

**PAULINE MARIE PIPER CORRESPONDENCE WITH MARIA LEÓN
ORTEGA, 1954**
Finding Aid

Compiled by
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Museum of South Texas History
Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives
Edinburg, Texas

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SUMMARY

Size	1 folder (5 letters, 2 notes, 2 post cards, 2 newspaper articles, 1 photograph)
Geographic Locations	Marshfield, Wisconsin; Mexico City, Mexico; Chevy Chase, Maryland; Decatur, Georgia
Inclusive Dates	1954
Bulk Dates	1954
Languages	Spanish and English
Summary	Most of the correspondence concerns Maria León Ortega's tour of the United States in 1954.
Access Restrictions	The collection is open for research. If you wish to examine items in the manuscript group, please contact the Archivist at 956-383-6911 to make an appointment to visit the Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives (MHMMA) reading room.
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Related Collections	Maria León Ortega collection (1989.069)
Citation	Pauline Marie Piper correspondence with Maria León Ortega, 1954. Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.
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BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Pauline Marie Piper was a German and Spanish teacher at Senior High School in Marshfield, Wisconsin in the fall of 1954. The summer of that year she became friends with Manuel and Maria León Ortega while taking Spanish classes at Mexico City College in Mexico City, Mexico. Piper invited Maria to visit Wisconsin while she was making a tour of the United States in 1954.

Maria de León Ortega, known professionally in the United States as Maria León Ortega, was born Maria de los Angeles Falfari Alvarez in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, on August 1, 1906. Her mother was of Spanish and French descent, and her father was Italian diplomat Augusto Falfari Landini.

León Ortega graduated from Mexico City College, and was on its faculty in the late 1940s and early 1950s as a teacher of music and dance. In the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, she sang folk songs (primarily Mexican) while accompanying herself on guitar. She usually did that as small group entertainment. She also taught for short periods in various colleges, including The University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University.

In 1927, Maria married Manuel León Ortega (born 1896), a civil engineer who had graduated from Texas A&M University in 1920. They had a son, Augusto M. "Gus" León Ortega, born in Mexico City on October 20, 1929. Gus studied business management at Texas A&M University from 1950-1955. In 1964 he became a public relations officer for Hotel El Mirador in Acapulco, and an English teacher in 1969 at the Cultural Institute in Mexico City.

In 1956, Manuel and Maria divorced, and she then moved to Texas and married Joseph Adams Billings, a business economics professor at Corpus Christi University. They later moved to Austin, where Billings worked on his PhD at The University of Texas. They divorced in 1960.

In 1961 Maria married John G. Riemann, a scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They moved from New Orleans to McAllen in 1962, and then to Fargo, North Dakota. In early 1968, they separated, and she returned to live in McAllen, where she later became a U.S. citizen. She passed away in February, 1982.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

Most of the correspondence concerns Maria León Ortega's tour of the United States in 1954. In addition to her plans to perform professionally, León Ortega planned to visit Pauline Marie Piper in Marshfield, Wisconsin. It was to be a visit between friends, but Piper asked León Ortega to perform for her students taking Spanish. One of the newspaper articles documents the visit and how León Ortega not only performed her music but also agreed to be recorded by one of the students.

LIST OF SUB-GROUPS, SERIES, AND SUBSERIES

- I. Correspondence**
- II. Newspaper articles**
- III. Photograph**

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. Correspondence

Five letters, two notes, and two post cards are found in this series. Most were written from Maria León Ortega to Pauline Marie Piper. The first item is dated Agosto 13, 1954 and the last Noviembre 9 de 1954. All of the correspondence except the one dated September 24, 1954 is written in Spanish. The main topic of the correspondence is the itinerary for León Ortega's tour of the United States in the fall of 1954. León Ortega wrote one letter in English in case Piper would need to show it to authorities at the high school where Piper taught. One note was mailed in Washington, D.C. and the two post cards were mailed in Decatur, Georgia.

The letter dated Noviembre 9 de 1954 was written by Manuel León Ortega to Piper. He reported that Maria was in Georgia and thanked Piper for the care shown Maria during her visit.

II. Newspaper articles

Two newspaper articles, one in Spanish and one in English, are included in the series. The Spanish article is from the *Excelsior*, February 7, 1955. The English article is from the *Marshfield News-Herald*, October 16, 1954.

III. Photograph

This one-item series contains a black-and-white snapshot of Maria León Ortega. She is standing outside behind a short wall on either a balcony or small porch. The top of the wall is lined with potted plants. A window or door is behind León Ortega. A small bell is shown in the upper right corner.

INDEX TERMS

León Ortega, Maria, 1906-1982
Piper, Pauline Marie