
Notitas

Select Columns From
The *Tucson Citizen*,
1984–1993

by Alva B. Torres

Compiled by Lydia R. Otero



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Notitas: Select Columns from the Tucson Citizen by Alva B. Torres

First Edition

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Forward

From 1984 to 1993, one of Tucson, Arizona's major newspapers, the *Tucson Citizen*, featured a weekly column authored by Alva B. Torres. In the journalistic world, she stands out as one of the first Mexican American women whose weekly column appeared in a newspaper that serviced one of the top fifty most highly populated cities in the United States (U.S.).* Oftentimes, her column appeared nestled between nationally syndicated columnists like Erma Bombeck and Ann Landers.

Tucson's newspapers had included other columnists who wrote in Spanish but Torres appealed to a different readership. Written in English, Torres's columns spoke to the generation of Mexican Americans, born in the U.S., and who had attended schools that prohibited them from speaking Spanish, even on playgrounds, and that taught them to read and write only in English. This included the generation referred to as the "baby boomers," like myself and older generations who had attended regional schools.

Born Alva Bustamante in 1932 in Tucson, she attended local schools and graduated from Tucson High School in 1950. In 1953, she married Arthur A. Torres and they had three children. Although rare for a Mexican American, Alva received a two-year liberal arts degree at the University of Arizona. Even at a young age, she prioritized remaining active in community affairs, organizations and social clubs. Eight years before launching her column, Torres had already made a name for herself, and the Tucson Advertising Club named her 1975's "Woman of the Year" for her efforts in historic preservation

*In terms of population, Tucson ranked 45th in the nation in 1980 and moved up to 34th in 2021. Top 100 Biggest US Cities By Population, "Tucson, Arizona Population History," <https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/tucson-arizona>, accessed April 28, 2021.

This is a limited sample of *Notitas*. The number of pages is limited.

July 15, 1986

Magic Will Continue in ATC's Temple

With a lot of other *Tucsonenses*, I sigh with relief, knowing the Temple of Music and Art, which we called *El Templo de Musica*, will be the future home of the Arizona Theatre Company. It will become a public facility sometime this summer, according to our able City Manager Joel D. Valdez.

As children, my sisters Julietita and Esthersita and I spent a good deal of our playtime inside and outside this building. All three of us thoroughly enjoyed "our castle." I remember coming down the wide staircase as an "unjustly sentenced victim," namely Joan of Arc, more than once. Julietita was at various times a bride or a queen of an imaginary country. Esthersita also had her fantasy trips there, years after her *hermanitas*, sisters, had stopped pretending.

Besides pretend times, we had our real times. Mrs. Healy, the manager, gave the janitor permission to allow us to enter the temple, free of charge, to see the entertainment presented there. Before a show the janitor would tell us, "Get into your Sunday best tonight and come to the front door as soon as all the other people go in. Now don't yuh forget." We would be there for sure and for sure he would open the door and we would go in quietly. Then we would follow him and he would point out empty seats to us.

Between 1938 and 1946, we saw a good many wonderful programs. Among them was Robert Young in "The Enchanted Cottage." One of my highlights was seeing and hearing Tito Guizar [Mexican singer and actor] present a program and sing "Guadalajara." For that show Mrs. Healy had the side exit doors opened wide so all the barrio kids could enjoy it. Only once were we asked to leave because some patrons reported us as sitting in their absent friends' seats. We also saw the first act of "Swan Lake." It was so beautiful.



FIGURE 3.5 All three Bustamante sisters in 1946. Alva in the middle, Julieta on left, and Esther on the right. The photograph was taken at La Nopalera Studios. Courtesy Alva B. Torres.

Later we danced ballet ourselves when we took dancing lessons from Miss Schwabs at the temple.

In our make-believe world, we could never envision our fairyland castle gone. We dreamed it would always be there. So, I say, dreams do come true, not just for us, but for countless people who have enjoyed the Temple of Music and Art, and those who have been interested in saving it over the years. We can still, because of these knights in shining armor, continue to enjoy our *castillo*.

July 22, 1986

Ballads, Photos Tell History of Mexico

You are cordially invited to attend an afternoon of *corridos*, or ballads, from the Mexican Revolution. This musical presentation is planned for 2 p.m. Sunday at the Tucson Museum of Art at 140 North Main Avenue.

It is being held in conjunction with the museum's exhibition of *The World of Agustin Victor Casasola: Mexico, 1900-1938*. Although you may not be familiar with his name, you have probably seen some of his photographs. Thirty-five years old at the time of the revolution in 1910, Casasola was at the height of his career as a photojournalist. For the next 28 years he recorded all the events and people that he felt would tell the world about Mexico and its history. In images that speak louder than my words ever could do, he captured the essence and soul of the Mexican Revolution through its people. His photographs of Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa made their faces familiar to most of Mexico and the southwestern United States. This exhibition includes more than 150 of his stirring photographs.

The opportunity to view this exhibition, along with the many interesting events, concerts, lectures and films scheduled to take place during the showing, is made available at no charge to the general public. The exhibition demonstrates the importance of liberty and freedom and the unquenchable yearning to be free that lives throughout the ages in the souls of all men. I consider the entire program a salute to liberty. Which is so precious to all of us.

Sunday's focus is on *corridos*, which are used to describe events or people in music and poetry. *Corridos* are very popular with the common people. At the time of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, countless *corridos* were written. A good number were preserved on 45-rpm records by Mexican people and others, lamenting this tragedy that to them was both national and personal. Kennedy was greatly admired and loved by the Mexican people.

Antonio Federico, native of Sasabe, Sonora, born in 1934, will lead the corridos. He sings at Mass and events that mark joyous as well sorrowful times in families' lives. He has been a featured performer at Tucson Meet Yourself and was their prize winner in last year's Corrido competition.

Next Tuesday, the Tucson Museum of Art will present *Los Muertos Nunca Mueren* (The Dead Never Die) by The Borderlands Theater, *Teatro Fronterizo*. The program will feature Francisco Gonzalez from Santa Barbara, California. He has received numerous awards, including the San Francisco Chronicle's "Bernie Award" in 1982, and the Bay Area Theater Critics' Circle Award "for outstanding achievement in the theater in 1983." He regularly performs Jarocho and Norteño music at clubs, fiestas and other social gatherings and has made recordings playing the Mexican harp.

The Tucson Public Library is also offering a series of four public programs in August exploring the events, ideas and people of the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1917, called *Imágenes de la Revolución Mexicana*. Here is the schedule:

- A staged reading of *Los Muertos Nunca Mueren* on August 1 at El Rio Neighborhood Center, 1390 West Speedway Boulevard.
- *Mujeres de la Revolución* (Women of the Revolution) on August 18 at the Valencia Library, 202 West Valencia Road.
- *Corridos de la Revolución Mexicana* (Ballads of the Mexican Revolution) on August 22 at El Pueblo Neighborhood Center, 101 West Irvington Road.
- *La Leyenda de Pancho Villa* (The Legend of Pancho Villa) on August 26 at the Mission Library, 3770 South Mission Road.

The programs begin at 7 p.m.

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April 4, 1989

A Social Club Grows from Roots of Others

I want to transport you back in time to the late 1930s and early 1940s in the Old Pueblo. Those were the decades when clubs were prevalent in the Hispanic community.

In the 1940s the All Around Club had its beginning at Tucson High. It was made up of young women of Mexican heritage from Tucson. These girls had attended Safford Junior High and had shared friendships for years. Some of them remember a predecessor club called HCC for “Ha Cha Chas” and wanted to form their own club. They decided to get together and form a social club to hold parties, picnics and Mother-Daughter lunches and at the same time raise money for charitable causes. Their good times included a lot of singing together in their respective homes and churches as well as picnics at el Canyon de Sabino, ranchos, and Monte Limon [Mount Lemmon].

But most of all they remember *Las Fiesta Patrias* on September 16. And they always remember their dances, first at the old Blue Moon and later at El Conquistador, the Pioneer and the Santa Rita hotels and the American Legion. When all of the members had graduated from Tucson High, this came to an end—but their memories live on.

Although some of the members continued to see each other for a while, as time went by and Tucson grew they went off in different directions, most of them into marriage. None of this in itself is unusual. What is different is that in June 1981, Eduardo, known to all his friends as Lalo Guerrero (a successful singer and songwriter) and his wife, Lydia, paid a visit to Tucson. They had a get-together with their old school chums. All of them enjoyed themselves so much that some of the members of the former clubs, led by Genevieve Martinez Whalen, decided to regroup and take up where they left off so

many years before. This time the group called itself Club Recuerdo (*recordar* means to remember).

They not only remember the good times, but they are having a wonderful time “building new memories” and giving their children the opportunity to be a part of this by including them in their festivities. Besides holding private activities, Club Recuerdo shares its fun by holding three *tardeadas* a year. These dances are held *en la tarde*, or afternoon. Every time they hold these dances they designate the profits to a specific charity. Among the past recipients are La Frontera, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Clinic, Boy Scouts of America, the Legalization Amnesty Program, as well as the Community Food Bank and Santa Cruz Church. This time the profits are to go for scholarships at Tucson High School, their alma mater. They have given out more than \$10,000 in the last few years and built many good recuerdos at the same time.

All of you are invited to join Club Recuerdo and the dance band Los Classix and dance to music from the fabulous '30s and '40s. This *tardeada* is to be held at the Holidome-Holiday Inn, 4550 South Palo Verde Blvd. on Sunday from 2–6 p.m. There will be a dance contest with prizes. Cost is \$8 per person. *Están todos cordialmente invitados*. Do not be shy about joining us. When you introduce yourself to me, I will be most happy to introduce you to all the members, including a former *16 de Septiembre* *reyna* (beauty queen), now the president of the club (Bernice Ortiz), and the newest members (Natalia Benites and Evelina Venturo). For further information call Olivia Arriaga at 623-XXXX or Hope Cervantes at 326-XXXX. I hope to see you there. *Hasta la vista*.

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April 24, 1990

Mariachi Conference Brings Joy, Pride

Last weekend was a most memorable one for Tucsonans, especially Hispanics, and one that brought us a lot of joy and pride. Tucson hosted the eighth annual Mariachi Conference. One of the purposes of the conference is to allow young mariachi students, ages 10 to 15, the opportunity to take lessons from the famous Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlan of Mexico, from Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano of California, and Tucson's own Mariachi Cobre, now based in Florida. This year, more than 400 students received instruction.

Besides this, they also put on a wonderful program at the Tucson Convention Center for the benefit of La Frontera Center. Last year many fans were shut out and disappointed when the program's only performance was a sellout, so this year they added a matinee. At the rate they are attracting new fans, it will soon require another performance. I have been able to attend all of them and it is gratifying to see this become so successful. Linda Ronstadt was better than ever. Busloads of people came in from California and Texas and carloads from everywhere else, including Sonora and Sinaloa, Mexico.

Another event of this conference is Garibaldi Night. All the musicians play for *el pueblo*. This year they set up an extra platform at East 14th Street and South Sixth Avenue. The main stage was in the stationary shell in Armory Park. Musicians were having as much fun as the huge crowd at Armory Park. And the thousands sitting and standing joined in singing when they played *Volver, Volver, Volver*.

Mariachi Cobre also played for a special Saturday morning Mass at the *Catedral San Augustine*. Its members did not appear the least bit tired and gave a long, enthusiastic free concert to the friendly crowd which always waits for them. Some of these boys were in the original *Changuitos Feos* and

have inspired others to follow them. Randy Carrillo is their director and he is excellent.

An important part of Garabaldi Night is the food, which is homemade and served out of decorated booths. Although there were at least 36 *puestos* (booths), they were not prepared for the influx of people who strolled South Sixth Avenue between the old library and Armory Park. After the

Saturday matinee let out, one Tucson police officer on duty estimated that at least 6,000 people showed up all at the same time. He also guess-timated that, at its peak, about 25,000 people were at the park, listening to music and forming long lines waiting for food. Some of the booths simply had to close when they ran out of food; others started improvising. I am sure they will be better-prepared next year.

On Sunday afternoon El Mariachi Cobre again played at *la Catedral*, this time for persons from around the world attending the National Association for Bilingual Education conference here. The Mass was bilingual. Steve Carrillo beautifully sang "Ave Maria," which was most moving. They all received a big thank you from Bishop Moreno and a big round of applause from the audience. After Mass, many photos were snapped and *muchos abrazos*, lots of hugs, were received from friends and relatives for the mariachis. *Hasta la vista*.



FIGURE 7.4 Fiesta at Armory Park. Courtesy Special Collections, University of Arizona Library.

June 19, 1990

Tucson's First Black Dentist Reminisces

Dr. Floyd Thompson was the first black dentist to hang his shingle in Tucson. He was my dentist until he retired a few years back. I had not seen the doctor for years and thought a column about him would be interesting. According to Thompson:

“We came here in 1919, from Houston, Texas, where I was born. I attended school here and then went on to Howard University dental school in Washington, D.C. I met Nellie who was a dental hygienist—while there. I graduated in June of 1942 and we were married in December that same year. The Second World War was on and I became a first lieutenant in the Dental Corps. I was stationed at the hospital at Fort Huachuca for one year. From there I was sent to serve in Guadalcanal. *Soy veterano*. I was then reassigned to Fort Huachuca. Later I was discharged from the nearest center, which was William Beaumont General Hospital, El Paso, Texas, in January 1946.”

“When I came back to my town, I had a lot of difficulty renting an office. Nobody wanted to rent to a black dentist. Finally, E.D. Herreras rented me an office on South Main. He was one of my great supporters. At that time (the rent) was \$45 a month,” Thompson said. “Now there are five black dentists in Tucson and two of them started practicing at *mi oficina*. You remember, I always had an integrated office staff and also patients.”

Dr. Thompson's Spanish was good even then. When did he learn to speak it? “When I was just a little kid, living in the barrio, playing with the little *Mejicanitos*, one thing I could not understand then was why I could not go to school with them. All of the black children had to go to Dunbar, you

remember. My playmates and I could not understand it.” Thompson’s son, Floyd Jr., could not understand it either, as his father remembered:

Every morning I would drive him to school. We lived on *la esquina* (corner) of Cherry and 22nd. We would first pass Elizabeth Borton, and my son would ask, ‘Dad, how come I can’t go to that school there?’ Then we would go by Safford and he would ask the same thing. If we went by Drachman and Carrillo, which were also en route, he wanted to know why he could not go there. Then when he played with his little friends near the house, they had the same question. By the time my third child went to school, the integration policy had been initiated. Before this came to pass, we had some hectic times. Mayor Don Hummel appointed an interracial committee to fight discrimination. Dr. Robert Morrow really helped.

I remember when a black person could not get a drink of water anywhere downtown. We had a strategy. Do you remember the old Martin Drug Store? Crede Taylor was selected to ask Andy Martin if he would allow black people to get some water there. Then Dorsey Watson was to approach the manager of Woolworth’s *en la Congresso*, and I was to do the same at Walgreens, also on Congress Street. When we asked them, Mr. Martin said he was willing if the other two stores would join him. They said the same thing. These were the first three places where we could get a glass of water or a soda.

The Pioneer Hotel, at the time was the most prestigious. We, in the dentist association, held our meetings there and also had dinner preceding the meeting. We had a gentlemen’s agreement that I was to wait out in the foyer and not come in until dinner was over. Then I would go in and attend the business meeting. One evening, Dr. Paul Bennett, originally from Atlanta, saw me in the hall and asked me what I was doing there. I briefly explained. He said to



FIGURE 7.5 A young Floyd Thompson.
Courtesy of Floyd Thompson.

me, 'You come in right now to dinner and you are going to sit right beside me. If anybody says anything, let them tell me. Here was this dental surgeon from the South, who sat on the State Board of Examiners, doing something about discrimination. Nobody else had ever spoken up for me at those meetings.

Next week I will continue this article about Dr. Thompson. *Hasta la vista.*

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March 10, 1992

CARA an Exhibit Worthwhile to See

“CARA: Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation,” on exhibit at the Tucson Museum of Art, 140 North Main Avenue, will close April 5, less than a month from now. If you have not yet seen it, I urge you to do so. It is a thought-provoking exhibition and an important component of the Festival Chicano Del Tucson.

In conjunction with the exhibit, a symposium, “CARAS: The Many Faces of the Chicano Community,” was held last month. Debra Padilla, managing director of the Borderlands Theater, coordinated the symposium, so I paid her a visit and asked how she got involved. She said:

The starting ground was when I went to Los Angeles to see CARA. I was really inspired. I found out it was coming to Tucson and I wanted to know what I could do to assist in all of the ancillary programming. I spoke to Barclay Goldsmith, Raquel Goldsmith and Lupe Castillo, all leaders in our community. Lupe thought that we could commission Sylvia Woods, a playwright and educator, to write a play. I also contacted the Arizona Center for the Media Arts and suggested a Chicano film series. And I spoke with members of Arte Hispano and Dinnerware, both local art groups, and asked them how they wanted to participate. All of them became interested in being part of the festival. I wanted another vehicle or venue, of a moment in time, when we could all be in a situation where our minds were being filled with history, political, cultural and educational ramification of the *movimiento*—Chicano civil rights movement. So, I thought of the symposium. I put together the proposal and went to Bob Yasin, executive director of Tucson Museum of Art, and told him, ‘As an ethnic arts group, here is what we can do for you in relation to the whole show.’ He was very pleased. The festival has been in the planning for over a year.

Events held in conjunction with the CARA exhibition: ● Opening reception, noon-4 p.m. Jan. 19, free and open to the public at Tucson Museum of Art, 140 N. Main Ave. ● "CARAS: The Many Faces of the Chicano/A Community," described as "a humanist symposium," Feb. 7 and 8 in the Leo Rich Theater at the Tucson Convention Center, from 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. each day, with a reception at TMA from 6-8 p.m. following the Saturday presentations. Keynote speaker is Tomas Ybarra Frausto of the Rockefeller Foundation and also a major participant in the Chicano movement and a primary interpreter of its literary and artistic history. ● Festival Chicano del Tucson is a broad-based cultural accompaniment to the exhibition. In addition to the CARA exhibition, "Counter Colon-ialismo," a show of artworks that present alternative views of history and aesthetics will be presented at Dinnerware Artists' Cooperative Gallery, 135 E. Congress St., and at Pima Community College Fine Arts Complex, 2202 W. Anklam Road, from Jan. 28-March 2.	● Cine Chicano Film Series, presented by the Arizona Center for the Media Arts, will run Jan. 30-March 15 at the Screening Room, 127 E. Congress St. Times are: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 3 and 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$3. Call 628-1737 for programming information. ● "Latins Anonymous," an irreverent comedy presented by Borderlands Theater, will have performances March 12-15, 19, 20, 21, 22. Times are 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday at the Pima College Center for the Arts, Proscenium Theatre. Tickets are \$10 general admission or \$8 for senior citizens and students. For more information, call 882-8607. A staged reading of a play by Sylviana Wood will be held. Time and place to be announced. ● A music festival, "Viva Tucson," presented by Chicanos por la Causa on March 19, 20, 21. Time and place to be announced. ● "Teatro Campesino," presented by Teatro Carmen, will be held March 25 and 26. Time and place to be announced.
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FIGURE 9.2 Advertisement for CARA events. *Citizen*, January, 16, 1992, p.10.

For those of you who were unable to attend, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, assistant director of arts from the Rockefeller Foundation, was the keynote speaker. He spoke of being held in place by global networks of power. He spoke of the Chicano art movement, which rose parallel to the political movement. He also spoke of ideas that move from L.A. to Mexico, from Bolivia to Barcelona and back to the barrios. Padilla concluded, "This whole experience speaks favorably of the power of partnerships and collaborations."

Another part of the festival is Borderland Theater's production of *Latins Anonymous*. It played in Tucson last year and received wonderful reviews. It will be presented from Thursday through March 22 in the Pima Community College Center for the Arts, Proscenium Theatre. Performance times will be 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays. I saw it last time and plan to see it again. It is hilarious, witty and entertaining. For more information or tickets call 882-8607.

For information on "CARA: Chicano Art, Resistance and Affirmation," call the Tucson Museum of Art, 624-2333. The museum is open seven days a week during the exhibition, and whether you like the show or not, it at least gives us all another view of America. *Hasta la vista*.

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