

My Life Story



Eligio Augie Sanchez



Sally Reynolds Rice, Storykeeper

Acknowledgement

As we near the consummation of the Ethnic Life Stories Project, there is a flood of memories going back to the concept of the endeavor. The awareness was there that the project would lead to golden treasures. But I never imagined the treasures would overflow the storehouse. With every Story Teller, every Story Keeper, every visionary, every contributor, every reader, the influence and impact of the project has multiplied in riches. The growth continues to spill onward. As its outreach progresses, "boundaries" will continue to move forward into the lives of countless witnesses.

Very few of us are "Native Americans." People from around the world, who came seeking freedom and a new life for themselves and their families, have built up our country and communities. We are all individuals, the product of both our genetic makeup and our environment. We are indeed a nation of diversity.

Many of us are far removed from our ancestors who left behind the familiar to learn a new language, new customs, new political and social relationships. We take our status as Americans for granted. We sometimes forget to welcome the newcomer. We bypass the opportunity to ask about their origins and their own journey of courage.

But, wouldn't it be sad if we all spoke the same language, ate the same food, and there was no cultural diversity.

This project has left me with a tremendous debt of gratitude for so many. The almost overwhelming task the Story Keeper has, and the many hours of work and frustration to bring forth a story to be printed. I salute you.

To the Story Tellers, thank you for letting us share in your heart and soul. It is my prayer that some or many of the stories will influence many young persons to another level, to be enmeshed in the pursuit of learning of other cultures that make up our community and the world.

This has, indeed, been a project of "Many" for the Community. Thanks to the following who have played a role in helping to achieve the goal. The list is practically endless, first names only. You know who you are and what you did . . . sincere thanks to each of you:

Caroline, Charity, Charlotte, Bob, Dana, De Ann, Ed, Eric, Erman, Jim, Joha Oke, John K, John M, June, Kay, Kendall, Maria, Mark, Michelle, Myra, Norma, Pat, Rachel, Rob, Starr, Susan, Valerie, and special recognition to Jim Coombs, SMSU, Map Department.

Jim Mauldin
Coordinator
Ethnic Life Stories
'01 '02 '03

The Ethnic Life Stories Project....

...giving the Springfield community a window to its diversity through the life stories of ethnic elders...

Liewe Se Storie Afrikaanse	Afrikaanse (2)
ŌSŌ GAY HĀY WŌ TAN	Apache
قصص من الحياة	Arabic (2)
Ga-no-du Ka-ne-he-lv-s-gi	Cherokee
自傳	Chinese (2)
Life Stories	English (5)
Histoires De Ma Vie	French (2)
Lebensgeschichten	German
סיפור חיים	Hebrew
Mayer rah-Khaan Knee-Hindi	Hindi
生きてきた道	Japanese
나의 살아온 이야기	Korean
DZĪVES STĀSTS	Latvian
ജീവിത കഥകൾ	Malayalam
OPOWIESC z ŻYCIA	Polish
Imanawangtanan Wawanaycasjas	Quechua
Povestea Vie Ţii Mele	Romanian
Жизненные истории	Russian
Historia De La Vida	Spanish (8)
പ്രവാളി ജീവിത	Thai
Kuwento Ng Aking Buhay	Tagalog
CHUY-N [©I TjĪ	Vietnamese
געשיחטע פון מאיזן לעבען	Yiddish



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MEXICO

Mexico City

Gulf of Mexico

PACIFIC OCEAN

GUATEMALA
BELIZE
HONDURAS
EL SALVADOR
NICARAGUA

Eligio Sanchez
Mexico City, Mexico

DEDICATION

**My story is a brief account of my life that is nothing short of a miracle
I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO THE GLORY OF GOD WHO IN HIS INFINITE
WISDOM TRANSFORMED MY LIFE BEYOND MY DREAMS, AND ...**

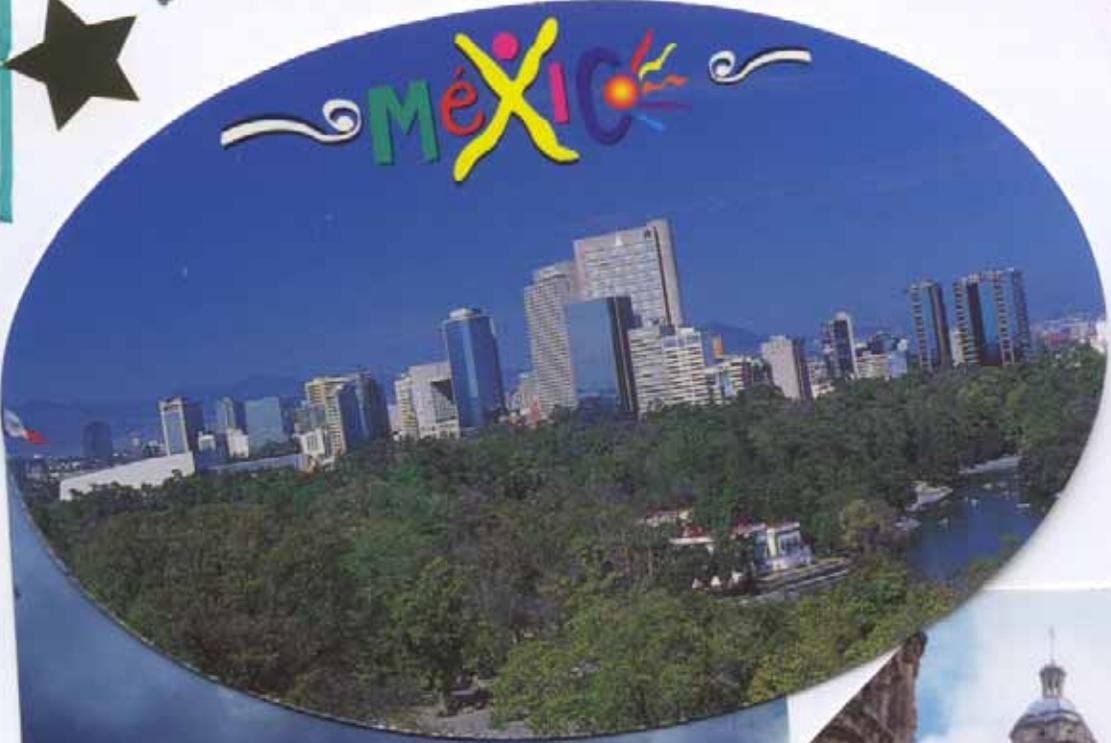
- To my parents, Eligio and Margarita Sanchez for giving me life;
- To the late Ronald Gene Rice, Ph.D., who was my American Dad and paved the way for me to reach my dreams; he touched my life in so many meaningful ways, and infused in me a love for learning; He made it easy for me to adapt to a new country;
- To Sally Reynolds Rice, for being my American Mom and for being my “Story Keeper” for *The Ethnic Life Stories Project*; She has accepted me as I am, and been my strongest advocate and supporter;
- To my American brothers, Daniel Shawn Rice and Timothy Gene Rice and their spouses, Michelle and Rebecca; They are close to my heart;
- To Helen Wood Reynolds (MawMaw Helen), the mother of Sally Reynolds Rice, who has accepted me into the family and taught me to work hard and not give up;
- To my nieces and nephews, Sarah Elizabeth Rice, Andrea Gray Rice, Sophia Ellen Rice, Emma Jean Rice and Timothy Gene Rice, II; They are a very special part of my life;
- To Drury College (now Drury University) and faculty for their help and faith in me, and for taking me to new heights and fulfillment;
- To The Bureau of Prisons; The United States Medical Center for Federal Prisoners; Springfield, Missouri, for having trust in me and giving me the opportunity to be part of the bureau family. Many new heights have been reached through special training and continuing education, as well as, a permanent career;
- To the people of Springfield for accepting me and making my life here very enjoyable;
- To Jim Mauldin for being such a devoted leader of *the Ethnic Life Stories Project* of Springfield, Missouri; Thanks Jim, for keeping after me until my story was finished;
- To Viviana Batista, my friend, for helping to edit my story.

Eligio Augie Sanchez 2003

MEXICO



México



México

CHAPTER ONE: FAMILY HISTORY

My Arrival

I was born on a chilly morning on November 29, 1959, at 8:00 a.m. in Mexico City, D.F. The setting was in a hospital named Hospital Guadalupano and the address was Giotto 49, in Gustavo A. Madero County. The doctor who delivered me was Agustin Krause, who was born in Germany practicing in Mexico. I was named Eligio Agustin Sanchez Diaz. The Eligio is also the name of my father, grandfather and my great-grandfather. Eligio means Elijah in English. Eligio or Elijah means Jehovah is God in Hebrew. The name Agustin comes from the word Augustus (Latin) meaning majestic dignity or grandeur. The Agustin part of my name is after the doctor who delivered me, Agustin Krause. Sanchez is a Spanish name from my father, Eligio Limon Sanchez. Diaz is a Spanish name from my mother, Eduwiges Margarita Diaz.

Family History

My parents were both born in Orizaba, Veracruz Mexico. My maternal grandmother, Virginia Ordonez Bragado, was born in the city of Toluca, Estado of Mexico (SW Mexico City). My maternal grandfather, Jose Diaz Luqueno, was born in Pachuca, Estado of Hidalgo. Pachuca is approximately 80 miles north of Mexico City. Their parents were both born in Spain. My paternal grandmother, Emma Maria Urena was born in Ciudad Serdan, Estado of Puebla. Puebla is located southeast of Mexico City. My paternal grandfather, Eligio Sanchez Martinez, was born in Ciudad Mendoza, Estado of Veracruz. My paternal grandmother's parents were born in Spain. My paternal grandfather's parents were born in the Holy Land. Their original last name was Judeo, and they were Jews. When they migrated to Spain, they felt forced to change their name to a Catholic Christian name and they chose Sanchez. When Spanish names end in z, they have a Jewish background. If the name ends in s, like Sanches, the name is 100 % Spanish.

My maternal grandmother, Virginia, was twelve years old during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. She was born in 1898. My maternal grandfather, Jose, was a soldier fighting for the North. While fighting the Mexican Civil War, my grandfather met my grandmother, Virginia, and her family (who were from the South). My maternal great-grandfather, Jose, who was originally born in Spain, liked the Soldier, also named, Jose. Jose's job as a soldier was to destroy their home and family. My maternal great-grandfather decided to let his daughter, Virginia, go with Jose, a thirty-seven year old soldier. Jose, my great-grandfather knew there was the possibility of Virginia, his daughter, being raped by the soldiers of the North. They were happily married until death separated them. My grandmother, Virginia, had her first child at thirteen years of age. They had ten children together. Abuelita (Grandmother) Virginia was a homemaker. She made her own goat cheese, dairy butter and sold milk. She had a large garden including banana trees and cornfields. She designed and sewed her children's clothing. Jose, after he was discharged from the army, worked for the United States Santa Fe Railroad. Abuelito (Grandfather) Jose, my maternal grandfather, lived to be 106 years old (1873-

1979). Abuelita Virginia lived to be 79 years old (1902-1981). They both died in Mexico.

My paternal grandmother was called Abuelita Maria although her name was Emma Maria. She died very young at 38 years of age of Cancer. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to know her because she passed away before I was born (1910-1948). She was a homemaker. She was a very devoted Catholic. My paternal grandfather, Abuelito Eligio, was a Textile Engineer (made fabrics). He always lived in Ciudad Mendoza, Veracruz, Mexico. He passed away when he was in his late 80's in the 1970's. I remember being in high school when my Abuelito Eligio passed away. Since he lived in Veracruz, I didn't have the opportunity to spend as much time with him as my maternal grandparents.

My mother, Margarita (1931-2000) and my father, Eligio (1923-), were married in Coyoacan D.F. (South Mexico City), in August of 1950. They had three sons. The oldest son is Victor Hugo Sanchez (12/23/1953-), the middle son is Rafael Leonardo Sanchez (08/23/1955-), and the youngest son, which is I, Eligio Agustin (Augie) Sanchez (11/29/1959-).

Margarita, my mother, called Margie by her family had three children. She was a photographer before she married my father. The studio was named Hollywood Studio. When we were young children, Margie took most of our pictures. Eligio, my father started out driving an over-the-road truck. Then he drove a passenger bus from Mexico City to Belize; from Belize to Brownsville, Texas; and then returned back to Mexico City. He was usually gone about one month each trip. The towns he covered on his route south, during his thirty years of service, included Puebla, Cordoba, Orizaba, Veracruz, Coatzacoalcos, Villahermosa, Campeche, Merida, Cancun, and Chetumal. His route north included Tuxpan, Tampico, Soto La Marina, Victoria, Monterrey, and Matamoros/Brownsville. My father retired from Autobuses de Oriente (ADO), the Eastern Bus Company.



Grandpa Jose ↗



My Mom
Margie ↗



My Grandma
Virginia ↗



Aunt Josefa →

Grandma
Virginia ←

My Mom ←



Grandpa Eligio



My Dad
Eligio



Grandma Maria



My Mom
Margie



My Dad
Eugie

CHAPTER TWO: EARLIEST MEMORIES AND CHILDHOOD

Early Childhood

When I was very small, I lived most of the time with one of my mother's sisters, Josephina Arredondo, in Acapulco. What I remember most is playing music all the time, playing on the beach and learning to dance. I started dancing when I was about three years old. I lived in Acapulco in the early 1960's. When we were not in Acapulco, we were in Veracruz visiting grandparents and family. When we went to Veracruz, the play was over. We went to work. I remember putting rocks on my grandparent's driveway and pulling weeds. I had to put the weeds in a metal bucket. The state of Veracruz is a tropical forest. It rains everyday. Weeds would grow overnight. If you let weeds grow for a week, you couldn't walk because the weeds would be knee high. That is why we would put rocks around the house.

I recall helping to make cheese, cream (crema), and butter. I went with my uncles and cousins to deliver the dairy products to the local store. My Abuelita Virginia informed me she didn't want any beach boys in her house. She wanted workers. Play would come last. We cleaned the house before breakfast each morning. My Abuelita had a large kitchen with about twenty chairs around the kitchen table. She cooked in large pottery pots that held gallons of food. We ate well but worked hard. When the work was finished, we played. Abuelita would give us money (a few coins). The money was made of real gold.

One of the things my Abuelita Virginia taught me was how to make a bed. I would work and work. I thought the bed looked real nice. When my Abuelita saw the bed, she would tear off all the covers and throw them on the floor. She would tell me to do it over. Sometimes, I made the bed at least five times before she was satisfied with it. Today, I am a professional bed maker.

When we played outdoors in Orizaba, Veracruz until dark, my favorite thing to do was to roll a bicycle tire with a wooden stick down the street. We climbed the banana trees like a bunch of monkeys. We would pick the bananas and eat until we were full.

Most of the time, we danced outside at home in Veracruz. There was an old RCA Phonograph (Victrola) that you wind up and didn't need any electricity. The records we used were the 78 RPMs-LP. Some times on weekends, we would go to a dance that was for families. Everybody danced including grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. We danced Cumbia and Mambo. Very seldom was there any drinking of alcohol. Drinks included were Horchata (rice drink) and fruit drinks like melon drink, tamarindo (root drink), pineapple, guava, papaya and Jamaica flower drink.

Both grandparents lived in the state of Veracruz most of their lives. My Abuelito Eligio would teach me how to read a book in Hebrew while I was visiting him at his house. We would read a storybook or a Bible story from the Old Testament from the back to the front in Hebrew. All the Hebrew books were written from back to front. The beginning



Augie
12 yrs old
The Catholic
Church



Augie
age one

Augie

Top left: Age 3
2nd down: Middle School
3rd down: High School
4th down: College

of the book was at the back of the book. I would ask my Abuelito Eligio if he would like for me to help him work. He would say your Abuelita Virginia has you do enough work at her house. I want you to study and learn how to read Hebrew when you come to my house.

Living in Mexico City — Leaving My Aunt Josefa's House

When I was about seven years old, I moved to Mexico City, D.F., with my parents. Mexico City is located in the South-Central part of Mexico. It is about 700 miles south of Laredo, Texas. The climate is very mild all year around. The average temperature is about 70 degrees Fahrenheit. During the day, it is usually sunny. In the summer, it showers almost every afternoon. At night, you need a sweater because it can be quite chilly. Most homes do not have or need central heat.

In Mexico City, there were millions of people. It was very different from Veracruz. The water was not safe to drink unless it was boiled. Today, people buy bottled water for drinking and cooking. My food in Mexico was primarily tortillas, beans, rice, chicken, tomatoes, corn, potatoes, nopales (cactus) squash and tamales. There was a large assortment of fruits such as bananas, mangos, papayas, pineapples, oranges, pomegranates and melons. Cheeses were mostly made from goat milk. Fresh salsa, called pico de gallo in Spanish containing chopped onions, tomatoes, jalapenos and cilantro were served with meals to give more flavor to bland food.

When Coca Cola (known as Coca) became popular, it was served with lunch and supper. Other carbonated drinks like orange, grape and apple were available. Coffee was served after the meal. Bread (called pan) was often served with coffee. I started drinking coffee with milk and sugar when I was four years old or less.

Early Elementary School

In Mexico City, I lived with my parents and my two brothers, Victor and Leo. When I was seven or eight years old, my parents enrolled me in the Central Social Educativo Catholic School. From day one, I hated it. I thought the nuns who were my teachers were mean. They wouldn't let us get dirty on the playground. We had to all wear uniforms that consisted of a white shirt with a "stupid" navy blue tie, gray pants, and a navy blue cardigan sweater. One of my classes was to learn how to crochet and how to cross-stitch. It was mandatory for both boys and girls. I'd rather be playing volleyball or basketball. We couldn't play sports because we were all dressed up like little waiters in a formal restaurant. We couldn't sit where we wanted to sit. We were placed girl, boy, girl, boy, etc. I didn't want to sit next to a girl, especially next to a girl that talked to me all the time and bothered me.

I was very curious about the nun's dress (uniform). I wondered what her hair looked like under the cloth on her head. I couldn't even see her ears. Finally, I pulled off the cloth on her head. I thought her hair looked like a rat's nest. Her hair wasn't combed. When I didn't do exactly what I was expected to do, the nun would hit my hands with a yardstick.

One day, she hit my hands very hard with her yardstick and I bit her on the leg. This was cause for me to be expelled from school. I was delighted. I stood by the front gate and waited for my dad.

My dad told me, “Now you will have to go to public school”. So, I started attending an elementary public school in the third grade. I still had to wear a school uniform; but I was allowed to play outside and get dirty. I had a wonderful black lady for a teacher who was from Pretoria, South Africa. Her name was Christie Morpeau. One thing I learned from Miss Morpeau was the importance of caring for each other. I was very happy in her class and I wanted her to be my teacher forever. I thought she was beautiful inside and out. I enjoyed the public school.

CHAPTER THREE: THE TEEN YEARS

Difficult Teen Years

In Junior High, I became very motivated to make good grades and do well due to the influence of Miss Morpeau. She taught us to not ever let anyone put us down. I was having a very difficult time at home with my brothers. They were attending a private school and they were five and seven years older than me. Their beliefs and thinking were very different from mine. I wanted to be different from them. My thinking is they were spoiled rotten. Victor Hugo, was my parent's favorite son. As mentioned earlier, Victor was their first child. My brothers made fun of me and put me down because I attended a public school. Attending a public school was considered low-class in Mexico City.

During this time, my father would bring me records (music) from Brownsville of the Beatles and other American music artists like the Platters and Hank Williams, Sr. What a combination! I started dreaming about going to the United States. I would play the music over and over. I knew all the words in English, although I didn't know the meaning of many of the words.

I remember calling my elementary school teacher, Miss Morpeau, to ask her how to pronounce certain English words and what they meant. Since she was from South Africa, she spoke British English. I started dreaming more and more about going to the United States. At that time, it was a fantasy. I would visualize myself being in the United States.

In high school, I was about fourteen years old. I met a girl in Mexico from Dodge City, Kansas. Her name was Rosario. I enjoyed talking with her because she was Mexican/American and could speak both English and Spanish. I was taking English in high school. I started studying hard to make almost all A's. When my parents found out about Rosario, they would not allow me to talk with her. During the 1970s, Mexicans were not very receptive to Mexican/Americans living in Mexico. I was somewhat rebellious and continued to talk with Rosario and her family.

For four years, Rosario was my best buddy. We studied, played sports and danced together. I dreamed of someday marrying Rosario and moving to the United States. I learned all about Kansas because that was Rosario's home state. I also knew I had some relatives living in the state of Kansas.

In Mexico, a person is considered a minor until twenty-one years of age. I couldn't get a Mexican Passport or a Visa without consent from my parents because I was under twenty-one years of age. My parents would not approve of me leaving Mexico City.

While I was a student at the University of Mexico City, I finished a Bachiller's Degree. This degree is considered the same as a Bachelor's Degree in the United States. My degree was in Laboratory Chemistry. In Mexico, this degree was a three-year degree.

Rosario was attending the School of Dentistry. We remained good friends. My parents would not let me marry Rosario. She finally ended up marrying one of my best friends who became a dentist. My parents planned on me staying home and taking care of them the rest of their life. Since my dad was on the road most of the time, I had been taking care of my mother since I was seven years old.

At this time in my life, I was very unhappy. I wasn't close to either of my brothers or my parents. My brother, Leonardo, was married to Maricarmen. Maricarmen was the only one in my family who took an interest in me. She would encourage me to do well in school. She was someone I could talk with when life was almost unbearable.

CHAPTER FOUR: ADULTHOOD

Graduate Studies

I completed my first year of medical school, in 1981, at the University of Mexico City, School of Medicine. The school name was Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (U.N.A.M.). I was struggling to pay my tuition and books for my second year. Also, I had to leave home no later than 5:30 a.m. to arrive at school by 7:30 a.m. I rode the bus to one of the subway stations. I lived on the north side of Mexico City. The area where I lived is called Villa de las Flores. After attending school until 4:00 p.m., I started home. I didn't arrive home until about 7:00 p.m. due to the traffic. When I got home, I would eat my evening meal and then do all the cleaning of our house plus; I would do all my homework. I usually wouldn't go to sleep before 1:00 o'clock in the morning.

My parents wanted me to become a doctor. Being a doctor was more my parent's goal than it was mine. My heart was still with Rosario. Since she was now married, my dream was to travel to the United States and start a new life. I continued to play music (records) from the United States, whenever I had any free time. During this time, I found out one of my cousins who lived in Wichita, Kansas, was coming to Mexico to visit family for Christmas. His mother was my Aunt Josefina who I lived with in Acapulco when I was little. I started thinking about the possibility of riding back with my cousin, Jesus, when he returned to the United States after Christmas.

Instead of returning for my second year of medical school, I decided to get a paying job in the hospital, Centro Medical General, in Mexico City. It is a university hospital. My primary jobs were drawing blood, working in the lab and helping with the delivery of babies.

I worked on getting my passport and visa in case I had the opportunity to ride back with my cousin, Jesus, to the United States. My sister-in-law, Maricarmen, encouraged me to come to the United States, if that was my dream. When I left Mexico, Maricarmen gave me money she had saved. Her support has always been a great comfort to me. All together, I had almost \$1,000 dollars.

Leaving Mexico — Wichita, My New Home

My cousin and I left Mexico City for the United States on February 4, 1981. After a long trip in my cousin's van, I arrived in Wichita, Kansas on February 6, 1981.

It was very cold in Wichita. I had never seen snow in my life. My cousin and his wife, Mina, lived in a small house in south Wichita. They had two sons. Their oldest son was Nin; he was five years old. Kiko, their youngest son was four years old. I started babysitting Nin and Kiko while Mina and Jesus worked. They spoke Spanish in their home, no English.

When I attended school in Mexico, I studied English all during high school. I could read and write some English. My problem was my inability to understand conversational English. I couldn't understand much English when people would speak to me. I started becoming very depressed. I knew I had to understand English to do well.

When I left Mexico, my parents told me I would be back in less than three months. This was the first time I had been away from home, since I was a small child. I had always tried to please my parents and make them happy. I was beginning to think they were right. I would probably be back in Mexico soon if I couldn't find a way to improve my English and meet people who knew what I needed to do to be successful in the United States.

One evening, I went to Mina's parents house to visit her family with my cousin, Jesus, Mina, Nin and Kiko. An American family was also there visiting. I met Dr. Ronald Rice, his wife Sally, and their two children, Daniel (Shawn) and Timothy (Tim). They were the first American family I met in the United States.

A few weeks later I met the Rice family again at a hospital employee company picnic. I had the opportunity to visit more with Dr. Rice and his wife, Sally. We could communicate by writing notes back and forth. They told me that I needed to be around English speaking people to learn English. They offered to let me stay in their home for a month to help me with my English.

A New Beginning — At Home with the Rice Family

At the end of March 1981, I moved into the Rice home. I didn't want to be a burden. I tried to help with chores around the house. I found out that Ron had been diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 1976. Sally had been diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis in, 1958, when she was seventeen years old. Both of her hip joints were severely damaged by the time the arthritis was diagnosed, at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis.

For some background, Ron and Sally were married on September 1, 1962. Ron was twenty-one and Sally was twenty years old, when they married. They had grown up together in Springfield, Missouri. They both graduated from Central High School, in 1959. They both were members of Mount Carmel Methodist Church all their life, where they were married.

Ron was familiar with the severe form of arthritis Sally had before they were married. Although Sally's doctor, Dr. Glenn O. Turner, had taken the time to explain the severity of Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, Ron still wanted to marry Sally. With Dr. Turner's blessing, they were married. Ron helped Sally get dressed each day and would help her with housework.

While an undergraduate student at the University of Missouri, Ron was a lay pastor for the Methodist Church. In 1963, he was the pastor of Auxvasse Methodist Church. The

Ron & Sally Rice

Wichita, Kansas

1981



Augie

1981

next year, he was the pastor of Chamois Methodist Church located near the Missouri River.

Sally worked hard to help Ron reach his goal of finishing his Bachelor's Degree in Psychology; then his Master's Degree in Guidance & Counseling from the University of Missouri. In 1967, they moved from Springfield to the University of Florida in Gainesville with their two sons, so Ron could work on his Ph.D. In 1970, Ron completed his Ph.D. and became a member of the American Psychological Association and a Licensed Clinical Psychologist. His first job was in New Orleans working with Viet Nam Veterans at the Veteran's Hospital.

In 1977, after Ron became ill, Sally elected to have two total hips, a metal ball and plastic socket in each hip; so she could be more independent. She wanted Ron to rest as much as possible because he was on heavy doses of chemotherapy, called "the big gun", by his physician. Ron was diagnosed with Stage IV, Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, because the cancer was found in the bone marrow. With no treatment, the doctors only gave Ron six months to live.

By this time, Sally had finished a Bachelor's Degree in Foods and Nutrition and had become a Registered Dietitian. She was now the Operations Coordinator for the Food Service Department at Wesley Medical Center, in Wichita. Sally was responsible for 100 plus employees in the department. She became the head of the family until Ron was in remission and doing better with his health.

Ron was very concerned about Sally. He wanted her to get her Master's Degree so she would be better prepared to take care of their children financially if he was not a cancer survivor. Sally's desire was to stay home and spend as much time with Ron as possible. Reluctantly, Sally started taking graduate courses to please Ron. In 1980, Sally graduated with a Master's Degree in Adult Education from Kansas State University, in Manhattan, Kansas.

The following year 1981 was the year I met the Rice family and had the privilege of staying in their home. At the end of my thirty-day stay, Ron began not feeling well. Ron needed to go to Ft. Worth, Texas, for a medical check-up. I agreed to stay with Shawn (age sixteen) and Tim (age fourteen) so Sally could go to Ft. Worth with Ron. In Ft. Worth, it was discovered Ron was no longer in remission. He had surgery in Ft. Worth; and again he was diagnosed with Stage IV, Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

When Ron and Sally returned home to Wichita, Ron had to start chemotherapy, again. By this time, we were all acquainted with each other. Ron told me I was welcome to stay, as long as I wanted to stay, with him and his family.

My English was improving rapidly since there was no Spanish spoken in the home. My first job was at La Posada, a Mexican restaurant owned by Gilbert and Marie Sanchez. They were very good to me. They would let me leave work and go home to see about Ron, after he had a treatment of chemotherapy, when Sally had to work.

Ron and Sally helped me to learn English and helped me study for my driver's license. I passed the driver's test. I saved money for several months and then started looking for a car. I found a 1980 silver Oldsmobile two-door Cutlass. I really liked the car but didn't have enough money. Ron met me at the Oldsmobile agency to look at the car. He thought the price was fair so he co-signed for me so I could get a loan for the car. I was so thrilled to have a car and to know that Ron had faith in me to pay off the loan on time. I was careful to never be late with a car payment.

Moving To Missouri

Ron had become my Dad and my hero in the United States. He always had my best interest at heart. His advice was always superb. I never made mistakes with big decisions when I listened to him. In 1983, Ron's health was not good. He decided to take early retirement and move back home to Springfield, Missouri.

Sally got a job as a Registered Dietitian at St. John's Regional Health Center. St. Johns was looking for a dietitian who knew Calorie Points. Sally has worked in Wichita with Virginia Stucky, the Registered Dietitian who was the author of Calorie Points. Sally became the Endocrine Dietitian working mostly with patients who had Diabetes Mellitus.

In February 1983, the Rice family moved back to Missouri. Sally continued to fly back to Wichita on weekends and worked at Augusta Medical Complex as head of the Food Service Department, in Augusta, Kansas, until they could find a full-time dietitian for her position.

I continued to live in their home at 403 Courtleigh Drive in Wichita. Ron and Sally put their home up for sale. I worked hard on the house for the Sunday Open House. The house sold after the first Open House. Their home was a large four-bedroom, two and a half bath home with a full basement, located near the VA Hospital.

After the house sold, I didn't know what to do. I asked Ron and Sally if I could also move to Springfield. They told me it would be great with them if that were really what I wanted to do. In the beginning, their goal was to help me with English. They would often tell me I had helped them more than they had helped me. I enjoyed so much living with them and I felt needed. They always encouraged me; but they let me make my own decisions.

Since my background was in the medical field, Sally checked with St. John's Regional Health Center to see if there were any jobs I might be able to do. There was an opening in the lab for a phlebotomist. I was hired at the hospital. It was so nice to work at the hospital and be able to use my profession.

During this time, we all lived with Sally's mother, Helen Reynolds. She lives in a large two-story house on Benton. Ron was so ill and Sally had to work. Sally's mother, Helen

Reynolds, helped us by cooking meals. We stayed with her for almost one year until Sally and Ron could buy a house. Over the years, Helen had become “Mom” to me. She has accepted me into the family. I admire her because no one is more important to her than her children. All five of her children finished college. She is a very hard worker.

Ron continued chemotherapy. Since he had an identical twin brother, Robert D. Rice, the doctor in Ft. Worth recommended a bone marrow transplant. Bone marrow transplants were used mostly for Leukemia patients in 1983. The bone marrow transplant would be done at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston, Texas.

Shawn and Tim were now like brothers to me. Shawn had joined the Navy and was on a submarine. Tim moved to Springfield with Ron and Sally but missed Wichita. The 1983 and 1984 school year was his senior year. He had taken several years of woodworking and missed his teachers and his friends. Since Ron was so ill, Sally and Ron both thought maybe it would be better for Tim to finish school in Wichita. They both had great faith in Tim to live in Wichita and finish his senior year.

Tim had lived in Wichita for twelve years of his life. He was involved in church, attended church camp, and had many friends there. Tim was in advanced woodworking classes and still does commercial store fixtures and builds new stores in malls, today, all over the United States. He is presently with Midwest Construction in Springfield.

Sally looked for an apartment for Tim while she was in Wichita working on the weekend. She found a small house in back of an older home. Tim moved back to Wichita to complete his senior year of high school. Ron wanted Tim to have a good senior year. He didn't want Tim to worry and he didn't want him to see him so ill.

Moving to Houston, Texas — A New Job

Ron was now an outpatient at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston, Texas, as much as he was a resident in Springfield. Ron and Sally rented a small apartment in Houston. Sally had to continue working at St. John's Regional Health Center at least half time to keep her family medical insurance in force. Ron had good insurance that covered eighty percent; but there were still a tremendous amount of bills. Sally needed to continue working so the remaining twenty percent would be covered by her insurance. In addition to medical bills, there were now two residences to keep up instead of one. Sally would work one week and then come to Houston for one week to be with Ron.

I applied for a job at M.D. Anderson Hospital so I could stay with Ron while Sally was working in Springfield. I was offered a job in the Blood Bank. My Spanish was now an asset. I would go out to factories on blood drives. Many of the workers could not speak English who were willing to give blood. I was able to speak with them in Spanish and get their history. It was important to know their medical background when donating blood.

After work, I would spend time with Ron. We would talk for hours. Sometimes I would take his guitar to the hospital so he could play it, if he was feeling well enough. In December 1983, he had his first Bone Marrow Transplant. He was in a room called a bubble (sterile environment) on Christmas Day. Sally sent Tim a round-trip ticket from Wichita to Houston so we could all be with Ron plus other family and many friends.

Ron gradually improved and was able to stay in the apartment and continue his care as an outpatient. As he improved, he spent more time talking with me. He would tell me he wanted me to go to college. At the time, I didn't see how I could possibly go to college. How could I afford it? Ron would say, "You always have a place to stay." He would tell me that student loans are available for tuition and books. Ron would also tell me a person could always go to college no matter how old; they have the rest of their life to go to college.

Education Is Forever

Ron was a believer in education. He would tell me, and his children, that you never stop learning. Education is a lifelong process. His other words of wisdom were to love life, live life, and trust in God. Ron believed in staying busy and stressed the importance of using each day for good and making each day really count.

Now that I am older, the things Ron told me are more meaningful than they were twenty-two years ago. Ron prepared me well for my life after his life on earth was over. The time I spent with Ron made me a better person. Last, but most important, Ron had a great faith in God. He believed you must study the Scriptures and be obedient to God to have true freedom. If you do not have a relationship with Christ, you are lost and are not free.

In the Spring of 1985, Ron had gone through a second Bone Marrow Transplant. His brother, Robert, gave bone marrow to Ron for a second time. Ron was not doing well. The doctors said there was nothing else left to do. Ron wanted to come home to Springfield. I called Sally and she drove to Houston in a van and moved Ron back home.

I stayed in Houston and continued working at M.D. Anderson Hospital. After Ron left, it wasn't the same. Sally called my boss at M.D. Anderson on June 27, 1985, and told her Ron was very ill. Ron had asked for me to come home to Springfield. I had planned on coming to Springfield for the fourth of July. Ron told Sally he knew he wasn't going to make it until the fourth. I flew home on Thursday, June 27, 1985.

I wasn't prepared to see Ron near death. When I arrived around 8:30 p.m. on a Thursday evening. Sally's mother, Helen Reynolds, met me at the Springfield Airport. Sally didn't want to leave Ron's bedside. Ron was so happy to see me. He managed to come to life from a semi-coma. Tears welled up in my eyes. I knew we were together to say our goodbyes. He looked at me and said, "No more tears, let's have some fun".

For the next three hours late into the night, Ron and I talked and talked. A little after midnight, Ron slipped back into the semi-coma. Sally was exhausted. I told Sally to lie down and try to get some rest. I wanted to sit up with Ron. From that moment, I never left Ron's bedside. The next morning I shaved Ron. I could tell he knew I was there. Ron tightened the skin around his mouth over his teeth so I could shave his face well. The next afternoon on Saturday, June 29, 1985, Ron quietly passed away in his sleep.

After the funeral, I had to go back to my job in Houston. On November 8, 1985, I moved back to Springfield and made plans to start college like Ron wanted me to do. Ron had a profound influence on my life and will always be my hero.

College Bound

I started to Drury College in 1986 and worked on a degree in Biology. My language was still a barrier for me. I was determined to make it. When I took the course, History of Art, I was completely lost. My professor was Harriet Mears. Sally talked with Dr. Mears and asked her if she could sit in on her class and then go over her notes with me. Dr. Mears was very nice and agreed for Sally to sit in the class. Sally would go over everything with me after class and before tests. I got an "A" in the class.

Ilga Vise was my advisor at Drury. She was truly a lifesaver for me. She helped me outline my course of study. I had completed many courses in Mexico; but only a few would transfer to Drury. Basically, I had to start over. There was a sense of security for me at Drury. Even though my English was not perfect, there were always people available to help me, when needed. On May 6, 1990, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology at the 117th Commencement of Drury College, now Drury University.

After College

After graduation from Drury, I worked at St. John's Regional Health Center in the Lab. I started Medical Technology School. Claudette Milstead was head of the Medical Technology School. From the beginning, it was not a good experience. The tests were like Greek for me although I had no problem working in the lab. No one was willing to help me one on one where I could understand the material. Gradually, I disliked working in the lab. I had worked holidays, for example, Christmas and many weekends so the ladies in the lab could be at home enjoying their children. I tried to be positive. Nothing seemed to be right.

Ron had always taught me to enjoy my work. He would tell Sally and all the family to enjoy your work or make a change. Ron told us you spend more hours working on a job or in your profession than doing anything else in life. It is very important to enjoy your work each day.



DRURY COLLEGE
117th Commencement
May 6, 1990



The Convenience Store

I knew I needed to make a change. Sally had decided to buy a small convenience store on East Cherry in Springfield. She named it Jiffy Mart. In January 1991, the store opened for business. Since Sally has chronic Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, I helped her in the store. One of us would work early and the other would work late. Gradually, I started working in the store full time. The store opened at 6:00 a.m. and closed at 10:00 p.m. seven days a week.

Neither Sally nor I wanted to sell liquor or lottery tickets. Most of our business was milk, bread, candy, pop, cigarettes and a few canned goods. Being a dietitian, Sally wanted to offer healthy foods. The time just wasn't right; healthy foods were not in demand in, 1991, as much as they are today. There was one healthy product that sold well. It was a fat free frozen dessert called Skinny Dip. We sold a lot of Skinny Dip that included many flavors in cones, cups and pints. Skinny Dip was acceptable for diabetics and for weight control. There was no fat in it.

In March 1991, I received a job offer from the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners. I had filled out a job application about nine months before. I was going to turn down the offer because I didn't know how I could leave the store. Sally told me, "You have to take the government job if you go for the interview and you are offered the job, if you want it. You can't afford to stay here and work in the store with no benefits." Sally didn't know how she would be able to keep up with the store; but she told me God would help her and she would find a way.

In May 1992, Sally and I also started taking care of two of Sally's grandchildren much of the time. They are Sarah (DOB 9/19/88) and Timothy II (DOB 1/6/1991). Biologically, they are the children of Tim that is like a brother to me and Maria Elena Martinez Rice. Elena was born near Tepic, Nayarit Mexico. Tim and Elena were married December 1, 1984, before Ron passed away in 1985. Against Sally's advice, they married very young. Tim and Elena were now separated, in 1992. Tim was working long hours as a cabinetmaker. He made more money when he traveled and did commercial work. Elena had agreed for Tim to take care of the children. It was difficult for Tim to work long hours and take care of Sarah and Timmy. It was impossible to travel and work with the children.

I didn't want Sally to take care of her grandchildren so much because her health was fragile. Sally was having some hip pain. When Sally opened the store in 1991, the total hips that were done the in, 1977, were now fourteen years old. The total hips normally last fifteen to twenty years.

Sally was working long hours plus taking care of Sarah and Timmy much of the time. At this same time, my mother came from Mexico and lived a year with me. She was losing her eyesight from complications of Diabetes Mellitus and couldn't speak any English. Sally helped me take care of her while I worked mostly nights at the U.S.

Medical Center. I couldn't leave her alone. I helped Sally in the store as much as possible. Sally always told me to put my job first before the store.

In 1993, a man by the name of Darren Lawson came into the store and asked Sally if she would lease or sell the store to him. After much thought, Sally decided to lease the store. About five years later, he bought the store. This was a good change. Sally could stay home with Sarah and Timmy.

In November 1997, Sally had to have a new prosthesis put in her left hip. In March 1998, she had a new prosthesis put in the right hip. It had been twenty years since the first total hip surgeries in 1977. It was time for them to be replaced. After the surgeries, the recovery time was about two months for each hip. Sally was back on her feet.

Things were much easier without the store. Sally kept busy at home spending most of her time with her grandchildren. She taught them to read, count money, know their colors, and how to cook, among many other things. I taught them some Spanish and they helped me with the yard work. Since Sally can't do much cleaning in the house, Sarah and Timmy have learned to keep the house in order as well as do laundry, occasionally.

Sally has always taught Sarah and Timmy to care about others. They don't think anything about helping anyone because they have helped Sally get dressed and put on her shoes for years.

Hispanic Program Manager and Hostage Negotiator

I have now been at the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners for over twelve years. My title is Senior Officer. I was the Hispanic Program Manager for several years. Now, I am on the Hostage Negotiator Team. There are many opportunities for me within the Bureau of Prisons. In order to advance, it is important to be mobile and work in other institutions in order to "move up the ladder".

My job has been a tremendous blessing. I have made the choice not to move from institution to institution because of Sarah and Timmy (Tim). I have grown to love them as if they were my own biological children. It is important to me for them to be near all their family. They had a rough beginning in life because their parents were separated. Now, it is important for them to have a very stable environment. They are very well adjusted wonderful children. I want to stay near them and be a part of their life. They call their father, "Dad". They call me, "Papa". They are my life.

At the medical center, I can retire with twenty years of service. It is nice to know I can retire after less than eight more years of service. I may choose to work until I am 57 years old, which is mandatory retirement.



U.S. Medical Center
Served as Hispanic Program
Manager

CHAPTER FIVE: MY LIFE MISSION

Today, I am the happiest I have ever been in my life. I understand how God molded me into the person I am now. My mission is to help others realize the importance of faith and the importance of trusting in God. Let God be your pilot, not the copilot.

It took me years to reach the top of life's mountain, where I am today. It is also my mission to help others learn the importance of education, personal discipline, and persistence, especially my own people. Many Mexicans/Hispanics settle for low paying service jobs because they don't realize the importance of education and they never finish high school. Many have the ability to go to college; but they don't have someone like Ron and Sally to help them get on the right path and stay there. I would like to be that someone – like Ron and Sally have been for me.

The majority of Mexicans and Hispanics give up very easily. I can say this because I am Mexican. I know the culture well. To reach long-term goals, it is important to keep doing the right things over and over. Don't give up. Even though you may have struggles, continue to work and work and work until you reach your goals.

Ron used to tell me, "Teach people to fish; don't just throw them the fish." This is very meaningful to me, now. When I finished college and started making money, most of my family expected me to send most of my money to Mexico for them. Their philosophy is they took care of me when I was little and now it is my turn to take care of them. This is part of the Mexican culture. I did send money to Mexico for many years. I felt very guilty if I didn't help my family. Now, I know there are times when sending some money is the right thing to do. If a person in my family is ill and unable to work, I will help them. But, most of the time, it is wrong. Many times, my family in Mexico was using the money I sent for a weekend get together or fiesta.

Mexicans who have migrated to the United States are not rich like many Mexicans in Mexico think. Mexicans, here and in Mexico, need to get more education so they can support themselves and their families. They need to save a portion of their income for the future. This can raise their standard of living and have more money available for emergencies. They can eventually own their own home.

Working at the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners has given me insight into many problems that face many people. Inmates that I work with daily need to learn personal discipline, get more education, and be persistent in working toward their goals, just like my own people. Many inmates who are released end up right back in prison. When you have a strong faith in God, you desire to be obedient. It is easy for you to follow rules and not be a known rule breaker or lawbreaker. When you have a good reputation, you can go where you want to go. When you have a good education, your chances of making it are so much better. You have the skills necessary to make money and support yourself. If you are excellent at a trade, you will be in demand no matter how many others there are working in that trade. It is difficult for inmates to find work when they are released,

especially if they are uneducated with practically no job skills and have a poor reputation. Making it is not easy: but it can be done with God and a lot of hard work. Inmates are also a minority.

I want to make it clear I am not comparing my own people with inmates who have broken the law. There are many honest hard-working Mexicans who have good reputations. In general, minorities need to strive for acquiring more education, be very disciplined in their personal life, learn good money management and be very persistent to be successful. Setting one-year and five-year goals are important. It is important to have a plan in order to reach your goals.

My mission is also to help my people realize there are no bad jobs as long as it is honest work. When I came to the United States, I had to work in the dish room scraping plates at a restaurant. I came home covered in garbage. I was very discouraged because I had been working in a hospital in Mexico and wore a white lab coat. Ron and Sally continued to tell me this job is only temporary. It was a necessary part in my life that helped me get where I am today. Each job gave me enough money to help me reach my next goal. In Mexico City, there was no grass around my house, only concrete. I didn't know how to mow grass. Since Ron was ill, I had to learn to mow grass. In Mexico City, you were considered more of the working class if you were dark. I preferred to do anything rather than mow grass. I didn't want to be dark (How Stupid!). I mowed grass and I got dark. Everyone at work liked my dark tan to my surprise. So, now I lay in the sun. It is important to do whatever it takes to reach your goals. Working hard and doing all kinds of honest work keeps me humble.

My Greatest Accomplishments

My greatest accomplishments, to me, are moving to the United States, learning the English Language, graduating from college and accepting Christ as my Lord and Savior. These accomplishments have helped me reach many other goals in my life for the past twenty years.

In Mexico, I grew up Catholic. I never read the Bible. I thought the priest was the one who read the Bible. Somehow, I completely missed having a personal relationship with Christ. In 1983, I started attending a Christian church with Ron and Sally. Gradually, I realized the difference between attending Mass and actually reading the Bible myself and getting to know Christ as a person. Today, I have met spirit-filled Catholics who believe very much the way I do. My faith in Christ has helped me reach my greatest accomplishments. Everyone has struggles in life; but with Christ, you know that all things are possible. There is always a way out of the most difficult circumstance when Christ is the center of your life. When you make the choice to choose Christ as your Master, He is in every circumstance. Being a born-again Christian has given me an entirely new perspective about life. Death is no longer depressing because I know I have eternal life, with Christ. It is so comforting to know that I am only separated temporarily from Ron, the person who took time to help me and made the difference in my life. Someday we will see each other again.

How I Spend My Time

Much of my time is spent at work. Next, I spend time with Sarah, Tim and Sally. Sarah is taking violin lessons, piano lessons and voice. For several years, she took dance lessons. I help Sally by driving Sarah to lessons and appointments. Sarah and Tim both have orthodontist appointments. Tim enjoys the country. He enjoys the great outdoors. I spend time with Tim taking his yellow Labrador to the river to swim. All of us try to attend church on Sunday and Wednesday evening.

Recently, I purchased a two-story house in the historical district in Springfield. It was built in 1936. It needs some work but I love the house. Sarah and Tim will have a room at my house. They will also have a room at their Grandmother Sally's house. Sarah is fifteen now and has many friends who stop by to visit. Sally's house was large enough for years because Timmy was small. Now we need four bedrooms. Sarah and Tim are helping me fix up my house. Right now, it seems like there is more work than time. I still enjoy listening to my Mexican music and preparing Mexican food.

My Family!



Rebecca
married to
Jim a
mother of
Andrea &
Sophia.

Sophia
Baby Emma was born on
November 21, 2002, to Shawn
& Michelle. Jim is the father
of Sarah, Jim II, Andrea & Sophia.





Mexico City



1996

Viviana
(niece)

Sarah

Mauricio
(niece)

Maggie
(niece)

CHAPTER SIX: MY SPRINGFIELD EXPERIENCE

Overall, I have had a wonderful Springfield experience. Springfield is a beautiful clean town with many churches. I enjoy working for the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) because I have never witnessed any prejudice. If I want to work hard, I believe I have the same opportunities as anyone else in the BOP for advancement.

As I mentioned earlier, I have chosen to stay in Springfield because I want to be near Sarah and Tim until they are grown. This limits my possibilities for promotions at work; but it is my choice. I am very happy with Springfield and with my job.

How Can The Springfield Community Welcome Minorities Into It's Life and Work

First of all, minorities need to have something to offer Springfield. There is a saying, "There is no free lunch". I am proud to be Mexican; but I knew I had to learn English to be successful in the United States. Again, it is very important to have a good education. The Springfield Community can welcome minorities by giving them opportunities to further their education. Springfield is blessed with many good schools including schools of higher education.

It is not easy being a minority. This means that minorities have to go the extra mile. I try to always do more than asked. There has been a few times when there have been signs of prejudice, toward me, in my life. I recently read a book titled, Who's Looking Out For You, by Bill O'Reilly who sums it up very well. He says, "if you are a minority American looking for a full shot at the pursuit of happiness: DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF. Ignorant behavior on the part of others often means nothing to your life. Overlook the insult, avoid the practitioner, and concentrate on doing constructive things that will make you a good person and a success in the workplace." In my life, I have found this to be true. My success has been built on personal discipline, education, and persistence. I have to be responsible and accept the fact that most of the disasters in my life have been brought on by my own poor decisions. Charging material things on credit cards was no ones fault but my own. I finally mastered personal discipline. Learning to do the right thing most of the time has brought me success. It was important that I learned from my mistakes. Personal mistakes have to be kept to a minimum in order to succeed.

I believe the more education a person has, who is a minority, the fewer problems they will have becoming accepted and successful in Springfield or in any other city.

Education is a primary key to becoming successful. Springfield can help minorities by giving them opportunities for education and helping them to learn basic job skills at a very reasonable cost. If minorities can't find a job because of their poor English, they need to take English classes to improve their reading, writing and speaking.

It is not Springfield's place to help minorities financially for long extended periods of time. Minorities should not be a burden on the community. The truth is that we have minorities here, for example Mexicans, which Mexico doesn't want back in Mexico. Minorities must have a strong desire to be an asset to the community rather than a liability. If Mexicans come to the United States and work here, it is important they pay all taxes due. Also, Mexicans and other minorities need to follow the same rules and laws that everyone else, in the community, has to follow. For example, having automobile insurance is the law. It is not an option. Being a good citizen makes it easier for minorities to be accepted. Being a rule breaker is not acceptable behavior for any of us in Springfield.



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Ethnic Life Stories Project

<http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lochist/els/menu.cfm>