

LIFE CARE

LEADER

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Mr. Life Care:
The Man, The Myth, The Legend
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A Fashionable Life
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Ruben Aviles



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Photo by Heather Keys

RUBEN AVILES



AND THE REST IS HISTORY

By Rosana Hughes

Ruben Aviles recalled whispering a quiet prayer as he sat by his bedroom window one summer evening.

“God, I’m tired of living this crazy life as a sailor,” he prayed. “I’d like to meet a really nice girl.”

That was when Ruth Galindo – now Aviles – came sashaying by the window.

“That one?” he asked, chuckling.

“And the rest is history,” Ruth chimed in as they reminisced about their first encounter. “He’s just been the nicest man I’ve ever known.”

Aviles was the middle child of five boys, born in East Los Angeles, California, on Jan. 23, 1934. His father was a pastor for the Assemblies of God, and his stepmother worked at a cannery. His birth mother passed away from pneumonia in 1944.

In high school, Aviles was very involved with sports, participating in track, basketball and football. As soon as he graduated in 1953, he volunteered to join the Navy where he served for four years, earning third-class rating. While in the Navy,

he worked in the office for the admiral, eventually becoming the admiral’s driver.

Aviles went on many Naval cruises to Japan. While there, he never had to face combat, but he did have some lasting experiences.

“Some of his memories are getting in big brawls with the Marines,” said Ruth. “I mean, you know, what else [was he going to do]?”

And then he met Ruth.

“I had a girlfriend who had such a crush on him, but I didn’t like him,” said Ruth. “Years later, his family happened to move a block away from where I lived, and we just kept running into each other.”

Another friend of Ruth’s was dating Aviles’ brother at the time. The group of friends went out one night while Aviles was away. Ruth forgot something in the car – which was actually Aviles’ car.

Since Aviles’ house was on the way to the bus stop, Ruth had to walk by his house any time she had to go somewhere. One night, when Aviles was home on leave from the Navy, he saw Ruth

walking home from church. He called her over and said, “You left this in my car.”

They struck up a conversation. Aviles asked when she would be going to church again and she said “Tuesday,” so they attended the following Tuesday’s service, which was for the youth. That was their first date.

“After that night, we just knew,” said Ruth. “He was so kind and considerate and we just hit it off. We dated for a couple of weeks, and then he was deployed to Japan for nine months.”

Ruth was still in high school at the time, so Aviles said she should date other boys while he was gone so she could be sure he was “the one...” and he was.

“I didn’t even go to my prom because it just wouldn’t be fun without him,” said Ruth. “I was voted Prom Queen, but I wasn’t crowned because I didn’t show up. He thinks it’s so funny. He always says, ‘You didn’t get crowned because of me!’”

Aviles was discharged from the Navy and married Ruth in 1957. He began pursuing a degree in business while working for the

"He had a few customers when Ruben took over, and from one little bobtail, we ended up with 12 tractor-trailers."

Los Angeles Police Department in the records and identification department. Back then, there were no computers for police officers to quickly reference a person's file. They had to call the records and identification department in order to see if a person had any kind of record.

Eventually, Aviles was asked to become an undercover police officer in the drug enforcement department. He turned the offer down because he didn't want to worry Ruth since she didn't like the idea of him working in that level of danger.

"I didn't want to be a young widow," said Ruth.

Scheduling eventually became a problem for Aviles at the LAPD. He took a job at the local library that allowed him to have a flexible schedule to accommodate the classes he had to take.

When Aviles finished his classes, he began working at Aerojet General, a rocket and missile propulsion manufacturer in Downey, California. He started in the office and was then transferred to the ordnance department, where he tested bombs and other explosives.

"They would go to Nevada testing grounds to test bombs," said Ruth. "He used to have to climb a tower to drop the bombs

to see how they'd explode. And I didn't want him to carry a gun at LAPD! I always thought that was ironic."

Since the United States wasn't actively at war at the time, there was low demand for explosives, and Aviles was laid off. He was temporarily called back a few times and worked on and off for Aerojet until he got the opportunity to purchase a truck route from his older brother, Robert.

"It was just a little old bobtail his brother had," said Ruth. "He had a few customers when Ruben took over, and from one little bobtail, we ended up with 12 tractor-trailers. That was his big achievement – from one to 12 trucks."

Along with their two sons, Randy and Robert, Aviles and his wife ran their company, 3R Trucking, for 25 years, transporting produce from the Mexican border to the Los Angeles market, where the produce was distributed to different stores.

They had to close the company when the government allowed the Mexican trucks to cross the border and travel all the way to Los Angeles, reducing costs and cutting out the need for a middleman.

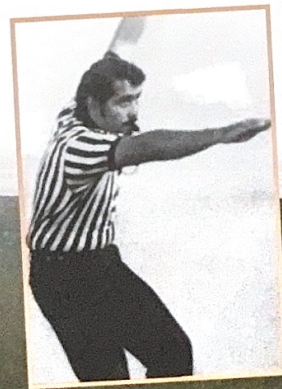
"We couldn't compete against them," said Ruth. "They beat us out of a lot of contracts."

Soon after Aviles closed the company, one of his sons reopened it under the new name R & K Trucking. His son was able to recover some of their former drivers and even a few of their previous clients.

After letting go of the company, Aviles became a school bus driver for the Oceanside School District in San Diego County, California, for about two years. Then, he decided to get a job driving the school bus for Tri-City Christian School in Vista, California. There, he was able to start and coach a girls' softball and basketball team.

"This is just his nature," said Ruth. "There's nothing Ruben didn't tackle. It's just who he is. He saw they had no girls' basketball or softball teams, so he volunteered."

As the girls' softball and basketball coach, Aviles helped build the girls' self-confidence by believing in them and



Aviles was touched by working so closely with the soldiers from their deployment to their return home.

encouraging them to get more involved in their sports.

"One day I was thinking, 'You know, I don't get to see my husband,'" said Ruth. "He's always driving the kids around in the bus, and then he's practicing or at a game,' so one night I decided I would go to a home game. One of the parents of the girls came up and sat down next to me, and she said, 'I can't tell you how grateful we are for Ruben. We love him so much. He has made such a change in our daughter. She has such self-confidence like you wouldn't believe.'"

From driving buses for the school, Aviles went on to shuttle residents at Ocean Hills Country Club, a gated senior living community, to and from their doctors' appointments or to the grocery store. After that, he worked at Camp Pendleton, just north of San Diego, driving Marines to various destinations.

"It was interesting at the camp – they had little cities that were built to look like Iraq and Iran where the boys would train with bombs and other ammunition," said

Ruth. "When he first started, he would come home crying, saying, 'Honey, they're so mean to those kids. They're so young, about the age of our grandkids, and the sergeants, they're so mean.' But he understood they had to make men out of them – out of these young boys."

Aviles was touched by working so closely with the Marines from their deployment to their return home. He was able to see them reunite with their families and see their babies for the first time – babies that were born while they were overseas.

Soon, Aviles began training the soldiers to drive the buses. They had to take their own buses overseas, so they needed to become certified in order to drive. It was during one of these training sessions that Aviles suffered a stroke that paralyzed him on the right side of his body.

"Every doctor said, 'He's not going to make it; he's not going to make it,'" said Ruth. "But I knew he wouldn't leave me!"

Aviles has been at Life Care Center of Vista for five and a half years now, and after all of these

years, his greatest joy still comes from being with his wife.

Next year, Aviles and Ruth will celebrate 60 years of marriage and a family that includes four children, 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Their marriage has given them countless opportunities to show their love and support for one another, and, through it all, Aviles has always found ways to make Ruth happy. Now, Ruth says it is her job to keep Aviles happy. She is his encourager, and his biggest admirer.

"He's so thoughtful, so kind, always just wanting to make sure his family has everything they need," said Ruth. "He is perfect for me. The things that I find the most adoring about him, somebody else might see it as a weakness, but for me he is perfect." 🍷

