

THE FIRST WOMAN LEAD WELDER OF THE PHILIPPINES: ELIZABETH ESPINA BORJA

Leonides “Daisy” Borja Plaza

While other mothers did the cooking, sewing, and cleaning of the house, my mother raised us all seven children earning a living by welding. And not just as any ordinary welder, but as an outstanding **Lead Welder**.

As the eldest child, I, Leonides “Daisy” Borja Plaza, saw a mother fight her way through life.

As an Engineer/Wage Earner: As a female engineer, she was never afraid to try her hand in lead welding a non-traditional field for women. She led her peers as a team leader, as the highest paid welder-supervisor of her days. Along the way, she also designed and welded innovative models of stoves and ovens when gas stoves were still a novelty. She literally hanged on a rope to weld gigantic tanks such as is the Iligan Steel Mills tank, a famous landmark in Iligan City. She rode on rubber floats inside water-filled tanks to weld the top-most and the rims of the tanks for acid.

She also earned extra pay as contractor for skilled and nonskilled workers with Atlas Fertilizers and as a contractor for trucking services for the Atlas Consolidated Mining Development Corporation (ACMDC).

As a Wife: She single-handedly earned for the family while at the same time nursing her invalid husband for 27 years until his death on July 13, 1993. An accident had resulted in paralyzing her husband’s spine and legs.

As a Mother: She raised all her children, making sure that they would all earn each a college degree. Despite her

non-traditional interest in welding, she tried to give all of us the chance of finding our own selves without trapping anyone of us to what she saw in life.

As a Politician: She died as the incumbent Vice-Mayor of Toledo City last January 9, 1996, while serving her term from 1995–1998. She has served as a public official since 1987.

As a Community Leader: She organized the squatters in the fishing villages of Toledo City and in the urban barangays into a cooperative called the Pagtinabangay which helped them in times of sickness, death, and economic crisis.

She would spend her weekends with us her children our relatives, friends, and townmates in Toledo City Cebu, gather at the beaches or in public places singing pop and classical songs while she did the accompaniment on the organ herself.

I, Leonides 'Daisy' Borja Plaza, am fortunate to have for my mother, Elizabeth Espina Borja. I am very proud of her.