



Olivia Valdez

February 19, 1922 - April 7, 2016

Olivia Valdez Peña was born on February 19, 1922 in Agujita, Coahuila. She married Napoleon T. Valdez, a War World II veteran, on March 23, 1946. This marriage brought Olivia to San Antonio. Her marriage to Polito, as he was known, lasted 41 years, until he expired in 1987. A short time in relative terms but long in values. This couple paired up to swim against the current. In the early 1960's when the population of San Antonio started running to suburbia, they ran in the opposite direction—to the inner city. They had a vision of how to provide opportunities to those who were lacking it.

Their belief was not only to invest in socially deprived areas but to move in and live among the underserved. This vision paid off.

They wanted to be role models for others of how to be successful and their formula was simple: extraordinary work ethics and humility. When the Victoria Courts public housing was built in downtown's southeast corner many in those neighborhoods started emptying their homes because they considered it "undesirable." Olivia and Polito purchased two blocks of dilapidated houses across the street from the courts, restored them, lived in one, and rented the others to low income tenants. Olivia cleaned houses and Polito was the handyman. Then Hemisfair came and purchased their two blocks of houses for a generous amount. With those proceeds, in 1969, they purchased houses along Durango Avenue and in the Lavaca neighborhood. Still too close to the Victoria Courts, no one wanted to live by areas with too much poverty. Well they did. They moved in to a house on

Riddle Street. In 1970 H.E.B. grocers purchased two of their Victorian houses that stand out majestically on Cesar Chavez avenue.

Olivia's final home is on Lavaca St. Thanks in part to this couple, the Lavaca neighborhood and Southtown are some of the most desirable communities where a diversity of people have come to live together.

Olivia passed away on April 7th, 2016. She was preceded by spouse Napoleon Tovar Valdez, brothers Enrique, Pedro, y Jose Maria Peña Garza, and sister Elva Treviño Peña ... She is survived by sisters Olga Ortiz and Zulema Carrillo Peña, and brothers Lauro Peña Garza.