



## Evelio Castorena Villarreal

June 8, 1955 - July 3, 2025

Evelio Castorena Villarreal, a beloved husband, father, and educator, passed away on Thursday, July 3, 2025.

He was born on June 8, 1955 in Austin, Texas to Evelio F. and Oralía C. Villarreal. His father was a pharmacist who graduated from The University of Texas after serving his country in World War II. His mother was a housewife and had several jobs over the years that supported the family. Evelio had three older sisters, Linda Gonzales, Chris Hogeda, and Marie Villarreal. In 1959, the Villarreal family moved to San Angelo, Texas.

Evelio attended middle school at Thomas A. Edison Junior High, where he started his lifelong pursuit of music as a percussionist in the beginning band. He then attended Central High School where he continued his pursuit of music and was involved throughout school clubs and the local community. For college, Evelio attended Angelo State University as a chemistry major but continued to play in the marching and concert band. In his third year at ASU and still a chemistry major, Evelio's junior high director, Don Hayes, asked Evelio to work with his percussion ensemble. Inspired by this experience, he changed his major to music education. Evelio would go on to serve as drum major at ASU, be selected as the Outstanding Upperclassmen and would graduate from Angelo State University with a Bachelor of Music Education degree.

In 1983, Charlie Casillas convinced Evelio to move to the Dallas area for work. Shortly after moving to Plano, he met his future wife, Abby Gullett, who was the assistant band director at Williams High School. Little did they know that they would spend many hours teaching together, which led to them getting married on June 9, 1984.

In 1989, Evelio and Abby were hired by Tom Shine to join the band staff in Duncanville, Texas. Evelio worked with Tom Shine, Brian Merrill and Mike Rowden at the high school while Abby was the new head director at Reed Middle School. While at Duncanville, Evelio started working on his master's degree at Texas A&M University Commerce.

Jerry Thomas hired Evelio in 1996 as his assistant at Plano East Senior High. In 2006, Evelio succeeded Jerry Thomas as Director of Bands at Plano East. As Director of Bands at Plano East, the wind ensemble earned the UIL Sweepstakes award every year, was a TMEA 6A Honor Band Finalist five times, selected a National Winner by the Mark of Excellence National Wind Band Honors project ten times, and named Best In Class at numerous music festivals. Evelio had the experience of a lifetime conducting the Plano East Wind Ensemble at Chicago's Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York. The John Philip Sousa Foundation awarded the Sudler Shield to the Plano East marching band and selected the Plano East Wind Ensemble as the recipient of the Sudler Flag of Honor. In 2017, The Plano East band program was honored with the Earl D. Irons Program of Distinction by Phi Beta Mu International Fraternity.

For many years, Evelio served on the State Board of TMEA as President of Region XXIV and XXV, the Region UIL Music Advisory Committee, and was a multi-year honoree of Who's Who Among America's Teachers. Evelio was a member of the Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters

Association, Texas Music Adjudicators Association, Kappa Kappa Psi National Band Fraternity, Percussive Arts Society and Phi Beta Mu International where he was President of Alpha Chapter from 2020 to 2022. Evelio was inducted into the American School Band Directors Association and in 2006, he was awarded the Legion of Honor by the John Philip Sousa Foundation for excellence in teaching and contributions to high school bands. Evelio was awarded an Honorary Lifetime Membership by the Plano East PTA and in 2019, received the UIL Sponsor Excellence Award. He retired in 2020 and maintained an active schedule as a wind band consultant, clinician and adjudicator. In 2021, he joined the faculty at Texas A&M Commerce as an Adjunct Professor of Music supervising and mentoring student teachers majoring in music education and volunteered his time as a Trustee on the Board of Directors for the Lone Star Wind Orchestra, where he served as chair of the education committee.

In addition to a life surrounded by music, he loved traveling with Abby around America. Recent highlights from their travels included the Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore, and Yosemite National Park. He was an avid video gamer, always up to date on the latest Call of Duty and Zelda games. He was a proud progressive, and often advocated for educators and marginalized communities. Evelio was also a World War II history buff, had recently restored several vintage drums, and was active in the wider Plano and Custer Road United Methodist Church community. He was also an Eagle Scout and continued to mentor aspiring Eagle Scouts throughout his life.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Evelio and Oralia Villarreal and his sister Linda Gonzales.

He is survived by his wife, Abby Villarreal, and his daughters, Melissa Villarreal Spurrier (and her husband, Nick Spurrier) and Rebecca Villarreal. He is also survived by his siblings, Chris Hogeda and family, Marie Villarreal and

family, as well as countless extended family members and friends.

A celebration of life service will be held on Friday, July 11, 2025, at 11:00 AM at Custer Road United Methodist Church: 6601 Custer Road, Plano, TX 75023.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the following organizations:

- Lone Star Wind Orchestra: <https://lswow.com/support-lswow/contribution-form/>
- American Civil Liberties Union: <https://action.aclu.org/give/now>

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JUL 11. 11:00 AM (CT)

Custer Road United Methodist Church  
6601 Custer Rd, Plano, TX 75023  
Plano, TX 75023

# Tribute Wall



“ *Distinctive Life Cremation and Funeral Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Evelio Castorena Villarreal*



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**Distinctive Life Cremation and Funeral Services** - July 09, 2025 at 11:39 AM



“ *Distinctive Life Cremation and Funeral Services created a Celebration of the Life of Evelio Castorena Villarreal in memory of Evelio Castorena Villarreal*



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**Distinctive Life Cremation and Funeral Services** - July 09, 2025 at 10:59 AM

TB

“ *Thank you for your devotion and for making us all better humans and musicians. The band program was excellent and gave us so much pride because of you. Thank you also for giving us a safe place to navigate high school. My fondest memories of PESH were in the band hall and the practice lot for marching and in the stands with you at games.*

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**Tracy L Blackmon** - July 11, 2025 at 11:51 AM

DR

“ One of my fondest memories of Mr. V was at the band banquet in May of 1998 at the end of my senior year. During the senior skit, I remember us spoofing one of his quotes. I looked over at Mr. V and he had tears running down his face because he was laughing so hard. I made a note that I would remember that moment the rest of my life and to this day that is true. I remember that so vividly. Thank you Mr. V for inspiring us band kids not just during our days at PESH but in life!!

Debbie Reske - July 10, 2025 at 10:21 PM

JE

“ I was at Plano East from 1998-2000 and band was like home to me. Thanks for making it a wonderful experience, Mr. V. Thank you for everything - You will be missed. ~Jennifer Hsu

Jennifer - July 10, 2025 at 11:34 AM

JF

“ Jerry gullett and family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Evelio Castorena Villarreal.



Jerry gullett and family - July 09, 2025 at 09:54 PM

JF

“ Jerry gullett and family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Evelio Castorena Villarreal.

Jerry gullett and family - July 09, 2025 at 09:54 PM

AG

“ Will miss Mr V very much. He would always ask about my family and education in downtimes throughout my time at Plano East. It was special to connect over our shared heritage as I didn't have many men to look up to who were also of Mexican descent. His care for his students and people he crossed paths with was and continues to be very impactful.

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Alex G - July 09, 2025 at 03:49 PM

KH

“ What a blessing my family had to have been educated by Mr V. My two kids and I spent many an hour on marching fields and in band halls during our tenure at Plano East (2009 - 2013).

*I personally will never forget them playing through a near tornado for state qualifications, making it to finals of BoA, bus breakdown on highway on way back from state, shopping at HEB and dinner competition on trip to Corpus Christi, seeing them playing in the Chicago concert hall and seeing the awarding of the Sousa Sudler Shield.*

*Mr V has definitely left a legacy that won't soon be forgotten.*



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Karen Hellberg - July 09, 2025 at 03:41 PM