

## *Edwin James Garza*

My Papi, Edwin James Garza, was an exceptional man. Coming from a very poor family, with just the shoes on his feet and the shirt on his back, Papi built a solid foundation for his business and for his own family. The cornerstone of this foundation was the deep-rooted pride he had in his heritage and his faith.

Hello everyone. My name is Katherine Hernandez and I am Edwin James Garza's eldest daughter. On behalf of my family, my brothers Jose, Carlos, and Edwin Jr., and my sister Esme, and all of our children, I want to thank you all for being here today.

Papi was born in Los Angeles on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, and first came to San Leandro as a little boy with his family in 1940. His father and mother, Jose and Cecilia Garza, ran a Mexican grocery store and did not make very much money. To help support his parents and siblings, Papi dropped out of school at the age of sixteen and went to work for a local construction agency, T&T Dynamics. Here, he learned the value of a hard day's work and also discovered his passion in real estate.

Together with his older brother, my Uncle Victor, Papi established Garza and Co., which he continued even after my uncle's death in 1997. He flipped houses and also managed several rental properties up until 2005, when he officially retired and sold the last property. Besides his family, his business was his pride and joy, and my father had a tear in his eye the day Garza & Co. closed its doors for good. His work afforded his own family a comfortable living that he was not able to enjoy growing up. My siblings and I are very grateful for that upbringing, Papi, and I hope that you knew that.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1955, he met a beautiful young lady, our mother Rosalind Reynoso, at a dance hall here in San Leandro. They had a relatively quick courtship by today's standards, and were engaged by that summer. On New

Year's Day 1956, exactly one year after they met, they wed at Holy Spirit Catholic Church. At first, the priest would not agree to marry them, since it was a holiday and also a Sunday. But after some persuasion by my father and his parents, the priest finally agreed to unite them that evening.

In the 1960s, against the wishes of their families, Mama and Papi left the Catholic Church to join a community church, Faith and Friends, which was started at a neighbor's house down the street from where we grew up. Although his faith label changed, his faith did not. Papi always made it clear that although he was no longer a Catholic, he was still a Christian, and would always be proud of his Catholic heritage. "It's where I first found the Lord," he would often say.

If there is anyone here today who did not know my father personally, let me tell you a little bit about who he was as a person. My Papi was usually a quiet, gentle man, but he knew how to be loud and proud when he had to be. He loved his grandchildren and instilled in them The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you...the same Golden Rule he so often repeated to his own children while we were growing up. In his old age, and especially after Mama died, his children and his grandchildren were his pride and joy. He had a special relationship with my son Oscar. Oscar has a special love for all things skateboarding, and when he was ten years old, wanted nothing more than to visit the Braille Skateboarding warehouse here in San Leandro. Papi was able to get them tickets to an event Braille was holding that year, and Oscar got to meet Aaron Kyro and other professional skateboarders that he looked up to. Oscar will always have this special memory of getting to do that with his grandfather. To all of the grandchildren in our family, Oscar, Christina, Alejandro, Caleb, Amy, Jaxon and Adele, Abuelo loved each of you very much. I know that it was so hard for you all to be here today to say goodbye to him, but I wanted you all to know that he was so proud of you and the amazing young people that you are.

Of course I cannot close this eulogy without any mention of the famous Mexican singer Vicente Fernandez! Papi loved him with a passion, to the point that my mother would sometimes say to him, "Why did you marry little old me and not

Vicente, Edwin? You love him so much!” This would make him laugh, and then all of us kids laugh. But it was true. Papi loved everything about Vicente Fernandez. He was constantly playing his albums on our old record player, and most of the house, including the master bedroom, displayed Vicente Fernandez memorabilia. It was a joke to everyone but Papi, who took his love for Vicente quite seriously.

When my Mama, the real love of his life, passed away last year, Papi was not quite the same. He was his usual loving self, especially around the grandchildren. But this past year he had become very sad, and was not very good at hiding it. When he died in his sleep last week, my first thought was, *what a blessing*. I was not expecting the news, but I was not surprised, either. What a long and beautiful life he had led. What an inspiration he was to his children and grandchildren. And there was no pain for him at the end. But there is no question in my mind that he died of a broken heart. My family and I find peace and solace in the fact that he is now reunited with Mama in heaven.

I want to say a special thank-you today to Jaime Rodriguez, the funeral director here at Esperanza & Sons Funeral Home. You have shown such patience in caring for my family this past week. We are a handful, I know, but you never faltered in showing us compassion and grace when we needed it the most. I want to thank each and every one of you for being here today, as well, as we say our final goodbyes to our Papi and Abuelo. Edwin James Garza was 85 years old, he lived a long, beautiful, loved-filled life, and I want all of you to remember that as we lay him to rest today.

Thank you.

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