

# "...y la familia?"

Volume 9, Issue 5

Apr/May '05

Needed for  
Future Issues:

"Stuff" about you  
and yours...

Announcements

- New Baby
- Engagement
- Graduations
- Promotion
- New address

Upcoming  
Events

- Family parties
- Reunions
- Weddings

Articles, 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

## 93 Years Young!

Auntie **Marie Nicholson**, born on April 9, 2005, is celebrating her 93rd birthday in good health, for which we thank God.

Born in Peñuelas, Puerto Rico, the third child of Florencio Rivera and Ana Cruz García, Auntie Marie was only four years old when her mother died. Rising above a childhood of poverty and hardship, Auntie Marie was the first of the Riveras to arrive in California, where she eventually met and married Achilles George Nicholson (our "Uncle Nick"). Widowed for over 50 years now, Auntie Marie is a great-grandmother who enjoys spending time with her family.



Maria (Rivera) Nicholson, Dec. 1946

Daughter Jenny reports that Auntie recently spent a wonderful week visiting with George and Barbara and is currently (as of April 2nd) enjoying her garden and home in San Francisco. Daughter Viki is arriving from Tennessee on April 5th to celebrate Auntie's birthday along with the rest of the Nicholson clan, after which she will take her mother back to Tennessee for a month or two. Jenny will then fly to Tennessee for a couple of weeks and bring Auntie back home.



Olga, Joi and I visited Auntie Marie in her home in San Francisco around Valentine's Day and we can attest to the fact that she is in excellent physical and mental condition. Jenny says her mother is "amazing," and we all agree!

Happy birthday, Auntie Marie! Hope you have an awesome time in Tennessee. We all love you!

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"¿...y la familia?"

## "Look what I still have!"

These framed embroidered nursery rhymes were made by my sister, Olga (García) Smith, almost 50 years ago. She has kept them all these years and currently has them displayed on her daughter Marina's bedroom wall.

Cousin Joi photographed them for the newsletter when she and I were spending the night at Olga's house last February.



## The Way We Were

Easter pictures abound in my photo albums. Here is one of me with my mother and sister, taken in the backyard of our home at 1718-22nd Avenue, San Francisco, CA, on April 17, 1960. I was almost 8 years old, and Olga was 12-1/2. My mother, Ana (López) García, was 48 years old.



## A Page Out of Our Family History

Years ago I traced the roots of my paternal grandmother, Ana Cruz García, back to a man named **Pedro Vilá**, who came from Cataluña, Spain about 200 years ago.

Pedro married María del Pilar González of Peñuelas, and by 1822 he owned 22 acres of land there in Peñuelas. Pedro and María del Pilar had six children that I know of. My grandmother was the granddaughter of Pedro's third child, María de la Cruz Vilá and her husband, Marcelino de la Cruz.

Pedro's first child, though, born around 1813, was named **Juan de la Paz Vilá**. He married María de los Santos Morales, daughter of José Higinio Morales and María Rodríguez. They had eight children: Engracia, María del Carmen, **Guillermo**, Benedicta, Salomé, José María, Manuel Estanislao, and Pilar.

**Guillermo** married María de Jesús Velázquez, daughter of Juan Encarnación Velázquez and María Petrona López, on November 14, 1868. They had six children: Valentina, María Amalia Vilá, Bartolomé, **Rafaela**, Magdalena, and Ignacia.

**Rafaela** married Vidal Cruz, a 24 year old laborer and son of Gregorio and Gregoria Cruz, on June 10, 1906. Their children were Aureliano, Amparo or Luis Vidal, Adela, Jaime, Josefina, Sara, Angélica, Oscar, Adán, and **Julia** (born on June 13, 1926).

On Saturday, July 1, 2000, I finally got up the nerve to contact **Julia Cruz Vilá**, who turned out to be a delightful lady. God willing, we will have a chance to meet Julia and other *Vilá* relatives at the family reunion this summer.

At this time in our family history...

- **Pedro José Rivera Maldonado** was born on April 3, 1875. He was a brother of our family patriarch, "Papa Flor." Pedro only lived for 15 months, though, dying on July 10, 1876.
- 163 years ago, on April 13th, **María Inés Vilá** and **Marcelino de la Cruz** were married. They were my father's maternal great-grandparents.
- On April 22, 1946, my parents (**Oscar** and **Ana**) were married in San Francisco.
- **Florencio Rivera (Tío Guar)** died on April 22, 1986.
- April 23rd makes ten years since my father, **Oscar Cruz García**, passed away.
- **Máximo Cruz**, my father's maternal grandfather, married his second wife, **Genara Maldonado**, on May 5, 1909. He was widowed from his first wife, **María Engracia García**.
- **Jesús Cruz Maldonado** was born on May 20, 1896. He was my father's uncle, the son of **Máximo Cruz** and his second wife, **Genara Maldonado**.
- **Elena Sevilla Rivera (Tío Guar's wife)** would have been 91 years old on May 22nd.
- **María de los Santos Cruz**, youngest sister of **María Engracia García** was born on May 23, 1859.

# From Russia, With Love

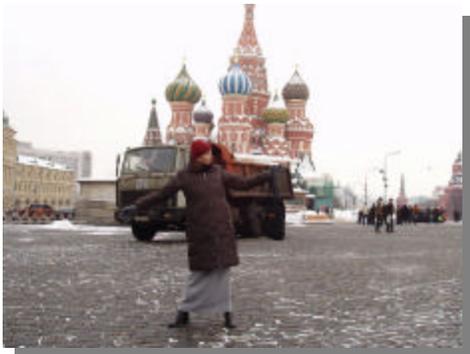
March 15, 2005

Dear friends and family,

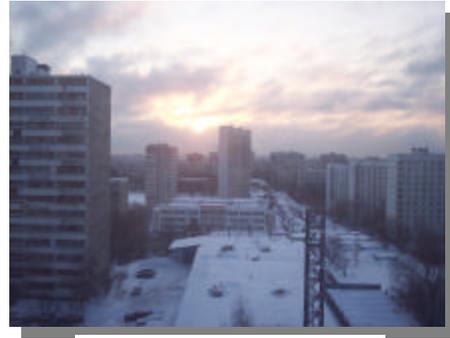
Hello from chilly Moscow! Thank you all for your thoughts and prayers - they have definitely come with me and warmed the late winter days! I have settled in and after only a week of jetlag and language fatigue, followed by very little culture shock, I find myself relatively comfortable here, missing all of you of course but looking forward to what I'm going to see, learn and do here.

"Speaking of here, what ARE you doing there?" you may be asking. My official work title is intern at the WHO in Moscow. I have been so blessed to have received exactly the funds that I needed from my school to come here as part of an elective Program called the global health area of concentration at UCSF. I'm learning about another side of medicine: the policy-writing side. It's interesting, important work. Not quite running around starting IVs at San Francisco General Hospital, but what is? The people here are very nice, and I have had the opportunity to read a LOT about tuberculosis policy, what's going on in Russia, why it's such a problem and what the international community is planning to do to help fix it.

While work is good, I have to say that the highlight of my time here is being able to live and spend time with my dear friends Oyuna and Deanna from Siberia, who are also here for a brief time. Not only them, but the American family I home-schooled when I lived in Siberia is right across the street! I can't tell you what an encouragement it is to live with such amazing women, and how much I have learned with and from them in such a short time. The timing of everything here is truly amazing.



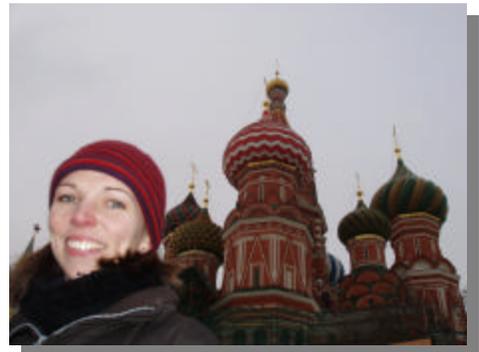
*Above and right are pictures of Lisa in Red Square, "the typical proof that you've been in Russia," as she puts it.*



*Chilly Moscow*

Last week we celebrated "Maslenitsa", which is the beginning of spring and Lent (interesting cultural note - lots of people fast for Lent even though they're not at all religious... it's like a form of diet for them! Even the restaurants have Lenten menus out during this season!). Someone needs to tell the sky, though, because it's still sub-freezing much of the time. It's warming up, and everyone is saying that pretty soon we'll be able to walk around outside without the jacket, gloves, scarf, hat, boots and long underwear. The sun is out today, it's not snowing, and much of the snow is turning to slush... I'm thinking that I need to take pictures of the beautiful frozen river quickly before it thaws!

Love and blessings,  
Lisa



# Meet Your Relative...

## Annie Meléndez Rivera

Wow, it has been a long time since I wrote a “Meet Your Relative” column. That’s because of lack of information, but the exciting thing is that not only do I have a new relative to present to you, but after the family reunion this June I hope to get enough material on family members for many future “Meet Your Relative” articles. Here’s how this one came about:

*Thursday March 10, 2005:* Cousin René and his wife, Carmen, took a trip to Peñuelas to scout out relatives. This is the town in which Adela, Oscar, María, Elena, Guar, and Anita were born, as well as generations before them). The one who had made regular trips there, when he was able to, was my father, Oscar. In the past ten years, I don’t think anyone had gone. Well, after Hurricane Georges, in September of 1998, Cousin René tried to enter Peñuelas to check on our great-uncle Angelito (who had already passed away two years earlier, but we didn’t know it). The bridge at the entrance to the town had collapsed, however, and there was no way to get in. So now on this day, March 10th, René and Carmen asked around and were directed to a drug store that was owned, they were told, by a granddaughter of Tía Carmela (my father’s aunt—a half-sister of my Abuela Ana). The proprietor was busy and at the same time, did not know who these strangers from Ponce were, so René left her with some copies of the “¿...y la familia?” newsletter as well as information on the upcoming family reunion.

*Thursday March 31, 2005:* A very happy René e-mailed me to say that he had just gotten off the phone with cousin Annie Meléndez, the owner of the drug store in Peñuelas. As I found out later on from Annie herself, when René and Carmen had first come into her drug store she thought they were solicitors. She saved the papers they gave her but didn’t look at them right away. Some time later, when she did start reading the newsletter pages and saw familiar family names, she started getting excited. However, by then she had gotten sick and was unable to call up René for several days after that. René was thrilled to hear from her, and wrote, “She is going to contact all the other relatives from Peñuelas to let them know about our thing. She wants to meet me and Carmen in person, so she invited us over.” What a wonderful contact! As René says, now we can tie up some of the loose ends from the Peñuelas branch of the family. René and Carmen did go visit Annie and had a great time.

*Saturday, April 2, 2005:* [E-mail letter from me to René] I am so happy! I called up Annie and we talked for I don't know how long--over an hour, I guess. She is as wonderful as you said. Annie said she remembers meeting my father when she was a child. She has already contacted many of the family members to tell them about the family reunion. (¡Híjole! We may get close to 200 people attending now!!) Annie is also going to write down family information to send to me so that I can update the Rivera Family History. I told her that Carlos said he'd do a DVD of the Rivera Family History if I compiled the information for him. We talked about Julia Cruz Vilá [see “A Page Out of Our Family History”, page 2] and she told me that Julia was a very good friend of hers. I told her that she and Julia were actually distant cousins. She didn't know that. I told her that we were all descendents of Pedro Vilá. Annie started giving me the names of other people, like her husband, Wilson García Peña. I said, “García? From Peñuelas? He is probably a cousin of mine, too!” I pointed out, though, that Wilson might be a distant cousin of mine but not of hers (so not to worry) because the García line is from our *abuela* Ana Cruz García, but she had a different *abuela* (Genara Maldonado). That would be funny if Annie's husband turns out to be a cousin (which he probably is) because then he can come to the reunion not only as the husband of a family member, but as a family member himself. Annie told me that Carmela had been married to Emilio Melendez, and that he was the brother of Tio Angelito's wife, Obdulia Meléndez. They had two children, Juan and Lidia. Did you ever meet them? Lidia's husband's name was Epifanio Feliciano. I said, “Feliciano? De Peñuelas? The Felicianos are probably my cousins, also.” Maria Engracia Garcia **Feliciano** was our great-grandmother (yours and mine)--the mother of our *abuela* Ana Cruz Garcia. Here is something else that just tickled Annie and me: we are the same age! We were both born in 1952, although her birthday is in Jan. (she's already 53) and I turn 53 June. AND we were both studying at the UPR in Rio Piedras at the same time! Heck, we could have had some of the same classes during the first year (*básico*) and didn't even know we were cousins. She said that she studied there for five years and became a pharmacist and has been in that profession for 30 years. Wow!! So then, when we were talking about the family she started saying, “So and so is a grandchild of this person and was born in such-and-such a year.” She did that for several relatives, and I asked, “How can you remember everybody's year of birth like that?” and she said, “They are all on my computer because they get their prescriptions filled here.” We shared a laugh about that.



Annie and her family (a party of 7) are coming to the San Francisco Bay Area in early June, and Olga and I are going to meet them! We will take pictures and get more information on this family for the June/July issue of the newsletter. And when we go to P.R., I can't wait to visit Peñuelas, and with Annie as the link in the chain, meet a whole lot more relatives!



## **FAMILY REUNION 2005**

**BIENVENIDOS A NUESTRAS RAICES  
WELCOME TO OUR ROOTS**

**PONCE, Puerto Rico**

**CHRISTMAS IN JUNE**

**DATES: JUNE 24th to the 26th**

### **To our beloved families:**

This year the “¿...y la familia?” reunion, as everybody knows, will be held in the Caribbean.

We here in Puerto Rico are trying to throw the doors through the windows, as the old folks used to say. It will be a Christmas celebration, not in the December month, but in June. It is our intent to show to those relatives that have never seen a traditional *fiesta de Navidad* what it is all about—to enjoy part of our culture.

Believe me it is a crazy idea, such a thing in June, but don't worry, Quixote de la Mancha was not *loco*, he was a visionary, so after all it is not that crazy, it really is a FUN time. So let's all enjoy and make the best of it.

We all know that the arrival of each one of you will be in intervals. We are preparing for that, and also we are trying to do our best to provide accommodations for some in a humble way. Believe me I can't wait for that day to come.

Please forget about the hamburgers and hot dogs, you can also forget about your diet for a few days. This is going to be all typical Puerto Rican goodies. It is PARTY TIME! The Rivera Sevilla Family welcomes you all for this big event.

*There is a lot to see, a lot to say, a lot to eat and a lot of relatives to meet!*

God Bless you all.

**René & family , Roberto & family, Raúl & family, Heriberto & family, Edwin & family Luz & family,  
Lilliam & family, Milagros & family**

¿...y la familia?

## Student News

**RCT René Miguel Rivera**, son of René Jr., is in the U.S. Marines and will be graduating from Basic Training on April 22nd in Parris Island, S.C. René Miguel's proud grandpa sent in the news, adding, "his father, Rene Jr., and sister, Chary, are going to be traveling a few days before graduation day to be there supporting Rene Miguel on this glorious day for all of us. He is following his father's footsteps."

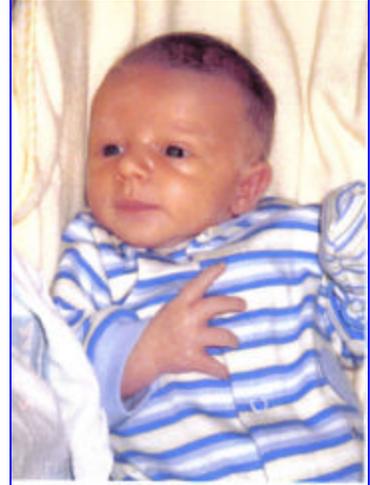
## Other Family News

### *Once again...Our prayers have been answered!*

**Marina Ramos**, Olga's youngest daughter, has returned safely from her deployment to Saudi Arabia. She will be coming out to California for a week starting on April 20th. We all can't wait to see her! But what really thrills us is that Marina will be attending the family reunion in Puerto Rico, God willing. Tom, Olga and family will meet up with Marina in Newark and the whole clan will complete the last leg of the journey together. Yippee!!

Marina's plans are to be honorably discharged from the Air Force in August and to complete her college education.

Congratulations, Marina, and *thank you* for putting your life on the line to defend our freedom. God bless you!



### *Did you enjoy the **Reunion DVD** that Cousin Carlos made of the 2004 reunion in Lugoff, S.C.?*

Our very industrious cousin plans to make a reunion DVD of our 2005 reunion in Ponce, P.R. So those of you with digital cameras, you can all be contributors to this exciting chronicle of our Caribbean reunion.

Furthermore, Carlos and I are collaborating on a "Family History Project". To this end, Carlos is making an appeal for any video (VHS, digital) or audio (hopefully cassette size) of interviews done of Auntie Marie or Uncle Isidro or any other relative who has long history with the family. If you can send any such materials to him, he will return them as soon as he copies them.

He will need the video or audio before May 15. You may contact Carlos at [support@pgrcreations.com](mailto:support@pgrcreations.com) with information about what you have.

Meet the latest addition to the family:

### **Robert Paul Cavino**

Born January 9, 2005

at 12:45 a.m.

6lbs.; 18-1/2"

Son of Richard Cavino and Teena Warren  
(Olga's 10th grandchild)

Little Robert may just be the *youngest* traveler to Puerto Rico for the family reunion!

### *Who is going to the reunion?*

Well, if you live in Puerto Rico and are a member of our family, you **had better be there!!**

But who is flying in? **Confirmed** (and **unconfirmed**) attendees who are planning to travel from the mainland to the island: **The Smith family (Olga & family, party of 13), the Pettits (party of 4), Vic and Joi Stenroos, Dave &**

**Delia Finch, Isidro Rivera, Carlos & family (party of 4); René Jr. & family, Nelson Rivera & family, Vicky Cabán & family, Mary Lillian, Awilda and Alex Joel, Helen González & family, Charice Ann & family, Raúlito & family, Roberto & Myrna & family, Eric & Catherinie Montalvo, and Familia Vázquez-Rivera.**

Between these people and those living in Ponce, plus our new connections with relatives in Peñuelas, the reunion count is estimated to be at over 150 persons!!!

# Relatives Respond



Cousin **Vanessa Braddock** sent in this recent picture of her daughter, Anita (named after Vanessa's grandmother, Anita Merritt). I really appreciate the way Vanessa keeps in touch with me and sends me pictures of her precious baby.

Not long ago, Vanessa sent me the following "Job Posting", which is a fitting piece for Mother's Day. Vanessa says, "This is hysterical. If it had been presented this way, none of us would have done it!!!!"

## **POSITION:**

Mother, Mom, Mama, Mommy, Ma

## **JOB DESCRIPTION:**

Long term, team players needed, for challenging permanent work in an, often chaotic environment. Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include evenings and weekends and frequent 24 hour shifts on call. Some overnight travel required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in far away cities. Travel expenses not reimbursed. Extensive courier duties also required.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES :**

The rest of your life. Must be willing to be hated, at least temporarily, until someone needs \$5. Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly. Also, must possess the physical stamina of a pack mule and be able to go from zero to 60 mph in three seconds flat in case, this time, the screams from the backyard are not someone just crying wolf. Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges, such as small gadget repair, mysteriously sluggish toilets and stuck zippers. Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and coordinate production of multiple homework projects. Must have ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and mental outlooks. Must be willing to be indispensable one minute, an embarrassment the next. Must handle assembly and product safety testing of a half million cheap, plastic toys, and battery operated devices. Must always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst. Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of the end product. Responsibilities also include floor maintenance and janitorial work throughout the facility.

## **POSSIBILITY FOR ADVANCEMENT & PROMOTION:**

Virtually none. Your job is to remain in the same position for years, without complaining, constantly retraining and updating your skills, so that those in your charge can ultimately surpass you

## **PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:**

None required unfortunately. On-the-job training offered on a continually exhausting basis.

## **WAGES AND COMPENSATION:**

Get this! You pay them! Offering frequent raises and bonuses. A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 because of the assumption that college will help them become financially independent. When you die, you give them whatever is left. The oddest thing about this reverse-salary scheme is that you actually enjoy it and wish you could only do more.

## **BENEFITS:**

While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered; this job supplies limitless opportunities for personal growth and free hugs for life if you play your cards right.

## "¿...y la familia?"

c/o Norma I. Pettit  
2426 Meadow Lane  
Placerville, CA 95667  
Phone: (530) 642-8960  
E-Mail: [mamanony@juno.com](mailto:mamanony@juno.com)

Visit us on the Web at [www.ylafamilia.org](http://www.ylafamilia.org).

## Birthday Greetings

<i>Michael Barnes (42) - April 1</i>	<i>Vic Stenroos (57) - April 22</i>	<i>Alexis Valentín (20) - May 17</i>
<i>Dustin Cavino (14) - April 4</i>	<i>Raymond L. Cavino (6) - April 25</i>	<i>Riley Hargraves (3) - May 22</i>
<i>Wilma E. Roig (20) - April 6</i>	<i>Haley Frosheiser (9) - April 26</i>	<i>George Nicholson (60) - May 27</i>
<i>Marlynn (Merritt) Krause (57) - April 6</i>	<i>George Rivera (32) - April 29</i>	<i>Lucas R. Pettit (19) - May 29</i>
<i>Tiana J. Rivera (11) - April 6</i>	<i>Nicholas Rivera (15) - May 5</i>	<i>Stephanie (Krause) Thompson (28) - May 29</i>
<i>Ana V. Pettit (20) - April 8</i>	<i>Ken Braddock (37) - May 5</i>	
<i>Maria Nicholson (93) - April 9</i>	<i>Ryan Reinke (9) - May 12</i>	
<i>Edwin Rivera (33) - April 10</i>	<i>Helen Correa-González (43) - May 12</i>	
<i>Rocky Pettit (80) - April 12</i>	<i>Ted Reinke (68) - May 13</i>	
<i>Tom Smith (67) - April 13</i>	<i>Roberto I. Rivera (54) - May 13</i>	
<i>Carly Díaz (20) - April 14</i>		

*Did I omit  
anyone's birthday  
or anniversary?  
Please let me know so  
that I can print  
a correction and  
make sure you are  
not left out next time.*

## Anniversaries



*Carol Lee and  
Roberto I. Rivera (18)  
April 26*

*Cathy (Rivera) and  
Eric Montalvo (8)  
May 24*

*Marlynn (Merritt) and  
Paul Krause (35)  
May 30*