

HONORING HISPANIC LEADERSHIP

Velia Yolanda De Leon Garcia, an educator 1905 to November 29, 2009



CORPUS CHRISTI — Velia Yolanda De Leon Garcia, an educator and wife of Dr. Xico P. Garcia, died Monday, November 23, 2009 at a Plano hospital. She was 79.

She had been a teacher at Colegio Columbia and a dean at the University of the Americas in Mexico. She also had been the executive manager of her husband's medical practice in Corpus Christi. She was known for being devoted to learning languages, reading and writing poetry. She also loved playing her piano and dancing.

Her husband was a local family practitioner and a former commander of the Founder's Chapter of the American GI Forum, an organization founded by his brother Dr. Hector P. Garcia. She is survived by her children, Yolette A. Garcia and Xico R. "Bobby" Garcia, both of Dallas; a brother, Jose R. De Leon of Corpus Christi; two sisters, Zaida Wilson of Oviedo, Fla., and Sylvia de Leon of Washington, D.C.

Mass was celebrated at St. Patrick Catholic Church. Burial was at Seaside Memorial Park.

<http://www.caller.com/news/2009/nov/25/educator-garcia-dies-at-79/>

REMEMBERING YOLANDA GARCIA
Sent by her niece, Wanda Garcia, daughter of Dr.
Hector P. Garcia

Foreword: Yolanda Garcia, my aunt died in November 2009. I will always remember her with great affection and hope this article honors her memory.

During the 1950s, Xico Garcia, my uncle and father's brother, came to live with us at 634 Ohio Street, in Corpus Christi, Texas during the summers. Xico enrolled at the University of Texas Pharmacy School in Austin, Texas. During the school year, Xico and Bob Sanchez drove in Xico's yellow Austin Healy from Austin to Corpus Christi on weekends. Eloisa Luna, a friend, remembers both men driving in the yellow Austin Healy. According to Eloisa, they were the heartthrobs of all the girls in the valley and the best-looking men at UT. So you can imagine the Garcia clan's relief when Xico began to court Velia Yolanda DeLeon. I was about nine years old when Yolanda DeLeon came into my life. Yolanda, as we called her, was a gentle loving soul. She was soft spoken and quiet, a true lady by the standards of the 1950's.

I remember how pleased the Garcia clan was when Yolanda accepted Xico's proposal of marriage. My father, Dr. Hector P. Garcia was especially pleased because "Yolanda comes from a good family and is educated." Yolanda graduated from Our Lady of Our Lake High School and Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Texas with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology. It was rare for a woman to get a college degree in the 1950ies. Mrs. Velia DeLeon, Yolanda's mother was a very elegant woman and moved in the high social circles of Corpus Christi, Texas. Yolanda's father Joe DeLeon was a successful businessman and owned a string of pharmacies.

Immediately, Yolanda began to plan their wedding. Yolanda recruited my mother and me to be part of the wedding. My mother, Wanda was the Matron of honor, I was a Jr. bridesmaid, Yolanda's sister Zaida was the maid of honor and Sylvia was the flower girl. Papa was Xico's best man. Yolanda chose "Gone with the Wind" to be the theme of her wedding. The DeLeon family spared no expense for the wedding. They commissioned Joske's of San Antonio, TX to make the bride's dress and our dresses. Yolanda selected an olive green taffeta that changed colors in different lights for our gowns. We had to wear crinolines so that the dress would display properly and a headband of green leaves. I still have my headband.

Mama threw a bridal shower for Yolanda. She set a beautiful table with her best china and silver. Mrs. DeLeon helped my mother with the shower arrangements. I remember all the sighs from the attendees when Yolanda would open a gift, followed by the inevitable shower games. Personally, I was more interested in all the Napoleons my mother served.

In the fall of 1954, the wedding was at the cathedral and following a reception at the Driskill hotel. The elite of the Mexican American community attended

the wedding. Yolanda was resplendent in her beautiful gown. Joe DeLeon was so proud of his daughter and said, "She was the most beautiful woman in the room." Mr. DeLeon spared no expense in "wining and dining" the wedding guests. The wedding was an elegant affair.

This was the only wedding ceremony I would attend for any of my uncles or aunts.

Life happens. I remember how happy Yolanda was when both her children, Yvette and Bobby were born. Years later, their family moved to Mexico while Xico attended medical school.

In 1962, when my brother died in an accident in Morelia, Michoacan, Yolanda and Xico were the first family members to arrive at the scene. It was such a terrible family tragedy, I was only 16 years old and felt comforted by the presence of familiar faces.


Through the years, Yolanda became an integral part of the family. I loved talking to her at the Garcia family gatherings. She had a tremendous sense of humor and wit. Yolanda and I shared a great love for jewelry. She had an extensive collection of rings and necklaces. We always admired each other's jewelry. Yolanda showed me some piece that my uncle had bought for her. Xico always showered Yolanda with jewelry.

After her children left the nest, Yolanda became the executive manager of her husband's medical practice in Corpus Christi. In 1996 after Papa died, Xico became active in the American G.I. Forum. The members of the Founder's Chapter, my father's chapter elected Xico commander. Yolanda became active in the AGIF and helped Xico with his work in civil rights. Xico's major accomplishments led to the dissolution of segregated cemetery in Tynan, Texas, and to the betterment of health care in South Texas colonias.

After Xico passed away in April 28, 2003, Yolanda moved from Corpus Christi to Dallas, Texas to live with her children. I never saw Yolanda again. On November 23, 2009, my aunt Velia Yolanda DeLeon Garcia passed away peacefully in her sleep. The obituary in the Corpus Christi Caller Times described Yolanda thus:

Yolanda was classic in style, devoted to learning languages, reading and writing poetry, and especially to playing her beloved piano. She loved to dance and sing too. In fact, she was much like the music she enjoyed: elegant as a Gershwin melody, witty as a Cole Porter tune and majestic as the concertos she played.

There exists a belief if we remember the departed they live through our



memories. I will always cherish the memories of my aunt and uncle and the wonderful times we spent together.