

## Arguello, Alfredo and Donaciana

Submitted by Cecelia Arguello Garrett with special help from Maryann Arguello de Herrera

In 1943 my mother gave birth at home to her eleventh child in a farmhouse on Route 2 south of Longmont. The rest of her children were all born in Colorado, at home, except the thirteenth (and last) child, who was born in a hospital. My father died one month before his thirteenth child was born, leaving my mother to raise twelve children by herself (the twelfth child was stillborn). This remarkable woman never remarried, never worked outside the home, and took care of her bedridden mother, Maria Garcia, for several years after Maria suffered a paralyzing stroke.

My mother was Donaciana Vela Arguello, and she was born September 6, 1908 in Chihuahua, Mexico. She crossed the Rio Grande into the United States in 1918 with her mother, Maria Garcia Vela, and a niece who had been left in Maria's care. They left Mexico to escape the war-torn turmoil that prevailed at that time.

My father was Alfredo Arguello and was born in March 1900 in Michoacán, Mexico. He crossed the Rio Grande into the United States in 1916 with two brothers, two sisters, and their mother, Sabina Huerta Arguello.

Alfredo and "Dona" met in the Trinidad/Walsenburg, Colorado area and also married there on July 17, 1927. They traveled north, working the fields in the summer and, in the winter, my father worked the coal mines in the Monarch, Delta, Eastlake, Erie, and Louisville, Colorado areas.

My father had visions of returning to Mexico with his entire family, but my mother steadfastly resisted. She had never forgotten the poverty and danger in Mexico.

There was a black-and-white ceramic piggy bank in which my father was saving money to buy a house someday. When he died from complications of diabetes and tuberculosis, there was enough money to buy a house for \$500 on Marshall Place in east Longmont. The house only

had two rooms and a basement (more like a fruit cellar). It had an outside toilet, and the kitchen was housed in a building separate from the house. My paternal grandmother also lived in this separate building. Up until this time, we had lived in housing provided by the farmers or mine companies that employed my father. Later the house was remodeled (mostly by donated labor from Mike Rodriguez and his brother-in-law, Pedro Mendez) to include a large kitchen, back porch, small bedroom, and an indoor toilet.

We survived with the State program of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). My mother always paid the bills first, and we ate on what money was left. In those days, storekeepers extended credit to trustworthy families, and my mother depended on that to get us through the last few days until the next check arrived. For many years she had a credit account at the little Anderson Grocery on Fifth Avenue and the Fred Harsch Lumber Company on Main Street.

My siblings from the fifth one on down became lifelong friends with the children of another large family that lived across the street, the Napoleon and Nellie Martinez family. To this day, some of us remain friends and stay informed on the lives of each other's siblings.

Faith played a big part in my mother's raising her twelve children. She saw to it that we attended Friday night novena (it was awful trying to stay awake) and Sunday mass. Christmas Eve we always made tamales and, while they were cooking, we would pray the rosary. After the rosary was prayed, Mother would pass around the ceramic Christ Child to receive a kiss from each one in attendance. Then she would lay the Child in the manger. (Until then the Child had been sitting up in a little chair that my mother had made.) This signified that the Christ Child was born, as by then it was a few minutes after midnight and Christmas day. Then we would enjoy the tamales.

My mother had a natural green thumb and grew beautiful flowers from seeds she had harvested the year before. She also grew corn and other vegetables that would feed her family

through summer and beyond with what she canned. She also raised chickens for the eggs and meat.

Once the hollyhocks bloomed in the spring, we younger kids helped our mother every day to cut the flowers and bring them inside to adorn the edges of the “altar” (it was a dresser, really) which held her statues and religious items. To this day, when I smell the hollyhocks in my own yard, I am transported back to those days of my childhood.

When the grandchildren started coming, every Easter would find the whole family at an egg hunt in my mother’s yard or at the Collyer Park in Longmont. We also had family gatherings on every holiday. Our family has always been and remains very close.

In the early 1970s my mother studied for, and passed, the United States citizenship test. We all were very proud of her. Mrs. Christine Evans from the St. Vrain Service Center helped her very much to accomplish this goal.

[ P H O T O ]

Arguello family 1968. Back row, left to right: Maryann, Archie, Bernie, Ted, Fred, Mark, Rose; front row, left to right: Phyllis, Jennie, Lucy, Dona, Cecelia, Carol.



Alfredo and Dona's children, in chronological order, are as follows: Bernardo ("Bernie"), Teodoro ("Ted"—deceased), Carolina ("Carol"), Felicitas ("Phyllis"—deceased), twins Narcisso ("Archie") and Juana ("Jennie"—deceased), Marcos ("Mark"—deceased), Rosalia ("Rose"), Luisa ("Lucy"), Cecelia ("Cheila"), Mariana ("Maryann"), Peter (deceased), and Alfredo, Jr. ("Fred").

Spouses: Bernie: Soveida Cordova, Green River, Wyoming; Ted: Frances Perez, Longmont; Carol: Delbert Parrish, Longmont; Phyllis: Gilbert Mendez, Longmont; Jennie: Patrick Vigil, Longmont; Archie: Dorothy Herrera, Longmont; Mark: Donella Martinez, Longmont; Rose: Nicholas Padilla, Los Angeles, California; Lucy's significant other: John Cortez, Longmont; Cecelia: Garlyn Garrett, Longmont; Maryann: Fred de Herrera, Longmont; Fred: Jeri Jolly, Klamath Falls, Oregon; Sharon Claire, Indiana; Jan Kamies, Iowa.

All live(d) in the Longmont/Denver area, except Bernie in Green River, Wyoming, and Fred in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Rose, Fred, and I graduated from Longmont High School. I also graduated from business college with an Associate's Degree, working in and retiring from the healthcare field.

Fred dedicated his life to the military, making his career with and retiring from the United States Air Force. He served in Viet Nam and, during his military career, was stationed many places in the world, including Germany and England.

Bernie and Ted served in the United States Army during the Korean Conflict. Bernie was on the front line and experienced a lot of action. On discharge he came home with "battle fatigue"—nightmares that haunted him for many years. Ted drove the Army trucks and kept them running.

Of the grandchildren, Bernie's son, Bernie, Jr., and Jennie's son, Ben, served in the United States Marines. Phyllis' son, Michael, served in the Air Force. Jennie's son, Christopher, served in the Army.

I am proud of my two daughters and all of my nieces and nephews. I am particularly proud of Rosalie's daughter, Anita, who is CEO of her own mortgage company that she started up several years ago.

My family is in possession of a document personally autographed by Pope Pius XII to my grandmother, Maria Garcia Vela, for her devotion to the Catholic Church. It was one of her most prized possessions. The document was obtained for my grandmother by Father James Mahrer of St. John's Church when he visited the Vatican in the mid-50s.

My father died in February 1946 and is buried in Boulder. My mother died on her seventy-first birthday, September 6, 1979. She is buried in the Foothills Garden of Memory in Longmont.

Besides their eight surviving children, other descendants of Alfredo and Dona include (as nearly as we could figure) forty-three grandchildren, sixty-four great-grandchildren, and nineteen great-great-grandchildren.