



Emelia Diaz Zubillaga

APR 5, 1923 - OCT 26, 2025



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Emelia Diaz Zubillaga

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E MELIA DIAZ ZUBILLAGA April 5, 1923 – October 26, 2025

Emelia Zubillaga, 102, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by her family on October 26, 2025. She was born on April 5, 1923, at Stoney Creek Ranch in Secret Valley, California, to Felix Diaz de Mendivil and Jermana Ylzauspe Diaz, both Basque immigrants from Spain. She was the youngest of four children, with siblings Marguerite, Felix, and Benito.

Emelia grew up in a humble ranch home without electricity or running water and attended a one-room schoolhouse four miles away. Life on her family's sheep and cattle ranch instilled in her the values of resilience, hard work, and creativity—qualities she carried throughout her long and full life.

After completing eighth grade in 1938, Emelia helped her parents on the ranch, driving the hay truck during harvest and meeting the challenges of the Great Depression and World War II with resourcefulness and gratitude. She fondly remembered summers filled with large family gatherings, food, music, and dancing.

At 21, Emelia began attending dances in Terno, California, where she discovered her lifelong love of dancing. In 1947, she moved to Reno to work at the Santa Fe Hotel, later returning after a fire to continue her job. It was there she met her future husband, Jean Zubillaga, a Basque sheepherder newly arrived from France. They married on December 17, 1949, and settled in Susanville, California, where they raised their three children—Anita, Raymond, and Teresa.

Once her children began school, Emelia worked cleaning homes and motel rooms. In 1971, she and Jean purchased and operated the Sierra Motel in Gardnerville, Nevada, before retiring. In 1993, they moved to Elko, Nevada, to help their daughter's family and spend more time with their grandchildren. She stayed busy gardening, canning, and preparing special meals for her family. When her husband became ill, she cared for him with unwavering devotion.



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After Jean's passing in 2002, Emelia returned to Gardnerville, where she enjoyed crocheting, reading, following politics, and practicing her strong Catholic faith.

Emelia was preceded in death by her parents, siblings, husband Jean, son Raymond, and son-in-law Jean Pierre Izoco. She is survived by her daughters Anita Izoco and Teresa Leonis, son-in-law Miguel Leonis, and daughter-in-law Michelle Zubillaga; 13 grandchildren — Aline Izoco Elicagaray (Philip), Caroline Izoco Chiramberro (Jean Luc), Roger Izoco (Yusenka), Michael Leonis (Sally), Joe Leonis (Lindsey), John Leonis (Cindy), Bernadette Leonis-Fritsen (Chris), Alicia Leonis Robinson (Dustin), Domingo Leonis (Haylee), Jean Zubillaga (Whitney), Dominica Zubillaga, Miren Zubillaga, and Erinn Zubillaga — and 11 great-grandchildren.

She will be remembered for her deep faith, creativity, love of family, and tireless work ethic. Emelia lived a prayerful and grateful life, celebrating her 102nd birthday this year.

The family would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the wonderful caregivers at Gentiva, especially Nicole, Felicia, and Megan, who helped care for her during her final months.

A rosary will be held Sunday, November 2, 2025, at 3 p.m. at Eastside Funeral Home. A Funeral Mass will follow Monday, November 3, 2025, at 11 a.m. at St. Gall Catholic Church in Gardnerville. Interment will take place Tuesday 11 a.m. at Lassen Cemetery in Susanville, California.

Remembrances may be made to St. Gall Catholic Church, Mendiko Euskaldun Cluba Dancers, or a charity of choice.



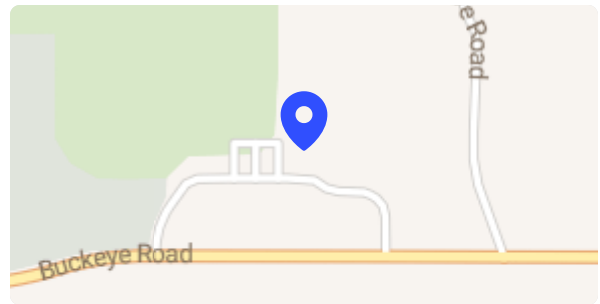
Events

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Service

- Sunday**, November 2, 2025
- 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM PT
- Eastside Memorial Funeral Home**
1600 Buckeye Road, Minden NV 89423

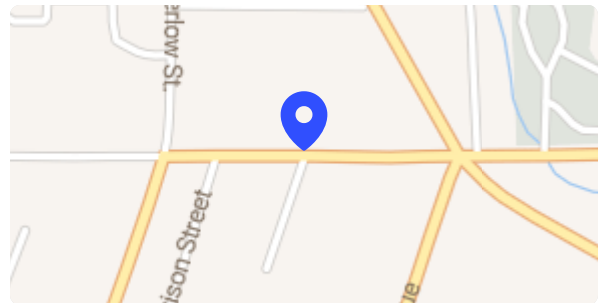


Mass

- Monday**, November 3, 2025
- 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM PT
- St Gall Catholic Church**
NV

Graveside Service

- Tuesday**, November 4, 2025
- 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM PT
- Lassen Cemetery**
Chestnut Street, Susanville CA 96130





Tribute Wall

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Eastside Memorial Park shared a photo to the **Emelia Photos** album.



October 31 at 7:17 AM



Media

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Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Emelia by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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