

DECLARATION OF ANGELA GONZALES VILLEGAS LOPEZ

I, Angela Villegas Lopez, declare as follows:

1. Sammy Lopez is my nephew. His mother Concepcion Villegas Lopez is my younger sister. My family has always called her Corrina. Corrina and I are two of our parents' 14 children who survived birth. I was the third born and Corrina was the sixth.

2. My great grandmother was Rosa. Rosa and my great grandfather had at least two children, my great uncle Diego and my grandmother Martina. My grandmother Martina and my grandfather Luis Gonzales had two children, my mother Concepcion and my aunt Cruz. My aunt Cruz is seven years younger than my mother.

3. My grandfather Luis Gonzales was killed in about 1918 when my mother was only ten years old and Cruz was only three years old. My grandmother walked with my mother and Cruz from their home in Chihuahua, Mexico to Texas. There were no paved bridges between Mexico and Texas back then. They had to cross the Rio Grande river on a wooden board. Once they reached Fabens, Texas, my grandmother Martina and my mother supported themselves and little Cruz by working in the cotton fields and washing clothes and cleaning for the farm and cotton workers.

4. My great grandmother Rosa eventually came to Fabens to live, also. She was a very deeply religious woman. The Catholic Church was very important to her, and she went there almost everyday to pray. She practically lived at the church. In her home she kept lots of statues of the Virgin Mary and Jesus and little religious shrines. She was a very proper woman.

She wore long skirts and long-sleeved shirts, and she kept her head covered with a shawl. She was also a kind woman who made dolls out of socks for me and my sisters and brothers.

5. My grandmother Martina also was a very religious woman. Because she had to work, she could not spend as much time in church as her mother Rosa. Martina died when she was about 50. My grandmother Rosa lived to be much older. Martina bought a two-room house up the street from the house my father built for us in Fabens.

6. When I was about seven years old and Corrina was about three years old, our grandmother Martina took in two young boys, Jose and Steven Vera. Jose and Steven are related to Martina, so when they were orphaned in Mexico around 1935 she let them move in with her. Jose was seven and Steven was ten, the same ages as me and my brother Luis. Martina's house was just a block from our house, so we grew up together.

7. My aunt Cruz still lived in Martina's house when Martina died. Cruz later moved to Phoenix, and my mother bought the house from Cruz so that Cruz would not sell it to strangers. My brother Luis moved his family from my parents' house into Martina's house when Cruz moved to Phoenix in the late 1940s.

8. Jose and Steven both joined the military when they were old enough. Jose joined the Army, and Steven joined the Navy. Jose had a house in Fabens, which he gave to my mother when he left. Steven later met and married Ofelia, and they settled in Sacramento, California. He passed away a few years ago, but Ofelia still lives in Sacramento.

9. Jose was a strange child, he was very quiet and kept to himself. When he was an adult, Jose was hospitalized in a mental institution in California. In 1997, he ended up at a rescue mission in El Paso. He was confused and had a memory problem. He did remember my

name, and someone from the mission called my home and left a message for me to pick Jose up. I went to get Jose, but he did not recognize me. He was paranoid and wanted proof that I was really Angela. I showed him my identification, but Jose still did not believe I was Angela. He did not seem to trust me or anyone at the mission. Someone from Social Services later called me about becoming Jose's guardian. I wanted to help Jose, but he was too far gone for me to handle. He was always very neat and orderly when we were growing up. But, he was so dirty when I saw him at the mission that I almost did not recognize him. He refused to take a bath. He had no shoes. The things he said made no sense. Eventually, Jose was sent by bus to his sister-in-law Ofelia in Sacramento. She met him at the bus station, but he did not want to go home with her. He kept insisting that she bring Steven to the station. He did not remember that Steven was dead. The last I heard, Jose was in a mental institution in Sacramento.

10. We had less contact with my father's family when we were growing up because they mostly stayed in Mexico. My father returned to his parents' home in Mexico a few times when most of us children were older. I went with him once in about 1946 after I was married. My father took Corrina and our sister Maria a few years later to visit his family in Mexico. Corrina and Maria were teenagers.

11. My father's family was from Curvea De Torro, which is in the mountains of Mexico. It took us a couple of days to get there. We traveled by train to Chihuahua and then by another train to Creel. In Creel we stayed with my father's brother Pablo. From Creel we rode all day by horse back. Some of the ridges we climbed were so steep that the horses leaned sideways into the mountain. Parts of the trail were so narrow that the horses could barely walk. We also crossed through a creek. The most shallow part we could find came up to the horses'

chests and over our legs. My fathers shoes were ruined. The next day, I was so sore from riding that I could barely walk.

12. My father's mother Maria was a Tarahumara Indian. She was a very small woman with long black braided hair. She was blind and widowed, but she supported herself by weaving baskets. She and the other people in her village lived by barter. They lived near some caves which they used for storing things. I saw a cave so big we could not see the end of it.

13. My father's father was from Spain, but he met my grandmother Maria in her village in Mexico. He passed away before I visited Mexico.

14. My father has three sisters and two brothers. One of his brothers, Jose Blanco, was adopted. Jose Blanco moved to Northern California when he grew up. My father's sister Julia left their village with a man and never returned. The family never heard from her again and does not know what happened to her. My father's brother Pablo moved to Creel, Mexico where he later died. My father's sister Maria moved to San Juanita, Mexico.

15. When my father came to the United States, he worked in the cotton fields near Fabens. He met and married my mother in Fabens. He and my mother had two sons in Fabens, my brother Antonio born in 1923 and my brother Luis born in 1924. Antonio died when he was only two years old. After Antonio died, my parents traveled to New Mexico, Arizona and California looking for work. I was born in Calipatria near San Diego, California in 1928, and my brother Alfredo was born near Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1929. Eventually my parents returned with us to Fabens, Texas where they had ten more children that survived birth. Although my sister Julia, who was born during the depression, only lived a few months.

16. My father got a job with the railroad in El Paso County, but not in Fabens, in the

1930s. The work was too far from Fabens for the workers to live in town, so we lived in railroad section housing in Sierra Blanca, which is about 40 miles from Fabens. Sierra Blanca was not really a town back then, just the name of that part of El Paso County. There was no school in Sierra Blanca, and no bus that went there. So during the school year, my brothers Luis and Freddie and I lived in Fabens with grandmother Martina and great grandmother Rosa so we could attend some school. My younger brothers and sisters stayed with our parents. On weekends my parents and younger brothers and sisters came to Fabens where my father worked to build a house for us. After he finished the house, my mother rented it to others until my father could get work closer to Fabens and we could move into it ourselves. Eventually the public bus came close enough to Sierra Blanca that Luis, Freddie and I could walk to the bus stop and take the bus to school in Fort Hancock, and we moved back in with our parents in Sierra Blanca.

17. There was nothing in the railroad section housing other than the flat-roofed buildings we lived in. There was not even a phone. Because there were no stores and nowhere else to buy or grow food, we had to stock up with food from Fabens on weekends or go hungry during the week. We could only get a ride to Fabens on the weekends, so it was hard to get fresh vegetables and we ate mostly canned vegetables like peas, corn and beans. The workers were able to keep animals next to the housing. We raised chickens, rabbits and sometimes pigs. Dad killed a pig each Christmas. The pig gave us enough lard to cook with for months afterward. After the lard from the Christmas pig ran out, we had to buy lard which was hard to find and expensive in Fabens.

18. Each railroad worker was assigned rooms according to the number of people in his family, and each family got a wood burning stove. The building we lived in had eight rooms.

We got two of the rooms for my parents, Luis, Angela, Alfredo, Josefina, Corrina and my baby sister Maria.

19. The train brought water to Sierra Blanca which then was stored in a cement well. We did not have running water inside the building. We did not have any indoor plumbing and used the bathroom outside. There was only one outhouse for all the workers and their families, so we often had to use the bathroom in the woods. There was no electricity in the section housing until just before we moved out, so we had no refrigerator or electric heating. In the summer time, we kept ice in a chest that doubled as a table. But the ice did not last very long in the heat, and trains only brought ice every two or three weeks to the section housing. In winter, my mother tried to keep us warm by filling our tin wash tub with sand, burning wood in the sand and then dragging the tub of warm sand and ashes inside.

20. We stayed in the railroad section housing for 3 or 4 years until the time my father got really sick. He got food poisoning and had to be taken to the city of El Paso to be hospitalized. When he got out of the hospital, the railroad transferred him to Fabens and we moved into the house he built. We felt like we were living in glory when we moved to Fabens. We had our own house in a town with stores, a school and a couple of bars. People could walk in the streets in the middle of the night. I was not afraid of anything in Fabens back then. I was 11 or 12 years old and Corrina was 6 or 7 when we moved to Fabens.

21. Our house in Fabens had only two rooms when we first moved in, but my parents put a wood stove in each room to keep us warm. My father later built another room onto the back of the house and split the bigger of the first two rooms in half, so we had four rooms. Father paid someone to put in running water, but we did not have an indoor bathroom until after I

was married. I was 15 or 16 years old before we got electricity. We got a fan, too, but mom would not run it even in the middle of summer because she was afraid it would raise the electric bill. After I got married, we got gas, too. Mother was afraid of using a gas stove, though, and she never did. We had a yard in Fabens. We raised chickens, rabbits, pigs and turkeys.

22. Some things were the same for us in the section housing and in our house in Fabens. We always washed our clothes outside by hand. We used four tin tubs. We washed the clothes once in the first tub, again in the second tub, and then rinsed them once in the third tub and again in the fourth tub. We used the same tin tubs to take baths. We built a fire and put rocks and cans around it to hold a tub to heat water for both clothes washing and baths. We pulled one of the tubs inside the house to bathe. I had my first shower when I was 28 years old in 1956 when my husband and I moved to closer to El Paso. We moved to Ysleta, which is connected to Zaragosa in Chihuahua, Mexico by a bridge over the Rio Grande River.

23. Hard work was a way of life for us, even as small children. All my brothers and sisters and I picked cotton after school when we lived in Fabens. My mother picked cotton all day. She brought my brothers and sisters too young for school with her to the fields. They picked some, and they napped beside the field. Those of us children in school came to the field right after we got out of class and picked cotton for a couple of hours until we all went home together for dinner. In the summer time, we all picked cotton all day. We chopped the cotton and weeded the rows with hoes. We chopped cotton May through September and picked cotton September through December. We wore big baggy clothing to protect us from the cotton and the sun and the bug spray. Little bi-planes sprayed the cotton fields for bugs. They flew early in the morning and in the evening when the wind was low. Many owners provided water to us,

especially in the summer. They brought the water in big tanks carried on the back of a truck bed. Some farms made us bring our own water.

24. When I was growing up, people in Fabens mostly made their living working in the cotton fields. Some worked on farms which grew tomatoes, chilies, corn and alfalfa. Only a few people got the steady work of the railroad. Cotton is not as important to Fabens as it use to be. The owners use machines instead of people to do most of the work now, so there are much fewer jobs. The fields were filled with people working when I was little. Now there are just a few people to run machines in the few cotton fields that remain.

25. Life was too hard for our family to enjoy or relax. My family did not celebrate birthdays or holidays. At Christmas, we had a Mexican dinner with fresh tamales and Spanish style fried tortillas, and a pig if we had one to kill. We did not spend money on a tree or presents. We never had a party, cake or present for anyone's birthday. We did not celebrate traditional Mexican holidays such as Cinco de Mayo or Mexican Independence Day. A long time ago Fabens had a parade each September 16th in honor of Mexican Independence Day, but not any more.

26. I completed the fourth grade before I had to start work full-time. I started school when I was 7 or 8 years old and I went until I was 14 or 15. School was hard for me and I had to repeat some grades. My parents spoke only Spanish at home, but my teachers spoke only English in school even though the white children went to one school and the Hispanic children went to another. I learned English living in the section housing and playing with the railroad bosses' children. All the workers were Hispanic, but all of the bosses were white and none of their children spoke Spanish.

27. The Fabens elementary school was segregated, but the high school was not. There were so few Hispanic children who made it to high school that there was no point in setting up a separate school.

28. After I left school, I worked full-time in the fields until I could find another job. I got a job making and selling hamburgers at a stand by the Greyhound bus depot. When I was 16, I was working at the hamburger stand when I met my future husband Matias. Matias use to come to the stand for food. He started walking me home at night. Matias was a not a field worker, but a carpenter who built houses. He helped to build part of the present building for the Catholic Church in Fabens, Our Lady of Guadalupe. Later he got a job working on compressors for a jeans company.

29. My parents did not like Matias because he was from Mexico. They forbid me from seeing him, so Matias and I eloped to Las Cruces, New Mexico. We were married February 20, 1945. When we returned home and I told my parents we were married, they were very angry and threw me out of the house. Matias and I stayed with friends for a month. During that time, my father did not even speak to me. Finally, he had one of my brothers write a letter to me saying that he forgave me and that he wanted me and Matias to come home. Matias and I moved in with my parents and stayed there until after we had our first child, Florencio, a year later in February, 1946. Matias got his immigration papers the fall after Florencio was born.

30. Matias and I had three sons together: Florencio who was born 1946, Miguel who was born in 1947 and Ruben who was born in 1950. Florencio works at a Ascaro refinery in El Paso. Florencio has been married twice and has two sons, Eddie and Jerry, who are each married also. My son Miguel works for the US Customs Department. He and his wife Rita have six

sons, Miguel, Ricardo, Ernesto, Javier, Jaime and Raymond. My son Ruben works at a plant that makes paint. He and his wife Maria have a daughter and two sons: Monica, Matias and David. I also have several great grandchildren.

31. I am very proud of my sons. They have raised good families and work hard to support them. But, like so many of the men in my and Corrina's family, Florencio and Ruben have struggled with alcohol. They have both been convicted of drinking and driving. I am happy that they found the strength to overcome their problems with alcohol and move on with their lives.

32. My husband Matias was killed in 1973. He was driving to work about 7 o'clock in the morning when a truck crossed into his lane and hit his car head on. I have never remarried. Before my husband died I worked for 7 or 8 years at a school cafeteria in El Paso. I did not work in the summer when school was out. This was a problem after my husband died, because it left me with no income in the summer. So I found work making shirts at a factory. Later I worked as a bank custodian. I also worked at the Tandy Corporation for 2 or 3 years.

33. By the time I reached the age of 60, I began to have serious kidney problems which prevented me from working. I received SSI benefits until I turned 65 and began to receive my social security retirement benefits.

34. My father was really sweet. He was a kind man who would help anyone, and he was hardly ever angry about anything. He always seemed to be kind despite how hard he had to work and how poor he was. He was never able to go to school, and he never learned to read or write in English or Spanish. He never learned to speak English either, but he was a smart man. He spoke both Spanish and the Indian language of his mother. He learned the railroad work,

learned how to build a house and even learned how to cook tamales. Making tamales became his Christmas hobby. My sisters and brothers and I ground the corn for days for him.

35. Dad worked very hard during the week and sometimes on Saturdays, too, for the railroad. On weekends, he liked to drink. He drank with the other men in Fabens at one of the bars. When he drank too much, he sang and tried to speak English. He did not change and become mean or violent when he drank like some of the other men in our family.

36. Dad did not usually punish me and my brothers and sisters, our mother did. My father hit me once when I was 14 or 15 years old for walking with a boy. He hit me in front of the boy as soon as he saw us, even though we were not even holding hands or anything. We were just talking, but my father said that girls should not walk and talk with boys.

37. My mother was very different from my father. I think she was tired all the time from so much cooking, cleaning and laundry for our big family. She was mean and angry a lot. She had a very bad temper, and she was very stubborn. Mother was not affectionate at all. She never hugged or kissed any of us. She never said, "I love you." She never showed love to anyone. I think old Spanish people thought it was more respectful not to be affectionate in front of others. There was no affection between my parents, at least in front of us children. My parents never touched each other at all in front of us.

38. Mother was very strict. Everything always had to be perfect, and everything had to be her way. We even had to wash the dishes her way. If we broke a dish, mother hit us with her hand or with a belt and then she made us eat off the broken pieces. She checked each chore that any of us children did. If she did not like the way we did it, she hit us. Mother also punished us by making us stand outside in the sun with no water for 4 to 6 hours at a time in the summer

heat. She made us kneel on our knees and hold bricks with our arms stretched out. She hit us if we dropped or lowered the bricks. Mother kept track of the money and was very careful how she spent it. She never bought any of us any toys. She said that toys were a waste of money.

39. Mother was never able to go to school in Mexico or the United States, but she taught herself to read and write in Spanish. She read out loud to us from the Bible in Spanish. Like her mother Martina and her grandmother Rosa, my mother was very religious. She prayed a lot at home and in the church. She kept religious pictures and statues all over the house. She talked to me and my brothers and sisters about Jesus. Mostly she liked to teach to us from the Old Testament.

40. Sammy's mother Corrina is four years younger than me. She was always very quiet and simple. She was so shy when she was a child that she did not hardly talk at all.

41. Corrina was raped when she was 17 years old by Jesus Vasquez, who was much older than Corrina. Jesus Vasquez had money because his parents had their own farm, and he would never go with a poor girl like Corrina. To him, she was just someone to have sex with. Corrina was ashamed and did not tell anyone for many months that she had been raped. She did not know that she was pregnant until she went to Mexico with our sister Maria and our father to visit our father's family. Corrina was hurt on the horse ride and had to see a doctor. The doctor realized Corrina was pregnant and told her.

42. After Corrina, Maria and my father returned from Mexico, I came home one day to find my mother hitting Corrina. Mother was really angry, and I asked her why. She said that Corrina was pregnant. After that, my mother made Corrina stay home so that no one would see that she was pregnant. I felt so bad for Corrina, she was so scared and unhappy. She told Jesus

Vasquez that she was pregnant. He denied the baby was his, and he never gave Corrina or his son a penny.

43. After Corrina had her baby, she went to find work in Phoenix, where our Aunt Cruz lived. Our father and mother would not let Corrina take her baby, whom she named Roberto. Once Corrina left Fabens, she never came back to see Roberto. Maybe she was mad at our parents for keeping him. Maybe her baby reminded her that she had been raped.

44. Corrina met Arcadio Lopez working in the fields in Phoenix. They never married and Arcadio never took care of Corrina or their eight sons. He became an alcoholic, and Corrina never wanted to talk about him on the rare occasion when I did get to see or talk her. Corrina had to raise their children all by herself. Arcadio left Corrina, but he came back and they had a little girl Gloria in 1970. Gloria was born with a balloon of skin between her arm and her body. It was like a cancer and Gloria died from it when she was still a baby. After that Arcadio left and never came back. I think he went to California and died.

45. I went to see Corrina when her oldest son Junior got married in the late 1970s. Corrina was very troubled. Junior watched over his seven younger brothers and even dropped out of school in the ninth grade to help support the family. She cried to me and said, "My right hand is going. What will I do? He is the only one who can make my sons go the right way. Now I will have no one to take care of my children, and I have to work to feed them."

46. For many years after Corrina left Fabens, I never saw her. I think for a long time she wanted to stay away, but later she was too poor to visit even if she wanted to. She could not afford to have a phone. Now I see Corrina more often because our family is getting older and dying. I saw her when our father died in January 1996. I saw her again at our sister Josefina's

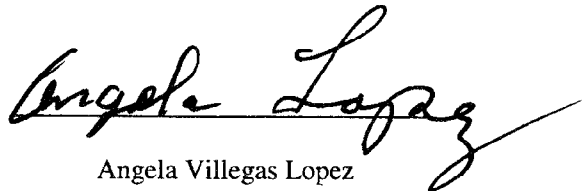
funeral in California last summer. Corrina also came to my granddaughter Monica's wedding in June 1994.

47. I love my sister Corrina very much. She has had to struggle her whole life. Even though she always worked hard, she was never able to give her children the security or things that she wanted for them. I think she did the best she could, but raising eight sons all by herself was too much for Corrina. It breaks my heart that now her son Sammy may be killed. I am afraid that it may kill Corrina, too.

48. I was never contacted about our family before now. I would have told Sammy's lawyers about our family if they had asked me.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Arizona and the United States that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on April 16, 1999.


Angela Villegas Lopez