

***EVANGELINA SOSA***

Evangelina Sosa begins her story of love and family in Sonora, Mexico. She was born in a small town called *Agua Prieta*, but raised in Sonora. Life in Mexico revolved around her large family of 11 brothers and sisters. Her father worked hard as a carpenter and her mother was a homemaker and seamstress. Evangelina was only able to attend school through the sixth grade, but her mother taught her important domestic skills. Evangelina learned to sew and cook at a young age, which enabled her to help her mother care for their large family and assist with the sewing.

Her family was deeply rooted in their religion and belief in God. In addition, Evangelina was taught the importance of loving and respecting people of all walks of life and cultures. When Evangelina was 10 years old, her best friend left Mexico for the United States. Although she was sad to see her friend go, this loss, tempered by her Christian acceptance, helped Evangelina grow stronger.

Though Evangelina never received a quinceañera at age 15, she remembers the very special birthday that marked her journey into adulthood. Traditionally, the quinceañera celebration acknowledging that a young woman has reached sexual maturity and become adult—that as a woman, she is now ready to take on more family and social duties. However, Evangelina's real coming-of-age was her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her mother had sewn Evangelina a beautiful new dress for the occasion. Evangelina was taken to get her hair cut and styled and then was treated to a movie. Evangelina recognized that this special treatment was reserved for someone moving into adulthood. Her parents would not have treated a child so lavishly!

After her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday party, Evangelina experienced an increase in family responsibilities. Although she had not yet turned 15, Evangelina knew she was ready to be married. Not long after, Evangelina met and married Jose Sosa. Jose was a musician and had come to her small town on tour with a Mariachi band called Chapala.

In 1959, Jose decided to leave Mexico for the United States. Although the separation would be difficult, Evangelina agreed to stay in Mexico to raise their young children. Eventually, when Jose found secure employment, Evangelina joined her husband in East Los Angeles.

Evangelina and Jose have had a total of five children, four born in Mexico and one in Los Angeles. In 1971, Jose set out to pursue a career in music and joined his brother's Mariachi group, Los Jilqueros in Stockton, California. In support of her husband, she agreed to move the family to Stockton.

Now 67 years old and living in Stockton, Evangelina still identifies with her Mexican heritage. She has enjoyed years of happy celebrations with friends and family—music, love, and togetherness have filled her life. Although her children do not live in Stockton anymore, they all continue to meet at Evangelina's home for family reunions. Evangelina holds dear these special times and recognizes that, for her, real adulthood lies in treasured moments spent with family.

Interviewer: Kathy Perez

Author: Tammy Hunt

Ethnic Group: Mexican American

Generation: Elder