



**2024**  
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI**  
**JAMES F. COLE MEMORIAL**  
**AWARD FOR SERVICE**

## GABE ANAYA '59



**B**orn 7th of 11 siblings, Gabe Anaya '59 grew up in Moriarty, New Mexico. The last to be born on the family ranch before they moved into town to be closer to the school, Gabe recalls, "That was my first understanding of the importance of education. Next was when my mother walked me to school on the first day and turned me over to the teacher."

**"Make commitments that you can live by and live by the commitments you make. And don't be afraid to get involved."**

—Gabe Anaya '59

He also recalls his brother "turning him over" to NMSU, dropping Gabe in front of Breland Hall and taking off, so—Gabe chuckles—he had no choice but to stay.

Gabe's oldest sister gave him a good start at NMSU, having taught him his work ethic and how to save money when he worked in her restaurant as a boy. He credits his

history professor, Dr. Ira Clark, with teaching him how to understand historical and social cause and effect. "I still think I pattern my way of thinking on him."

However, Gabe's most valuable NMSU experience was learning the importance of service in his fraternity and ROTC. His first day on campus, Gabe was invited to a Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE) fraternity party. "Right off the bat," Gabe felt at home with the fraternity brothers, and he was initiated in 1956. Gabe remains closely involved with the TKEs, winning national and local awards and serving the NMSU chapter in many ways, including advising the chapter for 40 years, establishing a TKE scholarship, and helping with house maintenance.

At that time, two years of ROTC were required of all male students, and Gabe absorbed lessons about commitment, discipline, and chain of command. After his two-year Army commission at Fort Benning, Georgia, he continued officer training courses and spent 30 years in the Army Reserve, retiring as a colonel in 1990.

Gabe had known since 9th grade that he wanted to be a math teacher, and upon graduation from NMSU, he taught in Silver City while obtaining a master's degree from Western New Mexico University. Gabe taught in the Las Cruces schools for 25 years, until J. Paul Taylor persuaded him to move to Las Cruces after they were introduced at a National Education Association meeting.

Gabe's commitment to his students is reflected in the countless invitations he's received to their weddings, christenings, and other events. "I was always trying to understand and guide my students, encouraging them not to quit pursuing their goals."

The list of Gabe's awards, accolades, and philanthropic and service activities is long. After he retired, Gabe became involved at El Caidito Soup Kitchen, and, 23 years later, continues to serve food as well as serve as board president. For 10 years he has been a member of the Basilica of San Albino Finance Council, and he was instrumental in the transfer of the J. Paul Taylor Historic Site to the State of New Mexico. Recently, he has been working with a local group to help migrants find shelter and receive help.

Gabe's advice to students continues to be about commitment. "When you are in school, commit to go to class. In life, commit to your spouse and your work. And try to give back." ▲