

# "...y la familia?"

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 6

JUNE/JULY '09

*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*

*This is YOUR  
family news-  
letter... help  
fill it!*

## Uncle Isidro's 90th Birthday Party

On May 13, 2009, Isidro Rivera turned 90. His sons organized a birthday celebration in Carrollton, Georgia, where Isidro lives. Please turn to page 4 for photos and the story.



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# The Way We Were

*My sister, Olga, was probably about a year old in this photograph from 1948. My mother, Anita (López) García, entered Olga into a baby contest and Olga won a trophy.*



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

- *My grandmother, Ana Cruz García was born on June 10, 1882 in Peñuelas, Puerto Rico. She died at the young age of 34, leaving behind Adela (7), Oscar (5), María (4), Guar (3), Elena (3), and Anita (one week old).*
- *Auntie Anita Merritt passed away on June 25, 1998. Anita was the youngest child of the union of Florencio Rivera and Ana Cruz García, and was only a week old when her mother died.*
- *On July 3, 1861, my great-grandparents, Manuel Alejo Rivera and Maria Apolinaria Maldonado were married.*
- *My beautiful and loving sister, Olga María (García) Smith, went home to Jesus on July 4, 2006, having been led to the Lord by our cousin Mary Lillian Pérez only ten days earlier. My heart aches with loneliness for her, but I will see her again in Heaven some day.*
- *José de los Santos Rivera died on July 11, 1845, in Guayanilla, Puerto Rico. He was the paternal grandfather of Florencio Rivera Maldonado.*
- *Auntie Adele was born on July 22, 1909 in Peñuelas, Puerto Rico. She was the oldest daughter of the union of Florencio Rivera and Ana Cruz García.*
- *Florencio Rivera ("Papa Flor")—our patriarch—died on July 22, 1941.*
- *My mother, Ana María López Maldonado, was born in Adjuntas, Puerto Rico, on July 26, 1911. She was the daughter of Juan López and María de los Santos Maldonado. She had one older brother, Confesor.*

## Look What I Still Have!

This unique ashtray, made to resemble an old-fashioned outdoor barbeque pit, belonged to my parents and was in our house in San Francisco for as long as I can remember. I was born in 1952, so it is over 50 years old.



I don't know the history behind it, though. It may have been a gift, or they may have purchased it. All I know is that my mother prized it for its unusual design. I can remember my father using it when he smoked his Camel cigarettes. The smoke would swirl up through the ashtray's chimney.

# A Page Out of Our Family History

by Norma (García) Pettit

## Marriages Between First Cousins

In the April/May issue of *¿...y la familia?* I wrote about my recent strides in family tree research, which included the discovery of two pairs of first cousins that had married—Manuel Alejo Rivera Maldonado with María Dominga Maldonado Rivera, and José de la Cruz Maldonado with María Mercedes Maldonado. I am sure that this bit of news raised a few eyebrows. For sure it disgusted one cousin who wrote that she was “grossed out” by the “incestuous relationships” in our family tree. I agree that it is icky to contemplate a union between two close relatives, but it is actually permitted in roughly half of the states in America. In Puerto Rico, marriage between cousins is also permitted, even if frowned upon by general society. I remember my mother telling me that her cousin Julio (“Yuyo”) married his first cousin, Virginia (“Ginia”). She considered it improper, but loved and respected them nevertheless. During the summer of 1969, I stayed with them for several weeks and have wonderful memories of their large, beautiful family, which included some children close to my age.

This brings us to the topic of health risks associated with the offspring of first cousins. According to Professor Hamish Spencer of the University of Ottawa, New Zealand, and co-author of research on this topic, first cousins who marry run no greater risk of giving birth to children with defects than do women over the age of 40. In a study published by the online journal *Public Library of Science*, the risk of developing congenital defects in babies born as a result of marriage between cousins is just two percent over the average. The risk of mortality among such babies is 4.4 percent higher than average, which is the same in babies born from women in their forties. Professor Spencer, along with Professor Diane Paul of the University of Massachusetts in Boston, are calling for a lifting of the taboo on first-cousin families, claiming that the legislation against such unions is based on “over-simplified views of genetics”.

At any rate, taboo or not, risky or not, and like it or not, marriages of first cousins exist in our family tree. We are not alone; as explained in the last issue, this practice, which results in “pedigree collapse”, is thought to occur at some point in almost everyone’s family tree. Some famous people who married their first cousins are Jerry Lee Lewis, Edgar Allan Poe, H.G. Wells, Charles Darwin, and Albert Einstein.

Okay, so this article turned out to be more of a research paper than a page out of our family tree. Forgive me for that. With the busyness of the end of the school year, I haven’t had time to do more genealogical digging. While in Puerto Rico for the family reunion (oh, so very *soon!*) I hope to visit the graveyard in Peñuelas and hopefully dig up (stated *figuratively* not *literally*) more information on our ancestors buried there. I don’t think anyone even knows the location of my grandmother’s grave (Ana Cruz García, 1882-1916). I would love to find it.



## Isidro Rivera's 90th Birthday Party

by Carlos Rivera



On May 13, 2009, Isidro Rivera turned 90. To celebrate the event, his sons (Carlos, Edward, Roberto and Orlando) and their families planned a birthday party to be held Saturday, May 16th, in Carrollton, GA where many of his current friends reside. Approximately 60 people attended the event.

Orlando and his wife, Jana, ended up having to do most of the work since they lived locally. Jana handled the majority of the invitations while Orlando took care of the majority of the cooking. They catered a buffet dinner with a number of the special Spanish dishes Isidro had requested. Jana's mother, Jan McLemore, made the birthday cake.



Carlos created a video which depicted his father's life over the years. It was well-received as it brought back many memories for family members who were present. Members of the American Legion who were there enjoyed the old World War II era photos.

Orlando and grandson, Tito, provided entertainment as a guitar duo. Tito, by the way, had recently won a contest at school with his guitar-playing abilities.



Following the entertainment portion, Isidro just couldn't resist getting on stage to show off his own guitar-playing ability and promptly entertained everyone with his rendition of "Pistol Packing Mama". He put so much vigor into the song, some of us worried whether he was going to have a heart attack right then and there! He did only the one song, however, and then offered a few words of thanks to his friends and family and referenced the 57 wonderful years he had with Rosita.



With Marie Nicholson's passing earlier this year, Isidro is now the oldest living child of Florencio Rivera Maldonado.

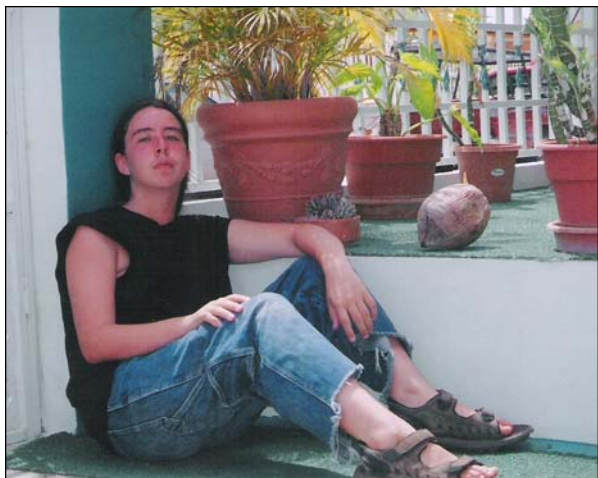
Happy Birthday, Dad,  
from all of us.

*Love, your sons*



# Student News

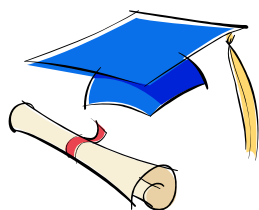
¿...y la familia?



**Timothy Teal Barnes**, 17, oldest son of Michael and Angela (Warren) Barnes, graduates from Liberty High School in Benicia, California on June 4th. Well done, Teal!

Teal plans to attend Diablo Valley College in the fall, with eventual plans to transfer to Ex'pression College for Digital Arts in Emeryville, California.

Michael and the children will be in Puerto Rico for the family reunion. Be sure to congratulate Teal for his accomplishment when you see him.



**Adam Campos**, son of Jennifer Pineda (who in turn is Nellie Feliciano's niece), graduated from the eighth grade. Adam attends Bishop Noll

Prep Academy, a Catholic School in Hammond, Indiana.

**Angelica Stickle**, daughter of Joanne McLaughlin and granddaughter of José and Tita Medina, just graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a major in Broadcast Journalism and Communications. Her aunt, Carol (Medina) Wright, notes, "We are very proud of her since she had a full ride for her entire college fees." Angie is thrilled that she is going to be the manager at Carol's new shop (see the article about this on the next page).

Congratulations, Angie!

**Nicho Rivera**, oldest son of Roberto Rivera and grandson of Isidro Rivera, is traveling to Chile this summer. In response to my inquiry, Nicho responded with a message on Facebook, from which I also snagged this photo of him.



"I'm spending June traveling and visiting friends (mostly just seeing places and hanging out)," wrote Nicho. Then during July I'll be meeting up with a group from the college I have been attending, North Georgia College and State University, to finish up a Spanish minor. We will be in La Serena. That's about it, besides all the museums and extracurricular activities we will be doing."

I hope that after he returns, we'll hear from Nicho again with an account of his adventures in Chile.

For those of you who are interested in tracking Nicho's travels as they unfold, he has started a travel blog on <http://www.facebook.com/l/shoestringvoyageur.blogspot.com>

*Have fun and travel safely, Nicho!*

## Our Prayers Have Been Answered!

God is *good* and **Dustin Cavino** is literally a walking miracle!

Less than five months after nearly dying in a vehicular accident, Olga's grandson is now up and moving about with the aid of a wheelchair and a walker. All of his tubes have been removed and he can eat all foods—including *pasteles* and *arroz con gandules*—without any restrictions. Dustin is due to be released from the rehabilitation center on June 4th, and his doctors have given him permission to travel. This is wonderful news because ***Dustin and his mother, Teena, are going to attend the family reunion in Puerto Rico!***

A heartfelt "thank you" to everyone who has had Dustin in his/her thoughts and prayers all these months. Dustin still has a lot of physical therapy ahead of him as an outpatient, but he is one brave and determined young man, and a true fighter. Having Dustin with us in Puerto Rico will give us another reason to celebrate at the reunion. ☺



# Other Family News

## Kathy Caffey Recovering After Gall Bladder Surgery

Cousin **Kathy (Merritt) Caffey** is doing very well after having her gall bladder removed on May 20th. Doctors had found that a large stone in her gall bladder had been the cause of her pain and weight loss during the last several months. Her sister, Meryem, came to stay with her for a few days following the surgery while Kathy's husband Jim was away on a family business trip.

When I last talked to Kathy, she was sounding great. I am sure everyone hopes that her health will continue to improve daily. ☺

## Family Book Still in the Plans

Let's preserve those wonderful stories that have been passed down to us or that we've experienced. It's not too late to get your family stories and memories written and sent to me by e-mail or by "snail mail", in English or in Spanish. I am going to compile these into a hardbound book and also use them in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

## Carol (Medina) Wright Opening Store!

*I caught wind of this exciting news and wrote to Carol for the details. Here is her response.*

Yes, I have decided to open up a shop. I have been selling online and at an antique mall for some time and with the economy the way it is and we are not traveling except to Indiana, I felt the time was right. The shop is called Circa Vintage. We begin the build out of the interior on July 1st and hope to open our doors on September 1st.

The store is right in Tequesta. It will have different zones: vintage and vintage-inspired area, upscale designer consignments, home decor, and theatrical supplies, including wigs and some costumes. We will also offer make up applications and accessories.

My niece, Angie, graduated from college a couple of weeks ago and will be manager of the store. We hope to have fashion shows, wine and cheese evenings, teas, etc.

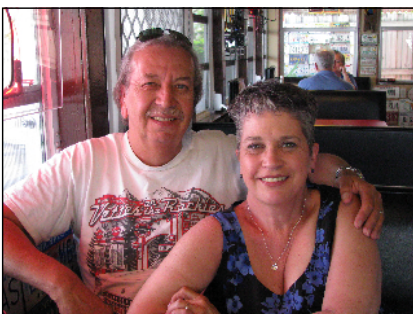
Burt Reynolds is opening up a new theatre and school about one mile from the shop and my friend is his new director. He promises to bring me lots of their business. We have another theatre that opened across the street by other friends of mine and I am already doing business with them from home.

I will be carrying a lot of designer purses so if anyone wants to consign with us, they can contact me. Everything I will take needs to be authentic and pristine. Rosa will be managing our website which is in the construction stage now. The website is [circavintageshoppe.com](http://circavintageshoppe.com).

I am terrified about this new venture, but excited at the same time.

## Vic and Joi Vacationed in Key Largo

Below are two pictures taken during Vic and Joi's recent scuba diving vacation to Key Largo, Florida. In one Facebook entry, Joi wrote, "Great day of diving off of Key Largo! Ocean was so calm and clear. Even had a little ittybitty fish try and bite me when I went in for a close-up -- guess he was protecting his feeding ground. Beautiful coral everywhere. The underwater world is FABULOUS! (and oh so quiet)."



## Your Prayers Are Requested

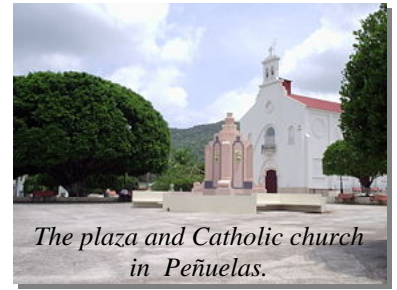


Michael Anthony Feliciano, one of our cousins from Chicago (Nellie Feliciano's brother) lost his wife, Carolina Rivera, on April 3rd (his birthday!). The family knew she had heart problems but didn't expect her to be taken from them this soon. She was 38 years old, and left behind four children: Michael (20), John (18), Lucy (15) and Angel (13).

Please keep this family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

## ***It's Time for the Family Reunion!***

Peñuelas, known as "La Capital del Güiro" (güiro capital) and Valle de los Flamboyanes" (valley of the flame trees), is where we are having this year's family reunion. Located in the southern coast of the island, south of Adjuntas, east of Guayanilla, and west of Ponce, the town of Peñuelas was founded in 1793 by Diego de Alvarado. Our family roots on the side of Ana Cruz García (mother of Adela, Oscar, María, Elena, Guar, and Anita) and on the side of Otilia Pacheco Arroyo (mother of Neri, Isidro, Angélica, and Delia) can be traced back to the earliest days of Peñuelas. (Florencio Rivera's side of the family is from Guayanilla.)



*The plaza and Catholic church in Peñuelas.*

**Driving directions:** From Ponce, go west on PR-2, then right after you see the refinery on your left, take Exit 213 and go north on PR-385 for about 3 miles. Turn left onto PR-132 which takes you into Peñuelas and onto Muñoz Rivera Street. Go through the main part of town to PR-386. Turn right onto that road, and look for the marker for Km. 1.2, which is just after you pass a business called El Bambuco on the left side of the road. Take the entrance to the **right** at Km. 1.2 and head to the top of the hill. Annie will have signs out as you get close to indicate where to turn. If you don't get lost (ha ha!) the trip from Ponce to Peñuelas takes about 20 minutes.

### **Reunion Schedule**

You are welcome to attend any or all of the following activities:

- **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. (See directions above.)  
Home phone #: 787-836-4626      Annie's cell phone #: 787-309-1408
- **Saturday morning, June 20th**—"Walk the Land" that our ancestors lived on. The road up to the top of Barrio Santo Domingo is mostly accessible by car, if not completely. We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at *Escuela Josefa Vélez Bauzá*, the high school which is on PR-132 (the main road that runs through Peñuelas). We will have someone to guide us as we caravan up the hill.
- **Saturday evening, 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 has hired 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. The doors will open at 7:00 p.m. Come early to reserve a seat at one of the tables; we are expecting an attendance of 150 persons that evening!
- **Sunday, June 21st**—The Goodbye Breakfast will be at Wilson and Annie's home. After a late night, we didn't want to make it too early, but some of us do have to head out to the airport to fly home, so we will convene between 8:30-10:30 a.m. The closer to 8:30 that you make it, the longer you'll have for those final goodbye hugs and photo opportunities.

Friday, June 26th—For those of you who will still be in Puerto Rico, Marina Ramos invites you to attend the scattering of the ashes of her sister, Angela (Warren) Barnes at el Yunque Rain Forest. Please see Marina for more information if you are interested.

Cousin Joi will be attending the reunion alone as her husband, Vic, cannot get the time off of work. She will be staying at the Holiday Inn Express in Ponce from June 16-21 and invites any female relative to share the room and the expenses with her. Contact her at joisheart@comcast.net.

As the time for our annual family reunion draws near, I wish everyone safe travels. *¡Vaya con Dios!*

# “¿...y la familia?”

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

## Birthday Greetings

Oops! Missed in last issue—  
**Analís Annette Fernández García (1) - May 29**

<b>Jayden I. Feliciano</b> (7) - June 5	<b>Enid Rivera</b> (23) - June 20	<b>Lilliam Rivera</b> (66) - July 11
<b>Máximo Carrasquillo</b> (33) - June 5	<b>Norma (García) Pettit</b> (57) - June 20	<b>José Medina</b> (59) - July 11
<b>Jeremy Carrasquillo</b> (32) - June 5	<b>Laurie Jimenez</b> (50) - June 21	<b>Roberto Rivera Sevilla</b> (69) - July 14
<b>Nellie Feliciano</b> (49) - June 9	<b>Tommy González</b> (39) - June 21	<b>Kayla N. Reinke</b> (10) - July 15
<b>Annette García</b> (26) - June 10	<b>Jason Pineda</b> (30) - June 22	<b>René Rivera Jr.</b> (47) - July 21
<b>Joyce Montalvo</b> (9) - June 12	<b>María L. Feliciano</b> (26) - June 24	<b>Sabrina Jaquez González</b> (16) - July 21
<b>Alicia Rivera</b> (27) - June 12	<b>Scott Hargraves</b> (45) - June 25	<b>Vickie Jimenez</b> (49) - July 22
<b>Julia Cruz Vilá</b> (83) - June 13	<b>Cindy Nicholson</b> (38) - June 29	<b>Christina (Krause) Darnell</b> (31) - July 23
<b>Leslie Feliciano</b> (24) - June 13	<b>Alura G. Barnes</b> (16) - June 30	<b>Annalise Cruz Rivera</b> (5) - July 24
<b>C.J. Burch</b> (20) - June 14	<b>Angel Feliciano</b> (14) - July 2	<b>Cynthia Feliciano</b> (31) - July 25
<b>Emily Medina</b> (31) - June 15	<b>Elizabeth Rivera</b> (13) - July 5	<b>Ada Rivera Segarra</b> (29) - July 25
<b>Garnet Rivera</b> (64) - June 15	<b>Eric R. Stenroos</b> (26) - July 7	<b>Rachel Nicholson</b> (9) - July 26
<b>Kimm (Reinke) Hargraves</b> (46) - June 16	<b>Carmen Nydia (Feliciano) Carrasquillo</b> (53) - July 7	<b>Fernando Vázquez</b> (19) - July 28
<b>Ken Reinke</b> (46) - June 16		<b>Paul Krause</b> (64) - July 30
<b>Nelson Rivera</b> (46) - June 17		
<b>René Rivera</b> (70) - June 19		

## Anniversaries

**Rachel (Rivera) and James Maskell** (1) - June 14  
**Ken & Vanessa Braddock** (6) - June 15  
**Annie Meléndez & Wilson García** (?) - June 15  
**René & Carmen Rivera** (48) - June 17  
**Jenny & Ted Reinke** (48) - June 18  
**Angela & David Nicholson** (12) - June 21  
**Angélica & José L. Medina** (61) - July 9  
**Edna & Edwin Rivera** (5) - July 11  
**Garnet & Carlos Rivera** (22) - July 14  
**Cindy & Christopher Nicholson** (16) - July 17  
**Joanne & Robert McLaughlin** (12) - July 21  
**Randy & Norma Pettit** (27) - July 30