



# Recuerdos

*Memories  
of life in the  
Barrios Unidos  
Phoenix, Arizona*



## Forward

A large land area located in south-central Phoenix bounded in the east by 24th Street, on the north by Washington Street, on the south by University, and on the west by 7th Street has comprised several neighborhoods of close proximity. These neighborhoods are called “Barrios Unidos” in Spanish, and each neighborhood or barrio has its own distinct name. The barrios to the east of 16th street, generally known as Golden Gate, are now devoid of residents due to voluntary relocation and, frequently, by forced-buy-outs, through the use of Eminent Domain, by the city of Phoenix for expansion of airport related activity. The neighborhoods to the west of 16th street, Cuatro Milpas (often known simply as Milpas), Green Valley, and Campito are presently in the midst of voluntary relocation, also due to airport related activity.

Because of the impending disappearance of this body of collective neighborhoods known by an identified name, culture, and historical presence, it was thought prudent to interview residents before the dispersal, to record their identity and recollection of their life in these neighborhoods. Thus, these factual interviews transcribed and typed into brief paragraphs, record their lives as lived during the last fifty years and into the new Millennium.

During the last fifty years, the neighborhood residents experienced the environmental changes of the terrain, near the Salt River, from a farming and ranching way of life on a dirt plain crossed by irrigation canals and creeks, and dotted with green belts of grass lawns, trees, and orchards of fruit trees, citrus, and flower gardens, into an area with residential houses, stores, light industry, and designated streets. The residential neighborhoods represented a multi-cultural and a diverse ethnic society.

Equality in citizenship presented an important value of American life within these neighborhoods; but, this value was challenged by differences on appropriate forms of economic pursuit,

cultural ways of life, and language from outside residential and geographic areas. The equality within the neighborhood was based on respect for individual differences. To the extent this respect of, and appreciation for, these differences was ignored, there developed problems against the sought after equality, fairness, and equity in the social and political realities of barrio residents. The different ways of economic pursuit (employment and salaries), and different levels of income, cannot remain different and at the same time provide equality in social, political, and economic ways of life unless those persons in control of these ways of life operate in an enlightened way help create equality. The life stories as lived and told by the persons interviewed demonstrated this factual experience. The economic growth and development process resulted in different situations as evidenced on one hand by monetary advantages enjoyed by groups in economic and political control, and on the other hand by the working poor. The narratives tell of a transition of life in a struggle for survival through different economic and social changes. These changes were in the form of new industrial, commercial, and transportation transformations brought about by rail trains, automotive cars and trucks, and airplanes.

This booklet presents the experience of the residents who lived in the barrios of south-central Phoenix. The paragraph narratives tell of their lives, challenges, and tell of their streets, schools, stores, and family life. It is presented as told, but the telling represents a recalled experience remembered through memory, renewed emotion, and a time-filtered perspective. Thus, the reader is cautioned against generalizing from one paragraph narrative but is encouraged to read all of the narratives and obtain a general idea about their way of life lived in a much different context of reality and now told through remembrance.

*Santos C. Vega*

## Introduction

This booklet shows factual life experiences written in paragraph format that depicts a “slice of life” or a small glimpse of life in the neighborhoods of an area in south central Phoenix. It is not the whole enchilada or loaf of bread of life, only a thin slice, but hopefully the reader will get a taste of life as lived in these barrios. These narratives tell of lives that were lived along a chronological time-line of some fifty years showing different environments, situations, and the telling of a variety of struggles against some unseen, and others seen, economic and political forces traversing through time. From the 1900s to 2003, the narratives captured life changes brought about by nature and mankind.

The social revolution of Mexico (1910-1917), the First World War (1918), the Great Depression (1930s-1940s), the immigrations of American Anglos caused by the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma and surrounding areas (1930s), and the Second World War of 1940s all brought unseen forces of mankind fueling social and political changes. These changes, and changes brought about by technology, population immigration, economic expansion, government regulation at all levels of public life, and international treaties, in some way found their way into the barrios of south Phoenix. The struggles for equal social and civil rights in housing, education, and employment of the 1950s, the civil-rights movements of the 1960s-1970s impacted Phoenix and filtered into the barrios and brought César Chávez with the United Farm Workers to stay at Santa Rita Church.

Prior to the late 1940s there was housing segregation, documented in deeds that prohibited Mexican Americans from purchasing homes in certain areas. In 1947, Mexican Americans could not purchase a home on Pima Street in what is now barrio area, but in later years they could. Civil rights changes did not all filter down to the barrios and thus failed to bring some amenities to the living areas in the barrios. In 1947, a Mexican

American remembers that the Campito neighborhood was all mesquite trees and dirt paths with no blacktop or sidewalks, a condition that continues to this day, 2003, where there are still no sidewalks in Campito and where there are 110 homes constructed north of Buckeye Rd. in the shadow of Bank One Ball Park. This seems to be a natural state of affairs because, in the barrio areas, the neighborhoods of the working poor lacked paved streets, city services, street lights, and garbage collection until approximately the 1950s.

Yet, the open interviews allowed the residents to talk about what they felt like talking about, and thus only inferences can be made about the great swirling social, political, and civil storms that drowned out old ways of life and fired up new ways of life. Thus, this humble and modest participation of people in *nuestro* (our) barrio (neighborhood) is anthropologically based, containing reflections that open a door towards a greater understanding that it was the ordinary common barrio residents, in economically poor surroundings, that through their heroic lives helped our society translate from one social challenge to another and transform our society for the better.

Hopefully, educators, political legislators, civic administrators, and economic and industrial developers can reflect on these social challenges and become increasingly inspired to effectively promote more humane ways and means for promoting beneficial progress for all Americans. These activities include working with, and around, changing economic and political powerful outside forces.

The primary aim of this booklet is to provide an understanding of this slice of life as lived in the south-east central Phoenix neighborhoods threatened with extinction of a way of life lived in a collective familiar environment scarce now in a mobile and transitory society of momentary time and diminishing neighborhood supportive living.

However, this booklet may infer civil and

political situations of past years, but the main reason the booklet was written was to help the reader remember a people, neighbors, through their own narrative. That is why it was written in a simple paragraph format, so as not to lose sight of their reality; and what we seek to accomplish, and what we hope the readers will get from the booklet of factual paragraphs - are factual life stories, miniature, but powerful as an atom, to help the reader reflect, associate, and compare. In this way, the booklet represents a conversation, the past with the present, neighbor to neighbor, a telling of a people's life that is shared with others. The booklet is grounded in the premise that we must live life as we encounter it and where we encounter it.

This booklet represents, also, a manner of oral history that, when combined with family genealo-

gy, creates an understanding that it is not only who our relations and neighbors were, where they lived, and how the context of their reality was in their time, in what situation they lived, but, also, why did change happen or why did it take so long to happen for the best? What were the outside and inside forces at play in their lives? This booklet may lead readers of all ages to ponder upon the meaning of life and wonder about life realities that make it worth living. All the people that were interviewed gave evidence of making their life worth living. We hope you enjoy reading their factual paragraphs.

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*"The Rodeo Drive-In was situated in the middle of the neighborhood where residents could actually watch movies from their yards and rooftops."*

**See neighborhood map on back cover.**

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*Several persons were instrumental in the preparation of this historical booklet.*

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Arizona Humanities Council

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***Residents, past and present, for their priceless histories.***

**Dominga Villasaez** has been a resident of the Phoenix areas since 1969 and has lived in her present home in the *Cuatro Milpas* neighborhood for the past 32 years. Dominga was raised in Texas by her aunt and uncle and began a migrant



*The Villasaez family is pictured here in the 1970s at 14th St and Mohave. The houses in the background were demolished during the Golden Gate Relocation in the 1980s.*

*Photo Courtesy of Villasaez Family*

life at an early age. Her family followed crops such as cotton in Mississippi (where she met her husband José), tomatoes in Indiana, sugar beets in Colorado, and grapes in California. While in California her husband joined the grape strike led by César Chávez. Dominga and José eventually settled in Phoenix in 1969, buying their present home for \$14,000 in 1974. They raised five children. Dominga describes the neighborhood of the '70s as one of constant activity with many stores,

services, churches, and families. “*Estaba lleno de casas aqui. Muy bonito.*” The relocation of the nearby Golden Gate Community has had a devastating effect on the *Barrios Unidos* neighborhood. Thousands of homes were demolished resulting in vast stretches of empty lots. Stores and services along 16th Street were relocated and/or closed. As a result, Dominga now has to drive quite a distance to shop and to gas up her vehicle. Dominga has been a widow for 16 years. This past summer her home, which had been remodeled extensively over the years, was heavily damaged in a monsoon storm. Tired of the constant roar of airplanes and heavy commercial traffic in the area, Dominga wishes to relocate to a sturdier, safer home in a quieter neighborhood.



*Dominga Villasaez*

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

**Josephine Manriquez**, 91, and her husband, Mike, 83, are both Arizona natives and have lived in *Barrios Unidos* neighborhood for over fifty years. Josephine was raised in the mining towns of eastern Arizona while Mike was raised in Mesa, Arizona. Both began to work at a very early age and describe growing up during the

Great Depression era (*la crisis*). For over fifty years, Josephine and Mike have lived in their home near the corner of 13th Street and Pima in the heart of *Las Cuatro Milpas* neighborhood (*milpas* means field). They have witnessed the area transform from a rural agricultural community to a neighborhood of 6,000 + residents. A small locally owned grocery store *Ponchos* (Austin's Market) has been across the street from their home for many decades. Many local residents have gathered for years around the store during the day and in the evening hours. Much community socializing takes place and Josephine and Mike have enjoyed their "window on Main St." atmosphere. Both stress that though their home is humble, it is their "*palacio*" and prefer to live here the rest of their lives.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*



*Josephine Manriquez has enjoyed living in the neighborhood for over 50 years.*

*Photo Courtesy of Manriquez Family*

**Anita Encinas Estrella's** family history is one that spans the history of the development of the state of Arizona and northern Mexico from the late 1800s to the present. This history involves: 19th century merchant stores in northern Mexico; early mining towns in eastern Arizona; the building of Roosevelt Dam (*el tapón*); the early history of Prescott; the support of St. Mary's Orphanage in Phoenix; commercial development in Guadalupe, Tempe, and Chandler; and development of both sides of the Salt River

near downtown Phoenix. Following in the historical footsteps of her family's enterprises, Anita worked at various jobs through the years to support her own family. Currently, Anita lives in her home of 50 years in Green Valley Park in *Barrios Unidos* and does not wish to relocate. She declares, "*Estoy muy a gusto.*" She is very happy in her present home.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*



*The Encinas family has two streets named for them in Phoenix and Guadalupe, Arizona.*

*Photo by Lucas Cabrera*



The life of **Carmen López** and her family reflects much of the history, vitality, and strength of the community. Born in Sinaloa, Mexico, Carmen arrived in Phoenix in the 1920s when her father Jesus Verdugo Valle, a printer, came with printing presses bought by Pedro de la Lama, a publisher of Spanish language newspapers and a major figure in the *Mexicano* community is this region. Her father later became a printer for the *Arizona Republic* for over 50 years. Beginning at the age of twelve, she struggled to help raise her seven brothers and sisters after her mother's death. Hard work was always a part of her life, working in homes and as a migrant farmworker on local ranches and as far as Washington State. She moved to Barrios Unidos in 1949 when she and her husband had a house moved from Mesa, Arizona to 11th and Mohave street. Her son Jesus Gregory Lopez Jr., presently lives with Carmen. Carmen has witnessed the community change from dirt roads to its present development and it is Carmen's home - She does not wish to move.

*Written by Pete Dimas*



*Jesus Verdugo Valle, was a printer who brought his craft to the United States from Mexico.*

*Photo courtesy of the Lopez Family*

**Margarita De La Rosa** has called *Barrios Unidos* home since 1961. Her home sits across the street from Ann Ott Elementary School where her children learned English. Nearby is *Barrios Unidos Park* where her grandchildren and great grandchildren go to play. Margarita was born in Texas in 1932 and married at age 14. Most of her life was spent in migrant fieldwork and most of her 17 children were born in various states such as Oregon, Idaho, Texas and Arizona. She later raised an additional two grandchildren. She recalls the hardships of living a migrant life with children in tow. Her children at many times had to leave school early due to the family's need to work. Margarita first came to *Barrios Unidos* in 1961 and lived in the Green Valley neighborhood. At that time, there was no freeway. The vibrant community had streets lined with well-cared homes beautiful lawns and trees. Margarita moved to her present home in 1969. Stores and shops were plentiful along with many services available to residents. With such a large family, Margarita had to budget her money carefully and bought clothes for the family at "los perros," a swap meet located at 40th street and Washington. Groceries were bought at Food City, a neighborhood grocery store that is still operating. In the late '70s and early '80s, the city of Phoenix began relocating residents from the nearby Golden Gate community due to

airport expansion. Margarita recalls the relocation when many of her Golden Gate neighbors eventually lost their homes due to higher taxes and utility bills. She is very concerned about her future in *Barrios Unidos*. Margarita is very content in her home and she feels safe with a few long time neighbors still living around her. Her family now includes 57 grand children and 47 great grand children.

*Written by Mike Valdez*



*Margarita is pictured in her kitchen in Barrios Unidos*

*Photo courtesy of the De La Rosa Family*

**Celia Corrales**, born in her parents' home at 1199 S. 13th street, has experienced many changes over the years in the *Barrios Unidos* area. Her mother came from Morenci, Arizona by way of Globe, Arizona. Her mother's family were copper miners. Celia recalls that as a little girl, her maternal grandfather would visit from Cottonwood bringing sacks of corn. There were thirteen in her large family. She described the barrio area as being without streets, a plain of dirt that rain would turn into a sea of mud. A canal traversed fields of cotton, corn, grapevines, fruit orchards, and some ranches. The children returning home from school splashed, swam, and played with rubber tire inner tubes in the canal. Families cooked on wood burning stoves and kept food fresh in iceboxes. They walked to downtown Phoenix to shop at Diamonds, Sears, the meat

shops, or purchase clothes and shoes. In later years, when they became available, her father, a carpenter who worked for the railroad, purchased more modern gas stoves, refrigerators, and washing machines for their home. Celia has had a long history of being employed. After briefly attending Stevenson School, she worked in a fish market, a sewing factory, a restaurant, and at the state hospital for twelve years. Later she cleaned offices at the state capitol. Celia witnessed the development in the community such as the construction of the Rodeo Drive In. She particularly enjoyed the dancing at the Calderon and Riverside Ballrooms and the *fiesta patrias* community celebration commemorating Mexican Independence Day, September 16th, that was held annually at Lewis Park on 13th Street. Celia presently lives in the *Cuatro Milpas* neighborhood.

Written by Santos Vega

**Josie Peru** has been a long time community volunteer, activist, and resident in the *Barrios Unidos* area. She has been in her present home in the *Cuatro Milpas* area since the early 1960s. Here she raised three children, Paul, Cecilia, and Daniel. Josie was instrumental in organizing the first Block Watch in the community which later became the first neighborhood association, *Los Ojos De La Comunidad*. With capable leaders such as Luz Baeza and Joaquin Olivas, Josie and the community group lobbied for community development that resulted in: a Barrios Unidos Community Park; *Los Ojos De La Comunidad* Gymnasium located at Wesley Community Center; Maricopa County Skill Center and the relocation and construction of the new Sacred Heart Catholic Church. In an *Arizona Republic* newspaper article in 1984, Josie credits the community support of Wesley Community Center as a key to the success of *Los Ojos De La Comunidad*. She learned to read and write English at Wesley Community Center and later served as a board member. Battling back from severe head injuries suffered in an auto accident, Josie continues to be active in the Seniors Women Group monthly meeting at Wesley.

Written by Santos Vega



Josie Peru enjoys a light moment with Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard at a neighborhood rally.

Photo Courtesy of Peru Family

## Fayetta Cain and

**Betty Ann Cain** are sisters. Fayetta entered the world in the time of the Great Depression, delivered by a doctor who came to her house on Pima and 14th Street. Fayetta, recalling her neighborhood, said “I was eight when my dad built the other two houses just down the street, still on Pima...” Betty Ann recounted some of her oral history, “Our great, great grandmother they came originally. Uncle Bob and them they came there in...that would be in 1925.” Betty Ann’s father came initially from Ohio. He met Betty Ann’s mother in Oklahoma. “They met in Oklahoma like I said and I was born there.” Their father worked for the Goodrich Tire Company and at another time for Allison Steel. About their life they agreed, “...you know most kids don’t grow up young, but we did. I mean back in those years people grew up young...” The Great Depression caused wide-spread pervasive poverty. “...in those days barter was really the best thing...My dad could do one thing, that person next door could do something else. You would just exchange back and forth; you didn’t pay each other, “cause nobody had any money...” But Fayetta recalled good times. “Everybody was nice; it was just a wonderful world that’s all...Yeah, right up and down the street on Saturday nights, they would kind of close up (the streets), and they would have big dances with beautiful costumes. Both sisters attended Stevenson and Monroe for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Both of their parents were politically involved, “...our mother was a political

...precinct committee woman, and our daddy was involved in it, too...” Fayetta and Betty Ann recalled the Palmira Water Company, the Phoenix Electric Company, and remembered several stores located downtown Phoenix where they worked or shopped, “...Kress’s, Korrick’s, Penneys, Walgreens, Newberrys, Time Value, Baker’s Shoes.” They would ride the electric streetcar that would take them downtown for a nickel. They enjoyed the Strand and the Orpheum theatres for movies.

*Written by  
Santos Vega*



*The Cain sisters are pictured in front of Fayetta’s house.*

*Photo by Santos Vega*

**Freddie Sardinias** was born in Phoenix in 1934. His mother came from Red Rock, New Mexico and moved into *Campito* barrio in 1949. Freddie was the oldest of fourteen brothers and sisters. He attended Grant School. He remem-

called Hollywood” and later the community came to be known as *Campito*. According to Freddy, there was no trash pick up prior to 1950 and “...we had to dig a hole up and throw it back in the hole.” Many services were within walking distance:

Sunland Grocery, Santa Rita Catholic Church, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Rodeo Drive In Theatre, and the Calderon Ballroom. Freddie remembers that there were two stores in the nearby Golden Gate. neighborhood:

“...there was a bar there on 16th street and Conchita’s. Yea, I think it's Conchita’s, and then there was a garage there, Trini’s Garage. And on 16th street, yea, there was Conchita’s, Trini’s Garage, then there was a store then there was Blue Barn, and there was Surrey Project by the railroad tracks.”

And Freddy has also witnessed the tearing down of many neighborhood structures “...knocking all



*10th St. and Tonto St. - Former site of an old, popular neighborhood tavern, the “Hollywood Bar” in the Campito neighborhood.*

*Photo Lucas Cabrera*

bered visiting *Campito* when he was 14 years old in 1947. There was field called Oak Creek that consisted of a few houses, dirt paths and no blacktop or sidewalks. There are still no sidewalks to this day (2003). His stepfather, who was from Mexico, bought a house at 806 S. 9th Place: “...it was made out of cardboard.” His mother worked in the fields and Freddie later worked in the lettuce, cabbage, onions, and cotton fields. Freddie said that he worked for “...Arizona Mills, then they changed it to John Briscoe...now they changed to Waste Management, I worked there for about 13 years.” Freddie recalls the various community nicknames: “When I came here, it was

those buildings down. He met his wife in *Campito* and later married her in 1965. They raised eight children. His wife passed away in 2001. His wife liked the area “because she knew everybody.” Freddy's mother still lives next door as she has for many decades Commenting on the present aviation noise issue, Freddie explains that he is accustomed to the airplane noise overhead.

*Written by Santos Vega*

**José Corrales** demonstrates an abiding faith in himself and his family in leading a successful life. José has a long history in the *Barrios Unidos* neighborhood moving here in the 1960s. He originally came to Phoenix area in the '50s working on various farms and ranches along side Mexican laborers or “*braceros*.” José later use his Spanish, English and cultural skills as an interpreter and liaison for an American heavy equipment company doing international business in Mexico. José and his family were also migrant workers making the yearly treks to the northern states following seasonal crops. This type of work, which proved spotty and low paying, led José to emphasize the importance of education to his children and managing money wisely. His children completed their education and this provided a means of escape from the hard labor in agricultural fields. Three of his sons served honorably in the armed forces, one each in the Air Force, Navy, and Marines. José and his wife, Juanita Deleon, who passed away in 2002, raised their family in *Las Cuatro Milpas* community.

*Written by Pete Dimas*



*The future Mr. and Mrs. Corrales in 1935.*

*Photo courtesy Corrales family*

**Edwin Neil Carmical's** family represents the great upheaval during the Great Depression era and subsequent movements of families from the Deep South to the western states. The Carmical family moved to Phoenix in the 1930s. Neil has many neighborhood memories as his father, Dewey Edwin Carmical, operated Carr's Barbershop on Mohave Street from 1948 to 1978. He remembers the heart of the city near downtown with all the vibrant commercial activity including the large department stores. The

relocation of an entire largely Hispanic community, Golden Gate, in the 1980s left some bitter memories for Neil. Neil also has strong recollections of discrimination of Hispanics particularly in north Phoenix. Neil graduated from Arizona State College and is actively involved in the local neighborhood association, *Barrios Unidos* Airport Action Coalition. Presently, Neil and his wife Barbara live in Phoenix and own property in *Barrios Unidos*.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

**Lucretia "Lucy" Holguin** was born in Phoenix, Arizona and has lived throughout the Phoenix area. Her father José Encinas owned a

store in Guadalupe, Arizona where he knew many of the local residents. Jose was a *fayuquero*; he sold, bought and traded goods all over the southwest and northern Mexico. This family story is rooted in the 19th century and continues in the *Barrios Unidos* community. The determination of this family is present in the stories and testimonies of Lucretia and her family. Lucretia finished the seventh grade and went directly to work in the fields. She has been living in *Campito* since 1951 and her home was built on an empty lot that the family purchased for eight hundred dollars and was recently remodeled to reduce aviation noise. The house still stands to this day. Lucretia has memories of Santa Rita Church, where she was married and when César Chávez visited *Campito* and the church. She explains how the church served many functions for the community, both spiritual and social. Lucretia is very comfortable in her home and neighborhood.

*Written by Mike Valdez*



*Lucy Holguin has been living in Campito for more than 50 years.  
Photo Courtesy of Holguin Family*

## Rose Hughes and

**Hughes Family** Alpha Patrick Hughes moved his family to *Barrios Unidos* in 1937 from Globe, Arizona after working in the harsh condi-



*Mr. and Mrs. Alpha P. Hughes operated a general store on 12th St. and Henshaw Road, which is now Buckeye Road.*

*Photo Courtesy of Hughes Family*

tions of Inspiration Mines. Alpha began building homes for his family of eight children, grandparents, and a great grandmother who lived to the age of 110. According to daughter Rose Hughes, Mary R. Hughes was a supportive, wonderful wife and mother who raised her children during the harsh conditions of the Great Depression and

through a war time era. Alpha Patrick started a wood company which served the community. Firewood was essential for survival in 1937. It was used for heating, construction, and cooking. This essentially gave birth to the A.P. Hughes Service Station on 11th and Henshaw Road (currently Buckeye Road). The Hughes family lived in four homes behind the service station. As the children grew, they helped to operate and maintain the business. Pumping gas, answering phones, and handling the cash register was the norm for Rose and her sisters. Alpha Patrick had many occupations. He was a certified public accountant and helped many of his neighbors with their taxes. He was also involved in politics and campaigned for various candidates in city elections and also served as a deputy sheriff. Alpha Patrick liked helping his neighbors and community because he understood how hard it was to survive. The Hughes family has wonderful memories of *Barrios Unidos* including the Rodeo Drive-In Theatre, a popular source of community entertainment and social gatherings. One of Alpha Patrick's daughters met her future husband and held the marriage ceremony at the Rodeo. Abraham Lincoln School, Sunland Market, and the Calderon Ball Room are all strong memories for the Hughes family. The Hughes family's recollection of *Barrios Unidos* is that of a vibrant community filled with things to do. Rose Hughes, a daughter, continues her relationships with the people of *Barrios Unidos* through her participation in community meetings.

*Written by Mike Valdez*

**María Piña** has lived in the *Campito* neighborhood since 1949. She was born in Globe, Arizona where her father, José Piña, worked for Inspiration Mines for 18 years. María has early memories in Globe of a daily sky filled with black smoke for most of the day coming from the mines, and the hard times of growing up in such harsh conditions, and also the prejudices of people against “*los mexicanos*” like herself. Her father was paid very little, not the same as the Anglo miners, and was often very sick from mining work conditions. Like many others, the Piña family struggled but survived despite these hard times. The Piña family eventually moved to Phoenix in search of better jobs. María found employment immediately among the many laundries located in and around central Phoenix. Her first job at Phoenix Laundry paid 52¢ cents an hour. María began working at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in

1981 and has continued there to this day. She recently paid off her home mortgage after 30 years, a testament to her hard work and determination. María has five children: Lupe, Gloria, Sylvia, José, and Vincent. All attended Herrera School. Among her memories is the downtown Azteca Teatro, the old Lowell School, and a political march through the neighborhood. Her son José “Casper” Habre joined a boycott march with César Chávez against Smitty’s Grocery Store located at 16th Street and Buckeye Road. María is looking forward to moving in the voluntary relocation citing longtime city neglect as evidenced by the lack of sidewalks, removal of the only neighborhood park for industrial development, and allowing tractor trailer traffic through the narrow neighborhood streets.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

## Mary Emma Jaramillo and

**Raul Noriega Moreno** Emma is a former resident of *Barrios Unidos* who lived with her parents at 11th Street and Yuma Street in the *Las Cuatro Milpas* neighborhood. Emma and her husband Raul have been married for 52 years and have six children. Emma’s parents, Pitacio “Pete” Benavides Jaramillo and Gregoria Maldonado Madero, were from New Mexico. Emma was born in Gallop, New Mexico and raised in Belen. Her father worked on sheep and cattle ranches. He also played various musical instruments in various bands to supplement his income. Emma began working at an early age, “...They kept taking off and on in school. I never really had schooling. I was helping to take care of the children” The family lived briefly in Albuquerque and in Grants, New Mexico where her father worked in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during World War II. After the war, her father worked for the Santa Fe

Railroad. Emma and her family moved to Phoenix where she began her career as a waitress working in various restaurants including the Grand Café and the Rice Bowl. Emma was active in community celebrations and competed for Fiesta Queen. Raul, her husband, was raised in the agricultural lands of west Phoenix and worked for the Southwest Flower and Seed Company in Glendale, Arizona for a few years. Although Raul never attended college, he excelled in mathematics and worked as an engineer for Garret Research (later named Honeywell) for more than 30 years. They are both retired and presently live in Phoenix.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*



*Emma and Raul are pictured in front of their Phoenix home*

*Photo by Lucas Cabrera*



**Rick Cortez**, who is the current chair of the neighborhood association, *Barrios Unidos* Airport Action Coalition, is a long time community resident and exemplifies the spirit of community activism and volunteerism so prevalent in the

starting raising a family. They raised two daughters. With time, Rick became concerned with the development of the neighborhood youth and began his involvement with the neighborhood association. With the help of other residents, Rick



*Rick Cortez attends neighborhood meetings at Wesley Center.*

community. His parents arrived in the area in 1961 from Harlingen, Texas in search of better work opportunities. His father Nicolas, worked at various jobs and at the Phoenix Country Club. His mother, Petra, was a homemaker. They raised two daughters and four sons. Rick and his siblings spent a great deal of their youth at Green Valley Park taking advantage of the various sports program available including basketball, football, baseball, and track and field events. Rick and his older brother became accomplished baseball players at the semi-pro level. After receiving training at Cochise College, Rick was married and began to work. He bought a house after three years and

applied for a Fight Back grant from the city of Phoenix to establish a neighborhood association and began implementing programs to address youth problems, security and beautification issues. Later the issue of excessive airport noise forced the association to regroup and address a potential voluntary relocation of the neighborhood due to the noise. Rick and the rest of BUAAC are fighting for fair treatment and rights of all residents in the planned relocation. Another major concern for Rick has been the apparent lack of infrastructure improvements in the neighborhoods

*Photo by Lucas Cabrera*

over the years. Until very recently, the neighborhood had not received any new streetlights for years and sidewalks still remain non-existent. Speed humps that had been sorely lacking are now in place in some streets. Rick has attributed this recent success to support from such groups as Wesley Community Center, Neighborhoods for Justice, Morris Institute for Justice, and Neighborhood Partners.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

**Manny Soto** Brought to *Barrios Unidos* within a few weeks of his birth in Casa Grande, Manny Soto has seen *Cuatro Milpas* and Green Valley transform from an agricultural area to its present condition of 1,000 homes and 6,000+ res-



*Manny Soto at Wesley Community Center  
Photo by Lucas Cabrera*

idents. He has fond childhood memories of a close-knit community in Green Valley. After graduating from Phoenix Union High School and working a few years as a baker, Manny joined the Navy and eventually flew combat missions over Vietnam. Manny later was employed by Arizona Public Service where he met his wife, Josie. He

**Luis Rodriguez** represents the positive impact that people from the mining towns of Arizona have had on the community development of the barrios of central Phoenix. Born in Superior, Arizona, Luis, after serving in the Army during the Korean War, went to what is now Arizona State University and in 1955 began teaching at Lincoln School in *Barrios Unidos*. He eventually became Superintendent of the Phoenix Elementary School District. He remembers the love the people had for education and its importance to the children. Luis has kept in touch with many former students. He also remembers the visits César Chávez made to the neighborhoods and the barrio homes that Chávez stayed in. Luis also has been appreciative of the positive impact that Wesley Community Center has had on the community and “the kids.” As for the transformation of *Barrios Unidos*, Luis notes that family busi-

nesses have given way to creeping industrialization. Interestingly enough, Luis’ father-in-law’s produce business was located where the Arizona Diamondbacks now play, Bank One Ball Park.

remained at APS for 22 years. Together with his wife, he was able to expand his house in the Ann Ott neighborhood into a large two-story home for his two daughters. Both girls have graduated from the University of Arizona. Memories include spending time in downtown Phoenix at the Woolworth’s and Newberry’s. Manny also experienced prejudice and discrimination, especially against *Mexicanos* at the Orpheum Theater. Manny has been involved in community activism after witnessing how “progress” affected the barrio. First was the construction of a major freeway down the heart of the neighborhood. Second was the increasing noise and pollution from the ever-expanding Sky Harbor Airport. As a result, Manny feels that property values and his quality of life have been greatly diminished. He hopes that through unity, the neighborhood can eventually benefit from the economic boon that he believes will result from the future development such as the Rio Salado Project.

*Written by Pete Dimas*

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*Written by Pete Dimas*



*Luis helped to design the underground schools of Ann Ott and Herrera.*

*Photo by Lucas Cabrera*

**Vicki Silva** has resided in her Green Valley neighborhood home for fifty-one years. Her parents emigrated from Mexico to California and brought Vicki to Arizona as a child. Vicki comments, “I guess like everybody else, you know...



Vicki Silva and her late husband, Frank.

Photo Courtesy of Silva family

looking for a better life...” Her family lived and worked on ranches in and around Phoenix. Vicki attended Roosevelt School until the fourth grade. She met and married Frank Silva who passed away in 1986. Frank worked for the City of Phoenix and attained his General Education Diploma (G.E.D.). Frank’s organization skills were evident in his work and his commu-

nity. He served as the Ann Ott School PTA President and frequently helped out in fiestas and jaimicas in the local neighborhood church, St. Mary Magdalene. He also was involved in union organizing at his job in the City of Phoenix. When the Silvas bought

their home in the 1950s, Green Valley was a wide-open spacious area. “Everything was empty, no warehouses, no nothing. From here, you could see down to 16th Street and dirt...it wasn’t paved or anything.” The community continued to grow and Vicki fondly remembers their four daughters happily playing in the front yard or at the neighborhood park. Vicki often rode the city bus to shop in downtown, “...Penny’s, Korrick’s, Wards, Sears, Skaggs...all the stores were there, the Learners...a bunch of stores.” For her groceries, Vicki shopped at Food City, and still does. In the 1960s, the community suddenly began to change with the construction of a freeway that sliced the community and reduced the size of the park. Vicki recalls, “I can remember, because that’s when I was pregnant with my last daughter...I had her about ’63.” Now the neighborhood has become a mixture of empty lots, abandoned homes, industrial warehouses, and residences. Vicki is now a great grandmother and has a grandson living across the street. She lives alone in her spacious beautiful home and does not wish to relocate. She explains, “I am very comfortable here...if they don’t pay enough money for the property...I am too old to start over, you know?”

By Lucas Cabrera

**Celia Molina’s** recollections of the *Milpas* barrio include religious practices and community celebrations. Celia attended many neighborhood *Novenas* and *Posadas* that were, and still are, two important traditions of the Catholic faith. *Novenas* were prayer services that were conducted in homes and churches in response to individual requests. Most novenas were for funerals or other types of family crisis. Fellow parishioners would also sing at funeral wakes or the “*veloria*.” Doña Mariallita was a local church volunteer leader who led singing at wakes and also led *novenas* in the barrio. *Posadas* involved processions or groups of persons marching house to house to sing traditional Christmas carols. Many commu-

nity celebrations involved “*bailes*” (dancing) and one of the more popular spots was the park on 13th Street on the “*plataforma*,” an outdoor platform. Celia recalls, “they had a band, they played, and everybody danced. I wasn’t old enough to dance.” At the same park was the annual 16th of September Celebration that climaxed with the crowning of the festival *reina* or queen. Many young beautiful barrio ladies competed for the honor of *reina*.

Written by Lucas Cabrera

**Gertha Sullivan** was born in Columbus, Arkansas in 1927. She has been living in *Las Cuatro Milpas* community since 1982 and is one of the few African American residents that reside in the *Barrios Unidos* community. Gertha and her husband Sei moved to *Barrios Unidos* upon Gertha's arrival to Phoenix in 1982; Sei had already been living in Arizona since 1942. Sei owned a home in the no longer existing Golden Gate community just west of Sky Harbor International Airport. Sei also had a business on 7th Street and Yavapai, where he came to know many of the *Barrios Unidos* residents. "When he first bought the house it was boarded up. It had burned on the inside and we have done a lot of remodeling since I have been here." Gertha is very happy in her home, a humble home that sits across from the new Sacred Heart Church. Happy in her neighborhood, she declares that "in fact it has been a nice neighborhood as far as I know...I

got to know many of my neighbors through my husband." Since 1982 Gertha has volunteered her time at Sky Harbor Family Services cooking and serving meals to residents, and also helping with games like Bingo. A giving person, she enjoys spending her time helping others. Although Gertha has become accustomed to the heat of Phoenix, she never really enjoys the Arizona summers. She has also become accustomed to all the noise from Sky Harbor. Traveling from Arkansas, she still remembers her first impressions of all the wonderful sites and views of Arizona. Once here, Gertha remembers the beautiful Japanese Gardens on Baseline Road, and all the wonderful drives she use to take around the city. Gertha is happy in *Barrios Unidos*, "a nice neighborhood, I have no problems."

*Written by Mike Valdez*

**Dora Rentería Quintanilla** remembers the neighborhood through the eyes of a child. She would spend much of her playtime with her friends, Velia Fernandez, Esther Delgado, and Frances Espinoza López near a canal that ran from Buckeye Road down to Pima Street, where the present post office is located. Ladies from the neighborhood would hide Easter eggs in and around the wildflowers and rocks that grew by the "canalito" for the children of the community. For some unknown reason, Dora recalls feeling ill around Easter time every spring. She recalls fondly an elderly lady who would sell her homemade corn (*maiz*) tortillas in the neighborhood. Doña

Macaria, as everyone called her, would carry them in a basket and would walk the streets of the neighborhood until they were all sold. Those same tortillas supplied many of the lunches for Dora who came home from school at noon each day to eat. Dora treasures many of her barrio memories including Doña Macaria, "*Nunca se me olvida la viejita.*"

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

**Enedina Rosales** and the Rosales family have been resident homeowners in *Barrios Unidos* for nearly 30 years. Their present home sits in the heart of the *Las Cuatro Milpas* barrio at 10th Street and Cocopah Street. The family originally



*Pictured are Enedina's daughter, Natalia, late grandson, Roberto, and grandchildren. Photo Courtesy of Rosales Family*

came from Guadalajara and Penjamo, Mexico. Enedina was a homemaker and her husband, Antonio, was a barber in northern Mexico and later southern Arizona. After many years of moving back and forth and in and around

small Arizona towns, the Rosales family decided to put down roots in the *Barrios Unidos* area in 1970. Presently five generations live close to each other in the community. Enedina and her daughter Natalia have witnessed many changes in the neighborhood over the years. Natalia comments that the neighborhood is much more tranquil than in years past. Natalia remembers the great shopping stores in downtown Phoenix including JC Penney, Woolworth's, Lerner's, and all the small restaurants. Natalia raised her own family here and all the children were educated at Lincoln and Herrera Schools. The most important change in the neighborhood has been the increasing noise from airplanes over the years. Natalia and her mother have grown accustomed to the noise but she voices concerns about the children's hearing. Natalia and Enedina have not decided if they are going to relocate from the neighborhood.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

**Francis Espinoza López** recalls the wonderful memories of her childhood playmates in *Barrios Unidos*. Her parents' house was directly across from the *plataforma*, or platform, where dances would be held for the community. She recalls that she was too young to dance but did socialize with all the youngsters running and yelling during the festivities. "...*Jugaba con everybody*" Francis says in her mixture of English and Spanish. She does recall fondly that she never felt fear or danger from other persons, especially adults, at any time in the neighborhood. Francis explained that all adults helped to supervise the children. "...Grownups and everybody looked after all the people, you know their kids...we

were just like a big family really." One reminder of the grinding poverty was brides who carried *laureles* or oleanders for the bouquet as oleanders were found everywhere in *Barrios Unidos*. Francis did remark on one very important time in her youth and that was the Bible study class that she attended at Las Casillas Baptist Church with her Bible teacher, Mrs. Miles, "...It was a good time in my life..."

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

## Marcelino “Marshal” Valdez,

a *Barrios Unidos* resident for over 47 years, presently lives in the Green Valley area with his wife, Sylvia. His parents emigrated from Zacatecas and Tabasco, Mexico and settled in the



Pictured are Valdez family members: Marcelino, Sylvia, Jesus “Chuy,” Rosie and Veronica “Ronnie.”

Photo Courtesy of Valdez Family

Willams/Flagstaff, Arizona area. His family included two brothers and six sisters. Marshall and Sylvia have known each other since the age of seven. Moving to the Phoenix area in 1955, Marshal and Sylvia bought their present home in

**Esther Delgado** has a unique perspective on the *Barrios Unidos* history. Her main recollection is that of religious instruction. According to Esther, there were many Catholic catechism classes to attend with play time before and after classes. The two main instructors were Doña Mariallita and Mary “*la chapita*.” Although most class members were fond of Mary, in later life, Esther and her friends began to appreciate Doña Mariallita for her firmness that helped to shape their young lives. Esther also remembers attending different churches which offered youth programs. One particular neighborhood memory that stands out was a processional that Esther participated

1963 and raised four boys and two girls. Marshall worked in the construction trades as a plaster tender and helped erect several giant high-rise buildings in the central Phoenix area. Family gatherings have been a priority along with camping trips and vacations. Christmas remains a focal point of family reunions. Marshal is also an avid hunter and fisherman. Marshal described the Green Valley area as a beautiful community in the ’50s and ’60s. Then the freeway was built down the heart of the community and effectively sealed off Green Valley from the rest of *Barrios Unidos*. Marshal’s words were, “...it was like a giant gray wall suddenly appeared and you could no longer see the rows of beautiful homes. It was a shock.” Then began the introduction of large commercial business warehouses and large tractor-trailer rigs began parking in the residential streets. At that point, many homeowners decided to leave. Marshal was one of those who decided to stay and still is very comfortable in his home despite the aircraft and freeway noise. Marshall would like to take advantage of the home exchange program if two conditions are met: 1) “I want to go to a place where I want to go” and 2) “...I get a house that is equal to mine, ‘cause I don’t want to have no more mortgage payments.”

Written by Lucas Cabrera

with her father. She recalls that some of the children had *velitas* or candles and marched from Buckeye Road to Pima Road and then back again. She can not remember the purpose of the procession but remembers it so well. There was also a civic club for men and later women called the *Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juarez* in which her father, Mariano, was the treasurer. Some of the members were Mr. and Mrs. Luis Mejilla, Pancho Ruiz, Charley Diaz, and Juan Rodriguez among others. The club was instrumental in organizing community celebrations.

Written by Lucas Cabrera

**James Fraijo** was born to Santiago and Sally Fraijo. The Fraijo story begins on the Apache Reservation of San Carlos, where Sally was born and raised, and in Magdalena, Sonora where Santiago was born. “My mother’s



James is pictured on the grounds of Wesley Center.

Photo by Lucas Cabrera

Grandparents are from Camp Verde, Arizona. The story goes that my mother’s Grandfather got into some trouble with the authorities; he was running with Geronimo and other Apaches. Instead of sending him to prison, they sent him to Carlisle College in Pennsylvania where he learned the tricks of a carpenter and was then sent back to San Carlos...In those days they would central-ize all the Apaches, keep them cornered and once the area settled down, those who wanted to go back to Camp Verde could and my grandma chose to remain in San Carlos.” Santiago Fraijo, born in Sonora, also served the United States in World War II. The very first Fraijo to come north worked in a cattle ranch and was given a parcel of land by the owners. These four acres were later given to the City of Irwindale in California. The Irwindale City Hall and police station now stand on this former Fraijo land. There are still celebra-tions in California where Fraijo family members

still live. At age 18 Santiago, along with his father, slowly migrated to Phoenix. They bought their first and only house at 1118 E. Yuma in *Barrios Unidos*. James remembers, “there was no paved streets in those days just dirt...everybody looked out for one another...Oh when it rained... the streets were a good place to play. As kids we would play in the canal that ran through 11th and Pima...a great place to go swimming...we built a tree house just next door to us.” James remembers that each neighborhood had a little grocery store. He has wonderful memories of Abraham Lincoln School where he attended. He had wonderful teachers like Mr. Diaz and Mr. Rodriguez. James recalls the Rodeo Drive In where he saw monster movies like King Kong and Frankenstein. Sunland Market, on Buckeye just as you enter the *Campito* neighborhood, was a good place to shop. James recalls the places and activity of the neighborhood: all the little mom and pop shops along Henshaw Road (now Buckeye); pas-try stores, ice cream and snow cones being sold out of houses; social functions at the Calderon Ballroom; the *jamaicas* at the churches; going to *Campito* to buy menudo on Sundays; neighbors that made and sold tamales. “There was always somebody in the neighborhood who was like a medicine woman or *curandera* who could help you.” Sears, Montgomery Wards, WoolWorth, and the old downtown are still vivid in his mem-ory. James continues his artwork and shares his tal-ent with the kids at Wesley Community Center where he continues his activism within his native heritage. He is very proud of his upbringing in the *Barrios Unidos* neighborhood. James, a visual artist wood carver, is presently artist-in-residence for the Arizona Commission on the Arts.

Written by Mike Valdez

**Aileen Johnston**, 91 years young, lives on the corner of 10th and Pima and has been in the same house since 1947. Her humble home sits across the street from *Nuestro Park* where she has a wonderful view of the neighborhood kids playing. Aileen was born and raised in Maple, Wisconsin. She has very little recollection of her biological parents who died when she was only two months old; just an old photograph that was given to her just a few years ago by one of her cousins who lives in Finland. Growing up, Aileen remember working on her family's farm raking hay, "20 acres mother and I use to rake, imagine that!" Aileen left Maple, Wisconsin at age 19 and moved to Chicago, the North Shore. In 1938 she met and married her husband Joe W. Johnston. He was in the army, the Cavalry. They married in Champaign, Illinois. In 1944 Aileen moved to Phoenix, "we just decided to go somewhere we hadn't been before, that was the only reason." Aileen first lived at 1818 E. Washington Street at the Washington Street Cottage Building Court. It was 1947 when Aileen moved to Pima street; the house was the last one to be built by Mary Anderson and her son on Pima Street. Aileen recalls Abraham Lincoln School, "it was such a shame because it was such a nice building, then they tore it down and built this one, because it's

suppose to be sound proof for the coming of the planes." Aileen remembers that Pima street wasn't paved until 1974 and that it was just dirt until then. Aileen remembers all her original neighbors on Pima Street: the Agustos, the Downfolds, the Berks, the Hinsons, and the Waige families. "I am the only one left...they wouldn't allow colored or Spanish people here, it's only from Seventh Street here. I don't know why it is that way." Aileen remembers that the city promised it would put in sidewalks but never did, "Oh, I don't know how many petitions I've carried around here...still no side walks." Aileen is 91 years young and still continues to do her part for her community. She continues to be active in the neighborhood association, remains active in community clean ups, and continues to support all efforts to develop and better her neighborhood. Aileen is very comfortable in her present home, and the noise from the planes is something that she has gotten used to. She recalls that one day she phoned the airport and asked them, "when is the air show going to be over?" She jokes now, because she can even after years of noise and pollution, but she will continue to fight for justice for her community.

*Written By Mike Valdez*



*This popular neighborhood market, which is known by many names, such as Poncho's, Simon's and Austin's, has been around since the 1950s.*

*Photo by Lucas Cabrera*



**Velia Fernandez's** family history reflects the growth of a united caring community despite tough economic times. Velia's mother, María Luisa Guevara de Rentería, was born in Mexico and brought to Arizona 45 days after she was

closeknit community, "...our home was always full (of visitors)...Everybody seemed to know each other and everyone kind of looked out, you know, for each others kids...they...advise something you shouldn't do and brought you out and sent you home." Velia recalls much resident bartering and commerce, especially on weekends, "...the Aguayos made pottery...we'd...buy the ollas and ...decorate...for *piñatas*....Doña Pomposa sitting on her porch, sold *raspadas*...Mr. Vercancum that sold *menudo*...the Mejillas...had the ovens in the wall...and sell pan de huevo.... Mitzi's mother sold eggs and milk..." Small local grocery markets provided fresh meats and other commodities. Tough economic times were reflected in the community. Most homes had no running water and bought water from neighbors who did. Outdoor toilets or outhouses were common. Most homes also had no electricity or phones. Despite the grim economic conditions within the barrio, residents banded together to build a stronger community. Velia's father and others organized fiestas and jaimaicas. Holidays such as the 16th of September were times of widespread celebration among residents, "...fiestas, queens, princes, princesses...dancers, speeches, reciting poetry...I got stuck one year with that (reciting poetry)...I was really teased about that one..." Local mothers formed a youth club (Mother's Club) to promote activities for girls and boys. Her father was also involved in *La Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juarez*, a Latino civic organization. Velia is now retired from a banking career and lives in Phoenix. Her daughter is married.



Velia currently lives in Phoenix.

Photo by Lucas Cabrera

Written by Lucas Cabrera

born. Mariano Rentería, Velia's father, left Mexico at an early age in search of better work. María and Mariano met and married in Phoenix and lived for a time at *la sesion*, a housing project for railroad employees in central Phoenix. They raised five daughters, three nephews, and three nieces in a house that Mr. Rentería remodeled over the years. Velia remembers the *Milpas* as a

**Betty Mathis** is the current Executive Director of the Wesley Community Center, a non-profit faith-based community center of the United Methodist Women of America. Betty became the 9th director in 1994. The center is located in the heart of *Las Cuatro Milpas* and has been in operation since 1950. Several programs are aimed at the youth and the elderly including: organized sports, tutoring, dance, after school meals, guitar, community garden, English as a second language, sewing classes, community development, Back to School, Home Repairs, Senior Women programs, Christmas-Adopt A-Family, an Oral History Project, and, soon to come, a Health Center aimed at diabetes treatment and prevention. Many of the youth attending Wesley through the years have gone on to live useful and productive lives. One such example is the current neighbor-

hood president, Rick Cortez. A large volunteer base has been the backbone of Wesley's success. Though there have been some lean years, Wesley Community Center has continued its service to this low-income community. Some of the many partners who have helped keep Wesley open through the years include: United Way, Arizona Diamondbacks, Sky Harbor Airport, Neighborhood Partners, Discover Card, local United Methodist Churches, Medtronic Corporation, Rotary Club, Boys Scouts of America and many, many more. With everyone's help, Wesley will continue to "Empower People Through Positive Change."

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*



*Wesley Community Center holds a monthly food distribution for the entire neighborhood.*

*Photo by Lucas Cabrera*

**Rueben Carrico** has a strong bond to the *Barrios Unidos* community. Rueben spent fifteen years working in Texas with Hispanic Churches and communities. In 1969, Rueben was transferred to Phoenix, Arizona and took charge of the *Primera Iglesia Metodista*, located at 701 S. 1st Street. Rueben remembers, “when I came to Phoenix in ’69, it was the time when the Chicanos, Chicanos Por La Causa, was born. The same time I came in, Father Frank Yoldi...was the Pastor of Sacred Heart Church. We became really good friends.” This gave birth to the working relationship between Rueben Carrico and the *Barrios Unidos* community. Rueben’s efforts in social justice are reflected in the amount of time he has spent in inner-city barrios and in grass-roots organizing. Rueben served on the Board of Wesley Community Center, an organization dedicated to improving and raising an awareness of the conditions of the *Barrios Unidos* neighbor-

hoods. He also served on the board of Chicanos Por La Causa, advocating for social justice within Chicano/Mexican communities. Rueben has witnessed the changes of the *Barrios Unidos* community. He has witnessed the relocation and extinction of the historic Golden Gate Barrio and fears that the city of Phoenix has an unseen agenda for the inner-city area of *Barrios Unidos*. Rueben has developed friendships over the years working in *Barrios Unidos* and continues those relationships with the long-term residents of *Barrios Unidos*. Rueben continues his support for *Barrios Unidos* and extends any assistance to *Barrios Unidos* in their journey for justice.

*Written by Mike Valdez*



*Food City has served the community since the early 1930s when it was known as Kirk's Food City.*

*Photo by Lucas Cabrera*

**Helen Brock** came to the Barrios Unidos areas from Oklahoma, when she was a young lady. In 1947, “I came on a Greyhound bus, got off at 24th Street and Washington, and that was farm land out there, that was open fields...” Helen lived through all the changes that have occurred in the neighborhood. She experienced the I-17 or Maricopa freeway construction. “It’s an elevated freeway,...but before they built the freeway we didn’t have the airport noise...It was a very, very small airport, around the railroad tracks...” However, in time, freeways, airport growth and development, buyouts and force-outs



*The background of this picture would later become the Maricopa Freeway.*

*Photos courtesy of the Brock family*

from the neighborhoods near the airport by the city government’s enforced use of the Eminent Domain laws brought about many changes. Helen remembers, “What I loved about south Phoenix, when I settled here was that it was a beautiful green belt, green lush trees, irrigation canals, water everywhere, so everybody had beautiful green lawns,...fruit trees and citrus...there was no crime, so your children would get out to the middle of the street and play ball...” Her children attended Stevenson School when Ann Ott was the principal. She became active in her neighborhood through her church. She said, “We did sewing for the poor and made quilts, and we fed poor people, and we took care of the homeless in my church.” She added, “When the airport and the freeway and all the problems were starting to happen with the city, we got involved with the neighborhood groups that were fighting for the residents’ rights, and also to fight crime.” She recalls her neighborhood, “We had everything in our neighborhood. We had clothing store,...many

grocery stores...Shoes stores,...TV repair, barber-shop, and beauty shop. We didn’t have to leave our neighborhood; we had a lot of churches, a variety of churches that have gone, disappeared. Buckeye to Mohave and from Twenty-fourth Street to Sixteenth Street to Seventh Street were neighborhoods that Helen Brock remembers, “We had our entertainment, we had our movie, our drive-in movies here, we had nightclub life,...we had restaurants, we had our shopping...everything you need.” And she remembers the wonderful flower aromas, too. “We could smell the perfume from the Japanese garden all the way downtown, and the orange blossom, there was a lot of citrus, too...when I came here the sky in Arizona was so gorgeous...big floating clouds, snow-white like angel hair, and the plump skies would be so blue. There was no pollution in the air...it was just so lovely.”

*Written by Santos Vega*



*Helen is pictured in front of her home in the 1950s.*

## Father Luis Baldonado, OFM,

of Sacred Heart Church located in *Los Cautro Milpas* area came from San Jose, California. He has served the *Barrios Unidos* area for many years. He remembered the old Sacred Heart in



*Father Luis meets with parishioners following Christmas Day Mass, 2002 at the Old Sacred Heart Church.*

*Photo by Avelardo V. Moulinet*

Golden Gate located on 16th Street and Tonto. His experience was one of seeing the barrio churches close, people move away, but yet return to attend services and participate in church related programs and festivals in the current church, Sacred Heart. Prior to its closing, he recalls Santa

Rita. "I served Mass at Santa Rita." He said of St. Mary Magdalene, "There's a center for Hispanics from the diocese..." Father Luis is from New Mexico and knew Father Albert Braun, OFM, "...when he went to the service I kind of kept in touch with him...he was a Chaplain...Second World War...imprisoned ...serving the prison camp ...with Japanese." Father Baldonado has for some years served Mass each Christmas day at the old Sacred Heart Church for people who formerly lived in Golden Gate. "...we have a Mass here every Christmas Day, the whole church is full of people we knew from the old timers used to be there." Father Luis continues serving the needs of his parishioners and has active groups such as a St. Vincent de Paul, Catechism Class for children, and church festivals. "...it's good to be together." As concerns the possibility of another property buyout by the city for continued airport expansion and how this affects the people of the neighborhood, he says, "...it's harder to sell and try to get a chance to go to another place. The old folks want to stay, you know." Father Luis, now retired as a pastor, continues to serve Sacred Heart Church.

*Written by Santos Vega*

**Don Clegg** was raised in the *Milpas* neighborhood at 11th Street and Mohave. The property, which is now a vacant lot, originally belonged to his stepfather, Rollo Todd, who had a business called the Todd Box Company. He served area farmers by providing crates and boxes for produce. There were large agricultural plots in the area. Don remembers people riding on mules on Mohave Street and also the large baseball stadium, Municipal Stadium at the corner of Mohave and Central. He and his friends could not afford to attend the baseball games but waited outside to catch stray fouls balls. A fire destroyed the buildings on Don's property some time ago and Don has had to continue paying property taxes on a vacant lot. This has been a sore point among many vacant lot owners in *Barrios Unidos*. He does not know how much longer he can afford to pay the taxes. Don has let his feelings be known

through the local neighborhood association, *Barrios Unidos* Airport Action Coalition. Don tries to maintain community ties even though he and his wife live in Show Low, Arizona. A sister-in-law, Mitzi Metcalf still resides in the community on Pima Street.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*



*Pictured is Don's large vacant lot property on 11th St. and Mohave.*

*Photo by Mike Valdez*

## Mary “Mitzi” Duncan Metcalf

was born in a small community in Phoenix named Lincoln Acres. This community no longer exists and was located where Sky Harbor International Airport presently is. Native to Phoenix, the Duncan family has lived all over the central Phoenix area. “On the other side of the rail road tracks, we’d never go across the rail road tracks.” Not crossing the railroad tracks was the norm for



*The Duncan family posed for this picture in the snow in 1939 on 14th St. and Pima.*

*Photo courtesy of Metcalf family*

many of the *Barrios Unidos* residents, most of the necessities were provided within the neighborhood. Clothing, food, social functions and gatherings all took place within the community. As a kid, Mary remembers the celebrations on 13th Place, sitting on her neighbor’s fence and enjoying the mariachi music, the beautiful customs and all the festivities. The Duncan family enjoyed taking their blankets to Miller’s Drug Store on Buckeye Road to watch movies that were shown up against the stores wall. The movie nights then changed to Friday nights at Food City. “They used to have movies for the kids, at like Food City...In the parking lot you could take your blanket and sit down in the parking lot and they’d show movies.” The Metcalf home was located on the corner of 14th and Pima, directly south of Austin’s Market. Mary remembers sleeping outside as a kid with her brothers and sisters, “it was quiet back then, no airplanes...” Mary remembers that in 1957 her home exploded, the explosion was so strong that it shattered windows of homes blocks away. Some residents described the sound as a bomb. The explosion was featured in the newspaper and was said to be caused by the storage of fireworks in the Duncan home. Other eyewitnesses have contradicted the newspaper’s account. The Duncan family enjoyed going to downtown Phoenix on the bus for a nickel, to shop at Newberry’s, Woolworth’s, Heartfields and Franklin’s department stores. Mary would also go to the State Fairgrounds to watch her father work, he would do the fireworks for the fair. Wonderful memories like the Riverside Ball Room, Luhrs Tower, and the old downtown Phoenix are what Mary remembers the most.

*Written by Mike Valdez*

**Nancy Diaz Family** The history of the Diaz Family in Green Valley is one of over-coming obstacles, realizing dreams, and giving back to the community. Frank Lee Diaz, a taxi driver, and Reyes Alaffa Diaz, a migrant worker, were mar-



*Mrs. Reyes Alaffa Diaz and her late husband, Frank.*

*Photo courtesy of Diaz family*

ried in Edinburgh Texas in 1949. They came to Arizona in the 1950s. They had four girls and three boys. Though Mr. Diaz has passed away, the legacy he left behind is extraordinary. Despite his limited formal education (6th grade), Mr. Diaz had some great accomplishments. While in the U. S. Army, he became an avid reader and began to accumulate knowledge that he would later put to effective use. He started Diaz Scrap Metal business in Green Valley. This successful enterprise allowed him the time and resources to begin his volunteer

contribution of giving back to the community. Frank encouraged the community youth by funding uniforms and equipment and coached them as well. He saw how drug substance abuse was affecting his community and learned to write grants and programs that led to the creation of South Help, a drug-abuse shelter of which he was the volunteer Executive Director. He witnessed the hunger and need for clothing in this low-income community and began cooperating with other neighborhood leaders and the City of Phoenix to begin addressing these basic needs through the L.E.A.P. program. This program was centrally located at 12th Street and Mohave, currently the site of Carolina's Mexican Food Restaurant. There was also an additional site in Green Valley Park. Frank also encouraged his own children by having them work in the fields to appreciate how hard it is without an education. He acquired watermelons for the kids to sell door to door in the neighborhood to see how it feels to own your business. This valuable education has allowed the children to have their own successful lives. Above all else, Frank knew and understood the value of family. According to his children and wife, his last request was "...always promise me that you will remain united as a family." Nancy and her mother relate that Frank accepted Jesus Christ as his personal saviour and is waiting for them in Heaven.

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*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

## Adolfo “Dolffie”

**Mazon Hernandez** Dolffie, as Adolfo was known in the neighborhood, was born in the *Milpas* neighborhood in 1935 and has been a lifelong resident of the Phoenix area. His father, who worked in warehousing, also operated a small store selling canned food, *raspadas* and gas



*The Hernandez' were married in 1957 at St. Mary Magdalene Church*

*Photo courtesy of Hernandez family*

for stoves in his home on Yuma Street. After his parents divorced, Dolffie kept in close contact with his two sisters and three brothers. After military service, Dolffie met Virginia Cota. They were married in 1957 at St. Mary Magdalene Church in the Green Valley neighborhood. They have two children, Mark and Dena. Their first home on 12th Place was given to them by his father-in-law, who helped them with extensive repairs and remodeling. Their home was so close to the Rodeo Drive-In that the family enjoyed watching movies from their yard. Dolffie worked in various departments for the City of Phoenix and is currently retired. He attended night school over the years and received a degree from Phoenix College in civil engineering. Dolffie's neighborhood memories include weddings and other celebrations at Cana Hall on 12th Street. His uncle, John Hernandez, still resides next door to Cana Hall. He and Virginia currently live in west Phoenix and own properties in the *Barrios Unidos* area and are active in the local neighborhood association, *Barrios Unidos* Airport Action Coalition.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*



**Virginia Cota Hernandez** traces her family, the Cotas, back to Sonora, Mexico, through the mining town of Superior and finally to *Barrios Unidos* in the 1940s. Some of the topics covered included: political instability in Mexico in 1915, northward migration patterns,



*Manuel and Margarita Cota are pictured with their son, Daniel, in 1971 on Cocopah Street.*

*Photo courtesy of Hernandez family*

mining town experiences, housing discrimination in Phoenix, and community involvement in inner city Phoenix. Virginia is especially proud of the community contributions by her father, Manuel Cota. Along with other local community leaders such as John Gomez, George Patten, and Frank

Diaz, he brought relief to some of the poorer residents and homeless persons through boxes of food and clothes. This effort led to the present-day community service center, Sky Harbor Family Center. Virginia remembers that their large house on Cocopah was the site of numerous community meetings. Her father was also very active in his church, St. Mary Magdalene and with the other churches within Sacred Heart Parish, such as Santa Rita, St. John and Sacred Heart, and worked closely with the local priest, Father Albert Braun on related community issues. Manuel also was active in the Ann Ott School Council, *Sociedad Porfirio Diaz*, a service organization, and St. Vincent de Paul. Virginia recalls fondly the family home that her mother loved so much at 1206 E. Cocopah "...our house had two bedrooms and a basement, a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom, and the upstairs has two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen and a living room...it was painted southwestern, the shower and the bathroom had a mural painted...southwestern scene over the tub, the kitchen had little Mexican paintings on all the cabinets, the basement kitchen had glass windows on the doors, glass doors and they had little Mexican designs on the windows. It was really unusual and it was really beautiful." Her parents also served as foster parents to many children over the years.

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

**Francis Espinoza López** recalls the wonderful memories of her childhood playmates in Barrios Unidos. Her parents house was directly across from the “*plataforma*” or platform where all the dances would be held for the community. She recalls that she was too young to dance but did socialize with all the youngsters running and yelling during the festivities. “...*Jugaba* con everybody.” Francis says in her mixture of English and Spanish. She does recall fondly that she never felt fear or danger from other persons especially adults at any time in the neighborhood. Francis explained all that adults helped to supervise the children. “...grownups and everybody looked

after all the people, you know their kids...we were just like a big family really.” One reminder of the grinding poverty were the brides who carried laureles or oleanders for the bouquet as oleanders were found everywhere in *Barrios Unidos*. Francis did remark on one very important time in her youth and that was the Bible study class that she attended at *Las Casillas* Baptist Church with her Bible teacher, Mrs. Miles, “...It was a good time in my life...”

*Written by Lucas Cabrera*

**Joe Dean** was born in La Jarra, Colorado in 1933. His mother was born in Puerto Rico and his father in Bojap, India. Joe and his family lived in Colorado on a farm, Joe recalls as a young boy working alongside his family on their farm, pick-

the hardships his family faced during this period. He remembers his family continuing to work in the fields struggling to make ends meet. It wasn't until the 1940s that Joe and his family moved to Phoenix and they lived in the Marcos De Niza housing projects while Joe attended Lowell Elementary School. Joe attended Phoenix Tech where he received his diploma and then went on to the National Guard where he served honorably for ten years. Joe settled in *Barrios Unidos* in 1956. He remembers his home back then, “well it was a small house...it wasn't that bad...but within years I made it a little bigger and made it comfortable. Oh yeah...in '56 this was county then.” Joe has wonderful memories of the quiet barrio, until the airport began to grow in the eighties. He remembers the old Sacred Heart Church where he attended in the no-longer-existing Golden Gate community. He remembers shopping at Smitty's, Walgreen's, and Food City. Joe is very comfortable and happy in his home.

*Written by Mike Valdez*



*Joe Dean is pictured in the 1970s.*

*Photo courtesy of Dean family*

ing cotton, cauliflower, and other vegetables they grew. As the family continued to grow, Joe remembers moving around a lot. In the mid 1930s during the era of the Great Depression, Joe remembers moving to Casa Grande, Arizona and

## Glossary

**Ann Ott** Former teacher and principal of Stevenson School located in *Barrios Unidos*

**Barrio** Neighborhood

**Barrios Unidos** Neighborhoods United; Name chosen by residents to identify all four neighborhoods being united

**Bracero** Mexican field worker, especially a temporary worker supplied by treaty with Mexico

**Campito** the camps; A Neighborhood located within Barrios Unidos

**Canalito** A small canal

**Chicano/Chicana** U.S.-born of Mexican descent

**La crisis** The Great Depression of the 1930s

**Curandera** Mexican healer and/or Medicine woman

**Fayuquero** trader; Merchant

**Fiestas Patrias**-Community Celebrations of Mexican Independence

**Green Valley Park** City Park located in *Barrios Unidos*

**Golden Gate Barrio** No longer existing community located directly west of Sky Harbor International Airport. Relocated in the '80s

**Jaimacas** Social gatherings within a community

**La Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juarez** Mutual Aid Society

**Las Cuatro Milpas** The Four Corn Fields; A neighborhood within *Barrios Unidos*

**Laureles** A flower; oleanders

**Los Ojos de la Comunidad** The eyes of the com-

munity; A community block watch founded by the residents of *Barrios Unidos* in the 1980s

**Los Perros** Park 'N Swap located in Phoenix, Arizona at the Greyhound park on 40th Street and Washington

**Mexicano** Mexican-born citizen

**Nuestro Barrio** Our Neighborhood; Name chosen by residents in the 1980s by the neighborhood association

**Novenas** Prayer services within the Catholic faith. Ollas-cooking pots

**Palacio** A palace

**Piñatas** used in celebrations, filled with toys and candies

**Plataforma** platform

**Poncho's** Austin's Market located in Las Cuatro Milpas Community

**Posadas** processions or groups of persons walking and singing traditional Christmas carols

**Raspadas** snow cones

**Reina** A Queen

**Santa Rita** A church located in the *Campito* neighborhood

**Sociedad Porfirio Diaz** Mutual Aid Society

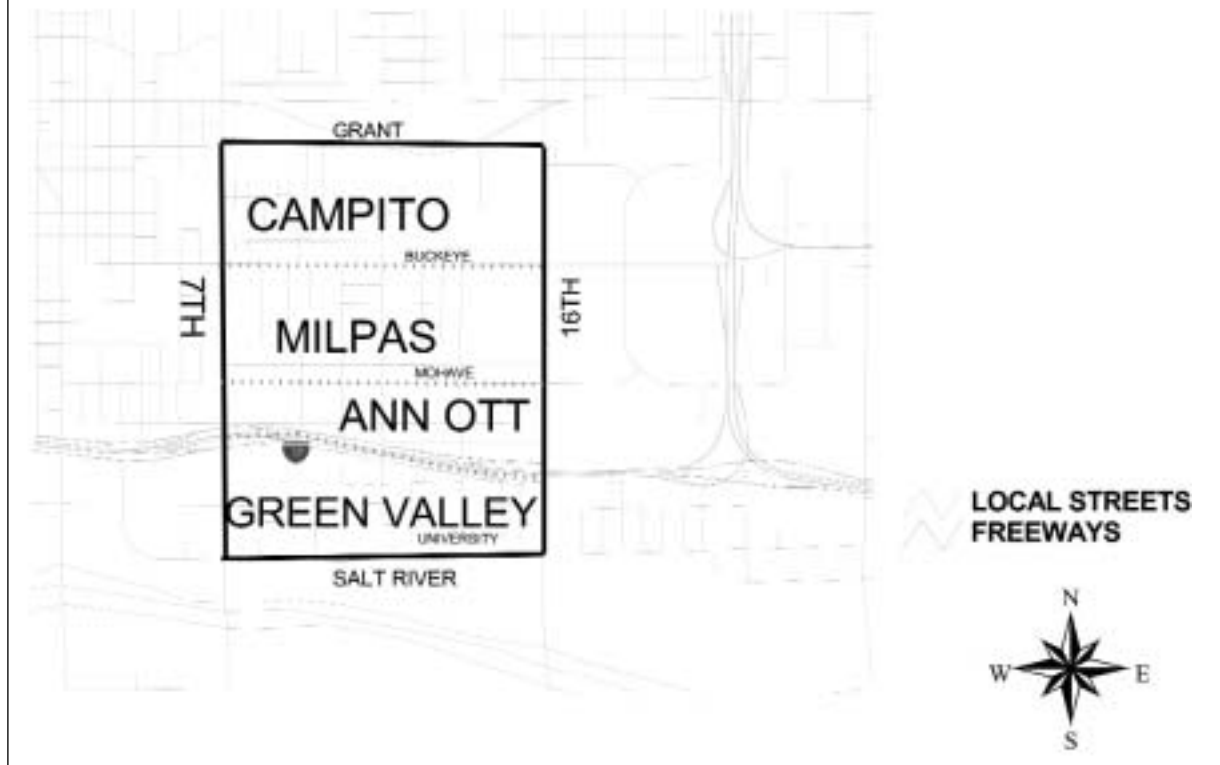
**St. Mary Magdeline** Church located in Green Valley community

**El Tapón** The Roosevelt Dam

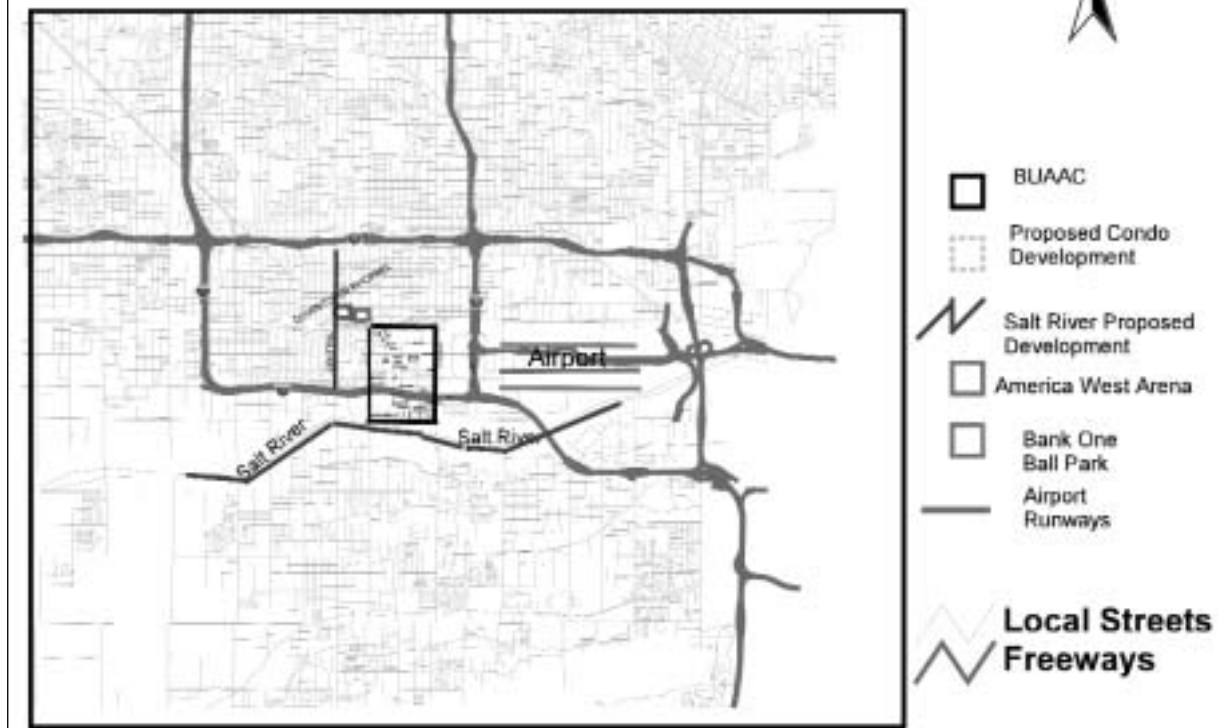
**Veloria** Funeral wakes

**Viejita** An older woman; elder

**BARRIOS UNIDOS NEIGHBORHOODS:  
Ann Ott, Campito, Green Valley, Campito**



**BUAAC NEIGHBORHOOD AND  
SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT  
PHOENIX, AZ MAY 2002**



*Maps created with help of Nikki Davis*