



## **Thelma Rivera**

### **ATTENDED**

**UNION CHURCH OF PONCE 1969 – 1973**

**UNION CHURCH IN PUNTA LAS MARIAS 1973 -1986**

**SECOND UNION CHURCH 1986 - 2015+**

### **By Anita Rodriguez**

Thelma Louise Roupp. That's my mom. Since the movie came out with her name she tells people she's the original. Original is a great word to describe my mom.

She was born in August of 1932 to Walter Roy and Bertha Pearl Roupp in Witcha, Kansas at the onslaught of the Great Depression. She was preceded by two older siblings Dorothy and Albert.

Grandpa and Grandma Roupp packed up the family just two months after mom was born and headed to northern Indiana. Grandma's father, Charlie Shantz, had a farm there. Times being what they were and food hard to come by, the move made it possible for them all to eat. Grandpa gave up carpentering with his brothers in order to work the land, a job he intensely disliked but endured for the family's sake.

Not long another brother, Donald, was added to the Roupp family. The family farm was filled with relatives. My grandma's older sisters, Fannie Mae and Dora Belle, lived there as well. That is until my great-aunt Dora set off to India as a missionary nurse. Her bold spirit and adventurous nature were an inspiration to the Roupp children.

Mom has always been a voracious reader and great fan of mystery stories. She and Dorothy used to listen to "I Love A Mystery" on the radio and read books in the closet with the light on when they were suppose to be sleeping. I think she got that love of reading from Grandpa. He was an avid reader as well. He and my grandma both loved Perry Mason. Grandpa enjoyed the books and Grandma loved the TV series. Mom used to read aloud to us; Heidi, Peter Pan, Alice in Wonderland, The Swiss Family Robinson and Little House on the Prairie just to name a few. My sister and I both still have an intense love of reading.

50th Jubilee Celebration - 2015

Urb. Alto Apolo • 2109 Mileto St. • Guaynabo • Puerto Rico 00969  
787-720-4423 • [secondunion.org/Second-Union-Church-Remembers](http://secondunion.org/Second-Union-Church-Remembers)

## *Second Union Church Remembers . . .*

Music has always been a part of mom's life. Growing up in the Mennonite church it is hard for not to be musical. She could always sing alto to any song we suggest. She played the cello and could pick out songs on the organ. She passed that love of music on to my sister and I, and it has trickled down to the grandkids. Our house, growing up, was always filled with music on the hi-fi. There would be classical, folk, pop, and rock. My sister and I developed a healthy appreciation for Bach, Perry Como, Mitch Miller, Peter, Paul and Mary, and the Mamas and the Papas.

Mom took up sewing at an early age in order to have a little pocket money. By the time she was in high school she was sewing wedding dresses. She told me once she had made nineteen wedding dresses before college! She also learned how to reupholster furniture, rewire lamps and other small appliances, and build things. And she learned to cook from my grandma. She also bakes the most phenomenal breads. Her strawberry freezer jam is something of an addiction for many people. You could say my mom is a real Renaissance woman!

Mom went to Goshen College [one of the more 'liberal' Mennonite schools] and, for a short period of time, Heston College in Kansas. This is where she met my dad, Julio Rivera. They were married in 1954. [But that is another story.] Goshen was the alma mater of my grandparents. My great great grandfather has a building named after him! There she studied Home Economics and Art. She told us stories about painting with other like minded artists while listening to classical music. They were considered rather Bohemian. Home Economics may seem an odd choice, but in those days careers for women were either nursing or teaching. To be an artist just wasn't practical. So a teacher she became.

In college a professor critiqued her watercolor work and told her categorically she wasn't any good. Unfortunately she listened to him and laid it aside. She took a Masters in Art Education and produced amazing work in acrylics, textiles, clay and other mediums. She taught art for many years but never worked just as an artist. After 30 years of teaching she retired and did just that. She rediscovered watercolor and to her amazement found she was very good. Some of her work graces the walls of Second Union. And the walls of many of our church family near and far.

A while back Mom was invited to Guatemala to do a commission for an ex-pat. With Irma Torres in tow, the two of them set out on an adventure that was the beginning of a great friendship. Since that trip they returned to Guatemala to eat and paint. On any given Thursday you might find the two of them in the crafting room at Second Union whipping up items for the annual Bazaar.

Mom comes from a long line of service minded people. It is just what the Mennonite church is all about. Wherever you are, with whomever you are with, whenever there is a need- you help. That was the way she was brought up, this is how she brought me up and this has been passed on to my kids, too.

Mom has sung in the 2UC choir for years. She has performed with quartets and ensemble groups for worship and the occasional coffee houses. She is always a staunch supporter of the arts [and me!!], and has sewn a

50th Jubilee Celebration - 2015

Urb. Alto Apolo • 2109 Mileto St. • Guaynabo • Puerto Rico 00969  
787-720-4423 • [secondunion.org/Second-Union-Church-Remembers](http://secondunion.org/Second-Union-Church-Remembers)

## *Second Union Church Remembers . . .*

vast assortment of costumes, built and painted scenery, shopped for flowers to decorate the sanctuary with endless dedication. She has taught people the art of arranging flowers. Not to mention the countless tee shirts we have silk screened for VBS and Girl Scouts. She has taught countless folks the intricacies of pie crust making for our Christmas Bazaar and spear heads the pie crust making for Union Church as well.

In 2015, she helped craft 10 out of the 12 months, cut a flurry of snowflakes for our walls, and organize gifts for transport to Santa Ana. It is not unusual to find my mom presiding over a sign up sheet encouraging others to join in the fun of helping out, whether via coffee fellowship, donating flowers or the turkey drive on Sunday mornings. She is always an encouragement to us to live a life of service.

Thelma Louise Rivera is indeed an original!



50th Jubilee Celebration - 2015

Urb. Alto Apolo • 2109 Mileto St. • Guaynabo • Puerto Rico 00969  
787-720-4423 • [secondunion.org/Second-Union-Church-Remembers](http://secondunion.org/Second-Union-Church-Remembers)

## *Second Union Church Remembers . . .*