

# Literary Ofrendas 2019

## Belle

By Randi Romo

In memory of 14 yr.-old Annabelle Pomeroy, murdered in 2017 with 25 others, during service at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, TX. by Devin Patrick Kelley, using a Ruger AR 556, a variant of the AR15. Police estimated that he fired over 700 rounds during the massacre. There were also 20 others who were wounded.

I was praying when he shot me, shot us  
 and as I lie here dying, I cannot believe  
 that God allowed this, to happen to me  
 I think others must be dying too  
 our screaming swirling heavenward  
 echoing among the rafters of this church  
 begging the Divine, crying for salvation  
 amidst an unholy sacrament of bullets  
 as they slam between our teeth and ricochet  
 a dirge that rattles through our bones  
 the bitter wine of our spilled blood pouring  
 the communion of our flesh, dying in service  
 worshipping as we have been commanded  
 yet, still he came with his gun and neither  
 God, Jesus, nor the Holy Ghost appeared  
 Prayer, pew, nor pulpit enough to deliver us  
 Guardian angels have all gone AWOL, and  
 Bibles aren't Kevlar as the apocalypse roars  
 spewing thirty rounds every ten seconds  
 as the aisles become graveyards in this  
 terrible altar call that is dragging from me  
 my very last breath, as I say my bedtime prayer  
 now I lay me down to sleep  
 I pray the Lord my soul to keep  
 Amen

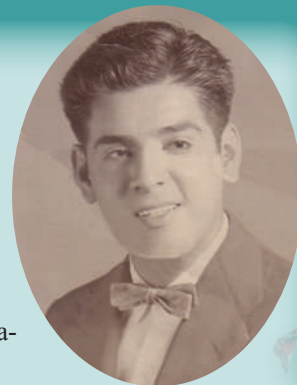
NOTE: *The Sutherland Springs church shooting occurred on November 5, 2017, when Devin Patrick Kelley of New Braunfels, Texas, fatally shot 26 people and wounded 20 others during a mass shooting at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, about 30 miles east of the city of San Antonio.*



## Pablo Martinez

June 29, 1928 –  
October 27, 2017

June 29 at 10:37 PM



Today would have been my father's 91st birthday. As I've written here before, he and I had a complicated relationship. Still, I miss him enormously.

Dad could be unyielding and tough; even in my adult years, I felt I could never live up to his exacting standards. I learned so much from him, and like to think that any time I accomplish something gratifying, anything that helps others, it's a tribute to my Dad. He loved good writing (though he didn't attend college, he was a voracious reader, in English and Spanish). He adored Cantinflas and Laurel and Hardy ("el flaco y el gordo" he always called them). He loved a wide variety of music. He admired los tres grandes, but favored Siqueiros, who, he said, was the only one of the three masters who held fast to the populism the trio espoused. Though he and his mother had an exceptionally difficult relationship, he always insisted no one bested her cooking (he'd often say her mole was incomparable). Above all, he loved Mexico and San Antonio's West Side, where Henry and I scattered his ashes. (My father's homophobia was a barrier to the end of his days: He adamantly refused to ever meet Henry, which pained me more than I could say.)

My father, whose name I bear, despised anyone who shied away from hard work, which in his book meant manual labor. He worked hard until he became too ill to do his own yard-work. The monogrammed shirt in the photo is the one he wore the last time he mowed his lawn. It's a cherished memento.

My father was a ball of contradictions: In his later years he was a card-carrying Republican, though he lamented the way his party abandoned the poor; he was kind to strangers, but quick to belittle family members he believed had let him--and themselves--down.

Over the past year, as I've drafted a memoir-ish manuscript, I've come to know him more intimately than I ever knew him in life. I'm grateful that he gave me my love of words. "They're all you have," he'd tell me.

Yesterday was the birthday of my beautiful Henry's father. These back-to-back birthdays are reminders of Mexican American men who loved their sons, even as they struggled to understand us and the love that binds us.

Que en paz descanse, Dad.

—Pablo Martinez





# El Vestido de la Comadre Clotilde

by Norma L. Rodríguez

My *Comadre Clotilde* loved beautiful clothes, *siempre muy a la moda*, a real *fashionista*. She wasn't always that way, not until her children were grown and her poor husband Polo, two months away from retirement, passed after being struck by a forklift that went rogue at *Golpe*, the humongous manufacturing plant. He left her a rich widow *por el* lawsuit, and to overcome her grief she started buying beautiful and fashionable clothes, which before she could never afford.

“¿Y por que no? she would say, what else am I to do with my money? *Los billes*, el mortgage, *las duedas*, *todito* paid off. *Pobrecito mi Polo*, no gozó más de la vida but such is life, death can come any time. Besides, *bién que trabajé en el layaway department del maldito Valu-Mart* al minimum wage, *que no era nada entonces. Les di los mejores años de mi vida.*”

And so *Comadre's* new life became amazing, taking trips and cruises in her beautiful new clothes that she bought for every occasion, *hasta parecía modelo*. Pues, some of the local shops even asked her to model, like “*The Lady's Shop, Today's Fashions and Caro's Beautiful Dresses*. By the way, Caro had to change the name of the store. *La Caro se quiso hacer muy cutesy y lo nombró CBD for Caro's Beautiful Dresses. Nomás vieron el nombre del shop y los marijuanos fueron corriendo to buy la marijuana. Bueno, pues ok*, she learned her costly lesson, having to change all the store signs and paperwork back to the original name but she does ok now with the store. She even was honored with Latina Business Owner of the Year award by the Hispanic Shop Owners Association. *Tal vez un día el (Anglo) Shop Owners Association* will honor her too. *Pero bueno*, we'll take what we can get for now, but we women are *activistas* now and with hard work and *esperanza* we are

changing the world every day, *paso a paso*.

Well, the inevitable happened like it does for everyone. Time passed and *Comadre Clotilde* got old and sick and couldn't shop for beautiful clothes anymore. She went to live with her daughters and though they treated her very well, she became bedridden and it was only loose *batas y pijamas, mucho muy* matronly, that they bought for her. *Y ni siquiera bonitas*. Finally, the call came from the daughters: *Comadre Clotilde* was gone. ¡Ay! *Dios, Comadrita, qué en paz descanses.*

I went to the rosary a few days later. *Y allí estaba medio mundo, todos chismeeando como siempre en los velorios*. I walked up to the casket to say my good-byes to my *Comadre Clotilde* and I almost fell into the coffin. They might as well have thrown me in, too. There she was. My beautiful *Comadrita*...in the most god-awful funeral home dress I had ever seen, complete with long flowing sleeves, *encaje en el cuello y color de mauve. Da de cuenta que era Morticia del tv show The Addams Family.*

“*Por Dios!* I screamed in silence, why, when you had beautiful dresses in all styles and colors in your closet, *¿qué no tienen juicio tus hijas?* Didn't they know you hated long flowing sleeves, lace collars and the color mauve? Didn't they know that you would always say, when a saleslady asked if you liked a dress not to your liking, “*¡Sobre mi cadáver!*”



## Diane Soriano

enjoyed helping her sister, Annette Sanchez, at Peace Market. —*Diane painted peace signs on my brown paper bags. She would mind my table while I shopped.*

*She loved this new venture that I discovered on a Black Friday weekend. She will be dearly missed.— Diane passed away April 28, 2019.*

Diana, in a wheelchair with her sisters at Peace Market. Annette at right.

## Elijah Cummings, 1951-2019

He stood up.  
He marched.  
He spoke.  
He served the people well.  
May he rest in power.  
May he Rest In Peace.  
May we carry on as he inspired us to do.  
Elijah Cummings, Presente!

—*Maria Salazar*

