



Dr. Louis D. Pippin

October 11, 1929 - March 24, 2025

Dr. Louis D Pippin 10/11/1929 – 3/24/2025

Dr Louis D Pippin passed away Monday March 24, 2025, at his residence in San Luis Obispo County at the age of 95.

Dr Pippin came to Cal Poly in 1970 when education was having a kind of renaissance. He was on the cutting edge and embraced his new career with fearlessness and enthusiasm.

Dr Pippin put his students in a circle rather than rows. When his superiors called him out, he explained that students in the front rows are more likely to succeed than those in the back. By placing them in a circle he was setting them all up for success. He brought a new understanding of education, and the role teachers have.

Not all his students went on to teaching, but to this day many of his students tell of his huge impact on their lives. He was awarded the Distinguished Teacher Award for the 1973 -1974 academic year.

Dr Pippin was one of the first professors to go without a suite jacket or at least a tie. "Just call me Lou" he told his students. His unpretentious approach was disarming and allowed him to really connect with his students.

This was surprising considering how hard fought his degrees were. Born in Texas to a struggling family of 6. His father died unexpectedly when he and his twin sister were only 6. It was the depression era and just keeping the family fed was a life and death struggle. It wasn't long before he was shipped

out to other family members. He bounced around to different homes, some good, some horrific, until at 15 he found himself on his own. He got a job at the local newspaper and slept in the curve between the big rolls of newsprint. Still, he got himself to school and graduated.

He went on to study at the local Jr College, then to West Texas State on a music scholarship. After graduation he got a teaching job at a small country school. While teaching there he continued his education and obtained his master's in music. In one of those classes, he met his wife, Dorothy. They married in 1956 and moved back to Amarillo where he became a choir director at Amarillo High. He and Dorothy had two children, Russell and Terri. One day he was discussing his theories on education with a group of professors. They were so impressed by his ideas they encouraged him to once again pursue a degree. This time to get his doctorate.

Louis moved his family to Denton Texas for two years while he attended North Texas State. Dorothy worked as a Music Teacher to support the family while Louis got his master's and Doctorate in Education. He said he never wanted to see snow again so when he walked up the Palm Tree lined Street "California" leading into Cal Poly, he knew this was home.

He retired in 1992 but never left the warm palm trees of San Luis Obispo. He is survived by his wife Dorothy Jean (Cleavinger) Pippin, His son Russell Dewane Pippin (wife Nancy), Daughter Terri Lee (Pippin) Medzyk (husband Daniel). Granddaughter Jenifer Christine (Pippin) Strait (husband Braden), Grandson Alex Russell Pippin (wife Jeannie), and 8 Great Grandchildren. Memorial services will be held at Reis Family Mortuary 991 Nipomo Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 on April 12, 2025, at 2:00 PM.

Cemetery Details

San Luis Cemetery

2 Higuera St
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR **12**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Reis Family Mortuary and Crematory
991 Nipomo Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
(805) 544-7400
k.reis1958@gmail.com
<https://www.reisfamilymortuary.net/>

Tribute Wall

KG

“ Hi, my name is Ken Garland and I just learned of Dr. Pippin’s death. I had the honor and privilege of singing in the Amarillo High School Bel Canto Chorale from 1961-63. Louie (as we Chorale members called him) inspired many of us to seek excellence in school and in our lives. In college, I majored initially in music because I wanted to be like Louie. Alas, I discovered that music is very mathematical and math and I didn’t get along at all. But I did wind up in a career of working with high school students in church ministry. And whatever success I achieved in that profession was inspired by Louis Pippin! I loved Louie and I hope lots of others did too!

Ken Garland - October 18, 2025 at 01:48 PM

MH

“ Lou Phippen was my psychology teacher for my teaching degree while attending Cal poly in 1983. We sat at a long rectangle table in a long, narrow room. The first thing he said to us was, “Everyone in this class is going to receive an A and I want to let you know that I love everybody in this room.” I believed in him and I did receive an an and I learned a lot when I became an elementary school teacher over the next 31 years. I applied many of his principles, especially telling my students that they were going to do well and then I believed in him and I did receive an a and I learned a lot when I became an elementary school teacher over the next 31 years. I applied many of his principles, especially telling my students that they were going to do well and then I loved them.
MarkRHatfield

Mark Hatfield - September 28, 2025 at 09:01 PM

LM

“ I met Lou at Cal Poly doing grad work. He was An outstanding educator. A kind soul and loved the feel of the sun at Pirates Cove..RIP Lou

lex McLachlan - May 15, 2025 at 10:05 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Louis D. Pippin.



April 11, 2025 at 11:26 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Dr. Louis D. Pippin.

April 11, 2025 at 11:26 AM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Dr. Louis D. Pippin.



April 09, 2025 at 01:11 PM