



Adan Ricardo "Richard" Vela

October 28, 1930 - January 31, 2026

Adan Ricardo "Richard" Vela, 95, passed away peacefully at his home surrounded by his family on Saturday, January 31, 2026, in Metairie, Louisiana. He was a lifelong member of the Catholic Church and was guided throughout his life by his faith; he had a special devotion to St. Jude, the Patron Saint of Hope and of Lost Causes, to whom he frequently prayed. Richard was born on October 28, 1930, in Laredo, Texas, to Adan Vela and Amalia Garza Vela. He was their only child to survive past infancy and grew up in Laredo, where he developed the strong sense of family, faith, and discipline that guided him throughout his life. In 1954, he graduated from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, with a degree in Arts and Sciences. Following his graduation, he honorably served in the United States Army, stationed at Fort Sam Houston from 1954 to 1956, and continued his service in the Army Reserves until 1962.

Richard went on to earn his Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis. Shortly thereafter, he joined the faculty of the Louisiana State Medical Center in New Orleans, where he became a respected professor of physiology specializing in gastroenterology until his retirement in 2000. Throughout his distinguished academic career, he educated generations of medical and nursing students while conducting extensive research in his field. His work resulted in numerous publications in peer-reviewed medical journals. He also served on the medical staff at New

Orleans Charity Hospital and the Veterans Administration, where he was known for his professionalism, dedication, and commitment to patient care.

On June 4, 1955, Richard married his beloved wife, Maria Luz Carazos, in Laredo, Texas. They shared more than 70 years of marriage built on love, mutual respect, and devotion to their family. Together, they raised their four sons in New Orleans, a city Richard deeply loved. He was an enthusiastic Little League baseball coach, proudly coaching his boys through many seasons. He embraced the culture and traditions of New Orleans, especially Mardi Gras, often taking his sons to the parades where they collected doubloons for his prized and nearly complete collection. He also enjoyed Jazz Fest, local festivals, and family outings to Pontchartrain Beach Amusement Park. In later years, he cherished his time spent in Arkansas working on the farm and forming close friendships, particularly with his extended Post family. Richard was preceded in death by his parents, Amalia and Adan Vela.

He is survived by his devoted wife, Maria Luz Vela; his four sons: Ricky Vela and wife Veronica of Austin, Texas; Edward Vela of Altus, Arkansas; David Vela and Gail of Metairie, Louisiana; and Danny Vela and wife Lori of Hollis, Maine. He is also survived by his grandchildren: Robert Vela and wife Dawn; Amiee (Vela) Hebert and husband Brent; Colton Vela; Kilee Vela; and grand-stepdaughter Nikki Raybon. He leaves behind six great-grandchildren: Taylor Vela, Victoria Vela, Ashley Vela, Austin Vela, Rylee Vela, and Jaxen Vela; and four great-great-grandchildren: Sara Vela, Hayden Vela, Jocelyn Vela, and Timothy Vela. To his grandchildren, he was affectionately known as "Güelo."

Richard will be remembered as a devoted husband, loving father and grandfather, respected educator and scientist, and a man of warmth, integrity, and generosity whose legacy lives on through his family and the many lives he touched.

Pallbearers will be David Vela, Eugene Post, Michael Post, Robert Post, A.J. Post, Nicholas Post, Will Cains, Kim Emigh, Luke Emigh, and Chester Epperson.

Visitation will be held at 10:00 A.M. at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Altus, with the Rosary to follow on Saturday, February 7, 2026. The Funeral Mass will begin at 11:00 A.M., with Father Raj Nalazala officiating, followed by interment in St. Mary's Cemetery. Arrangements are under the direction of Shaffer Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Mary's Cemetery Fund, 5118 St. Mary's Lane, Altus, AR 72821.

To leave an online memorial visit www.shafferfuneralhomeweb.com

Cemetery Details

St. Mary's Cemetery

Altus, AR 72821

Previous Events

Visitation with Rosary to follow

FEB 7. 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
5118 St Marys Ln
Altus, AR 72821

the Funeral Mass will begin directly after at 11:00 a.m..

Funeral Mass

FEB 7. 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
5118 St Marys Ln
Altus, AR 72821

Burial

FEB 7 (CT)

St. Mary's Cemetery
Altus, AR 72821

Tribute Wall

KT

“ Robert, Dawn, Taylor, Tori, Ashley & Austin: Our thoughts and prayers go out to you. May you remember his laughter in the special moments of your life. Barry and Kay

Kay Thompson - February 06 at 09:39 PM

GG

“ Words cannot express the sorrow we feel surrounding the loss of Mr. Richard. He was more than just a friend, he was family. Although he will be deeply missed, his memory will live in our hearts forever.

Love, Todd and Gina Guilbeau

Gina Guilbeau - February 06 at 08:57 PM

CG

“ Tio Ricardo, my family has such great memories of all the times we spent together. Christmases, Thanksgivings, weddings; so many special occasions made extra special when you were able to come. You will be missed by so many, and will not be forgotten. Rest in peace uncle...The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34: 18. The Garza family.

Carlos Garza - February 06 at 02:04 PM

TP

“ The Garza's Carlos, Bobby, Billy, Patty planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Adan Ricardo "Richard" Vela.

The Garza's Carlos, Bobby, Billy, Patty - February 06 at 12:18 PM

TP

“ *The Garza's Carlos, Bobby, Billy, Patty purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Adan Ricardo "Richard" Vela.*



The Garza's Carlos, Bobby, Billy, Patty - February 06 at 12:18 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Adan Ricardo "Richard" Vela.*



February 06 at 11:20 AM