

In Search of a Rainbow



Florence Paniagua Sanchez

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Florence Paniagua Hidalgo Sanches

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Preface

One day several years ago, I was reading the Union City Patch online. To my delight, there was an article about my grandparent's store. The article included pictures of the store, my grandmother and uncle as child, and my grandfather. I have only seen one picture of my paternal grandfather, so it was a treat. I was struck by how much my father resembled him. I decided to comment on this article and the author, Tim Swenson contacted me. He covers Union City for the Museum of Local History. We decided to meet so I could share some pictures of my family.

My grandmother had written her story many years ago. I showed this to Tim and he was interested in adding it to the Museum website. I was very flattered when Tim suggested this. We decided to add short biographies on my grandmother and her siblings and also make a simple family tree to go with her story. Tim was on the ball with his part, but it took me a couple of years to get my part together.

My grandmother, Florence Paniagua Hidalgo Sanchez would be thrilled to know her story was being shared. Titi, as her grandchildren called her, never made it past the 6th grade. It was her dream to continue schooling and go to college. She was very proud of what she taught herself because of her limited education. So I am honored that I am able to make one of her dreams come true, even though she is not here to see it. I do believe that she knows what we are doing and is watching over us.

My grandmother was a very special lady. I loved her so much. She always made me feel special, pampered and loved. I'm sure she made everyone feel this way; each one of her grandchildren thought they were the favorite. Reading her story and working on this paper makes me close to her again. It's like we are spending time together and she is once again sharing her stories with me. It is nice, I miss her so much.

When she was in declining in health, I was very sick myself and I didn't get to spend the time with her that I wanted to. This project has helped to ease some of the guilt I felt. I could barely take care of myself and my young children at the time. My life was a mess. I will always regret not being able to spend more time with her.

One of the best things about this project is that I have reconnected with so many family members. It has also brought me together with relatives I hardly knew before the undertaking of this project. I have found getting to know these relatives rather enjoyable.

I am so happy to have been able to learn so much about my family. I also am a bit saddened by the fact that I didn't know this much about my grandmother and her siblings when they were living. I have learned of the hardships my family faced and how they persevered and became successful, contributing members of society.

I am so excited to see the final project put together and share with my Paniagua family. I will share this finished project at a family reunion. Our family has only had one other reunion and it was a long time ago. I love my grandma and she holds a very special place in my heart. It is with this labor of love I do this for her, because she would be ecstatic that her legacy lives on. She would be so proud of being published.

I also met Tim Swenson, who is a wonderful historian for the Tri-City area. He is a very wise and knowledgeable man who knows vast amounts of information from our local history. So much of that history lives on because Tim is relentless in gathering and disseminating information in his spare time. He deserves to be recognized for all his handwork. He does this as a hobby and gets nothing from this work but a personal satisfaction. We are so lucky to have someone like Tim gathering and sharing information from the past. I thank Tim for bringing me and my family closer.

Wendy Hidalgo
August 2015

Prologue

The story talks about the early days of the Paniagua family when they first came to the United States and California. The story is told by Florence or Fulgencia Paniagua, who was a child when her family came emigrated to California. Most of the locations discussed are not in Union City, but the family eventually settled down in Decoto and spent many years there. A number of the Paniagua children and grandchildren become key citizens in Decoto and Union City.

The story highlights one example of the immigrant experience of those who came to Union City. Since the start of Alvarado and Decoto in the 1850's and 1860's, quite a number of residents have come directly from another country. Most of the stories of these emigrants are either a vague memory told by them to their children and grandchildren, or completely lost over time. This document is a rare detailed story of the experience of one immigrant family. The story is typical in that immigrants were told of "gold in the streets" and how easy life was in America. As many immigrants found out, life was not a whole lot easier and work was involved. In the end, most families did fairly well for themselves and this is true of the Paniagua family.

The story is taken from an oral interview with Florence in 1973 and was transcribed soon after. There are a few places where names were not clear on the type, so the transcriber left the name blank, and this had been kept in this document. Florence also told the story in the first and third person, switching between "I", "me", and "us" to "they" and "them". This has been left in to remain true to the original oral version.

Timothy Swenson
Museum of Local History

In Search of a Rainbow

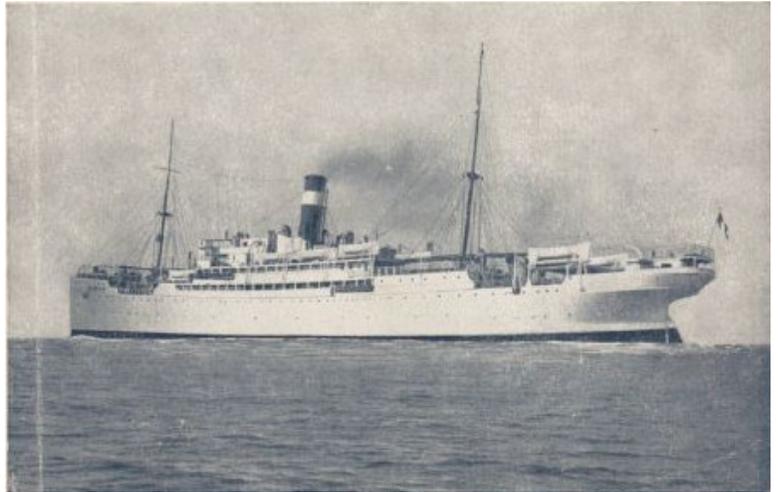
One warm sunny day in June of 1921, Ignacio was tending his sheep as his father, grandfather and men in his family had done for generations. These were not his sheep in the sense of ownership but he loved each and everyone as his own. Occasionally his employers would give him a few so Ignacio was desperately trying to build up a little flock of his own.

His thoughts were interrupted by shouts from Saturnina, his wife. "Ignacio, Ignacio," she called, "A letter from America from your sister, Genara. Listen to what she says my husband. There's gold in the streets in California just there to be picked up. Just think Ignacio, we could go to America for a few years and come back to buy a flock of sheep of our own. Just think how wonderful that would be." Ignacio was thoughtful, but a little cautious. "Don't get your hopes up Saturnina, you know our sister Genera and our brother-in-law. While good, well meaning individuals, they are a little lax and impractical when it comes to being real go getters." Saturnina's enthusiasm was so spontaneous that she finally convinced Ignacio.

Ignacio and Saturnina began to make plans. It meant leaving a land where they had ties for generations. They owned their little home, handed down from their parents, and their little huerta, a piece of land also handed down through generations. Everyone in the village owned a little piece of land most not bigger than a handkerchief, but they planted their garbonzos, potatoes, and different vegetables to supply their tables. They also raised a hog every year to supply them with sausages, hams, salt pork, and other little delicacies. It was a good simple life they were leaving behind for a very uncertain future.

Ignacio and Saturnina made plans, said their goodbyes to families and friends. Amidst a lot of crying and lamenting, they started out for the port of Lisbon in Portugal, with their three children, Fulgencia, Marceliana and Francisco or Paco as he was called. The village of Guijo de Galisteo in the Province of Caceres is in the part of Spain called Extremadura. It consists of the provinces of Badajoz and Caceres. They border Portugal and Lisbon is usually the port of Embarkation for most of them in those two provinces.

They traveled slowly but surely toward Lisbon. It was a very exhilarating and rather terrifying experience. Ignacio had fought in the war against the Moors in Africa so he was a little familiar with travel. Saturnina had also been to Brazil with her parents so she knew a little of what traveling involved. The children were thrilled and very excited. Lisbon was really something of a dream, a very beautiful city. As they had a day before the ship, a whole day to see the sights. For some of them it was their last sight of Europe.



Fabre Line - S.S Asia

Well, the great day finally arrived. They were to sail on the French boat, the Asia. It was a wonderful sight but a little frustrating with the vast Atlantic Ocean before them. The ship stopped a while at the Island of Santa Maria. Some of the farmers came out to the ship on small boats to sell pineapples and different fruits. The people on the boats would lower a basket for whatever they wanted and then they would pull it up. The fruit was absolutely delicious. Well, finally they took off again. It was six days crossing and some very sick immigrants. Fulgencia, the oldest, made friends with one of the French chefs in the galley and kept the rest supplied with French Fries and other delicacies from the kitchen. She was a very talkative and friendly child and made friends with almost everyone on the ship. Several older people couldn't get out of their bunks the whole trip and she would go fetch water and other things they needed.

They were supposed to land in New York City, but while they were en-route to America, Congress had enacted the quota system and they didn't want to let us land. The captain said our passports have all been issued before the quota and that they had to let us land. We finally had to go to Providence, Rhode Island where we disembarked.

It was indeed some experience. We couldn't understand the people and they couldn't understand us. We were all a little frightened and tears were mighty close to us all.

What had we done, Dear God. Left a sheltered home, a known life style for this terrifying unknown. The wonderful people from the Travelers Aid Society took us in hand and put us on the train that was to take us cross country to San Francisco. We stopped at several places along the way. The most remembered was the huge train station in Chicago, that gray terrifying city. The American people soon dispelled some of our fears, if not our loneliness. We had a stop over at Chicago and Paco, a big one year old boy who as too lazy to



Passport photo of Marceliana, Paco, & Fulgencia

walk, but could crawl around like he was jet propelled. The people at the station would throw him some coins and he would pick them up and bring them to mother and repeat the performance. He made quite a collection.

On the train again, very, very tired. As we neared San Francisco our spirits were high. Aunt Genara and the rest of the family were to meet us in San Francisco, then on to Mountain View in Santa Clara County, our real destination.

We reached San Francisco and no one was there waiting. Our hearts dropped to our toes. Here we were in a strange city and a strange country and no one to greet us. Ignacio his napsack over this shoulders with all his worldly goods and Saturnina with her three bewildered children waited for hours but no one came.

Someone told us to wait for a certain street car and it would take us to La Loma as North Beach was called by the Latins. Poor Ignacio, the only street car he had seen in his life were the ones he had seen in his native Spain when he had to leave his village for three years to fight the Moors in Morocco. The street cars Ignacio had seen were horse drawn and these strange contraptions that went jangling up and down Market street he thought were some new fangled trains. Fulgencia, Marceliana and Paco were terrified of all the strange sights and people they could not understand. Saturnina, who was the most courageous of the lot, saw a uniformed man in the distance and decided to go ask him how to get to Mountain View. The kindly officer didn't speak English but he knew Spanish so he got someone to take us to La Loma where a lot of Spaniards lived at the time. There we met kindly Encarnaciore and her husband, who's name escapes me at the moment, and the kindly pair took us to Mountain View.

Uncle Martin, with gold in the streets, didn't even have enough fare to get to San Francisco. They lived on Washington Street in Mountain View, which was called El Charco de las Ranas. It was a regular mud hole in the rainy season and therefore it was a frogs mudhole. Its occupants were mostly Spanish, one French woman, Mrs. Paris, and kindly Mr. Nardini, Nicky as everyone called him, with his wife. I can still remember the kindly old man with his red flag at the train crossing. He also had a daughter that lived by the Clarks Cannery, who later passed away, leaving two granddaughters and a grandson whom the Nardinis helped raise.

I can remember old Garibaldi, the Italian Junk man, who used to collect everything and anything. It was a sleepy community and jobs were very, very scarce. What a predicament, broke and didn't understand the language. It was enough to dampen the hearts of the bravest.

We had arrived in America on June 21, 1921. We arrived at a beautiful time of year. The orchards

were in full bloom, with some of the fruits ready to harvest.

No one had a car in those days, I mean no one in the poor community. It was no trick to travel ten to twenty miles both ways, on foot, to get to work. Ignacio's first experience with work was in the apricot orchard. One day Mr. Luis, who later was to be Ignacio's first _____ in California, started out to look for work. Neither knew a word of English. They set out and the first place they stopped was at a small hospital they used to have in Mountain View, off El Camino Real. Compadre said "let's try that house. It's very big." Being it was big with orchards surrounding it, they took the hospital to be a house. They soon found out their mistake.

The next ranch they stopped by, the man needed help desperately. He hired them and he just assumed they knew how to pick fruit. Compadre and Ignacio worked very hard and they wished to impress the man by working hard. The boss had left some ladders and baskets and took off. Ignacio said "I don't know why he left the ladders. We can reach, and what we can't reach, I'll knock down with one of the props they have on the trees." I guess they were thinking of olive picking in their Extremadura, where you picked what you could reach and then beat the rest to the ground. The owner came back in about an hour and when he saw what was happening, he turned red with rage. He told them to get out quick. They both got the message and retreated down El Camino with the angry ranchero shouting damnation on them.

Later that night they got to talking with their fellow paisano's. They fully understood the poor mans rage. Some of their paisano's got them on in some of the ranches they were working at and all went well. Many a laugh did we all have at his first work experience.

After the fruits were picked, they decided to go toward Gilroy and Morgan Hill to pick prunes. They had some mighty prune orchards there, in those days. It was a sight for sore eyes when a passel of six families set out for Gilroy. The grapes of wrath came to light. With a flat bed and a couple of broken down horses, the very minimum of clothes, of the barest of necessities, we set out at three in the morning. What a never to be forgotten ride. We took bread, salami, chorizo's, cheese, and water, and a jug of wine for the men, to eat on the way.

Whenever nature called we stopped along the side of the road and used our very special toilet tissue, a Montgomery Ward catalog, or a piece of newspaper. No fancy Scott's tissue for us. Only the good Lord knows how many inches of type we rubbed our back side with. After a bumpy, hot, miserable trip, we finally reached our destination. When we finally put up a few broken down tents we had bought at a second hand store we found out we had more inhabitants than tents.

Well, we doubled up the best we could and early the next morning Uncle Martin and Uncle _____ from Decoto, who's whole family came along too, and Ignacio went to San Jose to buy an extra tent. They tried to send one of the children along as interpreters but Uncle Martin who would have none of it. "What's buying a tent?" he asked. "No kids along. They are only a nuisance." Off they went with their very tired broken-down horses and their glamorous chariot, the flat bed wagon that only god knows what held it together.

On their way to San Jose, they passed a vineyard owned mostly by Italians. Uncle Martin, who loved the juice of the grapes better than life itself, told _____ and Ignacio, "We should stop at one of these house, these Italian's make good wine." "We'll buy a few glasses of wine from them." So the three musketeers approached the door and knocked. The man of the house came to the door. Old Uncle Martin gestured with his hands and said in Spanish "No tiene pora un trangino que no benda." Well, in those days people were always willing to share their food with strangers, so they gave them some food, instead of the wine poor Uncle Martin wanted so badly. On they went towards San Jose.



Saturnina, Mary & Ignacio

They looked around for a store that sold furniture and they went inside. The clerk came up to them and Uncle Martin, the interpreter, said to the clerk "You no like carpa?". The clerk said "I don't understand." "Garpo tonto carpa" said Uncle Martin, and the clerk smiled and said "Oh, I understand, a carpet." Uncle Martin said "yes, carpa, carpa." The clerk figured these three don't know too much about interior decorations that's for sure. He gave them a carpet that he had in the store for a long while and wasn't moving. He brought it out, all rolled up and loaded it into the wagon. Ignacio told Martin, "I don't know, but this seems too heavy for a tent" or carpa, as it is called in Spanish. Uncle Martin said "It's a tent, didn't you hear the man, it's a tent." So off they went, cloppity-clop back to Gilroy. When they arrived they promptly got their kerosene lantern and decided to put up the tent at once so they wouldn't be so crowded. To their dismay and the anger of their women, they rolled out their magnificent carpet in the middle of the prune orchard.



Florence & Marcella

We worked in the prunes from day break until sundown. Our beds were either on mattresses right on the ground or on prune boxes that served as springs for the mattress. Dear Lord, we got up in the morning with all the alarm clocks going off at once and you swore you had been crucified during the night. Besides the sore muscles from prune picking, the horrible makeshift beds we had, we had to crawl on our hands and knees till we got our bearings. What a life. In the mornings you liked to freeze from cold and during the day the heat was unbearable, but we had to stick by it for the prunes would dry up before they got the dryer. We all tried to see which family picked the most. In those days, you gave an orchard three or four pickings before you were allowed to shake the prunes down in the final pick. That was our favorite pick. Not only were the prunes coming to an end, but they were more plentiful and easier to pick.

Well, the prunes were over and back to Washington Street. We don't get paid until the very end and that would give you a little nest egg. Half of what we made, we paid to Mr. Manfredi, the kindly Italian lawyer who was a friend to all. Uncle Martin had borrowed money from Mr. Manfredi and we tried to pay it off as quickly as possible.

Poor Uncle Martin and his streets of gold. We had a few days off between the prunes and tomato picking, so one of our distant relatives that lived in Decoto was getting married and we were invited. Aunt Genera and Uncle Martin and children and Ignacio, Saturnina and the their three children set out in our famous flatbed and faithful horses to Decoto. I don't remember if the horses and goat belonged to Uncle Martin, or if it was community property. Aunt Genera had the youngest daughter, Esther, who was ailing and really shouldn't have made the trip, but with the dreariness of our lives, Aunt Genera decided to go to the wedding. It was a four day occasion. Claudia Oliveria married Thomas Garcia.

Ignacio and Saturnina had a wonderful four days with their paisano's from Guijo de Galisteo or El Guijito as they fondly referred to their village in the hills of Extremadura. Poor little Esther continued sick and died shortly after. She was exactly seven and my first recollection of death, which you quite never forget.

We finally found a farm to pick tomatoes. It was in a little hamlet called Castro. It was located between the then town of Mayfield, which is now part of Palo Alto and Mountain View. It was part of the Castro land grant and their beautiful mansion was a sight to see. You could picture in your minds eye the glamour and romance that must have been there. At the time they were down to about twenty acres of their vast land grant.

We walked from the Clarks cannery, which extended from Castro Street clear to Castro, to pick tomatoes. The children would walk home from school on El Camino to the house, change into old clothes,

walk to Castro, pick tomatoes til dark, and walk about four to five miles back home. While Saturnina cooked supper, Fulgencia washed clothes by hand. When we got to bed, we were beat. No need for sleeping pills in those days and not much of a chance to get into mischief. Not only were we very tired, but my mother had very heavy hands. She was a lion on discipline. With the money we got from picking tomatoes, we bought a hog and had it butchered. We made sausages, cured hams, salted salt pork and salted the bones and cured them and put them, packed real well, into ceramic barrels for the winter.

Saturnina and Ignacio would go to the Spanish store, the Escanos. It was on a corner across the tracks. They would buy a sack of garbanzo beans, a box of spaghetti, and several hundred pounds of flour for baking bread. We had the vegetables, fruits and jams we had put up during the summer and a few chickens and rabbits. Every European from southern Europe raised rabbits at the time. We survived all winter until spring when the vegetables arrived and there was work again. Many raspberries, blackberries, and onions were picked where Moffet field now stands. With the berries, we would have two cans tied around our waists. One can for market one can for back East. Our ripest fruit was for market.

Maria was born one year and three months after leaving for America. Saturnina picked prunes all day until five in the afternoon and Maria was born at nine that night, on the 25th of September. Dr. Milo, the only known doctor in Mountain View known to the newcomers, attended the birth the best he could. No prenatal care, no vitamins, no diet, just a lot of hard work and doing without. Saturnina hadn't had to work in her native Spain after she married, but here work became her middle name. She hung on with all her might to the little sack with a draw string that Grandpa Patricio had given her when she left. "I'll be back, Dad, as soon as I fill this little bag with gold pieces." Little did she know she would never see her parents again.

The following year someone came over and told them that the Driscolls of Palo Alto, actually Mayfield, had some land that people could share crop planting strawberries. They supplied the land, water, plants, all working utensils and they would share what ever money cleared. I don't recall if it was 40-60 or 50-50, but they gave us a house to live in. We had land to plant vegetables and we could raise chickens, rabbits and hogs. All in all it was a very peaceful life. The country was beautiful . It was called Alta Mesa. There right along a beautiful creek, beautiful oak trees, a regular paradise for growing children. In the spring, one weekend, we gathered the plentiful golden poppies, tied them in bunches, took a bucket with water and sold them on El Camino. We sold all we had. When the pussy willows were blooming, we did the same. People driving out from the city bought all we had. We did the same with Cattails.

Oh, the work preparing the strawberries plants for planting. We would burn a lot of kerosene till two, cutting the whiskers off the plants. They would come packed in wooden boxes with slits. What a job! We had to cut enough so Ignacio and Saturnina could plant all the next day. We had no electric lights in those days. Every Saturday we would wash the lamp chimneys, trim the wicks or put in new ones, fill the lamps with kerosene, so we would have for the following week. We didn't have indoor toilets, so every day we had to clean out chamber pots. We all had our chores to do and we did them faithfully or else no excuse.

Ignacio planted strawberries for twelve years in all. First four years for the Driscolls and then on the Palo Alto stock farm at Stanford for Mr. Joe Shearer. Those were peaceful years for Ignacio, Saturnina and their children. In the meantime, Antonio and Avelino had joined the other four children. Six children in all. Quite a test in those years, when jobs were not too plentiful. At the Palo Alto Stock farm it was a joy to the



Mary & Florence

children. What had been quarters for some of their cows and horses were converted to apartments for the strawberry sharecroppers. There were three big silos between the living quarters and a huge brick barn which provided the children with many an enjoyable hours climbing the hay loft, upstairs and down. It was a wonderful world. There was a creek near by which provided us with watercress in season, and wading and swimming in the summer. We then would wander through the park where there was a beautiful flock of peacocks. They would lose their feathers and the children would gather them and take them home. Such beautiful feathers. Once a week we would go into Palo Alto to shop. It was really something to look forward to. On the way back we would stop at a soft drink stand by the train depot. The root beer and ice cream were out of this world. How very delicious. It was draft root beer right out of a barrel. For a nickel, we got a huge glass.



*Top: Frank, Florence, Tony
Bottom: Marcella, Alvin, Mary*

Strawberries had have several picks. One picking would come then they would get dormant for awhile. While they were dormant, Ignacio would tend to them himself, weed, hoe and keep them watered. Saturnina and her women paisanas would go by bus to the Mayfield cannery. In those days, it was run by Chinese. Later, the Suthers took over.

There were Chinese women that worked sitting down all day. In their youth in China, their feet had been bound to prevent growth. It was a sad sight to behold. When they were through working they had to be helped. Fulgencia, when she was thirteen, worked during the summing like many other minors in those days. It was before the depression and before the dust bowl event.

The people of Palo Alto were very good to all of us. On Christmas morning, Thanksgiving, and Easter, the front of our houses were loaded with goodies, toys, clothes, or what have you. We never have forgotten those two blessed women doctors, Doctor Johnson and Dr. Lamson. Surely if there is a special place in heaven these two wonderful humanitarians will be in a place of honor. Mrs. Thirts, who's husband owned a store in Palo Alto and who was Dr. Lamsons sister, was another angel of mercy. There were people who helped but never made you feel inferior. They will always be remembered.

When the depression hit – strawberries, like a lot of other things, hit bottom. We decided to go back to Mountain View amongst our friends. We had saved a few dollars by being very frugal. We gave a down payment on a house, then Ignacio developed big carbuncle on the nape of his neck under his chin. Jobs were scarce and little by little our pitiful savings were depleted. It was in the middle of winter, such a miserable dismal, winter. In those days, it was very very difficult to get welfare. We had bought a second hand Model T, but there was no money for gas. Finally, we had no choice but to go into San Jose to see if we could get some food orders till the vegetable season came around. Poor Ignacio and Saturnina felt the world had come to an end. Never had anyone in the family had to beg to survive. We finally got some gas from this fellow Spaniard who owned a little garage on El Camino Real. His name was Soterito. He was a wonderful person and never pressured us about paying but it was such a bitter pill to take to have to ask for charity. They had been brought up to live within their means and being a good payer was a thing of great importance to them. The Escanos, who owned the grocery store, told us to take whatever food we needed and to pay when we worked. But with jobs at a premium, how were they ever going to pay and that was a very big worry to them.

Well, we finally ended up by going on charity as it was called in those days. Fulgencia went along as

interpreter. Fulgencia has never forgotten the shame and humiliation. The social worker they got was the most callous and inhuman person they had ever encountered in their eyes. She was very brusque. "How," she asked, "did you get here if you had no money?" "Well, Saterito let us have some gas so we could come." "Well, why don't you get food the same way?" "Well, how are we going to pay, we can't find a job." "Well that's your hard luck," she answered. Finally Saturnina and Fulgencia were crying real tears of desperation. Such humiliation. The woman dragged our pride in the dust. It has been many many years but Fulgencia has never forgotten. That night she cried very bitter years. She pounded the pillows with her fist and cried "I hate being poor. I hate it. I'm going to work hard and save all I can. I never want to go through anything like this ever again."

In the meantime, Ignacio found out Mr. Driscoll wanted to plant strawberries at his ranch on Driscoll road in Irvington, so off we went with our Model T filled to the seams with six children, Ignacio and Saturnina and hundreds of items stuffed where ever there was a hole between children and we went to Irvington. Times were very, very hard. Saturnina and Fulgencia would walk to the town of Irvington and bought supposedly day old bread which was really three or four days old. The baker would fill the one hundred pound flour sack with bread which as a lot cheaper than buying flour for baking bread. In these days we had wooden stoves and we made sure we collected enough fire wood to last the whole winter. How very cold the winters were. We all huddled around the oven door to warm our feet, then we would put our socks on right way to conserve the heat. At night we would warm bricks in the oven and put them in our bed, well rolled in towels, so our bed would be warm. Otherwise, we would all huddle up like one big turtle.

Fulgencia and Marceliana and Maria slept in one bed. Marceliana always insisted on sleeping in the center. She had the coldest feet this side of the north pole. She would either plant them in Maria's posterior or on Fulgencia's. Half the night was spent wrestling with Marceliana's frozen feet.

Our first winter in Irvington was a mighty hard one. Ignacio and Saturnina, with the help of the children, planted the strawberries. Strawberries didn't produce the first year, so you really don't have a crop for one year. In the meantime, we planted string beans and the Driscoll had an apricot orchard and prunes, which all the Paniaguas took part in. There was no market for string beans and many a day we spent working to get a form



Family picture of Paniagua's, children, spouses, & friends

back from the labor commission at the Markets, that we hadn't been able to sell the string beans. So we were on labor freight and what have you. We had chickens that ran wild and they would show up with a lot of chicks. We also raised hogs and rabbits, for our own consumption. We also had a horrible goat, which all of us hated with a passion. She had a deep hatred for women and if somehow she got loose, we wouldn't dare go outside. Eventually Fulgencia and Marceliana were able to work in the Cannery's in summer time. They wouldn't hire minors, but all you had to do was go to downtown Sunnyvale, pay a notary public one dollar and have your mother swear that you were twenty one and then you got a certificate which you gave the cannery to be able to work. All the young cannery workers in those days, from various races of people, were twenty one for five or six years. There were no unions and they used to work only one shift. It was nothing to work thirteen or fourteen hours a day for a mere pittance. We wore uniforms and we youngsters were really proud to be earning money. We all turned our earnings into our parents and no one questioned it.

The second year we lived at Irvington they started building the Hetch-Hetchy Aquaduct. Those big cement pipes were really fascinating, so much so that one morning Alvin, the youngest, stopped to investigate and wondered into the pipes, and when Maria and Antonio got to school, no Alvin. Maria got permission to trace her footsteps but no Alvin. So finally, the workmen found him in the pipes happy as a lark. Ignacio was a man of great patience, but poor Maria and Antonio couldn't sit down too well for a while. For not having kept their eyes on Alvin. In those days, the older kids looked after the younger ones. It was a lot easier on the mothers. Everyone had a chore to do. Fulgencia and Marceliana and Maria shared the house work. It was rotated around every week.

The four years of strawberries were over, so Ignacio and Saturnina decided to move to Decoto to be near some of their paisano's from the same village in Spain. The town consisted of almost three very short blocks 13th, 14th, and 15th streets with about twenty other houses scattered over town. There was only one school and there was some very nice Eucalyptus trees all around the yard. There were a few small groves of



Ignacio & Saturnina

them around town. All the empty lots had goats and a few cows, mostly goats. There were a couple of Swiss families, few Italians, and Portuguese and Spaniards. It was a peaceful friendly hamlet. No one slept with their doors locked and you could forget your clothes on the lines and it would all be there in the morning. Those were wonderful times. No one had much in the way of material things, but lots of brotherly love.

Everyone would fatten their hogs for sausage, ham and all sorts of delicacies. All the neighbors were invited. The men slaughtered the hog, the women would clean the intestine and prepare the meat for different sausages. Everyone, including their children, ate for at least three days. Then they would sing songs and dance native dances. What a grand time was had by all. Ignacio played the flute and drums combination. He was a one man orchestra and with two lids, tamborins and some castinets, the party was on. Every one got a small share of the hog to take home. They would butcher their

hogs in late December or January so they could cure their hams and sausage, before the flies came and, believe me, we had flies in those days. We would shred newspapers and nail them to the screen door so when you entered or went out, it would shoo the flies away. I can remember those sticky papers we would buy at the drug stores and the dead flies stuck to them. If there were too many flies, we took it down and up went another.

Those little houses behind the big house [outhouses] were really something in warm weather. Ignacio would peel lime in it occasionally and would clean it out with a hose, everyday,. No newspaper or catalogs were wasted.

We lived in a small house rented on 14th street. We bought the old Gover house at the end of 14th street. There was a nice apricot orchard across the street. Mr. Gover was a carpenter and he got Mrs. Gover as a mail order bride, so he had built her a bathroom with toilet and all accommodations that the poor didn't have on those days. They passed away and then the man that got it, I believe it was the man from the funeral parlor, sold it to us for the big sum of \$600. That was very big money for poor people in those days. Wages were 15 and 20 cents an hour, if you could get a job. The house was practically only a shell after the renters that lived there were through with it. They even tore down part of the wall to use as firewood.

We had to live in it the best we could till work came in. Ignacio, Saturnina and Fulgencia picked peas, strawberries, worked in the canneries, pick prunes, and tomatoes, anything we could get our hands on to make a few dollars. Then Fulgencia and Marceliana worked in 98 Ave. cannery which was non-Gerbers. Asparagus was worked at night because there were no refrigerators. On their day off, Fulgencia and Marceliana would pick strawberries without having any sleep. Twenty cents an hour and all you could eat.

In the early spring, we would go to San Leandro to pick rhubarb. There were rhubarb fields all over and beautiful cherry orchards. We stayed at a friends house, the Garcias, who lived on Orchard Ave. or the Calla Kanaka as everyone called it because almost everyone living there had come from Hawaii. They called the Hawaiians Kanakas.

Was it ever cold picking Rhubarb. We would start early in the morning, making piles of them About eleven we would trim the leaves, then after lunch, wash them thoroughly in water and pack them. I can still feel the cold. The packing house was open, the water frozen, and everyone half frozen from the morning frost. Fulgencia was taken out of school in the seventh grade. It was only through God's will she got that far, because she always went one month late when the prunes finished and was taken off for another two months for rhubarb and peas.

Fulgencia said to herself, "Dear god, if I ever have children they will get an education they will not have to suffer this agonizing poverty, this devastating round of cold, poverty and just the bare necessities." Fulgencia had to be interpreter and chauffeur as Ignacio never learned to drive. It was counting pennies twelve months a year. No one ever had a vacation. The first movie Fulgencia or Marceliana saw was when they were eighteen and sixteen. It was a musical and we saw it twice over and got a good spanking for taking too long when we got home.



*Front Row: Alvin, Florence, Marcella, Mary
Bottom Row: Robert, Manual, Alfonso, Bruce*

Then Mr. Roosevelt was elected president and he put in work programs. That is when the poor finally began to live better and, little by little, began to buy a few material things to make life a little brighter. Gradually wages for cannery workers got to fifty cents an hour. That was a cause for rejoicing, fifty cents an hour really was something.

In the following year, until the second World War, slowly, the canneries and factories began unionizing. There was a lot of strife and many were beaten trying to bring in the unions. But gradually things began to look better for the workers. Ignacio and Saturnina were able to put a little aside for their old age. They had remodeled their old \$600.00 house. Life was looking pretty good for the Paniaguas. In 1938, Fulgencia was married. In the Spanish tradition, friends and relatives ate for almost a week. A few days before the wedding, everyone helped with the preparations. Two years later Marceliana got married. Francisco was working and Antonio would also be working in a years time or two. Maria went to school and worked in the canneries in the summer. Ignacio and Saturnina were beginning to enjoy their lives without having to pinch every cent they had.

Then, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and for the next three and a half years, there were a lot of tears at the Paniagua household. All three boys went off to war. Francisco wasn't a citizen yet as he was born in Spain and besides he had become hard of hearing. They turned him down, but he wouldn't give up, so they signed him up with police men, escorts and guards. The war in Europe was very bad. Only after only six

weeks of training in Florence, Arizona, he was shipped off to Africa. Rommel was really giving the Allies a bad time but gradually, with the Grace of God, the tide turned. Francisco was in the first day of the Sicilian invasion, then off to Italy, and he didn't come home till the war was over.

Antonio turned 18, was drafted, and served with Patton's anti-aircraft battalion. He didn't get back till the war was over, too. Alvin turned 18 two years later and he was drafted, but by that time, the war was going better, so they trained them longer. When he was finally finished, he was in Florida. He stayed till his year was up and he came home. All he got to fight were snakes, mosquitoes and the likes. He didn't get to see the beautiful beaches that you see in posters all the time. No one can ever forget the happiness, the tears, and blessed relief that the war was over. Who would ever think we would have more wars after that holocaust.

Ignacio and Staturina were happy to have all their sons back home again. By this time, Ignacio



Saturina & Ignacio

started having severe pains in his eye. He fell victim to the dreaded sickness of the eyes, glaucoma. There was nothing that could be done, no drop to prevent glaucoma from blinding, so poor Ignacio eventually went blind. In the meantime, Saturnina and Maria decided to go to Spain and visit relatives they had left. They were gone three months. They had a wonderful time visiting relatives. When they got back Saturnina decided to become an American citizen. She loved Spain and always in her heart she hoped to revisit there again someday, but she felt this was really her country. She had spent more than half her life here. She had raised her children here. She had roots here. She found out that a Portuguese lawyer in Oakland gave citizenship lessons for a nominal fee. So Saturnina faithfully studied her lessons. Fulgencia copied all the

questions and answers in Spanish so she would know exactly what they meant. We would ask her the questions in English because that is how she wanted it. We really had some laughs with her. We would ask mother who was the first President of the United States. "Gorgi Washington," she would answer. We would roar with laughter at the "Gorgi" but we didn't dampen her spirit. She was determined to become an American citizen.

Finally, the big day came and she went to San Francisco. They asked her if she wanted an interpreter and she declined. She passed with flying colors. That was a proud and happy day for her. She took her voting seriously. She never failed to vote.

Poor Ignacio's sight completely went out. He was completely blind for eighteen years before he died. He will always be remembered by his children, grandchildren and friends who know him. He had no enemies, always easy going. He poked fun at himself all the time. He was deaf also from a mastoid he had in his younger days. The last few years he would spend three to four months of the year in bed then he would perk up and you would swear he'd never been sick. Saturnina had been sick a few times but she always was very active and all the family thought she'd surely live till her eighties. Ignacio and Saturnina celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Ignacio was failing then and everyone thought he would live to see the fiftieth wedding anniversary, but he fooled everyone. *[Note: This is reference to the fact that Ignacio was thought to have died, but woke up while his family was gathered to honor him. He walked out of the bedroom, quite cross, asking why they were holding a party without him.]*

He had been able to see his first four grandchildren but he had six more that he never saw. One day he told Fulgencia, "Daughter, if I had one wish guess what I'd wish for" "I dont' know" I said, "although I have an idea." "I wish that God would give me only one hour of sight so that I could see what my other grandchildren look like." That was Ignacio very unselfish and very humble.

Fulgencia and Marceliana would explain to him when spring was here, the buds, the flowers, the birds, the green hills, and he would see it all in this minds eye. He would tell us "I'm the richest man on Earth. God gave me six children and everyone is so good to me. I'm indeed blessed. Do not mourn for me when I'm gone. I've had a good full life. I'm happy. I've got a roof over my head and everything I need or desire."

Everyone thought he'd go before Saturnina but two weeks before the 51st wedding anniversary Saturnina slipped away from this earth, a victim of cancer. She left a void in our hearts and life that can never be replaced. Poor Ignacio just fell apart when she went. He lasted thirteen months after Saturnina. He suffered so very much. All that was left of him were bones and sad sightless eyes.

Finally, he passed away on the 11th of January, 1967. We always remember his sense of humor. The way he used to sing with all his children on Christmas eve and on many other occasions. We would sit in the kitchen around a brassiere and he would tell us stories of his youth. He would teach us folk songs from sunny Extremadura.

Ignacio and Saturnina, you left us so many beautiful memories. We were never left with a babysitter so that you two could go out. Saturnina, you were a tough disciplinarian but had a heart of gold. I never forget how much I loved pork chops as a child. To me being rich would be to eat all the pork chops I wanted till I almost burst. How many times both of you ate only vegetables so we could eat your meat. Yes, dear parents none of us will ever forget you. In our hearts you will live forever.

This is a time to life autobiography of Ignacio, Saturnina, and their three sons and daughters from the day they left Caceres, Spain in 1921 til Ignacio passed away in 1967.

Florence Paniagua Sanchez
May 1973

Paniaguas Mark Golden Anniversary



IGNACIO and SATURINA PANIAGUA of 33663 Fifth Street recently celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary with a party attended by a host of their children and great grandchildren. Among the well-wishers were the Panigau's 12 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Their six children are: Florence Hidalgo, Union City; Frank Paniagua, Hayward; and Maroella Roderigues, Union City; all born in Guijo De Galisteo, Spain; and Mary Lawrence, Oakland; Tony Paniagua, Hayward; and Alvin Paniagua, Fremont. Mr. Paniagua married Saturnina on December 19, 1914. They came to America on June 21, 1921 and quite obviously have lived happily ever after.

Biographies of Paniagua Children

Florence Paniagua Hidalgo Sanchez As told by Wendy Hidalgo

Florence (Fulgencia) Paniagua Benito was born in 1916 in the small village of Guijo de Galisteo in Extremadura Spain. She was the oldest child of Ignacio Paniagua and Saturnina Benito. When she was 5, they along with her sister Marcella and brother Frank immigrated to Mountain View, California. Being the oldest she was expected to take on more responsibility and help take care of her 5 younger siblings. Once she reached 7th grade, she had to drop out of school so she could chauffeur and translate for her parents. Florence was the first person in her family to ever obtain a drivers license. She was also expected to work, as were the older children. All money that was earned by the children was given to their parents to help sustain the family and buy a house. Florence was never able to finish school. Her dream was to go to college and become a social worker. She loved to read and was very interested in history.

When Florence was a young lady, a young man originally from Spain, began to court her. His name was Manuel Hidalgo. He was a very persistent suitor and courted Florence under the watchful eyes of her mother. If any gentlemen caller wanted to court one of the Paniagua sisters they were expected to follow Saturnina's rules. The conditions of courtship included having one of the younger siblings sit between the courting couple on the couch in the front room. Saturnina sat across from them in



On right, Florence & Manuel Hidalgo

her rocking chair crocheting, and would keep an eye on them by peering sternly over her spectacles. It was also understood that any conversations between Manuel and Florence were to be promptly translated for Saturnina. To ensure no suitor ever stayed too late, Saturnina would set the alarm clock for 9:00pm. At 9:00pm sharp Saturnina would look over her glasses and tap her crochet needle and that meant it was time to leave, right now. Manuel and Florence courted for a couple of years and were eventually married in 1938.

They began their marriage on a ranch in Sunnyvale where their first child, Manuel Joseph was born in 1939. Their only daughter, Patricia Joan followed in 1940 and their youngest, Robert LeRoy was born in 1941. After living in Sunnyvale for five years, Florence missed her family and the connection of living in a Spanish neighborhood. The young family moved to Warm Springs in 1944. During this time Manuel and Florence owned a restaurant in Warm Springs. It was called the Junction Inn and was located on the corner of Fremont Boulevard and Mission Boulevard. They kept the restaurant for a several years but then decided to try something new. They sold the restaurant and relocated to Decoto.

After the war when building materials were still scare and very expensive they purchased a Quonset Building. They used the Quonset Building to open the first variety store in Decoto sometime around 1947. The Quonset Building still stands today on H street and houses Centro de Servicios. Together they ran the store for 10 years, until Manuel and Florence got divorced. This was quite unusual for the time, but Florence was very

unhappy in this marriage. Florence's sister Marcella and her husband Alfonso helped her by buying Manuel out of the variety store. From that time on, the two sisters ran the store together. The two sisters were well known in Decoto and knew everyone in their small community. Everyone passed through their store at one time or another. After operating the store together for 10 years they decided it was time to close. Running the store required long hours with no time off. Also, none of their children were interested in working at the store and other larger stores were popping up in town, so it was no longer as prosperous. After 15 years of running The Decoto Variety Store, Florence retired as co-proprietor with her sister.



Florence at Store

With Florence's money from the sale of the store and home attached, she bought a fixer upper on D Street. The whole family helped to gut the house, leaving just the foundation. Her brother-in-law Alfonso Roderigues re-built the home from the bottom up. The house still stands on D Street to this day.

Florence, who was never one to sit idle, promptly went on to work at The Decoto Pharmacy. During this time, while attending a graduation party at her brother Frank's house, she met Manuel Sanchez who would become her second husband. Florence and Manuel, who was known as Nene (which means little one in Hawaiian), were married at her sister Mary's house in the Oakland hills in 1966. For the first year of their marriage Nene was still an active merchant marine and was frequently out to sea. While Nene was completing his last year as a Merchant Marine. Florence continued her job at the Pharmacy. Around 1967 Nene retired from a life long career as a merchant marine. Florence quit working at the Pharmacy and retired at the same time.

Once Saturnina and Ignacio passed away, Florence and Nene's house became the meeting place of the Paniagua friends and family. Almost every Saturday or Sunday the whole family would stop by and Florence would feed each and every one of them. Everyone loved her garbanzo soup which was a Spanish dish served with french bread. Of course, being Spaniard there was always homemade olives and peppers on the side. It was so delicious and enjoyed by everyone whoever had a chance to taste the dish. You never left her house empty handed. Florence and Nene had a garden filled with fruits and vegetables. Together they would can tomatoes, onions, peaches, peppers, olives and more from their garden. She would always send you home with canned good or two and if you were really lucky she would make you one of her famous quilts. Never one to waste anything, Florence used the old clothes of her family and cut the fabric into pieces and sewed them together to make the most wonderful hand-made quilts. It was fun for her grandchildren to point out the patches on the quilt and remember whose item of clothing it was. To this day a few of them still sleep every night covered by one of those treasured quilts.



Florence & Robert

In the evening of these large gatherings, when everyone had their fill. The adults would partake in a few glasses of wine or beer, then the music began. Nene who always wore a Hawaiian shirt would play his

ukelele. Others would join in by playing the sticks, maracas, castanets and even the silverware, on occasion. The family would sing and dance for hours. An ay-yi-yi-yi or two would be heard through the evening. They played many types of music; Spanish and Mexican ballads and songs, popular ditty's from the 40's on up and songs from Hawaii where Nene was raised. Nene thought Florence had the most beautiful singing voice and he always made her sing Ama Pola. The grandchildren would beg their grandpa to sing the "dirty" songs and Nene would always protest and then relent. Oh how the grandchildren enjoyed those racy songs which are very tame in regards to today's standards.



Florence in her birth village

Florence had the chance to return to her native Spain once in her adult life. She went with her sisters and brother Frank. Florence left Spain at the age of 5 so she did not remember too much of her previous life in the small Spanish village. She enjoyed meeting all the family that she had corresponded with for years. She loved seeing the house where she was born and the church where she was baptized. At the time of this trip, the town was still quite rustic. There were no roads and donkey was the method of transportation. Rustic also meant there was no indoor plumbing, each family had their own corral behind their gardens for using the facilities. For their American visitors they fashioned toilets out of flower pots so they did not have to use the corral. Florence always had fond memories of this trip.

Around 1979 Florence and Nene decided to sell their home and move out to Anderson, CA near her sister Mary. They bought a beautiful property on 3 acres. For the first year or two they raised, chickens, pigs and even a cow. These animals grew to love Nene and would follow him around.

When it came time to butcher the animals, Nene would be crushed so they quit raising livestock. They lived a very content life in Anderson for many years. Florence missed seeing her children and grandchildren terribly so they sold the farm.

They moved back to Union City and purchased a mobile home in Tropics Mobile Park off Alvarado-Niles Road. There were not the weekly gatherings, like the old days but every January 1st, Florence's Birthday, there would be a huge family bash. The family would laugh, sing, mingle and each family brought a special dish to share. Watching the Rose Parade and Rose Bowl was a highlight of the day and took place before the festivities.

In 1995 Nene died from cancer and Florence passed in 2003. She was survived by her sons and eight grandchildren. Her daughter Patsy preceded her in death in 1999. Florence or Titi, as I called her was my grandmother and I still miss her so much. She was a very loving and special lady and she always made me feel special.

Marcella Paniagua Roderigues **As told by Wendy Hidalgo**

Marcella was the second child and second daughter born to Saturnina Benito and Ignacio Paniagua on January 9, 1917 in the small village of Guijo de Galisteo in Extremadura, Spain. Marcella made the voyage to Rhode Island with her parents, older sister Florence and younger brother Frank in 1921. The family eventually settled in Decoto, California which is now known as Union City. As a child Marcella went to school, but she was expected to work, as were all the children in the family. The Paniaguas would work by following crop to crop depending on whatever was ready to harvest at the time. The family worked for the Whipples and Driscolls among many other farms at the time.

Marcella was a Daddy's girl. Ignacio and Marcella loved spending time together and Marcella was always there to lend a helping hand. She could reminisce for hours about the past and always spoke fondly and very lovingly about her father.



Fourth from left: Marcella and Al Rodriguez

When Marcella was a young woman she was introduced to Alfonso Roderigues by a mutual friend. After an eight year courtship they were married in the Catholic Church. As a wedding gift Alfonso's parents gave them the house next door to theirs. Al's mother felt this gave her the right to come over on a daily basis and judge Marcella's housekeeping. Oh how Marcella hated this. It infuriated her to no end.

Marcella also worked for her Father-in-law on his farm. When payday came around everybody got paid ... except Marcella. This caused her to become quite incensed and she decided to quit working for them on the spot. Since they gave the couple a house, they expected her to work for free. Marcella had never agreed to this! She needed to earn money to help support her family, so Marcella promptly left the Roderigues farm and went to work at the Whipple Farm. The Paniaguas worked for the Whipples off and on for many years. Mrs. Whipple had a soft spot for this family and helped them out over the years.

When Marcella went to work at the Whipples, her in-laws became angered and refused to speak to her for over 25 years. Marcella being very determined, decided she no longer wanted to live under the thumb of her in-laws. Marcella borrowed enough money from her parents to buy a house that had been confiscated by the local police. The previous owner lost their home due to their illicit activities (selling marijuana). This allowed Marcella to negotiate a great price. Al had no idea Marcella was planning on moving, let alone buying another house. Marcella kept her plans secret. When the house was ready for her to move in Marcella announced she was leaving and moving into her own house and Al could come or not. Al chose to follow Marcella and they lived in that house until their deaths.

Al was the Assistant Fire Chief of Union City and Marcella ran the Decoto Variety store with her sister Florence for many years. Al and Marcella were very active in the Union City/Decoto community and especially in their church, Our Lady of the Rosary. Al was a jack-of-all trades and did all maintenance and upgrades at the Church for many years. Marcella spent many hours volunteering at the church she also taught

catechism and became the Teen Club Church Adviser. The Roderigues spent a great portion of their free time volunteering at OLR (Our Lady of the Rosary). Living about a half a block away made their commitment to the church that much more convenient.

Al was able to tackle every type of home repair and maintenance imaginable. Utilizing his skill and craftsmanship Al and Marcella would buy homes in disrepair at bargain prices. Al spent all his free time working on these properties. Once the house was up to par they would rent them out. They owned many properties in Union City. They were known for renting these houses for very little money to young families in order for them to save up for their own homes. They were beloved in the community and Marcella had at least 25 Godchildren.



Al, Fonsy, & Marcella

Al and Marcella had one son, Alfonso Roderigues Junior. Al and his cousins, Manuel, Patsy and Bobby kept both their mothers and grandparents on their toes. Running from house to house and causing a ruckus among them. The four of them were like siblings and were always together.

Marcella volunteered for many organizations over the years and in 1973 won "The Citizen of the Year Award" from the Chamber of Commerce. Her husband won the same award in 1968. Marcella also volunteered for the March of Dimes, Red Cross, Boy and Girls Scouts, PTA and at the Well Baby Clinic in town. Marcella wore many hats and was the Secretary of Socieda Hispana de Decoto (Decoto Spainard's Club).

Al and Marcella were also members of the Lions Club. Every year there is an Alfonso and Marcella Memorial Senior Citizens Thanksgiving Dinner held in their honor.

Marcella also ran the Christmas Basket program for over ten years. She went throughout the community and solicited contributions from many of the local merchants. Marcella spent many hours assembling and distributing these baskets to needy families who were recommended by their church. She would work year round on getting donations. Her studio in the back of the house was always filled with the donated items year round.

Marcella visited Spain in 1971 with her sisters and brother Frank. They had a wonderful time. When Marcella's beloved granddaughter was a pre-teen she wanted share the experience with her. She took her son and granddaughter on all expenses paid trip to Spain. It was quite an adventure and they made lots of memories on this trip.

Alfonso passed away on September 30, 2003. His funeral was a sight to behold. The parking lot was filled with fire engines and the Church brimming with firemen, He was saluted and honored with the utmost respect by his fellow firefighters.

Sadly, Marcella was preceded in death by her son on March 10, 2010. He died after a short but valiantly fought battle with stomach cancer. He is survived by his daughter Michelle and four grandchildren Kailynn, Nolan, Sloane and Ailis. At Logan High School one of the gymnasiums is named after him. He was a coach

as well as teacher. He was known they who knew him as Coach Rod. When a new law was introduced requiring the schools to have womens competitive sports, Al had a pivotal role in this endeavor. It was due to him that this was implemented quickly and successfully. He was respected and loved by all who knew him. He was a wonderful man with a kind heart and a twinkle in his eye.

Marcella hung on a few more years, but life just wasn't the same without her husband and son. She did remain active and her house was filled with visitors all day long. Marcella had a wonderful memory and would entertain friends and family with tales from her life and the history of Decoto. She knew everyone, and everyone knew and loved her. She stayed spry and sharp as a tack until her last day on this Earth on August 26, 2012. Her funeral was held at her church and was well attended. The Church was filled by those whose lives she touched. Helping generation after generation of local families. Marcella lived to the ripe old age of 94.

Frank Patrick Benito Paniagua **As told by Wendy Hidalgo**

Along with his father, mother and sisters, little Frank Patrick Benito Paniagua, age 2 embarked on long journey from Spain to America. For some unexplained reason Ellis Island was closed at the time of arrival. Their ship was re-routed through Rhode Island. They became one of just a few families to ever immigrate through Rhode Island.

Frank wore hearing aids from a very early age and was considered legally deaf. It was never obvious by his speech, he enunciated clearly with no impediment whatsoever. He was fluent in American Sign Language, English and Spanish. Frank attended the California School for the Deaf until he began high school.

Right out of high school Frank was drafted to serve in World War II. On his first day of training he met Jimmy Partoyan who lived in South San Francisco, and a lifetime bond began. They remained best friends from that day forward until the day of Frank's death 46 years later. Jimmy passed away in 2012. Jimmy used to like to tell the story about the day they met. He asked Frank, "Where are you from?" Frank said: "Decoto." Jimmy then asked North or South Decoto? Living across the bay he had never heard of Decoto.

While serving together in Italy, Jimmy saved Frank's life. They were riding in a jeep and ran over a land mine. Frank was thrown, unconscious into the water. Luckily, Jimmy was able to pull Frank to safety and save him from drowning. Those two pulled plenty of shenanigans together. They stole boots from the German soldiers because they were much warmer than their own boots. This too, almost got them killed when they were mistaken for Germans by the American forces. Frank and Jimmy used to appropriate food and give it to the starving families in Italy. Especially to the families whose husbands and fathers were killed in the war.



Frank in World War II

Frank served 5 years in the service and he was stationed in Africa as well as Italy. He was a private 1st class and part of General Patton's Infantry. The town of Decoto erected a monument honoring all of the Decoto boys who served in World War II. You can find the monument with all the honorees names engraved upon it in Kennedy Park, located in the Decoto area of Union City. Frank along with his brothers Alvin and Tony have their names etched upon the monument.

Upon his return from the war, Frank entered into a very short marriage of about 1 year. After his divorce he chose to live the bachelor life until 1958 when he met a beautiful widow named Suzanna Guerrero. They fell in love and were married the following year. Suzanna, called Susie, had a son Horace Jr. and a daughter Susan Marie that Frank loved and raised as his own, along with their two sons together Frank Patrick Jr. and Henry James. They all grew up in Hayward and graduated from Sunset High School.

Frank was a very skilled craftsman making furniture and doing upholstery. He started his career at Pilar Furniture and retired from King Kovers in 1982 due to health reasons. His son Frank Paniagua Jr. still owns 9 pieces of furniture lovingly handcrafted by his father.

Frank did have the opportunity to return to Spain once with his sister Marcella, brother-in-law Al, his other sister Mary and brother Alvin.

Every single Saturday Frank would pile his children and sometimes his wife, into his blue Triumph and head to Ignacio and Saturnina's tiny house on H Street in Decoto. The house was very small and all of Frank's siblings and their families congregated there every weekend. Saturnina was especially fond of Frank's son, Frankie Jr. and would take him out to the detached garage and pick out a homemade chorizo from the wooden rafters, for him to take home. You never left her house empty handed! Ignacio loved pigeon soup and often Frank would provide a fresh pigeon and Saturnina would pluck, cook and serve the soup. No one else cared for the soup, it was strictly for Ignacio, That house still stands today and there is a flock of pigeons that nest on the garage roof. Those birds are lucky nobody likes pigeon soup these days.

Sadly Frank's health declined and he passed away in 1990 from a heart attack. He is still missed tremendously by his family but his memory will forever live on.

Mary Paniagua Lawrence **As told by Wendy Hidalgo**

Mary Paniagua was the middle child of the Paniagua siblings. She was the third of six and the youngest daughter. Mary was very lucky to have some of the opportunities her older sisters did not. She was able to attend and complete High School. Upon graduation Mary entered the Merritt Business School in Oakland.

Once Mary completed her courses at Merritt Business school, she promptly went to work at Central Bank in Oakland. The bank was sold and its name changed many times during Mary's many years at the bank.

Growing up in Decoto, Mary remembered the Carnival Festival they would have in town every year. Everyone participated, men, women and children. Saturnina would make costumes for all six of her children. It was a whole day of fun. There was tap dancing, costumes, a parade, singing and everyone would go from house to house eating and visiting. Ignacio was a talented musician. He would preform at the Festival. He

was known in Spain and Decoto for his splendid singing voice. He also played the drums and the flute. Everyone enjoyed listening to Ignacio perform, especially his children.

Ignacio was also a wonderful story teller. He always had a captive audience. In Spain, Ignacio's occupation was a sheep herder. He had to be aware of the wolves who were after his flock. The tales of his sheep herding days were just some of the exciting stories he loved to tell.



Mary & Ignacio

One day a co-worker from the Bank invited Mary over for dinner. Another guest, Bruce Lawrence was also there. Mary and Bruce hit it off immediately and were married four months later. They made their home in Oakland.

Bruce worked for his father as painter for many years. Once his father retired Bruce took over his father's business. Bruce was very active in the Masons. Mary was active in the Eastern Star, the sister society to the Masons.

Mary and Bruce had no children of their own but they had numerous nieces and nephews they loved like their own. Mary and Bruce were both very generous with their nieces and nephews, Mary was known to shop for the kids at Malnick's, a fine department store in Oakland at that time.

Mary had the opportunity to travel to Spain five times during her lifetime. She loved seeing the village she had always heard so much about. The high point of her trips was meeting her cousins.

Mary and Bruce retired around 1972, sold all their property and moved to Palo Cedro, California. They owned a few acres and lived in a house that Bruce built. Bruce loves to garden, cook and work on the property. Mary loved to travel and gamble. Playing the slots was her favorite. She would take bus trips to Reno regularly with her brother Alvin, sister Florence and her niece Patsy.

Mary and Bruce had several dogs and cats that they loved like children. Those pets were spoiled. I remember when Mary would take a trip from Palo Cedro to the Bay Area she would always stop and get her favorite dog, Misty an ice cream cone. They loved Misty so much she holds a very special place in their hearts. It is even rumored that Misty slept in the bed with Mary and Bruce, along with two other dogs, Disney and Suzette and four cats!

Mary passed away on May 12, 2015. Bruce still lives in Palo Cedro. He is an excellent cook and baker. His signature dish is cabbage rolls and he is famous in the neighborhood for his pies.

Tony Paniagua

As told by Wendy Hidalgo

Unlike his older brother and sisters, Tony Paniagua was born in the United States. He came into this world on August 28, 1924, the 5th of 6 children born to Ignacio and Saturnina Paniagua.

Like both his brothers, Tony was drafted and served for 3 years at the rank of PFC during World War II. The war was hardest on Tony and he came home with battle fatigue. He was never the happy-go-lucky man that he was before the war.

Tony was the first of his brothers to join the Pilar Furniture Company, followed by Frank and then Alvin. One day his coworker Babe Marquez' car broke down, Tony gave him a lift home. Babe's sister Mary was outside and Tony asked about her. He was smitten. They were married within the year.

Tony worked at Pilar Furniture until the company closed down. He was a wiz when it came to fixing furniture. He'd have any piece of furniture in flawless condition in no time flat. Tony then went on to work at American Licorice Company in Union City for 2 or 3 years until he retired.

Tony and Mary lived their entire married life on Bruno Avenue in Hayward. They were blessed with 2 sons, Tony Robert, born in 1952, and Bruce Lawrence, born in 1953. Tony and his sons shared a mutual love of baseball and sports in general. Tony could be found after work and on the weekends watching sports on TV, listening to sports on the radio, and reading the sports page all at the same time. Tony and his boys especially loved baseball. Tony played on Pilar Furniture's baseball team. He also was a coach for his sons Little League teams. That tradition lives on with his youngest son Bruce, coaching baseball and softball for the city of Hayward for years. You can still find him on the field helping out during softball season.

Tony never made it to Spain for a visit. unlike all his other siblings. Tony and his family took yearly vacations to visit Mary's brother in Seattle, Washington. Seattle was a very special place for the family. It leaves Bruce and Tony Jr. with so many good memories of sight seeing and visiting the Grand Canyon. They would visit Tijuana on occasion and go camping at Lake Orwood. Tony was a homebody and preferred to be at home relaxing with his family and enjoying sports.

The family has fond memories of gathering every weekend at Saturnina and Ignacio's house on H Street. The fresh and dried chorizo hanging in the garage comes to mind. Sometimes the fathers would play around and lock the boys in the garage, but they didn't care. They loved hanging out in Abuelita's garage. They would pull down a dried chorizo and polish it off.

Ignacio and Saturnina had a huge walnut tree in the yard. All the grandchildren would gather to pick walnuts and play hide-and-seek. Of all the grandchildren only Bruce and Claire Lynn could climb to the top. It became their job to pick the walnuts that were way up high.

Tony and Mary had 25 wonderful years of marriage until Tony's untimely death of a heart attack at age 53. No one had even known Tony was ill because he was very stoic and didn't like to bother anyone. His son Bruce does recall him holding his chest and being out of breath but Tony refused to go to the doctors. He didn't like a fuss to be made over him.

Mary continued her love of traveling after Tony's death and especially enjoyed going to Hawaii. She also loved going on a cruises. On her cruise to Puerto Vallarta, she was so friendly and outgoing the Captain insisted she sit at his table every single night.

Sadly on the same day that Mary had her follow up appointment from her angioplasty, she passed away from heart attack at her niece Patsy Hidalgo's home. She departed this earth in 1996, 20 years after her beloved Tony.

Alvin Paniagua **As told by Claire Lynn Mendonca**

Aunt Marcella would always say my father, Alvin Paniagua was born in Mayfield, Ca. Mayfield was formed in 1855 around the corner of El Camino Real and California Avenue. Mayfield was a wild west town with saloons and brothels. In 1925 Mayfield became part of Palo Alto. So technically, my father who was born November 10, 1926 was born in Palo Alto, Ca.

My father was the youngest child born of Ignacio and Saturnina (Benito) Paniagua. His siblings were Florence, Marcella, Frank, Mary and Tony. Ignacio and Saturnina had traveled from their home town, Guijo de Galisteo in Extremadura, Spain to follow other family to the good life in California. They left from Lisbon, Portugal by boat, arrived in Rhode Island and traveled by train to meet up with the family in Sunnyvale, CA. The new arrivals were used as fruit pickers on the relative's farm but the new arrivals were interested in creating their own stake and make their own money and buy their own house. They picked fruit throughout the year in Santa Clara County and Alameda County at many different farms. The family lived in Fremont. They lived on the same street as I do now, only there wasn't a street there, but just land and a house and they picked fruit on the Driscoll Road property. I remember taking my dad to my house on Farragut Drive in Fremont when I was first interested in buying it and he said "I know this place, I lived here" and he showed me the location by Mission Creek where their house stood, Hopkins Junior High now stands a few yards away.

In 1932, they were putting in the first Hetch Hetchy lines through Fremont. My dad was supposed to be walking to school to Irvington Elementary (which was on Fremont Boulevard) and he stopped and just sat and watched the workmen putting together the huge pipes that day. When his siblings got home, they were in trouble because they had "lost" Alvin that day.

The family moved to Decoto and my father attended Washington High School and graduated in the class of 1944 at age 18. His brothers were fighting in World War II, his brother Frank was in Italy. Alvin signed up with the army upon graduation and was a buck private and in training but never went to war, because the war ended as his training began.



When my dad returned home after two years in the army, he worked with his brother, Tony upholstering furniture at Pilar Company. My dad would go to dances at the Palomar, a dance hall in San Jose and that is where he met my mother, Claire.

Claire was born in Tulare, CA on May 2, 1938. She was the child of Frank and Clara Nunes and she had two older brothers, George and Albert. Frank and Clara had come to California separately from their home on Terceira, Azores Islands. They met in California and married. They were dairy farmers and there were cousins that also lived in Tulare. There was a cow virus and their herd had to be killed per the county inspectors, so they moved to San Jose, CA. The cousins stayed in Tulare and started again with a new herd and now they have the largest dairy ranch in Tulare County.



The Nunes worked hard in San Jose canning fruit in the factories. They all worked until the war started and the boys went to war. Claire graduated from San Jose High School in 1946 at age 18. She changed her birth name from Clara to Claire. She immediately began working at Pacific Telephone Company as a phone operator. There was her employer and work for 35 years and she retired from it in 1981.

However in 1950, one Saturday she went to the Palomar in San Jose with some girl friends and met Alvin, and danced with him. He wanted to drive her home but she said no, she wasn't keen on him. She saw his new car and really like the car. Alvin said, "I come with the car". They agreed to come back to the Palomar again and Alvin picked her up at home. He met her mother. Her mother really liked Alvin because he made her laugh. So Alvin and Claire dated two years and married on April 5, 1952 at Five Wounds Church in San Jose. I guess I should have mentioned this earlier but my dad was 100% Spanish and my mother was 100% Portuguese and they made fun of each other's nationalities all their lives with my dad called the shepherd and my mother called, "The Portuguesa".

My parents first lived in an apartment in Hayward, near where she worked, and when my mother became pregnant, they bought a house at 1239 Ria Drive in San Leandro. I was born in Hayward Hospital on December 13, 1954 and my brother, Alvin Brian was born at the new, Eden Hospital in Castro Valley on December 5, 1960. When Pilar closed, my dad worked at the Stella Doro cookie factory for a few months and then got a job at Continental Can Company in Hayward. I went to Ashland School for kindergarten, then St. Alphonus Ligouri for first and second grade. My family was Catholic and went to church at St. Alphonus Ligouri in San Leandro.

When I was eight, my mom wanted to move to a bigger house because her mother had died and her father had cancer and she wanted her father to move in with our family. My parents bought a house in Fremont at 42688 Saratoga Park Street. I went to St. Edwards school in Newark. My brother went to Timothy Rix kindergarten, to St. Edward's for two years, then went to Millard School in Fremont. My brother and I both graduated from Irvington High.

My dad worked at Continental Can until age 65, then retired and then he worked part time as a travel agent. My dad loved to travel and my parents went to Hawaii at least twenty times and to Mexico and to Portugal. My mother worked until age 53 and then stayed at home. She has always been busy in her church organizations at Santa Paula Church in Fremont, now called Our Lady of Guadalupe church. My parents had a lot of close Santa Paula friends. These were friends who truly loved them. My dad died of cancer on November 5, 2005. He was a smoker most of his life and the illness started with prostate cancer, then lung cancer and it went all through his body in the last six months of his life. He also had two heart bypass surgeries, one in 1984 and one in 2004. **My mother Claire passed away on June 21, 2015.**

My parents were all about family and church and working. They did not do anything remarkable but lived their lives day to day, owned their home out right, saved a little money, hung out with friends. A pretty simple life.

Before I sign off, I will give you some childhood remembrances of my dad's family. My Paniagua grandparents lived in Decoto and each Sunday, it was tradition that we had to go to my grandparents house each Sunday. My dad's brothers and sisters were there, Florence, Marcella and Frank talking at the top of their voices, speaking in Spanish and then English, telling stories, my Uncle Frank telling dirty stories. Their spouses were there and their children were there. The quieter siblings, my dad, Uncle Tony and Aunt Mary would do more listening and laughing and chiming in. My grandmother would be making food in the kitchen and feeding everyone and my grandfather who was blind and pretty deaf would sit in a chair and play cards with the grandkids. Funny, a blind man playing cards, but he just trusted that we would keep the score right. I would hang out with the kids closer to my age; Tony's kids, Tony and Bruce and Frank's kids, Frank and Henry because Florence's kids were 15 years older than I was and Marcella's son Fonsy was 12 years older. Florence had grandchildren and they were babies that were always crying. So the house was loud; parents yelling out their stories, children crying and it was a very tiny house, so we were all under foot with each other. Then we would go into the garage where there were sausages hanging from the rafters and the wringer washing machine and we had to walk carefully in the vegetable garden or get a yelling from my grandmother. I can remember Easter and the bread my grandmother would bake with colored hard boiled eggs on top. I remember sitting at my grandmother's table and eating garbanzo soup and crackers and drinking coffee. A six year old drinking coffee but that is how they did it then. My grandmother would sit there and speak in broken Spanish/English to me.

I remember being at my Nunes grandparents house, Frank and Clara on 15th street in San Jose when I was very little and making chocolate pudding, standing on a chair at the stove. I remember playing with a Mister Potato Head and "The Honeymooners" playing on the TV. I remember being outside and going into the basement where my grandmother canned a lot of fruit. I remember visits with my Nunes cousins and visiting at the park a few blocks away. My grandmother, Clara Nunes died when I was six and I don't remember too many conversations since she only spoke Portuguese. My grandfather died five years later and he only spoke in Portuguese to me.

Family Tree

Ignacio 7/31/1885 – 1/11/1967	-----	Saturina 6/14/1891 - 1965
Fulgencia/Florence 1/1/1916 – 2-15/2003 - Manual Joseph - Patricia Joan - Robert LeRoy	-----	Manual Hidalgo
Marceliana/Marcella 1/9/1918 – 8/26/2012 - Alfonso Jr.	-----	Alfonso Rodriques
Paco/Frank 6/4/1920 – 1/30/1990 - Frank Patrick Jr. - Henry James - Horace Petlas, Jr - Suzanne Petlas	-----	Suzanna Guerrero
Maria/Mary 1922 - 5/12/2015	-----	Bruce Lawrence
Antonio/Tony 8/21/1924 – 7/16/1976 - Tony Robert - Bruce Lawrence	-----	Mary Marquez
Avelino/Alvin 11/10/1926 – 11/5/2005 - Claire Lynn - Alvin Brian	-----	Claire Nunes

Acknowledgments

This paper would not be possible if it were not for Wendy Hidalgo. In July 2013, I posted an article on UnionCityPatch.com about the Market in Decoto owned by Manuel Hidalgo in 1947. Seeing the article, Wendy contacted me and said that Manuel was her grandfather and the little boy, shown in the picture that was published with the article, was her uncle.

It was Wendy that let me know that the manuscript written by Florence existed. Wendy took the effort to collect family photos and to dig to get the details of the biographies of the Paniagua children. All I really did was type up the manuscript, do the editing, and put it all together.

The whole process took a couple of years to complete. There was a missing page from her copy of the document that took a while to track down. Getting the different biographies written also took a while. During this time, Wendy won a successful fight against cancer. Her energy was lacking during this time, but she was still thinking about this paper and continued to write a number of biographies.

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