



## Leo Montano Jr.

May 14, 1924 - January 8, 2021

1924-2021

Leo Montano Jr., age 96, a resident of Los Chavez, NM, passed away on January 8, 2021. He is preceded in death by his beloved wife, Alice Montano; sons, Michael and Victor Montano; brothers, Paul, Florencio, Pat, and Tito Montano; and granddaughters Stephanie Baca and Monique Montano. Leo is survived by his children, Leonard Montano, wife Rosemarie; Theresa Lucero, husband, LeeRoy; and daughter, Emily Montano; thirteen grandchildren, twenty-four great-grandchildren and three great-great grandchildren.

The legacy of Leo Montano, goes back a long way. After surviving the Battle of the Bulge during World War II, Leo came home to marry his sweetheart, Alice Castillo. After 25 years in Albuquerque, they moved to Los Chavez and lived there for the remainder of their lives. Leo, a general contractor with one of the earliest contractor's licenses in New Mexico, built many homes in the area and also a Los Chavez landmark, Montano Plaza, where he became known as "The King of Chicharrones". Come chile season, you could count on the aroma of roasting green chile filling the air. A hot tortilla, a few chicharrones, some green chile...you're in Heaven. Leo added on to Montano Plaza until it became what you see today. It was there that his children and grandchildren earned their rite of passage learning to make jerky, chicharrones, bread, tamales, ristras, roast and peel sacks of chile; all lessons at Grandpa's school of work ethics.

Once, when asked what skills and trades he'd performed in his lifetime, Leo grabbed a yellow legal pad and scribbled down the following list: machine operator at Puget Sound Naval base, barber, watch repairman, brick mason, stone mason, cement finisher, lath and plasterer, cook and restaurant operator, painter, jerky plant operator, welder, butcher, meat cutter, plumbing work, electrical, painting and lettering. There was nothing he couldn't do; if he set his mind to do it, it would get done. If someone would say there wasn't a way, he would invent one. He had a million ideas and inventions going through his mind, always creating even at the end. He was a Jack-of all trades and master of most! Leo loved to play cards and would challenge his friends, children and grandchildren to his favorite game of Conquian. Although Leo grew progressively blind with the years, you could never

underestimate him, the sly fox, or La Zorra as he was called, would somehow manage to figure out the cards he was holding in his hands and then, without mercy, he would throw down all 11 cards at once beating his opponent.

The Dodgers made Leo a very happy man in 2020, winning the World Series. Leo loved the Dodgers! We don't believe it is just by coincidence that he and Tommy LaSorda, former manager of the Dodgers, would enter the Pearly Gates on the same day!

Leo, loved all of the culture and traditions that he grew up with in New Mexico and wanted this rich history to be part of his family's legacy. He was brought up hunting, farming, baking, preserving foods and trading local products for livestock at his dad's mercantile. Every winter Leo would take his sons and grandchildren hunting; braving the snow and cold they would bring home an antelope, elk, or deer. Weeks later the family would sit around enjoying the home-made jerky. Upon retirement, in his 60's, this love birthed his traditional foods store, "Leo's Beef Jerky" ~ King of Chicharrones.

Leo Montañó was well known and loved in his community. In his 96 years, he touched the lives of hundreds whether as husband, father, grandfather, business owner, mentor, teacher, or friend. Through the gifts and many lessons he has shared, his legacy will live on. Like Leo would always say, "Thanks for the memories!" We thank you for being part of his rich life.

Graveside services will be held at Santa Fe National Cemetery-date to follow. All services will be carried out in compliance with Covid restrictions. We thank you for your understanding. Please sign Leo's online tribute at <http://www.romerofuneralhomenm.com>  
Romero Funeral Home, 609 N. Main St., Belen, NM

# Comments

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“ My heartfelt condolences to all the Montano family and countless friends who had the privilege to either touch base with Mr. Leo Montano, hear his stories, or eat at his restaurant which was a happy and comforting place always. Surely his loved ones that went before him saved him a wonderful seat at the Lord's table. May his life and times always be remembered for the wonderful and amazing man he was to all he met.

**MICHELLE TAFOYA** - January 19, 2021 at 07:15 PM

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“ Blue & White Sympathy Floor Basket was purchased for the family of Leo Montano Jr..



January 19, 2021 at 11:19 AM

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“ Our sincere condolences to the Montano and Lucero families. Being neighbors to Theresa and LeeRoy Lucero for many years, we got to know the family very well and truly adored Leo. Norm always said he made the best beans EVER!!! We know what a wonderful family man he was and how well respected he was in this and many communities in the state. You will be missed greatly.

Norm and Stacy Lincoln

**Lincolns** - January 17, 2021 at 05:09 PM

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“ My condolences to the Leo Montano Familia. Leo built my mom and dads custom home in the South Valley. Built a custom addition for my grandparents and a custom addition for myself. While building our houses he brought us his chili and chicharones. Thank you Leo, Robby Sanchez and familia. Leonard when you get a chance stop by my house.

**Robert Sanchez** - January 17, 2021 at 02:27 PM



“ My sincere condolences to the Leo Montano family. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

**Kenneth Griego** - January 14, 2021 at 08:18 PM

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“ Lorraine Marquez lit a candle in memory of Leo Montano Jr.



**Lorraine Marquez** - January 12, 2021 at 11:24 PM



“ Love, hugs and Prayers to all of the Montano and Lucero families. I was very blessed to accompany Theresa to her dad's home or shop for many years and spend time with Mr. Montano. Family gatherings, Matanzas, Super Bowl parties, he always welcomed me and everyone with open arms. Rejoice in Paradise with your beautiful Alice. God's blessings to all.

**Lorraine** - January 13, 2021 at 12:31 AM

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“ I use to take my father Tito to visit his brother Leo I sit there and listen to there stores of hunting. My father was 90 when he passed away Leo was 92 they could still remember the old times. They would sit there drinking wine and smoking cigarette. I would tell them if you don't stop smoking it will kill you, they would laugh at me and light up another cigarette and my dad would say I will drink to that and they would take a shot of whisky Every time we go out there the the chicharron plant my uncle Leo he be making sopapillas on the table that didn't look to clean, I would tell my dad he is going to roll a cockroach into the dough one of these days. My uncle would say have a sopapilla, my uncle was blind but he could make a good sopapilla I would say where the butter. My dad and I would look at each other make the sign of the cross over the sopapilla. Our hunting trips were the best all my uncle were there Paul, Florencio, Pat, Leo, Tito and their Father Leonardo Montano and wagon master that what call their uncle Rito Romero, their mothers brother. All my cousins were their our father would stay up getting drunk and singing all night long. All of us young one would go to bed we just wanted to go hunting I would sleep with my grandfather, he would say have a shot of whisky it will keep you warm. So many memories that I had growing up with the Montano's sad to see them all gone. Loved them all

**Benny Montano** - January 12, 2021 at 11:22 PM

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“ My condolences to you Theresa..and your family. I pray the lord sends you comfort.

**Bertina Ledoux** - January 12, 2021 at 07:40 PM

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“ My very deepest condolences to Emily, Theresa, Leonard & Moñtano family. I was very saddaned to hear of Mr. Montaño's passing. The Patriarch of the Montaño family leaves behind his lifetime of extraordinary accomplishments, a legacy rich in New Mexico recipes & traditions, yet i remember him saying, "you never stop learning something new". This incredible man was given the gift of longevity in which he never took for granted one day of his life. His resiliency was a testimony to me personally in strength & determination.

I shall never forget when I adopted my (now) 4 children in my 50's. He asked with his poker face, "Are you crazy", smiled & said, " the most important thing in life is familia. He was a man of deep devout for family.

Rest in God's precious peace Mr. Montaño, you surly have earned your rest. Love,  
Claudia & Family

**Claudia Gallegos Martinez** - January 12, 2021 at 07:16 PM

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“ My sincere condolences to the family on the passing of your Dad. He is going to be missed. May he Rest in Peace.



**Corine Trujeque** - January 12, 2021 at 05:03 PM

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“ Leroy and Theresa, Although we never had the honor of meeting your father, it sounds like he was a wonderful person. It is clear that he was greatly loved and touched many lives. We just wanted to send our condolences to you and all of your family. May he rest in peace. Manuel and Norma Bustamante

**Manuel Bustamante** - January 12, 2021 at 03:37 PM

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“ My sincere condolences to Theresa and her entire family! May you find peace in your father's long and successful life and the love and memories you all shared! Blessings to all of you!!

Paul T. Luna

**Paul T. Luna** - January 12, 2021 at 03:00 PM

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“ Garden Accent Stone - 'Wherever a beautiful soul...' was purchased for the family of Leo Montano Jr..



January 12, 2021 at 01:06 PM

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“ My Uncle Leo was always kind and gentle with me. He always enjoyed his Church’s Fried Chicken (especially the greasy skin). He also loved the fat of a fine steak more than the meat. He and I both loved fine, old cars that were “all steel and all for real “ as he put it. I was blessed to purchase his ‘85 white Chrysler New Yorker automobile. He was never short with me unless I didn’t have his coffee and cereal ready for him at 7:00 sharp each morning while I was there at his home caring for my Tia Alicia Friday evenings and the following Saturday mornings. He was sure to correct my driving while cruising to the jerky plant. He repeatedly told me that my first cousin Theresa and I shouldn’t drive in the fast lane all the time. We enjoyed many days together there. I cleaned up while he made the finest carne seca, so papillas, and delicious bread while talking and smoking cigarettes. All his compañeros knew where to find him 7 days a week at his man-cave as I called his jerky plant kitchen. I look forward to seeing him in heaven with my Tia Alicia, Jesus Christ, God The Father and The Holy Spirit. We are all better off by being blessed with his time here on earth. May God bless all of his family and friends. God is Great! Amen, amen, and amen!

Doctor Dave Castillo - January 12, 2021 at 12:32 PM

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“ Our deepest sympathy to ALL of Leo’s family. Our thoughts & prayer are with you. May the “King of Chicharrones” Rest In Peace



T. Castillo Family & Evelyn Carabajal - January 12, 2021 at 12:23 PM

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“ Mr Montañó was a very kind gentlemen. He was truly the King of Chicharrónnes. He was a great chef. I had the honor of eating the delicious food he prepared numerous times. Rest In Peace sir.



Stella Schramski - January 12, 2021 at 12:16 PM

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“ Dicky And Suzanne Romero lit a candle in memory of Leo Montano Jr.



**Dicky and Suzanne Romero** - January 11, 2021 at 10:40 PM

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“ Charles D. Eaton lit a candle in memory of Leo Montano Jr.



**Charles D. Eaton** - January 11, 2021 at 01:56 PM