



Victoria A. Lopez

March 6, 1921 - July 27, 2012

Victoria A.(Molly) Lopez

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Molly Lopez was born at Aurora, Illinois, March 6, 1921, She passed away to the spirit world to rejoin her relatives and friends. She is the last Montecito matriarch of the old families at “Spanish Town”, Montecito, CA.

As a young girl growing up in Aurora, Illinois, she spoke three languages, German, English and Spanish, which was a springboard of her personnel survival.

During the Great Depression, Mollies’ family, because of her families Mexican background, relocated from Illinois to Paradise, Mexico. Mollie and her sister went to Colorado and then to Oxnard to live with her Aunt. The outbreak of the Second World War created a need for the USA to find a suitable Naval base here on the Central Coast, in preparation for a possible Japanese invasion. As a result, many women were recruited to work for Uncle Sam. So Molly went to work at one of the busiest bases on the West Coast, Port Hueneme, Ca. Because Point Mugu was not yet a sophisticated base as it is now, the Hueneme Naval Base was busy because of the need to repair of many types of Navy vessels.

Women like Molly were put to the test. As she explained to me “ They gathered us all together and welcomed us by describing in detail the enormous mountain high piles of bolts, nuts, and washers, some as large as a

small kitchen Pots! These huge piles needed to be moved in order to later be fitted and arranged to prepare for repairing battered Naval vessels. All women were tested in the yards and the ones that failed were no longer to be seen. They were sent home. After the introduction, these tough women performed, rising up to the call of country and duty, on 24 hour call, from 2:00 am. to 10 or 11 p.m.

They tirelessly worked to repair vessels. And if needed, be on call again for weeks on end, they adjusted their lives and families to the demand of a fighting a war, Port- Hueneme style.

The women painted, riveted, cut, welded, and cleaned many a vessels to prepare them for our fighting boys in the Pacific Theater. They were a proud group of women; from the kitchens to the docks they performed their assignments admirably. Yet when the Sea Bees returned at the ending of the War, many of these “Rosy the Riveters” (Rosita in Mollies case) were transferred to the Mess Halls and in turn, to the kitchens where they were put to another test: to feed the boys on base, from 200 to 300 men (and women) at Hueneme. At that time the base was a transfer point where many a sailor saw California by night and then all of the sudden, they were sent to San Diego or San Francisco for another war assignment, on a war-bound vessel. During this experience Molly caught the eye of an up and coming Fire inspector from Mugu Fire Department, overseeing fire prevention and operations at both Pt. Mugu and Hueneme. Molly was courted and soon married. She was a “looker” for out of all the women at the base, Molly caught my father’s eye.

From the base and the small community of Oxnard, Molly left her sister and relatives to move to Montecito, Ca. , where she would live for some 75 years, raising four children.

Raising a family in Montecito was no easy task. Living in one of the of the most expensive areas of the United States, the challenges of sending her kids to public school and dealing with the social climate was challenging. Her children all attended public schools, she actively supported her children in a

variety of ways, including sports, dances and her own Mexican and now Chumash culture.

At the time, bilingual education was in its infant stage, in the context of changing consciousness due to the social movements, civil rights, boycotts, UWOC, and the like. Molly started working at Lincoln and Franklin schools as a teachers aide in bilingual education classes. She would participate in the developing of Spanish as a second language, as well as creating such care and warmth with the children, that to this day many community social and political leaders recognize and benefited from Molly's contribution.

Her love for children did not just translate to the children at Lincoln or Franklin school.

She also was much involved with the Union Civica Mexicana (UCM), a Mexican –American social club for the uplifting and promoting of Mexican Culture. The UCM lasted for many years and developed a series of activities to promote Mexican Culture in Santa Barbara. The most prevalent activity was the selling of tamales at the Fiesta in the Mercado in front of the City Hall. Every Fiesta Molly would dress up to sell tamales with her other comadres and stay up way into the night, until my Dad would come to pick her up. This benefit would assist the UCM in scholarships for students toward their education and books, etc. Also, Molly was an active participant of the Mexican Garden Club which assisted many park and private agencies in beautifying Santa Barbara, as well as winning many awards for their flower arrangements in many local shows. The members needed not only a pretty face, but also to have the knowledge of plants and how to grow them. Mollys' garden at her home in Montecito was a testament to her knowledge and love of plants, as she had a green thumb and a wonderfully astonishing colorful garden. Molly also belonged to the Women's Club based in Rock Nook Park. She pioneered her way into an all-white established group, quietly breaking barriers. She enjoyed the activities there, but was always yearning for her home in Montecito.

Her lifetime companion and husband, Victor O. Lopez, was a well established Chumash Elder and they were always surrounding themselves with cultural activities of both Chumash and Mexicans. Never was there a moment when people visited the little casitas in Spanish Town where Molly would take on celebrity status for her salsa and wonderful cuisine of Mexican and American dishes. Relatives and friends would often want to come over just to enjoy the culinary magnificence of her offerings of food, her medicine.

When her husband Victor died, she did not end her activity in the Chumash world, but always supported her family's cultural ties and community involvement. Just recently, her contribution to the Syuxtun Mural project and the Annual Tomol crossing and repair of the Tomols was part of keeping her spirit alive . In spite of concern about Molly's age and ability to participate, due to limitations of motion, she blessed many people by her interest and presence.

Molly's main sustainable spiritual life was the Church, Mt. Carmel. She regularly arranged the candles for many years and walked over everyday (even in the rain) to arrange the alters of flowers and candles. Many young people and other individuals knew Molly and she, when possible, always appeared in church being the loudest and ever present saying the prayers. She would, toward the end of her life be visited by Sister Pauline and other people from the Church as she received the spirit of communion everyday. At the end of her ability to hear, she would pray in her own beat and style because she wanted God to hear her. Her devotion to the Rosary was her constant companion, with the Rosary in her hand or next to her bed. Her special spirits that looked after her were her Santa Niño and or Lady of Guadalupe, which had a special place in her heart and soul and in her own personnel history.

And yes, God did hear her. She lived a long life, full of adventure and concern for her family. Molly was the Matriarch of the Ruelas family and in Montecito, the matriarch of the Lopez family, which made her head of one of the oldest families in the entire region of Santa Barbara.

Molly outlived many of her friends but now she joins them in peace. Her children Alma, Larry and Marcus survive her, preceded by her husband Victor and daughter Flora. Molly leaves her grandsons, Marcus Victor, Chimaway and Casmali. Along with her sister Tiburcia Ruelas and brother Lorenzo Ruelas and many relatives living in Oxnard and Southern California, young and old, who once knew of this wonderful strong spirited women; she will be missed and undoubtedly not forgotten. Molly was a reflection of her time and demonstrated the need to grasp that as one comes closer to the impermanence of life, we need to live in peace. My family and friends. Molly is indeed resting in peace.

Viewing & Rosary

August 1st. (Wed.)

Viewing begins at 1:00 pm.

Rosary at 7:00 pm. at the Welch-Ryce-Haider Chapels

15 Sola St., Santa Barbara, Ca.93101

Mass/Funeral

August 2nd (Thursday), at 9:00 am. at Mt. Carmel Church,
1300 E.Valley Rd. Montecito, Ca. 93108.

Following there will be a reception.

Cemetery Details

Santa Barbara Cemetery

901 Channel Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
(805) 969-3231

Previous Events

Viewing

AUG 1. 1:00 PM - 7:00 PM (PT)

Welch-Ryce-Haider - Downtown
15 E. Sola St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 965-5145
info@wrhsb.com
<https://www.wrhsb.com>

Rosary

AUG 1. 7:00 PM (PT)

Welch-Ryce-Haider - Downtown
15 E. Sola St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 965-5145
info@wrhsb.com
<https://www.wrhsb.com>

Funeral Mass

AUG 2. 9:00 AM (PT)

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church
1300 East Valley Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
(805) 969-6868
<http://www.olmc-montecito.com>

Tribute Wall

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“ Aunt Molly was my grandmother Vicky's sister and I remember visiting with her as a child. As an adult my last memory was visiting her for a small family gathering in her garden with my uncles and some of my cousins. It was great to see my godfather Marcus and to meet Chimaway and Casmali. My regret is not having kept in touch. My condolences to the family. My heart goes out to all of you.



Love
Lupita Hernandez

Guadalupe Hernandez - July 30, 2012 at 12:57 PM

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To Marcus and Family: You are all in my prayers and I will pray for Victoria to have a safe journey. Kiwa'nan, Alan Salazar

Alan Salazar - August 01, 2012 at 11:50 AM