

(October 1939 - May 1997)

by Maria Teresa Narganes 8 Cleveland Street, Lawrence MA
1843.Narganes10@aol.com

Thank you for sending your newsletter to my husband, Francisco Narganes. However, I must tell you that he was killed in a car crash on May 21, 1997, at 6:10 p.m. on Route 110 in Lowell as he was on his way to his daughter's varsity softball game. I would like to tell you that Francisco was not only a fine educator but especially a wonderful husband and father. The entire Lawrence community came out to pay him tribute. The line for his wake extended for blocks; some people waited more than three hours. At the funeral Mass at Sacred Heart Church in South Lawrence there was not a seat available; chairs were even put in the altar area and in the choir loft. I am not aware if the wider Marist community ever learned of his death and his legacy – for over 40 years in all educating children as a Marist and then educating the immigrant children of Lawrence. And he was the father of four beautiful and wonderful children. I was so fortunate to find such a wonderful man and to share my life with him for 20 years. I will be grateful if you will let other members of the Marist community know about his passing. Francisco had a lot of friends in the Marist community. He was always a Marist in his heart. -- Maria Teresa Narganes: 8 Cleveland Street, Lawrence MA 01843.

(Editor: We were so affected by this brief note that we were eager to know more about Francisco, especially since he came from another province to the United States. Maria Teresa was gracious in her response, which follows in summary.)

My husband Francisco Narganes was born in Spain on October 31, 1939. Many of his uncles were Marists, teaching throughout the world. Francisco entered the novitiate at an early age and in his twenties was sent to Cuba where he taught in Havana until Castro exiled all religious. He then taught in El Salvador. There he began to think that he would like to leave the congregation. In an attempt to hold him his superiors sent him to the United States where more freedom was allowed. He arrived in Lawrence in 1968 without knowing a word of English. He taught Spanish at CCHS to 1973. Both in El Salvador and the U.S. he was required to renew his teaching credentials, for no documentation had been allowed to leave Cuba. Thus, he obtained a degree from Tufts in 1973, where his extraordinary teaching ability was recognized; he was invited to teach several Spanish courses while at Tufts.

During his time in Lawrence, my family, also from Spain, became his surrogate family. We developed a deep friendship which over the years turned into love. In the fall of 1976, after a time teaching in Europe, Francisco returned to Lawrence to request my hand in marriage. We married on February 19, 1977. Instead of spending our money on a honeymoon, we brought his family over to participate in our marriage. It had been his wish to continue to teach at Central Catholic, but at the time he was told that his leaving the community and his subsequent marriage would send the wrong message to the students. He then began his career in the Lawrence Public Schools, first as a teacher and then as an Assistant Principal.

Francisco was respected, admired, and loved for the wonderful man he was, for the excellent educator he was, and for the compassionate and religious man he was. He had an uncanny knack of knowing exactly how to deal with children, even hardened gang members, and how to gain their respect and the respect of their families. Earlier at Central he had gained the respect of his students, some of whom became lawyers, teachers, politicians, mayors, etc. We could not go anywhere without meeting someone he knew, someone he had touched in some way. At the funeral, an intellectually limited man told me that when he was in junior high, my husband would meet him outside school every evening and bring him something to eat. I never knew that our leftovers were going to such a deserving young man. Francisco went about doing good, always without recognition, without self-concern.

At home Francisco was a wonderful father and husband. Our children were brought up with excellent moral and religious values, and he taught me many values, too. He was also a wonderful son. He tried to go visit his family yearly even though at times that was financially difficult. God has been very good to us.

A few brief comments about us, his family. I am also an educator. I taught bilingual math at Lawrence High School for several years and then became an elementary school principal. I have been with the Lawrence system for 27 years. Our elder son, Francisco Junior, a 1999 graduate from Tufts, is a mechanical engineer working in Texas. Celeste is a senior at Holy Cross, majoring in English and Spanish; she hopes to be a missionary somewhere in Africa or Latin America. Marina has just begun college at Fairfield University. Our younger son is 15 and a sophomore at Central Catholic. He is following in his father's and his brother's footsteps as a great soccer player. Every day he looks more and more like his father.

Thank you for taking an interest in my husband. The Marist community was in his heart to the day he died.