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IN THIS ISSUE

105-Year-Old Veteran Reflects On How Faith And Family Help Him Persevere



LOCAL BUSINESS

Locals Can Fly to New Destinations from Taos
Page 5

Red River Again Nominated for Best Ski Town
Page 4

Understanding the Motives Behind the Green Hydrogen Project
Page 7

SPORTS & EDUCATION

Questa Implements No Cell Phone Policy
Page 10

Local QISD Staffers Recognized
Page 10

Questa Football Make it to Playoffs
Page 11

Questa Volleyball Charge Through District Playoffs Undefeated
Page 11

Questa Soccer Season Comes to an End
Page 11

COMMUNITY NEWS

Beautiful Mural Appears in Costilla
Page 14

Michael Cordova Awarded Fire Chief of the Year
Page 18

OBITUARIES

Roger Archuleta Jr.
Lawrence Martinez
Elsie Rael
Tina Marie Romero
Floraida Archuleta Sanchez



Courtesy Photo

Veteran Valdemar DeHerrera and his late wife, Consuelo

By LORA ARCINIEGA

Valdemar DeHerrera turned 105 on October 8, 2024. He is a decorated war veteran and prisoner of war. He says there are two things that helped him get through his most difficult times; family and faith.

DeHerrera's house, where he and his wife of 69 years, Consuelo, raised their children—six girls and one boy as well as two adopted children—sits on what used to be his 100-acre farm. All throughout his home are little reminders of his military service, but nothing is as prominent as the family pictures, particularly of his wife and kids. Large vintage pictures of his children hang proudly in the living room, and his chair faces in that direction.

Together, we sat with his daughter Valerie Rael, his granddaughter Celina Trujillo, and his great-granddaughter

Janae Trujillo, shuffling through old photo albums containing black-and-white pictures and more current pictures of him with his wife on travels after he had retired.

DeHerrera was 22 years old when he was drafted into the Army and eventually transferred to the New Mexico National Guard. What was supposed to be an 18-month training in the Philippines turned into three years and seven months, spent as a prisoner of war after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Upon returning to New Mexico, severely malnourished, DeHerrera spent months recuperating in Santa Fe.

DeHerrera recalls that when he returned to New Mexico, he met his wife, Consuelo DeVargas, in Taos. "She didn't know how to cook or farm so I taught her both," DeHerrera says. He and his wife created a homestead in Costilla and

raised their family with the same values that DeHerrera grew up with. "My mom was strict but my dad was more relaxed," DeHerrera says. He talked about his family being entrepreneurs when it came to establishing businesses in Costilla and Amalia. "They made a good life for themselves and were generous to many along the way," said granddaughter Celina.

DeHerrera is very stylish and has a great sense of humor. He wore a plaid collared shirt with a sweater vest and under his flat cap his hair is actually turning black. "It's going back to its original color again!" His daughter Valerie remarks while giggling, "he's going in reverse!"

DeHerrera recalls the difficult times he spent in the Philippines and being constantly beaten, weak, and extremely malnourished. He believes that the hard

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