



Richard Moya

Community Leader
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Native Austinite, Richard Moya, (1932-), son of Bertha and “Pete” Moya, was the first Mexican American elected to the Travis County (Texas) Commissioners’ Court representing Precinct 4. Moya served four full terms, or sixteen years as County Commissioner beginning in 1970 to 1986. He was appointed as one of three Deputy Chiefs of Staff under Governor Ann Richard’s administration from 1991 to 1995. Moya served as delegate to the National Democratic Convention in 1972. Moya has been active as a civic leader all of his life and is still active in national, state, and local politics. He is well known as a man of action and a problem solver. Moya is a principal partner in the small business, First Team, a company that specializes in marketing research.

Moya grew up in predominantly Hispanic East Austin, attending Austin’s “Mexican School” Zavala Elementary. Later his family moved south of East First Street (Caesar Chavez), near Metz Elementary, the “White School.” He and his sister, Christine Irene, were still expected to attend Zavala Elementary because of their Mexican ethnicity. His mother Bertha wanted them to attend the school closer to their home. She confronted the Superintendent of Schools about the matter, and Moya and his sister were reassigned to Metz Elementary School. He attended Allen Junior High, which had a mixed white and Hispanic student population. He then went on to Austin High School, where he graduated with the Class of 1950. It was in high school that he met his wife to be, Gertrude Garza. They were married in February 15, 1953 and had two children, Danny (deceased) and Margaret Lorraine.

Mr. Moya was drafted into the armed service from 1953 to 1955 as a Sergeant 1st Class in the Korean War and later was in the Army National Guard. He learned the printing trade when working at Best Printing on East 19th Street in Austin. He remained in the printing business for almost 15 years and became a union journeyman printer. In 1966 he took the job as Investigator for the Travis County Legal Aid Society and worked with the Office of Economic Opportunity. It was here that he was exposed to the intricacies of county government and made the decision to seek elected office. While announcing for a seat on Travis County Commissioners Court, Precinct 4 in 1969, he stated “I feel that I must run for this office, with the goal of seeking a more efficient form of local government, one that will respond readily to the needs of the people of this community.” [Austin American 12-15-1969]. In 1970, he won the election and became the first Mexican American to be elected in Travis County as County Commissioner, Precinct 4. He helped form the Mexican-American Democrats (MAD) between 1972-1973 and from this group, the Tejano Democrats formed.

Moya’s political career spanned over 20 years in county and state governments, serving in both elected and appointed positions. However, his role as a community leader covers an even broader span of time. Moya has served as treasurer of the Austin Aces Athletic Club, the Pan-Am Advisory Board, as well as the Capital Area Planning Council and the Century Club. He has remained active in national, state, and local politics.