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Former postal worker remembered for community spirit

By Paul Burgarino
Contra Costa Times

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If a person or cause needed help in Pittsburg, Ralph Quesada was likely lending a hand.

A longtime community fixture as a postal worker, volunteer for Pittsburg youth sports and family man, Quesada died last week after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 80.

Anyone who grew up in Pittsburg the past several decades likely benefited from Quesada's work weeknights at the snack shop in City Park. Quesada sold concessions during baseball and adult league softball games alongside son-in-law Vince "Doc" Silva, with proceeds going toward Pittsburg youth sports programs.

"Ralph was Mr. City Park," said friend Dave Kehler.

The pair's casual friendship grew when Quesada helped organize a fundraiser

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for the Kehler family before Kehler's young daughter, Jessica, died from cancer in 1991.

Quesada and Silva helped raise money for a scholarship and memorial softball tournament in her

honor .

"That was the type of man he was. He was a true humanitarian," Kehler, 52, said.

Quesada was president of Pittsburg PONY baseball for 15 years, cofounded the Pittsburg Youth Athletic Association, and helped organize events and raise money for Pittsburg children, his church, victims of natural disasters in Mexico and other causes.

"It's not just that he cared, but he showed it," said friend Sandra Valle, 67.

Quesada helped her family run a foundation and annual softball tournament in honor of her slain brother-in-law.

Silva added: "He was the type of man who would give the shirt off his back to help another."

Though he earned accolades for community service and other tokens of appreciation from various sports teams, Quesada preferred to be in the background.

"It's so sad. We lost a person who is so needed," longtime friend Guillermo Muniz said.

Quesada made a greater impact than people probably know, added county Supervisor Federal Glover, a Pittsburg native who once delivered newspapers for Quesada.

"He was always busy, busy, busy," said Quesada's widow, Jessie. "Sometimes I wondered if he was my husband or if he was a husband of the community. He was always on the go and helping others anytime they asked."

Born and raised in the copper mining town of Jerome, Ariz., Quesada met Jessie in high school.

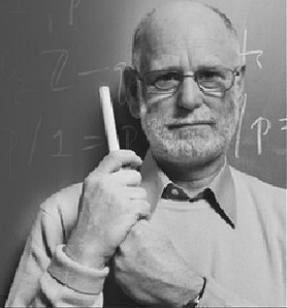
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The two were married almost 61 years and had five children. He worked in the copper mines in Jerome before they closed.

Quesada, whom Jessie described as "a great provider," was looking for work to support his growing family upon hearing from other family members about opportunities in California.

In 1952, the Quesadas moved to Pittsburg. Quesada took a job as a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Service, for which he worked for 35 years. He also worked in newspaper circulation for 25 years, both in the morning for the San Francisco Examiner and in the afternoon for the Pittsburg Post Dispatch.

Many people around Pittsburg knew Quesada as "Dude" from his daily route. Jessie said her husband would pick up home improvement tips while on his route, and shared stories about how he built a large television room and brick walkway at their home.

Paul Burgarino covers Pittsburg and Bay Point. Reach him at 925-779-7164.

EPITAPH WHO: Ralph Quesada BORN: Sept. 9, 1928, in Jerome, Ariz. DIED: Thursday, in Pittsburg
 CAREER: Worked as a letter carrier with the U.S. Postal Service in Pittsburg for about 35 years and in newspaper circulation for 25 years. Worked at the snack shop at City Park to raise money for Pittsburg youth sports. Volunteered for many causes and fundraising efforts in Pittsburg. SERVICE: A visitation followed by a vigil, will be held beginning at 5 p.m. today at Pittsburg Funeral Chapel, 2295 Railroad Ave. A memorial Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Thursday in St. Peter Martyr Catholic Church, 740 Black Diamond St. SURVIVORS: Wife Jessie. Children Roberta Silva, Teri Quesada, Alfred Quesada, Lisa Rios and Edward Quesada. Brothers Gene, Refuigo, Ruben and Buzzy, Six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

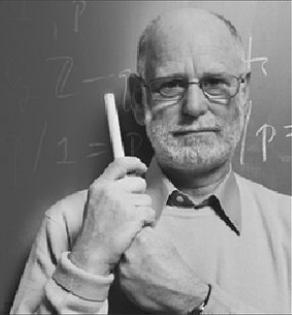
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