



Juanita Rosas Delgado

1915 - 2019

As I sit in front of her dressing table, I am transported back to my childhood. I use to love playing with her earrings. Unfortunately I lost most of them. I see mom as a young farm girl of 20 coming to San Antonio as a newlywed in 1935. She waited that long to get married after seeing her older sister marry young and bear children year after year. She saw the toll it took on her health. Mom would have been happy to stay on the farm but Dad did not want to be a farmer. He loved music and hoped to earn a living at it. So mom became a city girl.

She remembers her first sight of San Antonio. They drove past the Plaza de Zacate which was full of Christmas lights and music. It was an impressive welcome to their new home. Both worked at the Elizondo Flower Shop at first. Then they set off to build a house for themselves. Dad was a strolling musician at the Plaza and played with other groups. Once the babies came he had to get a steady job.

Mom was told by neighbors of job opportunities at the local garment factories. San Antonio was at the peak of the ready-to-wear industry. One of the biggest factories was Basila Frocks. Her last job was for Jay N in that same building. One of the perks was being able to purchase the imperfect stock at a discount. I loved my pinafores and fancy dresses. Every Easter and Christmas we got the entire ensemble, a hat, dress and new shoes. Mom would remind me of how I loved my charoles, the patent leather shoes. She was very insistent on matching shoes and purses for us and herself. Even when she reached 100, she adhered to that rule.

The crowning touch was the hat. People dressed up more back then. Dad always wore a fedora. Then our grandma and two of our

tias moved to San Antonio, too. Working in the garment factories gave them an income plus a social life. On one occasion, Pedro Infante gave a Mother's Day concert at the Municipal Auditorium. Our Tia Chelo told her coworkers that she was taking her mom to the concert and that she would dance with him. Sure enough, Pedro Infante was serenading the mothers and asked grandma to dance. She was so shy and said she did not dance. Tia was quick to say that she did and got her dance with him. She smiled at her friends in the audience as she danced by them. I asked mom why she didn't go. Her reply was that Dad reminded her that she was a married woman with children and should be home taking care of them.

Mom had fond memories of her time as a sewing machine operator. Her job was hard and they were paid by the piece. Unions were discouraged. Her income helped complete our house. She would even be up there hammering alongside our dad. After a week of sewing, she treated us kids and herself to a trip downtown. Hot dogs and sharing a Nehi at Pete's Hot Dogs and then off to the Alameda. It was magical walking into the theatre. I was enthralled by the Art Deco interior. The black light murals on the walls reflected the history of Mexico and Texas. The entertainment on stage was even more spectacular. Either a film from the Epoca de Oro or live entertainment. One of my favorite spots was the ladies lounge. There was a mirrored wall with stools that extended across the room. I sat there watching the women primp in the mirror. I, too, felt glamorous. Then it was back to sit with the family. I continued to go with mom to the Alameda well past my teens. Just like I went with her to see Miguel Aceves Mejia, she went with me to see Raphael. Those were happy times.



I find comfort in knowing that mom lived a long and full life. She was the neighborhood Plant Lady and a church lady, too. Thinking of her makes me a smile. Love you mom. □

—Rachel Delgado,
Teatro Esperanza



Juanita & her two daughters in front of their Westside family home holding *This Place Matters* signs.

Pedro Delgado

1910 – 2003

I am a daddy's girl. Us, kids, were all born at least 5 years apart so I felt that I had Dad all to myself. Dad grew up on a farm in Flatonía, Texas. He and mom were children when they met at a family wedding. Mom was eating an ice cream and dad came up to her and licked it. Mom told her brothers but they just stuck out their tongues at him. From then on, they took notice of each other. Dad and his brother, Jorge, provided music at many family gatherings. Dad played the bajo sexto and Jorge sang. At 20, he moved to San Antonio and lived with his older sister working at her flower shop. He studied with Maestro Mandufano and performed in the community. He also tried writing songs and for a while was with a group called *Los Zapatas*. They went to do a recording. Dad was disappointed when they told him "just play, do not sing". That was his life as a musician.

When they began married life they became very involved in the community as founding members of St. Augusta Catholic Church. Dad was President of the Holy Name Society and was also a CYO baseball coach with the St. Augusta Braves. A favorite memory is about sharing hot dogs with dad during games at the old Mission Stadium. Another favorite pastime was sitting next to Dad watching TV—the Untouchables or a Western. We had many talks about gangsters and prohibition afterwards.

Dad worked as a house painter doing a lot of the interior stenciling and decorative arts in some of the city's historic buildings and would often take us on Sunday drives to show us the places he worked at. He greatly admired the work that Walter Mathis was doing restoring homes in the King William area. That's what inspired my interest in historic preservation.

Mom and Dad continue to live in our hearts. Dad always made the funniest comments. One day we all piled into the car and he declined to join us. His granddaughter, Amy, asked why... He paused and looked

at her and said "the dogs do not give change". —Rachel Delgado



Juanita & Pedro Delgado



FLOR DE PITA



A HOMAGE TO MY MOTHER, CONCEPCIÓN O. ELIZARDE

Passing by your house
Only a hollow shell remains
A carcass of memories in shadows
Tus plantitas are long gone
And the Gulf winds strip away daily at the paint
Only the stoic Ébano remains
A silent witness to your glorious life

Choosing not to engage in the ancient death rituals
Of my ancestors that could help release this
Deep well of sadness, I am stuck in the black void
Estoy en Luto.

I yearn to call out to you just once,
"¡Amaaaaa! ¡Ya llegué!
¡Que Bueno hija, Gracias a Dios!"

I am afraid
Tengo miedo.
The clarity of collective memories
Fading like white cirrus clouds

Pero este valle de nopal y mesquite
Calls me back to these fleeting glimpses:
*Ya mero va florear La Pita, hija. A ver cuando vienes al Valle
Las comadres y yo vamos a tener estas comidas de Cuaresma:
Flor de Pita, nopalitas, frijoles refritos, chile del monte, arroz,
atole con cilantro y capirotada*
Entice me away from the business of my life.

And the laughter of your Comadre Pilar
As she watched me pelar nopales painstakingly
While her arthritic hands were able to clean the prickly pads
With Fluidity, grace and speed
Is forever etched in my heart.

Your voice in Ehecatl calls out to me,
"Do not grieve for me forever
For I have already arrived.
Is it not a fact that you no longer see my bodily presence
In your dreams"?

"Be happy for me. Bask in my joy.
No me vayan a traer flores a mi tumba.
¿Pa que"?

Instead, Bless yourself with the medicine of her pencas
And don't forget to look for me each Spring
In her—while blossoms, soon turning brown, fall into the bosom of
The dark Earth—dissolving into dust.

—Margarita Elizarde



Concepción O. Elizarde

