

ORTIZ Y PINO DE KLEVEN, MARÍA CONCEPCIÓN (“CONCHA”) (1910– 2006)

“I don’t need a costume. . . . I know who I am.”

Born in Galisteo, New Mexico, to an elite landed family, Concha was expected to execute the service and responsibility associated with her class. The first Hispanic woman legislator in the U.S. and the youngest American woman elected to a state office, she was only twenty-six when elected, but well qualified for the role. At the age of twenty she had already organized a vocational school to promote traditional Hispanic crafts, blankets, embroidery, leather goods, and furniture. As a legislator, she proposed the first bill that would allow women to serve on juries and promoted a bill requiring teaching of Spanish in New Mexico’s grade schools. She supported bilingual education and pushed to create a School of Inter-American Affairs at the University of New Mexico. An advocate for the disabled, and for abused children, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed her to the National Commission on Architectural Barriers. Devoted to public service, in later life, New Mexicans honored her for her accomplishments and considered her a living treasure.