Rafael Meléndez-Duke

Rafael passed away peacefully, surrounded by loved ones, in the early morning of February 4, 2025 just shy of his 95th birthday. Rafael was born March 25, 1930 in San Salvador, El Salvador to Rafael Meléndez and Noemi Duke.

Predeceased by his wife, Teresa (2016) and brother, Maurice (2009), Rafael is survived by his five children: Anthony (Shinder), Marie, David, Michael, and Arelí (Craig), and four grandchildren: Trevor, Nicholas, Benjamin and William. Along with his children and grandchildren, he will be missed by many cousins, nieces, nephews and friends in Canada, USA, Europe and El Salvador.

Rafael lived his childhood in San Salvador and moved to Canada in 1942 attending University School (now known as St. Michael's University School). He graduated from St. Mary's College in California after which he worked as an Accountant for 10 years before changing careers to become a Teacher, a vocation "Mr. Duke" was committed to for 27 years.



Rafael was dedicated to community service and spent many hours supporting charitable organizations. He was a canvasser for The Kidney Foundation, a church leader and Eucharistic Minister for St. Andrews Cathedral and Sacred Heart Church, a treasurer for Victoria Mini Rugby and St. Michael's University Alumni, a member of The Flying Y and Mary Walsh Bursary Committees, and was instrumental in upholding the Gauss Mathematics contest for over 20 years. His dedication to track and field spanned over 5 decades. Rafael officiated

countless cross country and track and field events from elementary, middle and high school levels right up to national and international caliber meets. He also was a key fixture for Operation Trackshoes for 30 years. In 2016, he received a Long-Service Award from BC Athletics and in 2017 he was inducted into the Greater Victoria Sports Hall of Fame as an Official in Athletics. Rafael's own track career is well documented as a sprinter: 6-year BC Double Gold Sprint Champion, 1951 Canadian Sprint Champion, and podium finishes in US and World Masters sprint competitions. Despite penning two books: On Your Marks! A History of Track and Field Officiating in Victoria and A History of the Flying Y Track and Field Club, Rafael was always humble and shied away from fan fare.

Rafael had many interests. For those who knew him, one of which was keeping warm – he always wore two layers more than everyone else! It must have been from his Latin American roots. His love of airplanes and the mystery surrounding female aviation pioneer, Amelia Earhart, and her disappearance over the Pacific Ocean was a passion he researched throughout his entire life. Rafael contributed positively to the lives of many students, athletes, friends and family. As one dear friend said, "He was a giant of a man, the epitome of what a human should be." Rafael will be greatly missed.

An open casket visitation will take place at 9:15-9:45 am at Sacred Heart Church, 4040 Nelthorpe Street, Victoria, BC on Friday, February 7, 2025. Funeral mass at 10:00 am with a reception to follow in the downstairs church hall. The service will also be livestreamed at: https://youtube.com/live/T_ER48-T0nY. Interment of ashes to take place on a warm sunny day later this Spring. If you can join us, wear two layers!

Rafael supported many charitable organizations. In lieu of flowers, please consider contributing to an organization of your choice.

The family is grateful for the care and attention provided by many caregivers, support staff and friends.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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