



Raul Benavides Rodriguez

December 14, 1927 - November 29, 2025

Raul B. Rodriguez, age 97, entered eternal rest on November 29, 2025, at his home in Harlingen, Texas. He was born on December 14, 1927, on a small ranch in Harlingen. He came from a pioneer family that dates back to 1868. He is preceded in death by his parents, Francisco V. and Lucia B. Rodriguez; his loving wife of 70 years, Maria Diamantina Vallejo-Rodriguez; a brother, Ramiro B. Rodriguez; a sister, Raquel R. Garcia; two sons, Roberto Rodriguez and Raul Rene Rodriguez; and a granddaughter, Sabrina Tolentino Pina.

He is survived by his daughters, Sylvia R. Aguilar (Lorenzo), Mary Helen R. Tolentino (Rolando), Rachel Hartanovich-Sanchez (JR), and Rose Mary Rodriguez, and daughter-in-law Rosario Suarez Rodriguez. Seven grandchildren: Reuben Rodriguez, Rebecca Rodriguez, Benjamin Tolentino, Vanessa T. Rocio, Samantha Hartanovich, William T. Hartanovich, and Raquel M. Hartanovich. Eight great-grandchildren: Holden Mason, Juno Ray, Genesis Tolentino, Ezra Tolentino, Seraphina Rocio, Catarina Rocio, Abrielle Rocio, Neriah Rocio, and Alejandro Raul Patino.

Raul believed in many things...First and foremost, God, his family, and then his country.

Raul attended Harlingen High School. At the age of 16, he enlisted in the

Texas State Guard and served in Company A, 26th Infantry Battalion (Army). At the age of 17, he enlisted in the Maritime Service (Merchant Marines), where he served on the S.S. Pennsylvania in the Pacific.

In 1945, after turning 18, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served with the 1st Marine Division in China, Headquarters Co. 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division. During WWII, he was stationed in China and on the Island of Guam. He was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps in 1948 and returned to Harlingen. He completed his Senior year of high school at Hanna High School in Brownsville, Texas, and graduated in 1948. He began his second career at J.C. Penny Inc., as a clerk and Salesman.

In June 1950, the War in Korea started, and on January 10, 1951, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. He served in Korea from 1951 to 1952 with the 13th Squadron, 3rd Bomb Wing, 5th Air Force. In December 1952, he was stationed in Florida at Eglin Air Force Base.

In July 1953, he volunteered for the Fighter Pilot and Observer School. He passed all the tests, including the flying board, but fortunately, the Korean War ended, so they no longer needed Pilots. He was offered Officer Candidate School, but did not accept it because, as he always said, "I wanted to be a flying officer, not a ground officer." He said he regretted not taking this offer, because he could have retired as a Lt. Colonel instead of a Tech. Sgt.

He married the love of his life, Maria Diamantina Vallejo, on April 14, 1954.

In 1955, he was sent to the island of Eniwetok, in the South Pacific. The Air Force was testing nuclear weapons. He was there for one year and returned to the U.S. in 1956. He served in several bases in the U.S, and abroad, including Kelly Air Force Base, Kirkland Air Force Base,

Tyndall Air Force Base, Eglin Air Force Base, and Itazuke Air Force Base (Japan), and Kadena Air Force Base (Okinawa).

In 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he was part of the first crew sent to MacDill Air Force Base (in Tampa). When the crisis was over, he returned to Tyndall Air Force Base.

In 1965, he volunteered for Embassy duty in Argentina. But orders were given to report to Kessler Air Force Base in Biloxi, MS., for Flight Instructor School. He didn't want to be an instructor, so he volunteered to go to the Vietnam War. They wouldn't send him because they needed him as an instructor. After completing Instructor Training, he got orders to report to the Inter American Air Force Academy in Panama, Canal Zone. This was in November 1965. After one month at the Academy, he told his commanding officer that he didn't want to be an instructor and volunteered for Vietnam a second time. His request was denied again due to his orders to complete 18 months at the Academy before he could be sent to Vietnam. After serving three years in Panama, he received orders to report to Hill Air Force Base in Utah, where he served as an Instructor for Officers and enlisted men who were being sent to Vietnam.

In 1969, he volunteered for Vietnam a third time, but again, they would not send him because he was needed as an instructor. He retired in December 1969, after serving over 20 years in the Marine Corps and the United States Air Force. He was awarded 15 medals and Ribbons, including the Air Force Instructor Wings and the Expert Rifle Medal.

He worked for Western and Southern Insurance Co., and John Hancock Insurance Co. in Ogden, Utah, upon his retirement from the service before moving back to his hometown of Harlingen, where he accepted a position with the State of Texas Department of Health & Human Resources. His desire for

service continued while he worked as a Social Worker for 15 years, retiring from his third career in December 1989. He lived the remainder of his years in Harlingen, with his loving wife by his side, watching his children and grandchildren start their own families.

He was a firm believer in the importance of education, stating many times to his family and even students when asked to serve as a guest speaker for Veterans Day ceremonies, "Education is the one thing no one can take away from you."

He demonstrated that belief when he graduated from South Most College in Brownsville with an associate degree, and then attended Pan American University from 1971 to 1974, while working full-time at the age of 44. He lacked only one semester and his Student Teaching to complete his degree in Elementary Education. Having a family to support, he could not quit working to complete his student teaching. However, his example inspired all his children to pursue post-secondary education, graduating with their bachelor's degrees, and his two youngest daughters earned their Masters' Degrees. His daughter Rachel Hartanovich-Sanchez followed in her father's footsteps, fulfilling his desire to become an educator.

His hobbies included hunting, fishing, and raising cattle. He had a great sense of humor and was a role model not only to all his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, but to anyone who had the honor of knowing him.

Visitation from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. with a rosary will be held on Monday, December 8, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at Rudy Garza Funeral Home.

Funeral mass to be held on December 9, 2025, at Queen of Peace Catholic Church, beginning at 10:00 a.m., followed by graveside burial with full Military

honors at Restlawn Memorial Cemetery.

Pallbearers will be Rolando Tolentino, Tiburcio Sanchez, Jr., Frankie Rodriguez, Douglas Rodriguez, Benjamin Tolentino, and William Hartanovich. Honorary Pallbearers: Leo De La Fuente, Ramiro Rodriguez Jr., Richard Rodriguez, and Ruben Vega.

The family would like to thank the following individuals for the love and care given to our father. Mrs. Mary Bazan (respice care provider), Dr. Mogbolahan, and Taiwo Kuye, the staff at Lindenwood Hospice and Palliative Care, with special thanks to Dr. Stephen Robinson, Vincente Garza, Irma Vasquez, and Anna Pizana.

Cemetery Details

Restlawn Memorial Park

14166 U.S. 83 Business
La Feria, TX 78559
(956) 797-2322

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 8. 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM (CT)

Rudy Garza Funeral Home - Harlingen
1702 E Harrison Ave
Harlingen, TX 78550
(956) 425-8200
rgfhtx@aol.com
<https://www.rudygarzafunerals.com>

Rosary

DEC 8. 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM (CT)

Rudy Garza Funeral Home - Harlingen
1702 E Harrison Ave
Harlingen, TX 78550
(956) 425-8200
rgfhtx@aol.com
<https://www.rudygarzafunerals.com>

Funeral Mass

DEC 9. 10:00 AM (CT)

Queen of Peace Catholic Church
1509 New Combes Hwy
Harlingen, TX 78550
(956) 423-0098

Graveside Service

DEC 9. 11:00 AM (CT)

Restlawn Memorial Park
14166 U.S. 83 Business
La Feria, TX 78559
(956) 797-2322

Tribute Wall



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Raul Benavides Rodriguez.*



December 08, 2025 at 09:05 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Raul Benavides Rodriguez.*



December 06, 2025 at 05:29 PM



“ *Bill and Olivia Hartanovich purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Raul Benavides Rodriguez.*



Bill and Olivia Hartanovich - December 06, 2025 at 01:29 PM



“ *Bill and Olivia Hartanovich planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Raul Benavides Rodriguez.*

Bill and Olivia Hartanovich - December 06, 2025 at 01:29 PM

BF

“ *Belen and Anne Garcia and family purchased the Enduring Grace for the family of Raul Benavides Rodriguez.*



Belen and Anne Garcia and family - December 05, 2025 at 09:12 PM

BF

“ *Belen and Anne Garcia and family planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Raul Benavides Rodriguez.*

Belen and Anne Garcia and family - December 05, 2025 at 09:12 PM