

Deutilde Medina Varley: the Lady with the Hummingbird Hands

Deutilde Aurelia Medina Varley, age 95, passed away November 7th, 2009. "Deu" (as she was commonly known) was every bit as unique as her name, and the fact that it rhymes with the verb "do" seems almost destiny. Because despite her diminutive size (4'11", in an updraft) and stylish petiteness, Deu was the definitive Portuguese-American "Little Engine that Could"; absolutely nothing could ever be assumed to be beyond her reach or capacity; not only to accomplish, but to excel.

Creative, charming, intelligent, talented, hard-working, and possessed of an absolutely iron will; Deu was not only willing and able to tackle almost any task, she sometimes couldn't see why others didn't also.

Born Deutilde Aurelia Medina in Half Moon Bay, California on February 1, 1914, Deu's ancestral roots nevertheless ran deep both in the volcanic soil of Pico Island, Açores and here in San Diego, specifically La Playa; the small cluster of blocks that many of this city's oldest Portuguese-American families come from.

Her parents, Jose Machado Medina and his wife Amelia, were from Santa Cruz das Ribeiras, and her maternal grandfather (Jose Oliveira Soares) was from Sao Roque, Pico (where the family maintains the Medina Vineyard). Her childhood included going back to Pico to live for a time, and one of her favorite memories was of long walks with her Avô (grandfather) between the two villages, especially as they crossed the crest of the island with its breathtaking views. The distance was a struggle for a young girl, but perseverance, patience, and working together got them through to a great reward. It was a lesson she never forgot.

When Deutilde came to San Diego at age 14, she was fluently bilingual and became the subject of a booklet written by Mrs. Lois Kimble, the wife of Cabrillo School's principal; an early version of the ethnic "study guides" of today. Deu excelled in school, showing natural talent for music (her hands were said to be like hummingbird wings on the guitar), sports, and leadership; but she also came of age during the Great Depression. So like her fisherman father and her hardworking mother, she went to work at various jobs as often as possible, and at an early age.

One of those was as the first "food hostess" at the "Old Spanish" Lighthouse at the Cabrillo National Monument at the end of Point Loma. The "food hostess" idea was one she originated, and she made the sandwiches herself at home; so already a pattern was beginning to form. Deu was a "go-getter".

She graduated from Point Loma High School (with Honors) in 1932, near the worst of the Depression, and continued to do whatever she could to help support her family.

Not far away in La Playa lived her Uncle M. O. Medina, President of the (then relatively new) UPSES Hall, one of its chief founders, and a major leader in San Diego's tuna fishing industry. As fate would have it, living with M. O. Medina and his wife Isabel was M.O.'s handsome nephew-in-law Edward Varley, son of the late Maria J. Soares and her husband Sam Varley.

Deutilde and Eddie met at Point Loma High and the rest, as they say, is history.

They were married on July 7, 1937 at St. Agnes Church, and in due time were gifted with three sons; Edward Jr. (1938), Joe (1941), and James Varley (1944), despite the harsh reality of WWII. Eddie Sr. was Captain of a YP (Yard Patrol) Boat in the Pacific very early in the war, and his whereabouts and safety were a complete mystery to Deutilde for over 18 months as she raised their young sons. Her relief upon finally hearing he was alive and well was beyond measure; and it was another lesson she never forgot.

After the war, Eddie Sr. continued fishing in San Diego's growing tuna fleet and Deu looked after their home, children, and her widowed mother. She also began lifelong involvements in several Portuguese-American organizations at about this time. She joined the women's lodge S.P.R.S.I. (Sociedade Portuguesa Rainha Saint Isabel) #98, eventually becoming their President for 10 years, State President in 1971, and Queen of the State Convention in 1995. She also was an original member of the PASCC (Portuguese American Social & Civic Club) in 1941, as well as that club's President twice, and on its Board of Directors numerous years.

In her spare time she was President of the Luso-American Society for 12 years, a member of the St. Anthony Society, the St. Agnes Women's Guild, the Point Loma Association, the Point Loma High School Association, the Cabrillo National Monument Foundation, and a lifetime VFW member.

Deu was also a charter member of the House of Portugal in Balboa Park in 1935, and the traditional Portuguese dance group that formed there was the forerunner of the Portuguese American Dancers that continue to entertain us today. She proudly wore her original dancers costume into her 90's.

In 1942 Deu also opened a Gift Shop on Rosecrans St., formalizing a business acumen that would become one of her trademark characteristics. She would later operate another one in "Tom Ham's Lighthouse" for 8 years.

Eddie Sr. continued fishing, and after their boys were a little older, in 1949 he and Deutilde were two of the original investors in Christian's Hut (i.e. the "Bali Hai") on Shelter Island, a business she ran alone for 6 weeks until Tom Ham could finally take over. Deu was also along when the first Shelter Island Inc. was formed, the only woman on that Board of Directors, a position she held for 8 years (she was always proud to show that she was issued **Membership Card #1** from them).

That same year she was on the committee (United Portuguese) of the **Portuguese-American League** that re-enacted Cabrillo's landing (a forerunner of the Cabrillo Festival Inc., which she also joined in 1965) again in San Diego, this time on Harbor Drive. The 1949 Cabrillo portrayal was handled by Danny Silva, and the Padre role was

filled by Herculeano DaSilva. The Portuguese-American League went to the Pala Indian reservation and had *real* local indigenous people come to participate for the first time since the 1890's, a detail that Deu was very proud of.

Also as a member of that Portuguese American League, Deu was involved with along with Lawrence Oliver, Harley Knox, and Colonel Ed Fletcher, the group that got the **Cabrillo Statue** moved from San Francisco to San Diego and placed (first) at the Sonar School, and eventually up at the Cabrillo National Monument where it remains today.

Still in 1949, Deu and Eddie Sr. purchased the Circus Café at 2975 National Ave., a business they would continue to run for 29 years, and an experience she "wouldn't have missed for anything". It was one of the first of a series of businesses they were involved with, including the "Showboat Bar" downtown (10 years), the "Bull Room Bar" in San Ysidro (8 years), and "Varley's" Restaurant near the County Administration Building on Pacific Highway.

Then came their landmark year of 1955, when Deu & Eddie Sr. (and his tunaboat the "Sun Victoria") were picked to be the hosts (*mordomes*) of that year's Festa do Espirito Santo, the biggest single event in San Diego's Portuguese-American community. Eddie Sr. was out to sea, and Deu was intimidated by the enormity of the task. To her unending gratitude, former *mordome* Mr. Joe Rodgers came to her and said (in Portuguese), "Don't worry little girl, I'm here to help you". And so he did, as did the entire community, and it was another lesson she never forgot.

Under Deu's guidance and with the help from an enormous amount of others, the Festa do Espirito Santo contained many "firsts" that year; including the:

- First Rosary at the Hall for the entire community.
- First overhead Crown of the Holy Spirit centerpiece hung from the ceiling in main hall.
- First use of the outside Bazaar (instituted to help keep the crowds through the afternoon).
- Restoration of the original 1922 *Imperio* Chapel (aka. *Capela*) to house the Crown of the Holy Spirit year-round, as it still does to this day.
- Paying off of the Mortgage of the 1948 re-construction of the UPSES Hall, which was symbolically burned in a silver tray on the final Sunday of that 1955 Festa.

Deu adored the Festa do Espirito Santo, and despite the up's and downs of life and a busy work schedule, she worked in the "Festa" kitchen (except for 1994, the year her husband died) at every one from 1955 through 2009, a string of 53 years.

Another word about that Festa do Espirito Santo is noteworthy here: In the time I knew Deu, she was only short with me once, when I asked her a series of generic questions I addressed to each annual *mordome* about *comparing* their Festa do Espirito Santo to one's from other years. It was an innocent enough question, but foolish; and she let me know why: It's because although short-sighted people may want to make comparisons in order to praise or correct others; the fact of the matter is that because each year is unique, irreplaceable, and inherently precious and deserving of its own stage, each year *is* genuinely, absolutely "perfect". I quoted that in the Centennial Gala program last month, her final outside event, and she was pleased to hear it.

Deu felt the exactly same way about each member of her family. She could be critical of them sometimes (even a hummingbird has a sharp tongue), but when she said, "They're *family*" it really and truly meant something: deep, profound, and everlasting.

Both are lessons I hope I never forget.

As a guest in Deu and Eddie's home, there was always a place for you at their table, at her breakfast nook, on their beloved patio; and there was never, ever (not even once) a shortage of food. Deutilde came to play the role as family matriarch naturally, beautifully, and a finer friend could not be had.

Deutilde Aurelia Medina Varley was a diminutive grand dame, a lady with tiny feet and hummingbird hands, delicate but always busy, always engaged. And like the whale hunters of her ancestral Pico, despite her bantam size, one look into the concentrated gaze of her beautiful dark eyes and her rock-steady stance let everyone know in no uncertain terms; it would be the *whale* that was in real trouble.

The last time I saw *that* look was when she'd heard that the portrait of M. O. Medina was no longer up anywhere in the UPSES Hall. This despite the fact that he was a primary founder of our Hall, had been that Hall's first President, and served in that capacity for over 50 years.

This, she pointed out, "Was a lot to forget".

I'll never see another hummingbird without thinking of Deutilde, or without being reminded that despite living to 95 years, like a hummingbird; Life goes by so fast.

OBRIGADO, ARNOLDO
 By Jeff Madruga

Upon entrance to the momentous year of our Centennial 2010 Festa, we are reminded once again of all those who have made our Portuguese-American community what it is today. In the ebb and flow of life, we try to appropriately discern and address all those who have played their part in our collective success, but the fact is (unfortunately) we often miss naming many of those who indeed contributed, or name them at the wrong time, or (worse) even take them for granted.

Today, in a humorous attempt to balance the scales, I'd like to take that ideal to the opposite, yet still fitting, end.

Today, we will recognize our *smallest* Portuguese-American contributor: Arnaldo the Turtle.

Arnoldo, a tartaruga, was rescued from harm's way on Rosecrans Street by his kindly owner, who brought him home and has allowed him to stay ever since. And although Arnaldo's ancestry remains a mystery (the Picoense say he's Picoense, the Madeirense say he's from Madeira), it's not so important after all these years; and all agree he looks Portuguese.

Arnoldo lives quietly (what else?) in a well-kept Portuguese-style garden on Evergreen Street. His address and the garden owner shall remain nameless for privacy's sake, and besides; Arnaldo (like our best heroes) is very modest. But don't let his low-key demeanor and self-effacing ways fool you, because Arnaldo is always on the job, always searching for snails and other critters that might harm the couves, or (worse yet) the fava beans! So while Arnaldo is admittedly slow, he is still always on the prowl; searching, relentless in his patrol of the garden perimeter, protecting, peering slooowly to the left and slooowly to the right; hunting to keep our staples in top-notch shape for our nourishment.

Today, we salute you Arnaldo! No one has done what you do any better, for so long, and for such small wages. And if he's complained even once, no one remembers it. Yet Arnaldo is always there, except during winter hibernation (although some suspect a mid-Atlantic cruise, or a lady turtle), doing what he can to help put good Portuguese food on our tables for over 20 years. Bravo, Arnaldo!



Long-time Portuguese Societies Agree to Merge

Sunday, December 6, 2009 - Four Portuguese fraternal societies will be merging into one as of January 1, 2010, to form the Portuguese Fraternal Societies of America (PFSA).

The current SES, UPEC, UPPEC and IDES societies will join to form the new organization.

The merger affects 58 districts in California, 2 in Nevada and 2 in Massachusetts with a combined membership in excess of 38,000.

The formation of the PFSA came in response to a recommendation from the California Department of Insurance that the fraternal organizations merge to assure protection of life insurance and annuities and to cover financial obligations for their members.

"This is a true testimony to the founding forefathers of four great Portuguese benefit fraternal societies uniting to become one," members were told in a letter from the future PFSA Fraternal Board of Trustees. "The legacy and the history of our four societies are the principle roots that will strengthen our new foundation. Our culture and traditions have been a significant part of our decision making."

The merger has prompted many questions from long-time members loyal to their individual societies. Each has operated independently with its own identity, books and activities, and members voiced concerns about preserving the long-standing traditions of each organization.

A meeting was held recently in Gustine for local members to get some of their questions and concerns answered by representatives from the home office.

"The new society will be composed of four societies but identified as one," Chairman of the Business Board of Trustees John Salvador explained. "The four societies are combining to strengthen what they have and all the assets. How the money in each council is spent will still be under the control of its members."

Richard Castro, Chairman of the future PFSA Fraternal Board of Trustees, stressed to the concerned members that preserving the heritage and significance of each society is an important goal as the new society is formed, extending even to the patron saints and symbols representing the organization. "Each patron and symbol was so important to our founding fathers that we want to keep that represented in the new society," Castro explained. The new symbol will incorporate devotions to St. Anthony, the Holy Spirit and Immaculate Conception.

As of the New Year, the current societies will be identified as PFSA and assigned a new council number. The identity of each new fraternal council will always refer to the original councils.

All four home offices will be combined to one home office in San Leandro, the trustees reported.

"Supreme has come together and we're hoping subordinate councils will also," Salvador expressed.

"You'll be able to do more as one large group and you won't lose your name," advised Geraldine Alves, director of the future PFSA Business Board of Trustees.

Six societies on the West Side decided to take that suggestion.

The historical moment took place in OLM Parish Center I on November 17th.

Six local Portuguese fraternal societies agreed to merge into one council with the hopes of creating a bigger, better society for their members. The SES Council 7, UPPEC Council 49 and UPEC Council 99 of Gustine and the SES Council 21, UPPEC Council 52 and UPEC Council 68 of Newman unanimously voted to merge. The president and secretary from each group signed the official document that evening, and now await the assignment of their new council number.

Eleanor Vierra of Newman said one of the benefits of the local groups deciding to merge is strengthening them as a unit. She has been president of the SES in Newman for 15 years and the Supreme choir director as well. She is also president of UPEC in Newman.

Another benefit of the merger is the consolidation of meetings, conventions and official visits.

Although there will have to be compromises during the transition period as the new council is formed, the board of trustees expressed confidence that each society will come to support and embrace the new beginning for the fraternal society.

The current Supreme Presidents of each society will serve as ambassadors for the PFSA, attending official visits together throughout the transition period leading up to the first convention which will be held in November 2010. At that point, Supreme officers for PFSA will be elected.

Subordinate councils, like the newly formed one in Gustine/Newman will hold nominations for their own council officers after the official merge in January 2010. Members will be notified of the date when it is set.

"From what I understand, the merger has to be done. I think this is going to be good," Vierra shared.

"We will be stronger as a larger group," agreed Luisiana Drumonde, president of SES in Gustine.

Some of the societies have seen membership decline quite a bit over the years, so combining resources while retaining the history of each society makes sense, she pointed out.

Drumonde said the combined organization will keep the Portuguese culture strong while protecting the assets and providing the best service for members.

The unification Mass will take place January 10th at Five Wounds Catholic Church in San Jose.

"The societies will march in with their current banners and proceed out with their new council banners, very symbolic and unified," Drumonde described.

Fun FACTS!

First New Yorker was Portuguese?

August 31, 2009 – The New Yorker Magazine reports: Among the many things that most New Yorkers *don't* know about their hometown is the arguable and under-documented fact that the first New Yorker was a black Latino named **Jan Rodrigues**. Born in Santo Domingo to a Portuguese father and an African mother, Rodrigues came to New York harbor aboard the Dutch ship *Jongue Tobias*, in the summer of **1613**. Because of a dispute with the crew or a directive from the Captain (or both), he stayed behind, alone, after the ship departed. This made him, four years after Henry Hudson sailed by, the first non-native to live there without the support of a ship. The captain had furnished him with a musket, some knives, and eighty hatchets to trade with the local Indians.

Rodrigues eventually married into a Rockaways tribe, and served as a go-between for Dutch merchants and settlers in and around Manhattan. He was, in some respects, the city's first businessman, and its first fixer. It is unclear where exactly Rodrigues settled, but a present-day Dutchman in New York named Joep de Koning has made the case that it was on what the Dutch christened *Noten Eylant*, or Nutten Island, just off the southern tip of Manhattan.



T. Les Perry's Eulogy by Granddaughter Danee Perry Clarkson

On behalf of my family, I want to take a few minutes to share some memories of our Grandpa, reflecting back on a period when he was happy, healthy and had the love of his life and partner in mischief at his side, Grandma Lillian.

Without a doubt, Grandpa had a sense of humor, a keen sense of adventure, a wild mischievous streak, and great love and respect for his family. From trips to Hanford or Julian, snipe hunting, grunion hunting, clamming, camping, dove hunting, dune buggy rides, water skiing, leisurely days spent at the Kona Kai Club, barbecues at the O.B.C. club or fish fries at the S.E.S. Hall, Grandpa was often leading the charge, and always with Grandma Lillian at his side. Never one to sit idle, Grandpa was either on the move or tackling a new project.

Back in the 50s, he had the go-to garage for working on hot rods, and Joe Varley, Peter Morrow, Tommy Madruga and others spent many hours there. Pete may still remember Grandpa's paint job that won him prizes at car shows. And although Grandpa didn't attend the illegal races at Hour Glass field he claimed that he knew that Grandpa Les was racing based on the way he kept going through tires. Unfortunately, despite their best efforts and the many hours spent in the garage, they never could get that Ford souped up enough to beat Tommy Madruga's Chevy!

My grandfather Les was nicknamed "Babe" by family members, short for "Baby Les." This name suited him just fine until he started school and was teased by his classmates, and then he decided that he didn't like it at all. However, he had a change of heart after his father took him to the movies to see "The Babe Ruth Story." When coming out of the movie, he told his father "you can call me Babe anytime!" The name stuck and his family and close friends, including a few who were grade school buddies, have continued to call him "Babe" over the years.

Because of the many special projects he undertook, he always had scraps of leftovers. The younger members of the family, like my Uncle Brian, remember the special box of wood blocks that Grandpa salvaged from projects for us to play with.

And it wasn't Sunday without a family dinner at Grandma and Grandpa's. Despite a growing family, Grandma and Grandpa always managed to get everyone around the dinner table on Sundays, including Grandma Perry and Aunt Lucy. And if you were celebrating a birthday—or just played your cards right—you would be rewarded with the favorite seat at the table, the stool located right between Grandma and Grandpa.

A favorite for all the kids was when Grandpa made "Breakfast for Dinner." He would break out the electric griddle and eggs and sausage and pancakes shaped like your initials or like Mickey Mouse.

Grandpa was responsible for teaching each of the kids—boys and girls alike—to fish. Nothing was more exciting than going on a day trip with Grandpa, launching the boat at Shelter Island, heading out to sea and then waiting for the first fish of the day. "Grandpa, grandpa – I've got a bite!" was always followed by his standard response, "Scratch it!"

There are so many great memories from weekends spent at the cabin in Julian, which so many people had the opportunity to enjoy, including members of the Portuguese Dance Club. Sure, for the kids, every road trip to Julian sitting under the shell in the back of Grandpa's El Camino was a death wish. I'm told that despite being banged up when Grandpa made a sharp turn—or simply hit the breaks for fun—they kept going back for more because weekends in Julian were always an adventure involving snow ball fights or sledding, dune buggy or motorcycle rides, camping on the deck and throwing popcorn to the bats, picking apples or collecting acorns, catching snakes, frogs, and horned toads, or going on the ever elusive hunt for snipe.

Grandpa must have had a pocket full of stones that he discreetly threw in every direction to convince the kids that the snipe were out there in the dark, just beyond their reach. I'm told that there were quite a few flashlight batteries killed in the never-ending search for snipe! The kids were nearly adults before they figured out that Grandpa had played them. Remember that this was before the internet and Google searches. He got them good!

And then there was the time that Grandpa decided to hitch the toboggan to the back of his motor cycle to tow the kids up the snow covered streets. Sure, it took several hours to pick the grit kicked up from the road out of their eyes, teeth and hair, but boy they had fun.

Grandpa had a way of getting what he wanted. As he sat with his feet up in his Lazy Boy waiting for Mutual of Omaha, the Wonderful World of Disney, or a professional wrestling match to start, he would say, "Boy, [fill the name in the blank], you make the best popcorn ever, with just the right amount of salt and butter. I think I should open a popcorn store for you when you get older. We could make millions!" Each person responded in the same way – Grandpa got his hot bowl of popcorn within minutes. It wasn't until they were much older that they realized that Grandpa was just working them for one of his favorite treats!

And speaking of his Lazy Boy, everyone remembers how he would often greet them with a "How would you like a kiss?" from his favorite chair. He would then reach into the table by his side and pull out a shiny Hershey's chocolate. Grandma always made sure his drawer was well stocked.

Grandpa was a man of many talents and he even got to play doctor when he and Grandma Lil—with some help from a local policeman—delivered my Uncle Les right on a sofa in their house. Grandpa stayed cool as a cucumber, carefully unwrapping the cord tightly looped around his neck.

Of course, with Christmas right around the corner, the family is reminded of the many ways in which Grandpa and Grandma made this holiday so special. From the traditional Christmas Eve dinner to celebrate Grandpa Les' birthday with pickled pork, to nights slept on the sofa in hopes of catching Santa filling the stockings hung in a row at the chimney, there have been so many great stories shared in recent days. One favorite relates to the night that Grandpa gathered all of the kids at the window in his den so he could point out Rudolph leading Santa's sleigh. It took quite a few minutes, but eventually he was able to get each child to see the little red blinking light moving through the sky, so carefully following the direction of the commercial jets through the Lindbergh Field flight path in order to avoid a mid-air collision. Like magic, when everyone returned to the front room, the stockings were filled with goodies, including butterfly nets and trinkets and toys. There were even some lemons and sticks left on the mantel for the naughty girls and boys, but nobody claimed those!

In small ways and big, Grandpa always took care of Grandma Lillian. For example, he never left for work in the morning without first bringing a cup of coffee to her bed and parting with a good-bye kiss. While Grandpa was getting ready for work, Grandma was frequently joined in her bed by a visiting sister or a grandchild, and Grandpa always made sure they too received a hot mug of coffee. My mother Debra blames this ritual for starting her on her way to a 40+ year coffee addiction.

Perhaps most of all, we remember and appreciate his devotion to our Grandmother Lillian throughout their marriage and especially through her long and progressively challenging struggle with Alzheimer's disease. Despite receiving recommendations from doctors and hospice workers to put her in a home, he insisted—and he did—give her the most loving care possible in the comfort of her very own home. He honored the vows he made to her on his wedding day, "to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part," setting an example for the four generations he left behind.

Finally, we remember that although he was not a big man, he was a very strong man, tough and a fighter, a man of character, a real gentleman with a big heart, who always kept us laughing. These memories and many, many more we will always treasure.

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OLIVEIRA, MARIA ALICE

January 9, 1928 – November 17, 2009

Maria Alice Oliveira, also known as “Mina”, passed away on November 17, 2009. She was born on January 9, 1928, in Horta Faial, an island of the Azores off of Portugal. After coming to San Diego, she married **Antonio Oliveira** and became very active as a parishioner at Saint Agnes Church, and with the United Portuguese S.E.S. Community to preserve the Portuguese heritage here in Point Loma. She had a generous heart for many in the community, both as a caregiver and foster mother for infants and toddlers, as well as an unofficial caregiver to other seniors in the area to ensure that their errands, shopping, and meals were provided so that they knew someone truly cared.



Mary Alice was also known as the "Bread Lady," and was always making cakes, cookies and of course her famous sweet bread, for birthdays, get well, or thank you gifts. She made her sweet bread in honor of her faith in the Holy Spirit for every holiday and throughout the year for the Festa do Espirito Santo. She was preceded in death by her loving husband Tony, her parents **Tony and Elvira Correia**, and her brother **Roger Correia de Melo**.

She is survived by her sister **Estela Correia Miller**; three nieces, **Michele Arterberry** (husband **John**, children **Abraham** and **Megan**), **Teri Ferguson** (children **Melissa** and **Derek**), and **Patricia Camacho** (husband **Victor**, children **Janessa**, **Samantha**, **Marlaena**, and **Daniella**). The extended family of cousins, friends and the children in her care over the years is a list too long to begin.

She will be missed by her family and friends and will always be remembered for her faith, love and friendship and her belief in the gift of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

A Rosary and Mass in her honor will be held at St. Agnes Catholic Church, on Saturday, November 21, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.