

BREAKING NEWS Gunman kills three hostages, self in Napa County veterans home

News

Anthony 'Lil' Arnerich, Alameda civic icon and youth sports advocate, dies at 89



Anthony "Lil" and Norma Arnerich talk about their family and life in Alameda, on Nov. 9, 2010. Lil Arnerich, who was 89, died March 9 at his Alameda home. (Laura A. Oda/Staff archives)

By **PETER HEGARTY** | phegarty@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group
PUBLISHED: March 9, 2018 at 11:33 am | UPDATED: March 9, 2018 at 1:14 pm

ALAMEDA — Anthony “Lil” Arnerich, a baseball player with the legendary Oakland Oaks of the Pacific Coast League who went on to become a beloved icon in the city as an elected representative and a longtime advocate for youth sports, died Friday morning.

Arnerich, who was 89, died peacefully at home surrounded by his family, city officials said.



Celebrating a decade of golf, a plaque and the dedication of the Norma Arnerich Teaching Academy at the Chuck Corica Golf Complex in Alameda on Sept. 12, 1997, is, from left, daughter Laurie, Lil Arnerich and Norma Arnerich. (Velina Nurse/Staff archives)

“Fantastic — wouldn’t change it for another day in the world,” Arnerich said just yesterday about his life.

Start your day with the news you need from the Bay Area and beyond.

Sign up for our [new Morning Report weekday newsletter](#).

Arnerich was appointed to the Alameda City Council in September 1988, then elected to the council in March 1989. He served as vice mayor between April 1989 and April 1991. He was re-elected to the council in November 1992, serving for an additional four years.

As a city leader, Arnerich spearheaded an ordinance to limit public comments to three minutes during public meetings — an effort to keep things moving — and worked to preserve parks, including through championing an amendment to the City Charter that required any parks or similar open space not be sold without a vote of the people.

For more than 25 years, Arnerich also served on a committee to save Historical Alameda High School, a commitment that led to the current work to retrofit and eventually reopen the campus to students.

His self-coined phrase, “If you have never helped out your fellow man, you have wasted your walk through life,” was quoted in a July 2014 city proclamation in his honor.



Former Alameda City Councilmember Anthony Arnerich, right, and U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee share a laugh before the transferring the Former Naval Air Station Alameda to the city of Alameda during a Phase 1 Conveyance Ceremony on June 24, 2013, in Alameda. (Aric Crabb/Staff archives)

Arnerich and his wife, Norma, who met when they were 14, settled in Alameda 69 years ago, when he took a job with the Alameda Recreation and Park Department as a recreation aide.

He became supervisor of athletics in 1953. He worked for the department for 36 years.

Arnerich played with the old Pacific Coast League team the Oakland Oaks between 1949 and 1950, according to baseball-reference.com. The league was regarded by some as the “third major league” because of the quality of the players, which included New York Yankees legend Joe DiMaggio and his brother, Boston Red Sox outfielder Dom DiMaggio, of San Francisco. At that time, Major League Baseball extended only as far as St. Louis, Missouri.

Arnerich’s fellow players included Ernie Lombardi, Billy Martin and other baseball greats.

A native of West Oakland and the son of Croatian parents who came to the United States from the former Yugoslavia, Arnerich was a three-time All-City shortstop, who played for McClymonds and Oakland Technical high schools.

He was also part of an all-star team that took the field at New York’s Polo Grounds in 1946.

Arnerich got the nickname “Lil,” short for “little,” because he was the youngest of six brothers. He was just 9 when his father died, an event that would have a pivotal effect on his life. To help support his mother, Arnerich sold newspapers on street corners and went to work at 14.



Anthony “Lil” Arnerich, left, founder of Alameda Recreation & Park Department’s legendary T-shirt baseball league, and Bill Sonneman, former Encinal High School principal, sing “Take Me Out To The Ball Park” during the “First Pitch Benefit Party” at the Alameda Theatre and Cineplex in Alameda on March 20, 2014. The fundraising event celebrated the return of the Alameda recreation & Park Department’s legendary T-shirt baseball league. (Ray Chavez/Staff archives)

In 1947, Arnerich and one of his older brothers, Johnny, were part of one of the best semipro teams ever assembled, Ben's Golden Glow. Its home field was Alameda's Washington Park, where the same field was dedicated in Arnerich's honor four years ago.

Arnerich's survivors include his wife of 68 years, Norma, and their children, Melvin and his wife, Alice, of Rancho Murieta; Ken and his wife, Colleen, of Alameda; and Laurie and her husband, John, of Brentwood. A son, Ronald, died in August 1993.

In addition, Arnerich's survivors include 12 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

His extended family also includes Newell Arnerich, the current mayor of Danville.

A rosary is set for 7 p.m. Wednesday at St. Philip Neri Church, 3101 Van Buren St., Alameda. The funeral Mass will take place at 11 a.m. Thursday, also at St. Philip Neri. Public receptions will follow both the rosary and Mass.

Correspondent Mike McGreehan contributed to this story.

Tags: [Local government](#), [Obituaries](#), [Obituary](#)

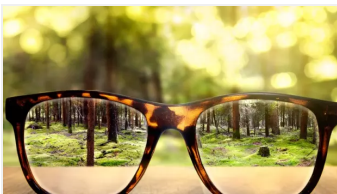


Peter Hegarty Peter Hegarty is a reporter for the Bay Area News Group.

[Follow Peter Hegarty @Peter_Hegarty](#)

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

ALL ACCESS DIGITAL OFFER FOR JUST 99 CENTS!



SPONSORED CONTENT

What the heck is view-through in digital marketing?

By



If your digital ad campaign generates the same click-through rates as the average campaign, then