

# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT - BEN NARVAEZ

By BERTHA SANDOVAL  
Special to The Chronicle-News

Benjamin Anthony Narvaez (Ben), 92, a man of gentle humility, was born on March 4, 1917, in Roy, N. M., to Pedro and Maria Narvaez. His father was a rancher, while his mother was a homemaker who stayed in the home to raise Ben and his 10 siblings (six brothers, four sisters).

Ben grew up helping with the work on the ranch and attending school in Roy until the eighth grade, when he enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps Program (CCC Camp). His vocational training included flood control for irrigation and building of dams. The CCC program disbanded in 1942 following the attack on Pearl Harbor and all operations ceased resulting in the closure of the program.

Ben and Phyllis Esquibel were married Jan. 9, 1939, and lived in

New Mexico until 1942, when the family relocated to Colorado. Ben started a 30-year employment career, first at the Raymie Coal Mine, then to the Valdez Coal Mine. After retiring from coal mining, he went to work at a local feed store, then to Trinidad State Nursing Home, where he worked until retirement.

Ben and Phyllis' marriage was blessed with nine children: Margie (Duran), Angle (Martinez), Vickie (Gonzales), Gertie (Gomez), Frances (Bosso), Ben Narvaez, Jr., Sue (Schlensker), Ed Narvaez and Annie Narvaez (deceased).

Ben is a very loving grandfather to 25 grandchildren, 33 great-grandchildren and three great-

great-grandchildren (with one more expected in May). Having celebrated 67 years together, Phyllis went to be with the Lord in 2006. She is very much missed by her still devoted sweetheart, children and many friends.

Ben is a member of Holy Trinity Catholic Parish and is very devout in his faith. Instrumental in helping build and repair the former St. Joseph hall, his hobbies are gardening and growing fresh vegetables. In prior years he enjoyed fishing and jewelry-making.

A valued member of the Sayre Senior Center, Ben attends the daily lunch, participates in all functions, and looks forward to visiting with his many friends at the center. Much

to the chagrin of his children, his strength and vitality became the topic of the neighborhood when he was recently spotted shoveling the snow from his roof during a terrific snowstorm.

Ben's legacy of success is an abundant pride in his children and their accomplishments. With a firm handshake and a pleasant smile, his kind and caring ways are greatly admired by his family, many friends and home community. His vitality and warm nature are a gift of life lived in humility and appreciation for his many blessings. Congratulations, Ben; it's an honor to feature you in the Senior Spotlight



At 92, Ben Narvaez is still going strong.

## THE SAVVY SENIOR

Dear Savvy Senior,

What tips or products can you recommend to make a bathroom more senior-friendly. My husband and I are looking to adapt our home for our elderly years and would like to start with the bathroom. What can you tell us?  
Aging Gracefully



Jim Miller  
Special to The Chronicle-News

Dear

### Aging

Because more accidents and injuries happen in the bathroom than any other room in the house, this is a great place to start seniorizing. Here's what you should know.

### Small Changes

To avoid hygiene hardships as you get older, let's start with some simple tips and a few low-cost add-ons that can make a big difference in making your bathroom safer and easier to maneuver.

■ **Floor:** To avoid slipping and tripping, get non-skid bath rugs for the floors or secure existing floor mats or rugs with double-sided rug tape.

■ **Lights:** The older we get the more light we need, so install the highest wattage bulbs allowed for your fixtures, and get a plug in nightlight that automatically turns on when the room gets dark.

■ **Entrance:** If the doorway into the bathroom is

## How to create a senior-friendly bathroom

not wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or walker, you can easily widen your doorways (two inches) with inexpensive offset door hinges.

■ **Bath/shower:** To make bathing safer, buy a non-slip rubber mat or put down self-stick strips on the tub/shower floor, and install grab bars for support. If you use the shower, it's a good idea to put in a shower curtain rod that screws or bolts into the wall (versus a tension-mounted rod), so that if you lose your balance and grab the shower curtain, the rod won't spring loose. Another safety precaution is to put in a water-resistant, wall-mounted phone in or near the bath/shower in case of a fall. And many seniors with mobility or balance problems need to shower sitting down. If this applies to you, install a hand-held, adjustable-height shower head, and buy a portable

bath/shower chair.

■ **Toilet:** Install grab bars next to the toilet too if possible, or purchase a toilet seat riser. This adds two-to-four inches of height making it easier to sit and rise.

■ **Faucets:** If you have twist handles on the sink, bathtub or shower faucets, replace them with lever handles. They're easier to turn, especially for seniors with arthritis or limited hand strength. Also be aware that it takes only 130-degree water to scald you, so turn your hot water heater down to 120 degrees or get anti-scald devices for your faucets.

### Bathroom Products

If you're thinking about remodeling, there are a variety of practical and stylish products on the market that can make your bathroom more age-friendly.

For bathing, prefabricat-

ed "curbless showers" and "walk-in bathtubs" are two popular options today. Curbless showers have no threshold to step over so access is a breeze and ideal for wheelchair users. These showers also typically come with a built-in seat, grab bars, an adjustable hand-held shower head, and a slip resistant textured floor. Or, if you like to take baths, a walk-in bathtub with a front door may be the way to go. You can find these products at sites like Accessible-Showers.com and Premier-Bathrooms.com.

If you're interested in getting a new toilet, go with an ADA compliant "comfort height" toilet that's 17 inches high, versus a standard toilet that's only 15 inches. Kohler (Kohler.com) and American Standard (AmericanStandard.us.com) make a nice variety.

And if you're putting in a new sink, install it at a

level that reduces bending. For wheelchair access wall-mounted or pedestal sinks, or a sink built into a cabinet that's open underneath will let you roll in nice and close. And if you get a new faucet, the single lever handle style is great for those with arthritis.

**Savvy Tips:** For more information on senior-friendly modification tips visit [aarp.org/families/home\\_design/bath](http://aarp.org/families/home_design/bath) and [Homemods.org](http://Homemods.org). Also contact your nearby independent living center ([ilru.org](http://ilru.org), 713-520-0232). These are non-profit centers that provide modification information, and many even offer free or low-cost home assessments. Your Area Agency on Aging (800-677-1116) is also a good referral resource.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit [SavvySenior.org](http://SavvySenior.org). Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

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Photos by Tim Keller

Mallorie Salazar turns her back on her work for a photo.

## Mallorie Salazar runs the show

By TIM KELLER  
The Chronicle-News

When Raton Youth Theater presents its spring show at the Shuler Theater this weekend, you won't even see the central character in the production: Raton High School senior Mallorie Salazar will be behind and high above you, running the show from the light and sound booth behind the balcony.

Wearing a headset to communicate with the young people backstage and on the spotlights, Salazar will "call" the show, conveying "live cues" that will make or break the show. Think of her as the conductor to the cast and crew's orchestra. For all this, she'll have one line in the program, next to the words "Stage Manager."

Salazar first tried theater when the Raton High School Drama Club was resurrected in the fall of 2008. She auditioned for director Gail Dixon-Willden, but she didn't get the part. However, Dixon-Willden put Salazar to work in the technical aspects of production. Salazar finally got to play onstage — she played a donkey, wearing a huge paper mache donkey head, in last spring's Man of La Mancha — but she's developed into a valued member of the local theater scene as a stage manager.

This weekend, though, will be the first time she's worn the headset and called the show. She'll be orchestrating several crew members and almost three-dozen young actors — kids

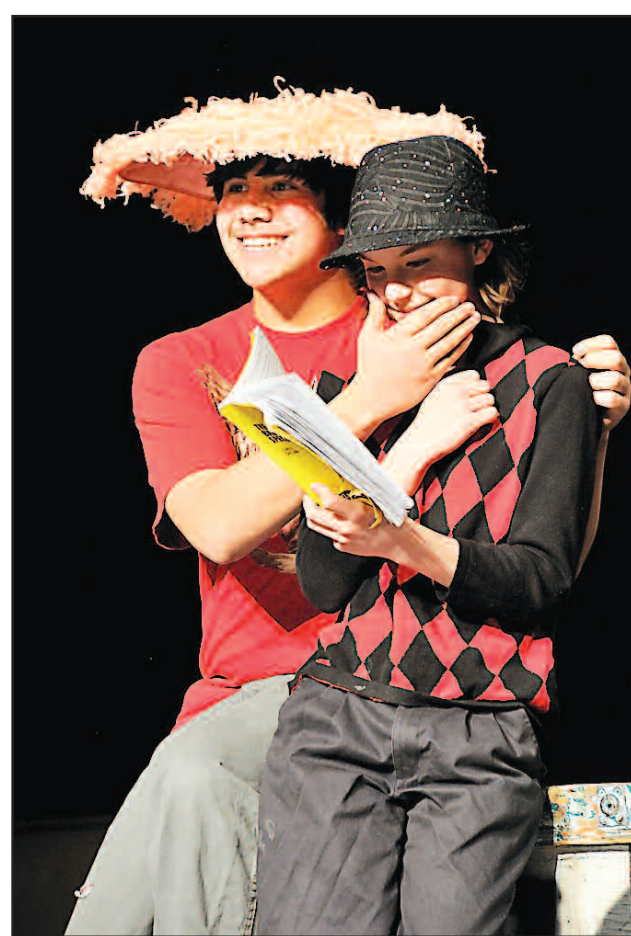
from 2nd to 12th grades in school — when they perform the hilarious comedy, The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon, by Don Zolidis and, well, The Brothers Grimm. The play weaves many famous Grimm Fairy Tales into one extravaganza running about 90 minutes.

The show will be presented at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights, March 5-6, plus a 2 p.m. Sunday matinee, March 8. General admission tickets cost \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and \$5 for students — though there will be times when it seems that all the students are on stage. There are also moments when the characters leave the stage to move through the audience.

Salazar, who lives with grandparents Prescilla and Art Salazar, is excited as opening night approaches, though she's been so busy that sometimes she just looks tired. "I have a lot more responsibility than ever before," she says. "There's pressure; there's plenty of chance to mess up! I love having the responsibility. It feels good to be trusted," she says with a smile.

Her relationship with her peers has changed, too. "I have to act differently toward the actors, because they have to listen to me."

Salazar will attend the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley next year, majoring in sports medicine with an emphasis in physical therapy, but she plans to continue her work in theatre and band — she



Zach Salazar rehearses the Wicked Stepmother with Cinderella understudy Clair Willden.



Mariah Fleming, Zach Salazar, and Brooke Fleming rehearse as the Devil's Grandma, the Devil, and the Doctor.

plays alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones.

Right now, though, she's focused on actors Zach Salazar (no relation) and understudy Clair Willden, who are acting out the entire Cinderella story by themselves. The show's premise is that there are no other actors left, so Zach Salazar has to play all the parts except Cinderella. He plays the Wicked Stepmother, all three

Wicked Stepsisters, and, of course, Prince Charming. This requires frantic — and hilarious — changes of costume, voice, and behavior. If you're not laughing uncontrollably during this scene, you'd better have the person next to you check your pulse.

And if, while you're laughing, you never give a thought to Mallorie Salazar, that'll mean she's doing her job well.