

"...y la familia?"

Volume 10, Issue 2

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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

Vanessa's Visitors

Cousin Vanessa (daughter of Meryem Merritt; granddaughter of Auntie Anita Merritt) was ecstatic about getting two rounds of visitors at the new home she shares with her husband, Kenneth, and her two children, Austin and Anita. Below is an account of the first visit, sent in by Aunt Delia, and to the right is Carlos's letter about his trip to Des Moines with Garnet.

"We had a wonderful time with Kathy, Meryem, Kirstin, Vanessa and husband, and adorable little Anita. She is a doll and so..... intelligent! Very, very smart. She just turned a year old and acts like a grown up. Took her first step while Meryem and I were talking in Vanessa's living room. She knows how to throw a beach ball right back at you, and then she turns her two little hands and with her shoulders makes the gesture as if questioning, "Where did it go?" She says "Daddy," "baby," and won't call Vanessa mommy, except if she does not get attention from her. She then will say in an angry way, 'MOM!' Just as cute as could be. We fell in love with her."

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Dear Norma,

I wanted to write to you to let you know about a vacation trip Garnet and I took last week. It was a road trip that was meant to be a slow and relaxing, sightseeing tour of a few northern mid western states. The trip started by spending a weekend with Alicia and Mike (Tokar) in Chicago. We had a great time with them. We saw the new condominium they were living in, went to dinner at a local Italian restaurant and visited with Mike's parents. Alicia and Mike are doing well and they have done a very nice job of decorating their place.

From there we traveled the back roads into northern Wisconsin, through Minnesota and ended the week in Des Moines, Iowa where we spent the weekend with Ken and Vanessa Braddock. Vanessa, who is Meryem's daughter, is a cousin whom I have never met before. I was anxious to reconnect with the Merritts whom I have not seen for nearly 30 years!



Meryem Merritt, Carlos Rivera, and
Kathy (Merritt) Caffey

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Their new home is absolutely gorgeous, very spacious, and tastefully, and artistically, well decorated by both of them. Her husband is so charming, and a great chef. He does the cooking all the time, and the food presentation is very elegant besides being very tasty. We spent a whole afternoon with them and Meryem, and did not go back home until about 10:00 pm. We had a wonderful visit.

Carlos will be in Iowa at the beginning of September. He will be staying at Vanessa's. Vanessa is getting closer to having her second baby around October. She looks as gorgeous as always, and is going to be a very busy Mommy with two little babies to look after. I wish I were close by to give her a hand. They are all such a loving bunch. They are trying to talk us into moving back to Des Moines. We have not made any decisions on where we will be retiring to as yet. We have to think things through very carefully."

From Vanessa: Wow, Norma! What wonderful people we have in our family!!! Auntie Delia and Uncle Dave were here a couple of weeks ago, as you know, and it is always a pleasure spending time with them! Ken really enjoyed meeting them as well and he loved being able to have them over to our home and cook a meal for them. That little bit of extra time we were able to spend with Auntie Delia and Uncle Dave meant the world to me!



From left to right, the Finches, Vanessa and Anita, Meryem Merritt, Jim and Kathy Caffey, and seated on floor, Kirsten Frosheiser.

(Cont. from page 1)

The Braddocks have a lovely home that they had just moved into. They have a daughter, Anita, who is an adorable toddler, and who received more than her share of attention from Garnet and me while we there. Vanessa's son, Austin, was away for the weekend with his dad, so we did not get to meet him, but we thank him for the use of his room. It's been more than 50 years since I've slept in a bunk bed, but his was a very comfortable, double-bed sized bunk bed, and I learned my old body could still maneuver in ways previously unimagined as I would crawl out while trying to let Garnet sleep.

Vanessa is expecting her third child (another son) in a few weeks but was amazingly agile given the size of her belly and the progression of her pregnancy. Her husband, Ken, fascinated us with his culinary skills and gourmet meals complete with beautiful presentation that transformed their dining room into a five star restaurant. It was difficult for Garnet and me to return home to Spaghetti-O's and Kraft's macaroni and cheese.

Saturday night was the highlight of our stay as cousins Kathy (Merritt) Caffey, her daughter Kirstin Frosheiser, granddaughter Hayli Frosheiser, and Meryem (Merritt) and her fiancé, Dale, came to dinner. Marlynn, unfortunately, could not make it. Her daughter had just given birth.



It was another award-winning meal, needless to say, and the stories that were told had us in stitches as Garnet and I learned what life was like when Vanessa and Kirstin were growing up. It was a great time and we were sad to see the evening come to a close.

Visiting with the families in Des Moines after having been to Puerto Rico for the reunion and meeting the families there has been such a rewarding experience. It brings back memories of when we were kids in California and all the local families would get together a couple times a year and we'd have fun basking in the warmth of kinship and family love. With the families now spread out from coast to coast, it's impossible to recreate such experiences, but the annual reunions come closest to helping us strengthen the bonds that tie us all together. We look forward with great anticipation to next year's reunion!

A Page Out of Our Family History

In August of 1916, about a week after the birth her baby, Anita, my grandmother, Ana Cruz García became ill with a fever and died. She left her husband, Florencio Rivera, with five other children besides the newborn Anita: Adela, 7, Oscar, 5, María 4, Elena, 3, and Sinforiano (aka Florencio, or Guar), 3.

Auntie Marie told me many years ago how she never forgot the day that her mother was being carried away in a hammock to be buried. I've carried in my mind the image of a little girl standing in the dirt *batey* of her front yard watching her mother being taken away down a mountain path.

During our time in Puerto Rico this summer, Joi and I had the privilege of looking out of an upstairs window in Cousin Annie Melendez's house in Peñuelas and seeing the mountain on which our ancestors lived. Later, Annie graciously took us on a driving tour of Peñuelas, where she pointed out the *the end of the mountain trail*, now a paved road, that leads down from where our forefathers lived. To clarify things in my own mind, I asked Annie, "So you mean to say that when my grandmother was carried down the mountain in a hammock to be buried in town, this is the end of the road they traveled on?" Annie said that was correct. This brought Auntie Marie's story full circle for me, and was, inexplicably, a very important moment of my trip to Puerto Rico.

Joi, who snapped both of the above pictures, recently told Olga and me as the three of us were looking at reunion photos, "I want us to go up that mountain the next time we go to Puerto Rico." The very thought of doing that sends shivers of excitement up my arms! To be able to walk on some of the very land that our ancestors lived on, where they were born and died, the land they worked with their hands, seems to me like an opportunity to *step right onto a page out of our family history*.



At this time in our family history...

- *Elena and Sinforiano (Guar) Rivera were born on October 1, 1913, according to their baptismal records.*
- *Rosita Hernández and Isidro Rivera were married on October 2, 1946.*
- *On Oct. 10th, 1815, José Santa Ana de la Cruz married Lorenza de Santiago in Peñuelas, Puerto Rico. José Santa Ana was a great-uncle of Máximo Cruz Vilá.*
- *Achilles George Nicholson was born in Elias, Greece 113 years ago on October 10th. He was the husband of Auntie Marie, and the father of Jenny, Victoria, and George. He died on November 3, 1953.*
- *Oscar Cruz García, second child of Florencio Rivera and Ana Cruz García, was born on Oct. 30, 1910.*
- *Máximo Cruz Vilá was born on Nov. 18, 1853. He and María Engracia García were married on Nov. 3, 1877. Their daughter, Ana, was the mother of Adela, Oscar, María, Elena, Guar, and Anita.*



The Way We Were

Olga, Joi and Ruben in front of our house in San Francisco, around 1952.

A View of...

René and Titi's gorgeous home in Ponce, Puerto Rico.





...we hugged...

At the 2005 family reunion in Ponce, Puerto Rico...



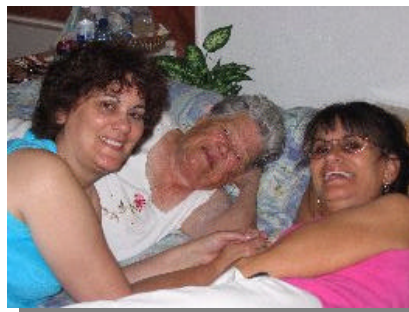
...we took pictures...



...we posed for pictures...



...we visited...



...we relaxed...



...we enjoyed the
wildlife...



...and boy, did we dance!



The article at right appeared in the *La Opinion del Sur* newspaper on July 6, 2005. It was written by Nelson Padilla, the attorney who presented the proclamation from the mayor's office to Auntie Marie and Uncle Isidro.

For those of you who don't read Spanish, the article says, in essence, that our family has been having reunions since 1999, and that for the first time we decided to meet in Puerto Rico. Brothers Rene and Heriberto Rivera organized the reunion.

It goes on to tell about our Christmas celebration in the middle of summer, and how over 150 relatives traveled to Ponce and were declared Distinguished Visitors by the mayor, Francisco Zayas Seijo. The celebration allowed family members who weren't familiar with Puerto Rican Christmases to enjoy the typical music and food of the holidays, including the roasted pig.

Mr. Padilla wrote that the Rivera family maintains communication via a newsletter that is circulated every other month, edited in California by Norma Rivera Pettit, and which is named "...y la familia."

He made mention also of the tribute made to Isidro Rivera and Maria Nicholson, family patriarchs.

Noticias

Se reúnen en Ponce los Rivera-Sevilla

Por Nelson Padilla
Especial Para La Opinión del Sur

Desde el 1999, una singular familia puertorriqueña ha estado reuniéndose en diferentes lugares de la nación americana, en donde hace muchos años emigraron sus progenitores en busca de una mejor calidad de vida. Desde entonces han estrechado lazos con sobre 200 familiares, quienes anualmente seleccionan un punto de reunión para compartir y conocerse.

Por primera vez decidieron encontrarse en Puerto Rico con sus familiares de acá, quienes residen en la Ciudad de Ponce en Punta Diamante y Bello Horizonte. Los hermanos René y Heriberto Rivera se dieron a la tarea de organizar dicho encuentro.

Y así, en los pasados días se reunió la Familia Rivera-Sevilla y sus descendientes en la Ciudad Señorial para celebrar una tradición puertorriqueña, la

Navidad, pero en pleno verano.

Sobre 150 familiares viajaron a Ponce para culminar este encuentro anual y fueron declarados Visitantes Distinguidos de Ponce por Francisco Zayas Seijo, alcalde de la ciudad, recibiendo una resolución al respecto.

La actividad estuvo muy animada y concurrida, permitiendo además a los descendientes que no conocían la navidad puertorriqueña disfrutar de la música y comida típica de la ocasión, sin faltar por supuesto el lechón asado a la varta.

La Familia Rivera-Sevilla mantiene una comunicación a través de un boletín informativo que circula cada dos meses, editado en California por Norma Rivera Pettit y que fue bautizado con el nombre de "...y la familia".

En esta ocasión se le rindió homenaje a Isidro Rivera y María Nicholson, patriarcas de la familia y quienes viajaron a Puerto Rico especialmente para la actividad.

Student News....From Uganda!

Exerpts from e-mails
sent by Tory Pettit

Mon., Sept. 12th: Well, so far, it's been nice. Last week we went to Rwanda for a study trip. We traveled all around and went to a few museums and heard so many lectures. It was very educational, and don't worry--it was absolutely safe. I'm back in Mukono, and today was first day of class. It was very interesting. I had African Politics at 8:30 this morning, and my next class was at 4, but the professor never showed up. They frequently do that. Here, time is not an issue. They are very people oriented, not task oriented like we are in America. It can get frustrating when you show up to class on time and the professor doesn't, but it is also nice at the same time. It is hard to get used to the culture here. I hate having to dress up every day wherever I go. Everyone is so polite, here, too. There is hardly any joking like the way we joke in the States. We just have to be on our best behavior. The food is fine. The rice and beans are hardly no different than yours, only more watery. *Somosas* taste exactly like empanadillas, only they look a little different. Wherever I go, the word "mzungu" is constantly being shouted at me. That means white person. Even in Rwanda they yelled that. Kids get so excited when they see us. They scream, wave, and chase our vehicles. They get so happy to see a mzungu, because it is so rare. All in all, the people are extremely friendly. They are also extremely Christian, which is cool. This is the most Christian place I have ever been.



Tues., Sept. 13th: I had more classes today, and I think they will be fun classes. One is specifically for USP students, that is, the Americans, and the other is a mix of Ugandans and USP students. They both require a lot of reading. It's hard to read here, because electricity isn't always available. Today I read for two hours by flashlight/candlelight. I know, bad for my eyes, but what can I do?

Mon., Sept. 19th: Life here has been good, on the whole. I could break it down and tell you all my complaints, but I'm not really feeling in the mood to tell you about the horrible pooppy squatty potties, ice-showers, over-consumption of matooke, girls up late and up early with loud voices echoing down the halls, or the thunderstorms that come once a day. Actually, the storms are nice, but twice so far they have drenched me to the bone--all because I forgot my umbrella. Finished my first week of classes, but have only attended two. The other three were cancelled on account of the professor not showing up. This typically happens here in Africa. I have no complaints. Food is generally OK, but I really hate sweet potatoes--and they serve that a lot here, come to find out. The people are super nice, and like I said, on the whole, I'm enjoying myself. It's good and fun to get to know Uganda. My brief trip to Rwanda was excellent. So much to tell on that, I couldn't possibly begin now.

Tues., Oct. 4th: Sorry it has taken me so long to write. it's been so hard to access the internet. I've been so busy, and I don't even have time for my own homework. That is because I'm at homestays now, and we aren't allowed to bring our homework home with us and we have to be home by 7 pm and stay for the entire weekend. Even if I wanted to I couldn't do any work because the house I'm staying in has no electricity and they only have one candle. It makes school work pretty hard, especially when I have a 20 page paper due in a few weeks and a few other smaller papers. I'm so overwhelmed. I don't know how they expect us to do it all! Luckily I have one more week left with my homestay family, and then I'm back on campus. It's been hard living here for numerous reasons. It's my fifth week, and I'm beginning to feel very homesick. I have no time to relax, I don't know anyone, the food is gross, and I'm always tired.

Wed., Oct. 12th: Thanks for the package!! I'm very excited. Hope everything is going well. You're in my prayers. Life here is much better. I'm enjoying every moment, praise God!

Other Family News



Congratulations to Ken and Vanessa Braddock on the birth of their new baby boy. Here is the first picture of little Logan for the newsletter. We will surely be getting progress photos as Vanessa is faithful about sharing her photos with us, something which I truly appreciate!

Name ~ Logan Alex
Ander Braddock
Born ~ 09/29/2005
Time ~ 04:36pm
Weight ~ 8 lbs 12.6 oz
Length ~ 21 inches
Hair ~ Light Brown
Eyes ~ Blue



More Family News

Marina Ramos Ends Active Air Force Duty

In early August, Marina Ramos (Olga's daughter) received her separation papers from the U.S. Air Force after five years of active duty. She is now in Inactive Reserve.

Marina went through Basic Training in Lackland AFB, near San Antonio, Texas, and then attended Technical Training School there, also.

From January 2001 to January 2002 she was stationed in Osan, Korea as part of the Security Air Base Defense. This is where she was when 9/11 happened. Marina observed, "Everywhere you go you will find adversity, but in our area where we were stationed, the local citizens were very supportive."

From January 2002 to January 2003, Marina was stationed in Keslovic, Iceland, again in Security Air Base Defense, where she worked with the Navy. Of Iceland, Marina said, "[It is] beautiful in its own way. Natural beauty, as the Blue Lagoon, waterfalls and glaciers. Great river rafting."

From Feb. 2003-Aug. 2005, she was stationed in Laughlin AFB near Del Río, Texas, doing security.

During that time, from August 2003 to January 2004, Marina was in Kuwait, also doing security. "I saw a different side of security," says Marina. "Very intense, eye-opening, and very rewarding. I love the culture and good food."

From September 2004 to March 2005, Marina was at UAE (United Arab Emirates) near Saudi Arabia, working security. "Not many people get the opportunity to play golf in a country club in a foreign country," notes Marina. "I did."

As she neared the end of completing her five years in the Air Force, Marina attended Airman Leadership School and graduated with an Academic Achievement Award on June 17, 2005. At this time she was also promoted to Staff Sergeant. In addition, during her five very successful years of active duty, Marina earned some fourteen awards and ribbons.

Marina's plans for the future include finishing college. She hopes to eventually embark on a career in counseling and psychology.

Another Golden Girl Getaway

If we go too long without seeing each other, Olga, Joi and I start going through withdrawals. So on Friday, Sept. 23rd, Vic and Joi flew out to California. After spending the night at Tom and Olga's house, Joi left Vic with Tom while she and Olga came up to Placerville so that we three could spend 24 hours together.

Much of our time was spent poring over Olga's scrapbooks filled with photos of the Puerto Rico trip, but we also snuck in some card playing ("Peanuts"—a game that Auntie Adele taught us some forty years ago). Dinner at our favorite Chinese restaurant was, of course, a must. And then, the next morning, we strolled through Placerville's Antique Street Faire. Yay! What a fun weekend.

Our next time to get together? December 10th, here in Placerville, for the Pettit's annual Christmas party starting at around 1:00 p.m. ALL ARE WELCOME!! (Mary Lillian, is this the year you are coming to my Christmas party?)



Here we are squeezed into my porch swing. Randy had to use a crowbar to loosen us up after he took the picture. Are those smiles, or grimaces of pain?

2006 Rivera Family Reunion

Mark your calendars!

Set aside your vacation days!!

June 23-25, 2006

in Carrollton, Georgia

Cousins Orlando and Donna Rivera

live in a beautiful lake front home.

**There will be boating, fishing and swimming,
not to mention scrumptious food!**

I want to say thank you to my sister, Olga, who gave me six sheets of beautiful stamps honoring Latin music for the newsletter. That adds up to \$37.00 worth of stamps! Wow!!

Thank you also to Cousin Josy, who is untiringly faithful in his support of "¿...y la familia?" I appreciate your contributions so much!!

"¿...y la familia?"

C/o Norma I. Pettit
2426 Meadow Lane
Placerville, CA 95667
Phone: (530) 642-8960
E-Mail: mamanony@sbcglobal.net

Visit us on the Web at www.ylafamilia.org.

Birthday Greetings

Teena Warren (34) - Oct. 3

Christina Rivera (9) - Oct. 3

Ruben A. Quiñones (29) -
Oct. 12

Felipe René Rivera (22) -
Oct. 13

Edwin J. Rivera (8) - Oct. 14

Jackie (Correa) Eddy (41) -
Oct. 15

Austin Rivera (11) - Oct. 17

Annalise L. Nicholson (3) -
Oct. 17

Virginia T. Feliciano (16) -
Oct. 21

Sierra Campos (9) - Oct. 21

Vickie (Rivera) Cabán (41) -
Oct. 23

Brandi Klene (36) - Oct. 24

Randy Pettit (50) - Oct. 27

Victoria Nicholson (66) -
Oct. 28

Joanne McLaughlin (58) -
Oct. 29

Joshua Rambo (3) - Nov. 1

Julie Rivera (13) - Nov. 2

Alex Joel Rivera (10) - Nov. 2

Lisa Quiñones (29) - Nov. 3

Adalberto Rivera (22) - Nov. 5

Austin Miller (11) - Nov. 8

Neysha Rivera (15) - Nov. 12

Lilliana Charice Cruz (3) -
Nov. 15

Joseph T. Springer (9) -
Nov. 15

Carol (Medina) Wright (53)
- Nov. 17

Michelle Cabán (17) -
Nov. 17

Amanda Knox (17) -
Nov. 22

Edwin Rivera (51) - Nov. 27

Carol Lee Rivera (45) -
Nov. 27

OOPS!!!
Left out of last issue. Again!!

Angélica Stickle (19) -
Aug. 23

Anniversaries



**Kimm & Scott
Hargraves (9) -
Oct. 18**

OOPS!!!!!!

*In the last issue to mention
Larry & Carol Wright (17)
Sept. 26*