



Maria Celia Villarreal

April 27, 1931 - August 13, 2022

(Arlington, Texas)—Mrs. Celia G. Villarreal, 91, of Rio Grande City, Texas, passed away peacefully on August 13, 2022, in Arlington, Texas, at the home of her beloved daughter, Rosie. This is where Celia spent her final years surrounded by her extended Arlington family branch which also included her grandson, his wife and her three youngest great-grandsons to whom she was devoted.

Maria Celia (known to all simply as “Celia”) Garza was born at home on April 27, 1931, to Mr. Hernan R. Garza and Mrs. Hermenegilda “Hila” Lopez Garza, a prominent pioneer business family in Rio Grande City, Texas. She attended local Starr County schools.

Early in her life, her parents realized she had an acumen for numbers and as a teen was given the responsibility of running the ticket booth at the family’s “Teatro Mexico”, the venue that hosted live performances by Pedro Infante, Pedro Armendariz and many famous Mexican actors and singers of the 1940’s and 1950’s. On January 13, 1948, she married Rene Villarreal, a young man from Rio Grande City, Texas and they soon started a family. Celia juggled motherhood with her work and though not easy, she did it well. Her grace and ease with people (along with her strong work ethic) led her to other jobs. She helped manage (along with her sister, Concha Gavilan) the community favorite H&H Drive-In Theatre. Celia was employed as a sales associate at the original “Valley Mart” in Rio Grande City. At Valley Mart, her acumen for keeping accounts, knowing what the customers liked and her

friendliness and integrity saw her selling fine jewelry and exclusive perfumes. She fostered and generated steady growth in that department at the Valley Mart for many years.

When she left Valley Mart, Celia decided that it was time to start her own business. She presented her idea to Rene, her husband, who came on board for support. They came up with a plan and got to work on manifesting that dream. In a short time, the building was constructed and “The Country Store” was officially opened. The Country Store became a bustling convenience store that kept her busy from dawn till closing every day. Instead of complaining at the long hours, Celia said that she didn’t mind because it was her “very own store”. And it was! She stocked shelves, waited on customers, kept the accounts, and cleaned up, too. Rene helped when he had time from his own busy schedule, but he was always there for Celia if needed. Her drive, enthusiasm and her superb customer service brought much well-deserved success. After the store enjoyed its great run for two decades, it was decided to close its doors. Celia contemplated taking it easy as she was already in her early sixties. That lasted only for a bit. Celia greeted all her customers with the same smile and good service that had been her trademark throughout her life. She knew she wanted to keep working and felt she wasn’t ready to retire. At age 61, Celia began working with developmentally disabled children at Fort Ringgold middle school. She learned, in her golden years, that she had a gift for reaching the hearts of these children with her patience, compassion and love. She often remarked that it was “the best job” she ever had. Celia was 72 years young when she left that position. She left to care for her ailing husband, Rene, until his death.

Celia was a skilled businesswoman, an entrepreneur, a loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Her last weeks were spent listening to her favorite music by Pedro Infante and Javier Solis. Celia possessed a kind heart and a generous spirit and became a successful businesswoman at a time when women were often discouraged from such ventures. Her legacy will live on in the family that she raised and loved with all her heart.

Celia was preceded in death by her husband, Rene Villarreal and her eldest son, Raul Ruben Villarreal and by her siblings: Hernan Ernesto Garza, Concepcion (Concha) Garza Gavilan, Hernan Regino Garza, Jr., Hortencia (Tencha) Garza Pena, and Alicia Garza Rosa.

Celia is also survived by her daughter, Rosie V. Wilson, her grandson, Bruce Dustin Wilson (Lezley Stiff) and great-grandchildren, Levi, Aiden, and Rhett all of Arlington, Texas; and her son, Rene Guadalupe (Pito) Villarreal (Cynthia Casas) and grandchildren, Michael and Matthew Villarreal and Reanna and Romeo Reyna; her youngest sister, Rebecca (Becky) Canales, dear cousin that she raised from childhood, Olivia (Bibi) Lopez Rivera (Jose Luis) and her granddaughter, Veronica Rivera Cox (Luke); her daughter-in-law, Elina Clark (Mrs. Ruben Raul) Villarreal, grandchildren Lucinda (Lucy) Villarreal (Pete Martinez) and Dylon Villarreal; and great-grandchildren, Pedro and Ruben Martinez, Zyruss Villarreal and Mark Anthony Villarreal (Christina Orano). All are from the Rio Grande Valley. The family is most grateful to Mrs Dani Martinez (CNA) of Arlington, Texas for her wonderful hospice care and her great help in making Celia's last two years comfortable and happy.

Arrangements at her passing were made by the Guerrero-Dean Funeral Home in Grand Prairie, Texas. In lieu of a funeral, Celia's life will be celebrated in September at a private family gathering in Rio Grande City, Texas. The family would like to thank all those who were kind enough to share their memories and condolences.

Tribute Wall



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Guerrero - Dean Funeral Home - August 16, 2022 at 03:15 PM