



Sammy Martin Lopez

September 6, 1955 - October 6, 2024

Sammy Lopez, a long-time New Mexican media leader, passed away surrounded by his family on Sunday, Oct. 6.

Sammy Lopez

NMPA executive director

He is survived by his beloved wife of 51 years, Kathy Lou Lopez; his cherished daughter, Melinda Lopez; his devoted brother, Victor Lopez; his caring sister, Bertha Benavidez; and his loving grandchildren, Javaris Smith, Jazmine Lopez, and Jeremiah Lopez.

Sammy is preceded in death by his parents, Victor D. and Antonia Gurule Lopez; his son, Anthony Lopez; and his brother, Chris Lopez.

A native of Jarales and a 1973 Belen High School graduate, Sammy spent his lifetime in journalism and newspapers, making significant contributions to the media landscape in New Mexico. He served as a publisher for newspapers across the state, including in Las Cruces, Farmington, Carlsbad, Ruidoso, Deming, Fort Sumner and the Valencia County News-Bulletin.

Throughout his career, Sammy was recognized for his leadership and passion for journalism. Under his guidance, the newspapers he led were awarded four first-place wins for New Mexico Press Association General Excellence. The Daily Times in Farmington earned recognition from Columbia University in 2008 for its outstanding diversity coverage and editorials. In 2017, under his leadership, the Daily Times received the Gannett Division III Breaking News

Award for its coverage of the tragic Aztec, N.M., high school shooting. Sammy's contributions to the industry extended beyond the newsroom. He was inducted into the NMPA Hall of Fame in 2010 and served on the Board for the Foundation for Open Government. His commitment to journalistic integrity earned him the Dixon First Amendment Freedom Award in 2008. He served as executive director of the New Mexico Press Association since June 2019.

Sammy enjoyed trying new food, traveling, spending time with his family, golfing and cooking. He was raised on a small family farm in Jarales, and although he lived in New Mexico, Texas, Ohio and Illinois during his lifetime, he returned to his roots on the family farm before his passing. He also received his pilot's license and learned to scuba dive, always seeking new adventures and experiences.

His wife, Kathy, reflects, "We were a great team, and we worked well together through life's challenges. I will miss him dearly, and I will miss his love more than words can say."

His daughter, Melinda, shares, "His love and guidance shaped me into who I am today, and I will forever cherish every moment we shared. The lessons he taught me are invaluable, and the confidence he instilled in me to face life without fear is a gift I will carry forever. He never accepted mediocrity from me and raised me with the same work ethic he developed. I'm forever grateful that he shaped me into the independent, capable woman I am today."

His lifetime friend, Rick Jaramillo, adds, "Sammy and I knew each other our entire lives, and he was my best friend. I will miss him for the rest of my life. He was a good man."

From his friend and colleague, Michael Bush: "Sammy loved life so much I kind of thought he would live forever. He put 100 percent of himself into every minute of it, enriching all he loved and everyone who loved him — of which there were many. He loved his family, his heritage, the newspaper industry and the communities he served as a publisher and leader. He was a very good man who always looked for the good in others; he was a very good

friend. Although he was not untouched by pain, he tended to keep it private; he once told me that laughter was the greatest thing to share. Today, I laugh when I think of his undying spirit, though that sound is mixed with my tears. Thank you, Sammy, for your many contributions to me both professionally and personally. We shared so many times, both good and challenging. Wherever you went, you were always by my side and the side of all that is noble and kind in this all-too-imperfect world.”

His long-time friend, Victor Titus, reflects, “He was a well-respected newspaper publisher and worked in the golden age of newspapers before they were decimated by internet news. The stories he could tell about working for Jack Kent Cooke when Cooke owned the Lakers were fascinating. More recently, he directed the NM Press Association, representing all the print journalists and awarding those who continued in the field all over New Mexico. He was also very involved with the Foundation for Open Government and was dedicated to the public’s right to know and speaking truth to power. Though small in stature, he was a giant in his field.”

Bryan Bahena, recognized as a son who spent time living with Sammy and his family during his teenage years, shares, “I appreciate everything he’s done for me, and those moments mean the world to me. I don’t know where I would be today, but I feel that I’m better today because of him.”

As the Scripture says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,” and Sammy’s journey was blessed with many gifts that have now led him into the arms of the Lord.

Services will be held on Friday, Oct. 18, at Our Lady of Belen Catholic Church in Belen. A visitation will begin at 9 a.m., followed by the Rosary at 10 a.m. and Mass at 10:30 a.m. The reception will take place at the Sheriff’s Posse, located at 10 I-25 Bypass, Belen, NM 87002, at 12:00 PM.

Pallbearers will include Rick Jaramillo, Victor Lopez, Barney Lopez, Miguel Lopez, Bryan Bahena and Jarvis Smith.

Sammy Lopez will be remembered for his unwavering dedication to his craft,

his community and his family. He leaves behind a legacy of journalistic excellence and advocacy that will not be forgotten.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 18. 9:00 AM (MT)

Our Lady of Belen Catholic Church
101 N. 10th Street
Belen, NM 87002

Rosary

OCT 18. 10:00 AM (MT)

Our Lady of Belen Catholic Church
101 N. 10th Street
Belen, NM 87002

Funeral Mass

OCT 18. 10:30 AM (MT)

Our Lady of Belen Catholic Church
101 N. 10th Street
Belen, NM 87002

Interment

OCT 18. 11:00 AM (MT)

Terrace Grove Cemetery
1200 W Aragon Rd
Belen, NM 87002

Tribute Wall

ME

“ *I remember Sammy all the way back to Belen High School, where he took great pictures of classmates. What an accomplished life he led! My condolences to his loved ones.*

Michelle Ethridge - November 11, 2024 at 03:35 PM

CH

“ *Sam was a pillar of strength on both sides of our family. He will be sorely missed and our hearts are full of sadness for his family.*

Christina Herh - October 16, 2024 at 12:22 PM

RC

“ *Ramon Chavez lit a candle in memory of Sammy Martin Lopez*



Ramon Chavez - October 15, 2024 at 11:55 AM