



# RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SUMMER 2012 • ISSUE 117

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society



*Felix Rodriguez Borrnel, Amparo Velez Borrnel, Aurelia Velez Guerrero,  
Victor Terrazas Guerrero, 1923*

## HOW I CAME TO AMERICA

*by Aurelia Velez Guerrero • Page 4*

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

## My Beloved Capitán: A California Love History

*by Fernando Padilla Fitch • Page 5*

*Translated from Spanish, with literary license by Ann Carranza*

## Decisions

*by Alejandro Zavala Flores • Page 26*

## In This Issue

Like our current community outreach exhibit, "Ancestors of Mexico," (August 1 to November 8), this themed issue of the *Russian River Recorder* is about Mexican-American heritage in Northern Sonoma County. While I selected all the articles in this publication, I haven't written any of them. My intention is to present primarily Latino voices telling their own stories of immigration, hard work, family values and striving for a better future.

This issue opens with "How I Came to America" by Aurelia Velez Guerrero, an article so powerful it gave me goosebumps. It is the story of Gabriel Fraire's grandmother during the Mexican Revolution.

Most of the writers have never written for the *RRR*. Some are youths, such as Emma Esquivel who is about to start 7th grade and Alejandro Zavala Flores, a graduating senior at Healdsburg High School. Emma won the Museum's 2012 Family History Essay Challenge by writing about the early life of her father, Andy Esquivel. Alejandro, a member of HHS's Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) club, provides a harrowing account of his emigration to the U.S. This gripping story of illegal immigration to triumphant citizenship is one that is seldom heard.

Ann Carranza translated "My Beloved Capitán" about the romance of Josefa Carrillo and Henry Fitch, originally written in Spanish by their descendant, Fernando Padilla Fitch of

Mexico. Ann shared her own poem "Yo, El Campesino" in honor of husband, Léonel. She also wrote vividly about Ana Merino de Alvarez, a traditional Trique weaver who lives in Windsor.

There are several stories of residents whose ancestors came to Healdsburg through the 1942-1964 Bracero Program, including Pedro and Gregorio De Luna, John and Lupe Arreguin, Benny Carranza, Daniel Novella and Rafael Morales. The De Luna family is chronicled by Irma De Luna Muñoz, daughter of Gregorio and Ramona De Luna. The Arreguins present their own immigrant story. *Press Democrat* columnist Gaye LeBaron shares her historical perspective on the Bracero Program and interviews several prominent Sonoma County Braceros. Janet Sbragia Pisenti wrote about the Mexican rancho era and interviews her classmate, Martha Gonzalez Greene. Martha poignantly describes how, when she first came to Sonoma County, she was "hungry" to speak Spanish.

If you are, or know, someone of Mexican-American ancestry in Northern Sonoma County who might have stories/photos to share, please contact the Museum.

Sincerely,

Holly Hoods, Curator



### **RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER**

*The Official Publication of the  
HEALDSBURG MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY*

**Edwin Langhart, Founder**

### **Officers**

**Ted Calvert, President**

**Darci Rosales, Recording Secretary**

**Stan Becker, Treasurer**

**Bob Rawlins, Ass't Treasurer**

**Kent Mitchell, Past President**

### **Directors**

**Maggie Bates**

**Diane Bertoli**

**Kathi Engler**

**Francie Forchini**

**Louise Fowler**

**Lockie Gillies**

**Ann Howard**

**Ann Mahoney**

**Larry Orr**

**Karen Tynan**

### **Staff**

**Holly Hoods, Curator**

**Meredith Dreisback, Assistant Curator**

### **Publication Staff**

**Holly Hoods, Curator**

**Ann Howard, Associate**

**Janet Sbragia Pisenti, Associate**

**Pamela Vana-Paxhia, Layout**

**Amoruso Printing, Printing**

**221 Matheson Street**

**P. O. Box 952**

**Healdsburg, CA 95448**

**(707) 431-3325**

**[www.healdsburgmuseum.org](http://www.healdsburgmuseum.org)**



# Contents

Russian River Recorder

Summer, 2012 \* Issue 117

- 4 How I Came to America**  
*by Aurelia Velez Guerrero*
- 5 My Beloved Capitán  
A California Love History**  
*by Fernando Padilla Fitch*  
*Translated from Spanish, with literary license by Ann Carranza*
- 11 A Common Destiny Shared by Four People**  
*by Janet Sbragia Pisenti*
- 17 From the Crisis of the '40s Came Our Fiestas Y Futbol**  
*by Gaye LeBaron*  
*Reprinted with permission from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, June 21, 1987*
- 20 De Luna Heritage: Faith, Family Unity and Education**  
*by Irma De Luna Muñoz*
- 23 Crop Pickers, Morning Serenades and Concrete**  
*by Johnny and Lupe Arreguin*  
*Reprinted from Ted Calvert's "Healdsburg Chronicles"*
- 25 My Dad**  
*by Emma Esquivel*
- 26 Decisions**  
*by Alejandro Zavala Flores*
- 29 Ana Merino de Alvarez: Keeping Oaxacan Traditions Alive**  
*by Ann Carranza*
- 31 Yo, El Campesino**  
*by Ann Carranza in honor of Leonel Carranza*  
*reprinted from Healdsburg Senior Writing Project's "Tuesday Morning Memories"*



*Felix Rodriguez Borruel, Amparo Velez Borruel, Aurelia Velez Guerrero, Victor Terrazas Guerrero, 1923*

## How I Came to America

*by Aurelia Velez Guerrero*

All my youth was filled with war. They called it a revolution. We only knew it as war. Many times the federales raided our village. When they came we all tried to hide. The last time my sister and I hid in the storeroom near the back of the house. Outside we could hear all this noise and the soldiers were yelling "Donde estan las chicas?" Then suddenly the door to the room was knocked down. We could smell the dirty federales and hear them rummaging around the room. We didn't cry or say anything. We just hung in a rack of clothes, keeping our feet off the ground. They didn't see us and left. When we finally let ourselves down, we cried and hugged for hours. After that, many men left town to join the revolutionary generals in fighting the federales. All my brothers, including the youngest who was only 13, went to join the most famous of the northern revolutionary generals, General Francisco Pancho Villa, the hero of every Mexican, living or dead.

I never saw any of my brothers again. Then, one night, my father pulled me out of bed and paraded me into the kitchen with my sisters. A man I had never seen walked back and forth, inspecting us, as if we were livestock. When his hand came down upon my head and I heard him say, "I'll take this

one," a shiver went through my body. Was I being sold or married off? I did not know. I knew nothing of the revolution other than to fear the federales. And I knew nothing of el Norte. The man was carrying people north, away from the war, and my father had only enough money to have one of his daughters go. Since he could not pick one of us over the others, he let the driver choose. The driver chose me because I was the smallest and would take up the least amount of room.

For many days I rode in a horse-drawn wagon with many people I did not know. When the wagon finally stopped, we were in Texas. Everyone began to get off. The wagon man came around to the back and told me it was the end of the line. When I asked him what I was supposed to do, he said it was not a concern of his.

And that is how I came to America, alone, as a twelve year old girl.

*Aurelia Velez Guerrero is the great-grandmother of Maria and Elizabeth Fraire of Healdsburg and the grandmother of Gabriel Fraire. Variations of this story appear in Gabriel's play "Who Will Dance With Pancho Villa."*

# My Beloved Capitán

## A California Love History

by *Fernando Padilla Fitch*

(Translated from Spanish, with literary license, by *Ann Carranza*)

February 5, 1849

The well-used buggy made its way over the byways that carried them to Healdsburg in the Russian River Valley. It had been a long voyage. From boarding at the port in San Diego they had arrived at the Yerba Buena Bay, in what is now known as San Francisco, and from there, General Vallejo, Josefa's brother-in-law had sent a carriage for them. At last, they arrived at the huge Victorian house, better known as "Fitch Castle," situated on the banks of the Russian River and in front of Fitch Mountain.



*Fitch Castle at Sotoyome Rancho*

With an anguished air, Pio Pico, the final governor of Mexican California, helped his cousin Josefa, alight. It had been a very tiring journey. She was dressed in black, the color she wore from that point forward, as a remembrance of her love, the famous Captain Henry Delano Fitch. Captain Fitch died January 13, 1849 and after all the customs were satisfied and the ceremonies were over, he had been buried in the Presidio chapel, at San Diego de Alcalá.



*Anita (Fitch) Grant*

Her daughter, Anita, went out to receive her. Josefa wore the appearance of one who has seen a ghost, her daughter wore the scarf that she had bought the first time she had embarked on the *Maria Ester*. Mother and daughter clasped each other in a trembling embrace, while her son-in-law, J.D. Grant, only watched them in silence. They had been unable to attend the burial, as they had seven small children, and one had been very ill.

Lorenzo, the old servant, lowered a heavy trunk with difficulty and he placed it in one of the bedrooms in the house. That evening, while everyone was asleep, Josefa was unable to sleep. She lit a candle, placed it in the censor and opened the old trunk that contained all her mementos. There, she encountered, wrapped in perfumed linen handkerchiefs, the Captain's old love letters. She took this legacy and slowly stripped the rose-colored ribbons from the bundle.

She took a deep breath, as if she were trying to restore time.

The scent of faded petals and old essences caused her to close her eyes, and for just an instant, she was in her parents' home, at the edge of the San Diego presidio, in the year 1826. She was 16 years old and on the horizon, she saw the outline of the *Maria Ester*. Very early, she joined her mother and sisters to decide whether to go to see the merchandise that had come from Monterey and the Orient.

The day before, the governor José María Echeandía, had visited with her parents' consent. She had acceded to their wishes, but did not find the slender, almost feminine, illustrious personage very pleasant. His constant flattery troubled her. Echeandía never tired of courting her. He even went so far as to move the capitol from the Port of Monterey to San Diego. He declared it capitol, not only of Alta (upper) California, but of Baja California, as well. He alleged that it was a strategic relocation, but many suspected that it was due to Josefa's beauty.

Josefa climbed aboard the ship and her heart palpitated in her chest, as if in premonition. To her, it was always exciting to visit ships and to see everything on them that one could buy. Such was her excitement, that she quickly found a blue silk scarf from the Orient with lively motifs in black and white. She immediately bought the scarf and wrapped it around her neck; she was very happy to have encountered something so to her liking. Her face, as radiant as the morning, had a strange smile. She agilely climbed to the hatchway and, arriving at the stern, she felt a look that clove through her spine. She turned rapidly, and felt as if a ray had paralyzed her—there *he* was, with his blue captain's uniform, its resplendent buttons adorned the military jacket. He had a short beard.

His gaze struck hers. Josefa stopped as if hypnotized and looked at him with a deliberate seriousness but, at the same time, she was so young, that the sensible and responsible sailor was attracted to her. This caused her to be more nervous, she fought for breath and immediately her mouth dried. Henry's countenance showed his immediate interest. He smiled, demonstrating his happy character while his refined and casual air signaled a contradiction. She had never seen irises this blue color in a man, it left her breathless and she felt her hands tremble and her cheeks began to blush with a fire that burned inside. She couldn't hide, flushed as her face was, her agitation from her mother. It was easy for her mother to see what was happening to her daughter. His impact caused her to need her sister's support, as she felt faint. Recovering a little, she heard for the first time the Boston-sailor's accent that emphatically asked her if she felt well. The Captain's voice, the voice of authority, held such an impact, that her faintness increased. Because she did not understand English, she was even more perturbed. Immediately, her cousin Pio, who always accompanied her, translated the words breathed by Capitan Fitch.



*Captain Henry Fitch*

After this encounter, Josefa was not the same, she was captivated by a color—the sea-blue color of the Captain's eyes.

When she opened her eyes, she could see the dark of the night the impassive gaze of her Captain, his eyes of deepening blue and filled with strange lights.

*Ericéis sicut Deus, sientes bonum et malum.... (You will be as God, knowing of good and evil...)* The funereal words of the priest repeated and resounded in her head.

She couldn't believe that her adored Captain had gone away. There were so many memories that fell in lamenting cascades, more with the emergence of precise words and too many to choose from—they were streets with nowhere to turn, a labyrinth of pain. The cold skin and inert hand of her beloved; he had taken the last breath on earth. With the closing of his blue eyes, with the rigidity of his serene face she had lost her life's companion, but in the depths of her soul she had stored the sensation of his lukewarm hands. She still felt their tight strength until, little by little, the infinite took over, and now, only a faint prayer from her mouth, that came and went like the waves of the sea until her throat ripped open.

*How cold is the night alone  
it is empty without name,  
the shadows castigate the night,  
how cold in the shadows without a man  
ungrateful memory without owner  
the night is not the night without dreams.*

Outside, the resplendent stars, inside a tenuous rain wetting her eyes. She once again lit the candle and the flame projected passing shadows that lengthened the bundle of letters.

Very slowly, she opened an envelope and immediately her vacant eyes were lost in space. The arrival of their presence or their departure was seen as if by a watcher seeing a beloved one on the horizon, or like one who shakes, from afar, a white handkerchief of goodbye—these anticipated memories.

Suddenly the image of Don Enrique (Henry Fitch) emerged. Her beloved Captain arrived like a soft fragrance escaping from the folded sheets of paper, yellowed with age, amber with time—it allowed the aroma of the images of her life escape. She remembered in each emanation, the pages of her existence, the flourishing moments of the book of her life, and she longed to read the first letter written in rose-colored ink.

*Josefa:*

*I saw the heavens a better blue and the earth's roses, and I, I saw with your love.*

*Oh, Gloria! To be in love, in love, drunk for the love of you, my perpetual, beloved  
sweetheart, crazily in love, as if I were 15 again, with first passion!*

*This is how you make me feel, my adored beloved.*

*Henry D. Fitch.*

Josefa remembered how her father had prohibited her from seeing the Captain. He was determined. The differences were abysmal: he American, she Mexican; he Protestant, she Catholic. In the customs of Californians of the time, it was not possible to consent to such a relationship. Before these contrasts and requirements, Captain Fitch announced that he was prepared to become a Mexican citizen and to convert to Catholicism. Therefore, he was baptized by Father Menéndez in the church at the Presidio, April 20, 1829. Lieutenant Domingo Carrillo, Josefa's uncle, was his godfather. The friar promised to marry them the next day, but at the last minute, Governor Echeandía sent a decree that had to be complied with that prohibited any stranger to marry in his territory without a special license and special permission from him. She knew she would not receive dispensation. Her uncle, Domingo Carrillo, lieutenant in the military, had to obey the orders and he declined to act as godfather of the marriage. Their case was bleak.

~~~~~  
With trembling hands, Josefa opened the next letter.

*Presidio de San Diego*

*May 5, 1829*

*My Dear Captain Henry D. Fitch:*

*I never thought there would exist on a frigate such treasures.*

*The first time that I climbed aboard your vessel with the hand of my sisters and my mother, it was without any reason other than to search for spices and dresses.*

*Today, I would climb to search for my reason. Yes, I received your letter and I was filled with an enormous thrill to know that you, too, received mine. I do not know when you will return, but every morning I believe that I will see your ship from my window. My heart awaits on the horizon, and when you do not appear in the sky my soul dies in the afternoon. Every day I pray that you will arrive. How large are the hours watching the ocean. Large, like the blue of the sky.*

*You have converted my existence and my reason for being.  
I will wait forever.  
Josefa Carrillo López.*

*The Brigantine Vulture*

*April 20, 1829.*

*My sweet Josefa:*

*I asked one of my men to translate this missive to Spanish.*

*The tree of life is not of knowledge, it is the tree of love, it will give the finest fruits.*

*I confess to you that in all my travels, I never have seen a woman as beautiful as you; and I, too, end my day looking at the horizon from the port and in my binnacle, I count the days and the hours until I return.*

*I worry that Governor Echeandía, who changed the capitol to San Diego, has decreed the marriage special permission. I believe in our love and on arrival, I will give in writing the marriage proposal to Don Joaquin, your father.*

*I am very happy that you have accepted my proposal and I know that even though they did not accept me at first, with the help of Lieutenant Domingo Carrillo, your uncle, we will convince your father.*

*The last time I spoke with Father Menéndez, he assured me that he is prepared to marry us. I will arrive in San Diego aboard the brigantine 'Vulture' and I have to complete one last voyage to Valparaiso and I will return to my wife.*

*Always yours,*

*Henry D. Fitch*

~~~~~

With the governor's prohibition, things became complicated. Josefa's father strongly pressured her to accept Echeandía's aspirations. But, to her, there was no other man than the one in uniform with eyes of the color of the sky and the sea.

Father Menéndez, ingenious man that he was, with many resources, was thinking of how not to entangle himself in problems. It occurred to him, and he suggested, that he marry them at sea aboard the Captain's ship. Technically, they would be outside the governor's territory. Fitch acceded immediately and upon arriving from his voyage, he did all that was necessary to weigh anchor anew. He simulated dismissal, including a visit to his betrothed's mother, and then he departed on the Vulture.

To lift anchor in front of everyone was only one part of the plan—he would find his place in the sun, then he would return to the coast. Pío Pico helped by taking Josefa in the carriage to a convenient point on the beach, where Father Menéndez awaited with the groom. It was a solemn moment. And so, as fast as that, the lovers were married on the ocean and the Vulture furrowed its way to the Baja, California peninsula. They spent their honeymoon in Valparaiso, Chile.

Outside, it had stopped raining and it was as if remembering these moments with her Captain had stopped the rain. The shadows of the candle were erased and now, she could hear the warbles of the birds announcing the new day. She thought of those happy days in Valparaiso with her beloved Enrique (Henry). How he had taken her to see *el Mirador de Esperanza* (Hope Vista) and the city of the *Viña del Mar* (Vine of Sea). Everything was marvelous, and even though they felt the premonition approaching problems, they would have married anew.

Carefully she separated the letters and in the depths of a little mahogany box, she found a profoundly treasured certificate—that of their marriage, dated July 2, 1819 in Valparaiso, Chile, and signed by Father Vicente Orrego, who testified that the happy couple was husband and wife.





*The Elopement, Pio Pico and Josefa on the way to meet Captain Fitch, painting by C. G. Nahl*

Their escape caused the scandal of the age and even though everything was done in the most profound intimacy of the family, the rumors began to make their rounds. Some decided that the bride had been forcibly abducted. Don Joaquín swore to his family that if they returned, he would kill them for dishonoring the family name. He ordered that all her clothing and photographs be removed from the house and he prohibited the mention of her name.

She took a deep drink of water, drank greedily but slowly, as if she were replacing all the tears captured in her handkerchief, this scrap of linen with the monogram H.D.F., that still smelled of the ocean, of her Captain. She remembered their brave love when they made the decision, after having their first son—Enrique Eduardo Fitch—to travel to California.

They traveled aboard the navy ship *Leonor*, along the coast of San Diego, in July 1830. Josefa lengthened her vision, trying to see the Presidio in the distance. She cried silently while holding her son, anxious to be with her mother and her siblings. The ship followed the pass until it arrived at the Port of San Pedro. Her eyes returned to the hatch as she disembarked, and with a mixture of rabid crying and desperation, she saw that he was detained and put immediately in prison. Echeandía had dictated an arrest order from his place. Don Enrique (Henry Fitch) was sent to the San Gabriel Mission to be judged. Josefa, at first, was placed in a private home, but in the end, no one could keep her in San Gabriel. The prosecutor alleged that the marriage was invalid, and wanted to annul the marriage but the couple showed their Chilean marriage certificate, as well as their son's birth certificate. The pair was interrogated repeatedly before the scholastic court. Captain Fitch wanted to be his own attorney and offered to, if necessary, remarry his wife.

Her face lit up and she felt that she was a very fortunate woman. How many husbands would be willing to marry their wives three times?

This thought made her smile and she closed her eyes again...

The lengthy wrangling lasted until December, then the vicar decided that the charges were not sustained and, while irregular, the marriage was valid and he ordered the Captain to be freed, but not without considering the scandal Don Enrique had caused the church. For that, he was condemned to pay a penalty—the restoration of the 50-pound bell that was in bad condition at the church in Los Angeles.

Returning to the ship, she encountered the picture of her parents and her siblings and remembered how terribly nervous she was when she once again arrived at the Port of San Diego with her swaddled firstborn. She had begged the Captain to let her go alone with her small son. He told her he wanted to accompany her, but Josefa understood that the battle with her father's hurt heart, she could ease only with the help of her son. She arrived at the adobe house outside the perimeter of the Presidio,

knocked firmly on the door, her heart beating so strongly that she felt the palpitations in her temples. As soon as she crossed the threshold, she encountered a cold and proud look from her father. She was unable to contain herself and she threw herself at Don Joaquin's feet. She implored his pardon and showed him her small son, Enrique Eduardo. Her anguished mother went immediately to her daughter's side and, hearing the boy cry, she took him into her arms and sobbing, embraced both her daughter and the child. The strength of love and blood faced Don Joaquin's pain and pride. He ended up hugging his daughter but it was some weeks before he accepted and forgave Captain Fitch.

Morning had arrived, but she stayed seated at the window, looking at the photograph of the Captain and a few postcards from when they established the *General Store* in San Diego. She remembered how it was many years before it was known as *The House of the Boston Trader*, which they had constructed with so much excitement between 1830 and 1831. These were happy times.

When California was incorporated into the United States, Santiago Arguello was very upset and he preferred to retire to his ranch in Tijuana, which was still part of Mexico. Captain Fitch, disappointed from all the arbitrary acts of the governments, went north where he had a number of properties in San Francisco and where he had claimed the Sotoyome Rancho, as his brother-in-law, General Mariano G. Vallejo, had proposed. [The Sotoyome Rancho included present-day Healdsburg in its 48,800 acre territory.] There, on the banks of the Russian River, he built what came to be known as Fitch Castle, a huge Victorian house that became the refuge of his soul.



*Sotoyome Rancho and Fitch Mountain*

In 1848, Fitch wrote: *"I'm anxious to return with my family to the house in Sonoma. It appears that they have discovered much gold close to the ranch—about a day's journey on horseback. They say that there is gold and silver on my ranch and I believe that they are going to discover more than in Sacramento. That is very unhealthy."*

Josefa knew, ultimately, that Captain Fitch was a stranger who had made himself Mexican for the love of his family, that knew how to love the woman of his dreams, and was loved and left in California dignified work and many friends. Of him, they said that he was always a gentleman, popular and influential, but also honest and compassionate. Those were things they were unable to say of many "gringos" that arrived in California after his death.

She stored his letters in their yellowed envelopes and she wrapped them in that linen handkerchief, and attached, again, the pink ribbon. The sun, surprisingly, bathed her with the night's dew—it was a beautiful morning with the scent of fresh rain. She went outside the castle to stroll along the green path. She lifted her eyes, following a seagull's flight as it fluttered alone, like her thoughts. Her prayers floated around the clouds and lifted into the infinite blue—she thought that life was like the sea, with a succession of moments that passed without repeating themselves and, like the swaying of the waves, arrived and left. And so, she went to the bank of the river, like she had done so many times hand in hand with her beloved *Capitán*.

# A Common Destiny Shared by Four People

## José Piña, Josefa Carrillo, Rufena Lucero, and Anita Cooper Become Healdsburg's First Mexicans in the Land Grant Era

by Janet Sbragia Pisenti

Numerous stories have been written about the first Mexican and Spanish settlers in the Healdsburg area, except for Anita "Ana" Cooper Wohler. Yet, if there were a stage play with a cast including the four people mentioned, Ana would have a very good part. She and José Piña, Josefa Carrillo Fitch, and Rufina Lucero Alexander, shared a common destiny due to the land grant era. General Mariano Vallejo would have been the leading actor in that production.

Once the Mexican government had won all the northern areas of the United States controlled by Spain, its goal was to populate those areas with its own people. The California missions were already established and the Sonoma Mission became the central business core for the land grants in our area. The huge Mexican land grants, which predetermined the future lives of the four young people just mentioned, are listed as follows:

1. Henry Delano Fitch – 48,836 acres in Healdsburg called Rancho "Satayomi" - 1841, 1846
2. José German Piña – 15,439 acres in Geyserville called "Tzabaco" - 1843
3. Eugenio Montenegro – 26,788 acres in Healdsburg called "Casalamayome" - 1844
4. William Markus West – 6,633 acres in Mark West called "San Miguel"
5. Francisco Berryessa – 8,867 acres in Santa Rosa called "Rincon de Musalacon" - 1846
6. José de los Santos Berryessa – 17,743 acres in Knight's Valley called "Malacomes" - 1843
7. John B.R. Cooper – 17,892 acres in Forestville called "El Molino" – 1834, 1836
8. Maria Ygnacia Lopez – 8,885 acres in Santa Rosa called "Cabeza de Santa Rosa" - 1841
9. Joaquin Carrillo – 13,360 acres in Santa Rosa called "Llano de Santa Rosa" - 1844
10. John Wilson – 18,834 acres in Kenwood called "Los Guilicos" - 1837
11. Lazaro Piña – 3,219 acres in Fetters Hot Springs, called "Agua Caliente" - 1845
12. Juan Castaneda (or Cataneda) – 17,238 acres in Cotati called "Cotate" - 1844
13. Juan N. Padilla – 16,887 acres in Roblar/Two Rock called "Roblar de Miseria" - 1846
14. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo – 66,622 Petaluma acres called "Petaluma" – 1843
15. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo – Petaluma/Vallejo acreage called "Suscol" – 1845
16. Edward M. McIntosh – 8,849 acres in Freestone called "Estero Americano" - 1840
17. Maria Cazares de Dawson – 8,781 acres in Bodega called "Canada de Pogolimi" - 1844
18. James Black – 10,786 acres in Freestone called "Canada de Jonive" - 1845
19. Manuel Torres (or Torrez) – 17,761 acres in Fort Ross called "Muniz" - 1846
20. Stephen Smith – 35,487 acres in Bodega Bay called "Bodega" - 1846
21. Bartolome Bojorquez – 24,903 acres called "Laguna de San Antonio" - 1846
22. Juan Vioget – 16,759 acres called "Blucher" - 1844
23. Jacob P. Leese – 18,704 acres called "Huichica" ranch – 1841, 1844
24. Ernest (Ernesto) Rufus – 17,850 acres at Gualala Ranch on German Rancho – 1846
25. Lac (177 acres), Mission Sonoma (14 acres), and Sonoma Pueblo Lands (6,094)

### General Mariano Vallejo Given the Leading Role

*Il Commandante* General Mariano Vallejo, the Military Commander and Director of Colonization of the Northern Frontier, arrived in Sonoma with military escorts to take charge of the

Mission, free the Native Americans, and distribute the lands under his jurisdiction. He and land grant recipients John B. Rogers Cooper, James Black, and Edward M. McIntosh were asked to set down roots around the Russian territory at Fort Ross as a buffer

to their spreading further into the territory. Even though the Russians left in 1841 and were no longer a threat, a flood of immigrants would soon follow.

Meanwhile, thousands of acres of land were granted to Mexican citizens who met the following criteria - proof of naturalized Mexican citizenship and willingness to survey and develop the land. English men were marrying beautiful Mexican women and were getting baptized as Catholics in order to receive those land grants. Many of those marriages swirled around Mariano Vallejo and his family.

Capt. Henry Fitch, baptized *Enrique Domingo Bautista Fitch*, married Josefa Carrillo, the sister-in-law of Mariano Vallejo. Markus West married Guadalupe Vasquez, a niece of Mariano Vallejo; John B. Rogers Cooper, baptized as *Juan Bautista Rogerio Cooper*, married Maria G. Encarnacion Vallejo, the oldest sister of Mariano Vallejo; John Wilson married Ramona Carrillo, sister of Josefa Carrillo; James Black married Mary Augustina Sais; James Dawson married 14-year old Maria Antonia Cazares (who received the formal grant); Stephen Smith married Manuela Torres, a Peruvian; and Jacob Leese married Rosalia Vallejo, the daughter of Mariano Vallejo.

### **José German Piña Scouting Dry Creek Valley**

José Piña (sometimes spelled Pena) was the second person on the land grant list, but was the first Mexican to settle in our area. He was born at Mission San Francisco de Asis in San Francisco in 1829, the son of Maria Placida Villela and Alfarez Lazaro Piña, also a land grant recipient. At the young age of 11 or 12, Jose Piña began scouting the area he called 'Tzabaco.' He petitioned Governor Michelorena in Monterey for it and it was granted to him at age 14 in 1843.

José, usually called *German* (Spanish for Herman) also had the nickname "*Chino*" (Spanish for curly). He had six siblings, according to one historian: Feliciano, José de Jesus, Francisco (*Pancho*), Antonio, Luis, and Clara Piña (married to William Fitch). It is believed by some that they settled into a pre-existing adobe, possibly built as a Mexican fort, since it was one of the first non-native structures built in Sonoma County. José and his siblings spent the next four years tending their cattle, corn, fruits and grain, with help from nearby Indian

laborers. In 1844, José's mother died and in 1847, his father was killed in battle. Unfortunately, José died the same year at age 18 at the Sonoma Mission, having left a will leaving his family as heirs. (No photos have been found of him or his family up to this date.)

In 1848, California was won by the United States and settlers arrived in droves. It was difficult for the Piña heirs to keep their land. In the 1860s, Samuel Heaton and Duval Drake Phillips bought 137 acres from them and the name 'Tzabaco' is not forgotten, since Kay Robinson, a Phillips family descendant, museum volunteer, and historian, enjoys the word 'Tzabaco' on her license plate.

### **Rufina Lucero Marries Cyrus Alexander Arrives in Healdsburg in 1841**

Rufina did not receive a land grant, but would benefit from one when her life became involved with one Cyrus Alexander. Rufina Lucero (also spelled Ruphena or Rufena) was born in May of 1830 in Mora, New Mexico, the daughter of Pedro Lucero and Maria de la Luz Pinos.



*Rufina Lucero Alexander*

Cyrus Alexander, of English and Scottish background, when seeing Rufina for the first time, fell in love. He was employed as manager of Henry Fitch's land grant, Sotoyome Rancho. The prevailing custom was that after a couple becomes engaged, they are supposed to wait several years to marry. Yet, it was a 200-mile distance to their home, so Cyrus streamlined his courtship and in December of 1841, Rufina, age 14, and Cyrus Alexander were married by Captain Sutter of Sacramento.

Historians differ on the dates, but after Cyrus left

his employment with Henry Fitch and the building of Fitch's home in 1845, he, Rufina and their baby began a life of their own on the 10,000 acres Capt. Fitch carved out for them from his Sotoyome Rancho, now called Alexander Valley. In 1847 or 1848, Cyrus began to build their own large home. Meanwhile, Rufina was spinning yarn from rolls of wool from San Diego and possibly some from their own sheep. Cyrus built her a loom and a brick oven outside the house, along with a school for the children and their neighbors.

Eleven children would be born of this marriage. Margaret Alexander was born in 1847. Ellen Alexander was born circa 1849 and died in 1856 at age seven. Jane Alexander was born in 1851, but died in 1852 from cholera or smallpox. Henry Alexander was born in 1856 and died at age 17 on July 9, 1869. Albert Alexander was born in 1857 and died in 1858. Two children were stillborn, yet more would follow. The next four children lived to adulthood, including Margaret, who married William Mulligan. Caroline Alexander was born in 1860, followed by Joseph A. Alexander, Thomas Alexander, and George Alexander, who was born in 1869.



*Rufina Lucero Alexander takes a moment to sit in the garden of her Alexander Valley home and enjoy the company of several of her eleven children. The woman in the dark dress is Carrie Alexander Streining.*

The family home no longer exists except for parts of the adobe walls, yet Cyrus and Rufina Alexander's descendants are able to enjoy a Mexican heritage and an English and Scottish heritage which can be found in St. Claire County, Illinois.

### **Josefa Carrillo Marries Henry Fitch Arrives in Healdsburg in 1850**

The third person to become a part of Healdsburg's history was Maria Antonia Natalia Elijia Carrillo, when she became the wife of Henry Fitch, the first person on the land grant list. He was born on May 7, 1799, in New Haven, Connecticut, the son of Boriah Fitch and Sarah Delano Fitch.



*Josefa formal portrait*

Josefa was born December 29, 1810, in San Diego, the daughter of Maria Ygnacia de la Candelaria Lopez and Joaquin Victor Carrillo. Both parents claimed noble connections in Old Spain.

Josefa's siblings included: Francisca Benicia Carrillo, who married General Mariano G. Vallejo; Joaquin Carrillo; José Ramon Carrillo; Maria de la Luz Carrillo, who married Salvador Vallejo; Juan and Dolores Carrillo, two children who died young; Julio Carrillo, a well known and longtime citizen of Santa Rosa; Juana Carrillo, who married David Mallagh; J Carrillo, who married Victor Castro; Marta Carrillo, who married Joaquin Carrillo; and Ramona Carrillo, who married John Wilson, the tenth person on the land grant list.

After a complicated courtship and colorful abduction (described elsewhere in this publication), Josefa married ship captain/entrepreneur Henry Delano Fitch. Eleven children were born in the years following – Enrique Eduardo Fitch, 1830; Federico "Fred" Fitch, 1832; William Fitch, 1834 (who married Clara Piña), Joseph Fitch, 1836; Josefa (Josephine) Fitch, 1837 (who married John N.

Bailhache); John B. Fitch, 1839; Isabella Fitch, 1840; Charles Fitch, 1842; Michael Fitch, 1844; Maria Antonia Natalia Fitch, 1845; and Anita Fitch, 1848 (who married John Grant).



*Josefa Carrillo Fitch and Henry Fitch, the land grant recipient, had eleven children, yet this often used photo shows Josefa with her daughter, Anita Fitch Grant and John D. Grant, and their family.*

Josefa was looking forward to moving to their home being built in Healdsburg, but Henry died in 1849, while the family was still living in San Diego. In 1850, the year that California was officially admitted into the union, Josefa and her children arrived in Healdsburg. She eagerly anticipated spending time with her mother in Santa Rosa, who had received the Rancho de Cabeza land grant, but her mother died six weeks after Henry Fitch. Meanwhile family gatherings, fiestas, weddings, bull fighting, gambling, music and dancing continued at the Cabeza rancho. Josefa's daughter, also named Josefa, once sewed a quilt of rich fabrics of many colors, with pieces obviously collected from the fabrics of her life, so to speak. (An elaborate silk quilt top is currently on display.)

When Josefa and family arrived in Healdsburg, the California Gold Rush had already begun when Capt. Sutter's foreman discovered gold on the American River. With that discovery came the squatters to this area. The incoming settlers began to 'squat' on all the land grants, causing their owners tremendous grief. Yet, Josefa continued to live at her home until she died at age 82 on January 26, 1893.

The home burned down in 1913, but due to the marriages of three of her daughters, Healdsburg's Bailhache and Grant descendants can claim a connection to this large and important family in California history, while enjoying their rich Spanish, Mexican, and English heritage.

### **Ana Cooper Inherits Part of El Molino Marries Herman Wohler in 1859**

Anita "Ana" Maria Guadalupe Cooper was born on December 29, 1828 in Nuevo Leon, Mexico and is the daughter of John B. Rogers Cooper, the seventh person on the land grant list. He was born in 1701 in Alderney Islands, England, and raised in Massachusetts. He was the ship master of the *Rover* and a friend of Henry Fitch. In 1827, like Henry, he married a Mexican woman, Maria G. Encarnacion Vallejo, born in 1809, the older sister of General Mariano G. Vallejo.

John Cooper became a naturalized Mexican in 1830, with the name *Juan Bautista Rogerio Cooper*, and was awarded the Rancho El Molino land grant in 1834. The Rancho encompassed the Forestville area and much of the Russian River land bordering Eastside and Westside roads.



*Anita "Ana" Maria Guadalupe Cooper, was the daughter of Maria Encarnacion Guadalupe Vallejo and John Rogers Cooper, the El Molino land grant recipient. She inherited 1500 acres of that grant and married Herman Wohler. Their property became known as the Wohler Ranch.*

John and Encarnacion Cooper had five children: Ana Cooper, born on December 29, 1828; Juan Bautista Henry Cooper, born in 1830, who married Martha Brawley; Rogerio Cooper, born in 1838; Francisca Guadalupe Amelia Cooper, born in 1844,

who married Eusebio Molera; Amanda Cooper, born in 1846; and Guadalupe Cooper, born in 1848.

The family resided in Monterey for many years, where Ana became one of the popular young belles of Monterey and several men were in love with her, but the family later moved up to San Francisco. On October 18, 1856, Ana's father gave her and her sister, Amelia, each 1,500 acres of the Rancho El Molino land grant. In 1859, Ana married Herman Wohler and her portion became known as the Wohler Ranch, although she was managing all of the El Molino land grant, it is written.

Herman Wohler had an office in San Francisco, became active in real estate, and served one term in the California State Legislature of 1855. He and Ana did not have children, and Ana devoted her life to the Church and some close relatives. She and Herman Wohler lived all their married life in San Francisco, yet, we can envision them visiting the Wohler Ranch at some point in time.

After Herman Wohler's death in 1877, Rford Peterson and Charles Farmer bought the ranch from Ana and her family and it was called the Wohler-Peterson ranch, the Farmer and Peterson ranch, or just "the Wohler Ranch." Ana died on September 5, 1912.

### **Mexico Loses California to the U.S.**

In 1848, Mexico lost California to the United States, finalized in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, where it was provided in Article X that the land grants would be honored. Yet, that particular article was stricken from the agreement by the senators in Congress, so that protection was not fully guaranteed. With the passing of time, pressured by thousands of newcomers to sell portions of their land, parcels were sold and some were just overtaken by cattle rustlers, intruders who broke down fences, and "squatters." Lawsuits followed, but the land grants were extremely large and unwieldy, the legal process was extremely slow, and lawyers were very expensive, so some landowners just let the land become settled by others. On September 9, 1850, California became the 31<sup>st</sup> state of the United States, and the land grants began to shrink in size and number.

### **The Bracero Program**

Approximately 55,000 Mexican workers immigrated to the United States from 1850 to 1880.

They became field workers in the areas just mentioned. The first de facto Bracero program began in 1920 led by Venustiano Carranza with contracts written up whereby U.S. ranchers allowed men to bring along their families during the period of the contract. In 1924, the U.S. border patrol was created. From then on, anyone who wasn't in the Bracero program was considered an "illegal alien." In 1942, the U.S. signed the Bracero Treaty, which reopened the borders for legal immigration of Mexican laborers, needed during World War II, when many people in the American workforce went off to war. Four million workers came to the U.S. at that time! One of those arrivals was Martha Gonzalez.

### **Martha Gonzalez Arrives in Town in the 1940s**

Martha Gonzalez Greene has no connection to the Mexican land grant era, but her grandparents and parents' arrivals in Healdsburg were a result of the Bracero Treaty.



*Martha Gonzalez, age five or six, in her First Communion dress, poses for the photographer at the Alameda Theater in Mexico City, Mexico. Photo taken circa 1942.*

She is a graduate of Geyserville Grammar School, attended Healdsburg High School, and graduated from Santa Rosa High School, Class of '54. She recalls the early days of her family's arrival from Mexico:

"The very first family I met when I arrived in Healdsburg was the Ramirez family. We had been living in the United States, living in Dry Creek, for a month. There was no car, but we had a car in our home in Mexico City. Harold Phillips, who had sponsored our family to immigrate to California, let my Dad borrow a truck to take the family shopping. I was left at the park (the Plaza) to take care of the kids. I had not spoken Spanish to anyone except Conchita Compian at school. Mr. and Mrs. Ramirez had also left their children at the park and they later came back to pick them up.

The first Spanish words I heard spoken from an adult were "Lilia! Apurate!" (*Lilia! Hurry up!*) I ran up to her mother and told her I was so happy to hear someone speak Spanish because we were at a ranch and no one I knew spoke Spanish. I told her I was hungry to speak Spanish. She was so gracious. She introduced herself (Julia) and introduced her husband, Paul Ramirez, and the family: Lilia, Ramona, Nicky, and Genevieve. Then Julia told her husband that they would wait until my parents came. I remember talking to Ramona, who was telling me that they had 12 'coches' and I thought that they had 12 cars and we didn't even have one!

When my parents came back, there were introductions all around and our family was invited to a baptism the next day. My father explained that we did not have transportation yet. So, Paul Ramirez said he would come and get us. The next day, we went to their house and Ramona took me to see the house and then took me to see the 'coches.' They turned out to be 12 beautiful piglets!



*Three generations of the Gonzalez family include: (l-r) Antonina Sanchez Gonzales, Martha's grandmother; Jesus "Jessie" Gonzalez, her father; and Martha Gonzalez. Her grandparents, Antonina and Jose Gonzalez, had already settled in Dry Creek Valley before her family arrived.*

The Mexican families who were there at the party were pretty much all the families who lived in the area. The Navarros, who lived right outside Healdsburg on East Side Road were there (one of the boys, Alan, married Conchita Compian). Also present were Conchita's parents and the Viramontes family. Their daughter has the ranch in Dry Creek. Also present were the Guzmans. Both Ray and his sister still live on the Dry Creek property. There was a

person named Chavez, who was a son of one of the workers of the vineyard. The Martinez family was there and the members of the family were living in town. The Diaz family and the Zavala family were also there. The Zavalas lived in Cloverdale. Esther Zavala was a member of the Ojeda family. Birdie still lives in Windsor. Others present were the Camacho family. Jenny Camacho was the niece of Tony and Lupe Viramontes."



*Spending a pleasant afternoon at the Gonzalez home in Dry Creek Valley are: (l-r) Grandfather Jose Gonzalez; holding little brother Jessie Gonzalez; brother Gilbert Gonzalez; grandmother Antonina Sanchez Gonzalez; Martha Gonzalez; her mother Bernardina Vasquez Gonzalez; friends Juana and Ramon, and Don Francisco.*

In 1956, Martha Gonzalez married John Greene, the son of Guy and June Patterson Greene. Eight children were born in the years that followed: June, John, Michael, Joe, Guy, Donald, Diana, and Sherri – all of them enjoying an interesting English, Irish, and Mexican background. Martha has been employed for various firms, including State Farm Insurance, the Telephone Co., and the California Human Development organization. She is still employed, is self-sufficient, and resides in Santa Rosa.

*Sources:*

- Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society, 2012
- Sonoma County Land Grants, Wikipedia, 2011
- The Sonoma West Times & News, Rollie Atkinson
- A History of California, Spanish period, MacMillen
- Kay Schmidt Robinson, José Piña, 2011
- "Cooper" by John Woolfenden & Amelie Elkinton
- Hannah Clayborn, Josefa Fitch history, 2003
- The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft
- Martha Gonzalez Greene, Santa Rosa, 2012





*Mexican braceros working in the strawberry fields at Craig Whites' Keyhole Ranch, Forman Lane, 1940s*

## **From the Crisis of the '40s Came Our *Fiestas Y Futbol***

*By Gaye LeBaron*

*Reprinted with permission from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, June 21, 1987*

The “pioneer” among Sonoma County’s 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexican community is Señora Antonia Viramontes of Healdsburg who came to Sonoma County on her honeymoon in 1939. Married in Mexicali, she and her husband came to the U.S. to “see the country” and found a job on Claude Black’s ranch on Westside Road. She knew of “no more than two or three” Mexican families in the County when they arrived.

That was soon to change. The start of World War II not only channeled the able-bodied Americans into the Armed Forces, it forced the Japanese-Americans who had provided much of the contract labor for agriculture, into relocation camps and created a labor vacuum. Women and children pitched in, but Sonoma County’s prunes and apples were in danger of rotting on the vine.

The first crisis, in 1942, was met with an emergency Department of Agriculture program to import Mexican Nationals. The Mexicans, many of them campesinos accustomed to hard work, were excellent field hands. The Bracero Program, as it

came to be known, was so successful that workers with “green cards” remained a permanent labor alternative for growers when the war ended in 1945. By 1960—the beginning of the end of the Bracero Program—there were a half a million “legal” Mexican workers on U.S. farms.

Today [1987], the official estimate for the number of Hispanics in Sonoma County is more than 30,000. An educated guess would be that some 5,000 of these Mexican immigrants are people who came originally with the Bracero Program.

According to records in the National Archives, the first Mexican contract laborers in Sonoma County were the 125 men Talmage “Babe” Wood hired in 1943 to pick hops, prunes, pears and apples on his father’s ranch on River Road. The wartime labor shortage is still vivid in Babe’s mind.

“In 1942, the first harvest after the war began, he says, “labor was really short. I remember we used Italian ladies from the Fulton area that year. And then we heard about Mexican Nationals becoming available. The federal government opened an office

in Santa Rosa on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Rosenberg building. I contracted for 125 workers for the harvest of '43.

"They came in special buses from the border. We met them at the Greyhound depot. Most of them had nothing but their straw hats. Our agreement with the government was that we had to provide food, housing and medical care. We put up tents with cots and blankets, built a community kitchen and a place to eat. We had a big cook stove and a cook who fixed three meals a day. It was a shaded campground and we drilled a well. When they wanted to swim, we dammed Mark West Creek.

"They were all between 16 and 25. Most of them had come from Mexican farms, although some were from Mexico City. One of them was fluent in English and could drive a truck. He hauled them around on a flatbed. When the harvest was over, "They all wanted to stay in this country," Babe recalls. "But the contract was only for that season. I picked 15 to stay the full year. I taught them pruning—we had vineyards and 40-50 acres of apples. They worked out just fine."

Benny Carranza might have been on that bus. He was not your average Mexico City street kid, having already achieved a measure of success as a professional basketball player in the Mexican league of the 1940s. He came with the Bracero Program in '43 as a kind of adventure, and by late summer, was picking hops on the I.D. Wood Ranch on Brittain Lane. Benny, described by his friends as "the best dancer in Sonoma County," remembers that first summer as a time of high spirits among the men who felt very lucky to be earning U.S. dollars to send home to their families. "A beautiful time," says Carranza, "On Sunday people would come from all over. There were lots of girls from the city and it was like a carnival, a fiesta, on the ranch."

Carranza, who knew English, soon supplemented his labor pay with part-time work for Don Mills, the main man in the importation of Bracero labor to the county. He is proud of the help he gave his countrymen. Because his English was good, he assisted the growers in choosing workers from the men Mills brought from the border.

"You'd be surprised," says Carranza, a soft-spoken man, "how growers would treat the men.

They even opened their mouths and looked at their teeth—like a horse. We felt degraded. We suffered, our people did, in those first years."

Carranza was in and out of the U.S. in those early years. He worked at the Wood ranch. He worked for the Mills agency. He went home to Mexico to play the season in his basketball league. "I even came back as a tourist one season."

It was his work for Mills that gave him status in the Mexican community. "In those days," says his friend, Rafael Morales, "Benny was *El Patron*. No matter what went wrong, they would come to Benny. 'Please, can you get me an extension?' 'Please, Benny, they treat me bad.' You can hear a lot of history from Benny."

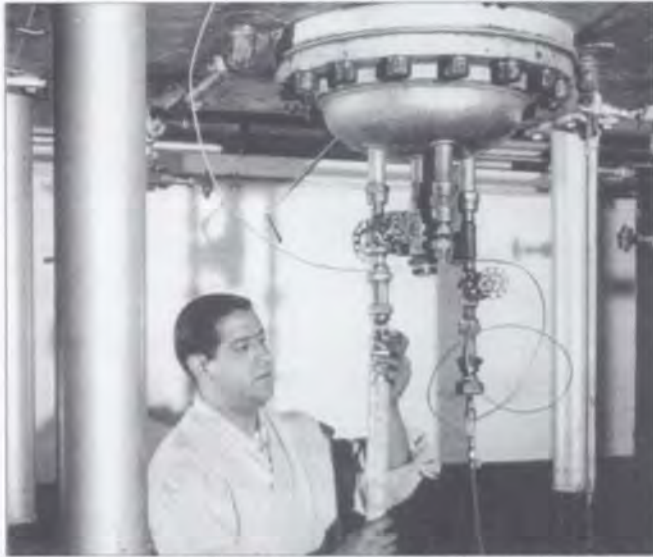
You can hear lots of history from Daniel Novella, too. Daniel, like Benny, is from Mexico City and came to Sonoma County as a contract laborer. Novella was a barber in Mexico City. "I cut the hair of the Minister of Work," he says, "and one day he brought me 20 green cards and said, 'Here, you and your friends want to go to the United States?'"

"You should hear all the things they told us in Mexico. The Mexican people said they are going to make us fight for the U.S. but we knew better. The government here was very strict with the first groups. They checked us for everything.

"When I came to Healdsburg in 1943," says Novella, "I brought my *futbol* (soccer) shoes, just in case. But all they knew was baseball." He was the man who would change that.

He worked first for Bob Goodyear in Alexander Valley and then at Italian Swiss Colony. There, working part-time at his old profession, he cut the hair of Enrico Prati, the ISC boss, who asked him how he would like to learn to make champagne.

Novella met his wife Eva when she came from Tucson with her family to pick prunes. Eva Novella is one of the founders of Head Start program in Sonoma County, a childhood education program that has been very valuable to Hispanic youngsters. Novella went to night school classes. He and Rafael Morales were classmates. "Mr. [Bill] Caldwell was our teacher." He learned English and his civics lessons and "When I became a citizen, they made me a cake at Asti."



*Daniel Novella bottling champagne at Italian Swiss Colony at Asti, 1957*

Novella retired from Asti in 1980. Like many Mexican immigrants, he didn't stop at one job. In 1960 he and his wife opened La Esperanza in Healdsburg, a restaurant that was like Santiago Peterson's Mazatlan in Santa Rosa, a gathering place for the Hispanic community.

Even before the restaurant, Novella had taken on the task of "socializing" life for his compadres in Sonoma County. "They looked so lonesome and lost," he says of the farm workers he would see in Healdsburg's markets. "They would buy groceries and go back to the ranch where they lived."

"In about 1948, I said to my brother-in-law Raul Basurto, "Let's make some enchiladas and find some people." The Latin-American Club of Sonoma County was born.



*Healdsburg Soccer Club – April, 1965*

*Front row, L to R; Felipe Medina, Francisco Prado, Jose Manual Calvo (of Ft. Bragg, recently of Spain), Manuel Carrillo, Lorenzo Reyes (of Cloverdale), Raul Mora, Israel Lemus (of S.F.), Jorge Ocegüera. Standing, L to R; Rudy Virgil (of S.R.), Gabriel Medina, Jorge Lozce (of Sebastopol), Manuel Cisneros (of Sebastopol), Ramiro Osegüera, Pedro Hernandez, Juan Lopez, Jesus Munis (of Santa Rosa), Daniel Novella.*

But Daniel Novella's most important contribution to Sonoma County may be symbolized by those special shoes that came with him from Mexico City. After the enchiladas and celebration of Mexican holidays came the really important matter—*fútbol*, or soccer. Soon Daniel had other Braceros out on whatever field could be found to kick a ball across. In 1964, Club Mexico, the most successful soccer team in Sonoma County, was formed. Daniel

Novella was the coach. The team he coaches now [in 1987] at age 79 is not exclusively Mexican. It is called Express and "just last week it took second in a tournament here in Healdsburg," says Novella, who has seen many soccer players come and go—"50 a year for 25 years" is his own estimate. Now, with more than 1,000 youngsters playing soccer in Sonoma County, Daniel can say proudly, "We were the first."



*Pedro and Inez De Luna, 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary*

## **De Luna Heritage: Faith, Family Unity and Education** *by Irma De Luna Muñoz*

### **1918 Arrival in United States**

Ladislao De Luna de Santiago and his family were the first De Lunas to reside in the U.S. They immigrated from Los Haros, Zacatecas, Mexico in 1918 and stayed until 1920. Ladislao was the paternal grandfather of Gregorio De Luna De Haro who currently resides in Windsor. When Ladislao arrived in the U.S. on July 8, 1918, he was 42 years old and came with his wife, Rafaela Martinez, and their four children: Rafael, Pablo, Pedro and Maria. Ladislao, being of Spanish and indigenous descent, was fair skinned with blue eyes.

Ladislao moved to the United States due to the Mexican Revolution (1910-1929). He worked at the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company. His son, Pedro De Luna Martinez, was ten years old when the family arrived in the U.S. Pedro learned English. He was also fair skinned, but



*Familia De Luna, Juarez, Mexico*

with green eyes. Pedro attended school in the U.S. and learned English. Ladislao and Rafaela had a daughter, Maria de Jesus, born in San Jose, Missouri, Illinois in 1919.

In the 1920s during the Mexican Repatriation period, Ladislao's family was forced to move back to Mexico. The De Luna/Martinez family was transported by train from the U.S. back to Zacatecas, Mexico. Eventually Ladislao moved and purchased land in La Leona, Fresnillo, Zacatecas, Mexico in the 1930s.

### **Pedro and Inez De Luna Family Line**

Pedro De Luna Martinez married Inez De Haro Santiago through a civil marriage on January 5, 1927. They had wanted to be married through the Catholic Church, but during this time (1926-1929) there was a shortage of priests due to the Cristero War. They eventually did marry through the Catholic Church, but it was a hidden ceremony at a house. Pedro and Inez De Luna had nine children: Jesus, Antonio, Gregorio, Amelia, Thomas, Alejandra, Abel, Lucia and Nicholas. Thomas, Jesus, Antonio and Lucia have since passed away.



*Gregorio and Ramona De Luna wedding, 1967*

Gregorio De Luna married Ramona Garcia on January 3, 1967. They settled in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, but in 1973 Gregorio relocated his family to the Napa Valley to be closer to his parents and siblings who had settled there. In 1974, Gregorio and Ramona De Luna moved to Healdsburg and in 1985 they moved again, to Windsor. Gregorio and Ramona have nine children: Gregorio Jr., Luisa, Maria Inez, Enedina, Evangelina, Lucia, Irma, Pedro and Antonia. All of their children attended schools in Healdsburg and eight of their nine grandchildren graduated from Healdsburg High School.

### **Working Under the Bracero Program**

Gregorio De Luna and his father, Pedro De Luna, both participated in the Bracero Program (1942-1964). When Gregorio De Luna was 20 years old, he (along with parents and siblings) moved from La Leona, Fresnillo, Zacatecas, Mexico to Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico due to family financial problems. Living in Ciudad Juarez enabled Pedro to work under the Bracero Program. Shortly after Pedro started, Gregorio joined him and they worked in New Mexico as field workers. During this time, Pedro and Gregorio traveled back and forth between Ciudad Juarez and New Mexico every eight days. Gregorio recalls working as a field worker earning 2 cents a pound for cotton in New Mexico and 15-20 cents for a box of fruit in California.

### **Following the Work**

In 1957, Pedro and Gregorio De Luna moved back to Juarez, Mexico. From 1957-1958, Gregorio moved and worked in Arizona, picking cotton for 3 cents a pound. His father, Pedro, eventually joined him to work in Arizona. In 1958, Pedro and Gregorio moved to Merced, CA to join Jesus De Luna and his family. That year they all moved to Napa, California. They worked in the fields in Napa and Merced.



*Pedro and Inez De Luna family, 1960*

In 1959, Gregorio moved alone to work in the railroads in San Jose, California and then moved to Ciudad Juarez in 1960. He resided there for approximately the next 12 years. The De Luna family eventually settled in California, the majority

in Napa Valley and Sonoma, but there are family members living in Los Angeles, Alaska and one member in England. No one from Pedro and Inez De Luna's family remains in Mexico.

In 1973, Gregorio and Ramona decided to move their family from Ciudad Juarez to the Napa Valley in order to be closer to Gregorio's parents and siblings who were all living there. The family of Pedro and Inez De Luna reunited in Napa Valley in 1973.

### **La Luna Market**

In 1974, Gregorio and Ramona De Luna and their family moved from the Napa Valley to Sonoma County in order for Gregorio to work at La Luna Market in Healdsburg. La Luna was a small Mexican products grocery store on Center Street near Piper in Healdsburg, owned by Gregorio's younger brother, Abel. [Today the La Luna Market is known as "Casa del Molé," and is owned by Octavio Diaz.] The Healdsburg La Luna Market was the second La Luna Market. The original La Luna opened January 9, 1968 in Rutherford, Napa Valley and is still in operation today. Gregorio worked at La Luna Market for 11 years. In 1985, he left for self-employment, selling Mexican food products. Gregorio's wife, Ramona, and her daughters owned a bridal store, "Babes to Brides," for several years in Healdsburg. In 2001, Gregorio, age 66, retired; Ramona retired a few years later.

### **Dual Citizenship**

Gregorio De Luna's wife and children are U.S. citizens through birth. Gregorio obtained legal residency in 1957, but he was hesitant to actually become a U.S. citizen since he owned property in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Eventually the influence of his children made Gregorio decide to become a U.S. Citizen, which he did in 2001 at 66 years old. Today he has dual citizenship in the U.S. and Mexico. Gregorio De Luna takes great pride in being able to vote and was excited to be part of history when President Obama won, since he was the first African-American president.

### **Language at Home**

Gregorio and Ramona De Luna speak solely Spanish at home. Although both understand some English, they have never fully learned the English language. However, Gregorio's father, Pedro De

Luna, was fluent in Spanish and English, since he learned English when he resided in the U.S. in the 1920s. Although Pedro spoke English well, Spanish was the language used in Pedro and Inez De Luna's home.

### **Family Values and Mexican Heritage**

Several lessons and values of the Mexican heritage were passed down to the children of Gregorio and Ramona De Luna. The values and lessons include the Catholic faith, celebrating a traditional posada on Christmas Eve, Mexican food, Spanish language and most importantly, family unity. Since 1992, a De Luna family reunion has been held in the summer. The De Luna reunions are always scheduled the last weekend of June in honor of Pedro De Luna's birthday. Each year, a De Luna sibling (one of Pedro and Inez's children) takes a turn hosting the reunion. Through the 19 years the reunions have been held in Napa, Windsor and once in Los Angeles. There are an average of 120 plus family members that attend the reunion annually.

Pedro and Inez De Luna were able to celebrate 66 years of marriage. They were devout Catholics who celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. They had a strong faith in God and family unity. Pedro De Luna, the patriarch of the De Luna family, passed away on January 18, 1993 and Inez De Luna, the matriarch, passed away on April 13, 2001.

As for Gregorio and Ramona De Luna, they placed a strong emphasis and value on the Catholic faith, family unity and education. They valued education for their nine children since, as children, they had never attended school because they had to work at a very young age to help support their families. Gregorio De Luna recalls working since age 8, taking care of cows that belonged to family members. Gregorio and Ramona De Luna feel very fortunate that their eight children graduated from high school and one graduated with a G.E.D., as well as having all of nine children attend college. Today the Gregorio and Ramona De Luna family consists of 27 members who reside in Windsor, Sacramento, Vallejo, San Francisco, California and a daughter in England. This includes 10 grandchildren. In 2012, Gregorio and Ramona visited their eldest granddaughter, Catalina Leon De Luna, at CSU Humboldt, during her first year in college.



*Lupe and Johnny Arreguin*

## **Crop Pickers, Morning Serenades and Concrete**

*by Johnny and Lupe Arreguin*

*Reprinted from Ted Calvert's "Healdsburg Chronicle"s*

**Johnny:** I was born in the town of Los Altos, Tamaulipas, Mexico and my family came from the town of Chamacuaro, in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. Life was very rough there. My parents, Paciano Arreguin and mother Consuelo, had twenty children, eleven who survived. (The eleven children still stay close as a family. They include Rachael, Esther, Joel, Sal, Robert, Mary, Rosa, John, Mary Lou, Junior and Connie.) We moved to the Mexican town of Los Altos, by the Rio Grande River and Texas border, where we lived on a ranch. My dad also worked as a "Coyote," bringing laborers from Mexico into Texas. My dad got his legal papers to live in the United States; then we moved to Texas where my dad worked in the fields picking cotton and sold fruit to make ends meet. An Uncle, Tio Manuel, who lived in Brentwood California, offered to move us there to live. He loaded all of us, fifteen total, into a small pickup with a camper shell, and headed for Brentwood; I don't know how we made it!

A local farmer, Bob Hartsock, who lived at 9206 West Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg, heard there was a

large family who came from Mexico who did good work and was in living in Brentwood. Bob went to



*Paciano Arreguin*

Brentwood and picked all of us up and brought us to Healdsburg. We lived on West Dry Creek Road. We picked prunes, grapes and fixed the irrigation pipes. My dad used to wake us up around 5:00 A.M., before we had to leave for school, to go move the irrigation pipes to water the fields. My mother died giving birth to my sister Connie when I was four years old. My sister Rachael raised Connie. My other sister, Ester, took over my mother's responsibilities and helped raise all of us. In 1965, my dad remarried. Now there were sixteen of us, including Hector, Josephine and Mario Sierra, all in the same house. My dad lived to be 92 years old.

We started with nothing, picking prunes, grapes, string beans, pears, and followed the crop harvest. I picked walnuts in Lake County at one dollar a sack and made a hundred dollars in one day! Later, my brother Sal started his own concrete finishing business, Sal's Concrete. Several of us went into our own businesses, my business being John's Custom Concrete. We invested in property and developed it with grapes. We planted Merlot and Zinfandel grapes and now we sell our grapes to Gallo, Mazzocco and Simi wineries. It's nice to have learned how to lay out vineyards, plant wild root stock, sucker the vines, prune, pick the grapes and make our own wine. My brother Joel has a vineyard in Redwood Valley and helped us with ours. My brothers Joel, Sal, Robert, Junior and I all enjoy making and tasting our own homemade wines. When you're tilling the soil with your tractor, smelling the earth's freshly plowed ground, then seeing the first buds on the vine in spring coming to life – there's really nothing like it...makes you feel god-like. It's really been a blessing to be a small part of the wine business. All of us are very happy living here in the Healdsburg area and will never move.

**Lupe:** My dad, Lupe Viramontes, was born in Azusa, California, by Los Angeles, and my mother Antonia (Valdivia), in Pueblo, Colorado. They met each other when both their families moved to Mexicali, B.C. (Baja California), when they were both very young.

My mother Antonia (people called her Toni), played in an orchestra in Mexicali, B.C. They married in the 1940s, spent their honeymoon in the Healdsburg area, and got jobs working at Italian

Swiss Colony Winery in Asti. My dad also worked at the lumber mill in Cloverdale, California. Later they moved to the Dry Creek Valley on Claude Black's property. Loving the area, they bought acreage in the Dry Creek Valley which had prune trees clear down to Dry Creek and grapes planted up to Dry Creek Road.

When I was six years old, I would walk up Dry Creek Road to Josephine Camaur's house for piano lessons. At ten years old, my brother Tony and I took accordion lessons. We played at county fairs, twelve o'clock mass, dances and mañanitas (birthdays). Occasionally, with friends, we would go and serenade people – whoever was celebrating a birthday. In the early morning, around five-thirty or six o'clock, a group of us would go to the birthday house, arriving at their bedroom window to serenade them with our accordions and sing Spanish songs. Later my brother and I started playing in a Mexican band. We would go and play as far away as Eureka, Redwood City and Sacramento.

I met my husband John when I was twelve or thirteen years old. We dated for eight years. Toward the end of playing in the band, I didn't want to play anymore because we were getting serious about getting married, so I felt I would rather dance than play in the band! After thirty-five years of marriage, we still haven't given up dancing!



*The John and Lupe Arreguin family*

We have three boys, Danny, Eddie, and Julian, who eventually will be taking over our business, John's Custom Concrete. We're very proud of them. Our son Eddie and wife Nora, just had a baby girl, Natalia Mariana, making us proud grandparents.



# My Dad

by Emma Esquivel

Many kids' parents grew up with fun family vacations, and everything else you could possibly imagine. My dad didn't get to do any of that growing up. His name is Andrew Ramirez Esquivel III and he grew up working with his family as a migrant worker.



*Andrew H. Esquivel (Emma's grandfather), Maria Esquivel (Emma's grandmother), Andy (Emma's dad) and Ydalia (Emma's aunt, Andy's sister)*

My dad, Andrew Ramirez Esquivel III, was born in Napoleon, Ohio on July 22, 1965. Andrew Hernandez Esquivel, Jr. and Maria Magdalena Ramirez are his parents, and he had a sister named Ydalia. Working as migrants, my dad's family had to move constantly from place to place wherever harvesting or planting was needed and had to change schools a lot. Changing schools every so often made it hard for my dad to learn more, make new friends, and learn the routines of new classes. In high school, he wrestled, played football, and got pretty good grades. And to top it off, he even got into Ohio State University; this was a great achievement for my dad because nobody on his dad's side had ever gone to college. My dad was curious, scared, and overwhelmed to be going to college and ended up enjoying college. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree and later moved on to accounting at State Farm Insurance. In February, 1989, when my dad was 24, my aunt Ydalia died in a car accident. Although this death was hard for my dad, he knew she would want him to appreciate every day of his life. Ydalia was a very talented artist and had a son named Paul. To this day, my dad looks back at every

day he has lived and has tried to find the good in every day. At State Farm, my dad met my mom, Susanne, who was an underwriter in the same office as my dad who was working as an accountant. In 1991, my dad proposed to Susanne Patricia Boyd and they had three kids, Andrew, Elisabeth, and Emma (me). Now my dad runs his own State Farm Insurance office in Healdsburg, California, and he doesn't have to move constantly. It is hard to imagine what my dad went through growing up, and when I asked him what a regular day in the fields was like, this is what he told me.

My dad was woken up early in the morning while it was still dark and cold outside. He would hurriedly get dressed and get onto a bus (sometimes the fields were farther away than others so they had to take a bus) which was cold and drafty and sometimes even wet from rain. Breakfast would be eaten while working and was usually some sort of breakfast taco. They would be working all day pouring small buckets of harvested fruit to larger and larger containers. There were small breaks for any sort of tacos his mom had packed up, and on special occasions they would get to eat sardines with mustard sauce. Late at night, they would get home and get as much sleep as they could to be ready for the next day of work. The best part of working in the fields was that my dad at least got to make connections with the other families that had to work at the same fields as they did. The worst thing though about working out in the fields was the bathrooms. Sometimes there wasn't even a porta-potty, so you had to go hide behind a tree far out and close your eyes. Through all the hard working days they finally came to a stop.

After many hard working days, my grandparents had saved enough money to buy a house in Fremont, Ohio and open their own trucking business when my dad was fourteen years old. When my dad heard this news, he was overjoyed; he didn't have to move or change schools every few months anymore. When they moved into their new house, my dad was amazed by the indoor bathroom and a room all for himself with light blue walls. This house wasn't the biggest house in the world, but that didn't matter, he got to live in one house with everything

you could imagine. My grandparents still live in the same house and I visit there often. The house has a huge backyard and a big lot right next to it to run around in. For some people the happiest time in their lives was when they get a new toy or a really cool birthday party, but getting his own house was my dad's happiest memory.

In conclusion, my dad had a very good childhood even though he didn't get everything that most kids might get when they were younger. This story shows that you don't need all those toys or fun birthday parties when you are younger. My dad had never told me anything from his childhood until this project, and I'm glad to have learned this. To this day, I can tell he tries very hard to make the best of his life for his sister and his family.



*Esquivel family home*

## Decisions

*by Alejandro Zavala Flores*

I was born in a small town of Uriangato, Guanajuato on December 1, 1993. I was born into a family of five. My mother, Lilia, a short, light skinned Latino woman, my father, Aurelio, a tall, dark, good body structure, Latino man, my two brothers, German (the oldest) a medium build, light eyes and a very shy young man, my second oldest brother, Aurelio JR, a good body build, skinny, strong, tan young man, and finally my sister, Cristina. I don't know much about her because she died at the age of 11 from leukemia. We had a good life. My dad pursued his dream of coming to the United States and he did. He got a job in California. He took care of us by sending money to my mom. My oldest brother did the same and followed my father's dream a few years later. He found a good job with my mother's family in Illinois and stayed there. Time went by and my second oldest brother also came to where my oldest brother was. But he did not leave Mexico without making my mom a promise that he was going to work hard and save up all his money so that he could bring us to the states. Getting to the states is no easy thing, not one bit. You are risking life and limb just so you could get a better life for you and your family.

A lot of people dream and fantasize about having a better life for themselves and their families; they think about the United States. But what they

and many other people don't know is that the process of crossing the border is life threatening and many people have died trying to reach the American Dream. Many people have been scarred for life because of the things that happened. I am one of those people. I really like living here in California. I have a wonderful family, I have a steady job and I am going to high school. I am a senior at Healdsburg High and I love it. But in order to get what I have now, I had to risk my life and also come face to face with death.

It was a sunny day in Uriangato and my mom had just gotten a phone call from my brother JR. He had broken the news to my mom that the promise he made to her was in the process of coming true. He had saved enough money to pay for "El Coyote" (the person who crosses you to the states). JR was a 14 year old boy who had saved 2,600 dollars and also my oldest brother German helped him with 500 dollars, so in total it was \$3,100 that they had saved. My mom told me the news that I was going to see my brothers soon. I was ecstatic that I was going to see them after such a long time. But what I didn't know was that in order to see them I would have to fight for my life.

At this point in my life I was five years old. The day came when we had to leave my beloved town to meet up with the "Coyote" in "Agua Prieta

*Sonoma.*" There were a lot of people there. Two of my uncles and one of my cousins were there. It was dark. It could have easily been 1:00 a.m. The only source of light for miles was one light bulb on the side of a wall. There were two men who were on the side of the wall. They were "*Los Coyotes.*" I was with my mother away from them. That night it was freezing and all I was wearing was a short sleeve shirt, a pair of jeans and my new shoes. My mom hugged me to keep me warm. As soon as the "*Coyotes*" saw that I was the youngest and that I was freezing they started arguing about one of them giving me his jacket. After they stopped arguing, one of them gave me his jacket. It helped me a lot that night.

The two men were still talking after half an hour and they were talking about what route we were going to take. While they were talking, I decided to walk and just look around; not very far. My mom, I could tell, was keeping an eye on me to see what I was doing. As far as the eye could see there was only sand, trees and pure darkness. I would sometimes look up at the wonderful night sky and the amazing glowing stars. It was incredible. As I was walking around I suddenly stepped on a sand dune but to my eyes it was a grave. When I told my mom about it, she ran to me and hugged me and she kept saying that there was nothing there, that it was flat ground. But I was sure it was a grave. There was no doubt about it in my mind. I would even tell her, "Look it's right here I am standing on top of it. Why can't you see it", but she would reply with tears on her face "No hijo (son), there is nothing there. Don't say that." After that my mom was extremely worried; more than before, because she thought that something bad was going to happen to me.

Once we got walking it seemed like there was no end to it. We walked up and down hills for hours on end over nothing but dry grass, trees and thorn bushes. We would have to cross fences that were covered with barbed wire. The "*Coyote*" told us that if we touched the fence it would send a sign to the "*Migra*" (Border patrol) and they would know where we were. So everyone would go under the fence however they could, but no one touched the fence. That night I got to see my very first helicopter but that was not good. It was "*La Migra*", *el Coyote* saw in the sky and we all hid anywhere we could. I was unlucky; I hid under a thorn bush and my face took

all the damage. I felt blood oozing down my face to my cheeks and it started to drop off. My face was getting torn up due to the thorn bushes; to this day I carry the scars due to that.

My mom became friends with a nice lady while we were there. My mom would talk to her so she could pass the time. As we kept walking the lady became weak; her legs were getting scratched and she was bleeding a lot. After a while she just could not walk. My mom would help her but after so many times of helping her and encouraging her to fight and keep going, she just could not walk anymore. The "*Coyote*" would tell her to get up and walk but she couldn't and my mom would try to get her to walk, but she was done. She could not go on any longer. My mom would tell the "*Coyote*" to help her and his response was "Let's go. Just leave her or you will stay along with her and we all will leave you." My mom felt really bad, but she had to move on for my sake. So we basically left her for dead. While we were walking away from her, we all could hear her screaming, "No, don't leave me, **HELP ME, HELP ME, PLEASE!!!!**" After that we don't know what happened to her.

After walking for what seemed like an eternity, I just couldn't walk any more. My uncle saw that I was exhausted, so he carried me on his shoulders. I thank him so much, because of him I got through most of my experience. If I could not go past the fences, he would help me go over them. But eventually everyone gets tired and he did as well, and once again I had to walk by myself. Hours passed and we were still walking, but at one point I walked in sand but this was no ordinary sand. It was really fine sand. At this point I was beat; I could not walk anymore and I could not move. I don't know how, but it felt like the sand was eating me alive. I was basically sinking in the sand. I could not get out. I had no energy left in me. Everyone was tired and my mom could not help; she was too exhausted as well. In other words, I was going to die. It felt like I was staring death in the face. My mom was thinking of some way to help me. I was, and still am, a believer in guardian angels and my mom told me to pray to him so he would help me pass this obstacle. So I did – I prayed to him. There is no explanation for what happened that moment. All of a sudden it felt like I had gotten all, if not more, of my energy. I have no way to explain how this happened. My mom does

not even know. But I have a clue; it was all thanks to my guardian angel. After that I had the strength to get out of the sand. I thank him so much; without his help I could have died and I would not be here today.

We got caught the first time. We were in the patrol car. Everyone was waiting for the cops. The "Coyote" told us that he had an idea to get away; that we should throw dirt into the cop's eyes and then run for it. But no one was willing to die that night, especially my mom, since she was with me. We were taken to a jail; it was the first time I had ever been in jail and it was horrible. Since then I have not experienced anything like that, ever. The men and women were separated; but since I was young I went with my mom. We were put in a room (cell) with about 30 other people. That room smelled like human waste, vomit, and urine. After awhile, we were called and they took my mom's fingerprints. She told them that my uncle was with us, so they took him out of his cell and fingerprinted him as well. My other uncle was taken out by my cousin who was with us. After that, we left and went to a hotel. To our surprise, the lady that we left in the desert was at the hotel. Her legs were torn up and bleeding. My mom apologized for what she did and the lady understood why she did it. My mom asked what had happened to her after we left. She said that after we left she started to cry and pray that they would find her. She had a medallion of Christ and she gripped it as tight as she could and continued to pray. She was eventually caught and was taken to the hotel. When we got there we saw two police officers with her who were trying to stop her bleeding.

After getting caught so many times, mom got tired of it. She was really worried about my health so we decided to call it quits. But my brother had other plans in mind for us. He called my mom and told her there was another way to cross, that was much safer for both of us. He asked my mom if she was willing to take the risk of crossing by car. My mom agreed and it was arranged. The exact details of how it happened I don't remember. All I remember is getting in a car and passing out. When I woke up, I was told by my mom that we had already crossed and that we were in the U.S.A. For the time being we were placed in a motel in El Paso, Texas, so we could wait for further instructions. There were other people who were brought there already. All the people were really nice to me and my mom. The people who

crossed us brought us food. That was the first time I had an American Hamburger. I didn't like it, but I was hungry so I had to finish it. We didn't stay there long. We were put in one of the Greyhound buses and we were on our way to the Windy City of Chicago. We would be staying with my mom's family. We stayed there for about 6 months. Then it was arranged for us to go to California where my dad was. By this time, both of my brothers were already there. When we arrived it was like a great event. Once again the Zavala Flores family was reunited. It had been a long time since we had been all together.

It's been 13 long years since that incident in my life. I am 18 years old now and live in Healdsburg, California, with my mother and my father and my second oldest brother, JR. We have a new addition to the family. I have a little sister. Her name is Ana Cristina Zavala Flores. She was named after my older sister who passed away. She is nine years old; she is light skinned and has light colored eyes. I go to Healdsburg High School and I am a senior. My family is really proud of me because I am the first one to go to high school. With all my hard work, I will be the first one to graduate from high school from my entire family; they are all very proud of me. I have a good job working at Taco Bell/KFC. My oldest brother got married to Griselda Sanchez, a tan, longhaired girl. They have a beautiful baby girl, Valeria Zavala Sanchez, who is two years old and has a lot of energy. My second oldest brother also has a son. His name is Cesar Daniel Zavala Beltran. He is the first grandson that my mom and dad have had. He is 5 years old and a really cute boy and very energetic. My mom is a cook at the River Rock Casino. She had been working there for a long time. My dad works at a vineyard; he has a good steady job. We live very happy and have a wonderful life. Once in awhile we do go to Mexico and visit my family. It is hard to forget what happened to me. I guess the fact is I probably won't forget. I just have to deal with it. Sometimes when I close my eyes I get flashbacks about what happened and I can see everything exactly like it was. Then I have to snap myself out of my daydream and think of something else. I do sometimes talk to my mom about what happened. She tells me that it was just one of the many obstacles that my life has for me. She is right; all I can do is face them as they come.



*Ana Merino de Alvarez*

## **Ana Merino de Alvarez: Keeping Oaxacan Traditions Alive**

*by Ann Carranza*

In a valley encircled by verdant mountains, covered with oaks and pines, and transected by waterfalls that tumble into quick flowing rivers lies Santa Cruz Rio Venado, Oaxaca, Mexico. In this fertile region, where bananas and coffee reign, the traditions of the Trique, native indigenous people of Mixteco heritage, live on in their traditional textiles and unique culture.

Nimble fingers weave an intricate pattern twining threads through a handmade loom hung from a post in the shaded back yard of a modest Windsor

home. Bright threads draw the eye through the lush green yard filled with luxuriant plantings to those digits flashing through warp and weft. Kneeling on a small pillow and wearing a traditional Trique huipil—a colorful woven blouse—Ana Merino de Alvarez smiles as she works the filaments of thread across the loom that consists of several pieces of wood and strung fiber cord.

Some Trique never learn a language beyond their native tongue—also known as Trique—Doña Ana is one of them, though she speaks a few words

of Spanish. A friendly outgoing woman, Doña Ana doesn't let language get in the way of her ability to welcome a newcomer into her midst. With snapping bright eyes, Doña Ana's vivid smile greets people who pass by her textile booth at the Windsor Farmers' Market, where she exhibits and sells her needlework. Her booth lies adjacent to another family booth that displays locally grown organic fruits and vegetables from Rancho Alvarez. Accompanying Doña Ana is her husband, Pedro, son Alejandro and other assorted family members. It is obvious to the passersby that a tight-knit family unit is working to achieve the American Dream.

What is not evident are the hardships this hardworking family has endured to arrive at this farmers' market. For eighteen years, Doña Ana lived most of the year separated from her husband of thirty-nine years, and their elder son, Alejandro, before the family was reunited in Windsor in 2000.

Orphaned at eight, she grew up in a small village in the Putla region of Oaxaca, Rancho Camoteja, with her aunt and grandmother. Across the Rio Camoteja from the small rancho, lived a handsome hardworking young man, Pedro. They met and Pedro followed the time-honored tradition of requesting her hand in marriage from her grandmother. His request was granted and they began their marriage at a very young age.

Pedro had lived with his mother and two brothers—he knew firsthand what it was like to lose a parent while small, just as Ana Merino did. He began his work life by going from job to job, house by house with his mother to obtain work. Early privation brought about high ambitions and he began producing and selling coffee and bananas. When Don Pedro and Doña Ana married, they traveled to Veracruz to work the pineapple crop to earn enough money to purchase property.

Having her first child when she was just fourteen, Doña Ana, worked the newly purchased two-hectare property with her husband. "Things we learned from them—to see them working so hard in order to gain something—we learned you must work," says Alejandro. For a long time Don Pedro, who learned Spanish to help grow the business, worked away from home selling and bartering goods and animals to achieve more for his family, while Doña Ana toiled in the house and on the farm to help achieve their goals. Eighteen-hour days were

common for both of them.

Through all the housework, farm work and long hours, Doña Ana continued with her traditional needlework. Each of her daughters has learned to use the needle; as her sons have learned the farm work and gardening. Originally part of her homemaking skills, Doña Ana found she could make money by selling her textiles.

Working day and night in an area fraught by jealousies and strife, Don Pedro decided to emigrate to the United States and brought Alejandro with him to work. Doña Ana remained behind to care for the rest of the children and for the farm and its employees. For the next eighteen-years, while Don Pedro went back to Santa Cruz Rio Venado for visits, Doña Ana did not see her eldest son. Keeping close through phone calls, there was never a time she didn't miss her son. Alejandro graduated from college and two of his brothers, Mariano and Raul, are still attending college. His sisters are married and live in the Central Valley. The youngest son is only fourteen years old.

Keeping traditional Trique customs and the language alive is a family passion. While the children speak three languages—Trique, Spanish and English, they understand and support cultural learning and communication. They are all active in La Unión Indígena (the Indigenous Union), founded by Mariano Alvarez in 2004. The union meets in Windsor, and has branches in other communities. He saw the danger of losing the languages and the cultures of Latin America indigenous peoples and began organizing them into cohesive units. There are sixteen languages in the State of Oaxaca, with approximately 23,000 people speaking Trique. Mariano seeks to provide translators, and to building bridges to cross-cultural, as well as cross-generational, understanding through facilitating communication and combating assumptions. "We need to let the Anglo community [know] that just because someone comes from Mexico does not mean they have to speak Spanish," says Mariano. The union provides translators for hospitals, as well as for other necessary communications.

Meanwhile, Doña Ana and her reunited family continue with their deeply instilled work ethic, filling their days, with housework, homework, needlework and farm work, and keeping their traditional culture alive.



*Leonel Carranza – boy to man*

## **Yo, El Campesino**

*by Ann Carranza in honor of Leonel Carranza*

*Reprinted from Healdsburg Senior Writing Project's recently published "Tuesday Morning Memories"*

Look at my hands. See them callous-laden, cut but strong.  
The icy frost of morning burns as I prune vines.

Look at my face.  
See the age, the worries. The sun permanent on my skin, as I toil in these fields.

Look at my back.  
See my shoulders stoop. Feel the pain.  
See the bunched muscles years of hard work have inflicted on me.

Look at my legs.  
See them cramp and quiver as I work "contract."  
Picking, pruning to earn a few dollars more for me, and many more for los dueños.

Look at my feet.  
See the blisters, the sodden socks, as winter's wet pours through the boots,  
I cannot afford to replace.

Look at this campesino.  
I work hard. I do not falter. Were I to falter, my children would not eat.  
Work well done is the hallmark of my pride.

Look into my heart.  
See the scars years of injustice and bias have left on me.

Look at my children. My sons, my daughters.  
My pride, my joy. I work to educate them. They will leave the fields.

Look at me, young women, young men. My legacy to you is hope.  
Be proud of this father, campesino. Who has worked so hard for you.

Production costs of this edition were underwritten by:

**Octavio Diaz**

owner of Agave Mexican Restaurant and Casa del Mole y Mercado



and

**Pedro Diaz**

owner of El Farolito Mexican Restaurant & Bar



We truly appreciate their generosity!



Third Class

Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society  
P. O. Box 952  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
HEALDSBURG, CA  
PERMIT 149