

Mary Lou Diaz



Mary Lou Diaz

Many of you don't know that my name is Maria de Lourdes (shortened to Mary Lou.) I was born in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico on April 19, 1943, so when we graduated, I was two years older than most of my classmates. I finished my elementary education in Juarez. In the fall of 1955, I was attending Jesus and Mary Academy, a parochial school in Sunset Heights. However, when I was 12, we moved to El Paso in December of 1955. In the spring semester, I went to San Jacinto Elementary School to take special English classes. One semester was not enough to master the English language. By the fall of '56, I started Cooley Elementary. Thank you Lynn Herrera for sending us the nice picture of Mr. Pope's 6th Grade Class. It sure brought a lot of memories. Although I recognize a lot of the students, I don't remember everyone's name. This seems soooo long ago.

At the time, I didn't know a word of English to carry on a conversation, so you must imagine the frustration I went through not being able to speak English. I remember coming home crying to my mother about not being able to understand English. Luckily, through the years, I have been able to learn the language and I'm still learning. My husband kids me that once in a while, I throw in some "beans." But, that's alright. I no longer cry when I'm communicating with people.

In 1957, as you recall, Burges also had a middle school located at the back wing of the high school (7th and 8th grades.) The high school was in the main building.

Three months after graduating on May 24th, I married Raul Villa. Although he had graduated from El Paso HS in 1959, we were only one year apart in age. Exactly, nine months after our wedding, we had our first daughter, Diana-pheeeeew, I'm glad it was nine months because a lot of people thought we had to get married. My daughter calls herself "the honeymoon souvenir." After Diana, we had five more children.

When we got married, Raul worked at the El Paso National Bank (now Chase.) In 1970, he opened up his own business--an upholstery shop--where he was the sales representative. He had several men doing the work while he visited the customers. His business was quite successful until 1995 when he was involved in an automobile accident. He received such bad injuries that he had to lie flat on his back for three months. After the accident, he wasn't able to be involved too much with his work, so five years ago, he had to retire. In between having babies, I worked in the medical field as a transcriptionist in doctors' offices. I tried going solo, but was only successful for two years. Apparently, the doctors were able to get the job done cheaper sending the work overseas. In 2000, I went to work for EPISD in special ed, in the deaf education department keeping track of the students' records. In 2006, I was transferred to El Paso HS and worked there in the same field until I retired in 2008.

In January of 2009, I had open heart surgery; two bypasses. Thank God, I have done well after that, but after retirement and our easy-going-life, the pounds are creeping up on me. It sure is hard to diet and exercise, especially when you cook all day.

Our biggest accomplishments have been our children. All of them have graduated from college and three of them have their master's degrees. Daughter #1, Diana, is an RN in a hospital in Burbank. She works in the operating room. Between work, she is going to school to get her MBA. Susie, daughter #2, received her degree in deaf education and her Master's in speech from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, and has worked with deaf children for over 18 years. When she came back to El Paso, she started out at Austin HS where they had the deaf program and

then moved to Burges when the program was moved. Luly, daughter #3, received her degree in English Literature/Communications from UTEP and has been lucky enough to stay home. Recently, however, she has gone back to school to get her Master's in library science. Daughter #4, Esther, received her undergraduate in interdisciplinary education and her MBA. She now works for EPISD in central office. Ruly, #1 son, got his degree from UTEP in biology, but presently is not working. Omar, #2 son, received his undergraduate and his Master's in Urban Development from USC. He worked for a year and then decided to go to Texas Tech School of Law. He received his law degree in 2005 and now works for the county.

Out of the union of four of our children we have eight grandchildren. Two of them live in California and the rest here in El Paso. We get to see the oldest ones once in a while, but we see the youngest ones more often, and let me tell you, they sure teach us "old foggies" so many new things.

Since we retired, our lives have not been very interesting. We just relax a lot, visit with family and friends, and go out to eat. We live fairly comfortably and have lived in the same block for 50 years. We do not do a lot of traveling together because of my husband's disability; however, I have travelled extensively by myself and with some of our kids.

You can figure the math from the figures above that I turned 70 this year. We also celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. Our children surprised us with an anniversary party, which I thought was better than when we got married since we had all our children present.

I guess I really overextended myself after deliberating so long. Hope to see you sometime.