

DECLARATION OF PETRA GONZALES VILLEGAS

I, Petra Gonzales Villegas, declare as follows:

1. I am the youngest child of Jose Villegas and Concepcion Gonzales. Sammy Lopez is my nephew, the son of my older sister Corrina Villegas. I was born August 1, 1949. Corrina was born November 3, 1932, so she is almost 17 years older than me.

2. I am the youngest of my parents' children. In all, 14 of us survived birth, although two died as infants. Our ages are very spread out, and my oldest living brother is 21 years older than me. Unlike most of my brothers and sisters, I was able to attend and graduate high school. I have three children: Stephen, born August 14, 1973; Daniel, born May 24, 1981; and Jenna, born April 10, 1986. After my son Daniel was born, I went back to school and completed 2 years of business school and later more classes at the Tarrant County Community College. I now work for the City of Forth Worth Courts in the traffic citations section.

3. My parents Jose and Concepcion met while they were both working at a farm near Fabens. They saw each other at a dance. My mother's mother, Martina, did not like Jose because he drank, but she gave them permission to marry. Many years later Martina's mother, my great grandmother Rosa, came to Fabens to live with my family. Martina and my mother got mad at Rosa when she took off my father's shoes after he passed out from drinking.

4. My father Jose was one of six children. One of his sisters was kidnaped by some of Pancho Villa's men when she was a teenager, and his family never saw her again. His mother Maria was a blind Mexican Tarahumara Indian who did not speak English or Spanish. His father

Jesus was Spanish and died when my father was still a boy. My father came to this country from Mexico when was just a young man himself. My father went back to Mexico to visit his family every few years, but it was a very difficult journey and he took some of my brothers and sisters only a couple of times. For many years there were no roads up into the area of his village, and he had to walk or ride along narrow mountain trails to get there. Later he hitched rides part of the way with loggers clearing the mountain forests. The first time my father returned home, people did not recognize him. His mother told him that he no longer seemed like a Indian in his shoes and long pants. I did not know his side of the family well, but his niece Irma came to live with my sister Venancia and helped her with her children.

5. In the United States, my father worked in the fields for years before he got a job working at the Southern Pacific Railroad where he worked for more than 35 years before retiring. My father did well with the railroad, but he never made foreman. He was very good at his work and he could manage the other men, but his lack of schooling prevented him from being able to keep the books. He could keep track of things in his head, but he did not know how to write out the numbers for the records foremen had to keep. He understood the math, though. He understood when the men in charge were collecting more checks from the railroad than there were workers and keeping the extra pay for themselves. My father's mind stayed sharp until he died just after New Years in 1997.

6. My mother Concepcion also came here from Mexico when she was very young. My mother's father had been a successful businessman who owned two businesses in Mexico before he was murdered by Pancho Villa's bandits. The killers tied a weight to his body and threw him in the river. This happened long before I was born, when my mother was a small girl. I

always suspected the violence of my grandfather's death and his family's sudden poverty afterward must have caused my mother's sour attitude about life.

7. Our mother was always very strict with us. In fact, she was downright mean. Mother disciplined all us children very roughly. She hit us with a belt on our arms, back and legs until we were black and blue. She gave these spankings everyday to at least one of us. She hit us for all sorts of little things. She beat us if she didn't think we completed a chore right or fast enough, she beat us if we said we did not like something she had given us to eat, she beat us if she thought we were not listening to her. Mother had no sense of humor. We could not joke with her or tease her. If we used bad language or hateful words, she washed our mouths out with soap.

8. Mother was a perfectionist, and she expected us to be perfectionists also. She wanted everything just right. When we made our beds they had to be perfectly even or she hit us for doing a poor job. We had to curl our hair perfectly for church. She inspected the dishes after we washed and dried them and she hit us if she found anything we missed. We were not even allowed to chew gum.

9. Mother never told me or my sisters about the birds and the bees. I learned about sex and periods from my sister Tina; I could not imagine my mother ever talking about something like that.

10. From the time we were about five years old, all of us kids picked cotton after school and on Saturdays. It was hot backbreaking work, and our little hands would be chapped and torn at the end of the day. The working conditions were unsafe, too. We could see small planes dropping pesticides on the fields beside us as we worked, and we drank water from the big open barrels set out by the owners of the field. I often wonder how much our health has been

affected by drinking that water that had been freely exposed to the pesticide sprays. Still, the extra money we made was important to the family, so we had to do it. When were little, we stopped and took naps on the side of the fields. My mother tied empty bean bags around our waists for us to stuff the cotton into. When we were very small, she had to make smaller bags for us so we were able to carry them. When my brother Jesus dropped out of school, he picked cotton full-time. My brother Jose wanted more than anything to get out of the cotton fields, so when he did not pass the eighth grade and he dropped out of school, he moved to California to live with our brother Alfredo who was a newlywed.

11. My parents' first child, my oldest brother Antonio , was born in 1923 but died as an infant from scarlet fever in 1925. My next oldest brother, Luis, was born September 25, 1924, followed by Angela on October 2, 1928 and Alfredo in 1929.

12. My sister Josefina was born in 1930 and died in 1998, when she was around 67 or 68. Josefina was called Fina by our family. She married Martin Morales, and they had two daughters, Marta and Antonia. Fina and Martin split up, although they never divorced. Martin did not want their two children, so Fina brought them home to live with our family. Antonia was 10 and Marta was 9 when they came to live with us. Antonia is a few months older than me and Marta is a few months younger than me.

13. Fina met another man Alfonso Velarde, and she had another six children with Alfonso. Fina and Alfonso never married because legally she was still married to Martin Morales, but she and Alfonso stayed together until Fina died last year of cirrhosis of the liver. Alfonso beat Fina, and I think he feels very guilty about it now. He thinks he hears her ghost haunting him.

14. Fina had an affair while she was with Alfonso and gave birth to a little boy she put up for adoption. Most of us did not know he existed until last spring when he came looking for us. He is named Jesus Barrios and he is in the Army. He served in Desert Storm and is now stationed in Bosnia. Fina died just a few months after they were reunited.

15. My sister Corrina, Sammy's mother, was born November 3, 1932. Corrina has lived in Phoenix since I was just a baby. I was only a year old when she gave birth to Roberto. My older brothers and sisters told me that Mother chased Corrina off right after she had Roberto. I believe it, because Corrina had almost nothing to do with our family after that, and she never sent any cards or letters or presents to our mother.

16. When I was young, I went with my mother and some of my brothers and sisters to visit my brother Alfredo in Santa Barbara and my sister Corrina in Phoenix. Corrina was always horribly poor. She and her children lived in tiny rundown apartments and houses. When we visited, we did not go on outings or do anything special because Corrina was so poor. Mother bought groceries for Corrina and her family while we were in Phoenix.

17. I met Corrina's common-law husband Arcadio on that visit. Arcadio worked as a laborer. He was a very small, very thin man. He was very light complected but had very dark eyes and black hair. He was always drinking, and he beat Corrina.

18. Corrina's son Jose came from Phoenix and stayed with me in Texas for a while when he was a teenager. He came during the summer, around July, and stayed with me until the following April or May. He was a good-hearted kid, but he a difficult time in school. He got a job working with me until he went back to his mother in Arizona.

19. My sister Julia was born November 14, 1933, but she only lived a few months and

died March 9, 1934.

20. My sister Maria was born January 16, 1935. Maria had three children. Her oldest son Bobby used to have a lot of trouble with alcohol, but later he straightened himself out and became a counselor for troubled kids in El Paso. Maria's godmother Maria Inez Mendoza Cedillos was 113 years old when she died.

22. My brother Ricardo was born April 3, 1939. He became a terrible alcoholic. He moved to California for a while, but he later moved back to Fabens. I was still living at home with our parents and my son Stephen, who was seven years old. I moved out because I did not want my son around Ricardo. My parents tried to keep my son, like they had kept Corrina's son Roberto, but I would not let them. I moved Stephen to Fort Worth, where we stayed with my sister Venancia and her family. It was hard for Stephen when we first left Fabens because he spoke only Spanish, but Stephen was a bright boy and he learned English from the other children at school.

23. My brother Jesus was born July 1, 1941. He was killed in a car accident in 1962, when he was just 20 years old. The sheriff came to our house at 5 in the morning to tell my parents. I was 13 years old. I remember being woken up by the crying of my mother. My mother was usually a very reserved woman who did not show much emotion. She was screaming Jesus' name over and over, and so I knew he was dead. The rest of us were all in shock and just stared at our mother.

23. My brother Jose was born July 2, 1943. He is an alcoholic and unpredictable. When he drinks, he becomes an entirely different person. He once had a good job working for a meat packing plant. One of the men who worked with Jose bought a big house he could not

afford, so he had to spend almost all his money on house payments. One day he asked my brother Jose for money for lunch and Jose got angry. They got into a fight and Jose stuck a meat hook in the man's eye. Jose was fired. Jose eventually moved to Fort Worth, where he has been arrested for DWI a couple of times. Jose applied for social security benefits years ago. The Social Security Administration had a doctor examine Jose for his memory problems, diabetes and drinking. He has a heart condition, too.

24. My sister Venancia was born May 18, 1945. She had a twin who died before birth. My son Stephen and I moved in with Venancia and her family when we moved to Fort Worth. I had my son Daniel while living with Venie. After Venie and her husband split up, my family continued to live in the house with Venie's ex-husband, but just as friends. He eventually moved out and later my boyfriend Marvin Cervenka moved in. Marvin bought the house from Venie and her ex-husband.

25. Marvin and I had Jenna while living in Venie's old house. Marvin was a very cold man and never really made an attempt to be part of a family with me and my children. He even kept his food separate from what my children and I ate. I eventually left him and bought my own house up the street from my brother Luis. Marvin still lives in Venie's old house.

26. My sister Augustina, born May 28, 1945, is known as Tina. Tina, Venie and I have always remained very close. I was very saddened when my sister Venie sued Tina in 1991 for custody of my parents. The lawsuit dragged on for many years and has divided my family even more than the distance between our homes and the difference in our ages.

27. Our father built our house himself several years before I was born. It had four rooms: a kitchen, two bedrooms and a living room. We had a big back yard. There was no grass

in the yard, but my father had a garden and my mother grew some plants. Gardening was the one thing I think my mother really enjoyed. Outside in the back yard, we had a shower, and we used a tin tub as a bathtub. We did not have an indoor bathroom until I was much older. I remember as I was growing up, we were the first in the neighborhood to get a couch. We were also the first to get a phonograph and later we were the first to get a television. We were poor, but we had many people to help make money in the fields. Smaller families in our neighborhood were even poorer.

28. Many of the older children had already grown up and moved out by the time I was born. Tina, Venie, Jesus and Jose were still in the house for most of the time I was growing up. Fina's daughters Antonia and Marta and Corrina's son Roberto also lived in the house most of that time. In addition to all my brothers and sisters, Jose and Stephen Vera also grew up in our house. The Vera brothers were somehow related to my mother's mother Martina. Martina adopted them after they were orphaned, but Martina was in bad health herself and died when she was only 50 years old. Jose was only 14 and Stephen was only 10, so the Vera boys moved in with my family and my parents raised them along with the rest of us. They both joined the military and moved out when I was still very little. Stephen Vera became a postman in Sacramento after he left the military, but he died.

29. Jose Vera was always a strange child. He would sit for hours in the window in some kind of trance, like he was in another world. He was also very shy and got scared on dates. If that didn't make him strange enough, he was also one of the few men in Fabens who didn't drink. Jose Vera became an architect and moved to Chicago, but later his mental illness got even worse and he could not keep his job. He moved to Sacramento to be near his brother, and he was

eventually hospitalized there. As far as I know, he is still institutionalized there to this day.

30. When I think of Sammy, I remember that shy little boy hiding behind a chair at Corrina's apartment in Phoenix. Each time I think of my sister Corrina, I can't help but to think about how deep the pain she feels for Sammy must be. They are both a part of my family and so a part of me.

31. I was never contacted by anyone from Sammy's trial defense team. If asked, I would have testified about my family including my sister Corrina and her sons.

32. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Arizona and the United States that the forgoing is true and correct.

Executed April 8, 1999.


Petra Villegas