

Joe (Jose) M. Gomez



Like many El Pasoans, Joe (Jose) M. Gomez came to El Paso via the military. Born in Puerto Rico, he first came to El Paso because his father, Pedro, an enlisted man in the Army, was transferred to Fort Bliss in 1958 to receive training on the Air Defense Missile Artillery. The family, including his mother, Norma, followed.

In 1961 the family was transferred to Bamberg, Germany about the time that the Russians were constructing the Berlin Wall. In August 1964 the family was again transferred to El Paso, and in September of that year Joe enrolled at Burges High School. He graduated in May 1965 and enrolled at Texas Western College in the fall. Throughout his college years he worked full-time at a small post-exchange (PX). After his freshman year, Joe held four jobs so that he could pay for his car, tuition, and fraternity dues. One of these jobs was delivering the El Paso Times to 180 households during the week and to 320 households on Sundays.

Coach John Gooden, one of Joe's teachers at Burges, influenced him to major in history and minor in physical education. Joe graduated from UTEP in January 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. While attending Texas Western College (UTEP) Joe received many honors, but his most cherished honor was that of being selected to be in the Phi Alpha Theta Historical Society. After graduating, Joe joined the U.S. Army Reserves; he was discharged in 1976.

During his years at Texas Western, Joe became friends with some of the members of the 1966 NCAA Basketball Championship team. He became especially close to Bobby Joe Hill; their friendship lasted almost 40 years. Being a history major and a sports fan, he realized that the 1966 victory over Kentucky for the championship was something special. He began to collect memorabilia on this historic event and still does today. As a result, he has become involved in a number of projects involving the team. He worked with the costume crew for the movie *Glory Road*. He also attended the dinner hosted by President Bush in 2006 for the 1966 team, and he secured championship rings for the team. He has been involved in the production of four documentaries on the team.

For the El Paso Museum of History, he worked on the "Awakening El Paso's Giants Don Haskins" exhibit. His historical interests go beyond

sports and include working on the Farah exhibit and arranging and managing interviews for the exhibit on El Paso's mayors.

Joe has received numerous awards including the Gold Nugget award from UTEP; he was inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame. He also received the Star on the Mountain award and named the Sun Bowl Association's Most Valuable Volunteer. He has served on the UTEP Civil Engineering Advisory Board and has been chairman of the UTEP Heritage Commission. He is the volunteer executive director of the Alumni Academy for Civil Engineering and serves on the UTEP Hall of Fame Committee.

His passion for El Paso and UTEP has helped preserve and promote our history.

