

# "...y la familia?"

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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*

***Article, Photos  
and Fillers:***

*Nostalgic stories  
Photos and art-  
work*

*Original poetry  
Vignettes on  
your imme-  
diate family*

*Favorite family  
recipes*

*Cute things your  
kids have  
said*

*Funny stories  
Prayer Requests*

## Bidding Farewell to María Nicholson



*April 9, 1912—February 8, 2009*

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# A Page Out of Our Family History

By Norma I. (García) Pettit

I've been researching our family history for the past 20 years. I'll set it aside for a time, when life gets really busy, then go back to it when I can. At times I've gotten tired of hitting dead ends with the Rivera side, so I've researched my mother's side, or Randy's mother's family. But with the Rivera Family Reunion looming ahead, I recently started doing some genealogical digging into our family history again, and this time I have had some awesome breakthroughs that I am excited to tell you about.

You probably already knew that Florencio Rivera was the father of Adela, Oscar, María, Elena, Guar (whose birth name was Sinforiano), Anita, Nery, Isidro, Angélica, and Delia. Florencio's parents were Manuel Alejo Rivera Maldonado and María Dominga Maldonado Rivera. I always marveled at how they had the same last names, only inverted. In Spanish speaking countries, your first last name is your father's surname, and your second last name is your mother's maiden name. Manuel's parents were José de los Santos Rivera and Cipriana Maldonado (of whom I knew nothing), while María Dominga's parents were Felipe Maldonado and María Apolinaria Rivera. Here's what I recently discovered: Florencio's paternal grandmother (Cipriana Maldonado) was the sister of his maternal grandfather (Felipe Maldonado), which means that Florencio's parents—Manuel Alejo and María Dominga—were first cousins!

So now, all the information that I had gathered about Felipe's ancestors can be applied to Cipriana's ancestors as well, because they are brother and sister. Because of this, instead of Florencio having four sets of great-grandparents, he only had three, and his family tree was reduced by 25%. In genealogical terms, this is called "pedigree collapse", a term first coined by genealogist Robert C. Gunderson some thirty years ago, and is not as rare as you might think. In fact, some genealogists affirm that pedigree collapse occurs at some point in almost everyone's family tree.

The other amazing thing is that thanks to family trees that I found on Ancestry.com, I have been able to trace the Maldonado line four generations farther back than I previously had. All I used to know was that the aforementioned Felipe Maldonado's parents were Antonio Maldonado and Juana Santiago, both from the town of Utuado. Now I know that Antonio's father was Lope Maldonado, one of the first mayors of Utuado. Reportedly, most of the Maldonados from Peñuelas, Adjuntas, Utuado, and Arecibo can be traced back to Lope Maldonado.

Cipriana and Felipe had seven other siblings. One of them, Remigio, fathered sixteen children! One of those sixteen children, María Mercedes Maldonado, also married a first cousin—Felipe's son, José de la Cruz Maldonado. Are you confused yet? I plan to have an updated version of the Rivera Family History ready in time for this year's family reunion. Let's see how much more I can dig up by then!

## *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.*
- *166 years ago, on April 13th, María Inés Vilá and Marcelino de la Cruz were married. They were my father's maternal great-grandparents. María's father, Pedro Vilá, was born in Cataluña, Spain.*
- *On April 22, 1946, my parents, Oscar C. García and Ana M. López, were married in San Francisco.*
- *Florencio Rivera (Tío Guar) died on April 22, 1986.*
- *April 23rd makes thirteen years since my father, Oscar, 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. I met this man when he was about 74 or 75 years old. I was with my father "debajo del Acueducto de Ponce". . . We were on our way to visit Tío Guar when we encountered Tío Jesús, who was very happy to tell us that he was learning to read and write. You are never too old to learn!*
- *Elena Sevilla de Rivera (Tío Guar's wife) would have been 95 years old on May 22nd.*
- *María de los Santos Cruz, youngest sister of María Engracia García, was born on May 23, 1859.*

*“¿...y la familia?”*

### **“Bye G.G.”**

With these few syllables, Kayla Reinke, 9, bid farewell to her great-grandmother, affectionately referred to as “G.G.” At the end of her life, María (Rivera) Nicholson had been blessed with three children, seven grandchildren, and thirteen great-grandchildren. Many of them were present at her bedside when the angels came to take her to her husband Nick, who had been waiting for her since 1954.

María was born in Peñuelas, Puerto Rico on April 9, 1912, the third child of the union of Florencio Rivera and Ana Cruz García. Sadly, María’s mother died in August of 1916, when María was only four years old. Farmed out to live with another family, María quickly learned to be resilient and resourceful.

At the age of 18, as the companion to an army officer’s wife, she accompanied them in moves to Boston and California. In her early 20s, leaving her job with the military couple, María moved to San Francisco, where she met and was courted by her future husband, Achilles (Nick). They had three children together; Eugenia, Victoria, and George.

Widowed at 42, and with three children to support, María entered the workforce, took college courses, and was eventually responsible for the nutrition of hundreds of small children within the San Francisco Unified School District preschool program. In her retirement years, María took trips to her husband’s homeland (Greece) and to Puerto Rico, and spent time with her ever-growing family. Fiercely independent, she chose to live in her home in San Francisco until her passing.

### **“Bye, GG”**

Chris and I were talking last night about yesterday's events and reflecting on all that had happened. Chris said it is strange that someone who you are so used to always being there is now gone. He also told me something I never knew: Grandmother inspired him to pursue his photography hobby. She told him when he was about nine years old that he "had a gift" as he took shots with his Polaroid. He wanted more film, but she told him "You'd better ask your dad.

I'm on a fixed income!" LOL.

Not to sound overwrought, but I told Chris that I witnessed some of the most beautiful and poignant scenes in that room yesterday. So many moments stood out. Kayla's statement, "Bye, GG," was simple and profound at the same time. I watched B.J. hold Grandmother's hand and stroke her hair. He never left her side and she was never alone. One of the most touching scenes I ever saw was Kimm and Ken, brother and sister, comfort each other as Jenny tearfully looked on at her children. As Grandmother took her very last breaths, she was held and touched by her children and grandchildren who told her it was okay to go home now. It was truly beautiful.

I have been thinking about these things since yesterday and thought wow, we should all be so blessed. That beauty, love and closeness are all her legacy. She was the inspiration behind what happened in that room yesterday. We should all be so lucky.

*-Cindy Nicholson (wife of María's grandson, Christopher), Feb. 9, 2009*



## *I Remember Auntie Marie*

Auntie Marie holds a very special place in my heart and in both my husband's and my life. In the Spring of 1994, we were in the middle of planning our wedding, when Papa Oscar sent us plane tickets to honeymoon in Puerto Rico, inviting us to stay with him in Ponce. Three weeks of having fun under the sun. I was thrilled and excited to share my family and culture with my husband. Todd was born and raised in Spokane, Washington. He is what you call a White Boy. Side note: until his family moved to California, none of them had ever seen, met, or heard of a Hispanic girl. Mexican food was Taco Time and Taco Bell. Okay, back to the story, Todd was a little worried about going to Puerto Rico but I reassured him that they spoke English and everything would be okay. Besides, my Auntie Marie would be going with us. After the shock of hearing that my Auntie Marie was going with us on our honeymoon (I think he must of thought it was some Hispanic thing)... well it just shows how much he loves me—he agreed. Auntie Marie was so funny! She packed a can ham for Todd just in case he got hungry and didn't like the food in Puerto Rico. After that we had lots of fun telling everyone that my Auntie Marie was joining us. I wish I could show you a picture of my in-laws when we told them in passing. Food littlerly fell out of their mouths. They just couldn't believe that we were taking a chaperone with us on our honeymoon.

We asked Auntie Marie and Uncle Joe Lee to bring up the gifts during the mass. So before the mass started Auntie Marie went up to several Asian men and asked, "Are you Joe Lee?" They all replied, "No," so she went back to her seat and waited. At the moment that the gifts needed to be brought up, she stood up, and so did Uncle Joe. She turned to Uncle Joe and said, "Who are you?" He replied, "Joe." Auntie Marie exclaimed, "JoeLee! But you are not Asian!!" Uncle Joe was a good sport about it. I guess the Lee just threw her off. Anyway the flight was good and we all had a great time in Puerto Rico, Auntie Marie slept in the downstairs bedroom next to Papa Oscar's and we had the apartment upstairs to ourselves. Auntie Marie made pasteles with me and we all went sightseeing a few times.

—Yuly (*García*) Springer



*Maria, Elena and Norma at Yuly's wedding on 9-17-94*

I do not have many memories of Auntie Marie. Some are just flashes of playing in her garage or being at her home on Christmas when we (the Merritt kids) were young and living in San Francisco while our dad was in the Navy on sea duty. But one "Merritt Moment" really stands out for me: Auntie Marie had come to Des Moines for a visit one summer. I believe that it may have been the summer I'd turned sixteen which would mean that Olga was in Des Moines also. Dad & Mom had taken Auntie Marie out on a tour of the city one afternoon. That evening we kids got a call from our dad saying that they had had a car accident. They had been in this tiny Renault that dad used for his drug store deliveries. Dad had some broken ribs and Auntie Marie had a broken leg. Mom was fine. Dad asked us to come and pick them up at the hospital ER. So we - Meryem, Jim, and Olga (Kathy was away working for the summer) all piled into the biggest monster of a station wagon ever made (10 seater) and no power anything. I, newly licensed, was driving. None of us really knew where the hospital was for sure, so we were driving around downtown Des Moines at night in a panic, getting turned around, getting lost - everybody yelling where to go, to turn, etc. (Oh for a cell phone or a GPS!) Finally we decided to go back home. When we arrived, Dad, Mom and Auntie Marie were waiting for us. They had to call a cab to get home from the hospital. Dad was NOT happy! But I cannot remember Auntie Marie having anything but a smile for us. She did have the best smile - it just filled her face! I don't remember her ever coming back to visit though. Hmm. —Marlynn (*Merritt*) Krause



What a sad day. Auntie Marie and her house held a lot of memories for me as a child for what time we got to spend in S.F. When we (Kathy, Marlynn and I) went to San Francisco for our first impromptu girls' reunion, going to Auntie Marie's was one of the highlights. Walking up the stairs from her entry, childhood memories came flooding back. Even the light from her front entryway was a fond memory for me. I remember finding my first snail in her back yard garden and for some reason, someone had a magnet and showed us if we stuck it in the dirt magnetic particles would stick to it. I was pretty taken with nature finds at that age. What were we, 5 & 6 yrs old at that time? We were pretty young back then but being with her and being in her house brought nothing but good feelings and memories to heart. I will miss her but know her spirit will always be there as well as the good memories she blessed me with will live on with me forever. Times like this, make me homesick for my childhood and being with the family the way it was when we were little. —Meryem Merritt

## *I Remember Auntie Marie (cont.)* ¿...y la familia?

When I was very young I went to second grade at St. Cecelia's. I was only seven, but used to ride the bus to school. In fact I got lost coming home one time because all the houses looked the same to me and I think it was Ginny who finally found me. I think I scared them all to death. I will never forget her address - 2020 20th Avenue. We were living with Auntie Marie at the time. I remember her as warm and loving and a fabulous cook. The smells were always wonderful. The company at the dinner table was also wonderful, with good conversation. Her home always seemed so big to me and I would look at the piano in the living room and wish I knew how to play it. Her home was one of my favorite places.

Of course, after that we would visit from time to time and I remember a huge family Christmas party there but it was never quite the same. I have always regretted not seeing her for all those many years after we moved to Iowa. I was away the one time she came to visit us out there. Of course, the last time I visited her was the summer after my own mother died, at the first of the family reunions as we now have them. It was a joy even if she was ill, and I knew it was difficult for her to have that many people around. You know, when you are young your memories are much bigger, like her home which always seemed so large to me when I was young - maybe because it was full of people.

I had Norma take me by there when I was in San Francisco last year and wished so much that she was up to having visitors, but it was wonderful just the same. I had her take me by St. Cecelia's, too, so I could relieve those happy memories of living and loving when I was seven years old.

She always was one of my very favorite people. I'm so glad she was in my life and that God gave me the chance to know her.

—Kathy (Merritt) Caffey



*Left: Lucas Randall and Ana Victoria Pettit at Auntie Marie's house, in August of 1989.*

*Below: Ruben and Vickie decorating Auntie's "tree" on Dec. 16, 1989.*



Our son, Eric, was about six years old when we went to San Francisco to visit Mom. We decided to include a visit to Auntie Marie. The Bay Area had just had an earthquake and some aftershocks a few days before so Auntie Marie had covered all of her furniture with white sheets to protect it from ceiling "dust" whenever the house shook. As we got to the top of the stairs in her house, Eric stopped abruptly and just stood still looking into the livingroom. He scooted towards me in a little bit of fear and quietly asked..."Is this a ghost house, Mom?" Auntie Marie laughed so hard at his question and quickly told him, "No," and explained to him why there were white sheets everywhere. For many years, Auntie Marie would remind Eric of his first trip to her "Ghost House" and her wonderful laughter would fill the air as she told the story.

—Joi (De Nardo) Stenroos

I remember when Ken and Kimm were little. Mom said that Ted and I should go away for the weekend and that she and Joanne would babysit Ken and Kimm who were about 2 months old. So Ted and I went to Lake Tahoe with some friends and when we returned Mom was waiting by the curb and said do not ever ask me to babysit again. I guess it was too much to babysit twins. Mom would come over and she would talk Ken into playing golf. Which was a golf ball, golf club and a cup. Everytime he would get the ball in the cup she would give him a quarter. That experience was Ken's introduction to his career in accounting. Kimm and Mom had a special relationship as Mom got older. Kimm would have Mom come to her house so that she could be with Matt, Riley and Kelsey. Mom really enjoyed the great-grandchildern. She was very proud of her family. Ryan loved watching G.G. cook and work in the garden. Kayla was so cute with G.G. making sure that she did not fall and that she was comfortable. We will miss her always.

—Jenny

Wow, I have so many awesome memories of Auntie Marie, starting from when I was a little girl. Our house was only a few blocks away from hers, so I was blessed to grow up seeing her often. She also was on my school emergency card, and I particularly remember how happy I was to see her one time when I was sick and she came to pick me up. I remember she bought me a 7-Up in a glass bottle on the way home. What a treat!

When I moved back from Puerto Rico with two children in tow, I'd go visit her now and then, and she always made us feel so welcome and special, like we'd just made her day by visiting her. I'd send her school pictures of the children, and it touched my heart to see that years later, after they were all grown up, she still had those pictures on display.

Auntie Marie and I took a couple of trips to Puerto Rico together and she was such a fun traveling companion. The stories that woman had to tell! We'd talk for hours on end about family history, and she was a wealth of information. One thing about Auntie: with her there was no generation gap. Despite her genteel, refined manners, there was really no subject that she and I could not broach.

I am so grateful that I was able to accompany her on that last trip to Puerto Rico that she took. It meant so much for her to go, and "to be with MY people", as she put it. She was the queen bee at the family reunion and was honored and revered as the family matriarch. She was even given a special recognition by the mayor of Ponce, delivered in person by one of his representatives. The Rivera cousins in Puerto Rico did a tremendous job of honoring her and making that trip unforgettable for her, and it was a well-deserved tribute.



*Olga, María, Awilda and Luz, in Ponce, 2005*

—Norma (García) Pettit

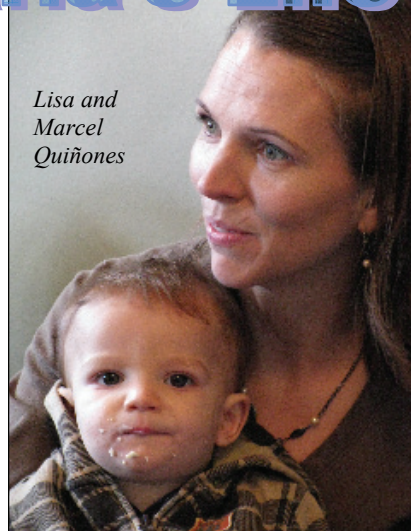


February 14, 2009

¿...y la familia?

St. Cecelia's Catholic Church,  
San Francisco, CA

# The Celebration of Maria's Life



Lisa and  
Marcel  
Quiñones

Above: Norma, Marlin, Joi, Muneca, Julie, Marina, Yuly, Michelle and David  
Below 3 photos, from left: Marcel, Ruben, Muneca, George, Norma, Victoria, Marlin, Marina.



Left: David Nicholson and  
Scott Hargraves (Kimm's husband)

Right: Joi, Muneca (Ruben García's  
daughter), and George



Los hijos de María:  
Victoria, Jenny and George



Jenny and Ted Reinke  
with daughter, Kimm Hargraves

Barbara Nicholson and  
grandson, Zachary

¿...y la familia?

## Update on Dustin

*Marina Ramos took advantage of Spring Break from her university studies at UC Davis to visit her sister Teena and family in Oklahoma, and she provided this update (dated March 31, 2009):*

I could see why Teena said that Dustin should not be there. The facility is small and they appear to be geared towards maintenance, not recovery. Dustin is lucky to have Teena and Rich there to look after him and his needs.



*Dustin, Bobbie & Raymie*



*Just before  
Valentine's Day*



*Just after  
Valentine's Day*

While I was visiting Rich stayed at the hospital while Teena was at the house with me. I brought a CD of Dustin's favorite music and that helped him relax.

Last Monday they started taking him off the ventilator for a couple hours a day and then they took him off completely. For a couple days now he has only been getting oxygen but he doesn't need it much since he is breathing on his own so they have started to ween him off that too. They decided to keep the tracheotomy in, just in case he may need assistance later for breathing.

The best thing to happen was that he started talking while I was there! On the day I left he said the "ABC's" with Teena (he had them memorized) and recited both Teena and Rich's full names. He has drop foot on both feet but Teena has been doing physical therapy with him every day so hopefully her efforts are reducing the impact a little. He can later get surgery on his tendons to help him walk.

Every day while I visited we all went to visit Dustin. He had a couple friends stop by, too. One visited five times during my stay, which was really nice. I sang to him and one time he smiled; I lit up inside. Each time I left I told him in my bad Spanish, "Duerme con los ángeles y tus dos ángeles de guardia, tu abuela Mami-O y tu tía, Angela. Te amo."

I didn't get much rest during my trip but it was worth every second to be there with them all. I have so much faith that Dustin will heal but he just needs his time. The whole family has been strong and they have been working together to take care of him.

*Please continue to pray for Dustin. God is good! He is answering our prayers.*

## Family Reunion Plans

Cousin **Annie Meléndez** reports that things are falling into place for the 2009 family reunion in Peñuelas, Puerto Rico. Following our usual schedule of three days of partying, the details as best we can give them are as follows:

- Friday, June 19th—Welcome Dinner at the home of Wilson and Annie.  
Come as early as 3:00 p.m. to socialize and swim in their backyard pool. Dinner will be around 6:30.  
Address: Barrio Jaguas, Carretera 386, Km. 1.2, Sector Fornés.  
Home phone #: 787-836-4626      Annie's cell phone #: 787-309-1408
- Saturday, June 20th—La Gran Fiesta will be held at the community center near Annie's house (same address as her house, except that the kilometer number is 3 or 4 (she's not sure). The dinner will be catered and Annie is looking into hiring a live band. **Because of the cost involved, there will be an entrance charge of \$10 per adult and \$5 per child aged 5-12. Children under the age of five will enter for free.** I am not sure of the start time of Saturday night's event; I'll have that information for you in the June issue.
- Sunday, June 21st—The Goodbye Breakfast will be at Wilson and Annie's home. After a late night, we won't want to make it too early, but then some of us have to head out to the airport to fly home, so maybe we can make it between 8:30-10:30.

**We need your ideas!** We'll have name tags, but what do you think we can do to indicate what branch of the family we belong to? What can we do to help us all get better acquainted? We are expecting approximately 125 persons to be in attendance at this reunion! E-mail your suggestions to Norma at [mamanony@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mamanony@sbcglobal.net).

Also, if you haven't already RSVP'd, now is the time to do so. You can e-mail, call or write, and I will forward the information to Annie. We want to make sure we have enough food for everyone. Hope to see you in June!



# “¿...y la familia?”

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## Birthday Greetings

<b>Michael Barnes</b> (46) - April 1	<b>Dalie Delgado</b> (17) - April 23	<b>Roberto I. Rivera</b> (58) - May 16
<b>Emilio Maldonado</b> (78) - April 1	<b>Naïome Campos</b> (5) - April 23	<b>Ryan Reinke</b> (13) - May 12
<b>Michael A. Feliciano</b> (43) - April 3	<b>Raymond L. Cavino</b> (10) - April 25	<b>Helen Correa-González</b> (47) - May 12
<b>Catherine Rivera</b> (32) - April 5	<b>Haley Frosheiser</b> (13) - April 26	<b>Alexis Valentín</b> (24) - May 17
<b>Dustin Cavino</b> (18) - April 4	<b>Daniel Campos</b> (15) - April 27	<b>Kirstin Frosheiser</b> (37) - May 21
<b>Wilma E. Roig</b> (24) - April 6	<b>Luz E. Sánchez</b> (3) - April 28	<b>Riley Hargraves</b> (7) - May 22
<b>Marlynn (Merritt) Krause</b> (61) - April 6	<b>George Rivera</b> (36) - April 29	<b>Heriberto Rivera</b> (22) - May 26
<b>Tiana J. Rivera</b> (14) - April 6	<b>Nicholas Rivera</b> (19) - May 5	<b>Ada I. Rivera</b> (32) - May 26
<b>Ana V. Pettit</b> (24) - April 8	<b>Ken Braddock</b> (41) - May 5	<b>George Nicholson</b> (64) - May 27
<b>Tom Smith</b> (71) - April 13	<b>Ted Reinke</b> (72) - May 13	<b>Lucas R. Pettit</b> (23) - May 29
<b>Elieñith Dessus</b> (21) - April 21	<b>Isidro Rivera</b> (90) - May 13	<b>Stephanie (Krause) Thompson</b> (32) - May 29
<b>Vic Stenroos</b> (61) - April 22		<b>Cristina Cruz</b> (6) - May 30

## Anniversaries



Jana and Orlando Rivera (1)  
April 12

Monica (Rivera) and  
Mike Shenker (12)  
May 10

Carmen (Feliciano) and  
Maximino Carrasquillo (34)  
May 16

Cathy (Rivera) and  
Eric Montalvo (12)  
May 24

James and Erika Frosheiser (2)  
May 26

Marlynn (Merritt) and  
Paul Krause (39)  
May 30