



## Dr. Homer José Peña

July 9, 2024

How fortunate we are to have been loved by Homer José Peña. We aspire to benefit from his example of how to live and love others. Our father was 92 years of age and passed peacefully at home in Austin soon after enjoying a bowl of ice cream on July 09, 2024. We'll hold on to his spirit and grace forever.

Here's how we'll remember him...

Family was first and meant everything. He was happiest when surrounded by as many family members and friends as possible. He was a simple man with hopes that people would do the right thing and treat others well. He enjoyed cowboy movies with John Wayne but wasn't the type to walk in a room with a powerful swagger. Instead, he presented strength with a mountain of integrity displayed by a gentle mannerism. He was gracious and patiently paid attention to your thoughts. He was honest and transparent. He was intelligent and succinctly articulated opinions with clarity and a response that sounded like "What would Jesus do"? We deeply love him, and he generously loved us back.

Dad was a loving husband of 66 years to our mother, Maria Del "Carmen" Peña, a caring father to Omer †, Sandra, Denise, Homer "Jay" Jr., Michael, and Veronica. He was a grandfather of 10 (Catherine, William, Elizabeth,

Ashley, Dillon, Aaron, Tori, Colin, Lauren and Mateo) and a great-grandfather of 1 (Orson). Dad also embraced the extended family of significant others through his children. More people, more love, that made our family complete and brought laughter and joy to his heart and home. They include: Carl, Cinthya, Shannon, Dan, Jerris, and Claudia.

Our father was preceded in death by 2 slightly elder brothers, all with similar character, that he revered. They were Joel Peña and Heron Peña, and they passed in June and July of 2019 respectively. A most difficult and heart-breaking time for all.

Dad maintained a positive perspective without much complaint while dealing with the natural and indefensible decline in health. A special note of gratitude from the family goes out to our sister, Sandra, who took on the responsibility of acquiring the knowledge, skills and patience to provide the time for all of dad's medical needs, including the struggles with at-home daily dialysis for the last year and half. We will forever appreciate all you've done for the family.

In his retirement years, dad took up the only hobby in his life and thoroughly enjoyed studying the strategic art in the game of chess. He loved chess and played every day. He exercised his mind solving chess puzzles on his iPad and was always challenging someone to play a game.

He was also a stubborn man with steadfast opinions but never demanded. He wasn't apt to voice criticism to his family but frequently complained about misguided legislators. He annoyingly followed all rules but viewed our mistakes and difficult times with empathy and compassionate open arms. To simply say he was a selfless man is inadequate. His actions and mind were always directed toward the benefit of others with a moral courage.

He never cared for lavish or fancy items and never bought anything to indulge

himself beyond a good book. He loved desserts and had a good-natured sense humor. He enjoyed sending us cartoons that appeared to make fun of himself in old age. He never cared for alcohol or curse words as a manner of expression. He carried himself as a gentleman. He worked at being better in whatever he pursued and demanded excellence of himself in even small tasks. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right was taken to another level in his every day.

He never raised his voice in anger or to discipline. He guided with simple and absolute truths. He established a presence of respect and lead the family by example. He consistently demonstrated love with the simplest actions.

Dad was born to Alonso and Olivia Peña at his home with the aid of a midwife and raised in McAllen, Texas. The family of 5 lived in a shotgun style house designed with only 2 bedrooms and 1 bathroom. Instead of participating in athletics or organized hobbies, his youth was occupied by employment. After graduation from high school, he couldn't afford college and chose to serve in the United States Navy. He served during the Korean war from 1951 – 1955 and traveled the world. He was an Aviation Electronics Technician assigned to fly in a patrol plane tasked with various duties including searching for enemy submarines. In 1954, Patrol Squadron 23 (VP-23) with a crew of 10 was flying a B-24 aircraft over the North Atlantic Ocean when engine failure necessitated a crash landing 110 miles east of Nantucket Island, Massachusetts. At least five more things went wrong during the emergency, but my dad and all other crew members were rescued in the ocean. This harrowing experience created an everlasting bond among these young men who continued to keep in touch and reunite for the next 70 years. To emphasize this critical moment in one's life, the personalized license plate on dad's car reads "VP-23" in honor of their survival.

After discharge from the military, his service provided the benefit of financial assistance to help pay for college. Dad devoted himself to the opportunities that higher education bring. Many people are defined by the one occupation they commit to for a lifetime, but dad seized each job as an opportunity to achieve more and earn the next job. The first rung in the ladder of success for his professional career began as a math teacher at his alma mater, McAllen High School. While employed, he concurrently continued his higher education as a door to be opened that would provide the opportunity to pursue elevated goals. Overall, he attended 5 higher education institutes to gain a teaching certificate, Bachelor of Arts Degree, Master Degree in Education and ultimately a Doctor of Education Degree from the University of Houston. A long list of job titles in administrative education were highlighted by becoming President of Pan American University at Brownsville in 1980 and the Founding President of the University of Texas at Brownsville. He ended his career working for the University of Texas System as the Executive Director for South Texas Program Development in Austin and retired in 2003. This warrants repeating ... he started as a high school math teacher and impressively escalated to directing the goals of a system of universities. All his accomplishments were earned, not given, and well deserved from a dedication to perseverance.

We offer the following imagery that exemplifies the family's perception of our father: As a young and small child when my father stood directly before me, I tilted my head back and looked straight up. In my mind, he appeared to stand 12 feet tall. Then, as I grew older and was able to look my father directly in the eye, the respect he garnered from the quality and content of his character was impressive. And in my mind, he appeared to stand 12 feet tall. As my father grew older and the laws of nature reduced his height, and I was now taller than him, I appreciated the way he lived his life and treated all others. In my mind, my father continued to stand 12 feet tall. We will forever look up to him for guidance in our decisions.

Memory of the details from any specific meeting with others is often vague at best but the memory of how that person made you feel is easily remembered. Our father always greeted us with a tremendous hello and a heart-felt good-bye. The moment you saw his eyes you felt his sincere excitement and could hear the love in his voice. He offered the warmth and affection of a strong hug and a kiss that instantly made both of your days better. We'll always remember and became accustomed to, his consistent parting expression that always repeated the exact same sentiment, "Be good. Be brave. Be happy. And be back".

Our hearts are filled with pride that mildly alleviates the heavy pain of his absence. It was a comfort to say, "I love you". But now, our hero has passed, and it feels impossible to say, "Good-bye".

Family and friends are invited to attend a visitation on Monday, July 29th 2024 between the hours of six and eight o'clock in the evening at Kreidler Funeral Home in McAllen where a recitation of the holy rosary is to commence at seven o'clock. Funeral Mass will be celebrated at ten o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, July 30th 2024 at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in McAllen. Private family burial will follow at Valley Memorial Gardens Cemetery in McAllen.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUL **29.** 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Kreidler Funeral Home, Inc.  
314 N 10th St.  
McAllen, TX 78501  
(956) 686-0234  
kreidler@sbcglobal.net  
<http://www.kreidlerfuneralhome.com/index.html>

## Rosary

JUL **29.** 7:00 PM (CT)

Kreidler Funeral Home, Inc.  
314 N 10th St.  
McAllen, TX 78501  
(956) 686-0234  
kreidler@sbcglobal.net  
<http://www.kreidlerfuneralhome.com/index.html>

## Funeral Mass

JUL **30.** 10:00 AM (CT)

Our Lady of Sorrows  
1108 W. Hackberry Ave.  
McAllen, TX 78501

**Burial (for family only)**

---

JUL **30**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Valley Memorial Gardens  
3605 N Taylor Rd  
Mission, TX 78501

# Tribute Wall

DR

“ We were very sad to hear of Homer's passing. He was indeed a kind and generous man who was a good friend to Eliseo and me. We will miss him. We send Carmen and his family our love and prayers.

---

**Dora Ruiz** - August 04, 2024 at 04:34 PM

AC

“ My deepest condolences 🌺 to his family 💔💔💔💔

---

**Annika Canales** - July 29, 2024 at 08:09 PM

AD

“ ...great professor, mentor, colleague, higher education administrator, and, a good, precious friend, who I worked with for years to improve the accessibility and quality of higher educational opportunities in the Rio Grande Valley and other parts of Texas. Homer will be missed dearly and not forgotten. Sincere condolences to his family. May he RIP. God Bless. Armando T. Diaz

---

**Armando T. Diaz** - July 27, 2024 at 06:50 PM

JG

“ I had the great pleasure to work with Dr. Homer Pena for several years. He was honorable, smart and kind. His decisions were always in the best interests of our students. He was pivotal to the creation of UT Brownsville... we simply would never have been able to imagine the innovative design without his creative genius. He was honest and kind. He was always a man of his word that treated everyone with great kindness and respect.

*Working and learning at his side was one of my life's great privileges.*

*Julieta V Garcia*

---

**Julieta V. Garcia** - July 25, 2024 at 05:06 PM

NE

“ Homer was my Godfather. Unfortunately, I never got to see much of him since I've lived in Florida most of my life. But here is a picture that was in my mom's album that I think you would like. I also have one from my baptism that I'll add later. I know he is resting in peace with the family awaiting him. Sending my condolences to the entire family. My all your precious memories of him help you find peace in knowing what an amazing man he was. Sending prayers and love to you all! 🙏💕🙏💕



---

**Norma Einwalter** - July 20, 2024 at 02:49 PM

MD

“ *Matthew 7:16 You will know them by their fruits. Yes, you will know Dr. Homer Pena by his fruits. I first met Dr. Pena while I was attending Pan American College in 1967. He was a well respected Registrar who assisted all my needs as well as the other students. Later, we happily met again as his daughter, Denise, married my brother, Carl, what a joyous occasion that was. I followed Dr. Pena's career through the eyes of Denise, and I concurred that he became a great communicator of knowledge and wisdom that was an imprint of his lifelong career in education. Dr. Pena, your mission is complete. Well done, good and faithful servant. My condolences to the Pena family. Marie Davis*

---

**Marie Davis** - July 20, 2024 at 11:53 AM

PP

“ *I was very sad to learn of Dr. Pena's passing today. He and my father, Marvin S. Baker, were colleagues at McHi, and I remember how he loved to teach algebra even to the think-headed (speaking of myself when it came to math!) He had a very happy and upbeat perspective on life, and the world is a poorer place with his passage. May the Lord uphold you at this difficult time and comfort you with beautiful memories of happier days. God bless you. Rest in Peace, Homer Pena.*

---

**Patricia L Power** - July 17, 2024 at 02:09 PM

DP

*A good friend, fantastic comrade, and a shipmate well remembered. A truthful, fun, caring person.,*

---

**Don Penzine** - July 19, 2024 at 05:33 PM

FE

*That is a beautifully written obituary. It certainly characterizes the man I knew and worked with at Pan American University (now UTRGV). He was one of the finest men I have known and worked with. Rest in peace, dear sir.*

*Dr. Frederick (Ted) von Ende*

---

**Frederick (Ted) von Ende** - July 23, 2024 at 06:53 AM

FA

*My first association with Homer was as a student at Pan American College in the 60's while he served as a Registrar--I felt then, as I do now that he was one of the few Hispanic University role models that inspired many of us to realize that dreams are possible. My second association with Homer was when we reunited at the University of Texas System, while we both served as administrators at the O Henry office building. He was respected, admired, and much sought after by his colleagues across the UT University branches. My third association with Homer, Carmen, and his family was as a friend who enjoyed his fellowship, and frequent visits to his home to savor his love of dominos, good food, and reminisce of our times in the Rio Grande Valley. I will miss Homer dearly, but most of all I will miss his friendship and remember his legacy that impacted so many !!! Felipe Alanis*

---

**Felipe Alanis** - July 29, 2024 at 12:28 PM