

---

# Memories



Partners in Reading  
Adult Literacy Program  
San José Public Library  
2003

---

---

## **Book Production Team**

Editor: Gail Nyhan

Desktop Publishing: Mary Ann Froman

Photography: Chrissy Chang

Design and Layout: Jennifer G. Lee

Production Coordinator: Ruth A. Kohan

The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the San José Public Library, the City of San José, or any other funders of the Partners in Reading program. No official endorsement by these agencies should be inferred.



**The Rotary Club of Campbell  
San Jose West**

PARTNERS IN READING



San José Public Library



---

# 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 Jose West Rotary Club for their donation supporting the printing of this publication
  - To our other funders for fiscal year 2002/03: 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.
-

---

---

---

# Contents

Introduction .....	8
--------------------	---

## Childhood

I Remember My Childhood, <i>Sharmane Augusta</i> .....	12
I Remember, <i>Brenda Barajas</i> .....	14
Memories I Won't Forget, <i>Miguel Bucio</i> .....	16
My Little Town, <i>Victor Cadenas</i> .....	17
The Mango Tree, <i>Ronda Enriquez</i> .....	19
I Wish I Could... , <i>Chino Haddock</i> .....	21
When I Was Five, <i>Cassandra Harper</i> .....	23
Barefoot Memories, <i>Maxine Johnson</i> .....	25
Starting School & Work, <i>Tony Lopez</i> .....	27
Food in Somalia, <i>Ramadan Munye</i> .....	29
Playland, <i>Gordon Nelson</i> .....	31
My Town, Taquina, <i>Maria Torrico</i> .....	33

---

---

## Family

My Mother, <i>Debbie Hodge</i> .....	38
My Role Model, <i>Bonnie Martinez</i> .....	39
My First Baby, <i>Elsa O'Besso</i> .....	41
My Grandma, <i>Hector Ramirez</i> .....	42
My Grandmother, <i>Addie Russell</i> .....	45
When My Family First Joined Church, <i>Jackie Smith</i> ....	47
Concepcion Alvares Solorio (Conchita) 1908-1998, <i>Richard Solorio</i> .....	50
Early Arrival, <i>Daisy Ung</i> .....	53

## A New Life

My Fantastic Dream with Angels, <i>Elizabeth Camacho</i> ....	56
I Made It, <i>Milton Johnson</i> .....	58
Sea, <i>Huong Nguyen</i> .....	60
Building a New Life for My Family, <i>Juana Ortiz</i> .....	64
Life is Like a School, <i>Maria Vargas</i> .....	66

---

---

## Learning to Read

Improving My Self-Esteem, <i>Elizabeth Lara</i> .....	70
About Memories, <i>Patricia Macklin</i> .....	72
Behind the Spotlight, <i>Darryl Redfield</i> .....	73
My Struggle to Read, <i>Jesse Valtierra</i> .....	75

## Work

It Was a Great Day, <i>Samuel Cruz</i> .....	78
My Story, <i>Maxine Johnson</i> .....	80
About Work, <i>Nancy Rowe</i> .....	82
Family Tradition, <i>Juan Vidal</i> .....	83

## Trips

My Trip to Little Rock, <i>Labryon Barton</i> .....	86
Vacations Unlimited, <i>Michael Fortier</i> .....	87

---

---

# Introduction

This collection of stories reflects the interesting lives of the learners in Partners in Reading, the adult literacy program of the San José Public Library. These adults are working to improve their reading and writing skills by meeting each week with a volunteer tutor. For most learners, this is their first attempt to express their ideas in written form for publication. They each worked very hard to draft, revise, and polish their story, with their tutor's assistance.

The theme of the book is memories. Many learners chose to write about childhood. Their grandmothers play an important role in these recollections. You will be transported by stories describing idyllic childhoods in small villages in Mexico. Don't miss Ronda's enchanting view of life in Hawaii as seen by a seven-year-old perched in a mango tree. In sharp contrast, a young boy named Bill did a man's work on a plantation in Arkansas.

Other learners wrote about making a new life for themselves and their families. Huong's harrowing escape from Vietnam will hold your attention from start to finish.



---

Maria describes her struggle to start over in this country through hard work and the challenge of learning English. Sam tells how he finally succeeded in finding a job after being laid off.

There are many other compelling stories. Each writer has a unique story to tell. Enjoy this glimpse into the lives of these new authors.

Gail Nyhan

---

---

---

# Childhood

---

---

# I Remember My Childhood

By Sharmane Augusta



I remember my childhood more than my adulthood.

I was on my bike riding. But I did not know that my dad took off the training wheels. I was hurt because I fell down. I saw other kids riding their bikes. Well, I was going to get back on my bike and never fall down again. I rode my bike all over Hamilton Air Force Base.

I remember my mother was making a pallet that was a bed because we were going to have a long drive. We were going to Colorado to the Air Force Academy. There were long, winding roads that went up in the mountains. It was scary if you looked down. I told my sister Renee to sit by the window and I'll sit in the middle because I was afraid the car would fall down. My mother read a book to us, and we calmed down and went to sleep on the pallet.

In Colorado, I went to Pine Valley School. At school we had a talking tree that talked about things like poison ivy and what peppermint smelled like. What I did not know

---

was that the talking tree was just a recording of my principal's voice to give us nature lessons.

On my first day at Pine Valley School, I met a girl named Margaret Moorhead. Every Friday, I would go over to her house. We would make tea and have cookies and turn the light off and look at "Dark Shadows" on TV and get scared.

My sister Renee and I saw a lot of snow in Colorado. One year there was a blizzard so we did not go to school all week. Our mother taught us how to make homemade bread and cookies. She made hot chocolate. We played games like pickup sticks, Old Maid, and Chinese checkers.

I think I had a great childhood.

Sharmane has learned how to work on the computer. She thinks that she is getting better with her reading. She hopes to get her degree soon in childcare.

---

# I Remember

**By Brenda Barajas**

I remember when I lived in Mexico, everything was so different than here. I was 10 years old and all my cousins and neighbors used to get together once a week, or sometimes after school, to play games. The games were so different, they seemed healthier. We played hide and seek, we sang songs that I don't even remember the names of, and we had a lot of fun.

At Christmas the whole family got together. My cousins and I played a game called "Onion." You are supposed to sit on the floor back to back and hold everybody by the waist. The last person left has to pull the first person on the line and if she succeeds, the line keeps pulling people. As the line gets bigger, it will get stronger; and if you can pull everybody, then your team is the winner. That was the finest game that I can remember.

We also sang a lot of songs. One game song is called "The Snake of the Sea." There were two people holding their hands like a bridge. There was a line of people

---

holding each other at their waists going through the bridge. You sing the song all the time, and when you stop singing you are supposed to hold a person between your hands. That person will then lose. You keep singing and losing people from the line until only one person is left and that person is the winner. Sometimes I miss being a child again in Mexico.

Brenda is 27 years old. She was born in Mexico and lived there until she was 15 years old. She has lived in the USA for 12 years. She met her husband in high school and got married when she was 15 years old. She had her first baby at 17. His name is Luis, and he is already 10 years old. She had her daughter at 23 years old. Stephanie is now five. She keeps herself busy all the time with work and all the projects that the kids have. She also likes to work out. That is her favorite hobby.

Brenda went to school until 10th grade, and she did one year of college to get her cosmetology license. That was a hard year for her because her kids were little and she was going to school full time, but she did it and she felt proud of herself. There were a lot of girls who dropped the class because it was too stressful.

Now she is working in Los Gatos. She rents her own station, and she has her own clients. She has a flexible schedule, which is good when you have kids. She is planning to open her own business in the future. She joined the Partners in Reading program to improve her English reading and writing skills to help her succeed and to help her children with their homework.

The only thing that she has to say is that if you have a dream, make it come true by keeping a picture in your mind of what you want to do, and it will surely come true.

---

# Memories I Won't Forget

**By Miguel Bucio**

I remember when I was four years old.

I was living in Lasaro, Mexico. Everybody knew me in my town so I could go anywhere around the town. I spent my days in different places.

One place I liked to go was to my friend's chicken farm. At the farm I helped to care for the chickens. I gave them water and food. Their food smelled good because it was made of natural things like corn and flour. I even gave the chickens their shots so they would be healthy.

The chickens always made a lot of noise! The little baby chicks were very cute and so soft! I also helped collect the eggs. I really miss those days a lot. I wish I was little again!

Miguel would like to thank Partners in Reading because they have made a big change in his life. Miguel has a beautiful family - his mom, two sisters and three brothers. Miguel is the proud uncle of three lovely little princesses.



---

# My Little Town



**By Victor Cadenas**

I remember my little town where I was born. It is located in Michoacan, Mexico, and its name is San Simon. Its population at that time was around five or six hundred people. My town is in the middle of two big mountains, and there is a river that goes through it.

People in my town didn't need an alarm clock to wake up in the morning. They used the sound of the roosters or the ringing of the church's bell as an alarm clock. Everybody knew each other, and I used to have a lot of friends. We liked to play cowboys and Indians, tag, hide and seek, and soccer. One of my favorite sports was swimming in the Duero River that goes through my town.

I grew up in a large family. We were five brothers and seven sisters. Our economic situation was very bad, but I enjoyed my childhood. I stayed in my town until I was 18, and then I came to the United States. Now, after 16 years in this country, I still miss my little town in Mexico.

---

I'm married. I have a beautiful wife and two wonderful children, Cynthia and Victor Manuel.

I hope one day I can go back to the place where I was born and where my parents live. I love the United States because I have spent half of my life here and my children were born in this country; but I wish one day I can go back to my little place in Michoacan, where a small piece of my heart lives.

Victor was born in Mexico in 1969. He came to the United States in 1987. He went to ESL classes and got his GED certificate two years ago. He just started in Partners in Reading because he wants to learn how to read and write in English. He hopes one day he can go to college and prepare for a career. He works in a restaurant and enjoys his job, but one day he hopes to get a better one. He wants to thank his tutor Maggie and all the staff at Partners in Reading for this opportunity.

---

# The Mango Tree



**By Ronda Enriquez**

I remember when I was seven years old living in Kalapana, Hawaii. We had a big red house with lots of acres. There were trees and bushes, but one thing I remember the most was the trees. As a kid, I loved the trees. Almost every day I was climbing them and going from tree to tree. When I climbed the trees, I felt like it was a world all my own, like nobody was there, only me. It felt good to be up in the tree because it took me away.

Every time my family would say, "Are you crazy? Going up in the tree, you might hurt yourself," but I never listened. When I climbed the trees, I always had my lunch, my bow and arrows, my rope, and my spoon that I made from a coconut shell. When I sat in the trees I could see almost everything. What a lovely sight it was!

There was this one tree that I remember. It was a mango tree, and it was the biggest tree near the highway. There was a long, thick branch that just went over the highway. How I loved sitting out on the branch, because it felt free.

---

The things I could see were my house, other trees, the dogs, all the other animals we had, mangoes, cars that passed, lots of rocks, and most of all the wonderful sight of the ocean. I used to sit up there for hours, eating mangoes. How good they tasted! The tree was rough to the touch, and the air smelled so fresh. It was silent. The only things I could hear were the birds or sometimes nothing but the wind. When I sat in the tree, I used to look out into the ocean, dreaming I was there and wondering what was beyond it. Was there more water or more land? But one thing was on my mind: I was free. It was a wonderful and beautiful sight to see.

Well, 18 years have passed, and I can still remember my mango tree. Most of all I remember the wonderful view of the ocean and how good it felt. Can you just imagine sitting in the tree and looking out at the ocean? It will set you free.

Ronda was born in Hawaii and moved to San Jose when she was 11. She enjoys reading, listening to music and watching movies. During the day she watches her two-year-old niece, Melissa. Ronda is also in PAR, where she is learning to spell better and, with the help of her tutor, she is improving.

---

# I Wish I Could...



**By Chino Haddock**

Sometimes I've felt that life is full of choices, but you can't make any decision. Sometimes I've felt whenever you make a decision, the ending just is not like the way you want.

I remember when I was a child, about five or six. My family was poor, but we had many kids and needed food. My mother decided to give away some kids so they could save some money. They decided to send away my younger sister and me to the next village to some rich family. Every night I was crying and wished someone in my family would come pick me up, but the consequence was disappointment. At that time I wished I could be like an elf... use a magic wand to point anywhere I want to go, eat anything I could, but there was only one thing I really wished I could do. Just go back to my family.

I think the magic was working for me. After six months, the rich people sent me back to my family because I

---

made a lot of trouble for the rich people. I think they didn't like me anymore. That's the reason I went back to my real family.

I was so happy when I saw my mother. They promised me to never separate my family anymore.

Chino is from Taiwan. She met her husband in Taiwan. They got married in 1996 in California. They have a daughter who is six years old. Chino called the library to help her learn to write English. That was two years ago. The first year she was shy about writing, but now she feels that she is willing to take more chances to write a little story about herself.

---

# When I Was Five



**By Casandra Harper**

I remember when I was five years old in Texas and riding a bike, and a dog chased me around the block. I rode around the block for a long time, and it was a hot summer day. I was scared and rode for a long time and very fast. My neighbor watched me ride and ride around the block many times.

The dog was a little black dog, and my bike was a big white and pink bike. I could not sit on the seat because I was too little for the bike. As I rode, I tried to kick the dog away with my bare foot. My dad, brothers and sisters were in the house watching TV. After many trips around the block, my mother came home and rescued me from the little black dog. My mom yelled at me to stop, and I told her, "One more time!" I continued to ride around the block one more time before I stopped. I rode the bike into the yard and jumped off the bike and ran

---

into the house. The little black dog stopped running and went home.

My whole family came out of the house and laughed at me. I wanted to play with the little black dog. After I caught my breath, I rode my bike back down the street to see if the dog would chase me again, but he did not chase me again. He just lay there on the grass looking at me with his tongue hanging out. Even today I can remember how disappointed I was when the dog would not play with me. I can also look back and laugh at the dog chasing me.

Casandra was born in Texas and moved to California when she was five years old. She is a graduate of James Lick High School in San Jose. Casandra is a single mom of three daughters, ages 14,13 and 10. She joined Partners in Reading in 1999. She loves to cook and enjoys spending time with her family. She is excited to have her first story published.



Casandra with her tutor, Diane



---

# Barefoot Memories



**By Maxine Johnson**

I loved springtime. The weather began to get warm. Flowers started to bloom, and you could hear the birds sing. It was a sign that we could begin to take off our shoes and run around barefoot. I did not like to wear shoes. I loved thinking about playing in my bare feet. It felt so good to feel the sand and dirt under my feet. Sinking my toes in the sand felt good. I would run around with my hands in the air and fall down and frolic in the sand with my sisters. We would lie down and stretch our arms out to each other. Then we would get up and chase each other. The sand felt especially good to our feet on hot and humid days. We had several hot and humid days in Arkansas.

During the hot days, we would lay under the cottonwood trees and cover our feet with sand to cool them off. There were a lot of cottonwood trees in our neighborhood. They grew real tall and wide. They gave us lot of shade. When we climbed the cottonwood trees,

---

we played a game. We wanted to see who could climb the highest and farthest out on the limbs of the tree. Then we would pull the cottonwood off the limbs. We would throw cottonwood balls at each other and have cottonwood fights. That was so much fun.

Even though we went to school in the springtime, we could not wait until we got home. Then we would take off our shoes and run and play. When summer came, we could no longer play. We had to work in the fields. We had to work in the fields all summer and through the fall until November.

Maxine came to Partners in Reading in 2002. She likes to help others. She also likes to help at her church and belongs to several organizations there. She enjoys coming to Partners in Reading because she is learning to read better, and she likes her tutor, Mary Cates.

---

# Starting School & Work

By Tony Lopez



I remember my first day of school. I rode the school bus for the first time. My bus driver's name was Frank. Thirteen of my cousins rode the school bus with me. My cousins and I lived on a ranch in Evergreen and went to school together.

Bobbie and I were in kindergarten, and my other cousins were in higher grades.

In the summer we moved to Cupertino to pick prunes. We lived in tents. We woke up at 4 a.m. to get ready for work. We started at 5 a.m. to pick prunes in the fields. We quit at 5 p.m. We went home to get ready for dinner. My Aunt Aurora and Mother cooked together. They made chicken and beans and rice and tortillas for dinner.

Picking prunes was hard work for a little boy, and I would have rather been in school. I missed all my friends

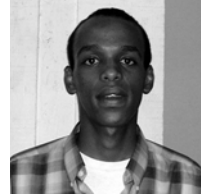
---

there and the fun we had.

Tony Lopez has lived in San Jose all his life. He is very motivated and is happy to be learning to read, write and spell. He heard about the PAR program and called the library. He has been in the program since February.

---

# Food in Somalia



**By Ramadan Munye**

In my country, Somalia, people eat differently than in the U.S. We eat three times a day – breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack at 3 or 4 p.m. Some people eat healthy food; some don't. Most of my country's people eat fresh food or dessert. At breakfast, something we eat is like a pancake, but it's bigger than a pancake, and we call it bedeno. For lunch, we eat many different vegetables, which mixed together make a tasty sauce to eat with spaghetti. Dinner is very simple. Everyone eats whatever they want, like two slices of bread with peanut butter and jelly, or noodle soup, or rice soup, always something not heavy.

In my country, people walk a lot, but some drive or ride their bikes. When it is summer, it is very hot. When it is winter, it is cooler. People don't need to wear jackets to work or school. Most of the people are healthy, but some aren't. So that's the way the people in my country stay healthy. You aren't going to see many fat people in

---

## Somalia.

Ramadan came from Somalia to the U.S. with his family on November 30, 1999. He was fifteen years old. He went to Del Mar High School. He was so surprised to see so many different people and subjects. He didn't speak any English. He couldn't read the alphabet or any words. Ramadan started in ESL class. He could only stay at Del Mar High School until he turned 18.

Now Ramadan takes an English skills class with Metropolitan Adult Education in Campbell. He also comes to the library for the free reading program at Partners in Reading. He is learning how to say the vowels and how to read new words and how to study on his own.

Ramadan took the written test for a driver's license. He couldn't pass five times. The sixth time he made it, and now he has a driver's license. Now Ramadan has a dream to get a high school diploma.

---

# Playland



**By Gordon Nelson**

I remember 1956 when I was 10 years old, living on Filbert St. in San Francisco, where I grew up. I used to ride my bike from my home down to the beach, which was called Playland. I remember watching a fat lady laughing, but she was a part of the decoration, not a real lady. Looking at the fat lady laughing made me feel good. I went on different types of rides, and I played games like basketball and tossing baseballs at toy dolls.

Sometimes my friend, Paul Bigi, would walk with me to Playland. We both ate hot dogs and cotton candy and had sodas at the Cotton Candy Wagon. Then we walked home. Sometimes I think and wonder what happened to my friend, Paul Bigi.

I hope he is ok, because we had lots of fun together.

---

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.

He has a son, who is 24, 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 he is doing pretty good at reading.



---

# My Town, Taquina



**By Maria Torrico**

I remember the town where I grew up - Taquina, Bolivia. It was a small town with less than 100 families. There were tall mountains around the town. There were different kinds of trees and plants in many colors of green. From the peak of the mountains came water, beautiful and clean like crystal.

Taquina Beer Company was the only company in town. There was a canal from the river to the company. The beer company stored the clean water. When the company saw rain in the mountains, they closed big wooden doors to keep out the water. They knew the rain brought rushing, dirty water.

When it rained, the river came very fast and noisy, carrying dirt, stones and tree branches. It came so fast and sometimes changed directions. You could not stop it. It was like an enormous monster.

The river was far away from the town. Parents and

---

children walked to the river. Parents taught that the water was dangerous when it was raining. When the water became nice and clean, women came to wash clothes and children played in the river. We made pools with stones and swam and jumped in them.

Early in the morning there were buses coming from different places making a lot of noise. The people were going to work at the beer company. The children were going to school. Some students in high school and college took the bus to a larger city.

When children were at school and workers were at work, the town was very quiet. I heard the birds singing. I heard a small river in front of my school. I smelled beer because the water came from the beer company. People used the water to grow flowers. The women carried them in company buses to sell in the city.

I loved living in Taguina, Bolivia. I never want to forget the town where I grew up.

---

Maria was born in Bolivia and came to California in December 1991. After one year she met her husband, Ed. They have two children, Vaneza, 9, and Bryant, 6. Maria came to Partners in Reading in October 2001 because she wanted to read books to her children. She is very happy because she is learning a lot. She says her children love being in the Families for Literacy program. She would like to thank the people who fund Partners in Reading.

---

---

---

**Family**

---

---

# My Mother

**By Debbie Hodge**

My mother was the best of the best. I loved her dearly.

There were 13 children in our family. My oldest brother died when he was three days old.

My father was a house mover; he drove an 18-wheel truck. We lived in Gallup, New Mexico, until I was 16 years old.

My dad died at the age of 45 years. Mother had to raise us 12 children all by herself. The oldest children quit school as each got into seventh grade to get jobs to help my mother with the family. My mother passed away at the age of almost 80.

Debbie has four children, all grown. She has been married for 26 years. Her husband is a minister. Debbie works in the medical field. She has three grandchildren. She likes to sew.

---

# My Role Model

**By Bonnie Martinez**

My role model is my mom because no matter how old I am, she tells me never to give up. She's been there in the good times and bad times! I thank God for blessing me with a Christian mother like her. She is always praying for her unsaved kids and teaching us the way we should be. When my brothers and sisters and I were little kids, my Mom worked many hours to make us enough money to feed us and buy all of the things we needed, and at the same time taking care of us and giving us all the love we needed.

When they asked me to write a story, I got so excited because I knew one person I wanted to write about was my mom. I want everybody to know the kind of person she is. My mom is always thinking of others, has never been selfish, and is always putting God first in her life.

My mom knew I was in a lot of pain because I could not read my Bible. She encouraged me to go to Partners in

---

Reading.

Another thing that I have to thank my mom for is that she encouraged me to be a good person and to love God with all my heart, like she does, and never to feel lonely or sad because I know that she and God are always with me.

And up to this day, she's been an awesome and loving person. And I want her to know that I love her with all my heart!

Bonnie was born in San Antonio, Texas, and moved to San Jose when she was very young. She is very active in her church, loves to spend time with her family, and loves to go to the movies. She is a childcare worker and loves children, especially her nieces and nephews. She says, "No matter how old you are, it is never too late to come to PAR and learn to read. If I can do it, you can do it, too!"



Bonnie with her mom



---

# My First Baby

**By Elsa O'Besso**

I remember when my son was born. At that time I lived in San Francisco. I don't have family in California. My husband drove me to the hospital at midnight because I was ready for delivery of my first baby. My husband was scared when the doctor gave the baby into his hands. I couldn't go to school because I was very busy with him. When he was sick, I had to take him to the doctor every day. But now he is okay.

Elsa came from Lima, Peru. She has two brothers in Peru, one sister in Brazil, one brother and sister in Italy, and her mother with two brothers in New Jersey. She has been here since 1987. She is married and has two kids, Louis, 8, and Michael, 15.

Elsa thinks this country is a different world because it offers a lot of opportunities for everybody. She thinks that she has found the perfect place for her children to study for a good education because without education you can't accomplish anything. She likes to live in this country because she enjoys the freedom of life in America. But the most important things are freedom of speech, respect for human life, and the women's right to vote.

Elsa is a school bus driver. She loves her job because it lets her see her kids grow because she only works when they have school.

Elsa is going to Partners in Reading to improve her writing skills, reading, and speaking. She says thank you.

---

# My Grandma



**By Hector Ramirez**

The place that I like most is where I was born and grew up until the age of 13. That was in Sinaloa, Mexico. That place is a beautiful spot, but it was more beautiful when I was just a child. I remember four beautiful rivers where I used to go and swim with a lot of other children for hours and hours. I also remember many creeks with trees, the mountains too, and all the wild animals, especially the beautiful birds. I remember that I always wanted to catch a red cardinal, but my grandma always said to me, "Let them be free, Manuelito." I will never forget that beautiful place where I was born. There used to be all kinds of wild fruits and we could eat them without buying. Nobody owned them; anybody could eat them. When we used to visit our relatives in other valleys, we used to walk in the middle of the night under a beautiful shining moon without fear that someone would hurt us. People were nice in those days. I miss those days when I used to live with my grandma and my three dogs. That's the place that I still like the most.

---

I will never forget my grandma. She was a part of my life; she was the light of my eyes. My grandma used to love me just the way I was. She was beautiful and tall with long hair. She was white with big blue eyes. She used to wear long dresses with an apron. I remember when my mother wanted to spank me, I used to run to my grandma; and she used to hide me under her apron. My grandma was everything for me. One thing that I still remember is when she gave me a gift, a white puppy, the most beautiful gift that I will never forget. That was my first dog, and I named him Palomo. Palomo grew up beautifully, and he was a good dog. He was very obedient. Everybody in the house liked him.

My grandma used to take to the fields in the month when they were getting green and the plants and all the trees were about to bud out. She used to take me there and ask me, "Do you like what you see, Manuelito? Look around, look in front of you and see how the wind is playing with the green grass by making those waves on it. Look, Manuelito, do you see it, Manuelito? Do you like what you see?"

"Yes, Grandma," I would answer her. "Yes, Grandma, I also like those big hills, Grandma. But I like you more than anything, Grandma. Because you gave me

---

Palomito, my little white dog. And he's beautiful, too, like the green grass, and the plants, and all the trees and flowers."

"Yes, Manuelito," she would answer me. And she would say to me, "Stay quiet and listen when the birds are singing, and notice that when the fields are getting green, and the plants and flowers and all the trees are about to bud out, birds sing more gracefully. Do you notice, Manuelito?"

"Yes, Grandma. And I like the red cardinals. They sing gracefully, too. Did you ever hear a cardinal singing, Grandma?"

"No," she would answer me, "but they are as handsome as you are, Manuelito."

Hector Ramirez, 41, has been in the program more than six years. He has had five tutors. Born in Sinaloa, Mexico, he came to this country at 13 to work. He had no education before Partners in Reading. He has worked with other parents at Headstart to encourage parent and child education. Hector is married and has four children. Manuelito is his middle name.

---

# My Grandmother



**By Addie Russell**

My grandma, Rachel, was born in Oklahoma on Thanksgiving in 1905. She had five brothers. They lived on a farm. She and her mother cooked a lot of food for people who worked for them. Sometimes there were maybe five or 20 farmhands to feed, so it took a lot of time. When she wasn't cooking, she watched her brothers at work and play. None of them had a lot of time to play. They made the best of it.

She met my grandpa, Bill. I'm not too sure how long they dated. But they must have been very happy! On July 21, 1921, they got married. I know my Aunt Ruth came first, my mom, Dorothy, second, and my Uncle Ray third – two or three years apart.

I'm not too sure when they moved to California. But they got here. Grandpa worked a lot of jobs. My grandma was busy, watching the kids grow up. Life was different then.

---

During the Depression in the 1920's, everyone didn't have a lot of food or toys. People worked hard and long hours for little money to bring home. So they moved around a lot.

Grandma and Grandpa came to California and made a place for the family. Both Grandpa and Grandma worked many years for Sunsweet, a company out near Spartan Stadium that packaged dried fruit. The kids grew up, went to school, and did what kids do.

I loved my grandparents. My mother and I lived with them from the time I was little. I'm glad they were an important part of my life.

Addie has lived in San Jose most of her life. She now has three cats to take care of. She likes to do volunteer work with children and art.

---

# When My Family First Joined Church

By Jackie Smith



I remember when my family and I joined Golden Altar Ministry World Outreach Church. The pastor was Cal Cook and first lady Dee. When I was single, I remember going to Bible study in their home in the early '80's. Later the Lord placed us in a Spanish-speaking community to win the neighborhood for Christ. We met once a week for Bible study.

I remember being in Missionary Ministry, which is men and women. The members provide food, clothing, and God's Holy Word to the misplaced. My children and I were in Street Ministry. We knocked on doors and shared Christ in neighborhoods. Sherman, Jasper, Leah, and I went to parks. It was a wonderful place to meet and greet! It was a blessing to be a part of this ministry. We sang praises, and people were drawn into the worship service as a different minister preached once a week.

Leah and Angelina were in the youth department. They

---

were a very unique ministry in that while studying God's Word, they also took time out for special activities. My son and Kwanzaa loved being in Children's Ministry. They were growing by leaps and bounds. They were memorizing Bible verses, singing children's Bible songs and doing marches, and learning Bible stories of Jesus Christ. Once a month they blessed the members of our family church and visitors with Christian plays. Joyce and Leah helped in Kitchen Ministry. This group of women, men, and young people were glad to fix delicious, healthy food every Sunday. They also helped all who were sick.

Our God is an awesome God!!! This was the most important part of the service to me and my family. It's where we spend time worshipping and glorifying Jesus Christ through songs and prayers and heard the preacher teach God's message! In Spanish you would say, "Palabra de Dios y alabanzas: for God's word and praises." There have been many baby dedications, weddings, baptisms, and people praying to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. I pray and hope that this article has helped you understand when my family and I first joined church.



---

Jackie has three children, two sons and one daughter. She is employed by the Santa Clara Office of Education as an Educational Specialist and Home Health Aide, currently working with children and the elderly. She is a member of Golden Altar Ministry World Outreach in San Jose.

---

# Concepcion Alvarez Solorio (Conchita) 1908-1998

By Richard Solorio

I remember waking up in my grandmother Conchita's bed to the sound of clanking pans and the aroma of chorizo and eggs cooking.

I would peek into the kitchen and see my Conchita at the stove juggling three things at one time - making homemade tortillas, breakfast and lunch. I'd watch her do all these things with a smile and love of life. As my father, uncles and older cousins would be getting ready for work in the fields, I would run over to her to hug her. She would pat me on the back and sit me at the table. I would say goodbye to everyone as they would leave to work. It would just be me and my Conchita. She would give me a taco and a cup of café, and she would sit and tell me stories of how she and her sister, tía Rafaela, came to America.

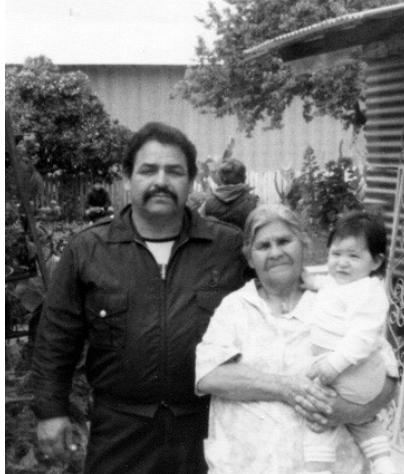
We would pass the time listening to the radio in Spanish.

---

As the years passed by we moved away, but we always visited. My family would pack in the car and head to Fresno to visit my Conchita. We would arrive, and my father would sing out, “Conchita, Conchita de la mar, dónde estas?” She would awake with a smile and a laugh. She would go straight to the kitchen and start cooking, as we would sit around talking and laughing while we were waiting for that fantastic food she was known for.

My Conchita and my father have since passed on. My tía Rafaela is still living next door to the house I’ve visited all my life. To this day when I smell these foods cooking, the warm memories come flowing back to me of how much I loved my Conchita.

Richard Solorio is a middle-aged person with a family that he loves very much. He has been married for 24 years to his wife, Rosa. They have three children. He has finally decided to commit himself to learn how to read and write better.



Richard's father — Gavacho,  
Conchita, & her granddaughter Nicole



Conchita

---

# Early Arrival



**By Daisy Ung**

My first grandchild, Michael, is 16 years old. He was born at home because he was two months early. He weighed under five pounds. That was wintertime in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was cold and snowed a lot. The air smelled like fresh ice, and the ground was covered with snow. It looked and smelled wonderful.

The whole family felt joyful and happy - especially me, because I was a first time grandmom. That was good news that I had been awaiting for a long time. I felt like my dream came true.

When Michael was crying, we all ran for him - my daughter Kathy, her husband Ed, her mother-in-law - Mrs. Hoy, and I. Whoever got there first had the chance to hold him. Kathy told us to put him on top of our stomachs, because the top of the stomach felt just like the inside of the mom's stomach before birth. If we held him the other ways, he would still cry. But if we held him

---

on the top of the stomach, he would stop crying.

Now I have five grandsons and six granddaughters. I love them all. I remember when they were born. They are all special for me. I have a lot of fun with each one. I like to thank God for all these blessings.

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.

---

# **A New Life**

---

---

# My Fantastic Dream with Angels

By Elizabeth Camacho

Since I was a child in Veracruz, Mexico, between 1970 and 1975, my father and mother usually bought one important magazine. In this magazine I saw pictures about mountains, rivers, lakes, and cities of California and Nevada. Every time I would wait just to see the pictures. All the time I would cut out the pictures and hang them on the wall. When I would study in my favorite corner, I could look at the panorama, so I said to my mama, "One day in my life, I don't know when, but I will know this beautiful place." My mama, smiling, just looked at me with a lot of love.

One day my life changed. I was in San Jose, California, and I knew one little angel named Samuel. He showed me big things. Together he and I learned to read in English, and we discovered some secrets from the ocean in the aquarium. We saw in one park in Carmel, California, about the life of monarch butterflies.



---

My little angel Samuel is only five years old, but together we want to enjoy a lot of the panorama in California.

Like him, I know big angels. They teach me great things. I'm so very happy in my reality because I have the opportunity to be together every day with all, and I have learned a lot of things from your wonderful hearts.

My great angels, thanks for making my fantastic dream a reality!

Elizabeth Camacho has impressed her tutor with her initiative, intelligence, ambition and motivation. She is a day care provider and shares her knowledge and enthusiasm for learning with her "angels" - Samuel, Etham, and Will, as well as with her cousin, Angelica.



Elizabeth and Samuel

---

# I Made It



**By Milton Johnson**

I was born in Clydesdale, Arkansas, on a plantation.

I remember when I was nine. It was 1949. I had to take care of all eight of my sisters and brothers. I had to drive a tractor to feed my family.

When I was nine, I worked like a grown man, but I didn't get paid as much. I drove a tractor from sunup to sundown for three dollars a day. You had to be at least 15 to get paid. I was the only one that could drive a tractor. At first I was plowing with mules.

I worked from sunup to sundown five days a week. I was waking up the men on the plantation before sunup. I didn't have a clock. The way we told the time was by counting the cotton rows. When 12 o'clock would come, the sun shadow would be on 12 rows of cotton. When six o'clock would come in the evening, it'd be six rows. We had to sit by the lamplight at night.

---

When I was 28, the foreman (a school teacher), told me, “As hard as you work, you’ll be treated better in California.” If I would promise to go to California, he would pay my way because it would be better for me. It would be a better opportunity.

When I came to California, I had the idea in my head to help my sisters and brothers. It was also my desire to get my mother and father a home before they passed.

It was one of my best moments of my life when I was able to purchase my mother and father an acre of land. I knew that it was going to be a bright light in my mother’s and father’s lives when they were going to be able to say that that was their land.

Bill (Milton) was born in Arkansas, but has enjoyed living in California for the last 30 years. Bill and his wife, Maxine, are learners in PAR and are doing well. Bill is a very talented singer and performs as lead singer in two gospel music groups.

---

# Sea

**By Huong Nguyen**

I remember when I was 26 years old, I took a big chance in my life. After the communists took over South Vietnam in 1975, I tried to look for a chance to escape for many years. Until, in the summer of 1981, my friend introduced me to the boat owners. They agreed to let me go with them to leave Vietnam.

Next morning, my father took me to the bus station. I was the only one that got on the bus. As it departed, my father stood on the ground and waved goodbye to me. That was the last time I saw my father.

At noon, I had reached another town. After I ate lunch, I got on the boat. Around three o'clock the boat left the dock with 206 people on board. We started down the river and got some drums of gasoline and water. When we reached the ocean at about 9 p.m. the next day, my boat hit a big stone and got a hole in the bottom of the boat. The ocean water got into the boat and mixed with

---

the drinking water. That meant we had no water to drink. In only four days on the boat, there were many things that happened. I never knew the ocean water far from land had the very awful color “dark purple”. Before, in my mind, I always thought the color of the sea is blue and beautiful. But many things I couldn’t imagine. Maybe my boat was very small compared with another boat that went on the sea. It made me more worried.

I tried to remember many books I read about the ocean. I didn’t see any fish, but I saw many sea snakes. I looked at the sky. I wished I could see some birds, but nothing at all. I understood that my boat was already too far from land. We met a total of seven big boats, but only one boat gave us some gasoline.

When I closed my eyes, I always thought about a glass of lemonade that I had one day before I got on the boat. Some kids on the boat were very thirsty. They cried and kept asking their mothers or fathers about drinking water. Two kids got fever. We helped them by taking two T-shirts, made one wet, and covered their body for a while, then changed to another wet T-shirt. We hoped their temperature would go down.

---

On the third night, one man tried to commit suicide by jumping in the ocean at midnight. Many men grabbed him and tied him up. Next day the boat owners got seawater and boiled it. They got water from steam, but not much. After that they got seawater and added sugar. They gave everybody only one drop. One lady got seawater and added sugar. She thought that water was good to drink. She let her kids drink a lot of seawater like that. Next day, in the morning, she cried and yelled loudly because her one kid died. For me, I prayed in my mind. Sometimes I remembered my family, and I thought I did a stupid thing by escaping. Another lady's son got fever and diarrhea. She prayed in front of a doctor to save her son. But he couldn't do anything because there was no fresh water. Next day her son died.

On that day, a boat from Italy helped to save my boat with the USA agreement to accept the boat people as refugees. While we were waiting for five hours for the USA to respond, the Italians gave us water. Some people drank too much water at this time, and they lost consciousness. After the USA agreed, everybody went up to the Italian boat. The Italians cooked a meal. We

---

had been hungry for many days and ate a lot. After the meal, they gave us blankets and sheets. Everybody felt tired and slept. When we woke up, another family found out one boy, seven years old, had disappeared. Maybe he fell into the sea; nobody knew.

When I woke up, I cried because I understood that I was still alive and I couldn't see my family anymore. We went to Singapore. I lived there six months and went to Indonesia for six months more to learn English before I went to the USA.

Even today, almost 20 years later, I still remember everything of the four days' travel on the sea when I escaped from my country.

Huong was born in Vietnam. She came to the USA in 1982. She works in a medical devices company. She is married and has two children - a girl, who will be 18 years old this summer, and a boy, who will be 16 years old this summer, too.

---

# Building a New Life for My Family

By Juana Ortiz

I remember how afraid I was to leave my husband. It was 1993. I was married to him for 17 years. I was afraid because I had three children and no job. I didn't speak English, but after 17 years of mental and physical abuse, I made the decision one day after he physically abused my daughter. I said, "That's it!"

I remember it was very hard with three kids, only \$20, no job, and no family here. It was very scary, but with the help of my older son and daughter, who took care of my youngest daughter, I started working and going to school. Sometimes I had two jobs because none of the jobs were permanent, and I had to support the kids all by myself because their father refused to pay child support.

It's almost 10 years ago that all this happened, and now I'm stronger and very proud of my kids. The oldest is a fireman and paramedic. My oldest daughter is working and going to college. She wants to be a teacher. My



---

youngest daughter is 12 years old, and she learns a lot from the older children. So here I am with my children, my job, and my life so different that all I have to say is “Thank God for everything and for all the good people that helped me out.”

Juana is one of 12 children born in Lagos de Moreno Jalisco, Mexico. She married when she was 15 years old and moved to the United States three years later. While living here, she found the courage to leave her abusive husband and became the sole support of her three children.

Juana found out about Partners in Reading through her work at the U.S. Post Office. Since starting the program, she has taken and passed the Post Office Supervisor’s exam, which has opened the door to her career advancement.

Her determination has made a better life for herself and her family, and she serves as an inspiring role model for her children and others to follow.



Juana Ortiz

---

# Life is Like a School

**By Maria Vargas**

I remember when I came to this country in 1974. I was very young. I wished I could have gone to school; I didn't go because I was married. After fourteen months of being married, I became the mother of my first child. It was very hard not being able to speak or write in English.

I remember when my daughter started school, she only could say ok and thank you. I felt so bad I could not help her, but I didn't let that stop me. I kept very close communication with the teachers. It was hard because I was working all the time.

I started working four weeks after I got to this country, and they were paying me \$2 an hour when the minimum wage was \$3.25 an hour. I was working very hard, and I think I was not getting paid more because I did not speak English.

My first job was ironing big drapes. I needed to put a stool under my feet so I could fold them. I had to keep

---

up with five ladies who were sewing. A lot of times I had to take the bus, or wait for someone to give me a ride and take me back home. But that did not stop me; I had to work hard to pay back the money I borrowed for my trip tickets to come to this country.

After 12 years of being married, I found myself all alone in this country with no family and two children. It was not easy, but I feel it was worth it when I look at my children and see that little girl who could not say more than two words in English when she started school is graduating this year with a masters in accounting, and my son is now taking science at San Diego State University. I just want to say to all the mothers, "Don't give up on your kids." Every child in this world has great qualities. They are all special and smart.

Now when I say to people, "Don't worry. I will take the bus to go pick up my car from the repair shop." They look at me surprised or make smart remarks, and I have to remind them I used to be like them or worse.

I remember how I learned my first words. I met this great lady by the name of Jeanie. She taped some words in English and Portuguese. When I used to come home and I was working in the kitchen, I would listen to the

---

tape. I also tried to speak with people. Some people used to laugh, and others corrected me. Those who corrected me I would say thank you to. Those who laughed, I would laugh with them.

Now I found this great person who is tutoring me every week and helping me a lot. I thank God for my children and my tutor, Mari Lu, and everything I have.

Maria was born in Portugal and came to this country when she was 16 years old with her then-husband. All of her family was back home. She never had a chance to do things like a normal child, so her dream was to make sure her children would have a chance to do things she never was able to do.

Maria feels life is like a school. "Learning young makes you strong to deal with big problems. Never give up on your dreams. It's hard; but if I did it, so can you. That's an old saying: don't get jealous, get even by doing good."



Maria with her children, Natalia & Michael

---

# **Learning to Read**

---

---

# Improving My Self-Esteem

**By Elizabeth Lara**

My name is Elizabeth. I was born in Honduras. I came to the USA in 1974. I did not learn English while I was in school in Honduras. I did not speak English for the next 10 years. I could not understand a single word.

Then I came to California. I married and had my first daughter. It was hard to communicate with my daughter's doctor. I started going to ESL at night and began to understand a little English, but I didn't stay long enough. I was very busy with my three children.

I went to CET to learn electronics assembly. They also taught me a little English. I started working in electronics in 1981. I had to learn reading and speaking in English. I was afraid to write. I got stuck, and I believed that everyone was going to laugh at my writing.

One day my friend told me about Partners in Reading. In the program I met Jennifer. She taught me PowerPoint

---

on the computer and the pronunciation of vowels and consonant sounds. I was assigned a tutor. He helped me a lot. I am not afraid to write in English. He has faith in me. He says that one day I will become an author. I am glad to have a tutor, one on one. I learn more, and I am not embarrassed to talk, read, or write with him.

I am no longer afraid to write as you can see by this essay. I am glad that I can write better and improve myself every day, little by little.

I thank PAR and my tutor Ian for all the help I received.

May God bless you all.

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 electronic specialist. She has three children, ages 18, 19 and 23.

---

# About Memories

**By Patricia Macklin**

My first day at PAR was very hard to do because I didn't know what to expect, but I can say everyone was so nice and made me feel like I can believe in myself once again. And now that I have a real good tutor, it makes it easier to read and write more. I know I still have a ways to go but, with the help from Seth, I'll make it.

Patricia is from San Jose. She lives by herself in the downtown area.



---

# Behind the Spotlight

**By Darryl Redfield**

When I was in high school, I was good in sports and involved in leadership, but terrible in academics. Sometimes I felt like a penny with a hole in it; I felt worthless. I had ribbons and awards that said I was a winner, but I never felt like one because of my disability. In the summer of '85, when I was trying out for the varsity football team, the coach asked me to run track in the summer games. I ran the 100, the 200, the 400, and the 4 by 4 relay. I won gold and silver in these events, and I didn't think anymore about track. My mind was mostly on football.

The cross country coach heard about how well I did in the summer games and convinced me to run cross country. Our first meet was going to determine who was going to be the captain of the team. I came in first and won the spot for captain. I beat the last year's champion in our league. My first day of school everybody heard about my victory. My friend Eddie called me over to the

---

sports table to look at a newspaper article that was written about me winning my first meet. This was where all the athletes hung out in morning to see if there were any articles written about them in the paper. By the end of homeroom a new star was born.

My high school years were a fantasy to other people but a nightmare for me. With my learning disability I always tried to be in the background, but because of my sports ability I was always in the spotlight. In my junior year I was the class vice-president, Mr. Ironman, punt return for the varsity football team, and still the captain of the track team. I went to the junior prom with Toshi, who was the captain of the debate team. We became a couple, and she started helping me with my learning disability by tutoring me. This was a turning point for me in my life. This tutoring gave me confidence in myself that I never got from the awards for track and leadership. Now I'm reaching one of my goals by writing this story.

Darryl Redfield was born in Los Angeles and moved to San Jose three years ago. He works as a certified nurse's assistant at Good Samaritan/Mission Oaks Hospital. Darryl came to PAR in order to improve his reading and go on for a nursing degree. He is active in the Masonic Lodge and enjoys fishing, tutoring, and all sports.

---

# My Struggle to Read

By Jesse Valtierra



I remember when I wanted to learn to read. When we lived in Fresno, we did not know that we could go to school without paying to go to school. So we did not go to school in Fresno. Then we moved to San Jose, and there I started to hang around with the Mexican-Americans and learn to speak English. I started to go to school in a special class to learn to read.

This class was separated from the rest of the school except during recess. That is when other kids would call us names because we were in a special class. Because of that, I started to lose interest in going to school and started to cut class when I was in the sixth grade. Then I started to hang around the wrong crowd and started to get high and sit in the back of the class to hide. From then on, I did not want to go to school. So my dad gave me an ultimatum. Either I go to school or work with him at the fields. And if I did not keep up with him, he would smack me around. So that made me go back to school; but I went back with anger, so I did not learn anything.

*Memories • 75*

---

---

So, in the ninth grade, I dropped out. Then I thought I could get by without reading. So I continued for 35 years without reading and writing until I met Elizabeth. I was with her for six years. Then she went to live in Sacramento, and I did not know what to do because I could not read. This made me feel bad because I could not read. So I continued to not try to read until I got myself in trouble with the law. So I started to go to church. As I was going to church, they told us to read your Bible. When I told my friend Reggie that I could not read the Bible, he felt bad; so he gave me the phone number of Partners in Reading.

After all that I have been through, it took God to give me the willingness and make me teachable, and Partners in Reading and my tutor to give me the ability to read and write. And now I am reading the Bible.

Jesse was born in Mexico and raised in San Jose and has worked most of his life as an autobody repairman. Thanks to the prayers of his mother and his determination to better his life, Jesse has been clean and sober for more than three 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 his tutor, Simon.

---

**Work**

---

---

# It Was a Great Day

**By Samuel Cruz**

I remember when this great day came because that was the day I was to take my truck to the shop because it was not running very good. After leaving the truck, I jumped on the light rail and guess what? As it went through town, I saw what a nice day it was and how the sun was shining. I decided to walk through town and enjoy the day. As I was walking, I saw a union sign. I started to walk past, but then I decided to stop and ask what kind of union it was and how to join. It was the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. I was given a list of stores that had job openings. I went home and started calling. I was getting to the bottom of the list when I finally got a positive response. I spoke to the store manager. She said that there was a meat clerk opening and asked if I had any experience. I said, "No, but I am a quick learner and a hard worker and dependable." She said, "Come in and fill out an application." At first I thought I didn't have much of a chance, so I went to get a haircut. After that, I decided to

---

go to the store and meet the manager and fill out an application. The manager was very encouraging. She said that someone who is hard working and dependable is just as good as someone with experience. After we spoke, she told me to call the department manager to set up a time to meet for the next day. We met, and he showed me the duties of the job. The next thing I knew I was in the manager's office scheduling an orientation for the job. It was a great day!

Sam was laid off over a year ago. He had been seeking employment; but, with his reading and writing disability, it was very difficult.

Sam is married and has four daughters and five grandchildren. Sam has been in the PAR program on and off since 1989. It has helped him tremendously, but he thinks he still has a lot to learn.



Sam with his grandson Nathaniel

---

# My Story



**By Maxine Johnson**

As a little girl in Arkansas, my sisters and I worked to help support the family. I was 10 years old when I started working in the fields. We chopped and picked cotton 12 hours a day. We were paid \$3 a day. This was very hard work, and I dreamed of getting out of the cotton fields.

I liked lunch because we had an hour break to eat and relax. During lunch, I could pick and eat berries along with the lunch we had brought from home. While relaxing, we could hear frogs and crickets. Sometimes we took naps. This was the best part of the day.

I liked working with my sisters because they would help me if I had problems. But none of us liked working in the cotton fields. We worked all summer and fall. We went to school in January and studied until May, when school was out for the summer.

When I was around 17, I went to work at a hotel and



---

liked this work a lot better. My sisters moved to St. Louis. We were close to each other and kept in touch. After working at the hotel for four years, my husband Milton and I moved to California. We had two girls that we left in Arkansas. We sent for them six months later.

I got a job working at a boarding school and quit after one year. Then I took an electronics training course and got a job working in electronics. I worked in electronics for five years. My last job was at San Jose State. I did janitorial work there.

Maxine came to Partners in Reading in 2002. She likes to help others. She also likes to help at her church and belongs to several organizations there. She enjoys coming to Partners in Reading because she is learning to read better, and she likes her tutor, Mary Cates.

---

# About Work

**By Nancy Rowe**

I have been at my job for three years. I work with people who have Alzheimer's. Some people are afraid to be around them because they do not know much about the sickness. The people with Alzheimer's still have a life to live.

They still can do things for themselves, like they can still get dressed in the morning and they like to do activities. They like to see different places. They enjoy meeting new people so they can tell them about when they were young.

Nancy has a grown daughter, Vanessa. A San Jose native, she has traveled to Hawaii, Mexico, Texas, Michigan, and extensively through California.

---

# Family Tradition



**By Juan Vidal**

My name is Juan Vidal. I'm 33 years old. I was born in a small town in Mexico. I'm an electrician, like everyone on my dad's side of the family. Yes, it is a family tradition; and I want to tell you how I joined the family tradition.

Everything started with my father. He was a strong influence on me. Like my grandfather, he was also an electrician. Now I'm the third generation of electricians in my family, and I feel very proud about that.

All this noble fascination about my father's job happened when I was between seven and nine years old. It happened at the same time my parents separated. That was very painful for me at that age, but what happened is that love for my father's job was bigger than my family problems.

Three years ago I came to San Jose, California. My

---

English was just a little better than what it was before. During these three years I worked as an electrician, and my language problem was the same. That problem started to change when I joined Partners in Reading. Now my language is a lot better every day. I wrote this story of my life a couple of hours after my two daughters and my son called from Mexico. My son said to me, "Dad, I want to be like you - an electrician." I just thought that was continuing another generation of family tradition.

Juan Vidal is 33 years old. He was born in Mexico and attended a year of college there. He has worked as a carpenter and a plumber and now works as an electrician. He has lived in San Jose for three years. Juan enjoys watching movies and going out dancing. He likes to customize trucks and cars and owns several tropical fish. He hopes that what he learns in PAR will assist him in starting his own company one day.

---

# **Trips**

---

---

# My Trip to Little Rock

By Labryon Barton



I remember my trip to Little Rock, Arkansas, in the summer of 1983, when I was 12 years old. My aunt came to visit us in San Diego, and she took me back to Little Rock with her. We went to Arkansas on the Greyhound bus. This was the first time I took a trip on the bus. It was a very long trip, but lots of fun. In Little Rock I met many relatives. My grandma, my uncle, and my cousins all lived in Little Rock. My grandma took me fishing at the lake, which was on a dirt road in the country. We caught a fish!

I will remember my trip to Little Rock, Arkansas, forever!

Labryon was born in Arkansas, but spent most of his early years in San Diego, CA. He has lived and worked in San Jose since 1999. Labryon is very enthusiastic about his participation in the PAR program and has been working with his present tutor since February 2001. He has a four-year-old son. He works at Costco and enjoys movies and sports on TV, sports books, and magazines. He likes to use his WebTV to look up sports statistics and to communicate with friends. He participates in the Special Olympics basketball program.

---

# Vacations Unlimited

By Michael Fortier



I remember going on a lot of vacations. Most of my vacations I went with my parents.

The first one was to Mexico. In Mexico we went to Tijuana, Acapulco, and Mazatlan. In Tijuana my mom bargained for a bottle stand with a light.

We went to the Grand Ole Opry in Tennessee. There we saw Hank Snow perform. On another vacation we took to Tennessee, we went to Graceland. That is Elvis Presley's estate in Memphis. There we saw Elvis's jet, named "Lisa Marie." We also saw his gold records and his show costumes. Once we went to Kentucky. We saw the bluegrass. We bought a Louisville Slugger bat for my nephew.

We went to Canada. We crossed from Washington State by ferryboat. In Canada we went to a wax museum. Some of the statues that we were looking at

---

started to move. They were really live people standing very still. My dad and I went to Canton, Ohio, to see the Football Hall of Fame.

We went on some tropical vacations. We went to Freeport, Bahamas. The drums bounced us out of bed. We went to Tampa Bay, Florida. Another time we went to my timeshare in Orlando, Florida. While we were there, we went to Disneyworld. Once we went on an 18-day cruise. We left from Miami, Florida. We stopped in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Next, we stopped in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. The last stop was in Kennedy, Nassau.

The last vacation we went on was to New Orleans. We stayed at the French Quarter, on Bourbon Street. While we were there, we went to several jazz and blues clubs. We tried Cajun food. After a few nights we went to Gulf Port, Mississippi. There we stayed at my timeshare. My dad and I went to a riverboat to watch the San Francisco 49ers vs. the New Orleans Saints football game. We flew over the stadium when we left.

I enjoyed all of my vacations. I hope to go again some day.



---

Michael likes country music. His favorite singers are Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash. He has been collecting football cards since 1965. His favorite team is the San Francisco 49ers.

