

Emilia Almada

Emilia Almada was born on May 28, 1919, in a mountain region outside of Mexico City known as El Rancho de los Huesos, or The Ranch of Bones. Her mother was Martha Rojas and her father was Mercario Rojas. At the age of three she came to Chicago with her parents. As a result of this change Emilia grew up speaking both Spanish and English fluently. At an early age Emilia showed an interest in school and artistic activities. She graduated from high school at a time when young girls were not expected to do so. After high school Emilia met Ignacio Almada. They eventually married and started a family. Initially they lived in Chicago but eventually they moved to Northlake, IL. They raised eight children in that community with all of the children graduating from West Leyden High School and all going on to attend Triton College. Of the eight children, six completed studies at four-year colleges earning undergraduate degrees, three went on to earn master's degrees and one earned a doctorate. Obviously, Emilia and Ignacio were a positive influence on their children. Ignacio earned a GED at Triton and Emilia earned an associate degree from Triton College in December, 1985. While attending Triton, Emilia took ceramics classes and created several sculptures. One such sculpture was a piece she called, "Where Will the Penguins Go." It was a futuristic piece that addressed the issue of global warming at a time when the topic was not being publicized. She entered the sculpture at a West Suburban Artist Guild competition where it was awarded The Best of Show.

While raising eight children, Emilia pursued her own interests when she had time. Those interests included attending classes at Triton as well as exercising, writing, painting, sewing, crocheting, drawing and other creative endeavors. She learned the languages of French and Italian while attending Triton. She also worked as a teacher's aide in the language department at West Leyden High School for six years. These activities kept her young and healthy. At the age of 99 she is still in good physical health but suffers from dementia. She currently resides in an assisted living facility in Park Ridge, IL.

Ignacio died in March of 1996. After his death Emilia wrote a book that chronicled their lives from their respective childhoods, to their meeting, courting, marrying and raising a family together. The book is titled, "The Saga of Millie & Ig, The Long Road Home." She completed and self-published her book in 2006. She continued with her writing and art. Her writing included short stories that were about her life as a child and an adult, as well as fiction, poetry and introspection. Her art was also a reflection of her feelings and emotions. She frequently talked about putting her writings into a book of short stories. To commemorate and celebrate her 99th birthday, some of her children took many of her short stories and compiled them into a second book. It's a hard cover book that consists of two parts, the first part being the short stories. Some of the stories were inspired by taking French at Triton and attending a summer class in France. Part two consists of photographs of some of her art works. The book is titled, "Here I Am, The Writing and Art of Emilia Almada." The title is taken from a short introspective piece that she wrote and is accompanied by a self-portrait. The book was self-published in 2017.

Although age and time have limited Emilia's ability to write and create art the way she used to, she is still a joy to spend time with, and always upbeat and happy. Her time at Triton provided an outlet for her creative genius.