

"...y la familia?"

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1

AUG/SEPT '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 artwork

Original poetry
Vignettes on

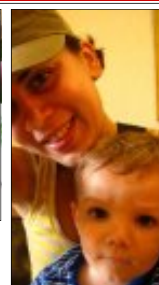
your immediate family

Favorite family recipes

Cute things your kids have said

Funny stories

Puerto Rico 2009



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Puerto Rico 2009. Cont.

¿...y la familia?

A family reunion in Puerto Rico is extra special in so many ways: a vacation in paradise, a chance to see those Rivera relatives who live on the island, and the opportunity to visit relatives on “our other side” of the family, just to name a few reasons. Randy hadn’t been to Puerto Rico for 16 years, and as my father, Oscar, was very sick at the time, it wasn’t really a fun time to be there. This time, after getting over the stress of traveling, he thoroughly enjoyed his time there and fell in love with the island. We were able to see Luquillo Beach, visit my cousin Martita López (my mother’s niece, pictured at right) and her family in Gurabo, visit Las Cavernas de Camuy, and relax at Jobos Beach near Isabela before picking up Tory and Joi at the airport and heading down to Ponce. Other family groups from the states did the same thing. We counted at least 50 relatives who traveled to Puerto Rico from stateside locations. The largest group was 17 members of the Feliciano clan—a great bunch of people who I already love. They are hosting next year’s reunion in the Chicago area!

With our family, the party starts as soon as we get together. The very evening we arrived in Ponce, we had dinner at René and Titi’s house, then walked over to Papo and Ada’s house, where we were introduced to their pet *coquí* that lives in their refrigerator. Ada wrote about her “Distinguished Guest” in the Feb/Mar ‘08 issue of “...y la familia?” We then visited their daughter Elenita’s house and were treated to a dance routine by Iris’ daughter, Jeixly Nicole Barbosa Rivera (7) and Elenita’s daughter, Rose Adamaris Segarra Rivera (8). Afterwards, we returned to René’s house to find that Felita was there with Milagros’ daughter, Jackie, Jackie’s husband Chris, and their two sons. We had a great time getting to know them. What sweet people, all of them!

The next day a group of us went to the beach in Rincón, and on Thursday René and Titi had a big birthday party for their son, Nelson. That’s Nelson, in the third picture below. René and his sister, Lilliam, cooked for the whole crowd.



At Rincón Beach



Earlier that same day, René and Titi had taken Joi and me to the cemetery to visit the grave sites of Auntie Helen and my parents—emotional, but necessary. Then we did a little souvenir shopping in the downtown area of Ponce and on the way home, we stopped for a visit with my mother’s cousin Teresita and her husband, Jorge. Teresita had just gotten out of the hospital and had been feeling sad. She said she brought me with her thoughts.

While all this was going on, other family groups were arriving on the island and having their own fun adventures in Luquillo, Cabo Rojo, Cidra, and other areas. On Friday morning, Joi and I took a trek to Peñuelas to visit the cemetery there, hoping to find the grave of our grandmother, Ana Cruz García (no luck). We met up with Cousin Annie Meléndez in her pharmacy and she accompanied us to meet Joi’s friend, Marissa (at right), who was visiting her aunt and uncle. A couple of weeks earlier, Joi had found out that her long-time friend and United co-worker was going to be in Puerto Rico at the same time we were. Then we found out she was going to be in *Peñuelas*. Next we learned that her aunt and uncle live in Barrio Jaguas, same as Cousin Annie. Finally, at the pharmacy, Annie told us she is *friends* with Marissa’s aunt, Hilda Colón Rivera, and she directed us to the house for a short visit! Joi and Marissa had always joked that they might be cousins, and while we didn’t quite make *that* connection (*yet!*), Marissa’s uncle, Andrés González Bigas, said he knew some of our relatives—Tío Angelito, Tío Agripino, Cousin Cirilo Maldonado, and others. He said they were friends of his. Small world, huh?



Edna, Felita, Edwin Rivera Ramos, Joi, and Edwin Rivera Sevilla at Renés house





Max Carrasquillo Jr., Myriam (Feliciano) Pineda, Annie Meléndez de García, little Alessandra Janae Carrasquillo, Nellie Feliciano*, Joannie García, Carmen Nydia (Feliciano*) Carrasquillo, Doña Rosa Rivera vda. de Meléndez, Rosanie García.*

¿...y la familia?



Jana and Orlando Rivera



Mike Tokar, Isidro Rivera, and Alicia (Rivera) Tokar



Vanessa Rivera, Edwin Rivera Ramos, Isidro Rivera, Edwin Rivera Soto, George Rivera Ramos, Felita Soto de Rivera



Mary Lillian served cake to celebrate René Rivera's birthday. Carlos and Garnet Rivera are in the background.



Wilson and Annie provided a delicious catered dinner of various appetizers and "asopao".



Tory Pettit and Wilmie Roig



Marcel and Rubén Quiñones

From the photos above you can see that the Welcome Dinner at the García home in Peñuelas on Friday, June 19th was a huge success and a lot of fun. Annie*, a pharmacist, had welcome banners placed in several locations—at the entrance to the town, at her pharmacy, and in her front yard. Wilson and Annie had set up tables with bright pink plastic tablecloths under a large covered patio, plus had various tables with umbrellas. Their spacious home and yard was perfect for the gathering. The pool provided refreshing recreation for the children and a few adults who took their babies in for a dip.

We calculate that there were at least 80 people there, meeting and greeting, catching up on each other's lives, enjoying the pool, the food, and the friendliness. Unfortunately, my niece, Marina Ramos, and her group got lost trying to reach Annie's house via the back roads. Even though Annie and I attempted to go find them, we weren't able to connect and Marina ended up turning around and going back to Ponce.

I was a little worried about the next day's trip to Barrio Santo Domingo because as yet I hadn't secured a guide to take us up the mountain. Annie said that Emilio "Millín" Maldonado* lived close by and that he could take us there. We walked over to his house and found Millín just getting out of his car in his carport; he had been out of town. He and I were so happy to finally meet each other. We had talked on the phone, and he had wanted to make it to one of the family reunions before this, but had never been able to. We talked for a little bit and I asked Millín if he could be our guide the next morning. He agreed, and shortly after Annie and I returned to the party, he and his brother joined us there and met the rest of the family. Plans were announced to meet at the high school in Peñuelas (the one that our architect cousin Bill Roig had designed) at 9 a.m.

**Some of you may still be confused about family relationships. My grandmother, Ana (the mother of Adela, Oscar, María, Elena, Guar, and Anita) had several half brothers and sisters, the children of Máximo Cruz and his second wife, Genara Maldonado. One of Ana's half-siblings, Carmela, was Annie's grandmother. If you saw where Annie's pharmacy is, Carmela's house is just a few doors down on the same side of the street. Carmela was also the grandmother of the Felicianos (Hector, Myriam, Carmen and Nellie attended this reunion; they and their other siblings will be hosting next year's reunion in the Chicago area). Another of Ana's half-siblings was Gilberto Cruz Maldonado, the father of the above-mentioned cousin, Emilio Maldonado. Emilio was my father's first cousin, as were the Feliciano's mother (Lydia) and Annie's father (Juan). On www.ylafamilia.org there is a link to a Family History Slideshow that may be of help.*

“¿...y la familia?”

We Walked the Land That Our Ancestors Lived On

(Or as close as we could get to it!)

This was a dream come true. I could hardly believe it was finally going to happen. A group of twenty relatives, ranging from one-year-old Marcel to ninety-year-old Isidro gathered in front of Escuela Josefa Vélez Bauzá, the high school designed by Joi's architect brother, Bill Roig. From there we caravanned up the winding mountain roads, all paved and in great condition, parked, and then walked the rest of the way along paved roads. There was no hiking involved, although to reach the actual spot where



Tío Angelito had lived, we would have had to hike on some treacherous terrain. Millín led us down a path to a lookout spot from which he pointed out a dead tree on the mountainside to our left. He said Tío Angelito's house had been there. He showed us where a road had been carved out of the mountainside at great trouble and expense, but a jeep had overturned on it and a woman had been injured. After that, the road was not used and became overgrown. Tío Angelito used to hike all the way up from town on foot every day up until shortly before his death at the age of 96.



That was as close as we got to walking the land that our ancestors lived on. I'm not certain, but I think that Tío Angelito's mountain property must have been land that he inherited from his father, Máximo. It was to her father Máximo's house that my grandmother, Ana Cruz García, used to go with children and farm animals in tow whenever she and Flor got into an argument, so she must have lived nearby. Uncle Isidro's mother, Otilia Pacheco Arroyo, also lived nearby because she used to visit the Rivera home and she became Florencio's wife after Ana died. In fact, the 1910 Census shows that Máximo and Genara's house was #59 on the enumeration listing, Forencio and Ana's house was #55 and Juan Pacheco and Manuela's (Otilia's parents) was #61.

Carlos had posed a question, "I wonder what made our ancestors decide to live up on the mountain?" As we drove up the winding roads, Randy joked that it was because they had elected to be the lookouts for pirates and other dangers. When we reached the top, I felt I truly knew the reason. The views were breathtaking. These pictures below cannot do them justice, but just looking at them makes my heart expand. I felt the beauty of God's creation as never before. It was an amazing day, and I thank Millín so much for making my dream a reality.



1. *Papo explains how to cut down a banana plant.*
2. *The end of the road. Millín pointed out the location of Tío Angelito's property from there.*
3. *Tory offers Uncle Isidro some of her banana.*
4. *We made it!*
5. *Rest stop on the way down. Thanks for treating us to refreshments, Papo!*

To see a video of Uncle Isidro walking up a steep path in Santo Domingo, visit www.ylafamilia.org.

¿...y la familia?

Saturday Night's Fiesta in Peñuelas

Thank you to Annie and Wilson for hosting this wonderful reunion. They saw to every detail: a great reunion hall, delicious catered food, fantastic live music (Annie's brother and his group), lovely decorations, and even a yummy reunion cake. Carlos and I set up a family history display. You can go on www.ylafamilia.org to see the Family History Slideshow.



**Teena Marie Warren:
Mother of the Year**



One special event of our great reunion party was the presentation of awards to Dustin Cavino and his mother, Teena Warren.

Dustin, a grandson of Olga (García) Smith, was critically injured in an accident on Jan. 16th and was in a coma for over a month. A neurologist told Teena that if Dustin ever came out of his coma he'd have a 1% chance of ever walking and talking again. Teena had not despaired at these words. She said that 1% was all that she needed. Putting her faith in God and in the prayers of many, she steadfastly stayed by her son's bedside for weeks and months. The Rivera family honored her for her dedication to her son. Dustin defied all odds and his reward was a trip to Puerto Rico. When he stood to accept his award, he shook off all help and walked *unaided* to the platform. He is a walking and talking miracle and we thank God for answered prayers.

**Dustin Cavino:
Honored for Bravery
and Determination**



¿...y la familia?



Angie, July 8, 1971

Ashes Ceremony



Angie, June 23, 2007

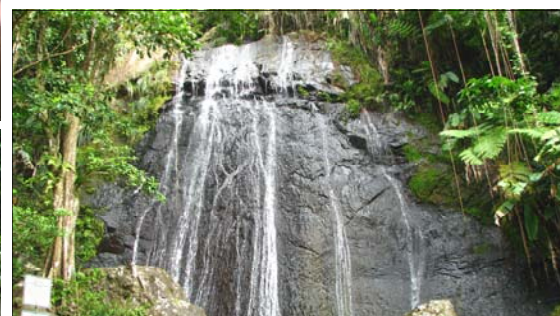
On Friday, June 26th, a ceremony was held at El Yunque Rain Forest to scatter the ashes of Angela Barnes, daughter of the late Olga (García) Smith. Angela passed away from Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma on Oct. 8, 2007, just fifteen months after her mother died. Her express wish was to have her ashes scattered in El Yunque, and her sister Marina undertook the Herculean task of ensuring that not only Angie's wish be fulfilled, but that all of her children would be present at the ceremony.

Angela María Warren was born on July 15, 1969 in San Francisco, California. As a baby, she lived in Puerto Rico for about a year in Santa Isabel, and later returned to Puerto Rico for visits in 1973, 1978, and 2005. During the 2005 visit, she fell in love with El Yunque. She had a dream of returning to live near there to explore the healing possibilities of the native herbs in that area. Angie felt very much connected to her Taino roots and to nature. As her illness progressed, her yearning to return to Puerto Rico did not diminish, and if she could not live there in body, then it would be in spirit.

There were twelve persons present at the ceremony, which was held at La Coca Falls, an 85 foot cascade onto boulder formations located close to the freeway. It is the first major attraction that visitors come to when they visit El Yunque. Marina and the others had decided the day prior that this would be the best place with easiest access for Dustin. They set up an altar and read poems before scattering Angie's ashes. Afterwards, while looking at an album that Teena had made of the 2005 trip, the very first picture that Teena had placed in there, square in the middle of the page, was of La Coca Falls. "After that," says Marina, "it just seemed perfect and meant to be." She also added, "We are just grateful to everyone who made this trip possible for the family. I feel truly blessed and loved and my heart overflows with happiness and thanks."

"I feel that she will be happy there, flowing with the river through beautiful, sacred land."

—Marina Ramos



Student News Other Family News



Adalberto Rivera, son of Papo and Ada, just graduated from *la Universidad Interamericana* with a degree in Marketing. Congratulations, "Macho"!

Francheska Rivera, daughter of the late Joshua Rivera and granddaughter of René and Titi, graduated from Ponce High and will be attending *la Universidad Interamericana* in the fall. Way to go, Francheska!



Proud grandparents José and Tita Medina sent in this photo and information about Angelica Stickle, who graduated from Florida Atlantic University with honors this past April. "She worked very hard, but it was worth it!" remarked Tita.

Congratulations again to all of our graduates! You make us *all* proud.



José and Tita Medina celebrated 60 years of wedded bliss on July 9th. They were surprised by cake and ice cream in honor of their anniversary at the home of their daughter and son-in-law, Carol and Larry Wright.

Cousin Joi brought back some *flamboyán* seeds with her from Puerto Rico and planted them just to see what would happen. Look! She's growing a tree! If it succeeds and lives through Denver winters, she may have the only *flamboyán* tree in all of Colorado! (*The flamboyán, or "flame tree", is Puerto Rico's national tree and is gorgeous with its bright red-orange blooms.*)



Relatives Respond

Relatives Respond

June, 27, 2009

Hi Norma,

Guess what I'm doing? After receiving your scanned newsletters, I was energized to convert them to PDF for posting to the website. I finished the conversions. I haven't yet posted them to the website, however.

Then I decided to scan in my old copies of your newsletters which, when combined with your scanned copies, should complete the entire history if I haven't made a mistake. Of course, while scanning, I read many of them over again. What a treasure! I wonder if other family members realize how much work you have put into the newsletters over the years! But more than that, it was all the family news that has been captured and all the tidbits of family history you have shared. It's just amazing and fantastic and invaluable! Thank God we have you as our family's historian.

I really hope you find a protégé to carry on your work when you are unable to do so.

I read a 1997 article about you and Joi watching the Helen De Nardo Family movie. I immediately wrote Joi and asked to get a copy or if it is in VHS format, I would be more than pleased to convert it to DVD.

As a reminder, I really would like to encourage you to write a book about our family's history. It may take years to write, I'm sure. But you have so much captured already, perhaps it won't be such a chore. Hopefully our latest trip to PR has added to your wealth of knowledge. I'd be happy to review and help edit it.

I am proud of you and honored to assist you in capturing everything electronically so we can have a lasting memory for our family members and their children.

Love, Carlos

From Angela Nicholson: "Thank you for putting a beautifully written account of Grandmother together for the [April/May 2009] newsletter. It was so nice to see you and your family at the memorial. On a separate note for the photos on-line: If someone could please correct the caption for BJ, who is Victoria's son, not Jenny's and also Zachary as David and Angela's son, not Barbara's. :)

Thank you again."

[Corrections were made to the online photo captions, but if you received a hard copy in the mail, please make a note of the

From Cousin Helen Correa-González, on July 15, 2009

Last night, I was thinking about how we missed the reunion and thought about a segment for the newsletter, I still haven't downloaded it from my brain but as soon as I settle down with the move I will share it with you.

I don't get to say it often but your work for the family newsletter means the world to me because you are keeping the family together. In this world where family values are being shred to pieces, it is nice to know that our family still laughs, cries, and stays together. That is what motivated us to buy a house near Mom and Waleska.

The Final Say

Did you notice on page one that this is the first issue of Volume 14? That means that we have had 13 full years of the newsletter. Cousin Carlos is working on completing an online archive of every single issue, dating back to the very first one, which you can access via the family website, www.ylafamilia.org. There is lots of history in our newsletters. Recently, as I scanned and e-mailed issues of the newsletter to Carlos that he was missing, I happened upon something that I wrote almost 11 years ago, in the Oct. '98 issue...

"This is something that I dream of—someday having a family reunion that would include the family from all around the United States and Puerto Rico. Well, as it is not likely to happen any time soon, let's all continue to communicate via the newsletter and keep each other informed of the events of our lives, thereby strengthening our family ties and sharing our love."

It wasn't long afterwards that we began having annual family reunions. Not everyone can attend each year, but we have them in different locations to try to make it convenient for those who long for a closer connection to our extended family to be able to attend at least some of the reunions. Nowadays, with Facebook, a lot of us are able to share photos and day-to-day events, but not all family members have computers and/or access to the internet. And nothing replaces the face-to-face contact and the hugs and conversations only possible at family reunions, or the lasting legacy of volumes of newsletters containing information about our ancestors and events as they happen. Do your part to help keep these traditions alive; send me photos and news items for the newsletter and plan to attend next year's reunion in Chicago.

“¿...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

Anita C. Braddock (5) - Aug. 3

Christian Rivera Rosa (17) - Aug. 3

Brian Pineda (33) - Aug. 3

Chet Cline (43) - Aug. 6

Michael García (17) - Aug. 8

Timothy Teal Barnes (18) - Aug. 9

Leandro González (15) - Aug. 9

Yamil Williams (23) - Aug. 10

Rosa (Medina) Meddaugh (58) - Aug. 10

René M. Rivera (24) - Aug. 15

José L. Medina (85) - Aug. 15

Jennifer Campos (35) - Aug. 16

Carmen Rivera (66) - Aug. 18

Andrea Rivera (20) - Aug. 22

Shanda Peters (23) - Aug. 23

Zuleymi Cruz (5) - Aug. 23

Héctor Burgos (43) - Aug. 24

Angelica Stickles (23) - Aug. 26

Frankie Valentín (28) - Aug. 26

Héctor González (47) - Aug. 26

Yuly (García) Springer (37) - Aug. 26

Evelyn Roig (65) - Aug. 28

Julian Miller (11) - Aug. 29

Zulena Delgado (21) - Aug. 29

Taelyn Darnell (4) - Aug. 31

Nelson Rivera (27) - Sept. 5

Luz Rivera (61) - Sept. 6

Jerry Feliciano (33) - Sept. 6

Iris L. Rivera (27) - Sept. 8

Serena Campos (12) - Sept. 10

Miguel González (46) - Sept. 10

Leslie (González) López (46) - Sept. 10

Charice A. Rivera (27) - Sept. 12

Rosanie García (32) - Sept. 13

Rachel Rivera (29) - Sept. 14

Kathleen (Merritt) Caffey (63) - Sept. 15

Craig Burch (22) - Sept. 17

Monica (Rivera) Shenker (29) - Sept. 21

Amy Valentín (27) - Sept. 21

Oscar González (70) - Sept. 21

Carmen E. Delgado (25) - Sept. 23

Edie (Jimenez) Neitzel (48) - Sept. 23

Raúl Rivera (16) - Sept. 24

Carlos M. Rivera (63) - Sept. 25

Marina M. Ramos (31) - Sept. 25

Johanna Rivera (37) - Sept. 26

Robert Rivera (40) - Sept. 26

Angélica Medina (81) - Sept. 29

Joseph Montalvo (4) - Sept. 29

Logan A. Braddock (4) - Sept. 29

Anniversaries

Michelle & David Fastenau (8) - Aug. 4

Nellie (Feliciano) & David López (21) - Aug. 6

Jeremy & Sheila Carrasquillo (8) - Aug. 11

Luz Rivera & Ramón Trinidad (18) - Aug. 14

Evelyn & Bill Roig (38) - Sept. 11

Rosa (Medina) & Brian Meddaugh (20) - Sept. 16

Yuly (García) & Todd Springer (15) - Sept. 17

Carol (Medina) & Larry Wright (22) - Sept. 26

