

# Insider NARRATIVES



Presented by the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project Issue No. 2, Spring 2005

## Spreading the Knowledge



A poster featuring Carmen Bozak in a series of educational materials targeted toward fourth through sixth grades.

The U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project is growing once again! In addition to the Project's newspaper, website and newsletter, **EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS** are now currently under development, which will share the remarkable stories of the WWII generation with a very special audience: children.

In recognition of September/October's Hispanic Heritage Month, the WWII Project is developing bilingual educational materials for school age children, that will include posters featuring photos of men and women of the WWII generation and quotes from their interviews, as well as an educational guide for teachers which will engage students in activities related to topics including: women's work in wartime jobs on the home front; the various positions Latinos held in military service; Mexican nationals in the U.S. armed forces; letters written between

families and sons and daughters over seas; use of Spanish language; and military honors bestowed upon Latinos and Latinas.

Austin I.S.D. fifth grade history teacher, Diana Garcia, is working with the Project on this initiative.

"I chose to help out with this project because all students need to know how Hispanics contributed to the WWII efforts and how they overcame obstacles such as discrimination, poverty, and limited opportunities in education to reach their goals of making a better life for themselves and their community," Ms. Garcia said. "When I got to college and enrolled in Chicano literature and Mexican American studies classes, then I learned that Latinos and Latinas could write, think, be leaders. I want my students knowing that now! I want them to be proud of their cultural roots, and I want them to be open-minded, tolerant, and respectful of others because it took all sorts of diverse humans to make America the amazing country it is today."

Ms. Garcia is dedicated to teaching children about the historical experiences and contributions of U.S. Latinos and Latinas. She is developing activities that will engage students and teachers in learning about the WWII generation and what it was like to be a Latino during that era—both at war and on the home front. Children will also learn about the process that the WWII Project goes through in its collecting of oral histories, how to do oral histories with their own family members, and best preservation practices of photos and other family heirlooms.

These introductory educational materials are being developed for 5th grade students, taking into consideration the fifth grade Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) requirement that address U.S. History. The educational materials will be available to teachers as well as the general public and adaptable for home and home school use.

For more information please contact Brenda Sendejo at 512-471-1924  
or by email at [latinoarchives@www.utexas.edu](mailto:latinoarchives@www.utexas.edu)

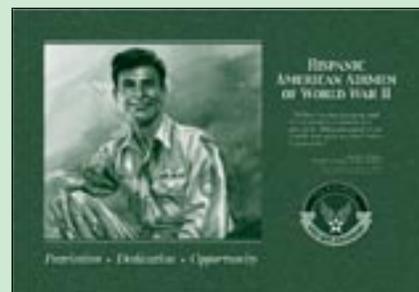
## AIRFORCE EXHIBIT

The Air Force History and Museums Program has designed two exhibits for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the end of World War II using photographs and information from our projects' collection.

The first exhibit will be in San Antonio on Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Villita Assembly Building. For more information, please visit <http://www.60wwii.mil>. The second event will be held in Washington, D.C. in May.

Materials, such as the handout (below/above), will be distributed at air shows and Hispanic Heritage Month events sponsored by Air Force organizations across the nation this year.

The Air Force WWII 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary website will contain links to photos from our project, as well as commemorative materials, so be sure to check back at <http://www.af.mil> for updates!



Air Force History and Museums  
Program handbill, front and back.

# Insider NARRATIVES

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I have enclosed a donation of \$10 cash, a money order, or a check for the quarterly Narratives Insider newsletter. (Donations are tax deductible. We are recognized as a 170C-1 Tax-Exempt Organization.)

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### or donate online, see next column.

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## IN HONOR OF A LOVED ONE

You can now make a donation online. (Donations are tax deductible. We are recognized as a 170C-1 Tax-Exempt Organization.) From the left-hand side of the UT main webpage: [www.utexas.edu](http://www.utexas.edu), choose "Support UT: Make a Gift Online" and follow the instructions. Be sure to select "Communications, College of" when asked to "select an area." When you do select "Communications, College of," you will get a drop-down menu with the name of the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project. For further assistance, please call our office at (512) 471-1924.

## VOLUNTEER!

You can still interview a loved one, or send us info about a person who has passed on. We have training materials for both conducting interviews and compiling tributes. You may find the materials on our website (web address in top bar). If you would like a hard copy of our training manual and training video, please send us \$10 to cover duplication and postage.

Phone: (512) 471.1924 e-mail: [latinoarchives@www.utexas.edu](mailto:latinoarchives@www.utexas.edu)

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# ★ Volunteer Spotlights

Project Web site: [www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives](http://www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives)

## IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

- Steps to compiling and correcting stories for the book, *Mexican Americans & World War II*.
- Volunteer spotlight on one of the *Narratives* photographers, Carlos Rios.

## Richard Brito [Military Fact Checker]



**Birth date:** June 15, 1944

**Birth place:** Mexico City, Mexico (My grandparents were from Spain and Portugal and came to the United States in the early 1900s. My father grew up in Saint Louis, MO, and as an adult, went to work for Pan American Airlines. Since he spoke Spanish, he was transferred to Mexico City where I was born. When I was 9 months old, he was transferred

to Brownsville, Tex.)

**Residence:** Austin

**Occupation:** Vietnam Veteran. Retired after 30 years in military serving both on active duty and activities with the Texas Army National Guard activities. I currently enjoy playing golf, reading, and my grandkids.

**How did you learn about the project?**

I first learned of your project while reading an article in the Austin American-Statesman (in 2000).

**Why are you interested in the project?**

As a young teenager, I developed a keen interest in WWII and read everything I could on the subject. This interest continued for at least 40 years where I read no less than 50 non-fiction books per year.

**How do you do your job?**

My approach to fact checking is to ensure that the text is creditable to someone with a military background. We are fortunate to have Bill Davies who complements my efforts by being able to access a database with specific dates/locations/units/etc.

**What are some of the most common mistakes you've found?**

A lack of specifics.

**Why do you continue to do this?**

I do it because I feel I am contributing to something meaningful, and I get a great deal of satisfaction that my years of study have resulted in something worthwhile.

## Bill Davies [Military Fact Checker]



**Birth date:** April 24, 1943

**Birth place:** Sacramento, CA

**Residence:** Sacramento

**Occupation:** Retired, Librarian, Military history research

**Activities:** Above as a vocation, travel, grandkids.

**How did you learn about the project?**

Email and personal contact regarding the project and my WWII Veterans' Oral History Program (at California Military Museum).

**Why were you interested in the project?**

I want to improve the military history information generated by the programs.

**You've now reviewed and corrected hundreds and hundreds of stories for the project. Any idea how many hours you've spent on it?**

I would guess something like 500. On average, about an hour each.

**How do you do it?**

Searching CMM Library printed resources, searching the WWW, particularly HyperWar, for other pieces of information.

**Why do you keep doing it?**

I think I am helping getting more information and improving the accuracy of it.

**What do you enjoy about doing it?**

It is intellectually stimulating, and I learn information everytime I have to search some questionable factoid.

## RECENT INTERVIEWS

### Arizona

Servin, Ignacio

### California

Carrasco, Abner  
Casso, Thomas  
Cervantes, Henry  
Fernandez, Randel  
Jaime, Carols  
Nevarez, Joe  
Reyes, Adolfo

### New Mexico

Abalos, Carmen  
Aguilera, Josephine  
Hoguin, Arturo  
Madero, Dora  
Milan, Alberto  
Sierra, Juana  
Tafoya, Elena  
Wood, William

### Puerto Rico

Amoros Santiago, Joaquin

### Texas

Aleman, Moses  
Flores, Belisario  
Fuentes, Leonard  
Guerra, Elena  
Guerra, Henry  
Guerra, Juventino  
Hernandez, Ezequiel  
Hernandez, Joe  
Juarez, Rafaela  
Long, Teresa Lozano  
Matta, Alfonso  
Navarro, Wilfred  
Ortiz, Elena  
Ortiz, Richard  
Pena, Carlos  
Perez, Pedro  
Pina, Jose  
Quintana, Bernarda  
Rede, Alberto  
Rodriguez, Anastacio  
Salazar, Epifanio Jr.  
Sandoval, Noe  
Soto, Felix Sr.  
Shank, Alice  
Torres, Maria  
Torres, Gilberto

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Luna, William G.  
Marin, Christine  
Martinez, Trinidad  
Murillo, Mary O.  
Peniche, Edward  
Ramirez, Calixto R.  
Reyes, Juan  
Rivera, Omar  
Tamez, Lydia J.  
Tovar, Rudolph S.



# ★Featured Interviews

Project Web site: [www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives](http://www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives)

**The following are a few of the stories we have collected since the last Narrative newspaper. Read all about Latinos serving as jet fighter pilots, mine workers and Braceros during WWII.**

## **Randel Zepeda Fernandez**

Date of Birth: May 21, 1924  
Birthplace: Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico

Randel Zepeda Fernandez joined the Armed Forces to become a U.S. citizen. In March 1943 he joined the Army and served the 315th Infantry Regiment 79th Division. He fought the Battle of the Bulge, took part in crossing the Rhine and liberated several concentration camps.

“There were times when there were bullets going by six inches from my head,” said Mr Fernandez, who made it out of WWII without any significant injuries, “I was just happy to be alive.”

With the help of the G.I. Bill, Mr. Fernandez attended a technical school to study design and tailoring. He soon bought his own business, Randy’s Tailor and Cleaners, in Los Angeles and kept it for 15 years. Even though he is retired, faithful customers still seek him out at his home.



## **Dora Gutierrez Madero**

Date of Birth: July 11, 1926  
Birthplace: Silver City, New Mexico

Dora Madero worked in the Kennecott mine in Santa Rita during WWII. Her jobs included greasing the switches so trains could safely pick up copper, taking water to women throughout the mine, checking the rail lines to make sure they were working and keeping track of records in an office.

The women workers—most of whom were Mexican-American, as well as Native Americans, had to deal with discrimination while they endured the hard physical demands of the job. Mrs. Madero remembers a foreman predict the women wouldn’t last through the first winter.

After 2\_ years of working in the mine, the war ended and the men from the region returned. Working in the mines during the war was hard work, but predictions were proved wrong.

“Every woman stayed there,” said Mrs. Madero.



## **Joe Nevarez**

Date of birth: Jan. 6, 1912  
Birthplace: Tepehvanes, Durango, Mexico

Joe Nevarez was born in Mexico and brought to El Paso when he was three months old. He attended journalism trade school and was hired as a copy boy for the L.A. Times in 1930.

When he was 31, he was drafted into the Army Air Corps and assigned to Sheppard Field in Wichita Falls, Texas. During his three years there, Mr. Nevarez did clerical work and wrote a monthly report for the Air Base Newspaper. He was then shipped to a base in the Azores Islands in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, for a year.

After the war, Mr. Nevarez redeemed his old reporting job, working primarily in the Business Section and retiring at 65. He helped found the California Chicano News Media Association and was a long-standing member in the American Legion.





**Carmen Esqueda Abalos**  
Date of Birth: May 16, 1920  
Birthplace: Morenci, Arizona

Carmen Esqueda Abalos was no stranger to hard labor when WWII began and she was hired at the Kennecott mine in Santa Rita, N.M. Her husband was overseas in the Navy when she began working in carpentry.

Before getting married in 1941, Mrs. Abalos worked in the fields and later as a housekeeper. Working at the mine was difficult not only physically, but emotionally as well since discrimination was rampant. Mexican Americans had separate entrances to the mine and separate lines to receive paychecks. The town was also separated by the railroad tracks into an Anglo and Mexican American side.

Mr. and Mrs. Abalos had a total of five children and she continued to work hard crossing boundaries. Today she is involved with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Disabled American Veterans organization.



**Henry Cervantes**  
Date of birth: Oct. 10, 1923  
Birthplace: Fresno, California

Lt. Col. Hank Cervantes and his siblings grew up working in California's farm fields. When he was eight, his teacher gave him a birthday card with the inscription, "Dream your dreams upon a star, dream them high and dream them far..." The words planted the seeds of flight.

It was a demanding commitment being the only Mexican-American pilot, but he persevered and went on to fly 26 B-17 combat missions with the Pilot 100th Bomb Group. His military decorations include the Airman's Medal, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the USAF Commendation Medal.

Mr. Cervantes is the author of *Piloto: Migrant Worker to Jet Pilot*. Today he continues to serve his community by giving motivational talks to Los Angeles schools and heading various personnel boards for the city.



**Ignacio Servin**  
Date of Birth: March 4, 1922  
Birthplace: Miami, Florida

Ignacio Servin and his friend Charles Samario were the only two of their company to volunteer to climb into a tunnel in Peleliu, Japan to destroy ammunition supplies. They both crawled out with their mission accomplished.

After the war, Mr. Servin's bravery was overlooked. His daughter urged him to share his story with Arizona Sen. McCain's office. In 2003, with the help of organizations such as the Hispanic War Veterans of America and individuals, including Frank Vela—the man who had given Mr. Servin his Browning Automatic Rifle before the mission, he was finally able to provide enough information to be awarded the Silver Star.

Mr. Servin married Maria Magdalena in 1946 and they had three children. Having grown up working in the cotton fields during the Depression, Mr. Servin wanted a better life for his children so he always emphasized the importance education.

# Steps to Interviewing



## Ezequiel Hernandez

Date of birth: April 18, 1924

Birthplace: Mackay, Texas

Son of a Mexican Revolution veteran, Ezequiel Hernandez grew up on a ranch in Mackay, Texas, helping his father in the fields.

At age 18, he followed his older three brothers into the military and enlisted in the Army Armed Forces. For three years, he trained troops within the U.S. until he was shipped to Normandy, France in 1945 where he mostly guarded German prisoners of war.

“We didn’t do too much,” he said, “I remember we played a lot of baseball.”

Mr. Hernandez used the G.I. Bill to become an auto mechanic and served a second time in the Korean War. Since his final discharge, Mr. Hernandez has worked in upholstery, ran a Texaco station and started an auto safety inspection business. He currently lives in Houston where he cares for his wife, an Alzheimer’s patient.

The interview is the heart and soul of our project. Due to limited resources, people who approach us with the name of a potential interviewee are encouraged to conduct the interview themselves, using guidelines available on our website. Our suggested question guideline was developed from work done in group interviews in San Antonio and Los Angeles. The following section will give you a quick understanding for conducting an interview.

## Before the Interview

To conduct the interview you will need a dependable video camera, an external microphone that will help you capture good sound from the interview subject, a tripod for the video camera, high-quality tape, and optional 35mm camera to take a current photo.

We recommend meeting with the subject to fill out the pre-interview form, available online, before the actual interview. It’s especially recommended that you do some homework beforehand. If the subject served in the Pacific, read a bit and understand the basics of the Pacific Theater.

## The Interview

For the interview session, try to conduct it in the subject’s home, so they’ll be most comfortable. Your most important responsibility, aside from recording properly, is to ask the questions, listen intently and ask the follow-up questions that will inevitably be needed. A question guideline is provided online.

Tailor the interview to your subject’s experiences: a Mexican American who was in the South Pacific will be interviewed very differently than a woman who worked at an airbase, etc. In general, we’re looking for their stories, with as much specific detail, about what life was like before, during and after WWII.

Please get them to talk about their own experiences as much as possible, and get detail as rich as they can recall—rather than say they missed their mother’s cooking, ask what dishes Mama cooked, what ingredients she used, etc. Let them show, on camera, their medals and explain what they got them for.

## Post-Interview

At the conclusion of the interview, let the subject know that we will be sending him/her a VHS copy of their interview, as well as a copy of a story written by a student journalist. They will have a chance to read the story we have written before it is published.

Please be sure the following materials are sent to us: the signed release form, the video tapes (labeled clearly with the subject’s name and date of interview), a completed pre-interview form and lastly, any photographs or any other paper memorabilia your subject might be willing to share with the project. The ideal is to have a photograph of them from those war years, as well as a current photograph. We will return the photographs to them as soon as we scan them into the archive.

For the complete interview training guide, refer to our website at <http://www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives> and follow the “Training Mat.” link.



Manuel Castillo with his WWII memorabilia after an interview at his home in Austin, TX. (Photo by Valentino Mauricio, Spring 2005)