

Remembering Rita Vidaurri

A vignette from my Mother, Ernestine Morales Guerra (1920 – 2007)



Susan Morales Guerra, writer and facilitator; San Antonio, Texas and Oslo, Norway.

When my mother passed away suddenly, in 2007, I recalled something she told me one day while I was with her, leaned against the kitchen counter cleaning beans, in her brown and pink kitchen on Oriole Lane in the northwestern part of San Antonio, “To think it all started with three bits of corn! Oh, your Daddy!”

As I listened, she told me about how my father, a young and handsome man five years younger than she; captured her attention at a Saturday evening dance in the neighborhood where they lived at the time, on the westside of San Antonio.

She told me that their form of entertainment was “home grown” and that talented musicians and singers from the neighborhood got together to make dances, usually outdoors, beneath tents placed on lots which were empty in between the rows of shotgun houses.

She told me about Rita Vidaurri singing there, before she ever made it big, and how everyone loved her voice and the *canciones* she offered to the neighborhood young people, those alone or in love, and/or in search for a suitable partner. Rita’s voice made a good memory for my mother—that was obvious from the tome of her voice as she told me this.

From this memory she relayed to me, I made a story which I told at the Esperanza’s Casa de Cuentos, in 2007, as a tribute to my Mama and those mothers like her, after she died. The Esperanza booked Rita Vidaurri, whom I had never heard, to sing after I told my story.

When I put the two together, it became even more meaningful for me, and I wished, as a true romantic always

does, I wished, more than ever, for a miracle—that Mama could’ve been alive for that performance at the Casa de Cuentos, in the same neighborhood; and heard Rita sing one more time, and recall again how my father threw three pieces of dried corn kernels at her to get her attention at the neighborhood dance beneath the tents filled with people, amongst the bales of hay, lights strung for decoration and talented musicians playing their instruments. He did get her attention, and as they celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary, when she told me the story, I thought: “To think, it all started with three pieces of corn!” Rita would surely have made a song about that!



Above left: Susan Guerra tells her story at Esperanza’s Casa de Cuentos in 2007. Middle: Susan’s parents walking on Houston St. as a young couple.



Rita Vidaurri sings at the Casa de Cuentos at a Second Saturday event.