

# Lucio Honoree Celebrates Centennial Birthday

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**Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio** (D-Brownsville), expresses best wishes to Elma Perez on the occasion of her 100th Birthday. Mrs. Perez was honored by Senate Resolution 1024 in 2009 for contributions to her community.

## **Celebrating 100 Years: Local woman credits faith for long life\***

Centenarians are part of a growing population within the United States. On June 20th, Elma Rodriguez Perez will be joining this minority by celebrating her 100th birthday.

Perez was born in 1919 in San Benito, Texas. By 1946, she went on to earn the equivalent of a high school diploma through the Seminario Bautista Mexicano in El Paso, Texas. It is here that Perez found her passion for academics and religious training.

That very fall, Perez enrolled herself at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. With the help of scholarships from Texas Baptist Convention and a local Baptist church, Perez had the chance to pursue her interests. The cost of tuition back then was a mere \$75.00 per semester.

Perez went on to graduate with a B.S. in Elementary Education and a minor in English and Bible. She was known as the only Hispanic woman to graduate from the university in 1950. It was here that Perez fell in love with her husband, Gregorio Perez, who was studying English with a minor in Spanish.

Elma had one brother, Gabriel, and one sister, Anita. Elma and her husband had one daughter, Noemi Ruth Perez, who currently still lives at home with her mother.

“I’m so excited,” said Noemi. “I think she’s an awesome lady and this is a milestone for her. And I feel really grateful.”

After graduating, Perez was hired by the Los Fresnos Public-School system for her first teaching gig. Two years later, she moved to Harlingen to accept a teaching position closer to where her husband was working. Perez moved around quite a bit due to her husband, Gregorio, being a pastor. Both provided services as home missionaries with the North American Mission Board and did so for 39 years.

On May 26th, 2009, Perez was honored by the state for her years of service as a school teacher and voluntary church worker. State Resolution No. 1024 was passed by the Texas Senate, initiated by Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. from Brownsville, in honor of Elma’s efforts.

As the years have gone by, Perez's memory has begun to fade. But, she will never forget those who made an impact on her life.

One may wonder how to achieve becoming 100 years old, and every centenarian has a different secret to their youth. When asked about her secret for a long and healthy life, Perez responded: "Trust God; follow God, He is the one who directs your life."

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\* Mathew, Ashley. "Celebrating 100 Years: Local woman credits faith for long life." *San Benito News*, 21 June 2019, <https://www.sbnewspaper.com/2019/06/21/celebrating-100-years-local-woman-credits-faith-for-long-life/>