

Eppie Archuleta, master weaver, dies at age 92

Mark Oswald / Journal Staff
Writer



Epifania “Eppie” Archuleta, 92, one of the Santa Fe Spanish Market’s master weavers, passed away on Friday at

Espanola Hospital.

Archuleta was recognized with several honors and awards, including the 1985 National Heritage Fellowship and the 1985 National Endowment for the Art's highest award. Her weaving is on permanent display at the Smithsonian Institute, and she was profiled in the January 1991 issue of the National Geographic.

"Ever since I could reach the loom, I was weaving," Archuleta told the Journal in 1996, when she lived in La Jara, Colo. "I was born a weaver. It was impossible not to be. My mother was always at the loom, and my dad used to run the farm. When we were very, very small and we couldn't weave, we'd gather the wool."

Archuleta broke away from the traditional Rio Grande and Chimayo tapestries — which are characterized by different colors and usually have stripes and diamond-shaped designs — and started weaving contemporary pieces.

She is particularly well-known for her tapestry that hangs in the Smithsonian of an American soldier dying in Vietnam, two female nurses comforting him as he breathes his last breath.

Archuleta was a Spanish Market Artist for many years and was named a Master's Lifetime Achievement recipient in 2001.

She came from five generations of weavers. Her daughter, Norma Medina, also a master weaver, is remains a participant in Spanish Market. "Eppie has left quite a legacy and will be greatly missed," says an obituary posted by Spanish Market.

Archuleta was invited to Bill Clinton's Inaugural Presidential Ceremony and received an Honorary Doctorate in Arts from Adams State University in Colorado in 1995.

The obituary says she taught hundreds of students to weave. People from all over the world have purchased her work, and she was especially well known Colorado.



An Eppie Archuleta weaving

She was born on January 6, 1922 in Santa Cruz, daughter of Agueda and Eusebio Martinez. She married Francisco Archuleta in October of 1940. They started their family in New Mexico and later moved to Capulin, Colo. Eppie found time to become a master weaver while raising eight children and helping her husband farm and ranch.

Public visitation begins today (Monday) at 6:30 p.m. in the Sangre de Cristo Chapel of DeVargas Funeral Home & Crematory in Espanola, with a rosary to be recited at 7 p.m. Her funeral will take place Tuesday at 10 a.m. at the St. Thomas Catholic Church in Abiquiu. Burial will follow at the San Antonio Catholic Cemetery.

Here's an excerpt from a Journal article about Eppie from 1991:

By Morgan Lee, Journal Staff Writer

The 2001 Traditional Spanish Market marked a come-back for Eppie Archuleta, who sat out last year's market after the death of her husband of 60 years.

"I lost my mother and I lost my husband," said Archuleta, 79, part of a weaving dynasty led by her mother, Agueda S. Martinez, of Medanales, who died last June at 102. "For a year, I couldn't weave. It's like I was lost."

She found her weaving muse again after moving back to New Mexico from Colorado, leaving behind her own weaving school and favorite loom to rejoin her family.

On Saturday, she shared a booth with granddaughter and weaver Delores Medina Archuleta.

“She’s really been weaving to ease her mind,” Medina said. “It helps to relieve the stress.”

Eppie Archuleta softly celebrated winning a master’s award for lifetime achievement from Spanish Market, an award also bestowed this year on her sister, Cordelia Coronado.

The elder sister, Archuleta has been honored at the White House for her work.

But she said receiving an award in Santa Fe still meant a lot to her. “I’m glad they think I belong here, too,” the silver-haired weaver said. “Some people say to me, ‘make a lot of money.’ I don’t worry that much about that. I love to see all these people, the way they walk, the way they talk.”

And from another Journal article in 1996:

Eppie Archuleta, the third oldest child at 75, took the family tradition one step further when she bought a wool mill seven years ago. She uses the mill to turn wool into yarn, selling it to weavers around the country.

“Ever since I could reach the loom, I was weaving,” says Archuleta, who lives in La Jara, Colo. “I was born a weaver. It was impossible not to be. My mother was always at the loom, and my dad used to run the farm. When we were very, very small and we couldn’t weave, we’d gather the wool.”

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