**Remembering Danny Villanueva**
Jerry Najera

EL PASO, Texas - He was a star college football player, a professional athlete and a self-made multimillionaire.

Daniel Villanueva died Thursday.

Villanueva launched his athletic career as a kicker for New Mexico State University in the late 1950's. He went on to become what some people are calling a true legend.

Looking into Villanueva's past ABC-7 found story after story of his accomplishments.

Not only did he become a New Mexico State University hall-of-famer and played for the NFL he is also considered a Spanish-language television pioneer.

Villanueva graduated from New Mexico State University in 1960.

He was a part of the Aggies squad that went undefeated in 1959 and 1960.

After a short stint of student teaching at Las Cruces High school he was called by the Los Angeles Rams for tryouts.

Villanueva became one of the NFL's first Latino kickers.

He told NFL producers in a earlier interview he found others fascination with him being Latino was odd at times.

"I came on the field and they played bullfight music which i thought was kind of silly," said Villanueva.

He played for the Los Angeles rams from 1960 to 1966 when he was then traded to the Dallas Cowboys.

The straight-style kicker launched the winning field goal against the Washington Redskins in 1966 that helped put the Cowboys in their first playoffs.

Villanueva retired after the 1967 NFL championship game famously known as the "the Ice Bowl," in which the Packers beat the Cowboys in Green Bay.

"After ... they beat us, in my mind that was it," said Villanueva.

After retirement Villanueva found a new career in sports broadcasting.

In the 1970's, he became part-owner of the Spanish International Network which later became Univision, a station many Latinos are familiar with now.

Villanueva became a self-made millionaire and used his money wisely.

NMSU officials say he donated millions of dollars over his lifetime.

NMSU President Garrey Carruthers said in a statement:

NMSU News Clips (1 of 2) University Communications and Marketing Services
"New Mexico State football and the entire athletics department lost a true legend... his passing makes a very sad one for all of Aggie nation."

Villanueva was 77, he leaves behind a wife and two children.

In 1991 he established the Danny Villanueva scholarship endowment to recognize New Mexico State students who excel in leadership and community involvement.