



## Albert Eugene Gates Biography

### Albert Eugene Gates

Albert Eugene Gates was born on July 10th, 1935 to Nathan and Albina Gates. He grew up on a small family farm in Chico, California as the second of four children. A carpenter by trade, Al's father tended their 17 acre almond orchard, with Al's help, to supplement the family's income.

### Childhood & Family

Al's agricultural upbringing inspired him to join the 4-H club and the Future Farmers of America (FFA) at Chico High School. Through 4-H, Al met his future wife, Wilma. The two showed livestock for 4-H at rival high schools. Despite the rivalry between their schools, the two found themselves paired up as co-chairs for the Butte County 4-H Exhibit Day. They were married in 1954. Al took an apprenticeship as a bricklayer in 1955 and gained an appreciation for the trade. He and Wilma moved to Sacramento in 1958 to continue his apprenticeship. According to Al, "Sacramento was too big then and we were looking for a place more like home." The couple settled in Elk Grove in 1959 and bought a house on Locust Street.

### Community Involvement

The Gates family eventually expanded with the births of their children, Mary, Kathy and Andy. As the kids grew and entered school, Al and Wilma got involved in school and community issues. Al joined the Masons Elk Grove Lodge #173 in 1966 and made friends that helped shape his role in the community. Lodge member Henry Kloss appointed Al to the Elk Grove Park District Board around 1972. His service with that organization lasted until 1977 and included maintaining the Youth Center in Elk Grove Regional Park, pushing for improvements to Mendoza Park, and initiating the planning process for the Henry Kloss Softball Complex inside Elk Grove Regional Park. Another lodge brother, T.R. Smedburg, encouraged Al to seek election to the Elk Grove School Board. Following one unsuccessful attempt, Al was elected to the Board in 1977.

### School Board

Serving on the School Board for more than 15 years, Al helped guide the District through the beginning of a rapid growth period in the student population. He served as Board President twice. Al combined his love for children and bricklaying by setting the corner stones at every school site built since 1977. Park guests have also benefited from Al's brickwork which can be found at over 30 parks in the Community Services District in columns supporting park signs. It should also be noted that Gates Park itself features bricks in various areas laid by Al, his son,

and grandson.

### **Charitable Organizations**

Al's community affiliations span several charitable organizations including the Masons, Ben-Ali Shriners, Scottish Rite Masons, Eastern Star, and Jobs Daughters as an Associate Bethel Guardian. Al's philosophy on children is rather simple, "It's hard for me to say no to kids. They are just little people. If they need assistance, we should all lend a hand."

*The information within this document was created at the time of park dedication and may not be current.*