



## Carmen Benavente de Orrego-Salas

December 17, 1921 - September 28, 2025

Carmen Benavente de Orrego-Salas, 103, passed away peacefully at her home in Bloomington, Indiana, on September 28, 2025.

Born December 17, 1921, in Santiago, Chile, to Juan Benavente Serrano and Eulalia Puga Vega de Benavente, Carmen lived through more than a century of extraordinary changes—from the Great Depression and World War II to Chile’s political transformations, the cultural revolutions of the late 20th century, and the digital age. Throughout her life, she carried forward traditions of living with curiosity, creativity, and optimism.

On April 17, 1943, she married Chilean composer Juan Orrego-Salas, with whom she shared over 70 years of love and family until his passing in 2019. Together, they raised five children and welcomed many brothers and sisters-in-law: Juan Cristian (deceased, 2018, Patricia Vasquez Marias), and Jeanie Schelm, the first wife of Cristian, as well as Francisca (Julio Alamos), Juan Felipe (Mara Baygulova), Juan Miguel, and Juan Matias (Beverly Colin). Her family grew to include eight grandchildren—Serena, Magdalena, Sebastián, Daniel, Gabriel (deceased), Lucas, Pascal, and Andreas—and nine great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her youngest brother, Felipe Benavente Puga.

Carmen and Juan made their home in Bloomington, Indiana, for 64 years after arriving in 1961, when Juan established Indiana University’s Latin American Music Center. They cherished their place in the Indiana University and Bloomington communities, finding a home filled with music, art, scholarship,

and friendship.

A gifted textile artist, teacher, and author, Carmen founded Workshop 21, where she taught what she considered the 21 essential embroidery stitches. Her influence spread internationally when, in 1971, she introduced the art of crewel embroidery to women in Ninhue, Chile. That project blossomed into a community of artisans whose work continues to this day and is documented in her book "Embroiderers of Ninhue: Stitching Chilean Rural Life" (2010), translated into Spanish in 2018.

She also shared her artistry through workshops in New Mexico and Colorado, enriching Hispanic craft traditions and leaving works now housed in museums. In 2008, she was honored as an Illustrious Daughter of Ninhue for her role in promoting and sustaining women's artistry.

Known for her elegance, determination, and generosity, Carmen lived nearly 104 years with grace and vitality. The family extends special thanks to her devoted caregivers: Durimilys Paz, Andreina Santaniello, Lilian Janet Orellana, and Koren Wyatt, whose dedication and care brought comfort and companionship to Carmen during her years.

Deep gratitude is also extended to Dr. Chris LaFollette MD, his Nurse Kathy, and the team at Indiana University Hospice Care for their compassionate medical support.

The family will hold a private celebration of her life. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the many causes that Carmen's friends and family would have known she supported.

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory 4155 South old State Road 37 is handling the arrangements and online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends at [www.allencares.com](http://www.allencares.com)

# Tribute Wall

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“ *Such a gracious and beautiful lady. So blessed our families were/are so close. I will always have a special place in my heart for dear Carmen (and Juan). I will miss you.*  
*Love always,*  
*Pila and family*

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**Pilar Gunderson** - October 09, 2025 at 10:02 AM