

# 2015 Hall of Honor

## Dee Margo

### *2015 Hall of Honor Inductee*

Dee Margo moved to El Paso in 1977, six months after marrying Adair at age 25, to work for John D. Williams Insurance Company as a straight commission salesman – a second-generation firm run by C.W. “Wake” Wakefield, his father-in-law. He rose to meet the challenge, buying the five-employee firm from his mother-in-law. Over thirty years the firm grew to be the largest El Paso insurance firm, and among the top 150 in the United States. In 2013 the firm sold to HUB International of Chicago, which wanted to replicate the culture Dee had nourished.



While building a company, Dee also helped build El Paso - starting the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in 1977 with a UTPEP football coach. In seeking to become a better president, he joined the Young President's Organization, gaining experience from the presidents of worldwide companies. In 1989 Dee helped found the El Paso-Juarez chapter, becoming its first Chapter Chair and — after joining the International Board of YPO - he was named Chairman of the Executive Committee of YPO International. He has also brought resources, founding the Border Fund with friend Dick Behrenhausen, who headed the McCormick Tribune Foundation in Chicago. Over thirteen years, the Border Fund provided over \$26 million in charitable grants to local not for profit groups. Dee continues Operation Noel in partnership with HUB International Insurance, the El Paso Times, KVIA Channel 7, and MattressFirm - providing 20,000 coats and 18,000 pairs of shoes to needy El Paso children from toddlers to 12 years old at Christmas time. Dee was also involved in numerous other El Paso civic organizations such as Rotary, United Way, EP City-County Board of Health, Greater EP Chamber of Commerce (Chair 2005), Symphony, Boy Scouts, Junior Achievement (named to their Business Hall of Fame with his wife Adair), and other groups.

Dee was appointed by Senator Phil Gramm as Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, serving as a liaison between El Paso and Fort Bliss from 1990 – 1998. He also played an instrumental role in El Paso's advocacy for Fort Bliss during BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) in

2005, resulting in its exponential growth.

In 2010, Dee was elected to the Texas House of Representatives, District 78, serving on the House Appropriations Committee and Land and Resource Committee. The skills he demonstrated uniquely qualified him to be Chairman of the Board of Managers for the El Paso Independent School District when it was roiled in scandal in 2013, forcing the State of Texas to step in. Texas Gov. Abbott appointed Dee to the Oversight Committee of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of TX (CPRIT) overseeing \$300 million in grants annually.

Dee and Adair have two sons, Wake and Don, a daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, and two granddaughters, Lilliana and Emma. They also have "adopted" daughter, Monica Gonzalez, and her three girls: Sophia, Anna and Camilla.

## Mary and Ernest Ponce

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*Ernest (1913-2002) and  
Mary Ponce (19W-2009)*



Ernest Ponce was born in Chihuahua, Chih., Mexico on July 25, 1913. His father was an accountant for the Terrazas family, who at the time were one of the largest cattle barons in the country. In October of 1913, three month old Ernst Ponce and his family were forced to leave their home when Pancho Villa and his men attacked the Terrazas family compound. The family moved to El Paso, TX. Ernest loved El Paso and its people. He devoted countless volunteer hours to improve the quality of life in his beloved city. In 1951 he became the first Hispanic city councilman. Ernie's services to his community included working as the director of the Valley Bank of El Paso. He served as a member of the Downtown Rotary Club, director of the Chamber of Commerce, president of Defense Supply Association, Commissioner of the North Texas-Oklahoma Export Expansion Council, Trustee with the City of El Paso Employee's Pension Board, the League of Texas Municipalities, director of the YMCA, the United Fund, the Optimist Club, Selective Service Board, National Conference of Christians and Jews, Our Lady's Youth Center, and the International Good Neighbor Council.

In the early 1960s Mr. Ponce played a key role in the negotiations and translations involving both the Chamizal Tract and Cordova Island. Ernie Ponce was the owner and operator of R-F Macaroni Co., Inc. which he sold in 1978. He was the El Paso YMCA Handball Champion from 1938-1951.