

# Recent Departures



## Theresa A. Rodríguez

August 4, 1944 - October 10, 2021



Theresa A. Rodríguez born on August 4, 1944 in San Antonio, Texas was called to her eternal rest on October 10, 2021. One of six children, Theresa, known as “Aunt Nini,” grew up in the Christ the King parish and remained dedicated to the church all her life working as a volunteer, lector, choir leader, Council member and faithful Eucharistic minister. She was honored with the *Lumen Gentium Award* in 2015 —bestowed on Catholic lay people by the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Theresa was a graduate

of Providence High School and received her B.A. in Elementary Education at OLLU. She was one of the first recipients of a Master’s degree in Bilingual Education from UTSA. A dedicated teacher at Bowie Elementary in SAISD for 37 years, she taught 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade children, many from immigrant families. She loved traveling in Europe, pilgrimages to the Holy Land and had recently completed the *Camino de Santiago* in Spain. She also loved to sing and had an incredible sense of style. Theresa was preceded in death by her parents, Apolinar R. and Sixta A. Rodríguez. The Esperanza staff, board and Buena gente extend heartfelt condolences to her family and community especially to Maria Antonietta Berriozábal, her sister, who was her best friend. Theresa touched many people throughout her life and her light will continue to shine for all who knew and loved her. ¡Theresa A. “Nini” Rodríguez, presente! Que en paz descanse.

## Maria Theresa Nese

February 17, 1954 - October 29, 2021



After a seven-year battle with multiple myeloma, Maria Nese died at home leaving her beloved son, Thomas Nese of San Antonio, family, friends and colleagues behind to remember her. A longtime Old Forge, PA resident, Maria made her mark in San Antonio as an educator receiving her Master’s of Social Work from OLLU. Maria came to Texas in her 20s as part of Volunteers for Educational and Social Services (VESS) to work with low-income Catholic school families. Seeing the impact

her work made, she decided to stay here where she taught P.E., then 4th grade, and finally 2nd grade. Some of her best memories and friends were made on the field and in the classroom, including her closest friend turned-family and her son’s adoptive grandmother, Diana Rivas. Maria’s passions spanned from music to gardening, reading and sports. An active member of the San Antonio Area Retired Teachers Association, the Oasis choir and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society support groups, her retirement years were filled with peace, joy and comfort. In spite of her battle with cancer, she never lost who she was and lived life to the fullest. The Esperanza staff, board and Buena gente extend condolences to Maria’s family, friends (especially, Grace Rosales) and colleagues. The memory of her smile will remain in our hearts. ¡Maria Theresa Nese, presente! Rest in peace.

## Raymond Morales Guerra, Jr.

August 19, 1946 – November 6, 2021



Raymond Morales Guerra, Jr., beloved son, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and great-uncle has joined his parents and sister in eternal peace. A Vietnam vet, he was the oldest of six siblings and owned an accounting business. He attended Central Catholic and was in the first graduating accounting class from UTSA. He always tended to his entire family caring for his mother and father, Ernestine Morales Guerra and Raymond Garza Guerra,

who preceded him in death in 2007. And , he was devoted to his oldest sister, Loretta Guerra Woodruff, NYC, deceased in 2003. Raymond loved to cheer on the Chicago Bears, listen to music, bake his famous cheesecake for Thanksgiving and tell corny jokes. He is survived by the light of his life, his daughter, Anita Guerra Pleasant and grandsons Adrian, Christopher and Steven. Raymond was the brother of Susan Guerra, co-founder of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center who now lives in Norway and Donna Guerra, archivist for the Esperanza. Read his full obituary at [www.angelusfuneralhome.com](http://www.angelusfuneralhome.com) In lieu of flowers, in memory of his sister Loretta, please donate to <https://ecan.org/give-the-gift-of-hope/> The board, staff and Buena Gente of the Esperanza extends our heartfelt condolences to Raymond’s family and friends. He leaves a legacy of kindness, generosity, and laughter—something we can all aspire to be like. ¡Raymond Morales Guerra, Jr. presente! Que en paz descanse.

# Richard Moerchen, the plant man

May 21, 1934 – October 2, 2021

By Kamala Platt



Richard with his granddaughter at Esperanza's Peace Market.



Before San Antonio was declared Monarch Champion City, I met Richard Moerchen through a quest for milkweed for Monarch caterpillars who had eaten their way through

mine. After finding no milkweed for sale in nurseries, I decided to try a place I'd seen on Oakway, off of Evers Road where a sign told me there were "Plants." With no one around, I made my way through rows of attractive plants on tables in the shade of a canopy of trees back to a greenhouse where, amongst green growth, I found milkweed! I left a note, my phone # and \$4. Later, Richard called. After that, I visited him in his canopy amidst the plethora of plants, working on seedlings, or visiting with customers.

Eventually, we collaborated on a Peace Market plant table. His daughter, Margaret, made business cards from photos of his plant art—distinctive succulents, house plants, natives, veggies, bonsai, plants in ceramic animals, plants you'd never seen before and those you'd been looking for all over town. Richard supplied San Antonians with plants for decades: I learned from his wife, Barbara, that they had sold plants at flea markets when they were first married, over 40 years ago.

## Candelaria Sánchez

February 2, 1931-September 30, 2021

Surrounded by family, Candelaria (Cande) peacefully passed away just months after her beloved sister, Isabel Sánchez, passed away this summer. She is survived by her husband of 62 years, Adrian Sánchez, Jr. (Chito), brother of Enrique Sánchez, recently widowed. Ironically, the two brothers were left as widowers to be cared for by their children. Cande is survived by her children



Marta (Graham), Eric (Veronica), Stella (Eddie), and Deanna (Kevin); her grandchildren and many nieces, nephews, family and friends. She was known for her sense of humor, her

Richard died October 2, 2021. In his last years, he couldn't grow plants. Despite dementia, he lived at home, with Barbara's and home healthcare assistance. Granddaughters were important to him—Petra had joined us the last year at Peace Market; her sister Elfi was born just 8 months ago.

This summer, Richard's plants were among those defying code compliance's 12-inch rule and my memories of our good times exchanging plants and plant wisdom helped keep me going when my Garden of Good Trouble came under siege. Richard's spirit of green reciprocity is the legacy and the future of Esperanza as hope for us all. Read more & offer a remembrance, especially if you made a home for one of Richard's plants at [bit.ly/Moerchen](https://bit.ly/Moerchen).



Richard and his plants at the Peace Market.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *The Esperanza family extends heartfelt condolences to Richard's family and friends. A devout Catholic serving as a Marianist for 25 years, he was a lifelong ecologist, scientist and educator who dedicated his time to growing plants in recent years—at which time Richard with Kamala began to sell plants at the Esperanza's annual Peace Market where he will always be missed. ¡Richard Moerchen, presente!*



style, her strength in spirit and most of all for her love of family and friends. She grew up in the West Side of San Antonio graduating from Sidney Lanier High School. She eventually began a career as a receptionist for the Salvation Army of San Antonio. At her memorial service, the Salvation Army personnel lauded her contributions to the organization that included continued service as a member of their Women's Auxiliary where she volunteered in their annual Christmas drives, Doll and Bear Show, Fiesta Fashion Show and more. In her youth, she was a member of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church but had recently become a member of the International Bible Church where she was part of the sewing circle and helped with the food pantry. She was remembered as a devoted and faithful congregant. Candelaria always put forth a beautiful countenance that lit up the world around her. Her wisdom, strength, and love were passed on to all who knew her. She will be held dear in the hearts of her loved ones. Anyone who wishes to honor Candelaria please donate to the Salvation Army and/or the International Bible Church both in San Antonio, TX. May her memory continue to be strong in the lives of her family and the many who were touched by her generosity of spirit. ¡Candelaria Sánchez, presente!