

# The Zavaletas

## Nearly 100 years attending St. Joseph Academy

The Zavaleta family has a unique record: four generations of Zavaleta men have attended St. Joseph Academy at various times over a period of nearly 100 years. The first, Pedro Zavaleta was born in Cd. Mier, Tamaulipas Mexico in 1881, and lived on the family ranch near Roma, Texas. He boarded at St. Joseph as a student, traveling from his home in Roma to Brownsville by riverboat. He attended St. Joseph for approximately 10 years in the late 1800s and early 1900s, graduating around 1903. Upon graduation his father, Bartolo, sent him to Spain to study civil engineering. By this time he had traveled widely, but returned to Brownsville in 1915 to become superintendent of the Brulay Plantation, a large agricultural facility located on the Rio Grande several miles downriver from Brownsville. His brother Bruno, also an engineer, worked there but died in an industrial accident early in his life. Pedro lived in Brownsville until his death in 1965. Pedro's son, Ferdinand, was born in Brownsville in 1926 and attended St. Joseph from 1931 until 1941. When the United States entered World War II, he and several friends left school to join the Marine Corps to serve during the war. He came back to Brownsville after the war, but did not return to school, so he did not graduate. He began working in the construction business, later becoming the owner of Star Paving Company.

In the 1990s, St.

Joseph recognized Ferdinand and some other World War II veterans by awarding them graduation diplomas. Ferdinand's son, Anthony (widely known in Brownsville as Tony), was born in southern California in 1947 and attended St. Joseph from 1954 to 1964, from the second grade through his graduation. His family lived at 4th and West Levee Streets, and he regularly walked to school at the St. Joseph downtown location. He remembers the move in 1959 from the downtown location to the new campus near Palm Boulevard, where he played football, basketball and track, and worked on the school newspaper.

His teachers included Brothers William Menn, William Vessels, Luke, Jude and others, all good teachers who gave him a strong educational foundation.

He has been with The University of Texas at Brownsville many years and continues on the faculty as a professor. He specializes in teaching courses that reflect the culture of this region and its relationship to our neighboring country of Mexico.

He recently attended the 50th reunion of his 1964 St. Joseph class, and he recognizes that his classmates include men who have achieved considerable success in life. This includes Brownsville native Federico Pena, who has served both as mayor of Denver, Colorado and was a member of the cabinet of President Bill Clinton, as well as Robert Estrada, who has served as a regent of The University of Texas System.

Tony's son, Anthony Jr., was born in 1969 and attended St. Joseph from 1982 until he graduated in 1988. He now lives in Austin, where he serves as Vice President for Marketing for Progressive Medical Centers of America.

The story of St. Joseph Academy will be continued next week.

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