

# RECUERDOS

## Enedina Cásarez Vásquez

December 20, 1945 - August 16, 2021

By Norma E. Cantú

I don't recall when I met Enedina Cásarez Vásquez, when her bright smile and quiet strength first welcomed me into her life, when I first felt the incredible bond that one often feels when meeting a kindred spirit, someone you know "gets" you without judgment or expectation. I know it was in the 80s; I know it was through Angela de Hoyos at an event in San Antonio and I know meeting her and Arturo marked a shift in my relationship to San Antonio, just as meeting Angela and her husband Moises Sandoval had given me a foothold in the city that had been my mother's family home back in the 1930s.

I was living in my hometown, Laredo, and teaching at what was then Laredo State University, and I often came to San Antonio for cultural events. I stayed with Angela and Moises. Often the events were at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center so it may have been there or at the Conjunto Festival that we first met.

Enedina became a dear friend. She and Arturo her husband would come to Laredo for our Primavera Women's conferences every spring where she wowed everyone with the artwork. Ever generous with her time and her talent, I recall she would talk to artists and encourage them. She sometimes spoke about her teaching. She loved it! And she loved traveling to art shows and showcasing the work by EneArte. She always claimed that it was a joint venture as Arturo constructed the wooden pieces that she then painted.

I remember the first time I went to her home, how she welcomed me with open arms. Arturo, Enedina and their son Arturo lived in a museum! What an experience to walk into the casita on the West Side near other dear friends Ruby Nelda Pérez and Jorge Piña. She and Arturo communicated without words. A gesture a glance, perhaps a smile was all that was needed. The



Photo by Children's Bereavement Center

casita with the bright walls full of artwork and with colorful decorations all around filled me with joy. I am fortunate to own several pieces and over the years I often gifted her corazones and paintings to friends and family; I would go get the pieces from her home and have a chat and a cafecito.

We seldom had long sustained conversations, but when we did it was like diving into the ocean and feeling transformed. Her deep spirituality and common sense as well as her wit enriched me in many ways. I knew her as an artist but when she and her sister Josie Cásarez

contributed poetry to the book I coedited with Inés Hernández Avila, *Entre Guadalupe y Malinche; Tejanas in Literature and Art*, I got to know her as a poet and writer. As a founding member of *Mujeres Grandes* she had been writing plays and poems, sharing them with her community of writers for years.

In 2004 when we Arturo died, her work changed. No longer working on wood, her corazones then were made of glass, more fragile, she told me once, like our hearts. Her paintings of Our Lady of Guadalupe remain favorites of mine with the painted borders and the smiling image that seems to exude love and grace. Grace. Yes. That is what Enedina possessed, grace. I was not surprised when she became an ordained Lutheran minister, for I had witnessed her devotion and passion for sharing God's word. Nor was I surprised when she founded *Pláticas con Santa Sofia*, for she had a gift for bringing people together, especially women.

The humble, gifted artist has left us and the void in our community remains for us to fill with our memories of her, with our recuerdos of our time with her, and with our own art-making. She would've wanted us to tap into our own spiritual selves and to create beauty.

That is her legacy.



EneArte, fused glass cross



Photo: EneArt.com

The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center board, staff and Buena gente acknowledges the passing of Enedina Cásarez Vásquez, great artist and teacher, who was part of the early days of Esperanza with the *Mujeres Grandes* collective and later, artist in the Peace Market with her beautiful EneArte nichos, paintings and fused-glass art. She has left us an indelible body of work and an enduring spiritual consejos. Our deepest sympathies to her family, especially her son, Arturo, Jr., his wife, Jackie and many friends and artists. La memoria de Enedina Cásarez Vásquez, ¡siempre vivirá!

# Y MEMORIAS

La Música es Vida

## Juanita “Janie” González Esparza

September 4, 1926 - September 1, 2021



Janie's Record Shop on Bandera Rd



Source: bit.ly/janie-record

By Jeremy Landín

On September 1, 2021, my friend Janie Esparza of Janie's Record Shop joined the angels of heaven. She was only a day shy of her 95th birthday and will always hold a special place in my heart and in the hearts of many music lovers worldwide. Her shop continues to be a home-away-from-home for me and all who visit.

During my Sophomore year at St. Mary's University, I stepped inside the shop on Bandera Rd. for the first time. I introduced myself to Janie and her kids that run the shop, Becky and Robert. Over time I met most of the family and felt safe visiting the shop and Momma Janie.

One day I walked in and sat there with Janie, as I usually did a few times a week during my undergraduate years. I spoke with Janie about several songs that I had come across that I wanted to show her and get her opinion on. If I remember correctly, *Coplas* by Alicia Villarreal and Jose Alfredo Jimenez was the song I showed her. She recognized the song immediately and began singing the tune with me. Every visitor that showed up in the chair adjacent to Janie's was there because they had grown to admire her. She knew every song, lyric, title, label and even, sometimes, the years that those songs were released. She had a great love for music.

Frequently, I entered the shop trying to stump Janie with songs like “*La Reina Es el Rey*”, “*Se Va Diciembre*” and many more—none of which puzzled her. With so many frequent visits, Janie began referring to me as “name that tune,” a title that I will always appreciate. To Janie, “*La Musica Es Vida*,” and to share in that love of music with her was an opportunity that every person that entered Janie's was open to.

Janie was a pioneer in Tejano and Conjunto music. In 2003, she was inducted into the National Hispanic Hall of Fame (the only record shop to be recognized by them.) She has received the Tejano Music Awards Lifetime Achievement Award and the Narciso Martinez Conjunto Hall of Fame Award y mas. Although she received many awards, she was even prouder of raising her 14 children who she guided through high school before starting her record shop.

Janie will forever be missed.

My heart goes out to all of Janie's family—especially her son, Robert Esparza, and Becky DeLeon, with whom I have spent many days at the shop. My heart also goes out to her music family that also suffers as they hear this tragic news.

I've got to say, though, that what I know about Janie is that she

loved music as much as life itself, and today I will play those records that she shared with me out of the kindness of her heart. Anyone who feels that they want to remember her in a special way, break out that record player, turn up the volume, and remember Janie through the legacy of the music that she helped preserve and share. The love and light that she shared with her music and with her presence will forever ring from our record players for decades to come.

Juanita “Janie” Esparza, presente!



Janie in her record shop with family members. Photo: Jeremy Landin.



Janie with her collection jar for Lerma's. Photo: Jeremy Landin.

Janie's Record Shop was a generous contributor to the Conjunto and Tejano music scene, not to mention música Mexicana. Constantly promoting and educating the public on the music history of our community, Janie provided a service that will continue as long as Janie's Record Shop survives. The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center familia joins in mourning Janie's passing remembering her ardent support of Las Tesoros de San Antonio and her hopes and dreams for the return of Lerma's Nite Club—a project of the Esperanza. Her legacy and life will be preserved as part of the Museo del Westside. Little Juanita, who at 6 years of age received a Victrola from her parents, Juan and Petra González, in 1933, never stopped listening to music and found her calling—an archival memory of songs and música dedicated to the community of músicos and music fans in San Antonio and beyond. Juanita González Esparza, presente!