

The Life of Ignacio Lopez Zulaica

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Individual, Family, and Community Life
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Seeing his picture for the second time in my life, I stare and wonder how and if I can be like him in any way. Here's a man I never met and who I am related to, yet I never knew anything about. It is sad to just find out now what a remarkable person he was. *But it is not too late.* He was a head-strong man with pride, courage, and honor. Never looking back, he set out and made a name for himself and his family. This man became a very respectable man who was highly looked up to. Even though he was only 5'4" tall, he could stand out in any place. His rough life only strengthened him and made him work harder to make a better life for his family. My great-grandfather was a man who can easily be admired.

EARLY YEARS

Ignacio Lopez Zulaica Fuentes was born August 10, 1884 in Zaragoza, Coahuila Mexico. The proud parents were Victor Zulaica and Josefa Fuentes de Zulaica. He was the oldest out of five children. As a young boy of about four years, his father started gearing this boy into an early stage of manhood. Since this young age, Don Victor instilled in his son a sense of civic duty and hard work. With his rugged jeans and pointed boots he set out every morning at about 4:30 a.m. to help his father out on the ranch. School and play had no part

in this young boy's life. The only school he knew was the ranch and the only teacher he had was his father. My grandmother recalls a story he loved to tell about the first time he ever branded a cow. He was about six years old when his father handed him the hot iron. It was a little too heavy for him, but he insisted on going through with it. The iron slipped from his small hands and fell to the ground but not before scorching one of his boots. It burned but he did not cry. Don Victor picked it up and handed it to him again. With all his strength he branded his first cow. It was a little off, but it still made his father proud. For accomplishing this task, he got a pat on the head. This was one of those rare times his father showed any sign of affection. In those times, emotions played no part in the bringing up of a young boy no matter how young he was. His father wanted a strong, hard-working son to carry on the family name. As Ignacio grew a little older and Don Victor grew sicker, he took charge of their three ranches. There were two between San Carlos and Zaragoza, Coahuila and one by Rio San Rodrigo. My grandmother cannot recall exactly how many cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, or goats they had, but she does recall there were too many to count. The Zulaica family was well respected by the whole town. They were known by the story of the young rancher who started off with a few cows and pigs.

Two of Ignacio's strongest characteristics which showed through even as a little boy were discipline and hard work. Both of which he acquired from his father. No other man influenced him more than Don Victor. Pleasing and obtaining approval from him was Ignacio's main goal and doing so was not an easy task. This only made Ignacio strive harder for perfection. The type of life he led since a young boy

played most important in the making of this remarkable man.

An unfortunate incident occurred when Ignacio was about eleven years old. His father became very ill and passed away. Being the oldest male of the family, Ignacio took charge of his family with the help of his young uncle, Juan Lopez. The ranches were of course left under the care of this young boy and therefore at the early age of eleven, Ignacio along with the help of Juan, ran the ranches. He undertook the hardships a man of twenty could probably barely handle. The outcome, however, was positive. He not only gained experience, but also a sense of leadership. He took care of his family and saw to it that they were never in need of anything. Ignacio kept his family together. ✓ *Amazing*

Ignacio grew very fond of his uncle. He would never replace his father, but he was the closest person to a father he would ever have. His mother became very bitter and cold with the death of Don Victor and his little brother and sisters were still too young to offer any type of emotional support. The bond between this uncle and nephew became very strong. It was so strong that Ignacio adopted his Juan's last name as his own, though never forgetting his own. He looked up to his Uncle Juan as a father. Juan set him in the same path his own father would have. Ignacio grew up strong and wise, learning everything from his father, his uncle, and life itself. No school could have offered him so much knowledge.

By the age of twenty, ranches weren't the only thing on this young man's mind, a certain young lady by the name of Tomasa Garza Sierra had won his heart. She was only fifteen years old, but age was of no importance. He wooed her for four years and finally on June

17, 1908, he married her. Every girl in town envied this lucky girl who had managed to win the heart of the most wonderful man in town. There was no honeymoon, no new furniture, and no new home. The only home that awaited her was his parent's home. It was a three bedroom house that had to be shared with six other people. Spending all day with her mother-in-law was the only thing she could look forward to. After the marriage, Ignacio's life continued its normal pattern. His ranches kept on producing and he acquired a small amount of wealth for himself and his family. ✓

MILITARY YEARS

From 1910 to 1920 Ignacio Lopez Zulaica F. served in the Mexican military under the orders of Venustiano Carranza. This is the time Mexico was undergoing great political turmoil. He supported Carranza's policies and reforms with full force so he decided to show his patriotism by supporting him in this way. He decided to stay and fight instead of fleeing to the United States like so many others did. He left his family and ranches under the care of Juan and left to fight the Zapatistas. Ignacio tried to see his family as often as he could, but his rank as a Major of the Cavalry required his undivided attention at almost all times.

Being a strong military leader, gained him the respect of his fellow townspeople as well as that of the higher and lower ranked officials of his group. El Mayor Ignacio Lopez, as he was referred to as, fought many battles. Some battles included those in Cadereyta Jimenez, Montemorelos, Ciudad Victoria, and La Plaza de Tampico in a

continuous struggle that lasted forty-five days. From February 20, 1914 to March 25, 1914 after having operating in Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, he settled himself in the state of Coahuila to keep the enemy back while plans were being made in Nuevo Leon to take over the city of Monterrey. From May 26 to November 1914, he was part of the Brigade under General Benjamin Garza of the second division of the Northwest. During this time he took part of all major battles in the states of San Luis Potosi, Guanajuato, and Mexico City. My grandmother remembers him telling her that Carranza and himself were very good friends. She doesn't know if he was exaggerating or if he was telling the truth, but he insisted on its validity. We're not sure if the man he is standing next to in photograph "C" of Appendix "A" is Venustiano Carranza himself.

HOME AGAIN

During this ten year period and frequent visits home, Ignacio and Tomasa managed to start a family. During this period four girls were brought into the world. These children were Paulita, Josefa, Rita (my grandmother), and Aurora. Two years after his return, a boy who they named Leopoldo was born. Tomasa followed, then came Ignacio, Esperanza, and Consuelo. They still lived in the same house only that it had been expanded and remodeled. My grandmother recalls helping around the house as well as at the ranches sometimes. The girls were only privileged enough to attend school up to the fifth grade. With so many kids to look after and feed, Tomasa needed all the help she could get. The two boys only attended school up to the third grade.

Their next school was the ranch and just like Ignacio, their teacher was their father.

Things returned to their normal way. Ignacio worked even harder on his ranches and in this process, he obtained one more ranch. The Zulaica family became one of the wealthiest families in Zaragoza. I am not sure if there was a bank in Zaragoza at that time or not, but my grandmother vividly remembers the way her father stored away his money. He would make small bundles of money and wrap it up in small leather pouches and place them in a space between the ceiling and the roof. This was completely visible to anyone inside the house. No one had to worry about being burglarized, especially not my great-grandfather. He was too much of a respected man in town for anyone to even consider such a thing.

The war seemed to have had some noticeable effects on his life. He grew more impatient and demanding, which affected the whole family. He worked harder than before and he slowly worked himself out. Ignacio wanted to make sure his family's well being was secure when he no longer was around. After the war, he saw many families left without a husband and a father that were struggling to make it through. My grandmother never really got to know her father until they were both older. Devoting all his time and energy to his ranches, he grew farther apart from his family. My grandmother recalls nights when her mother would stay up waiting for him to walk in with his clothes, boots, and face were covered in dirt. The only day out of the week the children and his wife got to see him for more than an hour was on Sundays when they all went to church. But, because of this, his family looked up to him more.

LATER YEARS

Ignacio grew older and he hired more help around the ranches. At this time he became a much more active member of the Zulaica family. Knowing that his family's future was secure, he now wanted to be a husband and a father. ✓ The kids weren't kids anymore, but they still enjoyed sitting around the dinner table listening to his old war stories. The two oldest of his daughters had already gotten married and Don Ignacio was getting older. The hard life he led had slowly taken its toll on him.

As he married off his youngest daughter and became a grandfather he became a very interesting person to get to know. My mother remembers all the times he asked her to write letters for him. He would sit in an old wooden chair and dictate to her. After all his experiences in life, he never learned to read or write. This is what is so extraordinary about him. He was a successful rancher and military leader, yet he was illiterate. This just shows how intelligent he was. ✓

On May 13, 1971, Ignacio Lopez Zulaica died of old age. He was not suffering from any illness, he was just tired. On this day our family, friends, and the world itself lost one of its most valuable persons. ✓ He passed on a very happy man as it was clear to anyone. *It's great you-tee this wa*

Though my great-grandfather left a will, things ended up mixed up and the family created a hostile relationship. The entire family became greedy and suddenly forgot the most important concept Don Ignacio had taught them, which was the true meaning of family. My

great-grandfather had worked long and hard to provide financial security for the "entire" family. He never would have thought that looking after his family would end up causing so much pain and anger.

This family turmoil lasted until about seven or eight years ago. Everyone wanted what belonged to them as well as what belonged to somebody else. The resentment and tension between them finally died out when the oldest sister, Paulita, passed away. It took the death of a sister to settle and put aside all hard feelings. As they say, "It's better late than never".

CONCLUSION

My great-grandfather taught everyone, including me, a very important lesson. He taught us that family always comes first. He also proved that hard work and dedication really pays off in the long run. His life was not an easy one, but he made the best of it for himself, his family, and his country. He fought for what he believed in and never gave up.

Great Paper.
Nice Insights.
Lessons Learned?

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