

"...y la familia?"

Volume 7, Issue 1

Aug/Sept '02

Fiftieth Birthday!!

Needed for
Future Issues:

"Stuff" about
you and yours...

Announcements

- New baby
- Engagement
- Graduations
- Promotion
- New address

Upcoming Events

- family parties
- Reunions
- Weddings

Article, Photos and Fillers

- Nostalgic stories
- Photos and artwork
- Original poetry
- Vignettes on your immediate family
- Favorite family recipes
- Cute things your kids have said
- Funny stories

About fifty people showed up to help me celebrate my 50th birthday at my church, Christian Life Center, on June 22nd. Yes, I know, looks are deceiving, but it is true: I am half a century old!!

I'M 50.

I'M OVER 50.

I'M WAY OVER 50!!

A mysterious "Birthday Fairy" sent me a birthday card *each day* beginning with 50 days before my birthday. They were postmarked Denver. Hmmmmmm.....

It was just a fun, old fashioned picnic atmosphere, with yummy pot-luck food, good friends and family all around, water balloon volleyball (see below right), and a softball game. As you see, Joi flew in from Denver, and Olga and Tom showed up with a passel of grandkids. There were a lot of nice gifts, too, even though I had specified "no gifts, please." Olga and family gave me 50 presents, many of which contained 50 items, such as 50 rubber bands, or 50 paper clips. It took forever to unwrap them all, but was a lot of fun.



Inside this issue:

Fiftieth Birthday!!.....	1
Needed for Future Issues.....	1
I Remember.....	2
At This Time in Our Family History.....	3
The Way We Were.....	3
Guess Who This Baby Is?.....	3
Student News.....	4
A Cute Story.....	4
Other Family News.....	5
More Family News.....	6
Y la Familia Web Page.....	6
Relatives Respond.....	7
Birthday and Anniversary Greetings.....	8

I Remember...

By Delia Finch

This article is actually comprised of some excerpts from the second half of a letter that Aunt Delia wrote to me in response to the article on my mother that I wrote in the last issue. I have tried to copy her words exactly as she wrote them, down to the punctuation and spelling, for the sake of authenticity.

The beginning of her letter is printed on page 7, under Relatives Respond. This part of the letter was full of reminiscences of her childhood, so I thought it was better suited for the "I Remember" column.

Tita remembers very well the death of your grandfather, and nothing like that happened in their house with lottery tickets. She was a big girl by then of about 10 or 11 years old, and she remembers, that they were not dirt poor as your article says. *[Well, Aunt Delia, I re-read the article that I wrote and not once did I say that my mother was "dirt poor." You got that wrong, somehow. --Norma]* In fact they were one of the most fortunate ones, living very comfortably, and well off, of all the neighborhood. They were living at the time of our Dad's death, in a sort of long house that was built right next to the "El Puente de la Calle del Agua," by where Gual used to live. Doña Santa, had a lot of dolls and figurines, which everytime one broke, she fixed by putting them together with eggwhite. I remember after I was a big girl, all the dolls she had, and she never let anyone touch any of them. She taught Tita how to repair porcelain with the eggwhite.

Speaking about being dirt poor, we had no dolls ourselves. *[Sorry--It's too late to claim this distinction; the Nicholson's have already been declared the poorest.]* I used to make believe that a little mercurochrome empty bottle, was a

doll. Behind our house, I made a play area where I played all alone, and used that tiny little bottle as my baby doll. For arms I took a twig from our fence *enredadera* (a climbing plant that covered all our fence in the backyard) and tied the twig with a piece of string across the upper part of the bottle, and made believe it was the arms of my little doll. Out of pieces of rags, I used to make tiny little shirts to dress my baby, and with wild cotton I picked from our neighbor's yard, I made a little crib out of a wooden match box, lined with the cotton for my little dolly. I had a lot of fun playing that way all by myself.

I never got a real doll until I was about 12 or 13 years old. That happened for one Three Kings Day, and my brother Nery got it for me. On the same day, my Godmother got me one two. After that I got another one from a minister friend of the family. And that was when I started collecting dolls. When I turned 16, and had to leave for San Francisco, I took my dolls (all 16 of them that I had gotten from friends of the family) over to my brother Gual's house to keep for me until later, and when I went back home 6 months later, his kids had destroyed everyone of them. I felt heartbroken, because they were my only treasure.

Again, not to contradict you, Aunt Delia, but you say you never got a real doll until you were 12 or 13 years old. However, in the Dec.'97/Jan'98 issue of "¿...y la familia?" you wrote an article entitled "Childhood Memories" for the "I Remember Column" (page 4). Let me quote you: "At eight years of age I still believed in the Three Kings: Gaspar, Melchor, and Baltazar. My favorite one was Gaspar. One Three King's Eve, Mom, Tita, and I had already gone to bed when suddenly we heard a knock at our kitchen door. I opened it, and there was Nery, standing

with his arms full, waiting to get in. I remember saying to him, "Oh, so you are the kings?" He gently told me to go back to bed...In the morning Nery told me that the kings had not brought anything for me because I had been a bad girl. He asked me to look under the bed, but I refused to do so, believing that I did not get anything. He finally pulled out a box with a beautiful doll in it which I then did not want. He felt very bad when I refused it. In the meantime, my godmother's son came to our house looking for me. He asked me to go see what the Three Kings had left for me at their home. When I got there, my godmother handed me another doll..."

So I am just a little confused. Not that it matters that much, but where you 8 years old when you got your first dolls, or where you 12 or 13?



Delia as a little girl, with her mother, Otilia, and Auntie Rosita.

"¿...y la familia?"

Guess Who This Baby Is?

The answer is
found on page 6.



Have you noticed that there is no "Meet Your Relatives" in this issue? I need for you guys to send me information on yourselves for future issues. Please!!!!!!

The
Way
We
Were



Meryem Merritt and Joi De Nardo, June 20th, 1967
(Norma García's 15th birthday), in the dining room of the García
home in San Francisco, CA.

Question: Can you see that framed needlepoint of the windmill
that is hanging on the wall? Does anyone know who made it?
My mom told me once but I don't remember who she told me.
Was it Auntie Anita Merritt?

*At this time in our
family history...*

- Auntie Anita Merritt would have been 86 years old on August 8th.
- Florencio Rivera Maldonado was born 130 years ago, on Aug. 9th. He was my grandfather—the father of Adela, Oscar, María, Elena, Guar, Anita, Neri, Isidro, Angélica, and Delia.
- On September 11, 1917, Vicente Neri Rivera, son of Florencio Rivera and Otilia Pacheco, was born. He would have been 85 this year.
- María de la Cruz Vilá was born On Sept. 14, 1817. She was a sister of my great-great-great-grandma, María Inés.
- In August of 1916, my grandmother, Ana Cruz García, died. She died a week after giving birth to our Auntie Anita.
- Dolores De Nardo, daughter of Angelo & Elena, would have been 56 on Sept. 25th. She died in infancy.

Student News

My son, **Luke**, worked doing yardwork around our neighborhood to raise his own money to go on a mission trip to Mexico. During the month of July, he spent a week at Rancho de Sus Niños in Baja California with the youth group of another Christian church.

This was Luke's second trip to Rancho de Sus Niños. Last summer, Vickie, Luke and I went there with another girl from our church's youth group.

Rancho de sus Niños is a Christian Family Care Center/Day Care in Eastern Tijuana. The orphanage has group homes run by house “mothers,” with about 12-13 children per home, for a total of about 50 children living at the orphanage. The day care offers an alternative to an orphanage. The children of working mothers are fed and cared for in a Christian environment.

Rancho de Sus Niños also has built churches in the community, has built a community school and a youth center, and has constructed a Bible School to train future ministers. The Bible School is in its second year of operation.

Our family is sponsoring a precious little girl from the day care with only \$20 a month. If you would like to touch a family in Mexico with the love of Christ by helping one child, please contact Rancho de Sus Niños, Pastors Steve and Cathy Horner, P.O. Box 360, Potrero, CA 91963.

A Cute Story

A Child's Perception

By Laurie Jimenez

I have a 3 year old son, by the name of Julian. He is the love of my life. I have joy and laughter as I watch him explore the center of his own universe. His wide-open eyes explore the world with unwavering newness. A few days ago he went to visit with his father Jeff, for a few days. During his visit, he went with his father to enjoy the company of an old friend by the name of Frank, and the three of them went together to visit a lady friend of Frank's who lives in the mountains.

Upon arrival Frank introduced both Jeff and Julian to his friend, whereupon she asked Julian if he would like to see some baby kittens. With delightful enthusiasm Julian agreed, and the four of them walked to an old gray barn where the kittens resided with their mother.

Julian had never seen baby kittens before, even though he lives with a full-grown male cat called Hunter. The mother feline had given birth to four kittens.

Cats at birth are helpless creatures, and need a lot of attention from their mothers to ensure that they become full- grown cats. Usually in the 1st week after birth, kittens are so weak they crawl on their bellies, their eyes are puffed shut, and they latch themselves to their mother's nipple, and nurse while sleeping. By the second week their eyes are still puffed shut, but they have better motor skills with their front paws, and they drag themselves around the floor, and still attach themselves to their mother's tits, and nurse while slumbering. By the third week, their eyes are beginning to open, their vision is blurred, and they wobbly begin to learn to stand upright. They nurse on the same nipple, guided by smell, and sleep in a bundle with their siblings.

By the fourth week, their vision is slowly getting better, and they begin to learn to use their tail for balance as they unsteadily begin to walk, though they don't know how to walk on their toes yet. But they still nurse and slumber in a bundle.

The explanation above was important, when I explain that the kittens Julian saw were only four weeks old.

Julian and the adults entered the barn through a door. It was dark and dusty from elapsed use, and the room was cluttered with boxes and other forgotten household items. The barn was also dry and hot like a tinderbox from the heat of the day. On the far side of the wall, next to a mound of boxes was an old forgotten blanket where the mother cat laid, nursing her young brood in the comfort of her makeshift nursery.

Julian's excitement was noticeable as he fidgeted his way through the grownups legs to be the first to see the baby kittens. As the grownups bent over to look at the baby kittens contently nursing, Julian's eyes grew wide.

“Look daddy, look!” Julian said with enthusiasm, as he pointed to the kittens. “Them kittens are eating that cat!” he said astoundingly.

Before his father could make sense of what his only beloved son had said. Julian had already stepped in closer, and knelt down next to the kittens.

“I'll save you!” he said heroically, as he gently scooped up one of the kittens and dragged it away from its mother.

“No Julian, No!” his father said, gently correcting his son. But Julian wouldn't hear of it, and plucked another kitten from its mother. The adults could do nothing to stop him, as Julian bravely volunteered to save the mother from being eaten, and they burst into laughter when they realized what he was doing.

Before long Julian had all of the kittens askew, mewing for their mother. With an unsteady stance and blurred vision the kittens, guided by smell attempted to return to their mother.

“You get back here!” Julian would state, when any of the wobbly kittens attempted to approach their mother, and he would gently drag the kitten back.

Frank bent down and took Julian into his lap, and as they watched the confused kittens crawl around the floor. Frank tried to explain to Julian that the kittens where not eating their mother, but were just having lunch.

“Nuh-uh! Julian said. “Them eating the cat!” he insis ted.

Other Family News

The following is a combination "Family News" and "Relatives Respond" from Cousin Marlynn (Merritt) Krause. It is so wonderful to get letters from family—you guys don't know how much I appreciate it. I'm including the entire letter here so that you all can enjoy it, too.

Dear Norma,

I am sending along a letter we recently received from our daughter Stephanie and her husband, Scott. Scott was transferred by his company (Kimberly-Clark) to their plant in the Appleton, WI area rather suddenly. Anyway—it was sudden for us (the parents). We knew they would be moving by summer's end at the latest, but all of a sudden in mid-April they got the word that Scott was to report to work up there the 1st of June!

Needless to say there was an enormous amount of stuff to be accomplished in not too much time. The kids flew up one weekend, found a house, arranged financing, Stephanie had two job interviews, then back home to notify friends, employers, rental company, and begin the job of arranging movers and deciding what goes and what goes in the trash.

Kimberly-Clark does a marvelous job of making the move as easy as possible—arranging for the moving van, packing, etc. Paul, Christy and I saw them off on May 29th (Stephanie's birthday).

Their new address is 1234 Bluegrass Ln.,
Menasha, WI. 54952

Christy will be going up there this week for a short visit. She and her sister became much closer when they were both living in the same apartment complex.

Speaking of sisters visiting—the Merritt girls had their annual "Sisters Trip" this past June. We met at Meryem's place in Des Moines. I had not been back for 30 years (not counting Mom and Dad's funerals). There was very little that I recognized from our high school days. We drove by our old neighborhood and schools, went antiquing in West Des Moines, strolled around Gray's Lake, and went looking for treasures at discount stores and the garden shops. But the *theme* for the visit was set by the movie Meryem had decided we would go to on our 2nd evening together—"The Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood." From then on everything was "Ya Ya!" We shopped at the Farmers Market, ran into old neighbors, even a girl (woman now) that we all baby sat for, and ate an unholy amount of Meryem's good cooking. Grilled salmon—ya ya!

Love to you all,
Marlynn

P.S. Enjoyed all the pictures and stories surrounding Auntie Rosita's birthday. It looks like everyone had a grand time! Sorry not to have been able to attend. Oh—also, just wanted to let you know that I shared the poem "You and God" with our community group. We had *just* received the newsletter and it fit wonderfully with our current Bible study. So, everyone, keep sharing; you never know the lives you might impact! Thanks!

"Ya ya!"—The Merritt sisters: Kathy, Marlynn & Meryem →

June 28, 2002

Dear Family and friends,

Scott and I thought we would write to give you guys an update on our lives up here in the "frigid north." Ok, so, it isn't frigid yet, but 50 degrees in June is pretty chilly. First of all, thank you to all of you who made this transition a little easier for us. We miss everyone terribly, and we will never forget how each one of you has impacted our lives.

We had a very smooth move up here. All of our belongings arrived in one piece. What a relief!!! Mollie was the only one traumatized by the whole thing. She won't go near the car, for fear that we might take her on another 15 hour car ride. Ha!

Our house is becoming more and more a home for us. We were so excited to put our own touch on the design of the inside of our house. However, after two full days of painting and one awful paint color (that we had to change), we've decided painting is for the birds. Scott has become quite the handy man, drilling and hammering. And he's so excited that he has a wife that keeps coming up with project after project and on and on. At least it keeps him busy. Both of our jobs are going well. We're both being very challenged at work, which is different for both of us, but it is very good for us as well. Some days aren't as easy as others, but at least we're not bored.

We've been able to spend some time with a couple of other couples around our age. We've learned how to play frisbee golf, and Scott actually got me out on the tennis court. We went to the Packer's Celebrity Softball game. We figured that would be the closest we'd ever get to see the players. And of course, I've hunted and found some great places to go shopping. Poor Scott!!

We're in the process of finding a church home. We've been attending Christ the Rock Community Church, but we're not completely comfortable there. We are going to visit some other churches in the coming weeks. We ask that you continue to pray for us in this area. Again, a huge thank you for your prayers, thoughts, and gifts. We think of you often, and we will take our memories with us no matter where we go. And if you're ever up in this area or just want to plan a trip up, let us know. We love to have company.

In Christ's love, Stephanie & Scott



"...y la familia?"

Bill, Evy and Wilmi Roig went to Florida on vacation. While there they visited some universities that Wilmi is interested in attending, since she will be graduating from high school next May. Upon their return to P.R., Bill sent out this e-mail note:

Dear family:

Got back the 18th. at 9:00pm. Had a great time at Carol & Larry's. Stayed overnight and from there we went to visit Miami U. and Fla. International U., went back to Carol's and stayed overnight and then returned to Orlando. Tita and José were there when we first arrived and we all went to dinner at a nice restaurant. Tita told me that she remembered me as a little baby, just 4 or 5 months old (at that time she was barely 5 or 6 years old!) and that all her life she had wanted to see me again. It took exactly 69 years, but it happened! We spent only a little time together, but considering, it made up for that long wait. We already plan to spend more time with them next year. Couldn't visit with Rosa because she had medical appointments on the days that we had available but again, we'll coordinate with them for next year.

All in all, this was a significant vacation, if only because we had the opportunity to share some time with long-lost family. And all thanks to Norma and Joi. I think of them as the Crazy Glue that holds our family tree together. Our heart-felt thanks to both of them!

Love, Bro Bill

In addition to welcoming Vickie Jimenez home, the party at the Stenroos home was also in celebration of Eric's 19th birthday. Here are Eric and Vickie showing off the yummy cake that Joi made for them.

Cousin Joi wrote the following comments about the party:

We spent the afternoon just visiting and catching up on everything, and Vickie's experiences with writing her book, getting it published and book signings. Vickie promptly immersed herself in photo albums from our Family Reunion in Estes Park, our trip to Atlanta to be with the Riveras, Sonia's wedding, Norma's recent 50th birthday celebration a couple of weeks ago, and our vacation pics to Grand Caymen (last year) and Cozumel, this year. We also reviewed the family newsletters, all of them from 1996 to present. It was like a family history review! (Thank you, Norma!).

A touching moment was when we gave her Daddy Angelo's Victrola that we had brought back from Grandmother's. That is the one thing that she said she had wanted to badly! We plugged it in...and it worked! AM reception only, of course, 'cuz that's what they had then. Vickie spent time sharing her memories about her Grandpa Angelo playing his music and dancing. Sasha told us she could remember the day Daddy brought it home--when we lived on 23rd Avenue (around the corner from the Garcias). When Daddy used to play her opera records, Sasha used to sing along. She said that's why she loves opera music so much.



Congratulations!

Cousin Sasha Lovelace (daughter of Auntie Helen) completed an intensive three week course and exam in Denver, Colorado, to earn her Real Estate Agent Licence. She passed the course and exam with flying colors, once again proving that our family is brainy as well as beautiful! Congratulations, Sasha!

Sasha is pictured below, standing behind her sister, Joi. This photo was taken during a party at Joi's house in honor of Sasha's daughter Vickie's return from England, where she has been publishing a book. Also in the picture is Laurie Jimenez, Sasha's oldest daughter, whose story about her young son, Julian, appears on page 3. Laurie's oldest son, Dustin, is laying down on the couch.



The baby pictured on page 3 is my daughter, Sonia, on the day that I brought her home from the hospital. This is what *I* looked like 24 years ago!

Family Web Site

It's up and running! Go to www.ylafamilia.org and sign up today! Cousin Carlos has done a fantastic job of setting up our own family web site, which can be accessed in either English or Spanish.

Features include the following:

- Password entry for members only
- Family photos
- News items
- Current and past newsletters
- Family history information
- Upcoming family events

Check it out today!



Our sympathy to Tom and Olga Smith and family in the loss of their beloved family dog, Bridget, who developed a brain tumor and had to be put to sleep. Her rambunctious energy will be missed by everyone.

Relatives Respond

July 10, 2002

Hi, Norma,

We received your “LA FAMILIA NEWSLETTER” on Tuesday. It was very nice, except for one of your stories that is incorrect.

I do not know where or when you think you heard that story, but it does not pertain to any of your relatives on your mother’s side. You got that wrong somehow!

You need to correct it on your next “LA FAMILIA”. It is the story about the Lottery Ticket. That story is a real life story and belongs to my Father, Florencio Rivera Maldonado *and no one else*. My Dad had an unfortunate accident that happened in our home in Loma Bonita, Ponce, Puerto Rico. No-one in the whole family outside our home was present at the time of the accident except my sister Tita, and myself, when it happened. Mami was in the Kitchen preparing food for dinner at the time. Tita and I were with our Dad at all times, tending the produce shop that my Dad owned, which was connected to the house by an open doorway to our livingroom. Tita, and I were walking right behind Dad when he went up the step from his shop, to go into the house. At the left side of the doorway of the livingroom, there was a shelf on the wall which held our antique radio. Dad reached to turn the radio on for the news, he lost his balance and fell backwards, landing over a “charcoal tocon”, which caused internal bleeding causing his death about one month later. We were dirt poor, and had no money to get Dad a specialist to find where the problem was, except we got a doctor to make a house call to check him out, and all he did was prescribe pain killers, and nothing else. Tita and I were lucky that as Dad fell backward, we did not get crushed, missing us by a few inches. *[It is not likely that two girls ages 7 and almost 13 would have been crushed by one man falling backwards off of one step.]* Dad’s pain was unbearable as he ruptured the spleen with the fall, and made him act wild sometimes.

When my Dad past away, we were all very devastated, and dirt poor. For a very long time, probably a few years, he very faithfully played the Cuban Lottery (LA BOLITA), which was against our Government laws in Puerto Rico, and Dad always played the same special number every single time, 381, and never made any money on it until the day he died. The day after, the gentleman that he always bought the lottery tickets from, came to our house looking for Dad, and on a loud voice, he yelled out, “Doña Otilia, El billete de Don Flor ganó premio mayor.” (“Doña Otilia, Don Flor’s Lottery ticket won big, \$500.00.”)

Mami all broken hearted, let out a scream, and holding her head, she started crying out loud “Ay Dios Mío, if only this would had happen one month ago, I could have been able to get for my husband the proper medical care he was so much in need of.” It was very sad to watch my Mom so desperate, and heartbroken. Our neighbors were so good to us, that as soon as Dad had past away, they built a homemade casket for him, and fresh cut flowers kept on coming from everywhere, and everyone that knew my Dad. With the money From that lottery ticket, we were able to give my Dad a proper burial, and pay for the funerals of our two little sisters, whom died one after the other, withing three month, after Dad. The poor kids had been very sick for sometime, with two different kinds of infections.

What was left from the Lottery Ticket money after that, was used by Nery and Gual, remodel our house and kitchen that was falling apart.

I am not trying to offend you in anyway, but I needed to get the story straightened out. About three years ago, I started writing our childhood story of our lives, in our computer, and Dad’s Lottery ticket remembrance is in there. Everytime I go over what I have written and get to that part of our lives, it brings lots of tears to my eyes. I have written 39 pages.

Our Dad past away on July 22, 1941, but his grave stone marker, was written with the wrong date on it which was June 22, 1941, and for some laziness reasons, it never got changed to the right date.

When Dad past away, I was 7 years old, and was never enrolled in school until I was 8 years of age. My Dad did not believe in the school systems. He believed that teaching a kid a trade, was better for them, to learn to make the living. Nery and Gual, took me to Barbosa grade school and enrolled me there on my 1st grade, after Dad was gone.

Our CONGRATULATIONS TO SONIA AND SPOUSE ON THEIR WEDDING. Sorry they decided to keep the relatives out of it. That is supposed to be a day to celebrate with family. But that was their choice! We hope they are happy!

Love Aunt Delia

*My sincere apologies! Mom’s father **did** play the “bolita,” always using the same number—42—and I must have mixed that story up with the one of my other grandfather winning postmortem with **his** lucky number! Thanks for setting me straight. --Norma*

"¿...y la familia?"

C/o Norma I. Pettit
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E-Mail: mamanony@innercite.com

Birthday Greetings

*Christian Rivera Rosa (9) –
Aug. 3*

Chet Kline (36) – Aug. 6

Michael García (10) – Aug. 8

*Timothy Teal Barnes (11) –
Aug. 9*

Leandro González (8)-Aug. 9

Yamil Williams (16)-Aug. 10

*Rosa (Medina) Meddaugh (51) –
Aug. 10*

René M. Rivera (17)-Aug. 15

José L. Medina (78)-Aug. 15

Dave L. Finch (63)-Aug. 15

Paul A. Wright (18)-Aug. 17

Carmen Rivera (59)-Aug. 18

Shanda Peters (16)-Aug. 23

Frankie Valentín (21) – Aug. 26

Angelica Stickle (16) – Aug. 26

Héctor González (40) – Aug. 26

*Yuly (García) Springer (30)
Aug. 26*

Evelyn Roig (58)–Aug. 28

Julian Miller (4)–Aug. 29

David Nelson Rivera (20) – Sept. 5

Luz Rivera (54) – Sept. 6

Iris L. Rivera (20)–Sept. 8

Lloyd Lovelace (73)-Sept. 8

Miguel González (39) – Sept. 10

*Leslie (González) López (39) –
Sept. 10*

*Inés (Baez) Rivera (48) –
Sept. 10*

*Charice A. Rivera (20) –
Sept. 12*

Rachel Rivera (22)-Sept. 14

*Kathleen (Merritt) Caffey (56)
– Sept. 15*

Craig Burch (15)-Sept. 24

*Oscar González (63) –
Sept. 21*

*Edie (Jimenez) Neitzel (41) –
Sept. 23*

Raúl Rivera (9) – Sept. 24

*Carlos M. Rivera (56) –
Sept. 25*

*Marina M. Ramos (24) –
Sept. 25*

Robert Rivera (33)-Sept. 26

*Angélica Medina (74) –
Sept. 27*

♥ Anniversaries ♥



**Michelle & David
Fastenau (1) –
Aug. 4**

**Evelyn & Bill Roig
(31) – Sept. 11**

**Rosa & Brian
Meddaugh (13) –
Sept. 16**

**Yuly & Todd
Springer (8)–Sept. 17**

*If I omitted your birthday or
anniversary it's because I
don't know it! Please send me
info on your family! ☺*