

Self-proclaimed margarita inventor dies at age of 78

By Betsy McArthur
El Paso Times

A Lower Valley resident who claimed to be the original inventor of the margarita, Francisco "Pancho" Morales, died Monday at the age of 78.

He suffered a stroke Friday and never recovered.

Morales, once a bartender at Tommy's bar in Juárez, had said he was 24 when he accidentally invented the tart, tasty tequila today July 4, 1942.

"I think my father would rather

be remembered for his hard work as a milk man, his devotion as a husband, father and grandfather than as the inventor of the margarita," said his son Gabriel Morales.

Pancho Morales was heavily involved with his family in the 15 years since his 1981 retirement from Prices, his daughter Columba said.



Morales

But that didn't end the legend: On that fateful day he was working at Tommy's, a woman came in and asked for a magnolia, a popular drink back then.

The young bartender forgot how to make a magnolia, but didn't want to tell that to the lady. So, he whipped up an impromptu concoction of tequila and Cointreau, a liqueur made from orange peels, lime and ice.

He served it to the woman, who instantly loved it. She asked what it was, and Morales called it a margarita — Spanish for daisy.

The woman ordered another

one, and the drink was born.

Gabriel Morales said he grew up knowing his father's contribution to the world of spirits, but rarely did Pancho Morales shake up a margarita: "Only when someone would come over and ask him would he make it. It was a humorous thing."

Morales is survived by his wife, Margarita (no relation to the drink, Morales claimed), six children and 18 grandchildren. A rosary will be at 7 p.m. today at Martin Funeral Home East on George Dieter. Burial will be Thursday at Mount Carmel Cemetery.