



## Elodia S. Guthrie

April 21, 1928 - January 15, 2021

April 21, 1928-Jan. 15, 2021

Mrs. Elodia S. Guthrie, 92, of San Diego died Friday, January 15th of natural causes. She was born in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, raised in Belize, and migrated to the United States to study nursing. She married Dr. Robert Val Guthrie and raised six children in Biloxi, Mississippi, San Diego, CA, Pittsburgh PA, and Silver Spring, MD, moving together with her husband who was a noted professor of Black psychology. Dr. Guthrie preceded her in death in 2005.

Survivors include her daughter, Sindhu Sadhaka of San Diego; sons, Michael Guthrie of Los Angeles, and Bobby, Paul, Ricardo and Mario Guthrie, all of San Diego; nine grandchildren, and three daughters-in-law:

Grandchildren:

Robby (Bobby and Olga Guthrie's son)

Dorjhan, Prasadini, Rajkumar, Trivikram (Sindhu Sadhaka's children)

Maya Elodia, Ifa Emmanuelle (Shawn and Ricardo Guthrie)

Vanessa, Isabella (Beverly and Mario Guthrie)

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Elodia Sanchez Sexton Guthrie's life spanned national and international borders, as she was born in Guatemala, attended Catholic School in Belize City, Belize, and then migrated to the United States for nursing school in upstate New York in the late 1940s. She met her future husband, Robert Val Guthrie—who was stationed at Sampson Air Force Base—at a jazz band party on the base, and they were soon married. The family followed Robert's Air Force service—living at Wright airfield in Ohio and then in Biloxi, Mississippi—where five of her six children were born. They moved to 1005 Bollenbacher, in Southeast San Diego, in August 1960 when Robert ended service in the Air Force and was hired by San Diego High School and Memorial Junior High, before being hired as the first Black professor at San Diego Mesa College. The Encanto neighborhood was home to noted Black civil rights

leaders, educators and doctors, including Dr. Warren and Barbara Terry, Dr. Matt and Vira Williams, Rev. Thomas McPhatter, CORE leader Harold “Hal” Brown, Bob and Ardelle Matthews, and many others. Mrs. Guthrie and her husband recalled spending their first days in San Diego living out of their Chevrolet station wagon with five children under age 10—parked near Balboa Park—as segregated housing made it difficult to find a home right away.

During the early 1960s, the youngest of five boys, Mario, was born, and Mrs. Guthrie helped raise six children throughout a period of rapid growth and transformation in Southern California. She was known to host international visitors from Panama, Cuba, the Caribbean, as well as Zimbabwe (then known as Rhodesia) and other global travelers who came to San Diego for college, military service, or for jobs. Two of her closest friends, Dr. Clyde and Mrs. Norma Jones, hailed from Barbados, while school principal Josh Tull came from Panama—all were at home in the Guthrie household where Mrs. Guthrie entertained and fed them home-cooked meals with international flavor. Baseball players and minor league stars from Cuba and Latin America, also, were welcomed by the Guthries, forming lifelong bonds that continue to this day.

Robert Guthrie’s research and professional career would move the family in the 1970s to Pittsburgh, PA, and Silver Spring, Md., before the Guthries returned to San Diego in 1975, settling in Del Cerro, then in Clairemont, just south of La Jolla, in 1976.

A singer and a lover of music, Mrs. Guthrie organized impromptu duets with Josh Tull, but focused her energies on the home front—ensuring her kids attended Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Brownies, the local YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs, as well as school sports, beach and mountain trips, and music lessons. In later years, Mrs. Guthrie was an early supporter of Viejas, run by the Kumeyaay, and proudly regaled family with stories of her Mayan heritage from Central America.

Though she and Robert had been invited to move to the Midwest and settle in Carbondale, Illinois—closer to Dr. Guthrie’s cousins—Mrs. Guthrie elected to remain in San Diego, to be near her nine grandchildren. A noted raconteur with a feisty spirit, Mrs. Guthrie was no shrinking violet. While raising five kids in the deep South under Jim Crow segregation, she would speak Spanish to store owners, try on hats and clothes—and keep Southerners guessing as to her race, ethnicity or knowledge of Jim Crow customs.

Although she left Mississippi before it was desegregated, she was aware of the crisis and the dangers of Southern life. In April 1960, she helped rescue neighbors who had been attacked during a “wade in” to desegregate Biloxi beaches, and some of her fondest memories were of her kind neighbors, Mrs. Spencer and Patience Harris, who would bring milk for the children—three who were in diapers from 1957, 1958, and 1959.

Her earliest memories, however, were of surviving a hurricane which ravaged Belize and Guatemala—on the Caribbean coast—in the 1930s. “My mother took me and my brother up to the second floor as water rose above her waist, and placed us on a table where we

waited all night long for the hurricane to pass.” She said when her mother, Alfreida, became ill and passed away, she was sent to Belize to be raised by her aunt, and later attended St. Catherine Academy. She also worked in the United Fruit Company store as a teenager, as her father, Herbert Sexton, was a company employee who traveled between Dorchester, MA, and Central America. According to Mrs. Guthrie, she was a valuable employee because she could translate from English to Spanish and back, and help customers visiting from abroad. Her greatest joy, however, was singing in the choir at St. Catherine Academy, before graduating and moving to the United States, following her aunts.

In recent years, she would explain that she once visited Guatemala in the 1950s, but vowed never to return. “So much had changed,” she remarked—referring to the CIA-backed coup that removed democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954—but would say nothing more of her relatives who may have stayed behind. “That’s ancient history,” she mused, but then began telling stories of how she tried to escape the hospital after suffering appendicitis (“When some people went into hospital, they didn’t come out!”), or how she drove her bicycle to and from work with her friends, or how the platanos, mango, and bananas “tasted better” in her home country. She was a proud Guatemalteca, but studied and became a US citizen after 50 years holding a Green Card because “I wanted to travel the world again, and a USA Passport was like gold!” She joined her husband visiting Zimbabwe, Africa, and also traveled to the Caribbean and Mexico.

A homemaker for many years, Mrs. Guthrie also worked at a department store, overcoming her fear of escalators and proudly bringing home her own paychecks. She enjoyed local jaunts to the horse races, celebrating “hat day” at Del Mar Race Track with her friend Mrs. Norma Jones, or longer trips to Vegas and Viejas. These were highlights, as were her tales of raising children and attending to others who were sick and shut-in.

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Interment: Mount Hope Cemetery, 3751 Market St., San Diego CA 92102.

Services will be private, but tributes can be sent to: <https://www.clairemortuary.com/>  
Clairemont Mortuary, 4266 Mt Abernathy Ave, San Diego, CA 92117 • (858) 609-8713.

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Donations to St Catherine Academy, Belize City:

<https://secure.sca.edu.bz/payment.php>

St. Catherine Academy

#6 Hutson Street

Belize City, Belize

Phone: 223-4908/223-1758

Fax: 223-0057

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<http://www.sca.edu.bz>

# Cemetery

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## **Mount Hope Cemetery**

3751 Market Street

San Diego, AK, 92102

# Comments

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“ Ricardo, I'm so sorry for your loss. No matter when, it's always a loss. Thinking of you,  
With love, Elizabeth Conner

Elizabeth Conner - April 21 at 11:15 PM

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“ In honor of Elodia Sanchez Sexton Guthrie's birthday, April 21st, I remember that she used to say she went to Confession regularly, and participated in Mass every day for fifteen years. "Boy, none of you kids ever have to go to church again, because I've done all the praying at St Catherine's for all of you, forever!" Yeah, in her final weeks she would tell stories about Belize, and what it was like living at Catholic school. Her long-term memory was very good, but her short-term memory began to fade. 92 years--93 today!

Please send a donation in her memory to ST CATHERINE ACADEMY in Belize:

<https://secure.sca.edu.bz/payment.php>

St. Catherine Academy

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Email: [administration@sca.edu.bz](mailto:administration@sca.edu.bz)

[www.sca.edu.bz](http://www.sca.edu.bz)

Ricardo - April 21 at 05:51 PM

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“ Thank you for sharing your memories and gifts with the world through your children. We send our condolences to the family. ~The Winters Family

Venus Evans-Winters - April 15 at 04:06 PM