
Family and Friends



Partners in Reading
Adult Literacy Program
San José Public Library
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PARTNERS IN READING



San José Public Library



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Contents

Introduction	8
Yeshi Abdo	
My Mother and My Baby	11
Guadalupe Apen	
Memories from My Mother	13
Sharmane Augusta	
My Uncle	15
Scott Bowden	
From Sad Dad to a Grateful Grandfather	16
Miguel Bucio	
Meeting A New Friend	19
Patty Colombo	
My Brother's Ranch	20
Santa Dandan	
Life in Mexico	22
Ronda Enriquez	
My Aunt	23
Cathy Fileppin	
Dancing is Important in My Family	27
Michael Fortier	
The Harmonicat	30

Joe Goulart	
Growing Up on a Dairy Farm	33
Wudase Keleta	
Our Family Trip to Eritrea.....	35
Elizabeth Sandoval Lara	
My Friend.....	37
Pedro Magana	
Opening My Eyes	39
Karmjeet Mann	
My Family	41
Olga Melendez	
My Family History	43
Gordon Nelson	
Gordon Gets in Trouble	46
Huong Nguyen	
A Special Friend	49
Erma Ordunez	
My Crazy Girls	51
Darryl Redfield	
My Best Friend.....	52
Ed Reyes	
Growing Up in Mexico.....	55

Rodrigo Rodriguez	
Friendship	57
Addie Russell	
A Great Bunch of People	58
Jacqueline Smith	
Gauthier and Dumas Family Reunion	60
Richard Solorio	
My Family is My Best Friend	63
Steve Son	
My Best Friend	66
Pamela Tetzlaff	
Laurie	68
Maria Torrico	
My Family Vacation to Chapare	69
Daisy Ung	
Cheaper by the Dozen	71
Jesse Valtierra	
Together Again	73
Mustafa Yassin	
My Mom	75

Introduction

Each year the students in Partners in Reading, the adult literacy program of the San José Public Library, write stories for a book of their own. This year's theme was family and friends. You will see that many of the learners chose to share cherished memories of their families. Others wrote about a special friend.

It is a new experience for many of these adults to see their words in print. They came to the program to improve their reading and writing skills so they could realize goals like reading to their children, writing reports at work, getting a better job, or becoming a citizen. They worked very hard with their volunteer tutors to polish their stories. Using the correct spelling and grammar to express their ideas is a challenge for most. As new authors, they are eagerly awaiting the publication of this book so they can show their very own stories to their family and friends.

Take a moment to dip into a few of these heartfelt

stories: Erma's pride at her seven-year-old's reading, Daisy's delight with her dozen grandchildren, Jesse's growing relationship with his teenage daughter, Darryl's love letter to his wife - who became his best friend. Or learn about life in Somalia, Mexico, or Eritrea. This book is a cornucopia of vignettes that suggest the incredible variety of our students' lives.

Gail Nyhan



My Mother and My Baby

By Yeshi Abdo

I left Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1996 to get married, and my mother stayed behind. But we met again in San José in 2003. While we were separated, I was missing her and I worried about her a lot. Then she came here. When I saw her again, I was so happy and excited. When she came to this country she was sick, but she is doing better now. I am glad she is here.

When I had my first baby, it was hard to give him a shower. When I first held him, I felt like he was an egg that would fall and break. But my mom said, "Don't worry so much. He'll be okay. He's not an egg. He won't break." My mom helped me by teaching me a lot about how to take care of him.

I am so happy I have a baby. Now he is ten months old. His name is Bruke. He's so much fun and does so much for his age - smiling, crawling, and following me wherever I go. When I go to work, I miss him a lot. I

think he misses me too. When I come home from work, he's smiling and happy - jumping up and down.

Yeshi started in Partners in Reading in January 2003, stopped for a short while to have her baby, and then returned to the program. She says, "When I started this program, I was not able to write or read. Now I have met my tutor, Judy. She has taught me well, and I'm glad I've had her to teach me reading and writing. Now I'm reading a little bit better, and I'm writing too."

Memories from My Mother

By Guadalupe Apen



I remember when I was a child. My childhood was very nice, with all my family, my brothers, my sisters, and my mother. I remember when we were sitting at the table and my mom telling us her experiences. She told us many tales (histories) about her childhood - how she was sad or happy. I listened to her and tried to keep the histories in my mind. Sometimes I asked myself if it was possible to live like she lived with her parents and sisters. My mom said all the time to please listen carefully.

Now I want to tell you one story that she told us. When she was five years old, she didn't have any toys to play with. Instead of playing, she prayed to the saints. She said that she never finished praying to all the saints, but at the end she felt fine and went to her bed. One morning my grandmother woke her up early to walk to another village with her. It was three or four in the morning. She was scared because she heard that at that time many

things happened. But she still was walking with her mom next to her. She didn't know how to explain to her mom her fear. Sometimes she turned around, and she saw many little angels with their white wings and shiny clothes. She still was scared to tell her mom what she had seen, so she kept that in her heart and mind.

After we listened to her story, we hoped someday to see those little angels. We listened close, and we didn't talk. We just wanted to hear more about those histories/ stories and those moments that we shared with her. I will keep these memories in my heart forever.

Guadalupe Apen is from Mexico City. She came to the United States in 1989. She met her husband, Luis, after moving here. She has three children. She wants to say thank you so much to Partners in Reading and her tutor, Norma, for helping her with her reading and writing. Everyone is very nice.

My Uncle



By Sharmane Augusta

I talked to my Uncle Kerry last month on the phone. He said that he would like us to come see him and his wife. We talked for a long time. The last time I saw him was nine years ago when we had a big family reunion in New Orleans. I miss him. He makes me feel good about what we talk about.

Uncle Kerry asked me, “Do you remember when I got you in big trouble?” When I was a little girl, almost five years old, we were visiting my grandmother in New Orleans. Uncle Kerry was visiting, too. My sister Renee had some red hair on her legs. So Uncle Kerry taught me to spell a new word, red. He and I made Renee cry because we kept calling her Red half the day. But my grandmother chased me and Uncle Kerry with a broom around the house and outside. I was in big trouble by my mother, and my grandmother said, “Leave my baby alone!”

Sharmane likes to read and do crossword puzzles. She enjoys taking classes at Evergreen College. Often what she wears reflects her Native American heritage.

From Sad Dad to a Grateful Grandfather

By Scott Bowden

I remember when my granddaughter was first born. We were all there - my mom, Lisa's mom, and Anita's mom, three generations of mothers. The father, my father, and I were all there. What a good day. Labor was long. Lisa did not want any men in the room at that time. I was pacing so much, I think they had to change out the carpet where I was pacing.

My daughter called me one day and told me I was going to be a grandfather; and, if I wanted to be in their life, I had to be clean from drugs and alcohol. I had been using both for the past 30 years, so I knew what I had to do and that would be to go to the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center. I was there in 1995, so I knew where to go. This time I wanted it for my daughter or so I thought. After almost four years here, I now know that I am here for myself. I feel good about myself today. I pay my bills today. I have GOD in my life. I am bettering

myself. I am in Partners in Reading. I work with my tutor Ron, a really nice guy.

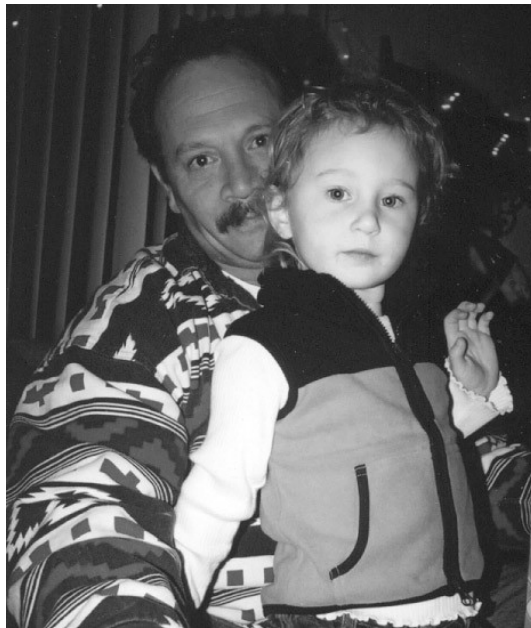
The bottom line is I am doing the right thing today. I have a driver's license, car insurance, health insurance, and a fishing license. I spend most of all my extra time with my kids, Lisa and Heather, and my granddaughter. We have a great time together. We have gone fishing together and to the zoo. My granddaughter's name is Irene. I took Irene for a boat ride about two weeks ago. She really likes the boat. She is the best kid I know. She is almost four now. Life is at its best.

Today I have two beautiful daughters and a wonderful granddaughter and a son that calls me. I work with people in recovery. It sure feels good to be part of something that is positive. Today I am a good son, better dad, and a great grandpa. I love spending time with my kids and my mom and dad.

I have been around Clear Lake for about 35 years. I love to fish there the best of all. I like to go out in my boat and fish and just look at all the beautiful countryside. It is just so peaceful there.

I would like to thank Mary Ann for introducing me to Partners in Reading and for all they do for us. It's never too late to be happy.

Scott is 47 years old. He has a beautiful granddaughter named Irene with whom he enjoys fishing and spending time. He has two wonderful daughters named Lisa and Heather. Scott enjoys being part of the PAR program and appreciates the volunteers there. Since joining the program his self-esteem has grown.



Scott with his granddaughter, Irene

Meeting A New Friend

By Miguel Bucio

This story is about my new friend, Carlos. We met in October at Sound X in San José. I was with my other friend, Zuvi. We saw a customer. He was looking for some bass speakers. I told him I would help him. I said, "I will get you speakers that you'll like for a good price." He did like his new speakers.

A few days later some friends were having a party, so I asked Carlos if he wanted to come along. He said, "Sure, let's go." We went and had a good time.

We do all kinds of things together now, like going to the movies with our girlfriends. We go to BBQs, too. We fix his truck that we call the "Blue Berry." We are getting it ready for Cinco de Mayo. We will drive around in San José with his cousins. I'm glad I met Carlos; we're good friends.

Miguel is thankful to the PAR program because it has helped him with the things he needed to learn. Now he feels more secure about himself. Miguel likes to spend time with his four nieces and one new baby nephew.

My Brother's Ranch

By Patty Colombo

When I go to my brother's ranch, I see his horses, his fishing pond, his dogs, and the beauty of the ranch with the beautiful blue mountain that is sometimes covered with snow. We see the ducks fly in about four o'clock and settle on the pond for a swim.

He has a driving range at his ranch, so we practice for the grand opening of the golf club he is building in Colorado Springs. It will be opening the end of June.

We may be going by train to Colorado. It should be lots of fun.

Patty enjoys doing art. She does a lot of drawings at the ranch and brings them back to her art class. Patty likes working on reading with her tutor. She also enjoys gardening.



Patty and her mom (left) throw snowballs at her brother's ranch.

Life in Mexico

By Santa Dandan

I was born at home in the city of Acuña Coahuila in Mexico. My grandpa, Selstino Flores, named me Santa. I never met my grandmother, Barta Gomes, because she died before I was born. But my mom told me interesting things about my grandmother. My mom's family lived on a hacienda and had goats, a bull, lambs, and chickens. My mother told me that my grandmother was a very good cook, and she taught my mom how to make tamales. At Christmas time they made a lot of tamales and shared them with their neighbors. And even now we still make tamales to carry on the tradition.

Santa has lived in San José for most of her life. Santa and her husband, Joe, have three daughters and five grandchildren. Santa is very grateful for PAR and her tutors, who have helped her improve her reading.

My Aunt



By Ronda Enriquez

I remember what my Aunt Ruby told me when I was old enough to understand. I don't remember how old I was when she told me, but I do remember what she said. She told me, "When you were three days old, I took you in like you were my child."

My mom had my older sister, Sonda, with her; so it was hard for her to take care of me, too. Aunt Ruby and my uncle, who I called Dad, took care of me in their home in Honolulu, Hawaii. I don't remember when we moved to the Big Island, but I still stayed with them.

As I got older, all of us, including my mom and sister, moved into one big house in a little town called Pahoa, Hawaii. So I grew up with one sister and three cousins who were like brothers to me.

Aunt Ruby and Dad always took me places that I will

never forget. I still remember all the places they took me to like it was yesterday. They took me to the beach and a macadamia nut farm, where I got to see the trees and how they made the candy. But the best part was eating the candy. It tasted good. They took me to Volcano National Park Museum. We also rode around the beautiful island of Hawaii to look at all the wonderful views.

I was in kindergarten, and it was my sixth birthday. My mom and Aunt Ruby brought me a big cake, enough to feed the class. It was pink with white trimmings. It tasted really good and felt soft in my mouth, but the frosting was too sweet. I was really happy that day, and I'll never forget what they did on my birthday.

When I was about seven or eight years old, I got mad at Aunt Ruby because she wouldn't let me do something I really wanted to do. I went into the closet and started to cut my hair. All I heard was the door opening, and Aunt Ruby said, "What are you doing cutting your hair?" The next thing I knew she was pulling my ear with one hand and taking the scissors in the other. She said again, "If you want to cut your hair, I'll cut your hair." By the time

she was done, I had hair like a boy, and I was crying,
“No, no, no!”

One day my mom and Aunt Ruby were going to the store to get something in our station wagon. They told us kids that we all had to stay home while they went. I said to myself, “Not me.” Just when they were about to leave, I got in the back seat and hid. By the time they went down the hill and started driving on the road, I popped up, yelling out, “Surprise!” They both got really mad at me, but soon they forgot about it.

I remember it was Easter. Aunt Ruby and Dad took me to Kona on this cliff that overlooked the ocean. My aunt stood next to me while Dad walked back to the truck, and my aunt told me to close my eyes. Well, when I opened my eyes, I saw a big pink Easter basket with a Barbie and lots of delicious candy.

What I can say about Aunt Ruby is she was a wonderful woman who cared for everyone she loved. She was not only my aunt who took me in, but she was like a mother to me. This story is in memory of Ruby Maximo, who

died February 7, 2004.

Ronda currently lives in San José and works in the Willow Glen area during the day. When she is not working, she enjoys listening to music, watching movies, and cooking favorite recipes. When Ronda is with her tutor, she enjoys writing stories and learning new words.

Dancing is Important in My Family



By Cathy Fileppin

My family and I love to do Yapese dances. We love to do a dance that they called bamboo dance, which means to dance with a stick in a group. We also prepare our own costumes. We make our costumes with hibiscus and color them with yellow, blue, red, green and purple. It's colorful and pretty. We also make our leis to go with it. We make leis that match the grass skirts. Each girl in a family has to have a grass skirt for her own. If you don't have one, then all the ladies in the village call you "lazy."

We have different kinds of Yapese dances. We have a sitting dance, bamboo dance, women's dance, men's dance, square dance for boys and girls, and standing dances for men and women. Each group has to learn their way of dance from the elder men or women. All the women gather together in a woman's house to teach the young women all kinds of dances, and men cannot be there if they start their dances. If they break the rules,

they will be punished. The children learn dances with the adults, and sometimes they let them dance with the teenagers. In our family, dancing is something that starts when you are very young.

The dances are important to our families, friends, and community because that makes us know more of our legends and learn our customs and get to know each other. In other words, we have good relationships with each other; and most of all we learn how to do the best to keep our village valuable and famous. Dancing keeps everyone aware of the islander cultures. This way, the culture is not lost.

Even today I'm appreciative that I have to learn all the dances and still know of my culture and customs that I can pass down to my children and my grandchildren.

Cathy was born on Yap, a small island in Micronesia, and moved to the United States two years ago. She lives in San José with her husband and two children, all of whom encouraged her to come to PAR to improve her written English and reading comprehension. Cathy is a very hard worker who enjoys learning new things.



Cathy's family of dancers

The Harmonicat



By Michael Fortier

I miss my Papa. Papa was my mom's "Daddy." His name was Michael Richard James Scoppetone. I was his first grandson. My mother named me after him. We lived with him when I was a baby. We were very close. He made me happy.

Papa lived a full life. He was born March 30, 1911. Entertaining people was his favorite thing to do. When he was 14, he formed a band of harmonica players called the Harmonicats. He wanted to be an actor and worked in a theater. He was cast for a role in the movie, "The Dead End Kids." He didn't get to do the movie because he got sick.

During World War II, he was a Chief Petty Officer in the Navy. He was a storekeeper aboard the aircraft carriers USS Wasp and USS Hornet. Both ships were sunk; he was in the water for 15 minutes one time and six hours another time before he was rescued. He was loaned out

to the 3rd Marine Division. He fought hand-to-hand combat in Saipan.

After the war, he became a detective. Later he was a salesman. He sold televisions, jewelry, and furniture. He loved good music, like Big Band and jazz. Louis Prima was his favorite musician. He also liked to gamble.

He had four daughters, four grandsons, four granddaughters, and eight great-grandchildren.

He lived with us when he was older. When he got sick toward the end of his life, he wanted to move back to his house. When he was sick in bed, he didn't want anyone to touch him. If anyone touched him, he would say "Ow!" I was the only one he would let touch him.

He died on January 23, 1984. It made me sad when he died. He was a great man.

Michael has been with PAR for seven years. He loves country music. His favorite singers are Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash. The San Francisco 49ers are his favorite football team.



Michael's grandfather

Growing Up on a Dairy Farm



By Joe Goulart

I lived with my family on a dairy farm when I was a little boy. We lived in Lodi and then moved to Tracy. I liked living on the farm because it was peaceful. It was fun to work with the calves and cows. Every day I fed them. My brother and I helped teach the calves how to eat when they were small. We cleaned the stalls every day.

Sometimes my cousins came over, and we went swimming and picked blackberries. We hunted for frogs in the ditch and looked for pheasants' nests to see if there were any eggs. Once when I was climbing a tree, I fell out and broke my arm.

Lots of exciting things happened on the farm, like the time a bull chased the boss around the field.

I have so many good memories of the years I spent working and playing on the farm that I sometimes wish I

could go back.

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.

Our Family Trip to Eritrea

By Wudase Keleta

Our trip started last summer from San José after I had coffee early in the morning with my husband, Mengisteab, and our children, Bekura, Rosina, and Aron. We were talking, laughing, and having a good time when I said, “Start the car and let’s go. We don’t want to be late to catch the plane!”

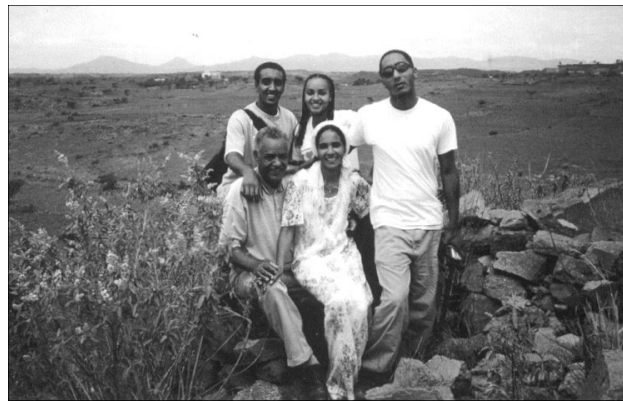
When we got to the airport, we said goodbye to my brother, Yowhanis, and our friend, Abby, and thanked them for giving us a ride. When we were in the airplane, my husband and I said, “We worked hard to make enough money so we can go with our children to our country, Eritrea, and here we are. Thank you, God.”

The next day we arrived in the city of Asmara, Eritrea. A friend picked us up and drove us to our home. When we opened the door and our children saw the big and beautiful house where we would stay, they were so happy they were jumping up and down. Next we went to

visit our family and introduced our children to their grandparents. Our children and our parents were very, very happy to see each other for the first time.

We also visited family near the Red Sea. We were so happy to see them after many years! We went swimming in the Red Sea and had a good time. After we came back to Asmara from the Red Sea, all our family and friends came to say goodbye because it was time for us to come home to San José. I hope we see them again next time!

Last year at this time Wudase didn't know how to write. Now she has learned to write her address and her husband's and children's names and write cards for their birthdays! Wudase thanks the people who started Partners in Reading; and she thanks Sara very, very much for opening her mind.



Our dream came true!

My Friend

By Elizabeth Sandoval Lara

Hi, my name is Elizabeth; and I am going to write about my friend. I have only known her for two years. We met at school. We didn't talk to each other very much, but later she invited me to her church on Sunday. That day I met her family. They are really nice. After church we went to eat. Then we went to her house. Later, she asked me if I wanted to buy Avon products. She is one of those ladies who sell all sorts of things. She is very good at that. At the time she was selling five types of products.

She knows a lot of people and she receives a lot of phone calls. She is on the phone often. There are always people in her house when she is home. She helps people. She is very outgoing. She always has something to say in a good way. She has been helpful to me in many different ways.

She understands English. She can read and write, but

she doesn't speak well. She always has her house clean, and she cooks very well. Every day she has people in her house, and she always has food on the table. She has a good heart. She is a good mother and wife. We used to go walking every morning, but now we don't do it as often because I moved out of the neighborhood.

She goes to Mexico often; she has a big family there. Her husband owns a small hotel in Mexico. In the future they are planning to live there. As long as she is in San José we will be close. I feel that I will miss her when she leaves. She is a good friend.

Elizabeth joined PAR in August 2002. She heard about it from a friend and wanted to improve her English writing skills. She enjoys listening to music, walking, and watching movies. She is employed as an electronics specialist. She has three children, ages 19, 20, and 24. She plans to go to college in the future.

Opening My Eyes



By Pedro Magana

A year ago, I had a big scare that turned into a valuable lesson. I woke up one morning and couldn't see clearly. I rubbed my eyes, but everything stayed blurry. What could this be?

My eyesight did not improve, and I had to get glasses. After two weeks of tests, I found out I was diabetic. What a shock! I immediately thought of my two uncles, Ruben and Richard. They too had been diabetic, and both died young. Their life was a lesson to me. If you take care of your health, you can live a longer, happier life.

I set out to learn how to deal with my condition. I attended classes and read books about diabetes. I also had diabetic friends and family tell me about their experiences. This new information changed my way of living.

One day I woke up and noticed everything around me

was sharply in focus. What joy! My eyes had been opened in two ways. Now I can truly appreciate the things I could see and that I had learned.

Pedro works full-time and is studying with his tutor, Paula, in the Partners in Reading program at the San José Public Library.

My Family



By Karmjeet Mann

I remember when I was a child. I have three brothers and one sister. My brothers' names are Herjinder, Sukvinder, and Gurvinder, and my sister, Divinder. Herjinder and Divinder are older than me; Sukvinder and Gurvinder are younger. We were really good friends with each other, and we loved each other a lot. My two younger brothers and I went to school together, and we had a really good time. I feel my family is a very happy family. My big sister and brother were our "good teachers" because they had more experience than us. We all looked up to them. My mom and dad were really proud of us.

One time Herjinder had a big bus accident, when both of his legs were burned with hot water from the radiator. My whole family was so worried about him. He stayed in the hospital about six months before he started walking again.

I remember when Herjinder and Gurvinder got married.

We were all so happy. A little while later I had three nieces and two nephews. When I got married I had to leave my family. It was really hard because my husband lived in America. When I came here, I wondered what kind of family my husband had. When I finally met them, I thought they were very friendly. In the beginning I wondered how I would survive because this “America” was so different from my India. I was scared because I didn’t know English.

Finally one Sunday my husband told me about Partners in Reading, where I soon met wonderful Gail. Gail gave me so much information. I began to like the program. After two or three meetings, I met my tutor, Bernie, who to me was very nice and friendly. I started with nothing, but now I know how to read, write and speak. I feel so good! I am thankful for all of their help. Ms. Sue, Ms. Jennifer, Ms. Mary Ann, Ms. Gail, thanks for everything!

Karmjeet is 29 years old. She came to San José in 2001. She likes cooking, sewing, and playing with her nieces and nephews. She has been with Partners in Reading for seven months. She thanks PAR for all their help.

My Family History



By Olga Melendez

I remember when I was eight years old. I was living on a farm in Mexico. Every year we went to Guadalajara. Guadalajara is a city. We lived in Guadalajara for six months – December through May. In May my whole family went back to the farm because in May the rains came. My father had to prepare the land on time to be ready when the rains came. My father liked to grow corn, beans, squash, and watermelon.

Every year we traveled in the first days of December. I liked the city, but I liked to live on a farm because on the farm the air smelled different than the city. Everyone in my family worked on the land. My father liked planting seeds and watching them grow. I liked to work in the fields with my father. I liked to walk on the land, and I liked to smell the fresh air. I liked to see all kinds of different birds. The last time we were on the farm was when my mother passed away at the age of 42. After

that, we stayed in Guadalajara and never went back to the farm.

When I was 17 years old I met my husband in Guadalajara. I saw him for only two months. My husband's family was living in Pasadena, California. His mom asked if he wanted to come to Pasadena. He said yes, and we came together. Almost two years later we married in Pasadena. We have five children, three boys and two girls.

In March this year my sister was sick, and I went to Guadalajara to visit her. I stayed for one week. My sister asked me if I wanted to go to the farm, and I said yes. I visited my father's and my mom's families. I was very happy because my wish was one day to go back to my farm.

We moved to San José almost nine years ago. I hope one day I can return to the farm where I was born and my parents lived. I love the United States because I have lived half of my life here and my children were born in this country, but I wish one day to go back to my farm.

Olga learned about Partners in Reading while attending ESL classes. She has been attending PAR since February 2004. She likes PAR because it helps her English speaking, reading, and writing skills and will help her get a better job. She is currently a supervisor for a janitorial service and wants to communicate more effectively with her clients.

Gordon Gets in Trouble

By Gordon Nelson



When I was about six years old, I got in all kinds of trouble; like when I was in school, I got in lots of fights. I put a kid's head between the bars of the school fence, but then I "blacked out." When I "came to," I was in the principal's office. The principal called my mother to come down to his office. Then he sent me home on suspension from school for five days.

This was serious because the other kid's head was swollen, and he had a concussion. To get his head free, they had to cut the fence and take him to the hospital to get checked by Emergency doctors. I don't know how I did this either. My mother gave me a whipping and sent me to my room crying with no supper. The next day she gave me the hardest chores to do. I lost a lot of privileges like no TV and playing with my friends for a while.

A couple of months later on a Friday I went to school with my handball and left it in the classroom after school. When I got home, I realized I didn't have my ball. The next morning, Saturday, I went back to school without my mother's knowledge. I climbed up the side of the building next to my classroom and slid open the window and climbed into the room. I went and got my ball and climbed back out the window and down the wall.

A policeman was waiting there and grabbed me and took me in his patrol car and drove me to my mother. The policeman walked to the door and up the stairs to my apartment. When my mother answered the door, the policeman told her he caught me climbing down the school wall. He asked my mother what she would do about what I had done.

My mother looked like she was in shock. She told the policeman that she would take care of it, so I never went to jail. (I'm glad of that.) Then the policeman left. My mother punished me again by having me wash dishes and do lots of housework and no TV or friends to go out and have fun with, for three months.

My mother was harsh with me, for my own good. My mother loved me, and she knew I had problems.

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 25, 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 Special Friend



By Huong Nguyen

I remember when I had just come to the United States in April 1982. I lived in my sister's friend's house. Her name was Hoang, and she had a husband and three teenage children. I lived with Hoang's family only four weeks, but we remained friends for 22 years.

At night, I couldn't sleep because the time was changed from day to night. When Hoang's children came from school, that was the time I ate lunch. Every dinner, Hoang always cooked special food for me and the whole family. Maybe she thought I didn't have good food in the refugee camp. When the weekend came, Friday afternoon, we had a lot of fun. All three of Hoang's children asked her to let me and them go to the swimming pool at the high school. We swam until six o'clock, and then we went home to eat dinner. On Saturday, the whole family drove me to the shopping center. Hoang chose for me pants, shirts, and shoes;

and the children chose soap, detergent, towels, toothpaste, etc.

After four weeks, I went to another house to share a room. I started a new life in the United States with everything Hoang's family gave to me. Sometimes every two weeks or a month I visited them, because they loved me and I loved them, too. For everything important that happened, I always called Hoang to help. For example, at my wedding and Hoang's daughter's wedding, we all helped, looking like a big family. Then, when my first time to give birth came, I called Hoang to go to the hospital with me at six o'clock in the morning.

Now, in my mind, Hoang is my older sister. I will never forget the love they gave to me. Not only for 22 years, but forever in my life I will still remember.

Huong came to the USA in 1982. She joined Partners in Reading about five years ago. She works for a medical device company in Fremont. She has a husband and two teenage children. She lives in San José.

My Crazy Girls



By Erma Ordunez

Last month when my daughter Niki was on vacation, I asked her to read to her sister's Headstart class. Niki was laughing before school because it was raining on the way to school. They were bickering in the car back and forth. Niki was embarrassed being in front of the class because this was the first time she was in front of anyone. Her cheeks were red when she read two books. One of them was "Two Crazy Pigs." Niki was sitting in a rocking chair in front of 24 kids, all of them three and four years old. My daughter, Corrina, is three years old. They were sitting on a blue rug, and they were quiet when she read for 30 minutes.

The class clapped a lot. She was happy it was over.

Erma is 35 years old and the mother of two beautiful girls, Niki, age seven, and Corrina, age four. She is teaching her girls that education is the only way to have a good future.

My Best Friend

By Darryl Redfield

My best friend is Veronica, who I met at Chico State in passing. She was going up the stairs, and I was going downstairs when we first met. She was so beautiful I could not believe my eyes. I asked for her telephone number, and she gave it to me. I was so excited. Later in the week we met at her dorm room to listen to music. After that night I believed that we would be more than friends. It was a big upset to me when she told me that she did not want to be friends. She felt that I was too old for her. I thought that was crazy when two people like each other.

One day, leaving from a friend's house, I met her again. We walked to the 7-11 to get some quarters. We went back to her apartment, where I could get her new telephone number. She told me that she was in a long distance relationship. I did not care that she had a boyfriend. I was going to win her heart. She asked me to

help her to pick classes for fall semester. I picked classes at the same time so we could ride the bus together, eat lunch, and walk to class.

One day I wanted to surprise Veronica with a rose. I spent several hours thinking how to do this. I knew she was studying for a history test. She did not want to be disturbed. I went over to her apartment unannounced. She opened the door with an angelic smile and asked me why I was there. I said, "One second," because I was on the cell phone calling her in the back bedroom. She ran to answer the phone, and I put the rose on her history book and left. It threw her for a loop.

Later on that night we went for a very romantic walk holding hands. It was very cold that night, but we hugged each other to keep warm. That's when I dedicated a star to her. She thought that was very sweet of me. Winter break was coming up, and we had to go our separate ways. She went home, and I stayed back to work. I called her every day to see how she was doing. That was the time she was supposed to be spending with her boyfriend, but everything was not going well. This was the perfect opportunity to move in

for the kill.

That Christmas I asked and pleaded to be her boyfriend. She made me very happy when she said yes. This relationship was the best relationship I have ever been in. Veronica taught me a lot about being in love. She taught me so much that I married her. My best friend turned into my wife, who I cherish so much. When I met people I was always talking about my wife. Now I have stopped talking about her and started talking about Savannah. Savannah is the new love in my life. Veronica is ok with this because Savannah Jade Redfield is my daughter. She will be born on June 15, 2004. So I dedicate this story to my best friend and wife because I am trying to find a new way to tell her that I love and appreciate her.

Darryl has been coming to PAR for two years with the same tutor, Stacy. Darryl attends Mission College, where he is studying to become a Licensed Vocational Nurse.

Growing Up in Mexico



By Edward Reyes

My family and I came from Mexico. In Mexico, we have to work very hard to make a living. At times I lived with my grandmother. I learned to work in the fields with my uncles. My job was to learn how to plow the fields, to plant the seeds, and to carry pails of water on my shoulders. My uncles worked with me and then taught me many things, such as how to talk to people and how to get along with others.

In Mexico some kids work so hard that, by the end of the day, they are too tired and they don't feel like playing. I was one of those who didn't feel like playing at the end of the day.

At dinner my grandmother and uncles were so strict with us kids that we could not talk or whisper, but just had to be quiet and eat all that they put on our plates.

Ed was born in Mexico in a little village called Sangre. When he came to California, he sneaked under the fence; and his uncle was waiting at the other side. He was seven at the time. He went to school in Brawley, California until he was 10 years old. His brother came to Brawley from San José in the summer of 1950 and brought him to San José. The rest of his schooling was in San José Playa Elementary School. He ended up at James Lick High School. After high school he had several jobs, including roofing, chrome plating, molding, food processing and custodial work. Ed is a retired custodian from Los Altos High School. He's glad the library has a program that teaches people how to read.

Friendship



By Rodrigo Rodriguez

Felipe is my best friend. We have known each other for about 19 years. We met when we were little kids from the same neighborhood. I had a bike, and he did not. He asked me if he could ride it, and I said yes. Since then we have gone many places together. He took me to my first baseball game. As time passed, we confided in each other when we had problems.

About 1½ years ago in early November my friends and I went to Las Vegas to party and had a good time. Later that month my friend Felipe had a motorcycle accident that left him paralyzed. This tragedy had been hard on everyone. No matter what happens we will continue to be friends. We plan an outing together every Sunday.

Rodrigo is from San José. He is married. He came to PAR to improve his reading and writing skills. His goal is to eventually go to college. His hobbies are martial arts and collecting baseball cards. His tutor is Bertha.

A Great Bunch of People



By Addie Russell

I'm in a group called Silicon Valley Leather Craft Guild – a great bunch of people. I've been in the club for five or six years. We meet once a month for the general meeting. There is a secondary business meeting later in the month.

Let me tell you about some of the guys. Most of them have been doing this for many years. Bruce has been making sandals for a long time and is president of the club this year. Reg makes miniature saddles. I believe he's made 50 to 100 saddles that are historically authentic. They stand about 10 inches high and were used on warhorses, Pony Express, Hispanic, and Asian horses, and many other styles. Bill builds miniature stagecoaches. Some he builds from scratch. He does research and uses photos of stagecoaches from the Old West. Some he buys at thrift stores and refurbishes them. He fixes the leather straps that go between the

horses. Frank makes purses for his wife and his daughter out of cowhide. They look great. If it's for someone, he puts his or her name on it.

I'm just learning leather crafting. We have classes taught by members of the guild and some other people. We practice different techniques of leather tooling. I've made hair accessories and Christmas ornaments out of leather. You use a swivel knife to cut the pattern into the leather. You use a beveller to get a deepening effect, for example, that one leaf or flower petal is on top of another.

We not only help each other with the leather, we help with many other things. We send get-well cards if a member of the guild gets sick and also sympathy cards. We take trips to visit other leather crafters' shops where they make full-sized saddles. We have a great time and lots of fun.

Addie has lived in this area most of her life. She has made a lot of friends and hopes to make more. She loves turtles and has two cats, Shaggy and Squeaker. Addie is enjoying reading books on her own. She likes to read mysteries and folk tales.

Gauthier and Dumas Family Reunion



By Jacqueline Smith

Family times are the best of all. For example, I can still remember the summer of 1987. The first reunion I attended I really enjoyed that when we're together, we put God first in everything we do. It starts in the kitchen where we are preparing all kinds of delicious foods with Grandma Alberta. My sister Fan and I had so much fun making juice from seven vegetables using a new food processor and juicer. I can still taste it right now. So-o-o-good! It does the body good!

My sister Joyce made tacos. First she cooked ground beef and sauce while I fried taco shells. After they cooled off, we filled them with cheese, tomatoes, and lettuce and enjoyed a delicious meal with Spanish rice and refried beans. It was so yummy I can still smell them tonight! Can't you?

Sister Sarah and I baked an orange cake. She mixed the batter, and I grated lemons and oranges. I added

them to the mix. After it was baked, Sarah added lemon frosting and orange slices on the cake. You could smell that cake for three blocks. M-m-m-m!!!!

Each family member brings something to this gathering, small or big, to make the reunion exciting. We go to four different homes for dessert. Mothers serve their children, then their husbands. One of the ways we build fellowship is taking lots of pictures. Whenever there is a misunderstanding with the children, they are corrected and taught to forgive each other. This is done in a loving -caring way.

One thing that really stands out in my mind is when Auntie Ophelia told us, "Always be responsible adults." In other words, don't worry about other people's business; take care of your own business. We also want our young people to take charge at home, be leaders in the church, responsible citizens in their communities, be business owners, and buy their homes.

At the beginning we start with lots of fun, hugs, and kisses. About five or more greeters give out T-shirts

(Gauthier and Dumas). Everyone is so happy to wear them. When all of the members are present, we gather in a circle to give thanks to Jesus our Savior. My sisters and I had a wonderful time at the park praying for our families. The children were playing games and enjoying themselves, using their imagination around the lake - just having some good ol' fun, while the men played games like: dominoes, chess, checkers, horseshoes, volleyball, and other outdoor games.

Jackie and her husband, Leo, have three children, two sons and one daughter. She enjoys working on the computer. Jackie's reading has improved a lot, and now she is writing more. She writes to members of her family and to people in need.

My Family is My Best Friend

By Richard Solorio

My father always said, “You can count your best friends on one hand.” I’ve come to realize that my family is my best friend. My father, Jessie (Gavacho), was my best man at my wedding. He instilled strong work ethics and a sense of fair play and honesty. Gavacho has passed on. A day doesn’t pass by without one of his sayings (thecos) coming to my mind. “There are two kinds of people who eat the best fruit in the world: the rich who buy it and the poor who pick it.” Needless to say who we were.

My mother, Dolores (Nena), is my sunshine on a rainy day. Nena has encouraged me not to miss my tutoring sessions. Her smiling face and her enthusiastic manner are an inspiration to everyone. I’ve been able to rely on her for help. When my oldest daughter, Sil, was having teenage problems, Nena quickly took her in until we could move from South California to the Bay Area. Nena

encouraged Sil to stay in school and go to college. Sil now has a part-time job and is a junior at San José State University. I am so proud of Sil, and I owe a lot of my happiness to Nena.

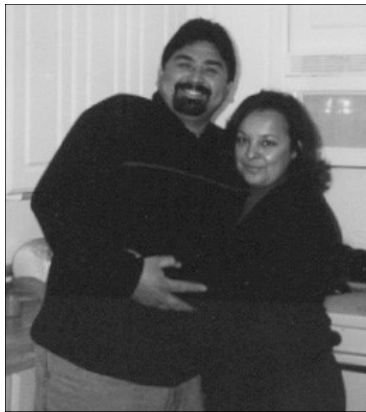
My wife, Rosa, of 25 years has become my rock of Gibraltar. Rosa keeps things very simple and knows how to work things out. I lost two good jobs in one year by plant closure and layoff. Rosa said, “We’ll get through this together, and you’ll find another good job.” Well, we got through those tough times; and I did find the good job.

One of our most important goals is to raise our children well. Rosa and I dedicated our lives to giving them a better opportunity in life. Rosa has a way of managing her jobs: household duties, raising the kids, and working on our marriage at great sacrifice to herself. Rosa and I played and grew up together when we were teenagers. Today we love and respect each other as adults. I know I can really count on Rose for the future.

God has blessed me with three wonderful children: Sil, 23; Santos, 15; and Jessica, 7. They bring much joy into

my life as I watch them growing up. I feel very lucky and proud to be able to have my family as my best friends.

Richard Solorio has been involved in PAR for a year. He is fulfilling his dream of mastering English by taking advantage of the PAR opportunity.



Richard and Rosa



Sil and Nena

My Best Friend

By Steve Son

I met Him when I was in seventh grade almost 30 years ago. He is in my heart, and He is always hugging me. He touches me always when I am mad, sad, whatever, whenever I feel lonely. He's Jesus. I want to praise Him and learn about Him as much as I can. I believe He will come again. I was born again because He died on the cross for my sins. He cleaned my sins. Sometimes I make a mistake, but I know what He wants. I became a Christian about 30 years ago.

Every week I go to church and praise Him. Right now I'm participating with my church praising team. I enjoy playing guitar and singing for Him.

I have been to China on two mission trips to teach the gospel. That made a strong impression on my Christian life. It totally changed my life style because I saw their life and what they need. I want to go again if I have a

chance. I think they need good news. That's simple. We are all sinners who must go to hell; but if we believe Him and confess our sins to Jesus, we'll be saved.

I'm sure He will cleanse our souls, and He promises eternal life. I want to introduce Him to people who have not heard of Jesus. There is only one way to believe "Jesus."

Steve was born in Korea in 1961. He started school when he was seven. He graduated from high school in 1979. After he graduated high school, Steve studied graphic design in college. He arrived in the United States in 1989. At first he lived with his sister in San José. He worked at a printing shop for three years. He started his own business in 1994. He has been doing business for almost 10 years. He lives in a house with his wife and two sons. Every Sunday he attends church with his family. He has three sisters and one brother. His parents live in San José, and his two sisters and brother live in Korea. One of his sisters lives in San José.

Laurie



By Pamela Tetzlaff

We were good friends. She helped me when I needed her. She went to the hospital with me one time. We went to a Gay Pride parade.

I met her family. I met her daughter. Her mom got me nice earrings, make-up, and seashells. I remember we went to a barbecue. I met her son, and we used to talk about sports. It was fun.

She was blonde. She was fun to be with. We went shopping together. We went to K-Mart. I remember one time we waited over an hour for the bus. We used to watch bus 25 and bus 73 on the other side of the street. I told her to light up a cigarette and the bus might show, so she did.

Pamela has been a learner in PAR for a number of years. She is a fast learner and an advanced reader, and she is working on writing skills. Pamela will soon be a success in both areas.

My Family Vacation to Chapare



By Maria Torrico

Once when I was about 14 years old, my family went during Easter vacation to Chapare, Bolivia. We drove five hours by bus to get to Chapare. It was my first time. I was so impressed because there were large mountains, big trees, and large tropical plants. They grew fruits like pineapple, oranges, papaya, and bananas. Chapare also had big rivers.

One day my cousins, brothers, and I got on a big log. Uncle José and Uncle Guillermo pushed us down the river. We had so much fun!

The next day we went fishing in a big boat. One of my cousins, Enrique, had an accident. When he reeled in his fishing line, it got tangled. He put the fishing hook in his pocket. He fixed the reel, then reached into his pocket for the hook. The hook went into his thumb. His father, my Uncle Maximo, was so angry. He said, "Why

did you put it in your pocket?”

I couldn't look. I said, “How are you going to take out the hook?” I was so impressed. Uncle José took out the emergency box, took the fishing hook out of Enrique's thumb, and put in some stitches.

Chapare was a beautiful place, and it was fun to go on vacation with my family. I loved it!

Maria was born in Bolivia. She has four brothers, José, Ricardo, Regis, and Freddy. Her father worked as a dispatcher with the Taquina Beer Company. Her mom was a messenger in the office of the company.

Maria came to California in 1991. She is married and has two children, Vaneza, 10, and Bryant, 7. They love coming to the Families for Literacy program. Maria says she loves Partners in Reading.

Cheaper By The Dozen

By Daisy Ung



On March 18, 2004, my new grandson was born. His name is Mathias William, and his weight is eight pounds and 12 ounces. He is my 12th grandchild and the biggest born. Now I have six grandsons and six granddaughters.

My first grandchild is a boy, and the new one is a boy, too. In between are boys and girls. The new baby is so cute. He wants to be held all the time. As soon as he is put down, he will cry. He is just a newborn; but when I talk to him, he keeps looking and listening to me.

Sometimes he is smiling at me, like he knows what is going on.

Sometimes they go to the park or movies with me. I always have a wonderful time around them. I enjoy being with my grandchildren. They are my best friends. I never dreamed I would have so many grandchildren. They make me proud and happy.

My grandchildren knew how to read and write when they were four or five years old. If I don't understand some English, I always ask them to help me. They are very special to me. I love them all the same.

I have three grandchildren living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I don't see them very much. The other four are living in Fremont, California. I don't see them very much either. The five living in San José, California, I see a lot. I have so much fun with them.

I still have Mom. She is 95 years old; and she is living in San Francisco, California, by herself. My father passed away two years ago. He was 96 years old. He came to the United States when he was nine years old.

Daisy has been retired for over 12 years. She is very busy. She goes to the senior centers to play ping-pong and go line dancing. Daisy wants to thank the PAR staff and her wonderful teacher for helping her to learn English.

Together Again



By Jesse Valtierra

In the beginning I had custody of my daughter, Casandra. She was six months old and lived with me and my mom. My mom and my sister, LaLa, helped me raise Casandra. When Casandra was two years old, I met Elizabeth. She was very attracted to Casandra, and we became a family.

When my daughter was five years old, she went with her mom. When she was 15 years old, she decided to live with me. Casandra is very happy to be with her friends and with me and Elizabeth. She had to go to a new school. She was nervous; but when we went to sign her in, she saw her old friend and that made her feel happy. Because of that, her grades are improving.

Because of all the time that we see each other, Casandra is opening up more to me. She asked me to show her how to drive, but I hesitated because I was

nervous. I asked Elizabeth to help me, so she showed Casandra how to drive. I said, "Let me out of the car." A few days later I felt more comfortable because Elizabeth told me that she is a good driver. So I trusted her, and I let her drive me to Tracy and back. She did good. So, because Elizabeth and I showed her how to drive, Casandra helps me learn to read. She is happy to help me, and I am happy to help her. I thank God that I have her back in my life.

Jesse was born in Mexico and raised in San José. He has worked most of his life as an auto body repairman. Thanks to the prayers of his mother and his determination to better his life, Jesse has been clean and sober for more than four years. He now wants to learn to read and write because he realizes the importance of education. He would like everyone to know that any change is possible through faith and determination. He is very thankful to the San José Public Library and the staff of Partners in Reading and Simon, his tutor, for teaching him how to read.

My Mom



By Mustafa Yassin

My first memory of my mom was when I was little, and she was coming home from work one day. I ran out to our house to meet her. My brother wanted to go to her first, so he pushed me down. My mom was very angry with him. She asked, “Why do you treat your brother that way?” and she punished him. She taught us always to be fair to each other.

To help us learn, she treated each person in our family the way that person needed. If the family had a problem, the first person we talked to was my mom. Many people, neighbors as well as family and friends, came to my mom for help or advice. She would take care of their children. When people were sick, she would help them. Sometimes she would even buy medicine for them. People came to her every day.

She cooked wonderful food. You could smell her cooking

from a long way off. I feel very special toward my mom when I think of the food she cooked.

We lived in the city of Hargeysa, which had about two million people. I loved living there, and I had friends and went to school.

Fighting started among the tribes of Somalia, and in 1982 bombing started, too. Half of our house was destroyed, and most of our things were stolen. We tried to live in what was left of our house. The schools were taken over by the government, and teachers were put in jail. Sometimes they were shot.

My father had a store. During this time, soldiers raided and took whatever they wanted. Soon my father could not take care of our family. My mom said it wasn't safe anymore, so we moved to a village of about 500 people called Jilqle. We lived in a house with my aunt's family. There were 13 people living in four rooms. I hated it there. I didn't have friends. There were no schools, and it was too dangerous to even go outside because of the raids.

I saw again how strong my mom was and how everyone looked to her for what we should do. She kept us busy with work. She taught us and read to us. She made up games for us.

A few years ago, my parents decided the family should come to the United States to live because Somalia was so dangerous. They sent my older brother, Kase, first. Then I came in 2001. It will take five to seven years for all of my family to come.

We talk to each other on the phone every other week, but I will be glad when we are together. I miss my mom the most of all. In my family I am called Abu, but my mom calls me Mustafa, so that is the name I use. Most people say I look like her. That makes me very happy.

Mustafa attends both the Partners in Reading tutoring program and Delmar High School Adult School. He hopes to get his GED and go on to college. He speaks both Somalian and English. Mustafa works at Target as a cashier. One of his hobbies is playing basketball.

