
Happy Times



**Partners in Reading
Adult Literacy Program
San José Public Library
2005**

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Acknowledgements

Partners in Reading would like to express appreciation to the following individuals and organizations:

- To the Partners in Reading adult learners in recognition of their efforts to improve their literacy skills
- To the Partners in Reading volunteer tutors for their generous gift of time to help adults in our community improve their reading and writing skills
- To the Campbell-San José West Rotary Club for their donation supporting the printing of this publication

To our other funders for fiscal year 2004/05: City of San José/San José Public Library, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, Microsoft Corporation, San José Public Library Foundation, Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund - Community Foundation Silicon Valley, State of California (California Library Services Act), Verizon SuperPages, Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, and private donors.

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Introduction

Every year, students at Partners in Reading, the adult literacy program of the San José Public Library, have the opportunity to see their words in print. Together with their tutors, they work very hard to share their personal stories. Most students struggle with putting their thoughts on paper; the process of turning real life experience to a published piece is a great accomplishment. Having the courage and patience to face the challenges in writing these stories is commendable.

In this edition, there are returning authors as well as new writers. The adults who come to Partners in Reading have personal goals they strive to achieve through improving their reading and writing skills. Whether it is to read to their child, become a citizen, or get a better job, these adults work very hard with their tutors to accomplish their goals and improve their lives one day at a time.

Happy Times is this year's theme. The writers have provided many heartwarming stories to share with the reader. Take the time to read about the first time Maria saw the Pacific Ocean, Mustafa's adventure of starting a new life in America, or Catalina's story of the joyous celebration of her sister's wedding in Oaxaca, Mexico. These stories will take you around the world and into the hearts of the students' lives. We hope you enjoy them.

Tina Darwish Oshaana
Program Manager

One of My Happiest Times

By C. Carey

One of my happiest times is when I go home to Nicaragua at Christmas to see my family. Sadly, my parents are no longer alive, but my four siblings and I still respect them and feel as though they are still in their home.

All year long I'm shopping for gifts to give to my family and friends. I still bring gifts for my parents to honor their memory. Every year while I am there my brothers and sisters and I plan a big celebration to honor the lives of our parents. Even though they are not there in body, we feel they are there in spirit. We respected them in life and still show them respect in their home.

The celebration to honor my parents is very huge. Seven small villages all come together to eat, sing and pray. We start at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and everyone stays until 7:00 a.m. the following morning. The evening begins with a service that includes our village pastor. I

Most of C. Carey's family lives in Nicaragua. She has lived in the United States for fifteen years and has been married to her husband Ken for almost ten years. She works as a caregiver for two children, Zach and Sachi. She has been with PAR since October of last year and is learning new things. She wishes she had more time to spend on her reading and writing.

El día de San Juan Bautista

By Bertha Chavez



When I was fourteen years old, I lived in my country Mexico, in the State of Michoacan, in my little town Uruapan. People in my neighborhood celebrated San Juan Bautista for three days in June, on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th. Every year some families were in charge of collecting money for the three-day party.

The second day of the celebration was my favorite. It started in the swimming pool at 4:00 a.m. All the girls and their families enjoyed the Mariachi music and hot punch. When I first went into the water, I felt very cold, but after I was in the water I didn't feel the cold water any more. I swam for at least two hours. After the swim, I enjoyed talking with the girls and preparing for the rest of the day.

Bertha Chavez is married to Carlos and has four sons. In her free time she likes to sew. Bertha has been in PAR for almost one year. She has worked as a preschool teacher's aide. She also worked for eight years in a church community outreach program that provided food, clothes, and other help to low-income families.

Diana Daniela's *Quinceañera* in Mexico



By Ana Cruz

We left on December 15, 2004 at 3 o'clock in the morning and crossed the border into Mexico at Nogales at maybe 10 o'clock p.m. We drove all night, and at about 10 o'clock the second day we're there, in Guasave, Sinaloa, Mexico. The whole family comes to greet us. I don't feel tired when I see my family, even after driving all day and night.

For Christmas we make *posole* and *enchiladas*. The whole family comes to my Mom's house and stays until 4 o'clock in the morning. The children and old people dance and have an exciting time. Everybody comes back at 10 o'clock the next morning for breakfast of *menudo*. The children break the *piñatas*, and everybody has candies and opens the presents.

After Christmas everybody prepares for my niece Diana Daniela's *quinceañera* (her fifteenth birthday coming-of-age mass and celebration). We practice going inside the

church and the way we're supposed to dance at the party afterward.

When December 29 arrives, everybody is in order. Diana walks first. Her dress is cream-colored, and the embroidery and beads on it are ruby red. Then come her mother and father, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and seven girls and seven boys who are her cousins and friends. At the end are Daniela's little sisters and girl cousins in dresses of cream and gold. All the aunts wear beautiful long dresses, and the men wear their best suits and ties.

When we go inside the church, the choir is already there and starts singing. For decoration there are wreaths of white lilies and red roses on the doors of the church; in big vases at the entrance, in garlands on the altar and along the pews. The priest says mass for maybe two hours.

When everybody goes out, *mariachis* start the music and play for one hour after the mass, while everybody says "Congratulations."

After the *quinceañera*, Diana goes in a limousine to the *salon* (a special hall for dances and parties). In the *salon*, each table has a big vase of natural, beautiful flowers. The tablecloths are cream-colored and the backs of the chairs are ruby red. The dinner is from about 7 to 9 o'clock, and the dancing finishes about 5 o'clock in the morning. When the *mariachis* stop and take a break, a band plays, and when the band takes a break, the *mariachis* start playing again.

The next day everybody goes to our old family place in the hills above the beach, Las Glorias, to cut the cake and open the presents. A lot of friends come, too, for a fish lunch.

A *quinceañera* is something you never forget—like when you marry. My mother and grandmother say that fifteen years old is the time when a girl is no more a baby but a beautiful woman now. This is why it's a time for celebration. At home, before the *quinceañera*, it is a tradition for each of the girl's parents and grandparents to kneel by her chair and give her their blessing and a present. When something inside you feels so good, I can't explain it to you.

Ana was born in Sinaloa, Mexico. When she married, she came to live in California. She enjoys her classes and has a beautiful family. She loves her mother, husband, son, and two daughters. They are all *her life*.



Diana Daniela with her mother and father.

Going to Barber School



By Elvin

I started attending barber school on January 26, 2005. I'm happy that I am going to barber school. I am learning something that I want to learn. I remember the first time I cut someone's hair, it was during the second week of school. It was just a plain, regular haircut and I think I did a good job because the customer was happy. I felt ready and not nervous at all. I talked to the customer about basic stuff, like how he wanted the haircut.

School is going by fast for me and I am having fun. I'm learning a lot everyday.

Elvin is 24 years old. He is a student at San José Barber College. He lives in San José with his sister, mother, and younger brother. Elvin works out a lot. He likes watching boxing. Elvin is a very fast learner. He says that reading is very important and works very hard.

The Appreciation That I Have for Partners in Reading

By Diane Flores

I'm happy when I come to the Partners in Reading office. Before I have had a very hard time getting my education through a college. I have struggled with my grammar, writing, and reading skills. I come from a very large family. My other sisters are currently in college. I would like to be able to attend one day . I would like to improve my education to better my childcare business. Kim has been a great support and our friendship means a lot to me.

The entire PAR staff has been extremely helpful to me. Partners in Reading has assisted me with grammar, writing and reading skills. My wonderful tutor has always been there for me with my personal problems and supported me in my education. I'm very happy to have such loving, faithful friends like all of you in the PAR office that have made a difference in my life. Thank you very much indeed.

Diane is a licensed day care provider. She has been in the PAR program since October 2004. She enjoys walking with her nephew. She says her tutor Kim has been wonderful and, "she's my guardian angel."

Happy Times

By Catalina Gomez

One of my happiest times was when I went to my sister's wedding (*fandango*) in Oaxaca, Mexico on November 22, 2003. Over one hundred and fifty people were invited, including neighbors, family and friends.

It was an exciting moment for all of us. It was an opportunity to have all the family together for two days, including people that I hadn't seen for a long time; people that watched me grow up. But, let me explain why it takes two days for a wedding party.

First my brothers and I arrived a few days before the wedding. We helped my mother with the arrangements for the food and the place settings.

On Saturday morning the guests started to arrive. They were greeted and escorted to the altar where they presented their gifts along with the *guelaguetza*, which consists of two cones of eggs, tortillas, a live turkey, a case of beer or wine and a gift for the bride. After breakfast, we cleaned up and then started to prepare

lunch. Some of the guests had social time while others chose to help do the cooking. Around two o'clock we finished eating and prepared the *pista*, a place for dancing. The bride danced with all her friends and family. We offered a toast and ate cake after that.

Then around six o'clock the groom's family arrived at the bride's house. The bride's family made a *balla*, two lines of people including uncles and aunts, godfather and godmother to receive the groom's family. They were escorted to the altar and they did a pre-ceremony. They gave the bride the *ajuar*, the bride's dress and shoes, along with half a pig, smoked turkeys, some dead ones and some live ones, that are for the next day's meal.

After the pre-ceremony, they set off some fireworks outside the house. Then the two families share some drinks and refreshments. They dance together, including the bride with the future husband, until midnight.

The next day, which was Sunday, people started to come early for breakfast and *almuerzo* (lunch), hot chocolate and pastries. They had a choice of soda, beer or wine

before they ate. Then came *el almuerzo* and *higaditos*, which was prepared with eggs, tomatoes, onion, garlic, salt and pig's liver chopped and cooked all together. Once it is cooked it is cut into slices and served hot with hot sauce and *atole*, a type of drink made of corn.

At ten o'clock, the bride started to get ready for the religious ceremony. Some people chose to help the bride and some chose to set the reception tables. Then they all went to the religious ceremony. When they came back from the church they ate and danced for awhile. Three hours later, one of the groom's representatives talked and asked the family's permission to leave the house. Everybody finished dancing and they presented *el dote*, all of the gifts that the bride received. Each member of the family took one gift to carry to the groom's house. On the way they danced in the street. The party continued until midnight and if they wished, they could have continued until Monday.

In order to preserve the tradition, they do both the pre-ceremony and the real ceremony.

It was a very happy time, having family together eating and

dancing.

Catalina Gomez has participated in the PAR program for the past two years. She has two children who attend school. She enjoys all types of sports, playing with her kids at the park and reading. Catalina works as a teacher's assistant and enjoys helping others learn.



Catalina and her family at her sister's wedding.

My Garden

By Joe Goulart



I really enjoy my garden. There is always something to do.

I plant vegetables such as tomatoes, peas, cucumbers, and beans.

There are also trees in my yard; a lemon tree, a tangerine tree, and an apple tree. There is a grape vine, too. Sometimes there are too many lemons so I give some away.

I have lots of flowers in the yard, too. My favorite is carnations, but I have roses, daisies, pansies and many other flowers.

It's hard work having a garden. Besides taking care of the flowers and vegetables, the lawn needs to be mowed and there are always weeds to be pulled.

I learned a lot about gardens when I worked at a nursery.

That was my first job.

Joe has been active in Partners in Reading for a number of years. Joe works at the Spaghetti Factory. He enjoys his time at the library and works very hard to improve his reading and writing. He feels that he has learned a lot and appreciates all the help he has received from his tutors and Partners in Reading. He lives in San José with his family.

Childhood Memories

By Zaid K.

When I was growing up, I spent most of the time with my mother. We lived in Ethiopia. As a child, my mother braided my hair when she had time. Our hair was braided often but definitely on holidays. Each hairstyle was different and sometimes she made fancy, little braids. In my first language, Tigrinya, we call braids, “*koono*”. She could braid my hair up from my ears to the top of my head, cross the braids and then continue them down the back of my head to my neck. She was very talented and a wonderful mom. Every time she finished, I felt happy and special. Those were good times.

Zaid was born in Eritrea. She's lived in San José for ten years. She likes reading and writing and has been coming to PAR for three years. She wants to improve her pronunciation and practice writing. Zaid likes listening to jazz music. She is grateful for her previous tutor, Richard, and her current tutor, Kelly, and thanks the staff of Partners in Reading, including Gail, Sue and Jean.

My Christmas Vacation

By James H.

SAN JO- After Christmas my family and I went to Las Vegas. Before we left we put the address of the hotel where we were going to stay into the car's navigation system. We followed the car's system to Las Vegas. It took us down to Los Angeles and back up again.

Start of the trip

HWY

It was going to be ten hours to get there but we got there in twelve hours. We spent twelve hours in the car; that made everyone very tired in the car. I drove most of the way. My dad drove some and then I drove again. We finally got to Las Vegas. We looked around and we saw all the beautiful lights that lit up. We got to our hotel and my parents went to check in.

After they checked in we went to go

LAS VEGAS
Finally!

LOS ANGELES

The next day we saw my uncle there. My uncle got my sister and I tickets to go see David Copperfield. He did a lot of neat tricks.

My favorite trick that David Copperfield did was when he made a car appear from nowhere. That was really neat.

SAN JOSE

The next day I took my sister to the *New York, New York* hotel to play games.

HWY 5

The next day I went to the Hilton to go see *Star Trek, the Experience*. It was a lot of fun. I went there at 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After it closed I went back to my hotel. I went to go eat with my parents. After we ate, my sister and I went back to the room to go to sleep because we had to get up early to drive back home.

This time it took nine hours. And this time we **didn't** use the car's navigation system.

LAS VEGAS

← **The trip home**

James was born in Houston and raised in San José. He has an older sister, a teacher in San Francisco, and a younger sister in high school.

Tiffany's Arrival

By Nereida Ibarra

When I found out I was pregnant with my first baby, I felt very happy, although I didn't have any idea of the pain or consequence it would be. In addition, my pregnancy went well and I just had a little nausea. After the ultrasound, when I knew it was going to be a girl, I went directly to the store and bought baby girl clothes.

Two weeks later I gave birth to a beautiful little girl. I didn't have any idea of the wonderful feeling that giving birth would be. The pain I felt went away at the moment I looked at her little face. I can't explain the feeling I had. I never knew a mother could love so much and that nothing would be more important than her child.

When I first saw my little girl, because the doctor showed me her right away, I gave her a kiss on her forehead. Later, in the hospital room, I didn't want to

be separated from my little girl. Although later I had the magnificent experience of having twins, I still remember Tiffany's arrival as if it were yesterday.

Nereida Ibarra has two girls and a boy. She likes to spend time with her family and friends. She is an ESL student at San Jose City College, and her goal is to get a nursing degree at SJSU. She wants to thank Partners in Reading and her tutor Victoria for the opportunity to improve her writing.



Nereida with her newborn daughter Tiffany.

Christmas at My Grandmother's House



By Trinidad Lopez

The most wonderful time in my childhood was when my mother and I went to my grandmother's house for Christmas. We lived in a small town in the center of Zacatecas, Mexico. My grandmother lived in the north of the country near the border with Texas, in Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila. To get to my grandmother's house we had to ride the bus for twelve hours. The bus stopped in every big city to pick up more people. It was fun watching the vendors offering food, jewelry, and souvenirs when we opened the windows. As we approached Ciudad Acuña, I could see the streetlights, the big buildings, and the tree-lined streets. It all looked very pretty to me.

When we arrived at my grandmother's house, all my mom's brothers, sisters, and cousins were already there. I really enjoyed seeing my cousins and we played together a lot. We all were very impatient for Christmas

Eve. All my aunts cooked during the day. They made Mexican food: *tamales*, *buñuelos*, and cake. All of the children could smell the warm delicious food while we played outside the house, in the cold.

On Christmas Eve, we all sang Christmas songs, played games, and had dinner. After that we danced and broke a piñata full of candies. Last, we got the Christmas gifts. One year I got a doll that looked, felt, and smelled like a real baby.

I always had a very happy time, every Christmas, when I was a child. After spending a few days with my relatives, we always had to go back to my little town. I was sad to leave but I still had my memories and my toys to enjoy.

Trinidad enjoys walking, going to the beach, and camping with her family. She lives with her five year old daughter, Melanie, her twelve year old son, Roberto, Jr., and her husband Roberto. Since she joined Partners in Reading and has been meeting with her tutor, Kathy, she has been learning a lot of new things and has improved her life.

Times in the Kitchen with My Mother

By Barbara Maes

I remember Mom told me the ingredients, like you use four cups of flour. You put in baking powder, a teaspoon. She had these little measuring spoons to do that with. You add a little bit of salt and cooking oil. Then you add a cup of water. It's got to be warm water, not hot, but warm. You start mixing it with your hands. As you're mixing it if it looks like it needs more water, you add more water. Make sure all the loose flour is mixed in. You put it in a ball like a ball of dough. Then you take it out of the bowl and either put it on the table or cutting board.

Then you start kneading it ... pushing it together like clay and making it squishy, just a little bit squishy. Then after that, take little pieces and make a bunch of small balls like the size of a meatball for spaghetti. Then you sprinkle a little flour on the cutting board. You spread the flour around on the board. That prevents the dough from

sticking on the cutting board when you're rolling it out with the rolling pin. Then you put one of the balls on the cutting board, roll it, turn it, roll it, and turn it. It makes it come out round like a tortilla.

As a beginner my tortillas didn't come out looking like that. They came out looking like maps, all shapes and sizes. They looked like maps! Eventually I got the hang of it and was able to make them come out round. The next step is you cook them. It's a lot you have to do to make tortillas. I would get flour in my hair and on my blouse and my mom would laugh. She'd say, "Look at you!" We would both laugh. We'd laugh at my tortillas because they looked funny, like maps. Hers would come out round and mine didn't.

It was fun.

Barbara is single. She is proud of her 25 year old son. Barbara and her son go to church together and to the movies. When Barbara was younger, she worked cutting apricots. When she got older, she worked on the apricot belt. She likes horseback riding, swimming and learning to read.

Family Reunion

By Pedro Magaña



Five years ago I was diagnosed with *E. Coli*. I spent two weeks in the hospital and during that time, had lots of time to think.

That was when I decided to look for my daughters. I knew one was born in Yuma, but I couldn't trace her, because she didn't have my last name. So I decided to look for my other daughter, Veronica, who lived in Lindsay. I was able to contact her and then go to visit her. At the time, she was 15 years old. Since then, I have stayed in touch with her.

I continued to think about my other daughter Alice. Then one day very recently, I went to the mailbox and found a letter from Yuma. I was nervous and happy at the same time. It was from Alice! She was 18 years old and wanted me to know she was very sick.

I went to visit her in Yuma, she said she was so glad to

have found me, even though I'd not been there for her all these years.

Now that I have been reunited with my two daughters, I feel that my life is complete. I am so happy that I have found them, because I can't imagine my life without them.

I would like to say thank you to my daughters, Alice Judy Magaña and Veronica Magaña.

Pedro has been working with his tutor to improve his reading and writing skills. He wants to get a better job and get his GED.

A Happy Time

By Bonnie Martinez

Some of my happiest times are spent with my dog, Princess. She is a Chihuahua. My Princess is soft and warm. When we cuddle on my bed at night, she hides under the blankets. She is a good watchdog because she can hear people's footsteps in the hall and barks to let us know.

My dog and I like to eat hamburgers and fries. When she sees the hamburger, she gets excited and wags her tail. She also jumps off the bed when she smells the food. She likes to eat pepperoni pizza. She eats dog food, too, but would rather eat what I eat. She reminds me of the Taco Bell dog!

She loves my nieces and nephews. When they pick her up, she gives them kisses. Sometimes she likes to take walks in the park. If we take her on a long walk, she will get tired and her tongue gets dry. Then she will drink a lot of water.

We have a second dog. His name is Oso, which means “bear”. He is a Rottweiler. Princess and Bear do not get along.

I look forward to many more happy years with Princess.

Bonnie has been with PAR for six years. She is engaged to Tim and they are getting married in June.

Going to the Market



By Olga Melendez

I'm happy when my family and I go to visit my father in Mexico. I like to remember when I was twelve years old.

My father liked to buy vegetables and fruit. He asked my brothers and I, "Who wants to go with me?" Nobody said anything. Only I said, "I'll go with you." My brothers don't like to go because my father liked to wake up early in the morning, almost six o'clock. They didn't like to wake up early.

I liked to go with my father because people were selling fruit on the street. They put up fruit stands. I enjoyed it when my father bought the fruit. He bought my favorite fruit. I like mango, papaya, and watermelon.

When I go back home, I wash and peel the mango. Then I prepare it with lemon, salt, and red chili powder. It tastes good!

Olga has been in Partners in Reading since February 2004. She has been married for 28 years. She was born in Mexico and came to the United States in 1977. She has five sons.

The Balancing Act

By Rudesindo Miranda



This is written in loving memory of my brothers. My fondest memory of a joyous time was with my older brothers when we would go to school.

In 1955 my older brother, David, got a new bicycle. He showed me how to get on the bike. I would run next to the bike and step on the pedal, then lift my leg over the seat. I could only go straight because I didn't know how to turn. I didn't ask David how to turn, and he didn't show me.

My first turn was a disaster. I started my right turn and the bike leaned. I didn't have enough speed to make the turn. I leaned with the bike and fell right into a patch of thorns. These thorns were the kind that point upwards. I felt like a pincushion.

That was my very first time on a bicycle. I was only six years old, and the bike was just a little too big for me. I only rode it that one time, but it left a big impression on me.

At that time, there weren't too many bicycles in my area. My brother and our neighbor were the only ones that had bicycles. The neighbor had a most beautiful bike that had a springer on the front of the bike and back fender skirts that covered the back tire. Between the seat and handle bar was a metal cover. It had lights and a horn. To this day, I haven't seen a bicycle as beautiful as that one.

In the morning when we would get ready to go to school, we were a balancing act. My brother, David, would sit on the handle bar and hold a snare drum and a sack that Ma had made to hold the drum stand and drumsticks. I would sit between the seat and the handlebars, holding my brother, Ruben's, trumpet in its case. Ruben, being the oldest, would pedal the bike on the dirt path.

Before we got to school we would drop David off in the middle of the field. He played hooky and missed a lot of

school. For half of the school year we dropped him off in the field. He just spent the day by himself. He would set fire to the fields by using a timer made from a book of matches and a cigarette. He would be far away by the time the field would catch on fire.

They caught David. He was given the choice of being held back a grade or a paddling for the rest of the school year. So, for the rest of the school year he would put on two or three pairs of pants. I would walk with him to the principal's office when he had to get his punishment.

When school was let out, my friend and I would walk by the fields and go to a radio station, KAVT that played Mex Music. We would go in and sing songs or just talk. My friend would get scared because his Ma listened to that same station.

By the end of the year, my mother would drive David to junkyards for spare parts. He was putting together a bike, piece by piece. Someone stole my other brother's bike, so the only bike we had was my brother, David's.

One day we were going to visit our grandparents. We were all on the bike going up a small hill when the front tire blew. That was the end of our freedom and fun.

Rudy was born in Arizona and lived there with an older sister and four brothers until he was ten years old. He remembers the freedom and fun he had growing up – exploring the countryside, learning with nature, and letting his curiosity take hold. He has written many stories about his childhood, but this is his favorite.

Rudy is grateful to PAR and his tutor who have helped him develop his stories and improve his spelling.

The Martin Luther King Library



By Freddy Moreno

I feel joy at the Martin Luther King Library. The library makes me feel happy. There are many things in this library. There's a lot to learn that encourages me to be in San Jose Public Library's Partners in Reading program. I feel very happy that the teachers are here for me, encouraging me to learn more about reading, the computer and the Internet.

Right now I'm working with three different programs for phonics and sounds on the computer. It helps me with sounding out and spelling words on the computer. It makes me very happy when I get better at sounding out words and spelling.

I also go to the second and third floors of the library. I find videos and take them home to watch. They are mostly movies on animals and pets. I also find tapes on

reading abilities. I learn a lot. Anytime I want to learn about something I come to the library.

Freddy has been a learner with Partners in Reading since October 2000. He enjoys music, sports, cooking, camping and exercising.

The Two Famous People I Met

By Gordon C. Nelson



I was about six years old and in the Shriner's Hospital in San Francisco when I met Rory Calhoun. I was seriously sick with polio and they operated to put plaster of paris arches on my feet. Rory Calhoun spoke to us kids (in the kids' ward) – he was smiling, very nice and he showed us gun tricks (his gun was not loaded) – it was cool! Maybe it was his wife, but I saw a very pretty lady with him. He autographed a picture of himself and took another picture with me, which he signed.

On another occasion, I was on a one-week field trip and I went with a group of students to Hollywood. We saw different types of people in costumes. We didn't know who we would see. (They didn't tell us because it was a surprise.) Roy Rogers was filming a western movie with Trigger! Dale Evans was not there. It was kind of exciting to see a "cowboy movie star" and he let us pet Trigger! That horse was really smart. It must have taken a long

time to train that horse.

All kids like westerns and I got a chance to meet Roy Rogers and he bought us all a good lunch. He was a very nice guy – he was a Christian too, believe it or not, who was very strong in his faith. (Maybe the Lord had a hand in his music and his movie career.) He spoke to all of us boys and he said, “Stay out of trouble and keep your heroes alive.” (He was a hero to all of us.) He said, “Don’t think about the bad things, and think about the good things in life.”

We all watched him make a film and listened as Roy Rogers sang and played his guitar. It was a real treat for all of us. This was a very special time and I was happy.

Gordon was born in San Francisco in 1946. Throughout most of his education (including a year of junior college), he felt they were pushing him through classes even though he had a learning disability. Without work skills, it was difficult to find work. He ended up driving light trucks delivering furniture.

Gordon has a son, who is 26, from a previous marriage. Gordon is the step-grandfather to his grandson, Christopher. He is married to Lenora. Gordon has a tutor, and he says that he is doing pretty good at reading.

A Day With My Girls

By Erma Ordunez



It was a sunny spring day. I drove my daughters to a little carnival at Corinna's school. The purpose of the carnival was to get people to register for Headstart. When we got there, we smelled the delicious smell of popcorn and saw the booths that were set up. I had volunteered to help with a booth that gave kids things to do, like coloring pictures and building Legos. The girls were anxious to start playing and helping.

I was happy because the kids that came to the booth had a lot of fun. The thing that made me feel best was how Niki was acting like a mother hen! She brought me water, popcorn, and ice cream. This made me feel good inside. After she saw that I was OK, she went to check on Corinna. It made me feel good because her happiness showed on her face. I could tell she was proud of herself, and that made me feel even better!

Erma is 36 years old and the mother of two beautiful daughters, Niki and Corinna. She is committed to teaching them the importance of getting a good education. Erma enjoys decorating and helping at Corinna's school. She hopes to work some day in the retail industry. Erma began as a PAR student in 1999. She took a break when Corinna was born and came back to the program two years later. She has made good progress in reading and writing and plans to continue in Partners in Reading.



Erma's daughters, Corinna and Niki.

Who am I?

By K. P.

I was looking for a higher power to help me with this drug addiction and total madness that I was going through. I found myself in a field looking up at the stars and asking God for help to get rid of the terrible addiction that I had. I got down on my knees and prayed the best I could, while I was crying, because I was thinking of the way I was hurting everyone I loved and hurting myself.

During the next couple of weeks, I was thinking about what happened that night. And then a friend invited me to an NA meeting at a church. I had only been to a church for weddings and funerals! In the church, a woman stood up and told my story. I realized it wasn't only me. There were a lot people out there like me, looking for that higher power and looking for the freedom from drug addiction.

I talked to a close friend of mine. We had used drugs together for over twenty years and he had been clean for over three years. I asked him, "How did you do it?" The first thing he said was, "If you don't put anything in your body you won't get loaded. If you need help to get straight

you stay here with me.” And I did.

I started to go to meetings and friends were introducing me to people who were clean and sober and knew what I was going through at the time. They didn't judge me for what I was, but who I am. Then I started a “90-90” program -- ninety meetings in ninety days. I was really unsure of what I was doing because old habits are hard to break.

I was doing a lot of it for my mother because I knew that she was up in years and wouldn't be around too much longer. I wanted to see the smile on her face when I gave her my 30-day chip. A chip celebrates your recovery time and it starts off with a month, 60-days, 90-days, and then six months, a year, eighteen months, and two years. It goes every year after that. I gave her every chip up to two years. A little after my two-year chip she passed away. I knew she was proud of me because she knew I was on my way to being a real man, clean and sober.

Seeing her satisfied that her youngest son was clean and sober was one of the happiest times in my life.

K. P. is married with two teenagers. He's a construction worker and has been involved with Partners in Reading for about six years. It's been hard to do this for six years but he really wants to learn to read to move ahead in life and do what he missed out on when he was younger. His big hobby right now is riding his new motorcycle.

A Day in the Snow

By Robert Perez

I took two of my kids, Marissa and Robert, to play in the snow. A friend invited us to go to the snow. We went to his cabin first and the kids played inside the cabin. Then we went for a half-hour drive to the snow. This was the kids' first time in the snow. We went up the hill with saucers and slid down the hill, first Robert, then Marissa and me. I stopped going up the hill after three times. Marissa stopped after two times and had a snowball fight with my friend's kids. But Robert kept going and going and going up to the time we had to leave. He was very happy and said that I was the "Best Dad Ever." That made me very happy and even happier that they had fun.

Robert has been in the Partners in Reading program for more than five years. He has progressed through the first 10 books of the Wilson Reading System. He currently works as a patrol supervisor for National Security, a job that requires him to write and file reports on a regular basis. Prior to his security job, he worked for a number of years as a machine operator for 3COM, the company that manufactures the Palm Pilot personal digital assistant (PDA). Nowadays his main hobby is taking care of his three children, Robert, Marissa, and Anthony. In earlier, less busy days, his hobbies included building model airplanes and martial arts training.



Robert's children, Robert and Marissa,
playing in the snow.

A Happy Cat Adventure

By Hector Ramirez

I remember my tutor told me that cats are very smart pets. I didn't believe it then, but I do now.

One Friday morning I went out for my walking routine around the track on the hill. Then I saw a beautiful, golden kitty lying in the middle of the track. It was at least fifteen feet away from where I was. Right when he saw me, he got up and started to walk in front of me. He was keeping the same distance, not letting me get near him. He was so cute. He was walking with his tail straight up in the air, waving it side to side.

Then I started to talk to him. I said, "Listen little one, my tutor told me that you are a very smart pet and, not only that, you are also very cute. Tell me little cat, do you belong to anyone? What are you doing here all by yourself? Don't you have a place to live? I am afraid something bad will happen to you, you're so cute."

When I finished talking to him, he stopped and waited for me like he understood everything that I said to him. When

I reached where he was, he went between my legs, rubbing his body and tail like he was telling me to take him home with me.

I said, "I'm sorry little one, I can't take you home with me. My wife doesn't like pets and I don't want to get into problems with her. I have to go, sorry."

He followed me for a little while and then he disappeared into the bushes.

Hector and his wife, Magdalena, are the parents of four and grandparents of one. Hector has been part of PAR for several years. He is currently on disability from an industrial accident. He came to the program with limited skills. He enjoys writing about his childhood in Sinaloa. His hobby is music, which he hopes to teach one day. He has volunteered for PAR and plans to volunteer for Joshua's school.

My Joy

By Darryl Redfield

I have many joyous occasions in my life. The first one is when I graduated from high school. The odds were stacked against me. Even some of my family members didn't believe that I would graduate. June 16, 1988 at 2:00 p.m. was when I graduated.

Another occasion is when I went off to college. Another occasion is when I was training for my CNA license. We had lots of crazy study groups. Being the only boy in the class -- they threw me a surprise party for my birthday.

Another joyous occasion is when I started Partners in Reading. I had doubts the first day because I thought I wouldn't be able to read. My luck, I got a college professor for my tutor who loves to give lots of homework. In the first three months we finished the first book. I cannot explain how happy I was. She taught me good study habits so I don't mind lots of homework. When I don't do my homework, I like the way she calls me on it. I guess being a college professor she's heard every excuse under the sun about the homework not being done.

Another occasion that always comes to mind is May 24, 2004. My wife and I went for her routine prenatal exam. During the exam we found out her water was low and she was three centimeters dilated. I ran out of the doctor's office so excited, I forgot my wife. That night we could not sleep at all because we were anxious. She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. To this day I still can't believe that I am a father.

I am blessed to have a wife like mine because she always takes control when I pick out an outfit for my daughter. She always changes it some way. When I try to feed my daughter, she is always looking over my shoulder and correcting me. One time I washed my daughters clothes and faded them because I put some blue pillows in the wash. Now I am banned from washing her clothes.

That is why I love my wife so much. If I really talk about the good times in my life, the majority would be about my wife.

Darryl has been coming to PAR for three years with the same tutor, Stacy. His hobbies are fishing, taking long walks, cooking healthy food, and exercising.

My Life in Germany

By Janeen Robbins

The happiest time in my life was when I lived in Germany. I lived near the French border in the town of Karlsruhe. I was there for five years when I was married. I was there before the Berlin Wall fell and after when they were selling pieces of the wall.

I visited Rottenburg, the oldest city in Germany. In the museums I saw statues of people from the years 1700-1800. I saw how they liked to live in those days. I saw the kitchen and bedroom of an old house. There was one big beautiful church in Rottenburg. I visited the Christmas Market in the town. They were selling nutcrackers and other Christmas things. I saw the biggest nutcracker there!

There was a castle in the city of Munich that looks like the one in Disneyland. I went on a tour in the castle. I saw lots of things like the kitchen and bedroom where the king of the castle slept. His name was King Ludwig. I walked across the bridge and I looked down and saw the big mountains and trees. From the bridge, I saw another

castle.

The food was fantastic in Germany. Some of the food I had was *chicken cordon bleu* and *henchmen* (baby chickens that were served with noodles and salad). I also had goulash soup and bratwurst sausage. The beer was very good - not cold, just poured in a giant glass. I went to the bakery and bought fresh bread and sweets.

I would like to go to Germany again.

Janeen Robbins lives in San Jose with her pet iguana. She works with special kids as a special education aide. She likes to work out at the gym and go to the movies with her boyfriend. She has been a learner with PAR for about three years and has worked with three nice tutors.



A castle in Munich

You Have to Like Your Job to Do It Well



By Nancy Rowe

I've always worked with old people. My last job I worked for four and a half years at a retirement home. I left there and stayed home for six and a half months. I found out that working with old people was what I really like doing. You can have a lot of fun with them because there are a lot of things for them to do in senior centers and churches.

The job I have now is taking care of an elderly gentleman, Orville, who is 99 years young. His 100th birthday will be on August 3rd and he's looking forward to that. His daughter-in-law will be giving him a surprise party. He still gets around pretty good and we go out three times a week. He enjoys going to church on Sunday, visiting the senior centers and meeting new people. Even playing BINGO can be fun.

I'm learning some new things like working in the garden. Recently we went to Wal-Mart and bought four rose bushes, which I planted. They are doing well. We also go grocery shopping and I'm improving my cooking skills. Last week I made hamburger meat with potatoes,

mushrooms, and tomato sauce. We both enjoyed it.

Orville likes telling stories. He grew up in the Stockton area. He's always worked really hard, from the time he was in grammar school. He used to catch skunks, skin them and sell the skins. He also worked as a janitor in the school and then at JC Penney's department store. He put himself through college. When Orville moved away, he worked at a cement plant as a "sample boy." He bought land and built his first house by himself. He dug his own well after a man with a dousing stick found water. This first house cost him \$100!

Orville moved to the Bay Area and became head chemist at the Kaiser Permanente plant before World War II. He worked there for 28 years until he retired at age 65. At the age of 65, he still traveled with his church until his family stopped him.

I really enjoy working with Orville because I learn a lot from him and because he's a very nice person. He enjoys my company and I enjoy his.

Nancy was born in San Jose and has lived here her whole life. She has one daughter. Nancy enjoys working with her tutor and feels she's learning a lot.

Mom's Kitchen

By Eva Segura



I was very happy when I was nine years old. I really liked to stay in the kitchen with my mom because the food smelled so good. I liked the food she cooked. I helped her cut the tomatoes, onions, and all the vegetables.

Now, I am 42 and I am still watching my mom to learn more about cooking. I love the smell of her food and I'm still learning from her. I also like to do other things, but staying in the kitchen is my favorite place when my mom visits me. That makes me happy.

Eva likes to visit her family during her free time. She started in the PAR program January 2005. Her favorite dishes cooked by her mom are *posole* and *menudo*.

My Dog

By Ranjeet Sekhon

My story came from a class assignment. My tutor gave me these four vocabulary words to use in a story:

Cheerful

Gladly

Playful

Colorful



Ranjeet's dog, Kaya

I love my dog. His name is Kaya. I got him when he was two weeks old. I bought him for one hundred forty dollars. When he was a puppy he gave me a very hard time, especially at nighttime. He cried at night. He must have missed his mother. He always wanted someone with him. As he grew older he got better .

Now he is three years old. He is very friendly and affectionate. I keep him in the back yard. He is an outdoor dog but sometimes he comes inside the house but only for a short time. When I am in the back yard, he

plays with me and doesn't let me do any other work in the yard.

I like him so much. Sometimes my son says, "Mom, you love Kaya more than me." I take him for walks. Twice a month I give him a bath. In the evening, my son feeds him and on the weekends takes him for walks. He is a big dog and he is an intelligent dog. He keeps me company when I am alone. I do not feel scared because I know Kaya barks loud if any strange person comes near our house.

Last week, I had a birthday party at home. My daughter baked a chocolate cake. She made beautiful decorations on the cake. Everyone gladly ate the cake. It was delicious. My dog Kaya was very playful because of all the excitement. Kaya likes to play with small children. The decorations at the party were colorful, putting everyone in a cheerful mood. It was such a fun party because everybody was happy.

In June 2004, Ranjeet started the Partners in Reading program again. Her tutor gave her a lot of encouragement and confidence; they have been meeting continuously which has helped her realize she can do it. She is currently enrolled at San José City College completing Level 2 - ESL classes and preparing for her future.

Hope

By Jerri Shih

Now my granddaughter is a mature woman and she takes care of me very good.

When my granddaughter was seven years old, she came to the United States. She did not speak or read English. After half a year, she spoke and read English very well. She was a straight-A student. One day in fifth grade, her teacher took a few straight-A students to go eat lunch. They took a limo. After she came back she was very excited. She told me, "Grandma, wait until I grow up and I have money. I will buy a big car for you." That made me have tears in my eyes. I love her so much.

Time runs so fast. Now my granddaughter is almost 20 years old. Sometimes we talk about life. I told her maybe my life will not be too long, because now I am 70 years old and will go see God very soon. She said, "Grandma, don't say that. You have to wait until I get married and take care of my baby. You can't go see God too soon." She used a good excuse because she

did not want me to die.

She is a grown girl now. She can take care of me now. Last month she took me to see the dentist. The dentist told me I have to pull out four teeth. My granddaughter said, "Not today, I have to go back to school tomorrow. Nobody can take care of her. We will wait 'til summer break to come pull the teeth." Now she can really take care of me. I think life is so beautiful.

Jerri is 70 years old. She believes she is an example for young people that it is never too late to learn. She feels she is too old to remember things well, but studies twice as hard to try to remember. She can read some easy books, write simple letters, and read lots of things she sees outside. She is currently working on her writing skills, which have been the most challenging for her.

Our Families are Important

By Jackie Smith

Family times are the best when we are together. We visit our elder members, cousins and our younger members. Usually we sit in the living room. We look at old photo albums and have conversations about hairstyles and the scenery. We enjoy ourselves often. One after another, we see our parents when they were younger, as well as how they look now. We are happy sitting patiently. Some of the family members put time into fixing the photo albums. Working on photo albums takes talent and time. There are so many pictures now. They organize the pictures by the order of the events. The photos are black and white. The sizes are small and large. The photos are put into groups. They are of different stages and events.

The snapshots are in color now. We celebrate weddings, our children's births, grandparents, graduation and family memories of our vacations. For example, we have pic-

tures of Disneyland.

We are from all over the nation. Small or big, no matter what size, to be a part of a family is to be wanted and needed. We stay in touch by telephone or by writing or sending cards. It seems to work anyway. We can see each other. We just like to talk about all kinds of things. We can also send photos by mail. Pictures are a fun way to communicate. Sometimes they say "I Love You." Families sometimes have their ups and downs but we are always there for each other.

Jackie works at the Santa Clara County Office of Education. She's married and has three children, one daughter and two sons. She enjoys putting her thoughts and hopes on paper. She hopes to continue traveling to add to her photo albums. Odysseyland in Denver, Colorado is one of the places that she would like to visit in the future.

Jackie sends special thanks to the staff and friends at PAR. With smiles on their faces, they have the time to be not too busy. PAR is the place where she's always welcome. Currently Jackie's tutor is Francis A. Odoms. They bonded right from the start. Jackie had to wait for a tutor, just like many before. It's worth the wait.

Many Happy Times

By Richard Solorio

To truly understand the meaning of happy times, one must search their memory for the happy moments of their lives.

Some happy memories of mine are being in the loving arms of my parents, playing with my brothers and sisters, family vacations, doing a good deed for a neighbor, the first time I drove a car, when I met my first love, my first kiss, my wedding day, and when my children were born.

Yes, happy times are every day when we wake up to make new memories. Memories like the sun shining on your face, the wind blowing in your hair, the sound of birds chirping, and seeing the smiling faces of your family at dinnertime.

Happy times are made every moment of the day, if we so desire. So let's go out and make more happy memories.

Richard Solorio enjoys reading good books and taking time to smell the roses as he passes by.

Swingin' Sunday

By José Torres



Some of the happiest times of my life begin on springtime Sunday mornings when our baseball team, the Indians, meets to take on all-comers.

On this particular Sunday morning, we got up at 9:00 a.m., and my wife Ana made my sons Alex, Livan and me pancakes for breakfast. I wanted to have a hearty breakfast so that I would be ready for our 10:30 a.m. game at San José's Overfelt High School. After eating, I went to our garage with Alex and he helped me pack my catcher's glove, mask, spikes and uniform into my baseball bag.

We left home at 10:00 a.m. and when we arrived at the park a few of my teammates were already there. I put on my Indian's uniform and got ready to warm up. Our manager came over to me and said, "Hi, José! "You're starting at catcher and batting fifth in the line-up."

“That’s great,” I answered and quickly began to warm up our pitcher.

The game started promptly with our opponents, the Yankees, batting first. Our pitcher’s fastball was hopping today and the Yankees went down in order – one, two, three. Unfortunately, their pitcher was just as good and we went out in order also. The game continued like this for eight innings with both teams getting hits but neither team able to score.

Finally, in the top of the 9th inning, our pitcher began to tire, and the Yankees got four straight hits and scored two runs before we got the third out.

It was now the last of the 9th inning and our last chance to win the game. We were losing 2 to 0 as Juan, our number four hitter, walked to the plate. I waited nervously in the on-deck circle. The count went to two balls and two strikes and then, on the next pitch, Juan swung and drove a double into right-center field.

Now it was my turn. A hit would bring us to within one run. I

felt the sweat on my palms and my heart was pounding in my chest. The first pitch came in fast and hard and I swung the bat fast and hard. I watched my bat hit the ball and I saw the ball going on a line between shortstop and third base. As I ran to first base, Juan was rounding third base on his way to scoring our first run. I kept running and slid safely into second base with a double and our teams' first RBI. I felt good. I felt even better when our next batter hit a home run and drove us both in. We had won the game 3 to 2 and I had driven in our first run and scored the tying run. Now I felt very good and very happy.

After congratulating one another, we went to my house to celebrate with a barbecue for the whole team.

Jose was born in Zacatecas, Mexico and he moved to the United States when he was nine years old. He is married to Ana and has 3 children, a daughter, Cassandra, and two sons, Alex and Livan. Jose works for Student Transportation of America and recently won a driving competition against 79 other drivers. He participated in the State Final Driving Competition held in Sacramento on May 29, 2005.

A Happy Time in the Pacific Ocean



By Maria Torrico

When I first came to this country, I came to California. My uncle's family and my uncle's friends, Jorge and Erminia, took me to the beach at Half Moon Bay. On the way I saw big and small pine trees, flowers, chrysanthemums, cows, and horses in the mountains. When my uncle was parking, I saw the Pacific Ocean from the car. I couldn't believe what my eyes saw, big water. I never saw the end. It was immense! I felt my heart pumping. My cousin Eliana said, "Let's go!" We ran from the parking lot through the sand. When I stepped in the sand, I couldn't walk. I was anxious to feel the water. The water was very cold. Even though it was cold, we jumped in. I didn't know how to swim. The waves threw me. It was very enjoyable. I played a lot with my cousins. This experience was new for me because I came from Bolivia. Bolivia is landlocked.

I'll never forget what I felt the first time I saw the Pacific Ocean.

Maria was born in Bolivia and came to California in 1991. She is married to Ed and has two children, Vaneza, 11 and Bryant, 8. They love soccer. They like to watch the Earthquakes at the Stadium.

A Special Wedding

By Daisy Ung



I remember a happy time on July 21, 2003. In the Morning, my sister June and I went to San Francisco for our friend's daughter's wedding. It was special because the wedding ceremony and reception were inside the City Hall. This was the first time I went to a wedding at the City Hall. The room was big and beautifully decorated with colorful pictures and paintings on the walls. The ceiling was very high and it was pretty too.

There were about 300 people at the wedding. The bride was tall, thin and pretty. Her dress was long and it had lots of lace. It was very pretty. The groom was tall and handsome. There were four bridesmaids wearing long purple gowns, two flower girls and two ring bearers.

After the wedding we had lunch in another room in City Hall. It was delicious food and drinks. We had a choice of salmon or prime rib with baked potato and salad. I had the salmon and I enjoyed it so much. I saw a lot of

friends and relatives I hadn't seen or heard from for a long time. I was happy to see them and talk to them. We were happy to see each other.

Later that day, June and I went to Chinatown for a long shopping adventure. We went into a lot of different stores to look around. I bought two pretty blouses, earrings and some cookies and candies. It was a wonderful day and one of my happy times.

Daisy has been retired for over 14 years. She is very busy. She goes to the senior center to play ping-pong and go line dancing. She has 12 lovely grandchildren and enjoys spending time with them. Daisy wants to thank the PAR staff for helping her to learn English.

Remembering When I Was Little



By Alberto Vidrio

I remember when I was a kid in my little town of El Tecuan in the state of Jalisco, Mexico.

It's a beautiful town, with approximately one hundred families. It has a river that goes across the center of the town where the ladies used to wash their clothes and kids got in the water. But my favorite place was where the river went into a lake. My friends and I used to go there and get in the water. My best friends were Arturo, Armando, and Daniel.

We spent long hours together swimming in the water. We climbed up a tree that was close to the water and jumped in from there. When we got hungry, we ate guavas, sugar cane, and corn or fish that we cooked right there at the lake.

“Que bonitos tiempos aquellos cuando no había mucho de que preocuparse, solo de vivir y disfrutar de la vida.”

(What beautiful times when there wasn't that much to worry about, only to live and be happy.)

Now every time I have the opportunity, I like to go to this place to remember and relive that beautiful experience.

Alberto came from Mexico 16 years ago. He has been married for ten years. He has two kids, ages nine and four. He likes to do anything in construction, such as kitchen and bathroom tiling. He likes to make plans for everything he does before he gets started. He loves being in Partners in Reading and wishes he could spend more time here. He says that his experience here has been really good and that he would like to learn more.

Start of a New Life



By Mustafa Yassin

I was on my way to live in America . I was flying from Nairobi, Kenya, to Atlanta, Georgia. The flight was 18 hours long but when I started out, I didn't even know how long it was going to be. I was so excited; it was hard to sleep.

I came to live in the United States in February of 2001. When I saw the ground from the airplane it was **GREEN**. It was noisy. It was colorful. There were more people than I ever thought possible and that was just the airport! What would a whole city be like?

I ate a turkey sandwich at a food court. I hadn't eaten turkey very much in my life and it wasn't the same. It was turkey, it was bread, but it wasn't bread that my mom had made.

The flight to San José was four more hours of flying. I had been traveling 24 hours and I was very tired when my cousin met me at the airport in San José. San José airport was much smaller and seemed like Nairobi airport.

It took a few days to really wake up.

I am a person who looks forward to new adventures and experiences. But after the newness wore off, it became hard for me. I didn't have a job, I didn't know what kept people from hiring me, whether it was my lack of English or something about me. It was so hard to learn English at first. I was not happy.

Finally things just started getting easier. I got a job with a good future. School became easier. I had enough experiences to start to feel at home. I started the Partners in Reading Program. I love a good challenge. I know with good English skills and experience, my life will change and I can be a success.

I dream of a time when I have enough knowledge to open

more doors: going to college, helping to bring my family here, taking part in my community, and having a family of my own. Those are dreams, but I don't need to have them right now to be happy. I love the adventure of starting to make them happen.

In the process of writing this story, Mustafa and his tutor learned that they had both traveled through the Nairobi airport. They experienced each other's culture and could understand how the other person felt.

Mustafa has been an excellent and enthusiastic learner in Partners in Reading. He has mastered hundreds of words of English, and writes and reads well because of his determination to meet his goals. Mustafa says that when he was little, his brothers and sister had the imagination and dreams. Now he has wonderful dreams of his own.

