

## Vicente H. Calderon Biography



**Vicente H. Calderon**  
**NLPOA Founder**  
**Visalia, California**

I was born in El Paso, Texas on June 16, 1944; my parents were Wenceslao and Rutlia Santillano Calderon. After my father returned to Texas from having fought in the U.S. Army during the Second World War he moved the family to Visalia, California in 1946.

Growing up in Visalia, I attended Holy Family Elementary School through the eighth grade then attended Redwood High School where I graduated in 1962. As we grew up, my brothers (2) and sisters (4) worked in the fields along side our parents picking a variety of fruits and vegetables that are produced in the San Joaquin Valley as well as throughout the state. There was a lot of work and sacrifice; in fact many times we went to work in the fields in the morning before school. However, I can truly say those times produced many fine memories that I and my siblings still talk about as we frequently visit.

I joined the U.S. Army in 1963 for three years and upon completing my military obligation, I joined the California Department of Corrections (CDC) where I was assigned to Deuel Vocational Institution located in Tracy. I remained with CDC until January 1968 when I entered the California Highway Patrol Academy in Sacramento. In May of 1968, I graduated from the academy and was assigned to work the West Los Angeles CHP office.

In 1967, while still employed with CDC I married Frances Valencia and have been married for 38 years. However, it doesn't seem that long ago, como decia mi abuelito, "La vida is como un suspiro" it passes so swiftly.

I voluntarily transferred to San Jose, California in 1969 and remained at that office until 1983. While at San Jose, I promoted to Sergeant, completed my bachelor degree at San Jose State (I was the first of my family to receive a degree at the time) today four of us have degrees, the youngest has her masters degree in education and is a vice principle at a local high school.

My sixteen years in San Jose were probably the best years; I was involved in so many positive things. As a CHP officer and while working on by B/A degree I, along with many other students and community leaders walked together in the Chicano Moratorium. We walked from San Jose to the State Capitol Sacramento. The significance of this event is that it brought national media attention to the many educational needs of the Chicano (Latino) not only in this state, but throughout the country. This is also perhaps the first time that a peace officer participated in such a demonstration.

During this period in my life, we, John Parraz and I founded the National Latino Peace Officers Association; it was shortly after this that I honed my begging qualities. Because along with the NLPOA I had also formed a East San Jose Boy Scout Troop 6. Due to lack of funds or resources I went out in to the community and businesses to ask them to assist in anyway possible to make these two projects happen.

As we slowly gained membership into the NLPOA, I recognized a need to publish a newsletter of the chapter's activities in order to perk people's interest in the organization and to encourage them to participate. I went begging and developed a one way working relationship with Fred Caballero who owned a printing company in San Jose. The reason I say a "one sided working relationship" is because poor Fred provided all the necessary equipment and other resources to make sure our newsletter was timely and professionally done (which it was, see our early El Puente issue). All Rosamaria Hernandez, Barbara Ponze and I had to do was compiling and type the information and make sure Fred received it on time. Even then, I would still plead with Fred to make changes or provide other favors. Fred always did. However, he would say, "Vicente eres como un boracho, terco y necio". Fred was an individual that was committed, not only to the NLPOA, but the community as a whole, he was a giant in the role model department.

Toys R Us was wonderful to me and my assistants during the time that we provided new (repaired) toys which Toys R Us donated to us. Without their help, and that of the other companies that picked up the damaged toys at their warehouses and delivered them to us then came and threw our large amount of left over trash( at no cost) it would have been impossible for us to provide new toys to thousands of kids during that period.

My very dear friend (now deceased) Gabriel Garcia was my right hand man during many of these projects. He always remembered how we were able to take all 26 troop members on camping trips with very little money. We never received any financial assistance from the scout council for our troop. However, I am certain that all the boys still have wonderful memories of their time with troop 6. I believe that as a result of their commitment to the scout motto and the many other things they were positively exposed to contributed to their personal successes in later life. As far as I know, not one of them ever was in jail or prison.

There are other things in which I have participated in, and continue to participate in, it gives me a great sense of input and perhaps it has made a difference.

My heroes are my grandparents who left the Sierra Madre in Durango, Mexico and traveled with a child and two small children, during the Mexican Revolution, to provide a better life for their family in the United States. My Grandfather would always say, “alludate, que te alludare” Help yourself and I will help you.

My Grandfather never went to school; however, he would tell me about two books he found while working in the fields. One he said was about “Self” the other he doesn’t remember. With that book he taught himself how to read and took for himself some of its teachings. He read every day of his life and wrote beautiful poetry. When he got too shaky to write he bought an old cheap typewriter and taught himself to type.

My parents are also my heroes; their can do attitude, their charitable ways, even when there was little money or resources (on many occasions, I saw my Mother give someone the last dollar we had) She was so positive and her faith held her always strong. My Father, ahead of his times; he had dreams

of his children being musicians, teachers, dancers anything we wanted to be and encouraged his children to seek the high road.

Their positive example of what life can be has always stayed with me.

**Vicente H. Calderon highlights in his 36 years in the law enforcement field**

- 1966-1968 California Department of Corrections (Correctional Officer)
- 1968-2001 California Highway Patrol
- March 12, 1972 received the State of California Medal of Valor in San Jose California.
- 1972 John Parraz and I (Vicente H. Calderon) established the Latino Peace Officers Association in Santa Clara County.
- December 11, 1973 Received the National Carneigi Hero Award for Valor
- 1980 Promoted to Sergeant in San Jose, California.
- 1986 Assigned as supervisor for the California Highway Patrol's Mexico Liaison Unit.
- 1992 Promoted to Lieutenant and assigned to Riverside, California.
- 2000 Promoted to Captain and assigned as commander of Santa Barbara County.
- Retired in 2002 as Commander from the Imperial County

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