St. Mary Magdalen Parish Celebrates Asian-American & Pacific Islander Month

Yokozuna

(1966 ~ 2000)



Agatupu Rodney Anoa'i was a Samoan American professional wrestler whose ring name was Yokozuna.

He was born into a famous wrestling family on October 2, 1966, in San Francisco. His uncles were the "Wild Samoans," Afa and Sika, who trained him to start his career in the family wrestling business at age 17. He was a cousin-once-removed of the wrestling and film star Dwayne Johnson (The Rock).

Anoa'i began his career in Japan, taking on the name "Great Kokina." He also spent some time learning his craft in Mexico, gaining the experience necessary to be a star in the sport. He first became known in the United States through the American Wrestling Association (AWA), under the name "Kokina Maximus." At the time, he weighed less than 400 pounds. When the AWA closed, he once again left America to wrestle overseas. In 1992, Vince McMahon (head of the former World Wrestling Federation) offered him the chance to create a new character, "Yokozuna," a reference to the highest rank in professional sumo wrestling in Japan, although Anoa'i never competed as an actual sumotori.

Yokozuna's career soon took off. During the course of the next few years, he twice won the World Wrestling Federation world championship, defeating wrestling greats Greg Gagne, Brett Hart, Lex Lugor and Hulk Hogan along the way. He also gained a great deal of weight, once weighing in for a match at 660 lbs.

On October 23, 2000, while on a wrestling tour of the United Kingdom, Anoa'i died in his sleep from lung and heart ailments – the terrible strain of wrestling at his great weight taking its ultimate toll. He was posthumously inducted into the World Wrestling Entertainment Hall of Fame in 2012.

"Nearly everyone was in tears when they reflected on Rodney's kindness, generosity, and untimely death."

St. Mary Magdalen is honoring the different communities of our parish in 2023.