

JESSE CAMPOS
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Jesse Campos was born in Goose Creek, Texas (what is now Baytown) on August 6, 1921. He was the 5th of 8 children of Jose and Maria Campos, who migrated here from Zacatejas, Mexico. Maria was a homemaker and Jose, like other men in the family, worked at the Humble Oil Refinery.

Jesse graduated from Robert E. Lee High School where he played in the band and was on the track team. Moved by the horrific destruction at Pearl Harbor, Jesse joined the U.S. Army and was inducted on January 7, 1942. Before the end of the month, he was assigned to the 642nd Second Amphibious Tank Battalion attached to the 15th Division Company B.

Company B was assigned to the U.S.L.S.T. 290 that sailed out of San Francisco on January 30, 1942. It was due west into the height of military action already underway in the Pacific Theater of War. The first assault landed on Guam. After that first assault the Company participated in 9 other amphibious landings including Midway, Marshall Island, Solomon Island New Guinea, the Gilbert Island, Tarawa, Saipan, Okinawa, the Fiji Island, and Mindanao Sea in the Philippines and on Leyte.

After being wounded in battle twice he received a Purple Heart, several Bronze Stars and numerous other decorations. Jesse returned to the U.S. and spent 20 years as a Merchant Marine for Humble Oil (now Exxon-Mobile). Jesse retired in 1969.

However, retirement did not keep him from being an active member of the East End community where he and his wife, Esther still live. The couple married in 1953 and has reared 4 children. Jesse's community involvement has been tireless beginning with the years he served as a Homeroom Dad at Lantrip Elementary school. Role reversals were not very common in those days, and Jesse enjoyed the involvement in his children's education and upbringing. He was the Dad who packed school lunches, bandaged the hurt knee and took care of any other household chores.

Jesse has always been there for his family, whether they ran out of gas, needed help moving or needed someone to watch the grandkids. For years while his wife served on the Houston Independent School District Board of Trustees, Jesse was there to support her and to accompany her to countless events and activities. The same dedication he gave to his family he also has given to his community.

Jesse continues to be active at the age of 85. He belongs to several veterans groups including the American Legion, and community organizations including Tejano Democrats and the Old timers, a benevolent fraternal organization for senior members of the Houston's Hispanic community. As an "Old Timer, Jesse takes part in fundraising efforts which are used to fund college scholarships and to meet the emergency medical needs of its aging members. He currently serves as Chaplain to the San Jacinto Chapter of the Disabled American Veterans. In 2004, Jesse was awarded the Eagle Award.

During the holidays, Jesse may be found "ringing the bell" at different sites as a volunteer with the Salvation Army or collecting and then distributing toys to underprivileged children. But one of his other favorite activities year-round is campaigning for his favorite political candidate or cause. Jesse is a true grass-roots activist who can be found constructing and posting yard signs, driving voters to the polls, handing out campaign literature or walking the blocks for the candidate of his choice. Jesse knows the right to vote and to participate in the election process is a precious privilege that should never be

taken for granted. That's why you'll also see him front and center and the public protests, news conferences and other events that he supports.

A significant highlight in his belief in the grass-roots political efforts came in the early 1990's when he was plaintiff in the historic federal lawsuit challenging the composition of the Houston City council. For many years, members were elected at large. Although the lawsuit failed, Houston now has a combined at-large and single member district representation that provides citizens with better representation in city government.

Having been around the world during his military service and while working aboard oil tankers, Jesse enjoys traveling. He has been to Europe four times, and has visited many interesting and fascinating places including el Valle de los Caidos in Spain, the WWII cemetery at Normandy in France and the site of the signing of the Peace Accord in Potsdam, Germany.

Jesse often shares stories with his family that made an impact in his life. One story was about his military life. His real name is Jesus, but when he entered the service his commanding officer told him they only needed one Jesus so Daddy was given the nickname "Jesse" and like many other servicemen had to follow orders and use the name he was given. He also remembers that like many others when he returned from his military service and his defense of freedom and liberty abroad, he came back to a country where racism and segregation were still accepted. For many years three water fountains were still present at the refineries, "white, colored, and Mexican." He and his wife, Maria Esther, also experienced realtors that would not show them houses in "white" neighborhoods. His public service has always been about eliminating the unfairness.

Jesse has said that politics was one way to make changes for the better and that politics was also an activity that all families could do together. And the Campos children learned well as they are all enthusiastically involved in community activities.

Jesse is a member of the Catholic Charismatic Center and has long participated in City of Houston sponsored Town Hall meetings for capital improvements for East End earmarked projects. His neighbors know he can always be called on to help. So does his family which includes his four adult children, 7 grand-children and 4 great-grand children.

Jesse Campos is a proud American who flies the American and Texas flags proudly in front of his modest East End home and is often seen wearing his Veteran's cap and medals and his State of Texas belt buckle and shirt. His photo has been featured in numerous newspaper and magazine articles and was included in a photography exhibit spotlighting the image of the Texas flag at the George Bush Presidential Library in Bryan-College Station. His outgoing personality and genuine caring for his fellow Hispanics have turned Jesse into a Goodwill Ambassador among Houston's Hispanic Community.