

# ARIZONA *Our history* LATINA *Our story* TRAILBLAZERS

Stories of Courage, Hope & Determination

Trailblazer Series Vol VII





## Patricia Preciado Martin

A Voice for History



Patricia Preciado Martin has tirelessly spent the last 30 years documenting Arizona's Mexican American history and culture through non-fiction and fiction short stories. She has written six books: *Beloved Land: An Oral History of Mexican Americans in the Southwest* (2004); *Amor Eterno: Eleven Lessons in Love* (2002); *Days of Plenty, Days of Want* (1999); *El Milagro and Other Stories* (1996); *Songs My Mother Sang to Me: An Oral History of Mexican American Women* (1992); and *Images and Conversations: Mexican Americans Recall a Southwestern Past* (1983). Filled with humor and dignity, her stories document daily life, family and love, connection to the land, and cultural traditions.

Patricia's parents, Anselmo Preciado and Aurelia Rascón Romero, met and married in 1935 in Clifton, Arizona. Patricia, born four years later, spent most

of her childhood with her brother and sister in central Tucson. She graduated from Salpointe Catholic High School in 1956. With encouragement and financial support from her parents, Patricia attended the University of Arizona. She recalls having a strong affinity for chemistry but chose a degree in education, as was considered "proper" for a woman at the time.

After graduation, Patricia developed an interest in her own Mexican heritage during a year of study at the Carnegie Institute in Guadalajara. In the early 1960s, Patricia joined the Peace Corps and traveled to Belize where she worked as a teacher and met Jim Martin, whom she married in 1963. They eventually settled in Tucson. Patricia enjoyed staying at home with their two children, Elena and Daniel James, and creating tall tales with titles such as "The Giant Who Ate Christmas Trees."

Her husband encouraged her to publish these stories. Influenced by conversations with a University of Arizona professor and motivated by the 1970s Chicano Movement, she decided to try writing stories about local Mexican American culture.

Patricia tried her hand at her first story for a contest, a bilingual tale called *The Legend of the River of San Agustín*. She won the contest and her story was published. This inspired her to approach elderly Tucson barrio residents and gather local legends to transform into colorful stories. After a few interviews she realized that these individuals wanted to talk about their family roots and their proud southern Arizona heritage, which some traced back as far as the 18th Century. During this time she also began gathering photos, stories, and more from Tucson's old families through the Mexican Heritage Project, initiated by the Arizona Historical Society.

Patricia drew inspiration from all the stories she collected to develop her first manuscript. She collaborated with a photographer to create *Images and Conversations: Mexican Americans Recall a Southwestern Past*, published by the U of A

Press in 1983. The book won the Virginia McCormick Scully Award for the Best Book Published by a Chicano, Chicana or Native American. With *Images and Conversations*, Patricia blazed a trail as the first Arizona author to use oral history to capture the stories of the Mexican American community in a published book.

Patricia continued capturing and preserving the stories Arizona's Mexican American community for years to come, publishing non-fiction works and fiction short stories. Her writing has won numerous awards over the years. Through her colorful and poetic storytelling, Patricia has preserved centuries of Arizona Latino history. She has captured the beauty of the community's traditions, songs, legends, and more that would have been lost as older generations passed away. Her compelling stories have immortalized the everyday lives of some of Arizona's oldest families, and her oral histories have become an archival legacy for current and future historians.

Currently Patricia is writing stories for a future publication, and enjoys giving public presentations and cultural tours that highlight the history she holds so dear.

The Raul H. Castro Institute (RCI) is proud to have a role in preserving the significant contributions made by the 2015 Arizona Latina Trailblazers. This vision of the the Raul H. Castro Institute is to improve the quality of life for the Latino community in Arizona by bringing focus to priority issues of education, health and human services, leadership, and civic engagement – all areas in which these Latina Trailblazers have created a tremendous and lasting impact. Through the use of this book in educational settings and through its availability as part of the Arizona Memory Project, their legacy will be perpetuated as generations of leaders continue to be inspired by the spirit and actions of these pioneering women. It has been a privilege to tell their stories.

To learn more about the lives and achievements of the 2015 Arizona Latina Trailblazers, please visit

**[www.azlatinatrailblazers.com](http://www.azlatinatrailblazers.com)**

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## *Latinas' Stories Remain Important in Arizona's History*

As educators, social workers, labor leaders, entrepreneurs, scholars, judicial representatives, homemakers, nurses, ranch wives, or political representatives, Latinas and Hispanas have long been at the forefront of Arizona's history. It is important that we recognize the impact of their individual contributions, and imperative that their collective stories be recalled and shared.

The life journeys of these women are filled with compelling stories that reflect the strength of their vision, their courageous actions, and their thoughtful advocacy. Their outstanding leadership formed strong cultural cornerstones, laying the foundation for women in leadership roles today.

And so we honor them and all that they represent, pioneers who forged our rich cultural heritage and strong role models.



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