

A Joyful Heart

The Life & Ministry of Mary Lou (Figueroa) Piña

Edited by
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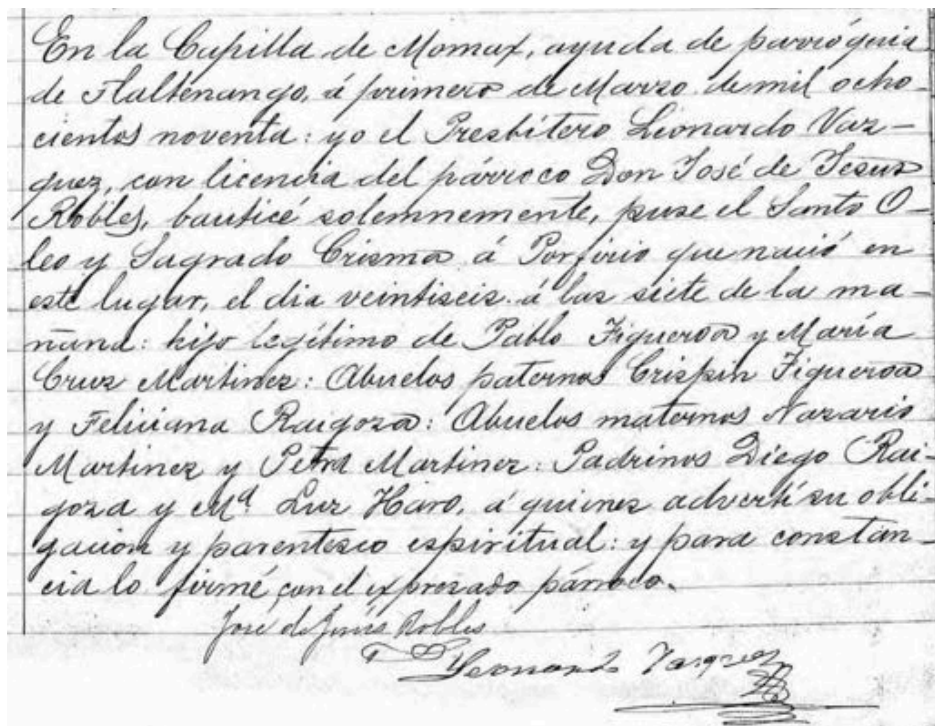
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Mary Lou (Figueroa) Piña was born on November 26, 1932 in Precinct 3 of Washington County, outside of Brenham, Texas. Mary Lou was named for her Spanish-speaking mother, María Luz, whose name was anglicized as "Lois." Both of Mary Lou's parents came to the United States from Zacatecas, Mexico.

On March 1, 1890, Mary Lou's father, Porfirio Figueroa was baptized by Father Leonardo Vázquez at the *Capilla de Momax* (Momax Chapel), which was under the purview of the Roman Catholic parish in Tlaltenango, Zacatecas, led by Father José de Jesús Robles. Porfirio's baptismal record states that he was born at 7:00 a.m. on February 26, 1890; in contrast, his headstone at St. Mary Catholic Cemetery (present-day Calvary Cemetery) in Brenham, Texas suggests that he was born on February 29, 1890, a date that never existed in history. Porfirio's baptismal record shares that he was the legitimate son of Pablo Figueroa and María Cruz Martínez. His paternal grandparents were Crispín Figueroa and Feliciano Raigoza, and his maternal grandparents were Nazario Martínez and Petra Martínez. Porfirio's godparents were Diego Raigoza and María Luz Haro.

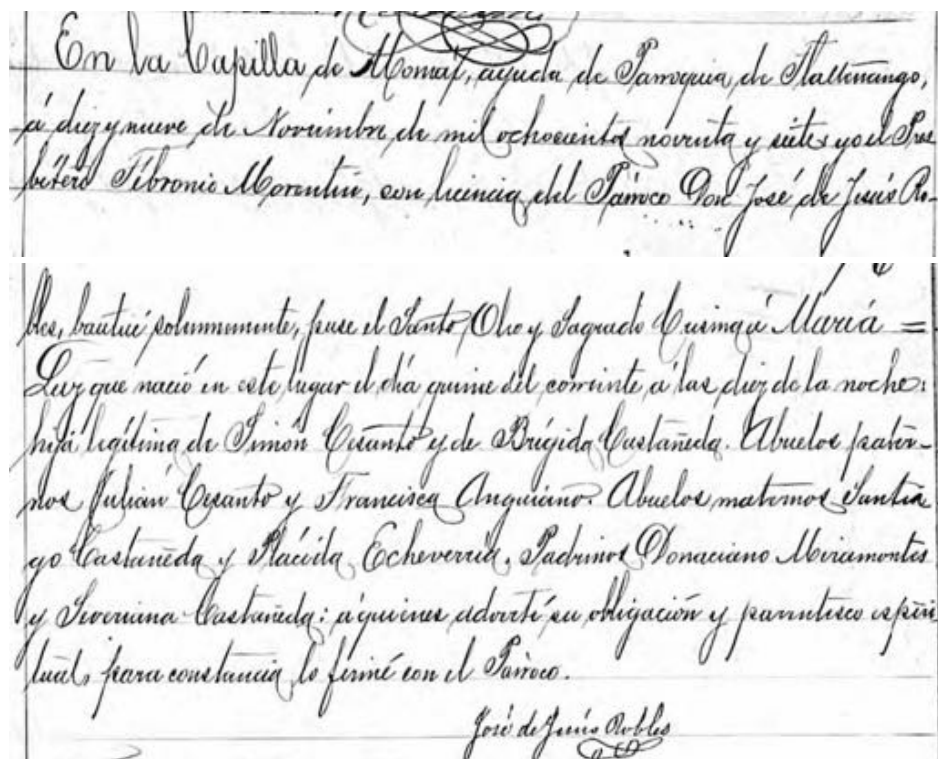


En la Capilla de Momax, ayuda de parroquia de Tlaltenango, á primero de Marzo de mil ochocientos noventa: yo el Presbitero Leonardo Vázquez, con licencia del párroco Don José de Jesús Robles, bauticé solemnemente, puse el Santo Oleo y Sagrado Cisma á Porfirio que nació en este lugar, el día veintiseis á las siete de la mañana: hijo legítimo de Pablo Figueroa y María Cruz Martínez: Abuelos paternos Crispín Figueroa y Feliciano Raigoza: Abuelos maternos Nazario Martínez y Petra Martínez: Padrinos Diego Raigoza y M^{te} Luz Haro, á quienes advierto en obligación y parentesco espiritual: y para constancia lo firmé con el y probado párroco.

José de Jesús Robles
Leonardo Vázquez

The March 1, 1890 baptismal record of Porfirio Figueroa.

Mary Lou's mother, María Luz "Lois" (Cesanto) Figueroa, was born to Simón Cesanto and Brígida Castañeda. Her mausoleum cover at Assumption Cemetery in Austin, Texas states that she was born on December 14, 1897, but her baptismal record notes that she was born at 10:00 p.m. on November 15, 1897 in Momax, Zacatecas, Mexico. On November 19, 1897, María Luz was baptized by Father Febronio Morentín at the *Capilla de Momax* (Momax Chapel), which was under the purview of the Roman Catholic parish in Tlaltenango, Zacatecas, which was led by Father José de Jesús Robles. María Luz's baptismal record shares that she was the legitimate daughter of Simón Cesanto and Brígida Castañeda. Her paternal grandparents were Julián Cesanto and Francisca Anguiano, and her maternal grandparents were Santiago Castañeda and Plácida Echeverría. María Luz's godparents were Donaciano Miramontes and Severiana Castañeda.



En la Capilla de Momax, ayuntamiento de Tlaltenango,
a diez y nueve de Noviembre de mil ochocientos noventa y siete yo el P.
Febronio Morentín, con licencia del Párroco Don José de Jesús R.
baptizé solemnemente, fuese el Santo Oleo y Sagrado Quinquá María =
Luz que nació en este lugar el día quince del corriente a las diez de la noche.
hija legítima de Simón Cesanto y de Brígida Castañeda. Abuelos patér-
nos Julián Cesanto y Francisca Anguiano. Abuelos maternos San-
tiago Castañeda y Plácida Echeverría. Padrinos Donaciano Miramontes
y Severiana Castañeda; a quienes advertí su obligación y prometí su espi-
ritual para constancia lo firmé con el Párroco.

José de Jesús Robles

The November 19, 1897 baptismal record of María Luz "Lois" (Cesanto) Figueroa.

On April 26, 1913, Porfirio Figueroa and María Luz Cesanto appeared in Momax, Zacatecas before Judge and Civil Registrar Eufrosino Campos, to register for civil marriage. Porfirio testified that he was a 20-year-old, single laborer who lived in Momax, the legitimate son of Pablo Figueroa, living, and Cruz Martínez, deceased. Luz testified that she was a 15-year-old resident of San Juan, a community 15 kilometers south of Momax, Zacatecas, Mexico. She was the legitimate daughter of Simón Cesanto, living, and Francisca Angiana, deceased. (Contrary to what the record states, Francisca was Luz's paternal grandmother, not her mother.) Witnesses included Antonio Figueroa, Carmen Ureña, Eligio Huizar and Pedro M. Figueroa, all married adults of that area. Luz's father, who was not present, was noted "por haber negado su consentimiento [for having denied his consent]." Judge Campos ruled that the couple could be married after 15 days and two publications of marriage banns.

Número 33 En Momax a 26 de abril de 1913. Yo, Eufrosino Campos, Jefe del Registro Civil de este lugar, comparecí con manifestar Porfirio Figueroa, de 20 años, soltero, labrador, vecino de este lugar, hijo legítimo de Pablo Figueroa vivo y Cruz Martínez, fallecida, y Luz Cesanto, de 15 años, soltera, hija legítima de Simón Cesanto vivo y Francisca Angiana, fallecida. Ambos se comprometieron a casarse, y yo, como Jefe del Registro Civil, les hice saber que para que su matrimonio fuese legal, había que verificar su consentimiento de ambos, y para eso me presenté con los testigos que ellos me presentaron: Antonio Figueroa, Carmen Ureña, Eligio Huizar y Pedro M. Figueroa, todos casados, mayores de edad, y de este lugar. En presencia de dichos testigos, hice protesta de comparecer con verdad, y declarar con conocimiento de los pretendientes, que no tienen impedimento alguno, de los designados en el artículo 15 del presente Código, y en el artículo 16 del mismo, y que siempre han residido en los lugares indicados. Para presunción por ser menor de edad, fue habilitada de ella por haber negado su consentimiento su padre. En suscritos Jueces determino se hagan las publicaciones a que se refiere el artículo 14 del presente Código, por el término de quince días. Leída la presente, fueron conformes y firmó el que suscribe. - E. Campos. - Carmen Ureña. - Eligio Huizar. - Pedro M. Figueroa. - rubricaron.

The April 26, 1913 civil marriage record of Porfirio Figueroa & Luz Cesanto.

During the 1910s, Porfirio and María Luz (Cesanto) Figueroa gave birth to their first daughter:

- Teresa (Figueroa) López (1918-1988).

According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Porfirio and María Luz (Cesanto) Figueroa immigrated to the United States in 1919. If this is true, they crossed the border with their daughter, Theresa, who was roughly one year old.

At present, no record has been found for Porfirio and María Luz (Cesanto) Figueroa in the 1920 U.S. Census.

During the 1920s, Porfirio and María Luz (Cesanto) Figueroa gave birth to the following children:

- Lucía (Figueroa) Castillo (1921-2011),
- Eloisa (Figueroa) Chávez (1923-2020),
- Pascual or Pedro Figueroa (1924-1984),
- Benjamín "Ben" Figueroa (1926-2020),
- Martina (or Marta) Figueroa (1927-2017), and
- Porfirio "Pascual" Figueroa, Jr. (1929-2000).

During the 1930 U.S. Census, Porfirio and "Lois" (Cesanto) Figueroa lived in Precinct 3 of Washington County, just outside Brenham, Texas. The census, which was taken there on April 23, 1930, states that Porfirio (age 45, born in Mexico) lived with his wife, Lois (age 37, born in Mexico), and their seven children: Theresa (age 12), Lucille (age 8), Louetha (age 7), Percy (age 6), M__ (age 4), Martin (age 3) and Porfirio (age 14 months). Porfirio and Lois had immigrated to the U.S. in 1919, and both spoke Spanish. Porfirio was a farmer who rented his farm. He was unable to read, but Lois and their three older children (who were enrolled in school) could read. All children were born in Texas. The census mistakenly suggests that Porfirio and Lois were married at age 25 and 17 respectively.

Figueroa, Porfirio	Male	45	YES	CL	MEX	1919	M	25	NO	YES	Married
Lois	Female	37	X	F	MEX	1919	F	17	NO	YES	Married
Theresa	Daughter	12	X	F	MEX	1918	S		YES	YES	Lucas
Lucille	Daughter	8	X	F	MEX	1922	S		YES	YES	Lucas
Louetha	Daughter	7	X	F	MEX	1923	S		YES	YES	Lucas
Percy	Son	6	X	M	MEX	1924	S		NO		Lucas
M__	Son	4	X	M	MEX	1926	S		NO		Lucas
Martin	Son	3	X	M	MEX	1927	S		NO		Lucas
Porfirio	Son	14	X	M	MEX	1919	S		NO		Lucas

The 1930 U.S. Census record for the family of Porfirio & Lois Figueroa.

During the 1930s, Porfirio and María Luz (Cesanto) Figueroa gave birth to the following children:

- Lázaro Figueroa (1931-1983),
- Guadalupe (Figueroa) Chapa, twin (1932-2012),
- María Luz "Mary Lou" (Figueroa) Piña, twin (1932-2021), and
- Paula "Pauline" (Figueroa) Hernández (1935-).

Mary Lou and her younger, twin sister, Guadalupe, were born on November 26, 1932. Interestingly, their birth certificates list them as female but respectively contain the names Silvestre and Conrado Figueroa. Their birth records state that they were born to Porfrws Figueroa and Lus Sesanto of Route 3 in Brenham, Texas. Porfrws was a 47-year-old Mexican initially listed as White on the document; the word "White" was then scratched out and substituted for "Mexican." Porfrws had farmed his entire life and now rented a farm. Lus was 43-years-old, born in Mexico, and worked as the "housekeeper of renter." Mary Lou and Guadalupe were their ninth and tenth surviving children, and four other children were enumerated as having died after birth.

1 PLACE OF BIRTH		TEXAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH				91605	
STATE OF TEXAS County of <u>Washington</u>		City or Precinct No. <u>3</u> No. _____ St. _____				Register No. _____	
2 FULL NAME OF CHILD <u>Silvestre Figueroa</u>		If child is not yet named, make supplemental report, as directed					
3. Sex <u>Female</u>	4. Twin, triplet, or other <u>1st</u>	5. Number, in order of birth <u>1st</u>	6. Premature <u>No</u>	7. Legitimate <u>Yes</u>	8. Date of birth <u>11-26-32</u>	(Month, day, year)	
9. Full name <u>Porfirio Figueroa</u>		10. Residence (usual place of abode) <u>Brenham, Tex</u>		11. Full maiden name <u>Lus Sesanto</u>		12. Age at last birthday <u>43</u>	
13. Birthplace (city or place) <u>Mexico</u>		14. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinster, sewer, bookkeeper, etc. <u>Renter on Farm</u>		15. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, sawmill, bank, etc. <u>Renter</u>		16. Date (month and year) last engaged in this work <u>all</u>	
17. Total time (years) spent in this work <u>all</u>		18. Birthplace (city or place) <u>Mexico</u>		19. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as housekeeper, typist, nurse, clerk, etc. <u>Housekeeper of Renter</u>		20. Industry or business in which work was done, as own home, lawyer's office, silk mill, etc. <u>Rented home</u>	
21. Date (month and year) last engaged in this work <u>all</u>		22. Total time (years) spent in this work <u>all</u>		23. Number of children of this mother (At time of this birth and including this child) <u>13</u>		(a) Born alive and now living <u>9</u> (b) Born alive but now dead <u>4</u> (c) Stillborn <u>none</u>	
24. If stillbirth, period of gestation _____ months or weeks		25. Cause of stillbirth _____		26. Before labor _____		During labor _____	
I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was born alive at <u>11:30 P.</u> M. on the date stated above.							
*When there was no attending physician or midwife, then the father, householder, etc., should make this return. A still-born child is one that neither breathes nor shows other evidence of life after birth.				(Signature) <u>F. N. Hodge M.D.</u> (Physician or midwife)			
Give name added from a supplemental Report _____				Address <u>Burnton Park</u>			
REGISTRAR				(23) FILED <u>Dec 2 1932</u> <u>H. B. Becker</u> Registrar			
(24) Were prophylactic precautions taken at time of birth to prevent ophthalmia neonatorum? Yes <u>Yes</u> No _____							

The 1932 birth certificate of Silvestre Figueroa, later corrected to Mary Lou Figueroa.

In 1991, Mary Lou’s sister, Martha, presented the necessary documentation to correct her sisters’ birth certificates. On Mary Lou’s birth record, her name was changed from Silvestre Figueroa to Mary Lou Figueroa, and her father’s name was changed from Porfrws Figueroa to Porfirio Figueroa. The record suggests that the change was made based on the certificate that Mary Lou received on the occasion of her First Communion at St. Ann Catholic Church in Somerville, Texas on May 27, 1945.

PART I. INFORMATION CONCERNING REGISTRANT AS SHOWN ON ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE.			
REGISTRANT'S FULL NAME SILVESTRE FIGUEROA		DATE OF BIRTH NOVEMBER 26, 1932	
PLACE OF BIRTH PRECINCT 3, WASHINGTON COUNTY, TX		STATE FILE NO. 91605	
PART II. ITEMS ON ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE TO BE CORRECTED.			
ITEM OR ITEM NO.	ENTRY ON ORIGINAL CERTIFICATE	CORRECT INFORMATION	
2	SILVESTRE FIGUEROA	MARY LOU FIGUEROA	
9	PORFRWS FIGUEROA	PORFIRIO FIGUEROA	
18	LUZ SESANTO	LUZ SESANTO	
PART III. ABSTRACT OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE.			
TYPE OF DOCUMENT	DATE OF ORIGINAL ENTRY	BY WHOM ISSUED AND SIGNED	DATE ISSUED
AFFIDAVIT OF MARTHA S. FIGUEROA	6/27/1991	DEBORAH A. ESQUIVEL NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF TEXAS	6/27/1991
CERTIFICATION OF FIRST COMMUNION CERTIFICATE, ST. ANN'S CHURCH	5-27-1945	PASTOR, SOMERVILLE, TEXAS	5-27-1945
PART IV. PERSON REQUESTING AMENDMENT.			
NAME MARTHA S. FIGUEROA	ADDRESS 423 COUNTRY ROAD SOMERVILLE, TX	RELATIONSHIP TO REGISTRANT SISTER	
PART V. CERTIFICATION BY STATE REGISTRAR.			
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I HAVE EXAMINED THE DOCUMENTS LISTED ABOVE AND THAT THE ABSTRACTS TRULY AND CORRECTLY SET FORTH THE CONTENTS OF THE SAME.			
DATE FILED 6/27/1991		STATE REGISTRAR 	

Now corrected, the Texas registry of births listed their names as Lupe and Mary Lou and their parents’ names as Porfilio/ Porfirio Figueroa and Luz Sesanto.

FIGUEROA, AMELIA	120	AUG 17	F	TREVINO, VICTORIA	FIGUEROA, MANUEL
FIGUEROA, ARMANDO	071	SEP 29	M	DE FIGUEROA, REFUGIO M.	FIGUEROA, ARNULFO
FIGUEROA, CLEMENTE	071	NOV 23	M	LOPEZ, YNEZ	FIGUEROA, JUAN
FIGUEROA, EDELMIRA	062	MAR 02	F	GARCIA, CECELIA	FIGUEROA, GONZALO
FIGUEROA, FIDEL	125	JUL 20	M	DEANDA, MANUELA	FIGUEROA, OCTAVIO
FIGUEROA, LUPE	239	NOV 26	F	SESANTO, LUZ	FIGUEROA, PORFIRIO
FIGUEROA, MARIA LUZ	015	JUN 30	F	BRUNER, FELICITAS	FIGUEROA, JESUS
FIGUEROA, MARY LOU	239	NOV 26	F	SESANTO, LUZ	FIGUEROA, PORFIRIO
FIGUEROA, THERESA	254	FEB 02	F	HERNANDEZ, YSIDRA	FIGUEROA, JUVENAL

The Texas birth register of all Figueroa children born in Texas in 1932, including Mary Lou and her twin sister, Guadalupe.

No record has been found of Mary Lou's baptism.

On September 30, 1935, when Mary Lou was two years old, her father, Porfirio Figueroa, died of heart failure at age 45. He farmed until September 18, then underwent a surgery on September 22. His death certificate suggests that he died of infection and jaundice as a result of that surgery.

1 PLACE OF DEATH STATE OF TEXAS COUNTY OF <u>Washington</u> CITY OR PRECINCT NO. <u>3</u>		TEXAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH		2 71220 Registrar's No.
Length of residence in city where death occurred <u>4</u> yrs. <u>0</u> mos. <u>0</u> days. How long in U. S. if foreign born? <u>0</u> yrs. <u>0</u> mos. <u>0</u> days.				
2 FULL NAME OF DECEASED <u>Porfirio Figueroa</u> RESIDENCE OF THE DECEASED No. <u>244</u> Street <u>3</u> City <u>Brenham</u> State <u>TX</u>				
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS		MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH		
1. SEX <u>Male</u>	4. COLOR OR RACE <u>Mexican</u>	5. Single ☒ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced ☐ (Write one word)	21. DATE OF DEATH <u>Sept. 30, 1935</u> (month, day, and year)	
6. DATE OF BIRTH <u>1890</u> (month, day, and year)		22. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>Sept. 18, 1935</u> to <u>Sept. 20, 1935</u> I last saw him alive on <u>9-30-</u> 19 <u>35</u> ; death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, at <u>11 P. M.</u> The principal cause of death and related causes of importance were as follows: <u>Heart failure</u>		
7. AGE <u>45</u> Years <u>0</u> Months <u>0</u> Days or <u>0</u> LESS than 1 day, <u>0</u> hrs. <u>0</u> min.		Other contributory causes of importance: <u>Exhaustion, jaundice</u>		
8. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, Sawyer, bookkeeper, etc.		Name of operation <u>Exhaustion, jaundice</u> date of <u>Sept. 22</u>		
9. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, saw mill, bank, etc.		What test confirmed diagnosis? <u>slab</u> Was there an autopsy? <u>Yes</u>		
10. Date deceased last worked at this occupation (month and year) <u>Sept. 18-35</u>		23. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following: Accident, suicide, or homicide? <u>None</u>		
11. Total time spent in this occupation <u>25</u> yrs.		Date of injury <u>Sept. 22, 1935</u>		
12. BIRTHPLACE (City or Town) <u>Mexico</u> (State or Country)		Where did injury occur? <u>Brenham, TX</u> (Specify city or town) Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in public place.		
13. NAME <u>Don't know</u>		Manner of injury <u>Heart failure</u>		
14. BIRTHPLACE (City or Town) <u>Mexico</u> (State or Country)		Nature of injury <u>Heart failure</u>		
15. MAIDEN NAME <u>Don't know</u>		24. Was disease or injury in any way related to occupation of deceased? <u>No</u>		
16. BIRTHPLACE (City or Town) <u>Mexico</u> (State or Country)		If so, specify <u>Heart failure</u>		
17. INFORMANT <u>Dr. J. C. Pres</u> (Address) <u>Brenham, TX, Rt. 3</u>		(Signed) <u>L. H. Martin</u> M. D. (Address) <u>Brenham, TX</u>		
18. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL <u>Sept 22, 1935</u> Place <u>Brenham, TX</u> Date <u>Oct 2, 1935</u>				
19. UNDERTAKER <u>Thos. Hutton & Co.</u> (Address) <u>Brenham, TX</u>				
20. SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR <u>W. A. Becker</u> FILE <u>100-1-1935</u> DATE <u>Nov 1, 1935</u>				

The 1935 death certificate of Porfirio Figueroa.

In a 2010 interview for *¡Viva Cristo Rey! An Oral History of the Roman Catholic Community in the Flats of Lower East Austin*, Mary Lou suggested that her father died of appendicitis, leaving her destined to a life of picking cotton, which she did from a young age. Before then, she recalled how her mother fed 14 children with a single chicken, often having only the chicken's feet or head for herself. She spoke of the treatment of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Texas at that time: "[If you were Mexican or Mexican-American,] you couldn't eat in some cafes. You couldn't even go in. You had to order food from another window."

By the time of the 1940 U.S. Census, Mary Lou lived with her family in Justice Precinct 5 of Washington County, Texas. The census was taken there on April 3, 1940 by Joe G. Klingsfon, whose lack of knowledge of the Spanish language is glaring: He spelled Eloisa as "Loise," Pedro as "Petro," Benjamín as "Mejamin," and Lázaro as "Lasarich."

At the time of the 1940 U.S. Census, Mary Lou's mother, Luz (age 45), lived with her children: Lucía (age 18), Eloisa (age 16), Pedro (age 15), Benjamín (age 13), Martina (age 11), Pascual (age 10), Lázaro (age 8), Lupe (age 7), Luz (age 7), and Pauline (age 5). Mary Lou was listed in the 1940 U.S. Census as "Luz." Other members of the household included Suzana (age 2) and Manerato (less than 1 year). Seven children, from Pedro to Luz, attended school. Mary Lou's mother was an unemployed widow from Mexico who never attended school and who enjoyed no income at that time.

—	Lucia	Daughter	2	7	W	18	S	No	5
—	Loise	Daughter	2	7	W	16	S	No	5
—	Petro	Son	2	7	W	15	S	No	5
—	Mejamin	Daughter	2	7	W	13	S	No	4
—	Martina	Daughter	2	7	W	11	S	No	2
—	Pascual	Son	2	7	W	10	S	No	2
—	Lasarich	Son	2	7	W	8	S	No	1
—	Lupe	Daughter	2	7	W	7	S	No	0
—	Luz	Daughter	2	7	W	7	S	No	0
—	Pauline	Daughter	2	7	W	5	S	No	0
—	Suzana	Daughter	2	7	W	2	S	No	0
—	Manerato	Son	2	7	W	12	S	No	0

*The children of Luz Figueroa in the 1940 U.S. Census.
(Luz was listed on the previous page of the census.)*

In *¡Viva Cristo Rey! An Oral History of the Roman Catholic Community in the Flats of Lower East Austin*, Mary Lou recalled moving to Austin at age 13, likely in 1946, where her family attended Cristo Rey Catholic Church and where Mary Lou was part of the *Hijas de María* [Daughters of Mary], a devotional group consisting solely of young women. Mary Lou remembered, "We would dress in white and blue, and we prayed to the Blessed Mother."



A photo of Mary Lou Figueroa,
signed "Love, Mary S.F."

By the time of the 1950 U.S. Census, Mary Lou lived with her family in Austin, Texas. The census was taken there on April 3, 1950 by Ellen H. Guerrero. Mary Lou's household included her mother, Luz Figueroa (age 51, born in Mexico), who lived with her children: Ben (age 23), Marta (age 21), Pascual (age 20), Lázaro (age 19), Lupe (age 17), Maria (age 17), and Paula (age 14). Mary Lou was listed in the 1950 U.S. Census as "Maria." Other members of the household included Sue Ann (age 12), Mike (age 10), and Carolos (age 7). Six children worked, from Ben to Mary Lou. Mary Lou worked 45 hours per week as a waitress in a private club.

<i>Figueroa, Luz</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>Wd.</i>	<i>Mexico</i>
<i>—, Ben</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Marta</i>	<i>daughter</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Pascual</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Lázaro</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Lupe</i>	<i>daughter</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Maria</i>	<i>daughter</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Paula</i>	<i>daughter</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Sue Ann</i>	<i>daughter</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Mike</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>—, Carolos</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Neu</i>	<i>Texas</i>

The household of Luz Figueroa in the 1950 U.S. Census.

On August 18, 1952, Mary Lou married Martin Piña, the son of Silverio and Armada (Guerra) Piña, in a ceremony officiated by Father Jerome Artola Olaizola, O.M.I, a priest of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate who served as pastor of Cristo Rey Catholic Church in Austin, Texas from 1951 to 1953. Mary Lou's name is listed as Mary Figuero on her marriage certificate.



Martin & Mary Lou (Figueroa) Piña

THE STATE OF TEXAS		No. <u>1299</u>
Marriage License		
COUNTY OF TRAVIS		
To any Regularly Licensed or Ordained Minister of the Gospel, Jewish Rabbi, Judge of the District or County Court, or any Justice of the Peace in the State of Texas		
GREETING:		
YOU ARE HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO SOLEMNIZE THE		
Rites of Matrimony		
Between Mr. <u>Martin Piña</u>		
and Miss <u>Mary Figuero</u>		
and make due return to the Clerk of the County Court of said County within sixty days thereafter, certifying your action under this License.		
WITNESS my official signature and seal of office at office in Austin,		
Texas, this the <u>13</u> day of <u>August</u>	EMILIE LIMBERG Clerk, County Court.	
A. D. <u>1952</u>	By <u>Marguerite Warren</u> Deputy.	
(SEAL)		
I, <u>J.A. Olaizola, O.M.I.</u> , hereby certify that on the		
<u>18th</u> day of <u>August</u> , A. D. <u>1952</u> , I united in Marriage Mr. <u>Martin Piña</u>		
and Miss <u>Mary Figuero</u> , the parties above named.		
WITNESS my hand this <u>18th</u> day of <u>August</u> , A. D. <u>1952</u> .		
Rev. J.A. Olaizola, O.M.I. Catholic Priest		
Returned and filed for record the <u>19</u> day of <u>Aug.</u> , 19 <u>52</u> , and recorded the <u>19</u>		
day of <u>Aug.</u> , 19 <u>52</u> .		
By <u>M. Morris</u> Deputy.		EMILIE LIMBERG County Clerk.
66 of 681 58		
THE STATE OF TEXAS		No. <u>1294</u>

The August 18, 1952 marriage record of Martin Piña & Mary Lou Figuero.

Martin and Mary Lou (Figueroa) Piña gave birth to six children:

- Julia “Judy” Piña (1953-),
- George J. Piña (1954-),
- Edward M. Piña, Sr. (1958-),
- Carmen (Piña) Ortiz (1961-),
- Eve M. (Piña) Ruiz (1965-), and
- Mario R. Piña (1971-).

Mary Lou was extremely proud of her children and grandchildren, who called her “Sita,” and she lined her walls and shelves with their photos. Martin and Mary Lou raised their children at their family home at 1129 Map Street in Austin, and Mary Lou often marveled that she lived in the same home for over 60 years.



Mary Lou & her adult children, 2020.

On May 26, 1991, when Mary Lou was 58, her mother, María Luz “Lois” (Cesanto) Figueroa, died at age 93. She is buried in the mausoleum of Assumption Cemetery in Austin, Texas, where her marker reads, “Our Strength and Our Love, Mother and Grandma.”

Mary Lou spoke with fondness of the years that she worked at McDonald's. One can imagine the smiling, welcoming presence that she provided to those who visited that restaurant.



Around 2000, Mary Lou became involved in the St. Francis of Assisi Joy Group, a ministry to senior adults and the bereaved at Cristo Rey Catholic Church. She attended the group's near-weekly meetings, prayed hundreds of rosaries with the Joy Group at local funeral homes, and assisted with the Joy Group's parish breakfast.

On May 29, 2005, when Mary Lou was 72, her husband, Martin, died as a result of Hodgkin's Disease at age 72. Martin and Mary Lou were married for nearly 53 years.



Mary Lou & her husband, Martin Piña.

Shortly thereafter, Mary Lou began dedicating herself wholeheartedly to her church. Dolores “Dottie” Chapa observes, “After her husband died, Mary Lou Piña got involved in every club at the church!” Rafaela Leal similarly shares, “Mary Lou was always willing to help in the kitchen or at the church in any way that she possibly could.” Father Roy Gomez notes that after her husband’s passing, “Mary Lou really spread her wings!”

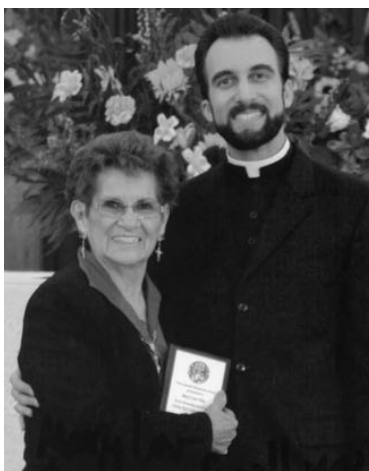
Mary Lou was most active as a Eucharistic minister and Joy Group member, but she also spent four to six hours in the church office each Sunday, helping to count the Sunday collections. Father Jayme Mathias, who pastored Cristo Rey from 2009 to 2011, recalls: “That was one dedicated group of volunteers: Helen Mendoza, with her mother, Inez, and her aunt, Dorothy Portillo, her sister and brother-in-law, Lily & David Reyes, and two friends who were part of the family: Guadalupe Felan and Mary Lou Piña. Mary Lou brought a lot of cheer – and great food – to that office!”

Father Roy Gomez recalls the *tamaladas* that Mary Lou hosted at her home for the Joy Group. They would make 200 dozens of *tamales* at a time at Mary Lou’s home, and most of them were sold by the time they were made!”

Beginning around 2010, Mary Lou also undertook the ministry of dialing all Joy Group members with news of rosaries and events—a veritable task in light of the fact that the Joy Group often had more than 30 or 40 active members at a time.

Beginning in 2010, Mary Lou opened her home to the lay missionaries of VIDES+USA, a ministry of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who served at Cristo Rey Catholic Church. Mary Lou would tell stories of the times when she hosted 20 or more young VIDES missionaries in her home, filling all her guests rooms and inch of her living room. In 2011-2012, Mary Lou opened her home for a year to Maggie Molfetas who served the Cristo Rey community at that time.

Father Jayme Mathias recalls, “When we initiated our *Christus Rex* awards program in 2009, to recognize those who so generously shared of their time, talent



Mary Lou receiving
the Christus Rex Award at
Cristo Rey Catholic Church, 2009.

and treasure, there was no question about Mary Lou being at the top of the list of award recipients. She was an absolute saint within that parish!

After the arrival of the Conventual Franciscan Friars of Mexico at Cristo Rey in 2012, when the spirit of Cristo Rey Catholic Church moved to the newly-birthing Holy Family Catholic Church, Mary Lou was part of that parish community from its very first Sunday, on March 11, 2012. Father Jayme remembers: "We celebrated our first Masses in our rectory at 1614 Willow Street, and Mary Lou was there from the start, with Inez Mendoza and Maggie Molfetas, making sure that we had breakfast tacos and other goodies after Mass!"

In April 2012, Holy Family moved to Los Dos Laredos, a dance hall at 8613 Lava Hill Road, where Mary Lou coordinated a weekly parish breakfast from 2012 to 2016. John Zavala recalls,

Mary Lou was a great leader of our breakfast groups, and she was always there for us. She was always running to Sam's and making sure we had the supplies we needed. If something needed to be done, Mary Lou was there, volunteering. Mary Lou hosted our Pastoral Council at her home, where she fed us, and she and Mary Alice Cantu made the most delicious brisket tacos for our *jamaica*!

Rudy Nieto similarly recalls: "Mary Lou's breakfast was excellent. I always looked very forward to her breakfast, and she always greeted us with kindness, ready to nourish us! Mary Lou was a caring and loving soul in our parish. She is sorely missed and will always be remembered as welcoming and loving everyone."

Rudy's wife, Gloria Nieto, adds:

I didn't know Mary Lou before coming to Holy Family, but she greeted me as if she had always known me. She greeted us with open arms and spoke to us like family. She reminded me of my grandmother, who was always there for me. I was a stranger, but she treated me like she knew me very well. I miss Mary Lou and her beautiful smile.

Deacon Stephen recalls how his vocation to ordained ministry is partly tied to Mary Lou's invitation to the weekly Sunday breakfast:



*Mary Lou serving breakfast
at Holy Family Catholic Church.*

"When Jordan and I first came to Holy Family, we were too nervous to go to the breakfast after Mass," he says. "We went to our first breakfast because Mary Lou shuffled us over to the parish hall after Mass. If it weren't for her, I wouldn't have come to the parish hall, where I started talking to people and making connections here at Holy Family."

Leonard Gonzales shares a touching story of the love that Mary Lou shared with him:

Mary Lou came into my life after my mom passed away. She was a really good friend of my mom at the Conley-Guerrero "Social Club." I met Mary Lou at church, and she took me under her wing, and she'd bring me a little *atole* or taco for me to enjoy before Mass on Sunday. She said, "Your mom said that you liked *atole*, and she's not here anymore, so I'm going to make it for you." There were many times when she would ask me at church, "Leonard, are you going out to eat?" I'd say yes, and she'd say, "I'm going with you, and you're paying." She was a sweetheart. She'd call us and say, "I'm going to cook breakfast for y'all tomorrow." There are no words for the love that she shared with me. She amazed me: She was very self-sufficient, and she was a very sweet lady, always thinking about everybody else and not herself. She was a very giving lady.



Mary Lou & Leonard Gonzales

Leonard's wife, Waldine Gonzales, similarly recalls, "Leonard and I were so fortunate to have this beautiful loving lady in our lives. We prepared many breakfast meals together for our Holy Family families."

Mary Helen "Nena" Quintero remembers:

Mary Lou was always thinking about how to make money for the church. She'd say, "Nena, let's buy something to raffle off" or "Nena, if I buy something to raffle, will you make the tickets?" or "Nena, let's bake some cakes to raise money!" She was always thinking about how to raise money, so that we could get our church. That was her main goal: She wanted to see us in our own church. She was in a hurry to raise money to get that church built!

Rebecca Saenz remembers the tutelage that she received from Mary Lou – with respect to altar linens, the liturgy, and even cooking:

Mary Lou taught me how to care for the corporals and purificators. She gave me a step-by-step lesson on how to wash and iron them. Because the purificators contained the Blood of Christ, she washed them separately in a little tub, then poured the water onto her house plants – and she had a lot of plants! Mary Lou had a beautiful, humble home, filled with all sorts of saints and rosaries that had been given to her over the years. She treasured every single one of them. On occasion, she would give them as gifts and say, ‘I want you to have this.’ She and Father Roy taught me how to set up for Mass. She was a cup minister, and she taught me how to share the Blood of Christ. She also made the best hot chocolate on cold Sunday mornings!

Mary Lou often opened her home for church meetings. Parish clergy possess fond memories of the *chalupas* and pineapple upside-down cake that she would provide for regular Clergy Council meetings, which involved priests, deacons, seminarians and aspirants. Rebecca Saenz recalls:

Mary Lou would make a big pot of meat and a big pot of beans, and her specialty was *chalupas* (*tostadas*). She invited me to help, but she had everything set up. She would have bowls of fruit for her hungry priests, and she always served a pineapple upside-down cake for dessert. After we served dinner, she and I sat at a little table in her kitchen while the clergy met. Sometimes those meetings would go late, but she would still be there.

Aspirant Vincent Maldonado remembers:

I was always arriving late to Clergy Council meetings, after all the food was put away, but Mary Lou still put a plate of food in front of me, so that I could eat. She would say, “If you’re sitting at this table, we’re going to feed you.” She was a saint. When my mom would walk into church on Lava Hill Road, Mary Lou always gave my mom a big hug, and she would thank me for taking care of my mom, and she’d thank my mom for taking care of me. I knew Mary Lou before Holy Family, and when we first came to Holy Family, she was the

first one to greet me. She made us feel really good, really special.

Outside of her ministry to the church, Mary Lou loved to dance. Rafaela Leal summarizes, “Mary Lou was very religious, and she loved to dance!” Mary Lou was part of the senior adult *baile folklórico* group at the Conley-Guerrero Senior Adult Recreation Center in Austin, a group that fondly referred to itself as “recycled teenagers.” Mary Lou especially enjoyed wearing the many colorful dresses made by her and the members of her dance group. Rebecca Saenz recalls, “Mary Lou loved to talk about her dancing, and her shoes and dresses, and how much fun she had.”



*Mary Lou in one of
her baile folklórico dresses.*

Mary Lou is remembered for always dressing up for church. Rebecca Saenz recalls: “She was always ‘dressed to the nines,’ with her heels on, and with jackets, necklaces and earrings to match. She was a special, special lady.” Mary Lou’s niece, Mary Alice Cantu, similarly say:

Aunt Mary and I attended Holy Family Catholic Church. Almost every Sunday, before the pandemic, she would sit in the second row and save a seat for Andy and me. I would compliment her on how pretty and elegant she always looked. She would get up early and make breakfast tacos and her delicious oatmeal for the priests. She wanted to make sure they ate. She was a very caring person.

Mary Lou is also remembered for calling loved ones on their birthdays to sing to them “*Las Mañanitas*.” Waldine Gonzales says, “You could always count on a phone call on your birthday when Mary Lou would sing “*Las Mañanitas*” to you. We will miss those calls tremendously, and the ones when we would just talk. She was our second mother.” Mary Lou’s niece, Mary Alice Cantu, shares: “Mary Lou was my wakeup

call....I will miss her, especially on my birthday, when she would call and sing "*Las Mañanitas*."

Mary Lou continued singing until the end. Rebecca Saenz shares:

When Mary Lou was nearing death, Father Roy and I would visit her at her home, and she recognized us and sang songs to Mary for us. In my eyes, Mary Lou is a saint, and I truly miss her. I love seeing her picture every Sunday in our parish hall kitchen.



*Mary Lou with her niece,
Mary Alice Cantu at
Holy Family Catholic Church.*

Mary Lou (Figueroa) Piña was born to eternal life on February 7, 2021. A plaque with her image hangs in the kitchen of the parish hall at Holy Family Catholic Church, where those there continue to pray for the intercession of the matron saint of Holy Family breakfast groups.

Saint Mary Lou Piña, pray for us!



My favorite memories of Mary Lou...

Stories I've heard about Mary Lou...

Other reflections...