

Summary: Oral History of Jessie Degollado, reporter at KSAT 12 News

Date: March 2019

Jessie Degollado was born in Laredo, Texas. She credits her parents for helping her see the world through compassionate and courageous eyes. Her father Rodolfo was a World War II veteran, who was outgoing and loved meeting people. Her mother Alicia was more reserved, but had deep compassion and a drive to help those in need.

Degollado was an extremely shy girl growing up and she stuttered. Other students would laugh at her in school. She decided to conquer her fears by taking many speech classes and joining the drama club. With every speech and every performance, Degollado gained her confidence and found her voice.

She became interested in journalism at an early age when her grandmother would visit their Laredo home and would ask her to bring the Spanish-language paper, El Diario for her to read. They both loved listening to the news on the radio too. Her grandmother was a “news junkie.” They also got to watch San Antonio’s Channel 12 on cable while living in Laredo. Little did Degollado know one day she would work there.

She also had a love for writing. As a child, Degollado loved writing essays and poems. She admits she was the enthusiastic student who was happy to write essay when it was assigned as homework while other students groaned.

Hard work and a scholarship helped Degollado get her education at Baylor University where she majored in journalism. There, he got involved her freshman year at the Baylor Lariat, the university newspaper. At first she was a volunteer. She learned how to cover stories at the paper, and by her senior year she was a paid staff writer. It was the 1960s and Vietnam was on the minds of many, and women were fighting for equal rights. Degollado covered many war demonstrations and protests by campus women.

Her experience at the Baylor Lariat helped her land an internship at her hometown paper, the Laredo Times. Her senior year she was also offered a fellowship to study at the prestigious Columbia University. She turned it down to marry her boyfriend who had returned from Vietnam, only to see the marriage end a few years later.

After graduating from Baylor University, Degollado got a job as a reporter at a radio station in Laredo. There she developed her voice for news. She then moved on to a television reporting job at KRGV-TV, the NBC station in Weslaco, Texas. She spent seven years there covering all kinds of stories, including international news. There she was promoted to anchor.

She remarried and her second husband got a job in San Antonio. Degollado applied at all the television stations, got offers from all of them, and decided KSAT 12 would be the place for her.

Although her second marriage didn't work out, that didn't stop her from keeping up with the community. During her time at KSAT 12 News, Degollado has covered everything from the fallen heroes in the Iraq war to a visit by Pope John Paul II. She's never had a desire to go to a bigger market or network television. Degollado believes when you work for the best television station in the country there is no need to leave.

Today, Degollado is not shy about sharing her experiences with people of ages, especially students. She hopes when young people hear her story, they will be inspired to take on any challenge and over come it.

She started her career in news in 1977, and one day she does plan to retire, but not now. There are still many stories she wants to tell before she says what she heard growing up, "Bueno bye!"