



## Miguel Salas

April 21, 1963 - July 8, 2020

The world lost a light when Miguel “Uncle Mike” Cordero Salas left us on the afternoon of Wednesday, July 8th , 2020 in Los Angeles, California. There is nothing that can be said to ease the grief and shock of his family and friends. In this sadness, we are also blessed with the overwhelming amount of beautiful memories he left us.

Mike was born April 21st , 1963 at Chinatown’s French Hospital in Los Angeles, California. He spent his early childhood in Glassell Park before moving to Sylmar with his brothers, where he would attend Dyer Street Elementary, Olive Vista Middle School, and Sylmar High School. His life overflowed with music. As a child, his Tío Serafin encouraged him to play drums and he never stopped. He began his music career in the Sylmar High School Spartans Marching Band. He also got his start in the Salas family band, Grupo America, which played weddings, birthdays and other celebrations in the San Fernando Valley and also toured California and México. Throughout his life, he was perpetually an active member of several bands and projects, playing in a myriad of Los Angeles and Southern California venues. He was lauded for his vast technical skill and his ability to improvise and go with the flow with any set of musicians. When he wasn’t with his drum set, he was never without his ukulele; whether relaxing at a family get together or trying to pass some time while standing in a line, he was always trying to engage and entertain others with song. He is famous among

his family and friends for his rendition of Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World." As a musician, he was a passionate learner; he was always looking for opportunities to grow. He enthusiastically attended countless drum clinics in the pursuit of honing and expanding his craft and played a mentorship role in the lives of many younger musicians he knew.

Alongside his music career, he worked as a tech support provider for many social services nonprofits in Southern California. Over the last five years, he was proud to work for Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, where he drove all over the city to service vital technology at their facilities which provide suicide prevention services to Los Angeles and Orange Counties. After hours, he was always on hand to fix the computers of his family and friends.

He attended USC where he met several lifelong friends in the Latino dorm, the infamous Casa Menlo House, and later, through his work at the USC Language Academy for international students entering USC who needed support with their English language development. During this time, he also co-founded the Los Angeles Young Democrats. Even after his time in school, he lived as the proudest alumni--- he religiously watched USC football and shared many afternoons with his fellow Trojans (and converts!) during epic tailgating parties. He is famous for his tailgating cuisine and rising early for home games on Saturday mornings to find the right spot to pitch the canopy and start the festivities.

Mike was/is known as a most treasured friend and somehow meant even more to his family. He was an amazing brother, nephew, and son. To say he was a phenomenal uncle would be an understatement. For his nieces and nephews, he showed up to all the important moments in their lives, big and small. He was "Tío Mike" to extended family as well and embraced them with the

same level of care and support. He always knew the perfect Christmas gift for each child (often music or USC-theme related!)—an acknowledgement of their particular interests and the people they were becoming. He made it his business to know and celebrate who they were. He was also beloved by the children of many of his close friends and was known to them as “Uncle Mikey” as well.

Though he never had children of his own, he was deeply influential in the lives of many young people and we know his light will continue to shine through them for the lifetimes to come. He was a wonderful and supportive partner to the love of his life, Tara. They enjoyed making music together, watching classic movies, making each other laugh, helping each other to take care of their families, and collecting plush hippos. They particularly loved visiting Hawaii, historical sites, and also zoos all over the country to visit and celebrate all of the hippos who reside in the US.

To both his family and friends, he was the guy you called when you needed an understanding ear without judgement or even some advice. His loved ones enjoyed his special talents: his ability to make anyone laugh with his jokes and impressions, his encyclopedic knowledge of pop-culture references, his knack for winning concert tickets on the radio or prizes on the midway, his ability to catch a nap any/everywhere, and more. He is cherished for his ability to fix broken things, his steadfast resilience, unflinching loyalty, and his meticulous thoughtfulness. His greatest talent: his socio-emotional rhythm. He always knew the “right” thing to do in any situation and found the most personalized way to show up for anyone in his life. He was the touchstone of his circles; he was the best at keeping friends and family (old and new) together and in touch. Everyone looked to him to stay connected. There is no one in the world quite like Mike.

He is survived and beloved by hundreds of friends, many who considered him family, his nieces and nephews, three brothers, one sister, cousins, in-laws, tíos y tías. He is also survived by his great love, Tara, and finally, his Tía Clarita who raised him as her own and with whom he shared a very special bond. He is now jamming at the great gig in the sky with his Tío Serafin (on bass), and his primo-hermano Armando (on trumpet). He is also finally reunited with his beautiful mother Ofelia Maria Cordero Salas.

May the countless people who loved him always remember to hear his music whenever they need to feel his presence; they needn't look far, just somewhere over the rainbow. He was taken too soon, but his music plays on.

Due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictions, services for Mike will be held at a later date. Details will follow when it is safe for everyone who loved him to gather in remembrance and celebration of his life.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Miguel Salas*

October 07, 2023 at 09:33 AM



“ *Miguel Salas*

October 05, 2023 at 03:41 PM

AD

“ I don't know how long Mike worked at the American Language Institute at USC. He was the registrar/computer guru for the international students who placed into the ESL program. Every foreign students' "what when and where" on the USC campus was stored and printed out by Mike. The ALI was possibly the second largest intensive English program in the US at the time. While it probably was not his dream job, he impacted alot of folks. I was one. Without Mike, the staff of the ALI could not have made the program work.

Sure, we had the great teachers, and an innovative program but we needed to get the students to the right instructors at the right time in the right building. We were housed separately in some WWII hut on the edge of campus. And what an ugly room he had to work in... dark and drab. But he never complained. I guess it worked for the computers. He probably managed a bunch of other tasks too but as an administrator, I just trusted him and really had little idea of the complexity of his job. Computers were not new at universities but USC was advanced in their use. And so was Mike. I can't recall that there ever was a computer crisis in his domain. Mike was the sweetest, funniest, easiest person to get along with in our funky little building.

It is bittersweet to write this because like many retirees locked up due to COVID, I began cleaning out photos and found two of Mike. A while back, I went on facebook and found him but did not know if it was polite to upload photos after being out of touch for so long. I am sad that I am doing it on his obituary page. I still can't believe that he is dead. So young. So vibrant...and music was still his passion I see. In the picture with a younger me, we are holding tickets to the Rolling Stones concert at the Coliseum. Mike was the only one who wanted to hear the Stones — pretty nice of him to accompany his boss to hear/see "Steel Wheels." Guns N' Roses were the opening act and Axel Rose fell off the stage he was so out of it! It was a great concert. Being there with Mike is one of my favorite memories.

*I can only guess at how deeply he is missed. Tears and happy memories. Anne Decker*



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**Anne Decker** - September 02, 2020 at 10:43 AM

CH

“ I think of Mike often. I remember his first day at Didi Hirsch coming to the Inglewood office. I trained him on the site locations he would be covering and taking over from me and the duties at the different sites. I remember thinking about it like the movie *Training Day* with Mike as Ethan to my Denzel rolling around town in my black Lexus and showing him the ropes.

Over the next few years we became good friends and went to the auto show and a handful of Dodger games. In between site visits or if he needed to stop by the Inglewood office for any reason he would come by the office we shared where he had a desk.

Sometimes it was to drop off some equipment he volunteered to pick up for me from headquarters or just to take a breather before heading on to his next site for that day. While he was around we would talk car shows he watched on TV or a *South Park* episode he watched that week. It always made my day when he would come by since I'm usually by myself in that office. Even during quarantine he would call me up to talk about an episode or two. We also discovered we had a mutual love of hippos. If we weren't talking cars or music we were talking about hippos.

One thing I really miss is Mike's humor. He always had a funny story or witty comment that brought a smile to your face. He was also funny with his ukulele. I remember one time while we were both at headquarters for our team meeting he randomly started playing and singing the *El Pollo Loco* commercial jingle.

Mike, you will be missed.



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Chris - September 01, 2020 at 04:19 PM

TA

*Mike spoke of you often, particularly your mutual love of hippos. This photograph captures in so many ways who Mike was—his sense of humor and love of fun, his mischievous smile, and those special moments only he could create. So touched that you posted it. I miss Mike every day still. He was always a stand up guy, and so much more. Will always love him.*

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**Tara** - July 26, 2021 at 06:20 AM

AN

“ *Mike was probably one of if not the nicest guys I've ever known. Every time I saw him I instantly was in a better mood. He was super supportive to me and my band. His humor will be missed eternally.*

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**anon17** - August 31, 2020 at 02:09 PM

CM

“ *Mikey was a caring boy when I first met him at Olive Vista in band. And it sounds like he lived as a caring man his entire life. We reconnected on social media about 10 years ago, it was great to catch up and stay in touch that way. He was the epitome of a great male friend; caring, non-judgmental while listening to me, entertaining, always up for a good time. He had his 'sticks' in the back pocket of his pants if we weren't in the band room. Mr. O and Willy were two great band instructors and we had a mutual admiration for them. We were in Jazz band together, too. And our instructors loved how he could improvise and entertain. I was super proud of him making the All City Marching band. May he rest in peace, and peace be with his family.*

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**Christina Jolicoeur (Tina Rock to Mikey)** - August 31, 2020 at 10:13 AM

DG

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories*



David M Glynn - August 29, 2020 at 06:14 PM



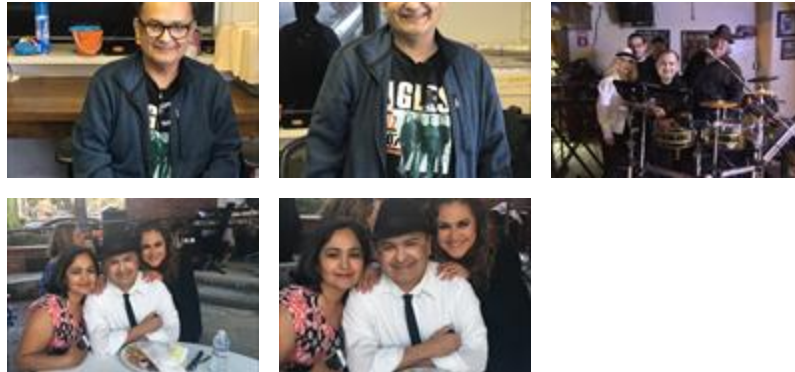
“ *Healing Tears - All White* was purchased for the family of Miguel Salas.



August 28, 2020 at 03:16 PM

TC

“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



Teresa Cordero - August 28, 2020 at 03:02 PM

HS

“ Here's Mike with Tymeles at the Rose Parade in '16. Dang it, I miss Mike!



Howard Skinner - August 28, 2020 at 02:27 PM

TA

*Mikey was timeless....  
Miss him every day still.*

Tara - July 27, 2021 at 04:20 AM



“ 3 files added to the album Memories



Utter McKinley Mortuaries - August 27, 2020 at 11:20 AM