

## **Jesus “Chito” Rodriguez Community Activist/Sport Official**

Chito was born in Coolidge, Arizona to Amado and Maria Rodriguez, migrant workers in western Pinal County. They lived in Coolidge before moving to Florence, Picacho, and finally Eloy.

He started his education in Eloy at the historic building on 4<sup>th</sup> and Stuart Steets before moving over to the Central Elementary School complex.

In 1950, Chito started at Santa Cruz Valley Union High School. An excellent athlete, he played varsity football and baseball for three years and basketball for two. He was elected All conference in football in 1953 and also honored as Best Male Athlete of the Year for Santa Cruz.

After graduation he served as assistant junior varsity baseball coach before serving in the United States navy from 1955 - 1957. From 1958 – 1968, Chito played baseball for the Eloy semi-pro team known as the “Eloy All Stars”.

He also coached summer league baseball for 13-15 year olds in the Pony League division.

He was employed by Delgado’s Department store until its closure when he started a long career at Eloy Elementary School as warehouse manager and maintenance supervisor.

During his 60+ years of community service, Chito umpired and officiated for virtually all sporting events occurring in Pinal County. He umpired for the Eloy Little League, Santa Cruz baseball, Casa Grande Regional AIA, as well as the semi-pro Nutt Farm baseball team.

Chito was chosen as the Santa Cruz Booster of the Year 1980 in recognition of his tireless support for all SC sports. In 1985, he was chosen “Employee of the Year” by the Eloy Recreation Department. He served St. Helen of the Cross Catholic Church in numerous volunteer capacities for many years.

His longevity in officiating enabled Chito to have refereed and umpired for four generations of Eloy families. His generosity and dependability are legendary in Eloy. He was considered the most loyal, good-hearted, and fair-minded official working the area.

Chito can always be found in the stands at all Santa Cruz events supporting the red and gray, often with his wife, Mercy, also a Santa Cruz graduate.