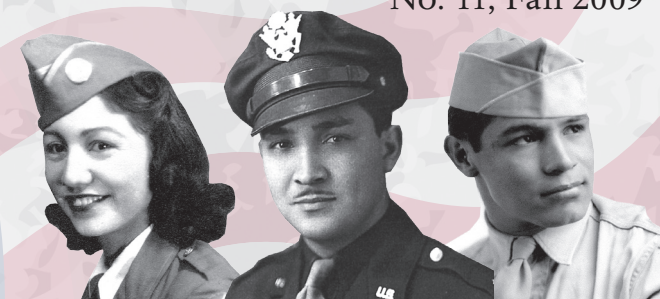


# Insider NARRATIVES



The U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project ★ The University of Texas at Austin

## THE PROJECT CELEBRATES A MILESTONE

**W**ith 10 years under its belt, the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project took time this fall to celebrate its past and prepare for the future.

The 10th anniversary festivities took place at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center at the University of Texas at Austin and featured a dinner to honor Project participants. It also included a one-day symposium that focused on the Korean and Vietnam wars. Inclusion of interviews from those two wars will be part of a planned expansion. *(For more information about the expansion, please see the article on page 3.)*

Jim Estrada, chairman and chief executive officer

of Estrada Communications, Inc. and Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez worked with a dinner committee of volunteers from Texas and California to ensure the event's success.

"Special kudos to our host committee for giving so freely of their time to making our evening a great success," said Rivas-Rodriguez. "This is the start of some beautiful new friendships for our project."

The dinner was well attended by sponsors, Project interviewees and their families. The event was sponsored by national corporations as well as several local companies. Organizations on the UT campus, as well as individual donors, also supported the event.

*continued on next page.*

## A NOTE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

Photo by Marc Hamel



WWII veteran Ramón Galindo and his wife, Pauline, welcomed me and two other UT employees into their South Austin home recently.

The purpose of the visit was for the UT Office of Public Affairs to videotape and photograph me interviewing Mr. Galindo for a new UT website. *(See the related story on page 15.)* Our Project interviewed Mr. Galindo several years ago, and he has become a good friend. But that Friday morning, Mr. Galindo related new anecdotes.

There was this canteen, you see, that he carried with him through all of Europe, on which he had scratched the names of every country and camp he stayed in. But when he got stateside, he was ordered to turn it in, losing an important memento of his time overseas.

As we expand to the Korean and Vietnam eras, we give a strong *abrazo* to our WWII people and continue to work with them, while also extending our reach to find similar gems among those who were born a little later, whose experiences will undoubtedly command our attention and commitment in the same way as those of Ramón Galindo.

*— Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez*

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# THE PROJECT CELEBRATES A MILESTONE

*continued from cover...*

The dinner featured several speakers, including:

- New Mexico's Secretary of Veterans' Services John M. Garcia
- Texas House of Representatives member Elliott Naishtat
- California Assemblywoman Mary Salas

The evening's guest of honor was:

- Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Rodolfo "Rudy" P. Hernandez

Hernandez received the Medal of Honor for his service in the Korean War as a part of the United States Army's 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team. According to his citation, Hernandez distinguished himself when his platoon came under attack from enemy fire on May 31, 1951, near Wontong-ni, Korea. Although he was wounded, Hernandez continued firing at the enemy until his rifle malfunctioned. Undeterred, he rushed the enemy armed only with his rifle and bayonet.

He killed six enemy soldiers before falling unconscious from grenade, bayonet, and bullet wounds.

The trip from his North Carolina home to Texas for Hernandez and his daughter, Martha, was sponsored by dinner committee member Manuel Madrigal and his wife Lydia.

"I thought it was very important to have Rudy be part of the event because he symbolizes the honor, commitment and sacrifices of our veterans," Manuel Madrigal said. "I also had five *tíos* who were veterans and my involvement in the project is in their honor."

The dinner was followed the next day by a symposium featuring scholars from across the country. The morning's presenters on the Korean era included Silvia Alvarez Curbelo, University of Puerto Rico, "War, Modernity and Remembrance: The Borinqueneers

in the Korean War (1950-1953);" Allan R. Millett, University of New Orleans, "The U.S. 8th Army, Korea, 1950-1953: Making a One Army from Soldiers of Many Cultures;" and Carlos Vélez-Ibañez, Arizona State University, "Korea and Latinos: The Invisible Minority in a Forgotten War."

The afternoon's presenters on the Vietnam era included Mark A. Lawrence, The University of Texas, "Rewriting the History of the Vietnam War: Political and Diplomatic Dimensions;" Kyle Longley, Arizona State University, "Grunts: The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam;" and Jorge Mariscal, the University of California at San Diego, "The Vietnam War is Boring: Young People and Historical Amnesia."

Manuel Aviles-Santiago, a graduate researcher assisting in the expansion of the Project, paid close attention.

"To listen to the speakers discuss the Latino experience in Korea and Vietnam allows me to understand that the war was not exclusive to those who live to tell their experiences, but that it traverses through time and space," he said.

The importance of the weekend's events was summed up by dinner co-chair Jim Estrada, who cited the nation's growing Hispanic population and the need to provide positive role models.

"It is universally accepted that the forgotten and never known become the same," Estrada said. "Therefore, we must insure our community's contributions are chronicled and archived. ... The stories this project collects represents factual accounts that must be included in the historical narratives of our nation."

To see a compilation video presented at the dinner please go to <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos>.

## MANY THANKS TO THE HOST COMMITTEE



Jaime Chahín



Alfredo J. Estrada



Raymond M. Estrada



Andrew Ramirez



J. Michael Treviño

Appreciated, but not pictured:

- Art Acevedo • Gus Chavez •
- Nora de Hoyos-Comstock •
- Victoria Gutierrez • J.J. Haynes •
- Jorge Haynes, Sr. •
- Mack Ray Hernandez •
- Manuel Madrigal •
- Guillermo Nicolás •
- Geronimo M. Rodríguez, Jr. •
- Luis Patiño • Mark M. Stacey •
- Andrés Tijerina •
- Alfred Valenzuela •



# 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND SYMPOSIUM



Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez with Rene Gonzales, a volunteer for the Project from San Antonio.



Richard Munoz, Andy Ramirez, Linda Ramirez, Gertie Moya, and Richard Moya. (Photo courtesy of Andy Ramirez.)



Gus Chavez, a supporter from San Diego, Ca., and Roberto "Bobby" Barrera, national commander of Disabled American Veterans.



Jim Estrada speaking at the dinner.



Carlos Vélez-Ibañez makes his presentation on Latinos in the Korean War at the symposium.



Erika Gonzalez, a volunteer, signs in attendees at the dinner.



Tejanos in Action Color Guard at the dinner.



Rudy Hernandez shares thoughts at the dinner (Jim Estrada holds the microphone).



At the Saturday symposium, Emilio Zamora, Rivas-Rodriguez and Ben Olguin.



Front row: Laura Grayson, Rachel Rachofsky, Vivian Rusk, Matt Felthausen. Back row: Kevin Wilday, Dr. Gonzalo Garza, Dr. Linda Webb Sean Fanin and Yolanda Rangel. (The students and staff are from Gonzalo Garza Independence High School, which was named for WWII vet Garza. They were guests of the Walt Disney Co.)



Juanita Gomez, Michelle Faz, Roberto Barrera, Enriqueta Chavez and Gus Chavez (Photo Courtesy of Gus Chavez).

(Unless noted, all photos by Marc Hamel)

## THE PROJECT EXPANDS ITS SCOPE

From the first day that the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project began 10 years ago, Project Director Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez has heard the questions:

When are you going to do the Vietnam War? When are you going to do the Korean War?

Well that time is now.

Rivas-Rodriguez notes that while she always thought it was a good idea to document and archive the oral histories of veterans from those two more recent wars, it was important to concentrate on the initial task at hand—the experiences of World War II veterans and their families.

Ten years of work have resulted in nearly 700 World War II interviews, three published books and a stage production, all of which helped provide a solid foundation for a federal grant proposal to expand the Project to include the Korean and Vietnam war veterans and civilians beginning this fall.

“We are still going to be doing interviews with World War II-era people,” Rivas-Rodriguez said. “But we felt that if we are able to do Korea and Vietnam, we should. We have a bit of a start, because many of our World War II veterans also served in the Korean War, and a few also served in Vietnam.”

The Project’s new phase will record the experiences of Latinos and Latinas during the two military conflicts, which in many ways, were different from what occurred during World War II. The Korean and Vietnam wars were

the subjects of a one-day symposium this fall that featured presentations from six scholars from throughout the continental United States and Puerto Rico.

The Korean War occurred only five years after the end



President Harry S. Truman presenting the Medal of Honor to M Sgt. Harold E. Wilson USMC, 1st Lt. Lloyd L. Burk US Army, and Cpl. Rodolfo Hernandez US Army. 1952.

of World War II and is often called “the forgotten war.” Many Americans know little about the conflict, except perhaps that it was the focal point of the television series MASH. But the war, which resulted in the deaths of close to 34,000 Americans, came at a crucial time in the political confrontation between the United States and communist forces. It helped shape both the world and the U.S. military.

The Vietnam War, the United States’ longest conflict, produced wounds that still have not healed for some. Coming at a time of social upheaval the war polarized many and prompted political discussions and disagreements, many of which continue to this day.

That war cost more than 58,000 American lives.

And, as in World War II, Latinos and Latinas played important roles.

The Oral History Project will document the experiences of those who fought and those who remained at home. Like the World War II portion of the Project, it will provide primary source material not only for academic researchers but also the general public.

“At this point, we are well positioned to get these stories told,” Rivas-Rodriguez said.

### PHOTO SEARCH: VIETNAM AND KOREAN WAR



**Do you have photos that may symbolize the Latino Korean and Vietnam War periods?**

As we expand our oral history work into the Korea and Vietnam War eras, we are looking for images that fit those periods.

#### WHAT TO DO:

1. Please do not send original photos through the mail. Send a photocopy of the original image (if we chose yours, we will contact you). 2. Make sure to include your contact information and where the photo was taken, the date, and who is in the picture. 3. Look for photos that speak to the Latino experience. These should be your personal photos, or photos that you have permission to use.

*Not to worry, we won't be retiring the WWII couple we've been using since 1999. They will forever hold a special place in our work, as will all the other beautiful photos we have now collected.*



## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Braulio Alonso

Interviewed: June 18, 2006, by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez  
in Tampa, Florida

Braulio Alonso's memories of World War II remain vivid, especially those surrounding the liberation of Italy's capital.

After Allied forces flooded Rome on June 4, 1945, some members of the 328th Field Artillery Battalion, part of the 85th Infantry Division, traveled from slightly south of Rome into the city.

"I think all of Italy was there. I mean, there were millions of people. They were crying, they were laughing, and they were dancing ... our Jeep was surrounded. I was kissed ... they threw flowers at us; they wanted us to drink wine ...," the Tampa-native said. "I've never seen anybody as happy as the liberation of Rome."

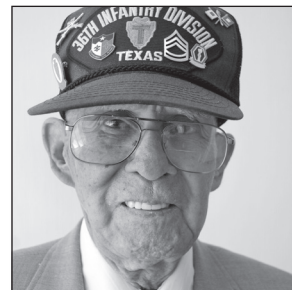
Overwhelmed by the chaos in Rome's streets, Alonso said he looked at the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, located in nearby Vatican City, and said to the driver, "Let's go over there."

He and some other men from his unit, all of them Catholic, then came up with a plan: They decided to attempt a visit to Pope Pius XII at the Basilica.

"The five officers and five enlisted men, all in combat garb, approached a Swiss guard and asked if it were possible to see the Holy Father. The guard was surprised by the request, but he, too, showed joy at the liberation. He left and after a short wait, an Irish priest appeared and asked us to wait," wrote Alonso in his account of that day, which ran in June 2009 in Tampa-area publication *La Gazeta*.

The priest said he thought a visit could be arranged, recalled Alonso during his original interview. Astounded, the men left their firearms with one of their drivers, a violation of military rules. And the group was escorted inside, into an empty white room.

"Here comes a lean, ascetic, frail individual, Pius XII, who came in and spoke to us in English, understandable English. And he said that he was happy to see that the war was over, and he wanted peace. And he wanted to pray for us and he wanted us to pray for everyone who'd been in the war, enemy and so alike," Alonso recalled.



### Albert Caballero

Interviewed: May 3, 2008, by Steve Treviño  
in San Antonio, Texas

While racial discrimination may have been prevalent during the 1940s, serving in the Army gave Albert Caballero an opportunity to develop relationships with people from different backgrounds.

Caballero began his service in 1940 with the 36th Infantry Division.

"When the combat started, we learned how to respect each other," Caballero said. "[It] was people from different parts of [the] country into one segment."

Interestingly, he was particularly close to Japanese-American soldiers, at a time when more than 100,000 Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans were being relocated to internment camps in the United States.

"[T]he Japanese Americans would come forward to our unit," Caballero said. "And we had a heck of a good time."

Though Japanese Americans suffered discrimination during World War II, Caballero said he only found out about it after he left the Army and worked at a post office in Los Angeles.

He recalled reading a news article in 2000 that said then-President Bill Clinton had awarded the Medal of Honor to about 20 surviving members of the 442nd Infantry Regiment, many of whose members were Japanese American.

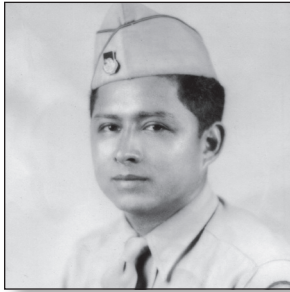
"[T]hey deserved everything that they've got," Caballero said.

Caballero received his initial training with the 36th at the armory in El Paso, Texas and then trained in Brownwood, Texas, and Mansfield, La., in 1941. He was stationed in Starke, Fla., for more training the following year.

The 36th returned to the Texas Army National Guard in December of 1945, at which point Caballero was discharged as a Tec. 5.

Later, he attended radio-operator school at Camp Crowder in MO as a member of the reserves, and was assigned to the Navy in the Philippines after the war ended in 1945.

## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Jesse Campos

Interviewed: April 15, 2007, by Olga Campos Benz  
in Houston, Texas

After graduating from high school, and with the world on the edge of war, Jesse Campos was drafted by the Army in June of 1941. He was sent to Fort Ord in Monterey Bay, Calif., and shipped out for the Pacific in August, ultimately going to the Hawaiian Islands for more training.

"While we were training over there, we heard the bad news about Pearl Harbor," Campos said.

Campos, a native of Goose Creek, Texas, was then transferred to the 672nd Amphibious Unit and served as an amphibian-tractor driver for assaults.

"The first landing was Makin Island, and that's when I was wounded," Campos said.

Campos spent two months in a field hospital with an injured leg. He re-injured the same limb during a landing at Bougainville Island. While in the hospital, Campos heard about a Latino GI who always gave a big holler when something good would happen.

"I told him, 'Hey, maybe that's some guy I know. So next time you see that guy, tell him my name and that I'm here,'" Campos said. "About a week later, my brother Manuel came by." He was the hollerer.

In 1945, while stationed in the Philippines as a radio operator near Manila, Campos learned his nephew, Gene Lopez, was also there. The two celebrated for a couple of days and ended up facing AWOL charges. Campos said he spent time in the military stockade and was bumped back down to Private.

In July of 1945, Campos joined a convoy under Gen. Douglas MacArthur that was headed for Japan. On the way, he celebrated his 24th birthday with news the U.S. had dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Campos landed in San Francisco in December 1945 and was honorably discharged from Company B of the 672nd Landing Ship Tank on Dec. 23 at the rank of Private. Campos returned home with the Purple Heart and a Philippine Liberation medal with one bronze service star.



### Joseph Davila

Interviewed: June 20, 2007, by Joanne Rao Sanchez  
in San Antonio, Texas

When he was drafted on Nov. 16, 1942, Joseph Davila left his work at the Southern Pacific Railroad and took up a rifle. Davila completed training that winter at Camp Lawton, south of San Diego, Calif., before being stationed at Fort Lewis, near Seattle, Wash., and assigned to the 184th Infantry Regiment, Seventh Infantry Division.

Then in May 1943, Davila, a 20-year-old from Saspamco, Texas, travelled to Kiska, an Aleutian island.

He then was sent to the Philippines, where his experiences would be more difficult.

For example, when Davila and his battalion approached Panaon, a small island in the Philippines, they noticed an unpleasant odor.

"The smell got stronger and stronger," Davila said.

Soon they came upon a graveyard and realized the stench was coming from the bodies of dead natives who had been killed by enemy forces.

Davila recalled the horror of entering a small church, where he found more bodies.

"One lady had her hand on a child," he said. "They were slaughtered right there."

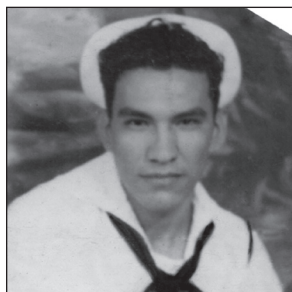
Davila's platoon encountered the enemy on his second day on the island. By the time the platoon decided to retreat temporarily, only 15 men remained.

On August 14, 1945, when Davila married pre-war sweetheart Helen Del Castillo in San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, he wore an arm sling.

The sling was better, however, than the full-body cast he had worn when he returned to the U.S. in April of 1945. Davila had spent 21 months in hospitals recovering from wounds he suffered on Okinawa.

Davila was discharged Dec. 28, 1946. He received the Purple Heart, a Silver Star, Bronze Star, Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two bronze service stars, and several other awards.

## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Roberto De la Cruz

Interviewed: June 26, 2007, by Raquel C. Garza  
in Austin, Texas

When military recruiters arrived at the local post office in the summer of 1942, Roberto De la Cruz saw it as a ticket out of the Rio Grande Valley.

So when one recruiter asked the 15-year-old his age, De la Cruz said he'd turn 18 on August 5. On that, he went back to the post office in San Benito, Texas, and enlisted in the Navy. A couple of days later, De la Cruz boarded a train and headed to Houston for his Navy physical.

"Everybody back then was either interested in joining the Army or the Navy," De la Cruz said. "[I]t was going to give us a chance to learn something about what other people did, you know. ... I learned so much just from the war, you know, and the places that I went to, that I would have never dreamed of knowing before then."

De la Cruz was eventually assigned to the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga*, on which he served from the end of October in 1942 until September of 1945. Among the places he saw while serving on the *Saratoga* were the Fiji Islands; New Caledonia, where he remembered helping defend the first landing made by U.S. Marines; Nauru; Bougainvillea; the Indian Ocean; Colombo, an island near India used for refueling ships during the war; parts of Australia, including Tasmania; Iwo Jima; and, finally, Japan.

De la Cruz was discharged in late September of 1945, at the rank of Seaman First Class and 20 pounds heavier than when he enlisted. Back in South Texas' Rio Grande Valley, he earned his high school diploma and attended junior college classes in Brownsville.

He later taught a high school algebra class for veterans and met his future wife, Nora Benavides De la Cruz.

At the time of his interview, Robert and Nora De la Cruz had been married 59 years and had seven children and 15 grandchildren.

He worked as an Air Force engineer for several years, retiring in 1979 at the rank of Major.



### Jesse De los Santos

Interviewed: July 13, 2007, by Yazmin Lazcano  
in Chicago, Illinois

Jesse De los Santos and seven of his brothers served their country during World War II: Ernesto joined the Air Force and was a Nazi prisoner of war; Candero, Pete, Belizarlo and Raymond served in the Army; and Nicolás and Eliséo served in the Navy.

De los Santos was born in Eastland, Texas, in 1929, to Ernesto and Angelita (Guajardo) De los Santos, one of the couple's 16 children.

Jesse "Chuy" De los Santos joined the Army in 1939, and was assigned to the Army's 7th Cavalry Regiment, stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. The regiment, whose members were called "Ruff Riders," patrolled the Texas-Mexico border on horseback since 1918. But in 1938, the Ruff Riders began training for World War II.

De los Santos, or "De los," as he says his fellow cavalymen referred to him, served in New Guinea and the Philippine Islands battlefronts. During his service, he contracted malaria, as well as suffered a bullet wound to the knee in the Philippines. He was discharged in 1945 at the rank of Sergeant. Among other honors, he earned a Good Conduct Medal, the Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. He reluctantly returned home.

"I didn't want to leave friends there," De los Santos said of being sent home after his injury.

After the war, De los Santos moved to Chicago. In April of 1954, De los Santos married Mary Sandoval. They had four children: two boys and two girls.

Like many people of his generation, De los Santos worked for a long time for the same company. He worked for Fulton Cold Storage for 38 years.

Although the Chicago freezer and cooler company paid well, he said his success wasn't the norm for many like him, referring to Latinos who spoke mostly Spanish.

"If you don't know how to speak in English, it's very hard here," he said. "Five or \$6 an hour, *no es nada*."

## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Baldomero Estala

Interviewed: May 3, 2008, by Cheryl Smith Kemp  
in San Antonio, Texas

When World War II broke out in 1941, Baldomero Estala was working in the paint department of a San Antonio, Texas, Pontiac dealership.

Estala was drafted July 25, 1942, and sent to basic training in Wichita Falls, Texas, from where he departed for Sioux Falls, S.D., for radio and mechanics military schooling.

Estala was then sent to Snetterton Heath Army Air Station in England as part of the 337th Bombardment Squadron of the Air Force's 96th Bombardment Group. He worked as a replacement radio operator in the Army Air Corps, filling in on aircraft missions for absent soldiers.

On the morning of May 8, 1944, near Resthausen, Germany, Estala was shot down en route to an attack on Berlin, Germany. He ended his 13th mission by bailing out of the Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress in enemy territory.

"It was just, out we went," Estala said. "Going down [with the parachute], I looked down, and there comes a German with a rifle ready to pick me up."

As a prisoner of war, Estala was sent to Germany's Stalag 3D, the first in a series of camps in which he would be interned.

He dwells on his experience only briefly, saying he and his fellow captives were treated rather well.

"No, not really," responded Estala when asked if he was frightened while in the camps. "I was hungry."

After Patton's Third Army liberated American prisoners from camp Lucky Strike in the area of Le-Harve, France, on May 8, 1945, Estala returned to Texas, where he was honorably discharged at the rank of Staff Sergeant.

He stayed on with the armed services in the Air Force until his retirement in 1964 at the rank of Tech Sergeant.

Estala married Graciela Inclán, and the couple raised two daughters and three sons. Estala said he was fortunate enough to be able to offer his children a rather comfortable life.



### Benigno "Tony" Gaytan

Interviewed: August 4, 2007, by Amanda Peña  
in San Antonio, Texas

For Benigno "Tony" Gaytan, the decision to enlist in the Armed Forces during World War II was easy.

"Most of my friends, they say, 'Let's join the Navy,'" he recalled. "I said, 'OK.'"

At the time, 17-year-old Gaytan was working as a stock boy at a five-and-dime store in Laredo, Texas. The United States had been in the war for more than a year.

By the time he joined the service in 1943, U.S. troops had recovered the key stronghold Guadalcanal from the Japanese. But the war in the Pacific was far from over. Gaytan recalled training in Corpus Christi, Texas, which he referred to as his "first mission," and then going to Coronado Island Marine Base in San Diego, Calif.

"We learned everything over there. How to go with a target," among other skills, he said, making soft artillery sounds.

From the Marine base, Gaytan recalled he was sent to Camp Shoemaker, also in California. He was assigned to the USS *Telfair*, a Haskell-class attack transport stationed in Okinawa.

Those on the ship were a mix of backgrounds, including French, English, Greek and Italian. Also on the ship were two other Mexican Americans.

On April 2, 1945, at approximately 5 a.m., a Japanese plane rammed into the starboard side of the *Telfair*; then flipped over and hit the ship's port side. Gaytan was 50 to 100 feet away when the airplane hit.

"I could have got killed right there," he said.

The 19-year-old Seaman Second Class was discharged Jan. 11, 1946, at Camp Wallace in Texas. Among the honors he earned were the World War II Victory Ribbon, Naval Occupation Medal and Korean Service Ribbon with three stars.

After his service, Gaytan trained as an auto mechanic, working for various car dealerships in San Antonio, Texas.



## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Manuel Juarez

Interviewed: December 27, 2007, by George Dobosh  
in Montebello, California

He was only a 14-year-old boy from the Los Angeles area when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, but Manuel Juarez was raring to go to do his part. His parents gave him permission to enlist, but he had to wait until he turned 17.

"I insisted on going and they finally gave me my way," Juarez said.

On Nov. 22, 1944, Juarez was called up for active duty in the Navy. After basic training in San Diego, Calif., he was assigned to the USS *Mobile*, part of the Fifth Division.

Its first stop was the Hawaiian Islands and after a couple of days, it headed for Iwo Jima on a bombardment mission. The *Mobile's* duty was to support bigger ships and sometimes participate in bombardments.

From Iwo Jima, it went on a bombardment mission to Okinawa, not long before land forces got there. That's when kamikaze attacks started. He recalled the Japanese suicide missions through a barrage of chaotic images:

"[S]cary, shooting all those projectiles. ... You could see tracers [bullets] going at 'em, but they weren't hitting. And you see their plane coming at you, or it'd go right over you ... or just fall on the other side." Juarez said. "Sometimes when you hit 'em, you figured ... it's just by chance. ... [T]hey just keep on coming."

His job was handling ammunition for the 40-mm 5-inch guns on the sides of the ship. And then they headed toward Japan.

"We knew there was going to be a lot of casualties. And then, all of a sudden we heard that the atomic bomb had been dropped [on Hiroshima]," he said.

The *Mobile* landed at Nagasaki in the wake of the second atomic bomb's havoc. Juarez recalled staying there about a month. He was discharged August 29, 1946, at the rank of Coxswain. For his service, Juarez earned the Philippine Liberation medal, as well as other awards.



### Felix Longoria

Interviewed: May 30, 2007, by Oscar Gomez  
in Corpus Christi, Texas

When Felix Longoria enlisted in the Army in October 1940, he was a 20-year-old from the South Texas town of Beeville and had no idea what he was getting into.

Four years later, the United States was in the midst of World War II, and Longoria found himself overseas, serving in the European Theater.

As part of the 9th Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division, Longoria landed in Normandy on June 12, 1944 before being wounded in Brest, France.

Longoria and his squad had loaded trucks bound for Brest, where they came upon an image many were unprepared to view: vehicles, dead Germans, tanks and trucks as far as one could see. Longoria left to check on another squad when a machine gun "let loose." He and one of his men were shot, and another GI killed.

"I was laying there and they kept firing," said Longoria, who was in the 9th Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division. "I ran."

Once Longoria made it to a medic, another squad leader was notified. Longoria recalled the other squad leader, whom he called Colombo, being a colorful character with a sense of humor to match.

When Colombo saw Longoria's injury, he certainly responded with an unconventional reply:

"You lucky bastard," Longoria recalled him saying, right before he handed Longoria a cigarette.

Longoria underwent an operation on his arm and stayed in the hospital a week and a half.

Longoria recalled Germany's surrender, celebrating in the streets with civilians and helping release Jewish women from concentration camps.

Soon afterward, he was discharged June 27, 1945, at the rank of Tech Sergeant. In addition to the Purple Heart, he earned a Bronze Star and European Campaign medal for his service.

## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Erasmo G. Lopez

Interviewed: May 3, 2008, by Elvia O. Perez  
in San Antonio, Texas

Erasmo G. Lopez spent a significant portion of his 20s on the front lines of both World War II and the Korean War.

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Lopez was drafted into the Army in 1942.

"If I hadn't of gone, they would have taken me," he half-joked in Spanish.

After training in Lake Charles, La., Lopez's regiment, the 335th Infantry, part of the 84th Division, was sent to Germany. Lopez was a rifleman during his first battle. In addition to fighting in Germany during the Battle of the Bulge, he recalled being at the siege of Bastogne, a hamlet in the southeast of Belgium.

Lopez remained in Europe after WWII for about six months. He was on peace-keeping duty, collecting rifles and ammunition. On Jan. 29, 1946, he was discharged at the rank of Private First Class.

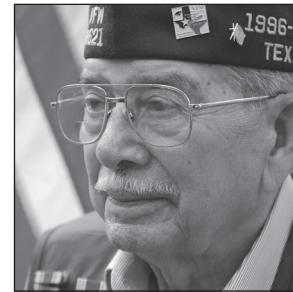
He then headed back to San Antonio, where he worked at Randolph Air Force Base as a painter until the end of September 1950. That's when he was called up for the Korean War and ordered to report to Fort Hood.

Lopez was shipped to Japan as a replacement.

A machine-gunner in Korea, Lopez recalled the firearm's barrel getting hot enough to light a cigar. His son, Ignacio Lopez, said the elder Lopez used to talk about how when he was in combat and it would get dark, he would see sparks, then promptly spray bullets in that direction. Silence would often follow, Ignacio recalled his dad saying, which is how Lopez would know he had wounded or killed someone.

Lopez was discharged from the Army a second time on Sept. 5, 1951, at the rank of Corporal.

He earned an American Theater Campaign medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign medal with three bronze service stars, a Good Conduct medal and WWII Victory medal, in addition to the Distinguished Service Cross, and other honors, for his Korean War service.



### Raymundo Rafael Martinez

Interviewed: May 23, 2007, by Megan Beck  
in Alice, Texas

Raymundo Rafael Martinez was just 21 when he received his Army draft letter in November 1941. So he packed his belongings and headed to Missouri for training camp.

After three months of training, he was sent to Seattle, Wash., before being sent to fight in the Aleutian Islands, after Japanese forces occupied two of the islands during World War II.

During his year in the Aleutians from 1943 to 1944, Martinez and the 807th Engineer Battalion saw much combat. One of his duties was to dig graves for fallen soldiers.

"I saw on the other islands that soldiers were to get the dead people down in the valley," said Martinez, clinching his fists. "They would dig a big ditch and you put [bodies] in a line and cover them up with dirt. On the last island, I was one of them that had to clean up. It was real bad."

After his stint in the Aleutians, Martinez went to Hawaii, where his experience was different.

"Hawaii was a good time," Martinez said.

But then, on May 4, 1945, it was back to reality. Martinez went with his unit to Okinawa. "Okinawa was real rough," he said.

Martinez returned to Seattle and was discharged in November 1945 at the rank of Tech 5.

Since then, Martinez has been a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8621, the Alice Memorial Post in Alice, Texas, where he resides.

After the war, he was awarded four honors: an Asian Pacific Theatre Victory medal, a Good Conduct medal, an Occupation medal and a Victory medal.

He said that remembering the war "makes me realize a lot of things."

"Makes people realize [the need to] help each other out. Makes you feel more brotherly like with everything. That's just the way I feel," Martinez said.

## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Joseph Ramirez

Interviewed: March 11, 2004, by William Luna with Margarita Magaña in Chicago, Illinois

U.S. Army officers tried to keep Joseph Ramirez on at the end of 1945, asking him to serve six more months at the promised rank of Sergeant.

But Ramirez wanted to go home to Chicago. Although he was born in Mexico City, Ramirez had grown up in Illinois.

He had worked his way through college from 1932-1939 and earned a civil engineering degree.

Then in 1942, Ramirez enlisted in the Army and was inducted in late October of that year, at the age of 29.

After basic training in Cheyenne, Wyo., he became a radio operator with the Army's 16th Headquarters Troop. Among his unit's accomplishments, he said, was that it was among the first to land at the Philippine Islands, even before Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

After his discharge from the Army in 1945, he was eager to return to Chicago.

"I was certain I would be able to get a job in the Engineering Department," he said, referring to Armour Institute of Technology, now Illinois Institute of Technology, from where he'd graduated before the war.

But every time he went by the office of the department head, a secretary would tell Ramirez her boss was in conference. One day Ramirez ran into the department head.

"And I stopped him. And I told him, 'I'm sorry to have to stop you, but I want to hear from you why every time I go to apply for a job with you ... they tell me you're in conference.' He said, 'No, don't waste your time. We do not hire Mexicans in the engineering department.'"

Ramirez instead was able to land a job with the Illinois Central Railroad Company. Later, he went to U.S. Steel, where he had worked part-time during his Institute days. He did heavy labor until he injured his spine in 1951.

Ramirez then worked as a home repairman and, in 1959, he married Mary Martinez.



### Angela I. Ramirez-Herrera

Interviewed: June 6, 1984, by David M. Ramirez in Camarillo, California

When Angela Isabel Herrera-Flores married Adolfo Roberto "Rusty" Ramirez on Sept. 7, 1942, she became Angela I. Ramirez-Herrera.

She also became a World War II bride.

Rusty landed at Omaha Beach June 6, 1944, and fought until Germany's surrender, while Ramirez contributed to the war effort at home.

"There seemed to be a national spirit," said Ramirez of the general mood of the country before D-Day. ...

"There was rationing of meat, sugar, certain staples that were just hard to find; gasoline, tires. People didn't drive cars like they do today. People did without but there was no complaining. That was the miracle of WWII, and what made it so different from what we saw in Korea and Vietnam," she said.

Communicating with those serving overseas was different then. Before computers, the United States Postal Service was Americans' main vehicle of communication.

"Sometimes it would be held up maybe two or three weeks. Then, all of a sudden, I'd get maybe 10 letters all at one time," she said, adding that, in some ways, mail delivery in 1944 was better than today.

"[A]t that time, we used to be able to get mail from New York to El Paso, Texas, where I lived, within 24 hours. And now, you send a letter from here [Camarillo, Calif.] to Anaheim [,Calif.,] and it takes you three days," she said.

"They had what you call the V-mail. I still have copies of them, some of Dad's letters. They were just one page and you folded the letter and that letter was also the envelope, but it was censored," Ramirez said.

Ramirez said she first heard her husband had survived D-Day when she got a letter from him three weeks afterward.

Approximately 11 months later, on May 8, 1945, the U.S. and its allies officially won the war in Europe.



## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### José M. Salas

Interviewed: April 30, 2008, by Robert Rivas  
in Bayard, New Mexico

On July 25, 1944, with 160 hours of B-24 Liberator tail-gunner training under his belt, but no combat-flying experience, José M. Salas was selected to fill in with a crew for a flight from a U.S. base near Torretta, Italy, to Linz, Austria.

"It was a very rough mission. We had a lot of enemy planes hit us," Salas recalled.

He remembered passing out, then coming to with the plane on fire. Another crew member of the crew put it out and then threw a parachute on Salas.

"I just put my feet out the escape hatch and I just pushed myself out," said Salas, who suffered a lower left leg injury when he landed.

He spotted a two-story farm house about 300 yards away. Somehow, he managed to move closer to the structure and then a couple of young armed soldiers came out. They carried him into the house and while in a bed upstairs, Salas recalled a German man who spoke English coming into the room and asking him a lot of questions, most of which he said he didn't answer. Salas did reply, however, when the man inquired where he was from.

"New Mexico," Salas said.

"We're not at war with Mexico," the man responded. "What the heck you doing here?"

Salas said he tried to explain that New Mexico is a state in the U.S., but the man wouldn't listen.

"You're not an American. What are you doing here?" Salas recalled him saying.

Not knowing yet that he was a prisoner of war, young Salas soon drifted asleep. After dozing off and waking up a number of times, he found himself on an operating table in a hospital in Linz.

The war ended while he was still in an Austrian hospital. Salas was discharged from the Army Air Corps on Nov. 23, 1945, at the rank of Sergeant. For his service, he earned the Purple Heart and a POW medal, among other honors.



### Felix Soto Jr.

Interviewed: March 12, 2005, by Cynthia Cueva  
in Manor, Texas

Hoping to see the world—and avoiding being drafted into the Army—Felix Soto Jr. signed up for the Coast Guard immediately after graduating from high school in June 1942.

Three out of Soto's four brothers soon followed his lead and enlisted in the Navy.

Soto, who was originally from Austin, Texas, was sent for training to the Algiers section of New Orleans, La.

"After receiving my training there in Algiers, we were shipped to West Palm Beach, Fla., where we stayed there for a number of months and did several different assignments," many of which entailed standing guard at different ports, Soto said.

After completing a stint at Lake Okeechobee, Soto then shipped off to Orange, Texas, where he would board the vessel that would eventually take him and the rest of his amphibious division to Rabat in North Africa for his first overseas mission. While there, his unit took part in several raids, eventually participating in the landings at Sicily and southern Italy.

"We always were the first ones to go in," Soto said.

He said he didn't experience discrimination from the other sailors, but that he did endure prejudice from locals when his division would travel through the Southern United States. At one stop in Atlanta, Ga., for example, Soto recalled a waitress at a bar refusing to serve him. She used a law that prohibited Native Americans from being served as her excuse, Soto said.

However, he also said his shipmates stood up for him, taking the waitress aside and saying, "Don't you get him roused up, because he's an Apache." Soto added that the restaurant manager apologized after realizing Soto was Mexican American instead of Native American.

After serving overseas, Soto was stationed in Houston for the remainder of the war. He was discharged Sept. 24, 1945, at the rank of Seaman First Class, and having earned a Good Conduct medal, among other honors.

## INTERVIEWS FROM THE PROJECT



### Emilio Torres

Interviewed: May 3, 2008, by Fernando Torres  
in San Antonio, Texas

When Emilio Torres enlisted in the Navy at the age of 18 on Sept. 18, 1942, he had no idea it was the beginning of a military career that would span more than 30 years and three wars.

Torres, a native of Laredo, Texas, not only served in the Army during World War II, he also served in Korea and Vietnam.

“We managed to get in with the ways of the people, and try to keep good relations with everybody,” said Torres of his interaction with civilians.

In the summer of 1943, while serving on the USS *Dorothea L. Dix*, Torres participated in the Sicilian Occupation. The following summer, on board the USS *Fremont*, he aided in the capture and occupation of Saipan. Torres then went on to take part in the capture and occupation of the Southern Palau Islands, as well as participate in the Leyte landings in the fall of 1944.

“There was always danger of being hit by kamikazes, and other ships and so forth,” Torres said. After the U.S. bombed Hiroshima, Japan, on August, 6, 1945, Torres was assigned to Treasure Island, off the coast of San Francisco, Calif. And about two months later, after the war with Japan ended, the Navy discharged him at the rank of Coxwain.

Torres then went to San Antonio, Texas, where he worked as a mechanic until 1954, when he enlisted in the Army on January 27. He was assigned as a sergeant to Korea, and, halfway through his tour, was placed with a radio shop repairing radios.

In the early 1970s, the Army sent Torres to Vietnam, putting him in charge of an inspection team. He recalled traveling all over the country, checking units, companies and battalions for readiness.

By the time Torres was discharged from the Army on June 1, 1973, he had earned a Good Conduct Medal and National Service Defense medal with one oak-leaf cluster, among other honors.



### Rafael Torres

Interviewed: May 27, 2005, by Robert Rivas and  
Hector A. Torres, in El Paso, Texas

Rafael Torres, of El Paso, Texas, was much affected by his wartime experiences. So much so that he wrote his memoirs, a 210-page book.

In it, he recalled the head injury that eventually brought him home from the war: He was going down Mount Rotondo near San Pietro, Italy, with the rest of his platoon on Dec. 15, 1943. Being assigned to rear guard duty, no one was behind him.

“Although I usually carried my weapon with two hands ready for action, on this day I grabbed my rifle with my right hand only and I turned my head to see if the platoon that had been following us was still in place. However, just then, WHAM!!! I didn’t hear the wham, or anything else for that matter. When I opened my eyes, I found myself lying down with my face in the dirt, without knowing why, without even thinking about it, or even wondering why. One moment I was walking, a split second later, I was down flat on my face, without the slightest idea that something had happened to me,” writes Torres in Chapter 35 of his unpublished memoir.

“I don’t know how long I sat there or lay there without any pain. I was wondering, ‘What is happening?’ I didn’t hear anything. ... I was alive, and a few minutes later, I was out,” said Torres.

Ten months later, Torres, who was a sergeant, was officially discharged from Brooke General Hospital at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. For his service, he earned the Purple Heart, two Bronze Stars, a WWII Victory medal and a European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign medal with one star, among other honors.

Torres eventually went to work for the Army as an accountant at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.

# THE PROJECT JOINS FORCES WITH STORYCORPS

(Photo by Raymond Estrada, ECG)



## THIS PAGE:

(L to R): David Isay (Founder & CEO, StoryCorps); Arturo Rodriguez (President, UFW); U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-NM); Patricia de Stacy Harrison (President, Corporation for Public Broadcasting); U.S. Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA); Tom Saenz (President and General Counsel, MALDEF); U.S. Rep. Charlie Gonzalez (D-TX).

The U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project and StoryCorps, two organizations devoted to capturing the American experience, are about to join forces in a new initiative—recording candid moments in the lives of Latinos in Austin, Texas.

“I’ve been a huge fan of StoryCorps since it began. So when the StoryCorps staff member Melvin Reeves contacted us about a possible partnership for a Latino initiative, it was an automatic and enthusiastic YES!” said Project Director Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez. “This is exactly what our project tries to do: create a better awareness of the contributions of Latinos to our country. StoryCorps is an excellent way to do that.”

StoryCorps has been capturing moments of American life since 2003. This year, it launched a new year-long initiative called “StoryCorps Historias” to focus on Latinos in the United States.

“The voices of Latinos and Latinas are essential in presenting a more accurate portrayal of who we are as a nation,” said Gabriel Higuera, senior coordinator for StoryCorps Historias. “We can learn so much from these histories, and the applications are endless.”

In addition to the interviews conducted in Austin, StoryCorps Historias will travel across the country, collecting interviews in more than 20 cities and towns across the continental United States and in Puerto Rico.

The conversations that StoryCorps collects usually take place between two people who know one another, such as friends or family members. These conversations focus on important times in the interviewees’ lives—the day they got married, the day they discovered an author that influenced their lives, the day they decided to come out as gay.

The organization’s motto, “Listening is an Act of Love,” is very powerful, Higuera said.

“These interviews are important for the individuals and families that participate,” he said. “I interviewed my mother, and the CD which stores her voice is the most cherished in my collection.”

Participants receive a CD copy of their interview, and, with their permission, their interview is archived in the Library of Congress. Some of the conversations are then turned into radio features broadcasted on National Public Radio.

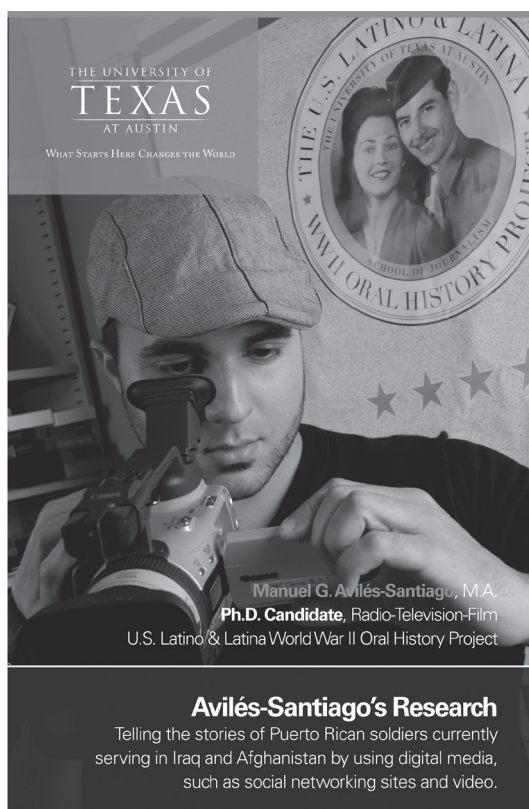
The conversation, though unique to the individual, can also speak to broader, very relatable experiences, showing us all how similar we are, Higuera said.

“We essentially want the same things for ourselves and our family,” he added. “Through dialogue, we break down the barriers that sometimes prevent us from realizing how our struggles are the same—to live with dignity and to provide for our families.”



# PROJECT PERSPECTIVE ON CAMPUS

(Courtesy of the University of Texas at Austin)



(Photo credit Christina S. Murrey/The University of Texas at Austin)

**Know**  
www.utexas.edu/know

Look for it: the *Know* promo video is currently on UT's home page: [www.utexas.edu](http://www.utexas.edu).

During the past decade the Project and its staff members have been featured in several campaigns and informational articles across campus.

And soon, the Project will be featured in a new online magazine dedicated to highlighting the excellence and relevance of the faculty, staff and students on campus.

The issues-oriented magazine, *KNOW*, is part of a new website being launched Dec. 7 by the Office of Public Affairs. The magazine will help the University reach a broader national and international audience.

*KNOW* recently contacted the Project to participate in a video and photo shoot for their inaugural issue. A photographer accompanied Project Director Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez to the home of Ramón Galindo, interviewed for the Project in 2000. The footage will be part of a promotional video on the new site.

And recently, the Project's office in the College of Communication was transformed into a photo studio.

Manuel Aviles-Santiago, the Project's graduate research assistant who oversees the Vietnam-era expansion, was photographed for a campaign to promote "The University of Texas at Austin Graduate School 100 Year Celebration."

Aviles-Santiago, a doctoral candidate in the School of Radio-Television-Film, focuses his studies on Puerto Rican soldiers currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan by using digital media, such as social networking sites like Facebook.

"The University of Texas at Austin has provided me with the tools to capture the stories of those Puerto Rican soldiers that remain untold," he's quoted as saying in the campaign material.

The Project was included in the new efforts because of its nationally recognized research, said Marsha Miller director of photography with the Office of Public Affairs.

"Your project highlights a group of people who have made significant contributions to our country but who have been under recognized for their important role in our national heritage, and it speaks directly to that group, as well as to all under served populations," Miller said.

She added that the Project has always worked well with the Office of Public Affairs.

Previously, the Project has been on the University's home page. The Project first appeared on UT's home page in 2004, under a banner that read "War Stories: World War II generation Latinos share memories through national journalism project." The site provided a link to a story about the Project.

In addition, the Project has appeared in several articles written for *The Daily Texan*, the student-run campus newspaper.

"All the exposure is a positive thing," Rivas-Rodriguez said.

"It shows how the University values our work and uses it to demonstrate the great offerings on campus," she said. "We're proud to be part of UT-Austin."

# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: LATEST BOOKS

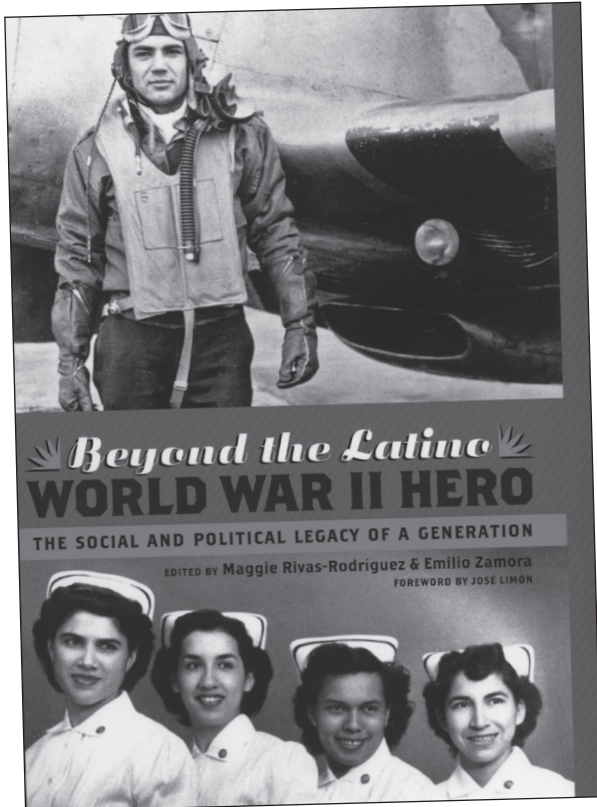
The Project is beginning to schedule signings for its latest book, *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation* (University of Texas, 2009).

Pictured on the right—Dr. Emilio Zamora and Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, co-editors of *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation*, at the University of Texas, Austin.

Please call our office at 512-471-1924 if you would like to arrange a book signing in your area.



(Photo by Marc Hamel)



(Cover Art courtesy of University of Texas Press)

The book (pictured on the left) is an anthology, edited by Rivas-Rodriguez, project director, and Zamora, a UT history professor. It features 9 chapters dealing with:

- Patriotism, Racism and Memory—by Richard Griswold del Castillo, (San Diego State University)
- Spanish-language radio and the WWII generation—by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, (UT-Austin)
- The Mexican American migrant worker—by Dionicio Valdés, (Michigan State University)
- Latinas of the WWII generation—by Joanne Sanchez, (St. Edwards University, Austin)
- Mexican nationals serving in the U.S. Military—by Emilio Zamora, (UT-Austin)
- Puerto Rican soldiers confronting discrimination—by Silvia Alvarez de Curbelo, (University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus)
- Spirituality on the battleground—by Rea Ann Trotter, Independent Scholar, (Colorado)
- PTSD and the Latino WWII veteran—by Ricardo Ainslie and Daphny Domínguez, (UT-Austin)
- The effect of Mexican American WWII mothers on their daughters—by Brenda Sendejo, (UT-Austin)

This book also includes excerpts from Project interviews, as well as 38 photos from our archives.

Purchase a copy today by visiting the UT Press Web site: <http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/rivbey.html>



Joe Bernal at age 17 in Salinas, Calif. on September 1, 1945.



Placida Barrera, picture taken Oct. 21, 1948 in Rio Grande City, Texas.  
Original inscription reads:  
Roma, TX, Oct. 31  
To a nice friend:  
Mundo.  
with best wishes,  
Placida



# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: SAM CORONADO RECEPTION



Arturo Madrid, professor at Trinity University in San Antonio, and Antonia Castaneda, of St. Mary's University, San Antonio, were high bidders on one of the unframed prints created by Sam Coronado.



Patricia Portales shares a laugh with artist Sam Coronado as she admires one of his prints. Portales is an instructor at San Antonio College and a doctoral student at UTSA who is collaborating on a new anthology from the WWII Project.



Evelyn Jasso Garcia, a longtime volunteer for the Project, views some of the artwork.

On November 6, Dr. Ricardo Romo, president of The University of Texas at San Antonio, generously hosted a reception to celebrate the art of Sam Coronado which featured images from the Project at the Institute of Texan Cultures.

In 2007, Coronado donated several pieces of original art he created around photos from the Project and other sources. Among the images was Romo's own father, Henry Romo, who served in WWII.

"The event was a celebration and a tribute to the WWII veterans that served our country proudly," Coronado said. "My art was specifically created for such an event, and it was an honor to contribute to The U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project."

The event also served as a fundraiser for the Project; proceeds will ensure we are able to continue our expansion effort, as we look into the Korean and Vietnam eras.

Patricia Portales, a scholar at UTSA and a contributor to the upcoming book, "Beyond the Latino WWII Hero: the Social and Political Legacy of a Generation" purchased a piece titled "Latinas."

"When I walked into Sam Coronado's 'Corazon' exhibit, the piece titled 'Latinas' was the first I saw," Portales said. "Having studied the roles Chicanas served during WWII, I feel the piece illustrates their vital contributions to the war effort."

Portales added that the print—which has a soldadera imprinted in the background with Coronado created photographs of WWII-era women in the foreground—also invokes the history of women in the military.

"I plan to display this piece in my office at San Antonio College, where I know it will ignite my students' interest in the contributions of our predecessors," Portales said.

The Project also wishes to extend special thanks to Arturo Almeida, curator for the UTSA art collection, and Denise Villarreal, special events coordinator for the Institute of Texan Cultures, for ensuring that the event was a success.

"It was a beautiful venue for these wonderful art pieces. It's especially fitting to hold at the Institute for Texan Cultures, which celebrates the richness of our state's diversity," said Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, project director.

Purchase online  
while supplies last!



A few of the pieces Sam Coronado donated are available for purchase online. Proceeds benefit the Project, and are much appreciated!

Please visit the following Web site to purchase a piece of Sam's art, as well as donate to the Project: <http://www.serieproject.org/>.



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JIM ESTRADA

(Photo by Marc Hamel)



Jim Estrada, chairman and chief executive officer of Estrada Communications Group, Inc. (ECG), first learned about the Project in 2007, while presenting on a panel with Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez at the National Association of Hispanic Journalists convention in San Jose, Calif. in 2007.

The panel was entitled, “Missing in Action: The Pattern of Erasing Latinos from History and Coverage.”

“As a military veteran, the presenters and their subjects struck a chord. Inasmuch as Maggie and I were in the same city it was logical that we collaborate on projects of mutual interest,” Estrada said.

*That collaboration turned into a partnership that led to a successful 10th Anniversary event. We’re proud to count Jim among our friends.*

## **Tell us a little bit about Estrada Communications.**

The family-owned agency specializes in integrated marketing communications directed at the U.S. Hispanic population and is recognized as one of the top U.S. agencies in its field.

With over 40 years of general and ethnic corporate marketing and

**NAME:** Jim Estrada

**BIRTH DATE:** March 11, 1943

**BIRTH PLACE:** San Pedro, Calif.

**RESIDENCE:** Austin, Texas

public relations experience, I have been referred to as a pioneer in ethnic marketing communications. In 1992, after an illustrious corporate career, I founded ECG in San Antonio, Texas. The firm provided clients a combination of ethnic and cultural expertise and traditional communications experience designed to attain marketing and image-building objectives aimed at the growing U.S. Hispanic Consumer Market (HCM).

## **What made you decide to volunteer with the Project?**

The fact that the project was celebrating its 10th anniversary and had never conducted a promotional or development campaign was challenging. If the staff had kept the project viable for such a long time, it was time the Latino community provided some financial and moral support for such an important educational initiative.

## **What advice do you have for future volunteers?**

As Hispanic population numbers continue to explode, future leaders must be prepared to fill positions of power and influence. Latinos are approximately 25 percent of all incoming kindergarten students in the USA. It is critical they learn not only how to navigate mainstream civic, professional, and social landscapes; but, they must also gain the pride of knowing that their predecessors have contributed to the growth and development of this great nation. This is only possible with the participation of individuals who understand the obligation to

help our youth reach their potential.

We need to support programs and projects that ensure our inclusion in the history of the United States of America. Projects like the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project ensure Latino history and contributions are recorded and shared with students and their parents. Chronicling overlooked and omitted histories will result in a greater number of proud, responsible citizens and success stories. The rewards of volunteering in such efforts are priceless.

## **Why do you think it’s important for people to be involved in projects like this one?**

Any educational initiative that provides positive reinforcement for the social and psychological advancement of the Latino community demands support from those who benefit from the sacrifices and contributions made by earlier generations. The lack of documentation related to Latino contributions to our nation’s growth and progress has had a great influence on our youth, which I believe is manifested in high-school dropout rates associated with Latino students. Our children must have positive examples and role models if we want them to establish healthy attitudes about themselves and their heritage. As Latino consumer, taxpayer, workforce and voter numbers continue to increase; we have an opportunity to ensure our community’s positive contributions are incorporated into educational curricula. This project accomplishes that!

## LATINO/AS AND WWII: MOBILITY, AGENCY AND IDEOLOGY DURING WORLD WAR II



Pictured above, Top row: Luis Alvarez, Pete Haney, Ben Olguin, Jordan Beltran Gonzales. Bottom row: Marianne Bueno, Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Patricia Portales.

Even before the latest book had been delivered to the loading dock of the University of Texas Press, work was beginning on the Project's next volume. This one will examine how empowered Latinos and Latinas of the WWII generation transformed their communities into better environments for themselves and others.

Editors will be Project Director Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez and Dr. Ben Olguin of the English Department at the University of Texas at San Antonio. The University of Texas Press will publish this book, tentatively scheduled for publication in 2011.

The magic of producing these books is in the "work-shopping" of the chapters—full-day closed discussions among the writers, readings of partially-completed treatments, asking one another questions, all in the spirit of building a cohesive body of a book. Not all the writers could attend the Oct. 2 all-day workshop, held at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection. Those who weren't there will be working closely via phone and email.

Olguin and Rivas-Rodriguez have recruited a small group of writers to the project, including (in order of how the manuscripts will likely appear in the book):

1. Rea Ann Trotter, Independent Scholar, Colorado—"Demography of the WWII generation."
2. Pete Haney, Independent Scholar, of Colorado—who will detail the world of Mexican American entertainment in "Carpas," a form of vaudeville.
3. Julian Gonzalez-Heilig, Asst. Professor, Education, UT-Austin—In development; broadly, area of education.
4. Emilio Zamora, Professor, History, UT Austin—In development; broadly, education and the non-citizen serviceman.
5. Felix Gutierrez, Professor, Journalism, University of Southern California—"The Mexican Voice [newspaper] Goes to War."
6. Marianne Bueno, professor of Chicano Studies at the University of Minnesota—"Castañeda and the FEPC."
7. Patricia Portales, instructor at San Antonio College and Ph.D. student, English, at UTSA—"Tejanas on the Homefront: Women, Torpedos and War in Mexican American WWII Literature."
8. Luis Alvarez, Assoc. Professor, University of California, San Diego—"Latino Soldiering: Military Duty and Dignity during World War II."
9. Ben Olguin, Assoc. Professor, English, UTSA—"Warfare and Masculinity in WWII."
10. Cuban Americans and World War II—Unassigned
11. Rea Ann Trotter, Independent Scholar, Colorado—"Hispanic aviators."
12. Martha Menchaca, Professor, Anthropology, UT Austin—"Civil Service jobs and the WWII generation."
13. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Assoc. Professor, Journalism, UT Austin—In development; Latino radio pioneers.
14. Unassigned—In development, scholar pioneers.
15. Jordan Beltran Gonzales, Ph.D. student, History, University of California at Berkeley—"Archival Power and Counterstories of the Bataan Death March from the Philippines and New Mexico."
16. Yazmin Lazcano, Ph.D. student, English, Arizona State University—"The mobilization effect of Ken Burns' The War."

Please visit our Web site— <http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/>  
We are always adding new stories and photos.



Current Spotlight:  
Henrietta Lopez Rivas  
*Read more about her and  
others on our Web site.*



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