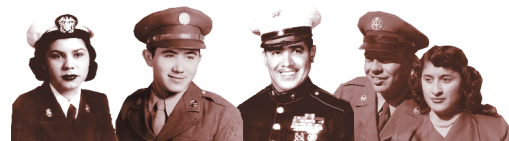


# N<sup>Insider</sup> NARRATIVES



Presented by the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project ★ Issue No. 5, Winter 2006

This issue sponsored by James L. and Henrietta Rivas Smith in honor of Ramón Martín Rivas

## Images of Valor: U.S. Latinos & Latinas and WWII Exhibit



Brenda Sendejo, Exhibit Coordinator (right) discussing the upcoming exhibit with Lynn Walker, Project Manager (left).

When audiences arrive March 24 and 25 to watch *Voices of Valor*, the play based on interviews from the Project, they'll be in for an additional treat: an exhibit of photographs from the Project, sponsored by Humanities Texas.

Project staff won a competitive grant from Humanities Texas to organize the exhibit, which will feature photographs from the Project archives, historic and contemporary, as well as text from oral history interviews. The exhibit, *Images of Valor: U.S. Latinos & Latinas and WWII*, will be displayed in the lobby of the B. Iden Payne Theater, in the Winship Drama Building, at UT Austin campus in conjunction with *Voices of Valor*. Visitors will receive a free companion booklet as part of the exhibit.

*Voices of Valor* is a play being produced by UT Austin's Performing Arts Center in partnership with Arizona State University's Public Events and the WWII Project. The script, written by award-winning playwright/journalist James E. Garcia, was adapted from the WWII Project oral history interviews. It brings to life the words and experiences of Latinos of the WWII generation through the portrayals of six actors. *Voices of Valor*, the play, will also include photographs from the Project Archives, as well as some audio from interviews—to be projected on stage.

The exhibit *Images of Valor* will include contemporary photographs by UT-Austin photojournalism graduate student

Valentino Mauricio. Mauricio, a native of Detroit, Mich., has been working for the Project for one and a half years, organizing and scanning the archival photographs, as well as shooting contemporary photographs.

"It's been a great honor to be a part of this Project," Mauricio said. "And I have to say, I'm overwhelmed by the great contributions these men and women have made. If it weren't for them, people like me wouldn't get the opportunities we enjoy."

The exhibit is being coordinated by Brenda Sendejo, a doctoral student in anthropology originally from Corpus Christi. Sendejo has worked for the Project for two years and has been involved with several exhibits. She developed the Project's exhibit, on display at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, as part of the Veterans Day reception last November. She has also worked on an exhibit about the 35th anniversary of the Center for Mexican American Studies in the Office of the President of UT-Austin, and another on the Women of the Raza Unida.

"It's been an exciting process and I think it will be an effective way of telling their stories," Sendejo said.

*Images of Valor* will feature six stand-alone two-sided panels, covered in plexi-glass, and framed in oak. Humanities Texas is considering the possibility of taking the exhibit as part of its traveling collection, available to local communities.

Tickets for *Voices of Valor* are \$18-\$10. They are available at: [www.utpac.org](http://www.utpac.org), (512) 477-7070, Texas Box Office outlets, Austin HEB and Central Market stores, and UT Performing Arts Center ticket offices at Bass Concert Hall (noon–6 p.m., Monday–Friday) and Hogg Auditorium (10 a.m.–2 p.m., Monday–Friday).

Also, in conjunction with "*Voices of Valor*," the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project presents its third national symposium: "World War II & Latina/o Cultural Citizenship." The forum includes presentations by scholars, excerpts from actual oral history interviews and a roundtable discussion with WWII-era Latinos. The public is invited to attend the free forum, which takes place from 8:30 a.m.–2 p.m. at the UT Performing Arts Center's McCullough Theatre.

# Featured Interviews

Project's New Web Address: [utopia.utexas.edu/explore/latino/](http://utopia.utexas.edu/explore/latino/)



Miguel Vasquez and wife Wilhelmina, Jan. 17, 1946.



Photo of Joe Belden provided by the Belden family.

## **Tribute**

### **Refugio Miguel Vasquez**

Date of Birth: January 17, 1920

Location: Laredo, Texas

During the Depression, Vasquez lied about his age to join the Civilian Conservation Corps, where he worked as a blaster to help build roads and bridges in Colorado.

He joined the Army on Feb. 2, 1942, and was assigned to the 756th Tank Battalion. Vasquez first saw combat on Sept. 17, 1943, in Paestum, Italy, attached to the 45th Infantry Division. Vasquez was wounded by shrapnel southwest of Oliveto Citra, Italy, on Sept. 22, 1943. He returned to his unit to continue fighting on Jan. 29, 1944, and his battalion was the first Allied unit into Cassino. He was shipped back to the States on March 27, 1944, to have the shrapnel removed. Deemed well enough to serve, Vasquez was again sent to Europe on April 25, 1945 — this time with the 1st Reconnaissance Troop in the 1st Infantry Division.

Since the war was already over, Vasquez served in Germany's occupation until his discharge. He wrote to Wilhelmina Cooremans during his time overseas and married her on Jan. 17, 1946. The couple had two children, Michael and Rene.

*Refugio Vasquez passed away on Dec. 27, 1991.*

*Story based on information provided by Wilhelmina Vasquez.*

## **Tribute**

### **Joe Belden**

Date of Birth: March 13, 1915

Location: Eagle Pass, Texas

Joe Belden was a pioneer in the polling field. His leadership roles included: founding the Bureau of Student Opinion, the first systematic nationwide survey of college students'; originator of the Texas Poll, the first regular statewide polling system; leader of International Research Associates, the first market research firm in Mexico.

He graduated from UT-Austin, where he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1939. After graduating he started the Texas Poll and his own market research company. He took a break from polling when war broke out and he joined the Navy in 1942. He spent almost two years in the Panama Canal Zone before being transferred to Washington in 1944, where he was director of research for the Navy's Department of Public Affairs and created surveys of military personnel. At the end of the WWII, he left the Navy with the rank of lieutenant and returned to his work with Belden Associates, a leading research firm, from which he retired in 1980.

Joe Belden met his wife, Eugenia Nash, while attending UT and working in the University archives as a Spanish to English translator. They married on Feb. 8, 1941. The couple had three children and three grandchildren.

*Joe Belden passed away on June 16, 2005.*

*Story based on information provided by son, Tom Belden.*



## Preserving Family Heirlooms

by David Gracy II, UT-School of Information

The most important things that one generation can leave to the next are documents—photographs, letters, diaries, scrapbooks, and the like—because these give roots to the succeeding generation. Time after time, the items that victims of Hurricane Katrina said they regretted the most to lose were family photographs and other documents of their parents, grandparents, and other family members. The reason was because, unlike houses, cars, furniture, and such—the one-of-a-kind documents cannot be replaced. Once lost, they and the information in them are gone forever.

To preserve documents of all kinds, there are general and specific actions that can be taken which will extend the life of any document.

### Actions one can take that will help preserve any document

**Display copies of documents, not originals.** Light fades and deteriorates documents, especially photographs. If you want to hang a photograph on the wall, make a copy and hang the copy.

**Avoid folding documents that do not already have permanent creases.** Folding stresses the fibers of paper at the folds. This is especially true of paper manufactured in an acid process, such as newsprint. To unfold a document that has been folded for so long that the crease seems permanent, humidify the document by placing it in a high-humidity environment (as a closed, steamy bathroom) for several hours until the paper relaxes. Then flatten it.

**Store documents in as constant a temperature and humidity as you can, and where air can circulate.** Large changes in temperature and humidity from years in attics, utility rooms with washing machines and dryers, and stored in undisturbed facilitates, migration of acid between documents filed next to, or piled on top of, each other. This results in paper becoming brittle and flaking when handled. The stale air in closets, rarely opened, often is higher in humidity, which also facilitates acid migration.

**Store document in as clean an environment as possible.** Avoid storage in locations subject to a lot of gritty dust. Store documents in boxes and acid-free folders made for the purpose. Boxes of uniform size stack better. Avoid shoe boxes, because they offer little protection. Put documents in folders, because folders protect documents during handling between storage and the place where the documents are to be viewed. Acid-free folders are better than plain manila folders.

### Actions important to specific kinds of documents

**Photographs:** Identify people and places in the image. Photographs of unknown people in unknown places have little to no value to family members, or anyone else. Write on the back of photographs using a number 2 pencil; don't

## ★Volunteer Spotlight

### Robert Rivas [Interviewer]



**Birth date:** November 24, 1945

**Birth place:** San Antonio, Texas

**Residence:** El Paso, Texas

**Occupation:** Retired Public  
Education School Counselor

#### How did you hear about the Project?

I learned of the project seven years ago when my sister, Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, was discussing the creation of a study of WWII Hispanic veterans.

#### Why are you interested in the Project?

As a history major with an interest in Military history I knew that very little had been written about Mexican Americans in the military—especially during WWI and WWII.

#### What is the biggest challenge about interviewing?

The biggest challenge is to have the veteran discuss information in many cases they think is irrelevant, but is truly important. They may also be reluctant to relive some very bad experiences. In some cases they would rather not remember certain details that they have tried to block out.

#### Why do you continue to do it?

I continue interviewing Latino WWII veterans because I know that they must be interviewed now! They are passing away and if we don't interview them, we will be left without their story. It is a story that must be told!

write directly on the image itself. (Write it lightly).

Avoid putting your fingers on the emulsion side of prints and slides. Oils from your hands eat into the emulsion, leaving an impression that cannot be removed. Handle photographs on their edges.

**Scrapbooks:** In making a scrapbook, be sure to use acid-free paper. Use photograph corners to put photographs and documents in the scrapbook, rather than using glue or tape. Never use cellophane tape, masking tape, electrician's tape, or any other press-on tape.

**Letters:** Keep envelopes and letters together, but take letters out of envelopes in order to store the letters flat.

**Newspaper clippings:** Since newsprint has a shorter life than other paper, to preserve a clipping, photocopy it onto acid-free paper. Then save the photocopy.

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## ORDER *A Legacy Greater Than Words*

Since 1999, the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project at the University of Texas at Austin has captured the untold stories of this WWII generation. Altogether, the project videotaped more than 500 interviews throughout the country and in Puerto Rico and Mexico. This volume features summaries of the interviews and thumbnail photographs of the individuals. The stories featured in *A Legacy Greater Than Words* chronicle the lives of Latinos in the 1930s and 1940s—stories that generally have been omitted from historical accounts of either World War II or the Great Depression. Distributed by the University of Texas Press.



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