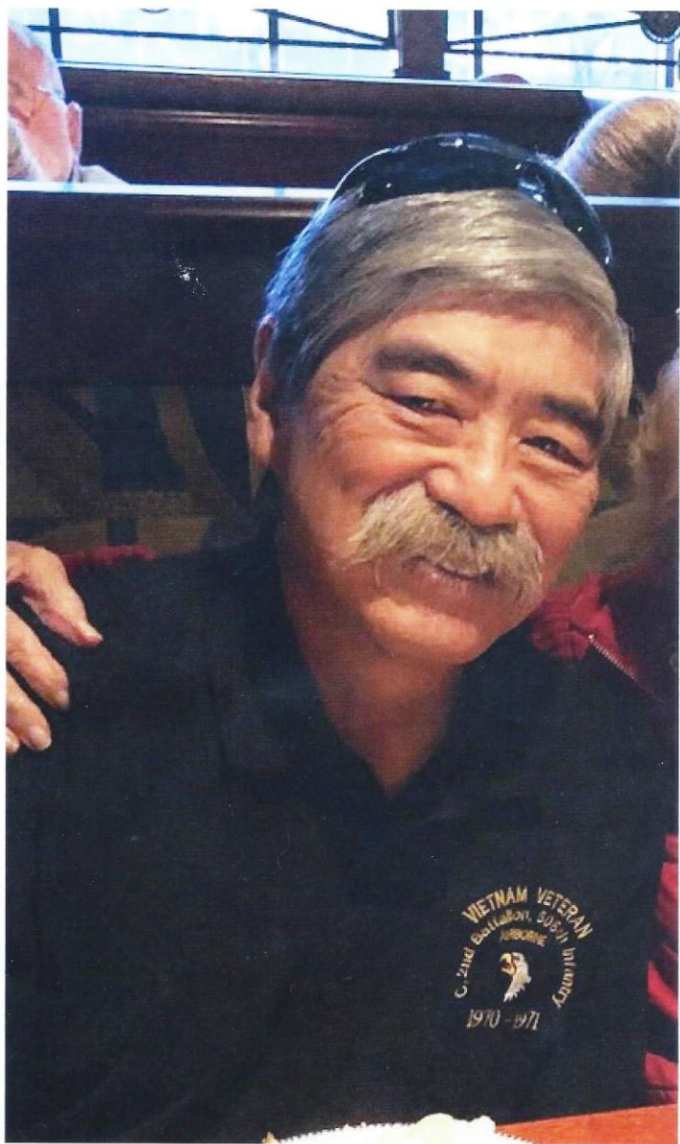




Calvin Ralph Kato, born June 11, 1948, in Chicago, Illinois, was the first of Ralph and Alma Kato's five children. Being native Californians and wanting to get away from the harsh winters of ChiTown, the new family relocated to the Los Angeles area, rejoining the nucleus of the Kato Family. Between the years of 1951 to 1957 Cal was joined by three siblings, Daniel 1951, Laura 1953 (d 1963), and Ronald 1957. Upon the advice of a close family friend, in 1959 Ralph decided to move the family to Whittier where the small town was known for good schools and a growing community ripe with the opportunity to have a successful family business and the last of the Kato children, Miki.

Cal was adventurous and, therefore, a curious and creative child. Throughout the years, Cal would always bring home treasures he had found while playing - including ducks, fish, polliwogs and frogs, new friends, birds injured along the 605 freeway, and a rooster from Knott's Berry farm that "just happened to fly into the station wagon". Cal loved the SoCal beaches and saved enough money to buy a fiberglass longboard from a friend. He borrowed the pink wagon from mom and took off to the beach as often as possible, much to the chagrin of our father. Cal was also interested in entomology, hanging around the nearby creeks and parks collecting various things with wings, beetles, butterflies, etc., and deftly stuck them with pins, identified them, making his own collection that were kept until Uncle Sam came calling.

Arts and education were instilled in the Kato family, and Cal was usually willing to participate. This also kept his curiosity and energy from most trouble. He learned to tap dance, developing his sense of rhythm and interest for various genres of music from classical to bossa nova, the latest jazz craze of his teenage years. He participated in recitals and in school bands branching out from trumpet to French horn, and rhythm with guiro, bongo, and later banjo and acoustic guitar. But trumpet was his favorite.

His artistic talents began to blossom in high school when he was transferred to the newly built Monte Vista High, now the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Training Center. The new school needed an image of their mascot, a mustang. So Calvin dove in and submitted a few interpretations, one which became a mural on the side of the boys gym, visible from the main road until the school closed in 1979. He also became the head yell leader of the Pep squad. When football season was over, he and the squad were able to secure a few Friday night gigs at the local La Habra Pizza Palace, opening the gig with 'Tighten Up' by Archie Bell and the Drells.

The Japanese American community was small in Whittier but active, Los Angeles had a new Music Center, and the County now had museums of art and history. Through the JACL, Japanese American Citizens League, Cal met Mabel Enkoji and Yoshio Nakamura, who encouraged his interest in fine art. Rio Hondo was a newly built junior college with an art department. Cal blossomed. Pen and ink drawing, mixed media collage, glass blowing, wire sculpting, acrylic painting, screen printing and of course ceramics. In summer, he attended Idyllwild School of Music and Arts, ISOMATA, a program operated by University of Southern California where he further honed his knowledge of ceramics, glazes, and techniques he applied in school and exhibited at art shows. He understood the chemistry of glazes and excelled in them. He proved his work was worthy! Then the notice from Uncle Sam arrived and another adventure for Cal had been presented.

Thankfully, Cal returned home on September 22, 1971. To hear more about Cal's Vietnam experience, please visit the Library of Congress Archives <https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.126353/>

Acclimating to civilian life was not easy, but he had a home and a real bed to come to as well as a job with the family business where he became a part time sales rep while attending Cal State Fullerton. His creativity and gregarious nature made it easy for prospective and existing customers to consider and order the products he promoted, yielding success for both family and customers. His hair was long, his dress was not exactly to our father's standards, but he connected with customers who truly enjoyed interacting with Cal. Working toward his college degree, he student taught art and was known not as Mr. Kato or Cal, but Calkato.

No one was ever a stranger to Cal. Now and then after college classes, Cal would grab a bite at a local coffee shop, periodically sitting at the counter and chatting with an older man who was a regular. One night, Cal and his buddies went to eat at the coffee shop and were waited on by a nice-looking waitress with her hair in a bun. The fellas were too chicken, so Cal asked her out. She acknowledged Cal's question but didn't give an answer. She then went to check on the man at the counter and asked him what he thought about the clowns at the nearby table. Cal didn't know the man at the counter was MISTER Zavala, Shelly's father! The rest is over fifty years of history.

Cal and Shelly both travelled parts of the US and Mexico learning more about ceramics and Mexican culture while selling ceramics through their business, Turned to Stone. But it came to a time when they both wanted something more secure and to spend time with their nieces and nephews, so they bought a home just 7 blocks from water so Cal could still fish and be near water, acquired a lawnmower shop in Laguna Niguel, and operated Al's Lawnmower for over 20yrs.

Opportunity came knocking when a national aftermarket company specializing in power equipment parts and accessories, Rotary, offered Cal a job as rep for the California region. He took the challenge for over a decade, building a territory, mentoring new owners, refreshing old customers, and saw a lot of California.

Now it was time to fully enjoy retirement. He built another kiln, created ceramic pieces again, enrolled in classes, and supported the Veterans of the 101st. It wasn't unusual to see Cal pull up with a kayak sticking out of the back of his truck, ever ready to gather at the beach with his Veteran's group. He was enjoying retirement!

As with many veterans of the Vietnam War, Cal lived with and succumbed to the effects of PTSD and Agent Orange. Without the support of his close friends, family, and especially the Veterans of 101st, his life would not have been so full and enriched. Thank you for being one of them.