

# "...y la familia?"

Volume 7, Issue 4

Feb/Mar 2003

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

## Rosita Rivera Succumbs to Cancer

Rosita Maria (Hernandez) Rivera, the last surviving child and daughter of Manuel Hernandez (died after 1951) and Amalia Sierra (died 1943), passed away December 23, 2002 after a year-long battle with pancreatic cancer. She is survived by her husband of 57 years, Isidro Rivera, and sons Carlos, Edward, Roberto and Orlando.

When the priest came to see Rosita a few days before her death to administer the last rites, she surprised him by puckering up her lips and giving him a kiss on the cheek. She couldn't talk, but her facial expressions told everyone how much it meant to her to have the priest visit her.

At her side during her final hours were her husband and her oldest son, Carlos. She passed away peacefully, and it was said that she died as she lived—with a smile on her face.

Funeral services were held at a Catholic Church in Carrollton, Georgia, with many friends and family members present to pay their final respects. Rosita's makeup and hair was lovingly done by her own granddaughter, Monica (daughter of youngest son, Orlando). A eulogy was delivered by Rosita's second son, Edward.

Following the burial, a dinner reception was held at the home of Isidro Rivera. A wonderful array of dishes were prepared and brought over by the Rivera's neighbors.



Rosita was born in Utuado, Puerto Rico on April 24, 1920. She married Isidro Rivera on October 2, 1945, in San Francisco, California. The couple raised four sons while living in California, then subsequently moved to Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, Homestead, Florida, and finally, Carrollton, Georgia.

At the time of her death, Rosita had ten grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

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## A Page Out of Our Family History

This article is a reprint from the February/March 1999 issue of "¿...y la familia?".

### How Rosita and I Met

By Isidro Rivera

It was June of 1936. I had graduated from school and was home playing with a mandolin. I laid it down and heard the voice of a young girl coming from the house next door. I tell you, they moved there recently and there was an old lady, and old man, and ome young fellows. I didn't know their names yet. They came there first and Rosita came about a week later. That's when I heard that sweet voice of a young country girl (exciting).

I stood and looked out to see if I could spot her (no dice). I waited...then she came out onto the yard and I liked what I saw. A nice girl on the heavy side with a sweet round face. She looked so clean and preened up that she didn't belong there. She looked at me and smiled and went back inside. I liked her smile and something did click inside of me.

I waited and got to know them. I found out she was engaged to a fellow (barber) in Jayuya and was getting ready for marriage. He used to visit them every week. Somehow she broke off the engagement and went to work downtown.

When she was home again, I wrote a little letter and had it in my pockets waiting for the right moment to declare. She went to the backyard and I told Tita to take the letter to her. She was reading the letter and crying. I got nervous and went inside the house, worried that she might reject me, but she didn't.

We were friendly to each other and enjoyed the company, going to the movies. I used to go see her where she worked and go holding hands on walks...dancing together at Christmastime. We were really in love with each other. Four years until 1940 that I went to New York and joined the Army. Then five more years writing letters until we got married in California.

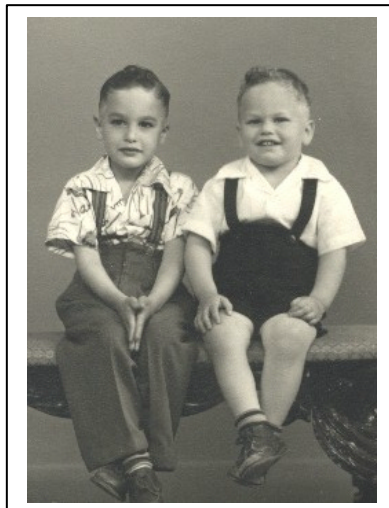
She was working with a family that went to New York and I told her to move to San Francisco with Maria until I got out of the service. I promised her I would marry her in three days. Well, the third day was Tuesday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, 1945, and we did it. Just about everybody marries on Saturday, and we did it on Tuesday. ♥

### Guess Who This Baby Is?

The answer is found on page 7.



The Way We Were



Carlos and Edward Rivera, about 1951

At this time in our family history...

- ♦ Hilario García Jr. and Juliana Pérez were married on Feb. 1, 1861. Hilario's brother, José de la Cruz García, became the maternal grandfather of my grandmother Ana Cruz García.
- ♦ Florencio Rivera Maldonado and Ana Cruz García were married on Feb. 12, 1914.
- ♦ Auntie Marie and Achilles G. Nicholson were married on Feb. 15, 1937.
- ♦ Dionicia del Carmen Rivera Maldonado (a sister of our family patriarch, Papa Flor), was born on Feb. 20, 1867.
- ♦ Victoriano Rivera Maldonado (my father's great-uncle) was born on February 23, 1845. He was a brother of Manuel Alejo Rivera Maldonado (my father's paternal grandfather).
- ♦ Juan Julian Rivera Maldonado was born 126 years ago, on Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>. He was five years younger than his brother, Florencio (my father's father), and died on New Year's Eve at the age of nine-and-a-half.
- ♦ One of Florencio's paternal uncles, Pedro Alcántara Rivera Maldonado, was born on March 21, 1844. He was the sixth child born to José de los Santos Rivera and Cipriana Maldonado.

# I Remember...Auntie Rosita

Jenny and I were so fortunate to have known Auntie before she married Uncle. She stayed with us before the wedding. I remember the wedding well. Auntie was always so beautiful and doll like. She wasn't much taller than most 12 year olds. She always was so cheerful yet extremely strong in character. Who else would God have given the responsibility of 4 boys! I remember her infectious laugh and warm and giving spirit and fun nature. She always had hugs and kisses for us and was such fun to be around. I can never remember an unkind word from her.

She was indeed a very special woman who was a remarkable mother and helpmate to Uncle. Look at the fruits of her labor. Each of her children is unique and gifted as she and Uncle were. She was and will always be a role model for those of us who were blessed to know her. She was the epitome of a wife and mother. I am grateful to have shared in her life.



Victoria Nicholson

*Rosita, Jenny, Victoria, and Sylvia, in the backyard of the Garcia home, around 1945.*

I remember being at Auntie Rosita's house with Carlos and all the kids. Orlando was very small and Auntie dressed Carlos as a daddy with a hat and all and dressed me in her clothes as the Mother. She was a small woman and even her shoes fit me. We wheeled the baby down the street in the carriage. When we made dinner that night she let me make the gingerbread but did not want Uncle Isidro to know because she was afraid he wouldn't eat it if he knew I made it. Most of all I remember her smile. She could light up a room.

Kathy (Merritt) Caffey

I remember Auntie Rosita very well. I was a little girl when Uncle Isidro was in the army and he had sent for Auntie Rosita to come to S.F. to our house to live till he came home. I remember the family preparing for their wedding and how exciting it was and how much they loved each other. I remember their wedding day and what a wonderful party we had to celebrate. It was one of our wonderful family parties.



I remember almost every time I ever visited Tía Rosita and Tío Isidro and Grandma Otilia, that Rosita always made a huge banquet of food. She made wonderful arroz con gandules! She was a great hostess and pampered her family and guests.

I will always remember her wide smile and twinkling eyes.

Carol (Medina) Wright



As I was growing up I always admired Auntie Rosita as a wonderful wife and mother. I always thought that is how I wanted to be—just like Auntie Rosita. I also remember how Auntie Rosita was always sitting on Uncle Isidro's lap and how much they loved each other.

Yesterday I saw Uncle Isidro and as I was looking at him I saw Auntie Rosita. Auntie Rosita was a wonderful and beautiful woman.

Jenny (Nicholson) Reinke



I have so many memories of Auntie Rosita. When I was little, Auntie Rosita was the cute, smiling aunt with the perfectly kept home where we used to have such fun holiday parties. It was at one of those parties, when I almost scared Auntie to death.

It was probably our family New Year's party for 1964 or 1965. We cousins had been dancing and snacking in the downstairs family room of the Rivera family's Belmont home. At one point I wandered upstairs to see what the grownups were doing. Mom, Auntie Rosita, and the other aunts were all in the kitchen, laughing and talking as they prepared the feast. I stood there just outside the kitchen, watching them.

Now back then we girl cousins were very proper and modest. We would never tell someone, “Your slip is showing,” because we wouldn't want to embarrass the girl by mentioning an article of underclothing. So we had a secret code: We'd say, “Charlie's hanging,” and if the slip was *really* hanging down, we'd say, “Charlie's dead.” The cousin who heard this could then discreetly leave the room to fix her slip.

As I stood there outside the kitchen watching the adult women, I noticed that Auntie Rosita's slip was *really* hanging down below the hemline of her dress, so I sweetly called out, “Auntie, Charlie's dead!”

I can still hear Auntie's scream ringing in my ears. How was I supposed to know that Cousin Carlos was called “Charlie” by his immediate family?



**Pretty in Pink:** Auntie Rosita, center, is surrounded by her sons (from l to r: Carlos, Edward, Orlando and Roberto), her niece Isa (standing behind Edward), my mother (Anita García), and Uncle Isidro. No slips showing in this picture!

In 1970, Uncle Isidro, Auntie Rosita, and Orlando moved to Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. Later that same year, I also moved to Puerto Rico to begin my studies at the University of Puerto Rico. The Riveras were my closest relatives, since my dad returned to California in early 1971 and my other cousins all lived in the southern part of the island.

About every two weeks or so I would take a public car to Guaynabo and walk to their house from the town. I never called ahead to say I was coming—I just went. When I got there I'd just walk in “como Pedro por su casa,” as they say in P.R. (I acted like I lived there.) Sometimes Uncle would be sitting in the living room and he'd hear my footstep coming down the long hallway. He'd call out, “Is that you, Norma?” and then he'd holler, “¡Ro-SI-ta! ¡Échale más agua a las SO-pas!” (“Add more water to the soup!”) It was just a joke. I was always welcome there, and I knew it.

Auntie Rosita was an accomplished seamstress. She went with me to choose the pattern for my wedding dress when I was planning my wedding with Heriberto Quiñones, and she helped me select the fabric. She had offered to make the wedding dress for me and was as excited as I was about the project. She did a beautiful job.

For ten years we lived near each other, until in 1980 they moved to Florida. Years later, after I moved to Placerville, I was thrilled when they'd take the time to pay me a visit on their way up to Lake Tahoe. In 1997, Randy and I spent a few days in their home in Carrollton, GA. Auntie was still as darling and vivacious a hostess as always. I'll miss her!

Norma (García) Pettit

[Place picture here]

*Auntie Rosita and Uncle Isidro in front of the home in Belmont, where we used to have those wonderful New Years Parties.*

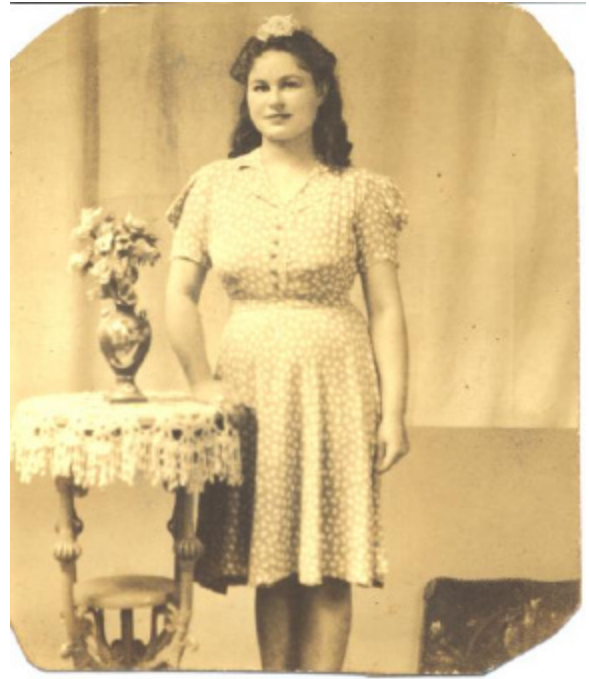
# I Remember...Rosita Rivera

Here I am sending you this picture of Rosita, it was taken in late 1945. I guess, after Isidro joined the Army, he wanted a picture of her, so Mami, Rosita, and I went to downtown Ponce to the photography studio. She was already engaged to Isidro.

This picture brings back memories of when I played a "sort of" chaperone for them when they were dating. Rosita was working for a woman named Ortencia, and Ortencia would not let Rosita go anywhere unless Rosita's mother was sick or needed to see her for some special reason. So, I was the one designated to go and tell Doña Ortencia that Rosita's mother was sick and wanted to see her. She would get the afternoon off. That way, Isidro and Rosita had their dates. Most of the time, I tagged along when they went to La Playa de Ponce to visit our brother Oscar, or to the movies. The family never found out about our carefully planned outings. Rosita used to tell me, "Tita, there will always be a special bond between us".

She has a very special place in my heart, we all loved her very much. She was and will be always special to all of us. Her eternal smile will be one more shining star in heaven.

Love, Tía Tita and family



I always thought of Auntie Rosita as the "Donna Reed" of our family. She was always perky and devoted to her family and home life. Her best memorable attribute to me was her smile! So lovely, warm and genuine! And, of course, she was a wonderful cook! It meant a lot to me that she and Uncle came for Mom's funeral and I was glad that Vic and I were able to be a guest at her last birthday celebration. To see her spirit of love for family and friends overflowing was so heartwarming. She taught us a lot over the years and will never be forgotten.

—Joi (De Nardo) Stenroos



## *The Rivera Family*

*Garnet and Carlos, Carol Lee and Roberto,  
Rosita and Isidro (celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary),  
Edward and Chris, and Orlando and Donna.*



# I Remember...Rosita Rivera

By Carlos Rivera

I remember coming home from grade school and greeting my mother in the kitchen. She would give me a snack and then I would proceed to do my homework while she prepared dinner. She never measured anything, but the dinner would come together nicely and taste delicious.



*Carlos as a young schoolboy (left) with his mother, and brothers Roberto and Edward.*

Many years later, I found myself in my own apartment away from home and attending college. Now it was my turn to cook dinner for myself and strangely I knew just what to do and what spices to add. I carefully tasted what I prepared and, gosh, it tasted like mom's. Little did I realize how much I learned from her by doing my homework in the kitchen.

My mother was always such a kind and thoughtful person. I have no memory of her getting angry, but then perhaps over the years my memory has become selective. I know she kept us boys in line and it didn't matter that we stood taller than her.

During the time when my mother worked outside the home, she would come home very tired and needed help with dinner and clean up. As I look back, I thought she had a good idea to put us boys to helping her, one to help with the meal and setting the dinner table, two others to help with washing and drying dishes, and the fourth one cleaning the table and sweeping the floor. I guess there's an advantage to having a number of children. We took turns each day with our chores. I dreaded when it was my turn at the sink. I hated washing the dishes.

Around the same time, I had a weekend job washing the floor of a local ice cream parlor. I got paid \$2 and walked about 3 miles round trip to do it. Okay, it was about 1960 and \$2 was kind of a big deal back then. Yes, we had electricity and cars in those days, but I was too young to drive.

Since I was earning money, I resorted to paying my brothers to wash the dishes when it was my turn. At first \$.25 got the job done. Then inflation hit. My brothers wised up and realize how much I really hated washing the dishes. Twenty-five cents became fifty. Fifty became a dollar. Before long, I found myself washing the ice cream store floor just to pay off my brothers. What a fool I was. My mother, meanwhile, didn't say a word. She just watched me with amusement and with a shake of her head.

Everyone comments about how my mother always seemed to be smiling. That wasn't just her public face, it was the way she was. I'm sure my mother had her moments, but she must have kept them from us for it seemed she always had her happy face. For a small lady, her love for us was larger than life. She always had so much to give. My most vivid and fond memory of my mother is seeing her eyes light up when I would stop by for a visit. She would call out my name and open her arms and give me a hug with the warmth and love that only a mother can give to her child. It's just a memory now.....I miss her so much.



*Edward, Isidro, Roberto, Carlos, and Orlando at Uncle Isidro's house, following Auntie Rosita's funeral.*

## Other Family News

Recently I was interviewed on the radio in a program called "Diálogo Civil" moderated by a professor from the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón. I had given quite a few lectures on Architecture, Urbanism, Art, and the like to his class at the University some years ago. He himself is a lawyer and Artistic Photographer and holds exhibitions quite regularly here in PR. Well, we hadn't seen each other for quite some time and last Thursday he called to invite me to be the guest on his program that Saturday (Apparently he found himself out of guests 2 days before the program.) So I said yes and he asked me what should we talk about. I said you shoot and I'll shoot back! He said, "Wow, that's what I like about you, you are not afraid to talk about anything!" I said the problem is not that, it's trying to shut me up once I start talking! We both laughed. Anyway, the program went through very smoothly. Me having been raised in Camuy, which is quite close to Manatí (where the radio station Radio Atenas is located), and having been involved as a consultant to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture with the investigation of certain historical and archeological sites precisely in the Manatí area, I was able to talk about themes that were significant to the population covered by the station. He was elated and apparently the program sponsors were too, so now it seems that I'll be invited as a regular guest every month to "keep talking".

*Bill Roig, Guaynabo, P.R.*

## Student News

*Also from the Roig household...*

We received confirmation from the University of Miami of Wilmi's admission to the School of Architecture. And this only with her pre-application papers! Also they offered her an automatic scholastic grant of 1/3 tuition, regardless of any other grant or scholarship that she may receive.

To date she has been accepted at Notre Dame in Indiana, a 2-hour drive from cousin Carlos, and at University of Miami, a 2-hour drive from cousin Carol's. If you know of any university that is a 2-hour drive from you, please let us know.

## Family Reunion 2003

While in Carrollton for Auntie Rosita's funeral, the Rivera "boys" started talking about wanting to plan a family reunion in California. It was decided that June 21<sup>st</sup> was the best date, and Cousin Edward and his wife, Chris, graciously volunteered (?) to make arrangements to reserve a section of a park somewhere in the vicinity of Menlo Park, CA. More details will follow in the next issue, but start making your plans to attend this year's reunion! Get your vacation requests in early, and start saving for your trip out to sunny California!

The baby pictured on page two is Roberto Rivera, third son of Isidro and Rosita Rivera.  
This photo was taken in 1952.

Thank you to recent contributors to the newsletter: Tío José Medina, Cousin Carol Wright, and Cousin Victoria Nicholson. The books of stamps sent to me by Tío José and Cousin Carol were a godsend, and the cash contribution made by Cousin Victoria was greatly appreciated by both Carlos and me. Thank you all so much!

## "¿...y la familia?"

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## Birthday Greetings

**Eduardo Medero** (15) –  
Feb. 2

**Juan González** (42) – Feb. 2

**Brook Rivera** (24) – Feb. 5

**Angela Nicholson** (36) – Feb. 6

**Maritza Rivera** (40) –  
Feb. 11

**Melissa González** (17) – Feb.  
15

**Nicole García** (7) – Feb. 16

**Ruben J. García** (54) –  
Feb. 21

**Heriberto Rivera** (51) – ¡Canto  
de Viejo! –Feb. 24

**Dustin Yager** (18) –  
March 3

**Miguel González** (9) –  
March 3

**Matthew William  
Hargraves** (3) – March 3

**Stephen Nicholson** (6) –  
March 11

**Rafael González** (34) –  
March 13

**Karen Rivera** (24) –  
March 15

**James Caffey** (61) –  
March 15

**Jenny (Nicholson) Reinke**  
(65) – March 17

**Joi Stenroos** (53) –  
March 18

**Raynell H. Díaz** (22) –  
March 19

**Veronica Nicholson** (5) –  
March 21

**Michael Rivera** (4) –  
March 22

**Mackenzie Eddy** (10) –  
March 24

**Sonia Quiñones** (25) –  
March 26

**Barbara Nicholson** (56) –  
March 26

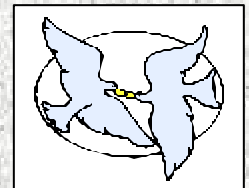
**Milagros Rivera** (60) –  
March 28

## Anniversaries

**Tom and Olga Smith** (19)  
– Feb. 19

**Sheila Andujar and  
Edwin Rivera** (6) –  
Feb. 15

**Sonia and Jacob Rambo**  
(1) - March 30



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