

Eulogy for Mom

March 28, 2009

This is a story of Love, Faith, Hope and Charity... Mom was born in *Beatrice* Texas, now known as Donna Texas, November 24th 1916 to Tranquilino and Adelita Avila. She was the “*coyotita*” or the last one born... She was one of 7 adored children.

Love

Mom grew up with a strong sense of family and a mother whose heart was as big as her own. She would often speak of her our beloved grandparents with a tear in her eye and a longing smile on her lips.

She grew up in a home that lacked little. She often spoke of the cattle that her dad uses to drive from one part of Texas to another to be sent by rail to all parts of the United States. The home where she grew up was full of love, faith, hope and charity.

Charity

Once she told us a story about how the family had a storage room where they stored food supplies and other household items. She said this pantry was always full to the brim. The township where she grew up was one made-up of a few families, some well to do and others less fortunate. She recalled that as a child she would see that some of the children in her neighborhood that had little to eat and so one day she took it upon herself to make small bags of rice, beans, flour and other grains to take to the families that she knew had little in their own pantries. She had seen her mother do the same on many occasions and so she knew it was the right thing to do... Now I don't know what ever happened to her for being so generous but I gathered from this story that mom was given at an early age the example of being generous and giving by her cherished mother Adelita.

Faith

As she grew up she was active in her church callings as a Sunday school teacher and a member of the church choir. This is where the really good stuff begins. One day, when she was only 12 years old, she was in the choir loft singing. Little did she know that a new family had moved into town. That family was the Lopez-Gonzales family. This small family consisted of Julia, a widowed mother, son named Regino, a sweet little daughter named Herlinda and a handsome 16 year old son named Casimiro.

Dad recalled the first time he saw our mother as he turned to see where the voices of angels was coming from. It was then that he first saw her. He said he couldn't take his eyes off of her and that to him she looked like an angel. He often told us this story with tears of joy in his eyes and a wily smile on his lips. He recalled that he decided then and there that *morenita* would one day be his wife.

Slowly but surely he worked his way into the lives and hearts of the Avila-Muñoz family, first by working at one of my grandfathers establishments and then after 10 years of waiting and working hard and winning them over finally got the courage to have the honor of taking Bellita as his wife. Our grandfather was not sure that Casimiro was the best choice for his beautiful youngest daughter due in part to the fact that he was poor and had little to offer... But he saw that he was a hard working, loving and devoted son and a dependable employee and finally the deal was closed! On June 18, 1939 Bellita and Casimiro were married with a fiesta and celebration that lasted three days. They really knew how to party in those days!

Hope

They had a wonderful life together and one by one had 10 children. They worked hard and had many struggles and challenges but together they taught us that family is first only after GOD. And that anything worth doing is worth doing right!

We watched and learned by example that with hard work and determination anything is possible.

They established a home in Parlier in the early 1950's after many years of migration back and forth from Texas. Dad soon got work with Chris Sorensen in Parlier. Not long after Rosie, our coyotita was born, mom also came to work for this fine family. A career that lasted over 30 years.

We watched and learned as she managed to keep a clean house, order, love and high moral and spiritual standards in our family and at the same time become a valued employee of the company.

Often she would return home late at night after having been on her feet for 12-14 hours at a time packing nectarines, grapes, plums or peaches and work well into the evening hanging out long rows of sheets and carefully concealed undergarments on the clothes line in our back yard. If I close my eyes I can still visualize her weary sweet spirit floating between the long rows of clean white sheets softly swaying in the cool evening breeze and smelling of Tide and Clorox.

We watched and learned of her devotion to family, her commitment to her high home management standards and her longsuffering for our sakes...We learned, as dad use to say, that *"todo cabe en un jarrito sabiéndolo acomodar"*.

In the early 70's Mom also had the opportunity to work for Head Start and it is here that she finally learned to drive! Talk about determination, she was 54 years old at the time and just learning to drive! But the job required it and so it had to be done.

I remember her praying when she had to transport little ones to the clinics and dentist offices in Fresno County for services. Somehow she managed to do all this and never have an accident, get lost or lose a child! However if you were ever caught driving behind her I hope you had patience because she was a slow and cautious driver...

We watched as she grew in this new calling and we learned of her great courage, determination, humility and loyalty.

During this time she became active in city politics. She helped in the city council with her advice and help when called upon. She fought for the rights of the less fortunate amongst us.

We watched and learned that it takes a village to raise a family and that when we work together we find our true strength and power and that each voice is needed for justice and equity to prevail.

She was involved in the church as well as an active member of the church Altar Society. We often went to help her clean the church and make sure everything was just right so that the House of the Lord would always be a house of order and cleanliness. She spent endless hours starching and ironing long white alter covers and the priests' white garments. She never complained but instead gave thanks for the chance to serve her Father in heaven. She had a servant's heart.

We watched and we learned that God's house is a house of order and that we must always praise and honor his house and his servants here on earth.

Throughout the years Mom went on to do many things in her life. She never lost sight of her top priorities which included to always be there for her family, friends, neighbors and fellow co-workers. Her faith brought us to church each and every Sunday to sit together as a family and praise God as we raised our voices in song.

While she was still able there was never a funeral where she would not send her famous chicken mole or big bags of *pan dulce* to comfort and feed those who came to mourn.

Here we are reminded of the scripture that says;

'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink'...Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?...'Truly I tell you, just

as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Matthew 25:35, 37, 40

Hope, and Faith...

Mother encouraged us to continue our educations to strive for the high standards and work towards equity for all. She encouraged to be a voice for the voiceless and to stand up for those who have less as well as for those who are unable to help themselves. She also taught her children the fear of God and the power of humble and heartfelt prayer and fasting.

Upon reflection I know the hardest job of all was watching as Dad wasted away with Alzheimer's. It took the life and light right out of her as well. When he passed away a big part of her died too. But she held fast to her faith and entrusted dad to God for she knew he would not forsake her or him if they but would endure to the end.

"Unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.... Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end,...ye shall have eternal life" (2 Ne. 31:16, 20).

We watched and learned that a true love endures to the end and is eternal and binding both here on earth as it is in heaven.

Dear friends and family today I testify that we know without a shadow of a doubt that Mom and Dad are now joined in Heaven as they were on earth. Today we celebrate and acknowledge an enduring and lasting relationship based on Love, Faith, hope and charity. We celebrate with joy and count the blessing and honor of saying **yes** we are children and descendents of Beatrice and Casimiro Lopez.

Padres ejemplares y adorados.

Today we also want to acknowledge and give praise and heartfelt thanks to our dear sister Ana who so lovingly cared for our dear mom during the last stages of

her life. She exemplifies all that mother taught us and for that we are truly grateful. Anita, God has a special place in his celestial mansions for you. Words alone can never repay you for all your sacrifice and devotion. Even though we all worked devotedly to keep mom happy and healthy each in our own way, but when all was said and done it was Ana who slept by mom's side and comforted her while she slept.

We are also gathered here to say ADIOS and Yes, *Hasta Pronto* to a devoted and loving daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, great-great grandmother, true and trusted friend, thoughtful neighbor and *beloved Tía*.

We also want to thank you all for coming today. Some of you are dear neighbors and friends and some of you are family who have traveled far to accompany us today. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We know you are here because our sweet mother played a small role in your lives as well and, that maybe you learned as you watched her live a life full of faith, hope, love, charity, patience, devotion, courage, humility, and loyalty and longsuffering.

On behalf of all of us the Lopez-Avila-Munoz family we thank you from the bottom of our hearts and invite you to accompany us to the cemetery where mom's mortal remains will be entrusted to mother earth.

I leave these words and loving tributes with you today in the name of our beloved brother Jesus Christ amen.