

MEMOIRS

OF

ARTHUR G. ALEMAN

BORN: OCTOBER 6, 1924  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

DIED: AUGUST 4, 1992  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

DEDICATED TO MY GRANDCHILDREN

“HE WHO LEAVES NO TRACE, HAS NO PAST”  
(A CHINESE PROVERB)

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(OCTOBER 6, 1924 - AUGUST 4, 1992)**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalm 111:10)

“Beauty to Ashes, Ashes to Gold  
Let The Light Shine Through of The Story I’ve Told”

My father was born January 7, 1897 in a small town in the state of Zacatecas, Mexico called La Blanca, Zacatecas in a mining state in north central Mexico. My mother was born April 25, 1903 in a small town near Piedras Negras, Mexico, called Villa de Fuente in the state of Coahuila, a northern border state with Texas. My father’s full name was ARTURO LOPEZ ALEMAN. My mother’s full name was ANTONIA GARZA de ALEMAN.

Because of the revolution in Mexico, my father, his grandmother and his uncle Sóstenes left Mexico in 1911 and came to the United States. Poor people in Mexico were tired of the dictator, Porfirio Díaz. Revolutionary leaders like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata would later defeat the Mexican Government for a better tomorrow in Mexico.

My father and his kin came to live in an area called Del Valle near Austin, Texas. Another uncle was already living there. It was there where he met a pretty young lady with hazel green eyes by the name of Antonia Garza. They had come to the United States for the same reason. She came from a big family, she being the oldest. My father was a Catholic but was attending a Methodist Church and later converted. My mother’s father, Galación Garza had been converted in Mexico by American Baptist Missionaries. My father and mother became friends, then sweethearts while picking cotton in the Del Valle area. On December 27, 1919 they were married by a Baptist preacher named named Paul C. Bell in Del Valle, TX. My father and his uncle were musicians playing guitar, violin, and accordion to people dancing at parties. All of that came to a halt after he married my mother, a young 16 year old teenager.

As the now young husband of today likes to go play golf, my father also had an obsession. He would leave my mother alone out in the country and would go all night hunting rabbits, coons, possum and other game like armadillos. My mother once complained to me that he did such a thing. After the birth of their first son on October 10, 1920, they moved into Austin. Austin was called “Waterloo” when it was a village on the banks of the Colorado River. It was founded in 1839 when Texas was a Republic. It was later named Austin after Stephen F. Austin, the father of Texas. Their first son was named ARTURO ALEMAN, JR. In 1923 when he was almost 3 yrs old he contracted Spinal Meningitis. He died of that disease. Arturo Alemán, Jr. is buried at San José Cemetery in Montopolis.

My parents were living at 607 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street near Waller Creek when I was born on Oct. 6, 1924. They named me ARTURO G. ALEMAN (“G” for Garza being my mother’s maiden name. Her father’s name was Galación Garza and her mother’s name was Eva

Escobar Garza. My mother once told me that I was born too “Peludo” (hairy), so I had my first haircut when I was three weeks old. Of course in English I am known as Arthur. The following year on Oct. 11, 1925 another son was born. They named him Samuel G. Alemán. He is known as Sam. When Sam was born they were living near Waller Creek close to Palm School. That is the elementary school where we all went. By the way, Waller Creek was named after Austin’s first Mayor, Edwin Waller. They later moved to 1101 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. on the corner of E. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Medina Street. It was there where my next brother was born. They named him Daniel G. Alemán. It was a house we called “la casa verde” because it was a green house. That house is still there with a different color. I might say at this time that we were all being born at home by a midwife. They couldn’t afford a hospital. That’s the way it was for poor people in those years. My mother’s cousin, Marcos Salazar, an orphan, was living with them at the time. My parents were raising him until he grew up and went on his own. He joined the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corp. He later married Mary Resendez, a girl from our church. My brother Daniel G. Alemán was born Jan. 14, 1927. We started calling him “Guero” because he was born real light complexioned, didn’t look ‘Latino’ at all. He even had brown hair. He never did like the nickname so we stopped called him that. He told my mother once that he wished he would have been born like me, “MORENITO”. Well, I’m really not too “MORENO”. So I say.

On January 16, 1931 my youngest brother was born. He is also light complexioned and they named him MOSES AARON ALEMAN - the only brother that does not use the Garza name. My mother liked the name Moses and my father liked Aaron. Moses and Aaron were brothers in the Bible. They had moved to 1112 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street where he was born. That house, which used to be yellow, still stands as of this year, 1991. My mother used to dress Daniel and Moses like girls with long brown curly hair because she actually wanted a daughter.

So on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1935 a pretty daughter was born. They named her Eunice from the Bible. In the New Testament Timothy’s mother was Eunice. As you can see they all have Biblical names except me. I was named after my father. I like my name though. My father had worked as a hotel cook and a Porter on a Pullman train from San Antonio to Mexico City. He got sick of some bad hiccups that wouldn’t go away. So he quit. Mother never did like that job anyway because he would be away a long time. He then started working at the Driskell and Austin Hotels as a cook. His uncle Sóstenes also worked there. He then quit the hotels and went to work at a clothing store on East 6<sup>th</sup> St. with a Jewish man by the name of Sol Ginsburg. He was the owner of the store. Dad also worked with Jerome Silberstein and a Mr. Swartz. He learned the way Jewish people do business. In those years E. 6<sup>th</sup> St. was nothing but Mexican and Negro beer joints and Jewish department stores. It was pretty rough. It was during the depression and for a while my dad also sold eggs, books and chicharrones (made to sell cracklings). He had us squeezing the shortening out of them. In 1929 when I was 5 yrs old they sent me to my first public school. It was Comal School at the corner of E. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Comal St. It was like a segregated school for Mexican American children. There was another one on the west side of Austin called “West Ave School” near a chili factory. There was also a park there. They called it “Chili Park”. At Comal School I still remember the teachers. They

were Mrs. Myslam, Mrs. Durham, Mrs. Moore and Miss Consuelo Herrera. I remember Miss Herrera well. She was the youngest and the prettiest and the first Mexican American teacher in the AISD. She had two sisters that also became teachers, Mary Grace and Edelmira. Now, I am glad that there is an elementary school named after my first teacher, the Consuelo H. Mendez School. I even remember that the janitor's name at Comal was Mr. Quiñones. Comal School had a large bell that we used to ring by hand. We took turns because everybody wanted to ring it. We rang it for recess, for lunch and at the end of the school day. For lunch they gave us a bowl of soup and sometimes a bone with a little meat on it or marrow bone. This cost us a penny. I would say the AISD has come a long way with their meals. On Tuesdays it was banking day. We all had bank books and mama would give us a nickel to bank. This was a task that the teachers had. In those years a nickel would go a long way. Things that cost a nickel then were a soda water, a cup of coffee, a pint of milk, a hamburger or a hot dog and also we could go to the movies for a nickel if you were under 12 years old. My mother would stand in the middle of graveled East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street on the eleven hundred block to watch me and Sam walk to Comal School. Sam was 5 and I was 6 yrs old then. Some of my school friends at Comal School were Arturo Muñoz, Joel Rodriguez, Narciso Gil, Otis Gil, Elisa Hernandez, Manuela Salazar, Ignacio Galván, Manuel Alemán (no relation), Edelmira Herrera, Elena Delgado, Robert Delgado, Julia Gil and Ezequiel Rodríguez.

After Comal School I went to Palm School at East Avenue and East 1<sup>st</sup> Street. Now it is Interstate 35 and E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street. Palm School had been constructed in 1892 and was built originally as an Arsenal for the U.S. Army. The Army later gave it to the City of Austin to be used as an elementary school. The Principal was W. L. Darnell. I remember him well. Other teachers that I remember there Miss Helems, Miss Casis, Mrs. Blomeke who was crippled, Miss Thompson, the music teacher, Miss Burden, Miss Mysler, the recreation or P.T. teacher and Miss Mollie Barrington, a tall teacher that taught me how to hold the pencil right and also how to write. During my stay at Palm School I had two fights with anglo boys. They were Joe Bomert, a short fellow that wore glasses and James Braddock. In those years the teachers had permission to paddle us and that they did! If we didn't behave they whipped the "cobwebs" out of us. We had 'assembly' on Mondays. We would all go to the auditorium and sing. We would sing the school song, ♪"Palm School is our school and we're proud of it" ♪

Palm School was about four or five blocks away from our house. Palm Park had a swimming pool but as Mexican Americans we were not allowed to swim there. There was discrimination then. We had trouble even playing in the park. When I was about 12 or 13 years old I went walking into the park one evening. A gang of anglo boys led by a mean guy they called "Buck Shot" Moore stopped me and asked me where I was going. I told them I was going to see people swim. They told me I wasn't allowed in the park. I saw them picking up rocks so I ran up the hill and out of the park with rocks flying all over me. I didn't get hit. Outside the park there was a tall dark complexioned Mexican boy with a big knife. We called him "La Changa". He wanted to go into the park and fight. I didn't want to fight so I went back home.

In the 1930s there were kids and adults shining shoes and selling newspapers on the streets. There were trolleys or street cars rumbling all over Austin. We could ride them for a nickel. My brothers and my cousins, the Almanzas, and a friend named Nacho Galván, that we called “Paper Hat”, used to go to the Market Place on E. 7<sup>th</sup> and East Avenue and help clean the fruits and vegetables for a small fee. We called the place in Spanish “El Parián” even though the name is really “El Mercado”. The Austin Police building is there now. The Market Café was at the corner of E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street and East Ave. It was owned by a Greek man named “Manos”. Sam, Dan and I used to ride the street car for a nickel to go buy a big sack of day old bread at a bakery on 5<sup>th</sup> St. and Lavaca. This sack of bread only cost us 50 cents. We would place the big sack of bread at the front of the street car next to the conductor.

After Palm School I attended John T. Allan Jr. High School. Before my time that school was actually Austin High School but they later built the new Austin High School at Rio Grande and West 12<sup>th</sup> St. Allan Jr. High School was a big three story red brick building with a basement that also housed class rooms. It had a big slide on the outside for use in case of a fire. It also had another slide that was spiral. The school was so big that I started getting lost. But I got used to it later. The gym was next to the school. It used to be a Negro Baptist Church. Soon the school had a new gym and the old one was torn down. Mr. Tommy Birdwell was the gym teacher for boys. There I went to school with Walter Bremond (Brewster), Tommy Steiner of the Buck Steiner Ranch and James Crozier. I think he is a banker now. The other students that I remember were Eugene Allen, Floyd Bates, Mary Alice Alvarez, Stenajean Caldwell, Maurice Hall, Ollie McGill, Ollie Caffee, Lucille Garza (she is now Mecey), Tell Matlock, Charles Betts, Robert Betts, Stanley Berkman, Arthur & Theodore Jabour (twins), Lee Hello, Thomas Daywood and Frances Jabour.

I had a kind of old woman teacher there named Mrs. Crockett. She claimed she was related to David Crockett, the Alamo hero. One day I was whistling in the hall the tune “Yankee Doodle”. She stopped me and told me to quit whistling that tune. She said that if I had to whistle, to whistle “Dixie”. I said OK, but I didn’t understand why (We were just a small bunch of Hispanics going there at the time). There was another Jr. High near the U.T. Stadium. That was University Jr. High School. The building was owned by U.T. Allan Jr. High burned down in the early 1950s. The First Baptist Church of Austin is there now. Some teachers I had at Allan Jr. High were: Mrs. Belger, the Spanish teacher, Mr. Reece, Mr. Gustafson and Mrs. Blackburn, the math teacher, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Comber and Mrs. Crockett and a pretty teacher Miss Blair; also Mrs. Pennybacker and Mr. Watson. In 1936 Franklin D. Roosevelt was running for President and made a whistle stop by train at East Avenue and E. 4<sup>th</sup> St. I remember I saw him there and he made a speech without getting off the train. I don’t remember what he said. I was only 12 and wasn’t interested in politics. The place was only one block away from our church, the First Mexican Baptist Church of Austin at the corner of East 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and East Avenue. I was there with my parents and my brothers. People were selling hamburgers, tamales, tacos, drinks and snow cones. Some of our church members were also selling.

In 1930 there were about 5,000 Hispanics living in Austin. By 1952 there were 13,000 and now, in 1991 there are 124,000. Another event I remember in old Austin is when Governor W. Lee O'Daniel was inaugurated as Governor of Texas in 1941. I remember they had a free barbeque and sodas for everybody on the lawn of the Governor's mansion. About 20,000 persons participated and ate about 19,000 lbs of barbeque. My brothers and I took part in that festivity. I don't think that can happen again. W. Lee O'Daniel had a Hill Billy band and was well liked by everybody. Right below E. 1<sup>st</sup> St. on East Avenue there was like a Gazebo or Kiosk ("Kiosko" as we say in Spanish). We just happened to be at a rally with our parents for Miriam Ferguson, running for Governor in 1933. A Mexican man was speaking on her behalf and kept saying "vote for Ma Furgas instead of Ferguson. We were laughing at him.

When we were pretty young our parents used to take us to the Capitol. We used to climb all the way to the very top by way of a spiral stairway inside the side of the dome. Somebody fell once and landed dead in the Rotunda. So they closed the upper part. The spiral stairway looked pretty old to me, since it was built in 1888. Maybe someday they will open it again. In 1986 they took off the Goddess of Liberty from the top of the Capitol. I went and took pictures of the event. I even had my picture taken with her in front of the Capitol. I found out she wasn't good looking. Helicopters had a hard time trying to put the new one on. My mother always called her "La Mona"

When Tex Ritter came to Austin he was appearing at the Ritz Theater. I was selling the Austin American Statesman at the Austin Hotel. He came out into the street going to the Ritz. I saw him pretty close and talked to him. I told him to draw for his guns. He did and scared the heck out of me. He didn't buy a paper. In those years the Austin American Statesman would come out with a noon edition in green. Then at 5:00 pm another one came out in pink. We called it the "pink pop".

In the month of October the Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus would come into town. We would go and see them unload by train at E. 4<sup>th</sup> and Waller Streets. It was real early in the morning and we wouldn't go to school. At the circus grounds we would get a job giving water to the elephants or help put up the tents. We would get free tickets to see the show. At other times we would slip in under the tent.

We used to play Cowboys in the back yard of the house and I remember we all had names. I was Bob Steele, Sam was Buck Jones, Dan was Charles Starret and one of my cousins was Tom Mix. We also played tops and marbles and pushed Casins or tires all over the place, and baseball of course. On Sundays Dad would take us to Zaragoza Park in east Austin to see a baseball game and we would swim at the pool. We would throw a watermelon into the pool water to cool it. Then we would eat it. We would also go on Sundays out in the country to the "Rancho" where Dad's relatives, the Menchacas, lived. It was on the other side of Bergstrom Air Force Base towards Elroy and Creedmore. We used to ride a mule called Colley Boy. We would ride the mule with Martin Menchaca.

One day we were getting ready to go to Palm Park to play tackle football and mother told us not to go. I told my brothers "lets go anyway". We went and while I was carrying the

football for a touchdown, a friend Joel Rodriguez tackled me from behind and dislocated my shoulder. Well the game was over then and everybody went home all shook up. At home they were getting ready to take me to the hospital and I started crying. It wasn't because of the pain, but because I thought God was punishing me for disobeying mama. A Doctor Esquivel fixed me up and taped my shoulder. I had it like that for about three weeks. Dad also used to like to take us to the Austin Municipal Airport. In the 1930s the airport terminal was a little house and a couple of runways. We would get out of dad's 1928 Chevy and stand there watching the planes land and take off. There was another airport around what now is Koenig Lane. The old hanger is still there near a Nursery close to where the Southern Union Gas Co. is located on Koenig Lane.

We kept selling newspapers with our cousins, the Almanzas, and Nacho Galván. I'm surprised my parents used to let us sell them all over town. We sold the San Antonio Light, San Antonio Evening News and the Austin American Statesman. The Austin boss in the streets was Frank Salinas. He was a real hustler. I sold papers at the Queen Theater on Congress Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> St., at the Maverick Café also on Congress Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> St. and also at a service station at the corner of Congress Avenue and East 1<sup>st</sup>. St. I was selling newspapers there one real cold Saturday night. Every once in a while I would go inside the station with the man inside to warm up. I couldn't stay inside too long because I had to sell. One night the San Antonio Light manager sent me to a restaurant called "The Toonerville". It was so far away from downtown that I thought I was near Round Rock. It was what now is North Lamar and Houston Street near 55<sup>th</sup> St. A U-haul business is located there now and across the street is a McDonald's restaurant. Now I live several blocks north of there.

I was selling newspapers at the train depot on E. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Congress Avenue when a train arrived with the Texas A&M football team. It was in about 1939 and they were undefeated scheduled to possibly play in the Rose Bowl. The train had a big banner that read "Rose Bowl Bound". I guess they had been invited, but they had to defeat the Texas Longhorns at the Thanksgiving Day game. The Longhorns beat them and kept them from going to the Rose Bowl. At the stadium we were selling football programs. We were told to yell "**OFFICIAL PROGRAM A DIME – NAMES, NUMBERS, POSITIONS OF EACH AND EVERY PLAYER**". That was kind of hard to say but we finally got it. One of my cousins, MATIAS ALMANZA, would get all messed up with the words and couldn't come out with it. We would be laughing at him. When the game was over I remember seeing Aggies real mad and cursing and their girl friends crying. I think Jack Crain, the "Nocona Nugget" and "Pistol Pete" Layden were playing for the Longhorns. On the Texas A&M side they had John Kimbrough.

We had our fun selling newspapers. I sold newspapers with Lebanese guys like Lee Hello, William Hello, the Joseph brothers (twin brothers) and even Matt Martinez, who later became owner of EL RANCHO RESTAURANT. Also on the scene selling papers were Thomas Daywood, Dave Abraham, Tom Attra, Louis Meccey, Phillip Attal the Cázares brothers, Eugene, Pete and Ephraim.

During the Christmas season different organizations would be giving away free fruits, candy and nuts. We used to make all of them, such as the Austin Fire Department at the Town Lake Tower where the fireman were trained, the Shriners at Ben Hur Temple, the Optimist Club, the Paramount and Ritz Theaters as well as activities of Austin Mayor Tom Miller. The mayor, a heavy set man, had a business and it was “turkeys”. He is the best Mayor Austin ever had and always wore a suit and with a necktie. He was generous and I guess that’s why he stayed in office so long. There were no drugs or crimes then so mama didn’t mind us getting involved. She knew who we hung around with.

There was a theater called the “Capital Theater” on W. 6<sup>th</sup> St. that would show Spanish movies at midnight only on Saturday nights. I used to walk with my parents to see these movies on Saturday nights. Also during the summers my brothers and I would walk all the way to Zaragoza Park in East Austin early in the mornings to swim at the pool located there. Dad wouldn’t let us go swim at the Colorado River which was actually closer to our house than Zaragoza Park. Dr. John Albert García was the life guard at the Zaragoza Park swimming pool when he was a young man. He later became a physician. To get to the park we would walk along the railroad tracks going east. Sometimes we would hitch a ride on the train. We would hang on to the box cars and ride, until I would tell the boys to jump off. We were lucky that none of us got hurt. We would not tell this to our parents.

On E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street I still remember the cowboys herding cattle down to the Abattoir. We called it “La Matanza” (The Slaughtering). Some of the cows would get into my mom’s plants and flowers in the front yard. This was at 1112 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> where we lived at the time. At the Abattoir the cows would get slaughtered. There was a black man working there whose job was to hit them on the head killing them instantly. My dad told us about the black man’s duties. Then much later in 1989 I was drinking coffee with a black man at Joe’s Bakery & Café on E. 7<sup>th</sup> St. While talking about old Austin, he told me HE was the black man that was killing the cows (small world!).

In 1937 a man robbed a Grain Company that we called “El Molino” (The Mill). He lived in our neighborhood and hid in his own house. The police and the owner of the mill were looking for him with guns drawn. They surrounded the corner house at E. 3<sup>rd</sup> & Medina and caught him. His name was Tommy Waldrop. This was a lot of excitement because that mill’s warehouse was behind our house and across the alley. During the man hunt my mom yelled at us to come into the house before a stray bullet hit us.

Besides selling papers I used to hop for a Mr. Farley. He had a car and paper route and I used to ride on the fender of his car, a 1937 Chevrolet, and throw the papers from the car to the yards. One day a car hit me in the legs. The policeman told me and Mr. Farley “he is lucky he didn’t break a leg or he could have been killed. He told us that I shouldn’t ride the fender anymore. I used to feel good riding in a modern car. My dad had a 1928 Chevrolet, big difference! Before the 1937 Chevy, Farley had a 1924 Ford. I was riding in style in the 1937 car! One Sunday morning Mr. Farley took me to eat breakfast at the “Hungry Man” on Red River Street. I ate scrambled eggs and pancakes with bacon. I felt like a king. I was used to 3 minute oatmeal at home.



One day we heard that the Salvation Army was giving away free milk and buttermilk. This was during the “depression”. The Salvation Army was at Congress Ave & E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Mother used to send Sam, Dan and me with clean pails to get some of that sweet milk. We didn’t like the buttermilk. Again, we would walk to the place. Sometimes my father wouldn’t even take his car to work on 6<sup>th</sup> St. He would just walk. The name of the stores where he worked was “The White House”, the “New York Store” and “The House of Bargains”.

At the corner of E. 1<sup>st</sup> St. and Waller the Tenth Ward Fire Station was there and across the street was a Piggly Wiggly grocery store where my mother used to send us to get a pound of Hamburger meat for 15 cents and a pint of milk for a nickel (5 cents). There was a Tower Light at the corner of E. 1<sup>st</sup> and Waller Streets. It was one of 31 that had been built & erected. Now there are only about 17 left in the city. They were erected in the 1894 - 1895 time period. Those tower lights would light up the whole City of Austin.

Another little job that I had for a while was at the Green and White Grocery Store on the corner of E. 7<sup>th</sup> and Waller Streets. Mr. Norberto Lopez owned and ran that store. He had married my mother’s cousin, Susie whom we called Aunt Susie. Norberto’s brother was Monroe Lopez. Monroe had El Matamoros Restaurant, the one and only big Mexican Restaurant in those years. There was also El Monterrey Café at E. 6<sup>th</sup> and Red Rivers St. The Wing-On café was also on E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street. It had two entrances, one for Blacks and one for Whites. It was like a Chinese Restaurant. On Red River Street I worked at the New China Food Market. A Chinese man named Fred Wong ran that store. I worked there when I was attending Allan Jr. High and would work from 7:00am until 7:00pm for \$1.00 and I’m glad that was only on Saturdays. I worked with Felipe Acosta as he was the truck driver. The Spanish Village Mexican Restaurant on Red River Street is the oldest since it started operating there in 1931 and is still going strong today.

When I was about 13 years of age something happened to me. I began to get head aches. I remember one day my brothers Sam and Dan and our cousins, the Almanzas, and I were walking to House Park near Austin High School to see a baseball game. I started getting those headaches so bad that I would stop and rest and everybody would wait for me. When the game was over we walked back home and the head ache continued. They were making me cry. My mother called the nurse, Mrs. Brockhart who spoke Spanish. She suggested that I be taken to the clinic at Brackenridge Hospital. After checking me out they found out I had Spinal Meningitis. Mother started crying because she had already lost her first born son to that same dreaded disease. The doctors consoled her telling her that they knew how to cure meningitis. I stayed at the hospital for 3 weeks. They were inserting a long needle in the middle of my back without putting me to sleep. I got cured but they put our house on Quarantine because meningitis is contagious. It never came back on me. Mama stayed with me all of the time.

In the 1930s we also liked to junk. We would go into the back alleys picking up medals, copper, rags, iron and bones. There was a Calloways Junk Yard at E. 4<sup>th</sup> and Waller St. We would sell the junk to him. If he gave us 15 cents or 20 cents we would be happy. With a nickel we could go to the Skinny’s Theater. One funny thing happened while I

am on the subject of 'junking'. Our friend, Ignacio "Paper Hat" Galvan had a dog. One day the dog died. The first thing he thought about was "bones", so he could sell the bones to Mr. Calloway. He dragged the dead dog to a place under his house. They lived in the 300 block of East Avenue, next to our pastor's house. In a few days the dead dog began to smell. The whole family started asking each other what was stinking so bad. "Nacho" knew but he wouldn't say a thing. They finally found the dead dog and made him drag it out. The thought to himself, "there goes my bones". We thought it was funny. At the junk yard, the Austin Metal and Iron Company, we used to see railroad cars full of iron and metal and it was all going to Japan. Nobody knew that Japan was already preparing for war, and we were selling Japan the materials to make weapons.

I might mention our neighbors there on E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. These were the Bazáns, the López, the Hipólitos, the Kunchics, the Sierras, the Smiths, Mr. Gilman, the Martínez, Almanzas and Mr. Charlie Hamby. Mr. Hamby was some kind of a policeman and rode a brown horse. He wore a mustache, was always in civilian clothes and used a black hat, which was not western style.

The Skinny's Theater was on Congress Avenue on about the 900 block. He always showed 'shoot 'em up' cowboy movies. One day he was letting kids in for free if they had front teeth missing, then it was freckled face kids. We dotted our faces with a color marker cause we heard he would let us in free that way, and he did! Then it was Red headed kids. Well, that left us Mexican American kids out, except one. Fernando "Red" Cantú, a Mexican American friend from our neighborhood was red headed and freckled face. He made out very good. Mr. Skinny (real name Pryor) was a good man. He later moved his movie theater business to East 6<sup>th</sup> Street and changed the name to the Cactus Theater. Mr. Pryor was Cactus Pryor's father. "Cactus" used to work in the theater. And sometimes Mr. Skinny would get one of us to go get him a glass of water, then he would let us in for free, any little thing to help us out. He did have some competition and that was the Ritz Theater also on E. 6<sup>th</sup> St. They were also showing cowboy movies at the Ritz. We used to go in for a nickel if under 12 years of age. I will never forget the first time I didn't get in for a nickel. The lady at the Ritz ticket booth asked me how old I was and I said I'll be 12 in October. She said "**No you're not, you are over 12**". I went home almost crying. I didn't get to see the serial. I think they were also showing Tom Mix. The Cactus Theater was in the 500 block of E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The Relief Building was in the next block and this is where people would line up to get free canned food. This was during the depression years.

I attended Austin High School in 1939 – 1940. It was during the time that Travis Raven was a football hero there with the Austin High Maroons. I remember Billy Quinn, Johnny Lucious, Raymond Jones and Pete Lewis. Travis Raven later became football coach for Reagan High School here in Austin. Other students I remember are Beatrice Arréchiga, E. R. Flores, Joel Rodriguez and Ken Jackson. There were just a few Hispanics in the whole school. I hung around with Joel Rodriguez, the guy that had dislocated my shoulder in a sandlot game. There was also Sarah Quintanilla; she is now Reyes, Martha Soto, Bertha Sifuentes, Ladislao Castro, Ruben and Eliseo Ortega. They were Daniel Ortega's brothers. Dan Ortega had worked for the Austin Recreation Dept.

He was killed in Europe during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Dan was killed in France on August 6, 1944 while serving as a medic and carrying a wounded soldier to safety. The Daniel Ortega Elementary School located in East Austin is named for him. I knew him well. Our family knew all of the Ortegas. They had seven sons (including one adopted) all of whom served during World War II. At Austin High School I had a teacher by the name of Mrs. Nitschke. **Mrs. Nitschke's father was the son of Susanna Dickenson's daughter, Angelina, who according to recorded history was the only baby at The Alamo. Susanna Dickenson, Angelina's mother, was the lady at the Alamo as recorded in Texas History. Her husband died in the battle of the Alamo and she was taken prisoner by the Mexican Army but later General Santa Ana released her so she could tell the news of the Alamo's fall in defeat. Mrs. Willard Marian Nitschke, my history teacher at Austin High School, died on June 23, 1990 at the age of 92.** All of this information was written in her obituary published in the Austin American Statesman. I never knew this until I saw it in the paper. I don't remember her telling us this story. She probably did. I didn't appreciate History then like I do now. Mrs. Nitschke was also the founder of the "Austin Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas". I also had Mr. Guy Bizzell for my English class in 1940. The reason I mention him is because he also taught my kids at McCallum High School in the 1970s. My gym teachers were Mr. Johnny Keel, Mr. Tony Burger and football coach Stan Lambert.

In 1940 while in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade I did something that I regret to this day. I wasn't doing very well in school, especially in Algebra II and Geometry, etc. I was getting frustrated with my grades so much that I decided to quit school. Dad didn't like it and told me if I was going to drop out I would have to go to work, and that is what I did. I had even taken up Boxing in school. In those years it was like joining the football or baseball team. I went to work in a Cleaners and Barbershop that was also a Taylor's shop. I was washing men's trousers and pressing them along with my cousin Joe Almanza and Nacho Galván. Nacho's father, Ignacio Galván, Sr. was the Taylor and Raymond Donley, Sr. was one of the barbers. He was the father of Cowboy Donley, a band leader that played guitar with Tex-Mex music. My salary was hardly anything. I finally quit and went to work at the Lockhart's Federal Bakery. It was in the 900 block of Congress Ave and was also a restaurant. Mrs. Prudence Brooks was the manager there. The bakers I worked with were a father and son, Mr. Apolonio Navarro and his son Sonny Navarro. Mr. O. P. Lockhart was the owner. Mr. Watson Hoover was the truck driver. At noon for an hour I would help the dishwasher wash dishes in the kitchen of the Restaurant and would get a free meal. Mr. Lockhart started me with a salary of \$5.00 per week as a porter. I later started helping the bakers in the bakery and soon I was making \$7.50 per week, then was raised to \$9.50 a week. I was going to work there at 4:00 AM.

Pretty soon I had my brother Sam working there also. Mr. Arthur Soto was one of the night bakers. Shorty Ramirez was the dishwasher in the restaurant area. Later my younger brother, Moses also came to work there too. The front area of the Bakery had Betty Jean Seaholm and Mrs. Bergman. Mrs. Bergman's son, Stanley went to school with me. Also in school with us was a Manuel Aleman and everybody thought that he was our brother. When I started working at this Bakery and Café it was 1941 and I was 16 years old. At one time they had me frying all the doughnuts. I was working there on

December 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. It was a Sunday morning and we had gone to church. Rev. Ignacio Gonzalez had baptized me in 1936 and this was at the First Mexican Baptist Church of Austin where Rev. Gonzalez was our pastor. We heard over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been bombed but we didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor or where it was. We thought nothing of it. After lunch my brothers and I went to the Queen Theater to see a movie. When we came out, the Pearl Harbor news was the newspaper headlines. Well, pretty soon it was 1942 and America was at war with the Japanese, the Germans and the Italians. I kept on working at the bakery and reading about the war.

About that time an incident happened to me. I was walking down E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street one night going home from work. A clean cut Anglo young guy with a new car stopped me and asked me if I wanted a ride home. I didn't see anything wrong with the suggestion so I said yes. While riding in the car with him we approached East Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup>. I told him to turn right towards E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. It was then that he asked me where the prostitutes were and had their business. I told him 'right there' and pointed to some houses where the Mexican Restaurant El Matamoros later was built. I also told him about the following block. Everybody knew that. All of a sudden he no longer was interested in women. He started feeling my leg. When we got to the corner of East Avenue and East 3<sup>rd</sup> I told him to turn left. By that time he had his hand up to my thigh. He was driving real slow and I started getting scared. When we got to our house I told him "stop, there it is". He then stepped on the gas. But at that time I jumped out of the car and fell to the ground on the gravel street. I got all scratched up and full of dust, but I was glad that I was out of his car. I didn't know anything about "homosexuality". And I was lucky that I didn't get hurt jumping out of his car. When I got home, everybody in the family was asleep except for my mom. I never told anybody about the incident. The following year while in the Navy I told the story to a friend of mine from Chicago. He told me the fellow was a "queer" or as they say now these days "Gay".

Another job that I forgot to mention in the 1930s was scraping bricks. We heard of a place at the corner of East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Red River near the railroad tracks where they had a big pile of used bricks full of dried up cement. They were paying a penny per brick to scrape them clean. So there I was with others sitting on a pile of bricks working. There was a Mexican man sitting next to me and he noticed that I was selecting the bricks with less cement. All of a sudden he looked at me and said in Spanish "**No mas no me los escojas Padre Santo**", which means "Just don't select them for me Holy Father". We never forgot that, especially my brother Daniel. Well anyway those pennies meant movies.

When I was 17 yrs old and working at the bakery I started training to become a boxer and fight in the Golden Gloves. I used to spar around with Tom Attra, a Syrian guy older and bigger than me. We knew him because he sold newspapers with us. Our boxing time was at the Austin Athletic Club near Austin High School. Once he hit me in the ribs pretty hard and the pain hurt me for about two weeks. I never got to fight in the Golden Gloves. Other fighters training there were Bert Linam, Dick Bryant, Rocky Calderón, Manuel Menchaca and Valentino Luna. We had a real strict trainer by the name of Mr. Louie

Muñoz. He took things seriously and did not allow cursing, drinking alcoholic beverages or fooling around. I actually wanted to join the U.S. Navy but I was 17 and needed my parent's signature, which my father refused to sign, thinking I was too young. So I waited until I was 18 years old. Since that was the 'draft' age, they would let you enlist without your parents' consent.

At our church I was interested in a pretty girl that had come to Austin from San Antonio. She started singing in the choir, so I joined the choir too. Our Pastor, the Rev. Carlos Paredes was also the Director of the choir. The girl at the church that I liked was Lucy Castro. I had a Silver King bicycle then and Fernando "Red" Cantú and I used to ride our bikes over to the 2100 block of E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street to see her because that was where she lived. Red Cantú had a girl friend that lived in the "Buena Vista Barrio", which was in the same direction of where Lucy lived.

The reason that I wanted to join the Navy was because one day I was walking down E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street and I saw Manuel Menchaca coming down the street in his U.S. Navy uniform. He was real trimmed and looked real sharp in his uniform and with his "Donald Duck" sailor hat. I said to myself, "That's for me". At the bakery I told Mr. Navarro that I was quitting and going to enlist in the Navy. He didn't much like it. So on January 27, 1943 I walked over to the Navy Recruiting Office on West 6<sup>th</sup> Street and joined the U.S. Navy not knowing what I would be doing. At the recruiting station I met Jesse Riojas, who was also joining the Navy. The Navy recruiter told us the Navy was taking in **Navy Seabees**. We didn't know what that was. He told us they were forming Construction Battalions (C.B.'s) and Stevedores. He said like Navy engineers. So after a slight physical exam we signed up. He told us we would go thru another physical exam in Houston. My friend, Jesse Riojas, was from Pflugerville, TX and he would be with me. At home I told my parents about it. They knew that sooner or later the Army was going to draft me anyway. I had already registered for the military draft and I was classified 1A.

At the church I informed the pastor, Rev. Carlos Paredes and the congregation. In 1943 our church, the First Mexican Baptist Church of Austin was small and was located at the corner of East Avenue and East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. It had been organized on March 24, 1899 by the Rev. Santiago Muza, a Baptist Missionary of Italian origin. The Mission was originally located in West Austin at 402 San Antonio Street, where the Covert Buick Automobile agency now stands. In that "barrio" (neighborhood), there was also the Latin American Methodist Church, the Guadalupe Catholic Church as well as the Mexican Presbyterian Church (according to Joe Galindo, a Presbyterian friend of mine). He is now the owner of El Lago Tortillas on East 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The majority of the Hispanics lived in West Austin in those years. For some reason they started moving to the East side. Maybe they were following their churches because the Hispanic churches all moved to the east side. Some of the Hispanics who formerly lived on the west side were the Lunas, Seguras, Martinez, Quintanillas, Carmonas, Maldonados, Aguilar, and Mr. Barrera, the barber who used to cut my hair there. My mother remembered the Baptist Mission on the west side of Austin. It was a two story yellow house that belonged to an Anglo lady. My mother was baptized there in 1910. She and her family used to attend the Baptist Mission in West Austin and came there on a wagon drawn by horses all the way from Del Valle,

which was a farming community east of Austin in the area that later became Bergstrom Air Force Base. It is a coincidence that the same preacher who married my father and mother out in the farming community of Del Valle, later became the pastor of the church in 1919. His name was Rev. Paul C. Bell and he was an anglo preacher who spoke Spanish. Another interesting thing is that the missionary who organized our church, Bro. Santiago Muza, was a former Catholic Priest. The church also had an interim pastor who was also an ex-Catholic priest and he was there before Bro. Paredes. He was a Spaniard and his name was Rev. Felix Buldain, This was in about 1941. My mother became the historian for the church and wrote the early history of our church. I was baptized by Pastor Ignacio Gonzalez in 1936 along with the Rincon brothers, Pete, Frank and David.

Back to the war and the Navy; we went to Houston on a bus. There we were given a complete physical exam. They lined us up about ready to get sworn in. I remember the Navy Perry Officer telling us “OK you guys there is a war going on and some of you might not come back. You are volunteers and you still have a chance to change your mind. Everybody take one step forward to get sworn in”. Everybody did get sworn in. The next day we went to eat at a restaurant downtown. The meal was paid by the Navy. The juke box was playing “Moonlight Becomes You”. Bing Crosby was singing it and there were about 30 of us Texans in the group. The following day we boarded a train. I really liked that train ride because it was a “Pullman”. It had a dining car and at night beds to sleep. Some of the guys were gambling. I had about 40 or 50 dollars in my pockets. I didn't know anything about gambling so I just kept quiet. \$50 was a good bit of money then. While sitting in the train riding I was thinking of so many things: the folks back home, the church, the bakery and Lucy Castro. Then I thought of something that happened to me when I was going to Allan Jr. High School. I was walking to school one morning crossing the railroad tracks when I saw two big pieces of metal. I said to myself, “if these are still here when I am out of school I will get them and sell them as junk to Mr. Calloway's junk yard”. I don't know how they got there. I got my brothers Sam and Dan to help me that afternoon. Since I was the oldest I sent Sam to get something to carry them. I also sent Dan to get me some chewing gum at the drug store at E. 6<sup>th</sup> St. and East Avenue. A Mexican man at Austin Metal and Iron Co. was watching me and called the police. A plain clothes man with a big cigar by the name of Mr. Frank Turner approached me. He asked me what I was doing. Real innocently I told him I was going to sell the junk to Mr. Calloway. He accused me of getting them out of the Austin Metal & Iron Co. on east 4<sup>th</sup> St. I told him that wasn't true. I lost the argument and he took me in his car to “jail”.

Dan and Sam saw the whole incident at a distance. They got all shook up and went home to let the family know. My mother was at the church with the women's sewing circle and dad was working. At the police station the cops were asking me a bunch of questions. Then they started making fun of me. One of them put an artificial piece of human excrement under the chair where I was sitting. It looked so real and accused me of doing it. They told me to get a piece of paper and clean it up. When I grabbed it I said “THIS THING IS HARD”. Then they busted out laughing and made me cry. By then they knew I was innocent and told me to sign my name on a piece of paper then they let me go. I never did get locked up in the jail. It sure did scare me. Now in 1943 I was off to war.

We didn't even know where the train was going. During the war they just don't even tell you, because it is a military secret. I was also thinking when we used to play "war" with Vernon Kunchics and his brother across the street on E. 3<sup>rd</sup> we played with "rubber guns". Then the anglos came out with rifles to fight us. So we made rifles too. These were wooden play weapons. Then they came out with play machine guns. Well, we had fun anyway, and now I was off to a real war.

The train got to New Orleans and stayed there about half a day. We were then on our way to Norfolk, VA. The man in charge had opened the manila envelope and told us. On February 1, 1943 we arrived at Camp Bradford, Virginia, a SEABEE boot camp. Since Virginia is a southern state I thought it would be warm there. But it was during the winter and it was real cold. We took injection "shots", a good haircut and received our Navy clothing and shoes. We then went aboard a ferry boat to camp Allen. When we arrived at Camp Allen everybody was hollering at us "you'll be sorry" and "where you from?" I was in boot camp in two training centers, Camp Bradford and Camp Allen. On March 15 we were transferred to an Advanced Seabee Base, Camp Peary. It was there that I was put on K.P. In the Navy they called it "MESS COOKING". Also, at Camp Peary we were quarantined to our barracks because somebody caught the measles or something. We were then sent with the Marines for two weeks of Marine Training. We went on long hikes, to obstacle courses and to the firing range. The Marine Sergeants really gave us hell. We also got some "STEVEDORE" training. We then went to be interviewed in person. I told them that I attended high school to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade then I dropped out and was working in a Bakery & Restaurant Shop. Two days later I was told that I would be working in the Galley and Bakery. After a few days on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April I was sent to Cook & Baker School. I graduated from that school and on May 15, 1943 the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Battalion of Stevedores was formed. The Stevedores were trained to do the loading and unloading of Navy ships at what they called Island X which was supposed to resemble the Pacific Islands where we might go. Some of the guys had already gone thru some Stevedore training. Since I was working in the Galley or Mess Halls I didn't have to take the Stevedore training. I was trying for third class petty officer when I broke boot camp.

I was with guys from different parts of the states, mostly from up North and East. They were Italians, Poles and other nationalities. I wasn't used to that. There were also some guys from the South. Some looked like real country hillbillies. But they were alright. All they talked about was hunting, fishing and picking cotton. I'd tell them that I knew a little bit about picking cotton. Back in the 1930s my parents took us to Corpus Christi, TX to pick cotton for a couple of weeks during the summer. They were paying 75 cents per one hundred pounds picked. My dad was a good cotton picker. We didn't like it much but it was some fun. On another occasion we went with mother to Pflugerville, TX also to pick cotton. My parents took us so we would know what it was to pick cotton. Sam, Mama, Dan and I were sleeping in what looked like a big barn with no windows. One night a big cow poked her head into the barn and scared the living daylights out of us. Well it was too much sun and too many mosquitoes in this kind of work.

One of the good things I liked about the Navy was the “chow”. It was good and we were served three times a day without fail. The first thing I did when I arrived in Virginia was to write a letter to my mom telling her and the family that I was alright and in good health. I told her not to worry, since there was a war going on. I was receiving a lot of mail from the church people: the Rincóns, the Peñas, the Martinez sisters, the Buitrons and Andrew Buitron, Sam, Dan, Moses and even my little sister Eunice and of course my parents. I also got letters from Pauline Cortez, Bertha Moreno and Irene Vega. I also received letters from the Lockhart Federal Bakery people. I was also writing to Lucy Castro, the girl that sang in the choir. I really took a liking to her. Martin Menchaca, a good friend was also writing to me. I felt very good about getting all of that correspondence. I felt important. The pastor, Carlos Paredes and his wife Irene also wrote to me. Brother Paredes married Irene San Miguel while I was at war in June 1945. Bro. Carlos Paredes had become pastor of our church on April 30, 1942. Before I joined the Navy, Miss Irene San Miguel, now Paredes, was the President of the young people’s department in our Baptist Association and I was her secretary.

When I left home for the Navy my mother gave me a Bible to read and told me not to forget my Christian way of living. In the Navy I had another friend who was from San Antonio, Texas. His name was David Gonzales. He worked in the butcher shop. He talked “Pachuco” talk and wasn’t bad looking. He was 17 years old. At this time I might say that I started doing something “illegal” during the war. I had a little red book and I started writing a diary. I didn’t know it was against Navy regulations but nobody ever found out because I would write when nobody was around. Had I been caught I would have been placed in the “Brig” (jail) and might have been subjected to an “other than honorable discharge”.

After graduating from Cooks & Bakers School I was transferred to Galley D-3 & D-4 along with some Filipino cooks. Near the end of April 1943 I was promoted to Petty Officer Third Class like a buck sergeant in the Army. We would go to Williamsburg, VA a small Colonial town with a lot of history. One day I got together with some Mexican Americans from the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. We went to Richmond, VA all of us wearing Navy uniforms. We ended up at a dance hall where young people were having a clean cut dance. I say this because they did not have alcoholic beverages nor smoking and the girls had like “Chaperones”. All my friends were dancing and jitterbugging except me. I was standing all alone watching them dance when a young pretty girl with brown eyes and brown hair approached me. She said “Hi, Sailor, are you having fun?” I answered “Yes!”. She said “Don’t look like it, so why are you not dancing?” I told her I didn’t know how. She then said “You think they all know how to dance? Some are just learning, let me show you”. She took me to the dance floor by the hand and for the first time in my life I had my arm around an Anglo girl and I was nervous. I didn’t do too bad, so she said. She asked me my name and I told her. Then I asked her what was her name and she told me and I have never forgotten that name. Her name was Frances Sutherland and she was 17 years old. When the dance was over, I said good bye and kissed her on the cheek and never saw her again. There is a Hindu proverb that says “**He who cannot dance will blame it on the floor.**” I didn’t blame the floor. I did alright. Also in Richmond on another occasion I went roller skating with another sailor. I didn’t do bad.



We stayed overnight at the Salvation Army Center at no cost. In the morning we cooked our own breakfast. The other sailor was a cook too. Then we went back to Norfolk. In June 1943 we got a 10 day leave so I came home to Austin. David Gonzales was with me since he was going to San Antonio. We were on a train that went through Cincinnati, Ohio and from there to St. Louis, Missouri. We spent almost all day making connections there and Gonzales started drinking and got drunk on me. I had to take care of him before an M.P. or S.P. would see him. It was there that I met up with Joe Galindo, a friend from Austin. He was in the Army and was at the train station going to New York. He was an acquaintance at the time. He is now the owner of El Lago Tortillas here in Austin. When I came home my mom and dad and family were sure glad to see me. I was a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Petty Officer. My mother made a party for me and invited some of my friends to the house. Besides my brothers and sister, there was Nacho Galván, Joe Almanza, Martin Menchaca, Elizabeth Rincon, Lucy Castro, Cleo Jacques, Olga Cazares (Lopez), Frank & Pete Rincon and Jesse Peña. I remember all of them cause mama took a picture. At the church I found out that some people were getting drafted and others were joining the military and going off to war. Sam, my brother, was already talking about joining the Navy. I must have started something or maybe it was Manuel Menchaca because later I found out that all of these guys had joined the Navy. Raymond Sanchez, Elias Ruiz, Joe Almanza, Pete Rivera, Zeke Ruiz, Manuel Ortiz, my brother Sam and later Dan had all joined the Navy.

Well, I went back by train to Norfolk and Camp Peary, VA. On the train I met a pretty Jewish girl. The reason why I know is because she asked me of my nationality and I told her, then she told me she was Jewish when I asked her. We went through a tunnel in some state and I remember I opened the window of the train and poked my head out just to see. Stupid me, I could have been decapitated there in the dark of the tunnel. I have always been curious. I turned to talk to her and she started laughing at me. My face was all black from the locomotive's smoke. She got off somewhere and I never saw her again. I arrived at Norfolk, then Camp Peary and was back working in the bakery.

On July 10, 1943 the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Battalion of Stevedore Seabees shipped out of Virginia. Again we didn't know where we were going and were traveling by train. We went thru Washington, DC, Baltimore, MD, New York City and on to Providence, Rhode Island. When we passed through Connecticut we saw something like a flood. I guess it had rained a lot. I was sitting in the train thinking of the flood we had in Austin in 1935. The dam burst and flooded Austin taking the Montopolis Bridge out. It inundated many of the streets south of E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street in East Austin. Water went over the banks of Waller Creek and E. Ave. and flooded our church at East Avenue and E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. I remember seeing people in canoes there. Then the water started flooding E. 3<sup>rd</sup> but it didn't get to the 1100 block where we lived. The water was coming out of the sewers. Austin is safe now with several dams in the chain of lakes that we have west of Austin.

Well, from Providence, the capital of Rhode Island we went to Davisville, R.I. where a Seabee Advanced Base was located. There I was in the smallest state of the Union and me from the biggest state then. I stayed there eight months and saw a lot of the East Coast. Again, I was working in the bakery as before. One Sunday I was off duty so I

went into Providence to attend church. I looked for the First Baptist Church. I found it and went in and enjoyed a good service. I later found out that I had visited the First Baptist Church in the whole country. It was organized by Roger Williams in 1639. Later I visited the First Baptist Church of Boston, Mass. I also saw the Old North Church where Paul Revere began his famous ride yelling “**The British are coming**”. I had a 36 hour pass so I had plenty of time. I went to an all night movie in Scully Square and spent the night there with some Bums. I guess they were homeless. I met an Italian girl there at a Penny Arcade. Her name was Tina Rubino. She said she was from Summerville, Mass. On another occasion with a 36 hour liberty pass I went to New York City. There I visited Radio city Music Hall and saw a movie and a stage show. I also went to the top of the Empire State Building, to the Latin Quarter Night Club and to the Roseland Ballroom. I was with a Navy friend of mine from New York. I also was very green about all of this entertainment business. On another time I went to the Stage Door Canteen and there met up with Faustino Rangel and Servando Varela from Austin. At the Paramount Theater I saw Benny Goodman, Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman and singer Marion Hutton, all big band leaders.

Back in Rhode Island a Detachment of the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Battalion was getting ready to go to North Africa. Some of my friends were going and I wanted to go with them. I talked to the Chief and even the Chaplain. They said no, that they needed me there. I then got a 10 day leave of absence and went to Chicago to see the kin folks and my mother. She was visiting there. My aunt Esther was living in Chicago and Aunt Julia in Morton Grove, Ill. I went to the movies with my cousin who lived there and also saw band leader Charlie Barnett. After the 10 day leave in Chicago and seeing my mother, I went back to Rhode Island again by train. When my parents first found out I was in Rhode Island, they thought I was on some island. I wrote back and told them it was the smallest state in the Union.

Some of the guys I was with did some things that I wasn't used to seeing. I went to a restaurant in Providence to eat with three of my friends that were cooks. We all ordered. I had fried chicken and they ordered steak but then they ordered wine and beer to drink. I ordered ice tea. One of them, a Polish guy from Chicago was smoking and eating at the same time. To me I thought that was strange and they thought I was weird. On the way back to the base I was thinking of the different restaurants in Austin and wondered if that would occur there. I was thinking of the Maverick Café on E. 7<sup>th</sup> and Congress, the P.K. Grill on E. 7<sup>th</sup>, La Louisianne on Congress, Joe Lung Café, Sam Wah, Wing On, Calloways, The Hungry Man, the Market Café and Toonerville Restaurant.

We finally received our orders to go overseas. On Feb. 23, 1944 we go aboard the USS Cavalier, a transport ship. I was the first one to go aboard with helmet, pack and gas mask. Some of my friends had told me that the actor Cesar Romero was aboard the ship. The reason they came and told me was because my nickname was Cisco. Cesar Romero was the Cisco Kid in the movies. I had my nickname on the back of my jacket. There were several with nicknames and they too had them on the back of their jackets. One day I was on the main deck and Cesar Romero was standing behind me. He asked me if I was from Cisco, Texas. I answered him and said “No, I am from Austin, TX”. These guys

call me 'Cisco'. From then on I made good friends with him. I was working in the bakery of the ship and he used to go by the bake shop at night. I used to give him a piece of pie, cake or cookies. Cesar Romero gave me his picture and autographed it. I kept that picture in my billfold until 1986. The same year I retired from my Civilian job in Austin somebody stole my billfold and that was the last I saw of the picture.

I became friends with some Mexican Americans on the ship. They were from San Antonio, Dallas, the Valley, New Mexico and Colorado. Cesar Romero was a Seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class and I was a Third Class Petty Officer. So I outranked him at the time. On Feb 24, 1944 the "CAVALIER" arrived at Norfolk, VA from Rhode Island. We stayed there one day and then shipped out again. We hit rough seas near the Bahamas Islands not too far from Cuba. Several Seabees got sea sick including me. My seasickness wasn't too bad. The next day the sea was calm and I was listening to Spanish music over the radio. They said it was coming from Cuba. We didn't know where we were going and we hit the waters of the Caribbean Sea. On March 1, 1944 we arrived at the Panama Canal. It was Colon on the Caribbean Sea side. It took us one day and a half to cross over to the Pacific side after some delays. It was the town of Balboa named after Francisco Balboa, who discovered the Pacific Ocean. He was one of the Spanish conquistadores. We then sailed to Hawaii. We weren't supposed to know that but we found out. On March 17, 1944 the "Cavalier" arrived at Pearl Harbor.

We left the USS Cavalier and Cesar Romero and were sent to "AEIA" Heights near to Honolulu and Pearl Harbor. We were living in tents. In April 1944 I passed the Baker's exam and made Petty Office 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. Today it would be equivalent to E-5 and my rate was BKR 2/c. That same month I broke my wrist. I found out that there was going to be a baseball game and that some of the baseball players were professionals who were now in the military. There was Pee Wee Reese in the Navy, Joe D'Maggio in the Army, Johnny Mize and others. I went to the game and was late so there were no seats left. So I went to the back of a barracks and climbed onto the roof. There were others there also. After the game was over, we saw some pretty Hawaiian and state-side girls down below so instead of going back down the ladder, I jumped all the way down to the ground next to where the girls were and landed badly. I heard one girl say "Oh, a Commando!". Well, this commando was hurting but I didn't say anything. I hitch hiked a ride back to the base on an Army truck. My wrist kept hurting all night long. The following day the Chief told me to go to the hospital and have it checked out. I did that. They took some x-rays and found out that it was broken. Well, that's what I get for showing off! I'll never learn. On another occasion I went into Honolulu to see a Mexican movie they were showing at the "International". I was standing in line when I saw Roy Sifuentes from Austin. He was an old friend that I had met at the Latin American Methodist Church. He was a civilian that worked in the ship yards in Honolulu. He took me home after the movie and I met the family he was living with. They were Puerto Ricans and his girl friend was half German and half Puerto Rican. He was living with Chico Rosa's family. Rosa was a professional boxer that was now in the Army. His wife was living there with him and her name was Helen Rosa. She was a good looking girl that looked Mexican to me. There was also a Portuguese girl there that they called "Dolly". I took her out on a date once.

One day while walking down the street in Honolulu I saw my cousin Joe Almanza. He was in the Navy also and he had already seen combat. I also once saw Clemente Flores who was a member of our church in Austin and was now in the Army. What a small world this is. Well, also stupid me I had gotten a tattoo again with a sailor friend of mine that had 33 of them. Since sailors were wearing ear rings on the left ear, I thought I would get one too so I went to a Chinese doctor and had my ear pierced. In a couple of weeks I was wearing a silver looking torpedo. After a while the Navy got strict and told us to take them off. The S.P.s were always getting after me for not squaring my hat.

While I was stationed in Hawaii there was a race riot between Black and White military personnel. Some on both sides were injured with cuts on their bodies. That incident never was written up in the Honolulu newspaper. I reckon they didn't want the Japanese to find out we were fighting among ourselves. The military was all segregated there. In my tent I kept thinking of the time back in Austin when I was involved in a "race fight". Back in the 1930s when we were young teenagers Peace Park was having an Easter Egg Hunt. My brothers, Sam and Dan and I found out so we went to Peace Park. When we got there, a bunch of Anglo guys were already there and were on top of a hill. There was a bunch of us Mexican Americans also there. I remember Canuto Galvan and his brothers were there and also there were the Falcon brothers and the Melendez brothers, Arnold, Roy and Rudy and some others. We started walking into the park and going up the hill when the Anglo guys started throwing rocks at us. So we threw some back at them. I then remember that one of them yelled "Remember the Alamo". Well, rocks were flying every which way, until the police came. They stopped the fight and took the leaders of both sides to jail. I don't remember what happened after that. Well, so many things were going thru my mind. Now I was with guys from up North in the U.S. that never had seen a Mexican. There were some from New Mexico that had never seen a Black before.

One day I went to the YMCA in Honolulu where there were girls teaching how to dance and I met a pretty girl there who tried to teach me how to dance the "Samba". She was curious and asked me what my nationality was. I answered her question then I got curious about her because she had a beautiful complexion with eyes slightly slanted and so I asked her what she was. She answered "I'm Spanish, Chinese, Irish and Hawaiian in that order. I was surprised but she was real friendly. I usually went on liberty with fellow cooks and bakers. I also had a Puerto Rican friend by the name of Ismael Lozado from Bronx, NY and also a Cuban boy from Cuba. His name was Pablo Catalá. The Italians from New York used to call us "SPICKS". I had never heard that word before. That is what they call all Hispanics. Pablo had a picture of a real pretty sister. He gave me her address in Cuba so I started writing to her. We wrote to each other for two years. She was from Central Delicias, Oriente, Cuba. We always wrote each other in Spanish and she asked me more questions about Mexico than about Texas. Her name was Carmen Catalá.

One Sunday morning I decided to attend a civilian church in town. I visited a Methodist Church in "AEIA". There were all kinds of people there. There were Whites, Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Puerto Rican, Filipinos, Blacks and me. I was the only "Mexicano" there. Boy, talk about a minority, I was it! But thank God we were all Americans. On another occasion I met a "SAMOAN" girl and made friend with her. We went to eat at a

Chinese Restaurant. I couldn't understand the menu so she ordered for me. She said something like "two ty me". Well, I didn't like it very much but I ate it. I saw her again and I thought to myself "I'll fix her". I took her to eat at a Mexican Restaurant called "El Rancho Grande". She didn't understand that menu so I ordered Enchiladas for her. She didn't like them so I ended up eating them. That was that, because I never saw her again.

When we first arrived in Hawaii some of us went to a pineapple field and confiscated some pineapples. I got sick of eating pineapples! Pineapple fields in Hawaii reminded me of cotton fields in Texas. Also, Honolulu was the first place where I ever got a haircut done by a woman barber. She was a civilian in a barbershop down town. She was either of Chinese or Japanese nationality.

In December 1944 the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Battalion of Seabee Stevedores was broken up. I was drafted into the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Battalion. The 10<sup>th</sup> Special was all white whereas the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special was white and black. The Blacks were the stevedores and the whites were the cooks, bakers, yeomen, storekeepers, corpsmen, etc. That was Headquarters Company. I was with the cooks and bakers. In other words the battalion was segregated. The blacks had their own area and we had ours. What a sad situation, but that's the way it was. Ritter and Kamienski were still with me. Gonzales was left in Rhode Island.

On February 5, 1945 we got orders to go aboard a merchant ship named the "Cape Isabel". It was loaded with fuel, ammunition and other war supplies. It had a crew of Merchant Mariners, Sailors and us Seabees. There I met up with the same bunch of "Chicanos" that had been aboard the "Cavalier". They were from San Antonio, The Valley, New Mexico and Colorado. I never saw Cesar Romero again. We sailed out of Hawaii on February 6, 1945. Pearl Harbor faded away in the distance. The Diamond Head Volcano was the last I saw of Hawaii. Nobody knew where we were going. I was working in the bakery with a funny fat bald headed man called "Otto". He was a civilian like all Merchant Mariners were and looked like a German but he was always saying "Allah Be Praised". The ship was sailing pretty smooth and we were approaching the Marshall Islands when we heard the General Quarters alarm. The Sonar had signaled that a Japanese submarine was nearby. We all ran for our gas masks and the ship was smoked screened so that the Japanese couldn't see the ship. Nothing happened so I went back to the bakery where I was working.

We arrived at the Marshall Islands on February 15<sup>th</sup> and anchored at Eniwetok. We stayed there one whole day and then deployed further into the Pacific Ocean and headed for the Marianas Islands. My friend Ritter was on another ship, "The Dashing Wave", and Kamienski was on the San Martin. I then made friends with a young white guy out of New Orleans named Stanley Davis, a baker and he was all right. Finally, on February 20<sup>th</sup> we arrived at SAIPAN, which was already in American hands. We anchored there and then in the afternoon some of the guys decided to swim. I saw a big curly headed Hawaiian Merchant Seaman dive from the bow of the ship. It was real high above the water. I thought to myself "I can do that!", thinking of the many dives I had executed from the diving board at Zaragoza Park in Austin as well as the high diving board at Barton Springs. So I decided to dive also from the bow of the ship. I dove deep into the

dark blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. In the deep I came face to face with an ugly looking fish. I immediately started swimming to the surface and almost didn't make it. It was rough climbing up the ladder. I also was scared not only of the fish but also because for a few seconds I didn't think I would make it all the way up. Everybody kept asking me "What Happened, Cisco?" but I wasn't talking. We stayed in Saipan for two days and on that second day we had an Air Raid. They smoked screened the ship again and again nothing happened.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February we left Saipan and now we know where we are going. We are on our way to the invasion of **Iwo Jima**, which is already underway. We knew it was a small volcanic island five miles long with the Suribachi Volcano on one end of it. The Philippine Islands had already been invaded under Gen. Douglas McArthur, who was returning there to win them back from the Japanese. For a while we thought we might be going there but that wasn't the case. When we got close to Iwo Jima we turned around and went back towards Saipan for a while. The battle was still ongoing and too hot for us to get close and we knew that many of our marines already had been killed. Since our ship was loaded with war supplies plus fuel and ammunition we just go around in circles hoping we wouldn't get hit. One of our Destroyer escorts spots a Jap submarine, so they drop depth charges. We never knew what happened.

As we approached Iwo Jima on our second try, there was a U.S. Cruiser shooting over us towards Mount Suribachi. We heard that three Marine Divisions were fighting during the invasion and that our Seabees were already there ready to construct or repair the airfields. Many thousands of Japanese were killed in that battle. On March 1, 1945 we landed on the beaches in landing barges. I felt like a Marine with a full pack, helmet, guns and gas masks. Our weapons were carabines. On the sandy beach we start unloading an LST. Some Marines were able to help us. I could see American airplanes shooting rockets and bombing the caves on the island. Other ships were also shooting at the island. I got orders to go back to the Cape Isabel and help the baker.

On March 6<sup>th</sup> we had another Air Raid but no airplanes appeared. By then, our planes were shelling two smaller islands on the tip of Iwo Jima. The air raid was at 02:00am. I was sent back to the island and my Seabee battalion was then living in fox holes. So they had me filling sand bags and putting them around the fox holes. On March 9<sup>th</sup> they sent me aboard another Merchant Ship named the "China Victory". There I worked with a black Merchant Marine cook. He was a civilian and they got very good pay for being in a war zone. Some of our Seabee Stevedores were unloading the ship. The black cook called me "Siña" because he couldn't say "señor". I was working all night. On March 15<sup>th</sup> I left the China Victory and went back to the volcanic island. The Marines were then fighting on the tip of the island trying to get it secured. Once again I was living in a fox hole with sand bags all around. When I would go to the latrine a few yards away I'd take my gun and a G.I. knife with me just in case. Kamienski was in the fox hole with me. The island was finally secured but there were a lot of snipers around. One of our cooks was Chinese American and a marine almost mistook him for a Japanese. One of our Seabees saved him. The cook's name was Carl Yue (San Francisco). He was lucky that he wasn't killed. I felt he should have been sent to Europe and not to the Pacific! Stanley Darci (the

cat) and I decided to go to the cemetery where they were burying marines, sailors and Seabees. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions Cemetery. There was a real bad stinking odor of blown up bodies. The nauseating odor of the dead Marines was worse than the dead Japs that we saw but it depends on how long they have been dead. I almost threw up and realized I should have taken my gas mask. A Seabees bulldozer was digging the ditches and then they lined up all the bodies. The stink smell was so bad we had to leave. I just couldn't help being curious. The Marines were then mopping up Japanese snipers. We then got set up with a beach galley so we could start cooking. Up to that time we had been eating K-rations and C-rations.

On March 24 we received mail and I got a letter from my brother Daniel. He was at Catalina Island taking boot training with the Maritime Service. I also received a letter from my mom and a letter with a pretty picture from Lucy Castro. On March 25 Davis and I went to the front line area again and noticed that the Marines were blasting some caves with Japanese snipers inside. They were also using flame throwers. We were at the mouth of a big cave but we did not go in. We had our guns but did not use them. The next day, March 26, Jap snipers made a Banzai attack from the same cave where we had been standing. They could probably see us but they kept quiet. On March 28 I received a letter from mom saying that my cousin, Albert Almanza, was missing in action in Europe but found out later that he was a prisoner of war. She also told me that cousin, John Almanza, was on furlough from the Panama Canal Zone. She later also told me that Daniel Ortega had been killed in the invasion of Europe by the Allies. Daniel Ortega was a member of the Latin American Methodist Church on East Avenue in Austin. At one time this Methodist mission was at the corner of West 4<sup>th</sup> and Nueces in Austin, not far from the Mexican Baptist Mission. When Daniel Ortega went into the Army during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Latin American Methodist Church had moved to 810 East Avenue in East Austin. My father was a member of that church. Dan Ortega was a clean cut young man that worked for the City of Austin as a Playground Director at Zaragoza Park in East Austin. We played junior league baseball there and Dan was the coordinator of this activity. All three of us brothers, me, Sam & Daniel played on the same team. Moses, my youngest brother was too little. Now there is an elementary school in East Austin named the Daniel F. Ortega Elementary School. Later, my family wrote me and told me that Jimmy Hernandez, a member of our church, had also been killed in Europe. He was the brother of Reynaldo and Lee Hernandez.

Back to my experiences at Iwo Jima, one of our Seabees, a black fellow was shot in the buttocks by a Jap sniper. He was sent back to the U.S. with a purple heart. He was in his fox hole, not too far from mine when he was shot. Two days later, Stanley Davis and I go souvenir hunting in a part of the island that had been secured. We were wearing Marine uniforms. We saw Japanese bodies all over the place. We were able to confiscate gold from their teeth but I don't know why we did that! I also took a Japanese battle flag from the leggings of a dead Jap. Then I also confiscated a Japanese helmet and water canteen. We went into a Japanese pill box which was about 2 ft. thick. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March some Seabee cooks and I climbed Mount Suribachi, a live volcano about 500 feet high. The US Flag was already waving there as it had been put up by the Marines. One of them was a full bloodied Indian named Ira Hays from the **PIMA TRIBE**. In Hawaii I had already

met Chief CRAZY HORSE III. I think he told us that his grandfather had fought General Custer. I talked to him in Spanish. He told me that when he moved to Los Angeles from the Dakotas, he lived in a Mexican neighborhood. The Mexicans made fun of him because he couldn't speak Spanish so he learned to speak it. At the top of the volcano we saw the crater. Where I was standing I could see small holes with smoke coming out of them. I poked my hand in one of these holes and it was hot. There was also sulfur there.

I spent Easter Sunday of 1945 on Iwo Jima. It was raining all day but we had church services in a tent. Smiling Sam was our chaplain. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> an ammunition dump caught on fire and the fireworks started. We got scared and dove into our fox holes. Then after a little while there is silence and then there is a great big blast that shook the Island. For a minute I thought the Island would sink. On April 8<sup>th</sup> 25 Jap snipers were captured by the U.S. Army and the Navy Seabees. They were placed aboard an LST as prisoners of war. By then, the Marines were gone. It was commonly stated that "Iwo Jima was the roughest one yet". About 5,000 U.S. Marines died there, but a whole lot of the Japanese died there too.

On April 9<sup>th</sup> of 1944 another Seabee and I got on an amphibious tank and we got aboard a Merchant Ship the Alcoa Penant. They thought we were Marines and fed us a good hot chow. They wanted to ask us some questions about the battle of Iwo Jima and we acted like we didn't really want to talk about it but they treated us very good anyway. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April seven Seabees were blown up by a land mine. They were on a Navy truck and three of them were cooks. By this time we had already seen the first B-29 bomber crash land at Iwo Jima. On April 19<sup>th</sup> another U.S. aircraft crashed on the airfield and the crew was killed. On May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945 we heard that Germany had surrendered. Everybody started shooting up in the air in celebration but I dived into my fox hole to be safe! There were some casualties because of what they did during the celebration. On May 21 we had an air raid and two Japanese aircraft were shot down. It was a very dark night and no moon but I think the radar picked them up and we were able to get them. They did drop some bombs but did no damage. On May 25<sup>th</sup> some B-29 aircraft flying from Iwo Jima made a big raid on Tokyo but coming back three of the B-29s crash landed on our airfield while trying to land. On June 1<sup>st</sup> 1945 we had another big air raid and five Seabees of the 90<sup>th</sup> Battalion were killed and 12 more injured. On July 11<sup>th</sup> we heard that we would be leaving Iwo Jima. We got 3 shots by Navy corpmen and also got new gear. Then on July 12<sup>th</sup> at 0900 we went aboard LST 821. From the Cooks and Bakers there was Ritter, Davis, Kamienski, Hutto and myself. We were told that we would be working in the ship's galley. Back during the time we were living in fox holes on the Island a US Marine had appeared in our area. He was AWOL from his outfit and we asked him what was the problem. He told us that some Marines and an American Chaplain that spoke Japanese were trying to get some Japanese to come out of a big cave. The Chaplain, speaking in Japanese, promised them safety, food, water, etc. if they would come out with their hands up. They finally did and when they walked out, the Marines killed them all. The Marine told us he didn't like what he saw so he left. He stayed with us two or three days and then left. We never heard from him again. On July 13, 1945 we left Iwo Jima and Mount Suribachi fades away in the distance and the horizon never to see it again.



We were on our way to the Island of Saipan again. The island was safe because it was in American hands. We arrived at Saipan Island on July 16, 1945 at 15:00 hours. The next day we were allowed to go ashore for liberty to relax a while and stayed on the beach from 13:00 Hrs to 16:30 Hrs. We were then taken back to the LST which was anchored since there were no docks there. On Sunday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> we sailed from Saipan in a convoy consisting of 75 LST's. "LST" means Landing Ship Tank. Our LST has everything but the "kitchen sink". My friend, Davis (the Cat) was with me in the Bake Shop. Again our destination was unknown. It was a Sunday so I attended church services on the ship. We thought we might be heading to the Philippine Islands to help there, but we were not.

On July 28, 1945 we arrived at Okinawa where our Army and Marines are there fighting the Japanese and the Navy is bombing the heck out of that place. There were already Jap Kamikaze airplanes diving on ships. We were hoping and praying that our ship did not get hit by one of them. We were carrying fuel and ammo aboard so we had a risky type of situation. There was an Air Raid emergency but it was on the opposite side of the island from where we were. Some of our cargo was unloaded, however, on August 1<sup>st</sup> we had to sail out to sea because of a big typhoon approaching the island. The sea started getting real rough and winds began to rock the ship "every which way and then the other". The quartermaster told us we were heading in the direction of "Formosa" which is now known as Taiwan. Then we turned in a different direction like towards the Philippines. It got dark and everybody wanted to go to bed early. Nobody ate much and some became sea sick. During the night I couldn't sleep so I got up and opened the "hatch" to go outside of the main deck. When I stepped out in the rain the ship rocked to one side. I went sliding towards the rail of the ship and grabbed it. To me it was like a life line, because I would have gone overboard if it had not been for the rail that I grabbed. I was able to wait for the ship to rock the other way, then I rushed back to the hatch, opened it and went back to my bunk all shook up! I didn't tell anybody about the incident. That was stupid of me. Anyway, if I had gone overboard nobody would have known until the next morning. Furthermore, during war time the ship does not stop for one crew member and puts the entire crew in jeopardy, especially during a typhoon. The only thing I lost was my white hat. The next morning the sea was still a little rough. That day we made a cherry cobbler and put it in the oven. The whole thing spilled inside the oven when it was half done. It messed up the oven so we had to clean it good.

The sea finally became calm as we headed back to Okinawa. We had traveled away from Okinawa for about 150 miles. On August 3<sup>rd</sup> we arrived at the harbor and on August 4<sup>th</sup> we go ashore at last. On August 5<sup>th</sup> I saw the first woman since we left Hawaii February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945. The LST was quite different from the Merchant Ship. On the Cape Isabel after supper we would go back AFT or to the STERN of the ship and sit around with the bunch of "Chicanos" and sing Spanish songs. They had me playing a guitar for some of this. On the LST there was a lot less room and also we were all kept pretty busy. Finally, my Mexican friends were gone as they stayed on the CAPE ISABEL. One of them named Elizondo gave me his cousin's address in Weslaco, Texas. He gave his girl cousin's name as SOCORRO GARCIA. We wrote to each other for a good while. We also sent pictures to each other. I was never able to meet her but kept her picture in one of my albums. By this time my brother Sam was already in the NAVY and stationed in San Diego, CA.

Then on August 7<sup>th</sup> I received a letter from my brother Daniel. According to his letter his Merchant Marine ship would be in Okinawa about that time. So when I went ashore in Okinawa I got a jeep and drove to NAHA, the capital, looking for Daniel. I asked several military people about crew members from Daniel's ship but no one seemed to know where they might be. Because of the war, Naha was completely blown to pieces and the whole town seemed to be deserted. Now, as of this writing, I have learned that Naha is a beautiful city. Okinawa was completely different from Iwo Jima. In Okinawa we saw a lot of civilians whereas in Iwo Jima it was mostly military. At Okinawa we also saw green trees, grass, creeks with water and rolling hills. One day we went swimming at a creek nearby. They took a picture of me in swimming trunks that I still have. I called the creek "THE ONION CREEK OF OKINAWA".

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 300 of us were sent to another area near Kadena Air Base. We set up our tent galley in an area where we would be working. There was a burned out village near us and gangs of Okinawa kids came from there to where we were apparently looking for something to eat. There were also some cemetery tombs nearby where Okinawans buried their dead. One day I went into one of these big tombs on my hands and knees. I had a big knife in my hand just in case there should be a Jap sniper inside. The only thing I saw in there was a big vase with human bones and a skull.

At this time we began to hear rumors that the next island we would be going to was Japan itself! We felt they would probably use everybody – Marines, Army, Navy, Air Corp and the Seabees – in that invasion. I really began to read the Bible that my mother gave me. Mom had written to me that she had a bad dream; I called it a nightmare. She said she dreamed that the U.S. Navy had come to the house and that the Navy officer had a little box. Inside the box was me, all shrunk up, probably just bones. I can imagine how she felt. At our church back home all the people were praying for the war to end and for us to come back home. There was a song that they had been singing over the radio which said "When The Lights Go On Again All Over The World". That was what everybody wanted. Pastor Carlos Paredes was doing great work at our church back home. He had already married Irene San Miguel.

During this time Sam was still in San Diego, Daniel was aboard his Merchant Marine ship, Moses, about 14 years old growing up and Eunice, whom we called "Niche", was almost 10 years of age. They kept sending me Christmas Cards, Easter Cards, Birthday Cards and so were my cousins in Chicago. They would tell me in their letters that Austin was full of soldiers from Camp Swift and Fort Hood as well as airmen from Bergstrom Field. Eunice's birthday was coming up on September 14. About this time a big typhoon hit Okinawa and wrecked 12 sea planes that were near us. The Pontoon Docks that the Seabees had built were destroyed. Some of our tents were either blown away or took a beating. During the storm we had gone to a "Quonset hut" type mess hall from where we watched our tents flying by. One black guy said "Well, there goes my #\*#@+##&# house". When it was all over I went back to my tent and saw that mine had survived. It was still standing but all beat up. At this time we got all packed up ready to go but then we heard that the "Americans" had dropped Atomic Bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They had leveled these two cities, killed thousands of Japanese civilians and then we heard that the

Japanese had surrendered. I never did go to Japan, thanks to God. I stayed in Okinawa. So then everybody went crazy with celebrations and started shooting up in the air because everybody had guns and ammo.

One night, while still in Okinawa, I was laying on my bunk inside the tent and with a mosquito net around me but somehow a mosquito got in and bit me. That insect bite caused me to get Malaria. I think I killed him when he bit me, however, I started getting chills and fever the very next day. I went to sick bay where they checked my blood and I had it alright. I started taking atabrine pills. They were yellow pills and it gave me a yellow look. After a few days I seemed to be alright.

October 6, 1945 was my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and the cooks and bakers found out. That day we all went to see a movie and after the movie they wanted to celebrate the “Cisco Kid’s” birthday. The bakers made some “Torpedo Juice”. It was peach or apple juice with yeast and was fermented. They also made a birthday cake and wrote “Happy Birthday Cisco” on it. They had like a Jam Session with someone playing the guitar and we were all singing. I drank some of the stuff and it got me a little drunk. Later I realized that I shouldn’t have done it. God had given me another birthday and for that I should have been grateful for taking care of me. I was then 21 years old and 10,000 miles away from home.

On October 8 another big storm hit Okinawa and the tents go down again. I sure was glad that I was not aboard ship at sea. On October 25 I received a letter from Lucy. She said she was fine and now living in San Antonio. As usual, she signed “Lots of Love, your friend, Lucy”. By this time many of my friends have gone home to be discharged. I was then in charge of the Bakery and “Captain of the Watch”. My friend, Stanley Davis was Captain of the other Watch. On November 1, 1945, after 19 months of being a Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, I was promoted to Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class (E-6). My rank then became BKR 1/C. The “Scuttlebutt” then was that we would be leaving for the States and everybody was happy. On November 26<sup>th</sup> we were all packing and getting our gear secured as **“THE CISCO KID WAS COMING HOME!”** I still had the photo that Cesar Romero had given me and with his autograph too. I had kept that picture for many years until someone at work in 1986 stole my billfold with the picture in it. That was the same year I retired at 62 years of age from **Hartgraphics**.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December we left our area and were moved to the Naval Operating Base at Kubasaki, Okinawa. Then on December 4<sup>th</sup> we left that N.O.B. and went aboard a Sea Plane Tender, The USS Kenneth Whiting. We left Okinawa and were heading for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The ship sailed real good because the sea was calm. This is one time that I don’t have to work in the Galley or the Bakery, after all I’m now a passenger! I didn’t mind standing in line for chow. I felt like a tourist on a cruise ship with plenty of lights at night. During the war, all ships were blacked out at night. They couldn’t even smoke outside. We were sleeping on the torpedo deck down below. On December 10<sup>th</sup> we handled ammunition just for target practice. We crossed the International Date Line on Dec 12<sup>th</sup> and we arrived at Pearl Harbor early in the morning of December 15<sup>th</sup> 1945 and docked at

Ford Island. I then went on liberty to visit Roy Sifuentes again. He gave me back my blue album picture book that I had left there with him. I told him he could keep my guitar.

We left Pearl Harbor and arrived in San Francisco, CA on December 22, 1945. We sail right under the Golden Gate Bridge and stayed at Treasure Island to be processed. There was a band playing Christmas songs and some civilians holding a big banner that said **WELCOME HOME**. There was also a Santa Clause waving at us. I guess they did this to everybody coming home from the war. It rained most of the time but on December 24<sup>th</sup> I took liberty and went to Oakland and had a good time. I was sporting a mustache and a “gotee” and kind of looked yellow because of the pills I had taken for malaria. My friend Davis was with me and we met a friend of his that lived there. On December 27<sup>th</sup> I went to San Francisco and went to the Walaahan Ballroom where I met a pretty Mexican-Puerto Rican girl. She was with her mother and spoke real good Spanish. Her name was Anita Vasquez.

On December 31<sup>st</sup> I started going to different restaurants in Frisco: The Guadalajara Café, Acapulco, Tijuana, El Rancho Grande. At El Rancho Grande Café I met Ignacio López, a sailor from Austin. On January 3, 1946 I left San Francisco and headed for home. I arrived in Austin by train at 5:30AM on a Sunday. By then the folks were living at 1015 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street where the Almanzas used to live. This was less than a block away from where my parents were living when I left for the Navy. Moses, my brother was waiting at the front yard gate. The house had a picket fence all the way around. I forgot to mention that in San Francisco the popular song, “Symphony” was being played a lot. Other songs that I heard were “Laughing on the Outside, Crying on the Inside”, “No love No Nothing”, “Mairzy Doats and Does Eat Oats”, “Paper Doll”, “A Rose Must Remain”, “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree”, etc. Well, back at the house, I got out of the taxi and passed by Moses without even recognizing him. He had grown a lot and his face changed. Of course Eunice had grown too. She was then about 11 years old. The family and I had a good reunion and they were all glad to see me. They didn’t say much about my tattoos. They were just very glad to see me. I went to church and saw the church members and the pastor, Carlos Paredes and Mrs. Paredes. I was able to stay in Austin for almost one month from January 6 to February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946 while on liberty. I then left Austin and went to the Dallas Naval Air Station just for a day and a half and then left there by train to Algier, LA, near New Orleans at a Naval Repair Base. Then on February 7<sup>th</sup> I left the New Orleans area and proceeded to Camp Wallace, Texas near Galveston arriving there at 11:30AM on February 10<sup>th</sup>. They put me in Co. 1454. I saw German Prisoners of War there washing pots and pans in the Galley.

Then by coincidence my brother Sam was around there too looking for me. He had found out that I was there (small world!). He was being discharged too and it was about 9:00PM when we saw each other. We were both discharged on the same day, February 12, 1946. We then went to Texas City, which was not far, and saw the Jacquez family there. They had been members of our church in Austin before moving here and Bro. Mariano Jacquez had also been a deacon in our Austin church. After a few hours Sam and I head for home sweet home. Well, we returned back home as civilians and back to normal life in Austin. The church had grown under the leadership of Bro. Paredes. I went back to work at

Federal Bakery except that this time I went to work there under the G.I. Bill of Rights. The Government was paying the Bakery to train me but I was working on the night shift and I didn't much like that. Meanwhile, the young people at church were going to socials and parties and even night picnics at Mt. Bonnell. I was missing all of that good time so I quit the job. I didn't much like it anyway.

Meanwhile, Sam and I started attending meetings of the Century Club, a social club that met at the Comal Recreation Center. Other members of The Century Club were Edward Cásarez, Lalo Campos, Frank Pinedo, Roy Guerrero, John Vargas, Richard Moya, John Cásarez, Tute Rios, Rudy & Robert Cisneros, Tootsie & Beatrice Balagia, Dan Mercado and his sister Vickie Mercado. The Century Club planned mostly picnics, parties and dances. On one occasion we planned a formal Valentine Dance at the Driskell Hotel in the Crystal Ballroom. I invited a pretty girl from Mexico City. Her name was Angelina Garza. I borrowed my dad's car and went to pick her up. She was dressed with a long white formal dress. While we were dancing and having a good time, my mother walked in and saw me. I got a little shook up and was surprised so I told Angelina about it. Well, I ended up going home with my mother and left Angelina there. Mama didn't like what I was doing and I didn't really blame her. I never found out who took Angelina home. I kind of had an idea that the next door neighbors (the Cortez) may have called my mother and told her where I was. Some of the Cortez family was at the dance. Well, it was embarrassing but later on Sam and I quit the Club. I had come home from the war not wanting to be active in church, just to attend every once in a while.

In 1946 I went to work in a Candy Factory close to the oil mill on E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street. We made mostly Peanut Patties and March mellows. Ovidio Rincón and Jesse Peña, both from our church also worked there. It was fun because we worked with a bunch of girls there and most of them were Mexican American girls. Some were good looking. One of the first things I did when I returned from the war was to go and see Lucy Castro. She was then residing on Rawlins Street in San Antonio. I went to her house and visited with her there. She was getting ready to go and buy flowers for the church for their Sunday services. It was a Saturday and she invited me to go with her. We bought the flowers and took them to Templo Bautista there in San Antonio, Texas. Rev. Timoteo Gers was the pastor. As we walked in I stopped at the door and read a list of the male members of the church who were in the military. The list was right next to the American Flag. I came across a name that I had never heard of. It was Marcos Peña. To this day I don't know why I went to the front of the sanctuary where Lucy was placing the flowers and asked her, "Lucy, who is Marcos Peña?". She answered in a nice manner, "He is my boy friend in the Navy". That was a shock to me but I tried not to show it. On Sunday morning I attended service at the same church. After the service I congratulated her for having a Christian boy friend, gave her a kiss and left. Then I came back to Austin.

Back in Austin I went on a date with another girl from the neighborhood by the name of Bertha Moreno. I also went on a date with Mary Cantú. She later married Batts Adams. I also took Angelina Garza to see Xavier Cugat and his orchestra at Gregory Gym. I later quit the Candy Factory and went to work at a Bakery on W. 6<sup>th</sup> St. and Lamar. I would go to work at 3:30AM and go home at 11:00AM. The Bakery truck driver would pick me up

at our house because I didn't have a car. At the bakery the first thing I would do was to take all the already made rolls out of the refrigerator, put them in the steam box so they could puff up. Then I would put them in the oven and bake them. Later on in the morning the rest of the bakers would come in to work. They were Jesse Mosqueda, Felix Martinez, Willie, Jack, and Jack's brother, the Boss. The truck driver was also the Boss' brother and Arturo Soto was also working there. My brother Dan was then working in a print shop and Sam was attending U.T. Moses was working at Goodfriend's and also attending U.T. At church I was active with the young people's department but wasn't too enthused. I shouldn't have felt like that because I had come back from the war without a scratch. I was running around with a guy from El Salvador. His name was Germán. The year was 1947 and that's the year that two ships blew up in Texas City, TX and killed a bunch of people. It was a huge disaster. That was the year a friend of mine and I decided to go to Mexico. His name was Tony Casas. In Mexico City we went to Xochimilco and were on one of the boats. Then we went to Puebla, a big Colonial City where my kin folks on my father's side lived, my uncle Chon and family. We stayed with them for 3 weeks. We had a good time with my girl cousins, Chila, Irma, Virginia and Eva. The Cinco de Mayo battle was fought in that city. Sam, Dan, Pete Rincon and I had been to Puebla and Mexico City before the war and had a good time with these cousins.

One day Jessie Riojas from Pflugerville came to see me. He was the same guy that had joined the Navy with me in 1943. He told me of a G.I. School for war veterans in Kansas City, Missouri. They were teaching Mechanics, Electricians, Shoe Makers, Plumbers and other trades. The Government would pay for everything and offer you a monthly check. We went to talk to the V.A. and told them we were interested in going there. They didn't much like the idea because Austin had a school like that. We told the V.A. man that we were interested in Kansas City. They gave the OK and my dad said it was a good idea because I'd be learning a trade. I was interested in automobile mechanics. The school was Kansas City National Trade School. I told Bro. Paredes, Pastor of our church about my plan and he gave me a letter of recommendation to a Kansas City Baptist Church. So Jessie and I went by train to Kansas City and this was in the summer of 1947. The school sent us to live in some apartments that had other students from the trade school. They weren't very good guys. After two or three days a Mexican guy told us that there was a "Jamaica" (Bazar) at the Guadalupe Catholic Church all week. We were very surprised because we didn't know there were Mexicans living there. They had a "Colonia" or "Barrio" there with stores, restaurants and churches. So we went to the Bazar ("Jamaica") and on the way we passed by the First Mexican Baptist Church. Boy, was I surprised! We noticed they had a full house. I went on to the "Jamaica" at the Catholic Church where they had a Carnival like atmosphere with rides and were selling beer. I met a Mexican girl there and made friends with her and her girlfriend. She thought I was from Mexico from the way I spoke Spanish. I took her for a ride on the Ferris Wheel. When we got off her father saw her and sent her home. I reckon he didn't like it. Well, that was the start of a long friendship and even love. She was 18 years old and her name was Lupe Panuco. She was light complexioned and kind of slant eyes. The next day was Sunday so I went to the Mexican Baptist Church. I found out there was a convention going on; Missouri, Kansas, Colorado and Illinois were represented there. They belonged to the Northern Mexican Baptist Convention. After the Convention was over I joined the church on the

following Sunday. Jessie Riojas later met Lupe at the Catholic Church and she asked Jessie about me. Jessie told her that I was going to the Baptist Church and boy was she surprised. She came from a strict Catholic family but I started dating her anyway. I used to go and pick her up at her place of work. She worked in a Packing Plant packing wieners (frankfurters).

While in Kansas City I once met Rev. Paul Siebemann and he wanted to enroll me in a seminary. We went out to eat and went to the YMCA to swim. I wasn't too interested in attending a seminary. I was attending the Mechanic's School at night and Jessie attended a Hair Dresser's School. Then one day I put in an application to work at the Muehleback Hotel as a Baker. I told the Pastry Chef, Henry Woods, that I had been a Baker in the U.S. Navy during the war. He hired me right away. I worked from 6:30AM to 3:30PM and then attended night school for five hours from 6:00PM to 11:00PM. That was 14 hrs of school and work. I enjoyed my job at the hotel. It was quite an experience working with bakers, cooks, butchers and pantry people. I also would deal with waiters of the Hotel Restaurants and Room Service Waiters. And we also dealt with Hotel bus girls and waitresses. At lunch time we would all sit down and eat together at a long table. I could eat all the pastry and ice cream that I wanted. It was there in the Bakery that I met Larry Barron who later became my best friend. He was a baker originally from San Antonio and a "Mexicano" married to an anglo red headed lady. I also had another friend named Modesto Cantú from Corpus Christi, TX. He was attending school to become a shoe-maker. We all graduated but none of us pursued those careers. The school courses were for eight months and we all received certificates or diplomas. The school had courses on Engine Machine Shop, Engine Overhaul, Transmissions and Differentials, Carburation, Electrical Fundamentals, Generators, Regulators, Starters, Engine Tune Up, Wheels, Brakes, Clutches and Maintenance. I graduated on February 12, 1948. My discharge from the U.S. Navy had occurred on February 12, 1946 at Camp Wallace, TX, just exactly two years before this G.I. Bill training experience. While I was working at the Muehleback Hotel, I also attended a Baking School for three weeks, sponsored by the hotel. It was The Fleichmann School for Bakers. That was on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March of 1949. I lived in a hotel on Grand Avenue in Kansas City for a while.

I dated a pretty girl by the name of Juanita Blanco that told me about the Charay family, a Mexican family that had two rooms for rent at 7000 Jefferson Street. Jessie Riojas and Modesto Cantú rented one of the rooms while Larry Barron and I rented the other room. Both rooms were upstairs in the Charay's house. From there I could walk to work and I took the Street Car to the school. Larry's home was in Louisburg, Kansas so on weekends he would go home. In 1948 I decided to buy my first car. It was a 1941 blue Ford Coupe which I bought in Kansas City, Kansas. In those years there was a lot of fighting going on between Mexican guys from the Missouri side against Mexicans from Kansas. There are two Kansas City locations and a river separates the two sides with one being in Kansas and the other on the Missouri side. In some places the two sides are separated by just a street. At dances the guys from the two locations would start fighting over the girls. Those of us from Texas just stayed neutral. Lupe had two brothers and they were with the Missouri boys. Cantú started dating a Missouri girl from the "BARRIO". Her name was Ernestine Zúniga and he got into some scrapes. They didn't like me either because Lupe

was also from the same neighborhood (El Barrio). That is where the majority of Chicanos were residing. A lot of them were from Mexico. President Miguel Alemán from Mexico had been there to meet with President Truman. So the Kansas City Mexican people were familiar with the ALEMAN surname. I also had two or three dates with a girl from the Baptist Church where I was attending. Her name was Gloria Gonzales.

President Harry Truman used to always stay at the Muehlbach Hotel because the owner was a friend of his. His name was Barney Ellis. President Truman once had a birthday party there and we, the bakers, baked the Presidential Birthday Cake! Henry Woods, the Pastry Chef, decorated the big cake but I had a hand in the preparation of that cake. I was also present on the occasion when President Truman was awarded the 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree status by the Shriners.

Well, the days went by fast and I felt proud of driving around in my 1941 Ford. I did not have a garage for the car so during the winter months it would get full of ice and snow. I went to Austin for a one week vacation and made the trip on the train. The folks were glad to see me and they wondered when I would be coming home for good. I returned to Kansas City and continued seeing Lupe. We would go to the movies and while taking her home we would be discussing the subject of religion. She wanted me to marry her in the Catholic Church and wanted me to convert to Catholicism. I would tell her I couldn't do all of that. She thought it would be easy for me because I had already participated in two Catholic weddings. Cantú had married Ernestine at the Guadalupe Catholic Church and I was one of his groomsmen. In the other wedding I was also a groomsman and Lupe was a bridesmaid. This was the wedding of Arturo and Olga Pescina. Both of these weddings had dances with full orchestras at the receptions and I participated in them. Lupe was firm and a strong Catholic in her church but I was also firm and a strong Baptist in my church. Also, she was keeping me from attending my church on Sunday night because a dance was always held on Sunday nights and I would go with her to the dance.

In the meantime a pretty girl from Mexico City started going to the Baptist Church just a block and a half away from the Catholic Church. Her name was Ruth Rodriguez. She had come to visit her sisters there, Paz and Esperanza. Ruth was born in Kansas City, MO but when she was four years old the family went back to Mexico City. She was raised in Mexico City and was educated there. She graduated from high school in Mexico City and also graduated from a College there. She worked in the Main Post Office of the Federal District as a secretary to the main director there. She had a good job there considering that she was American born. I had heard of her through a friend of hers that was one of the members of the Mexican Baptist Church in Kansas City. This same girl, Esperanza Hernández, had been in Mexico City and had attended the same church that Ruth attended. In conversations she mentioned to Ruth that there was a young guy from Texas attending the Mexican Baptist Church in Kansas City. So we both had heard of each other before we knew each other. Ruth was baptized at the Baptist Church in Kansas City, MO by the pastor of the church, Enoh Ortega. She started singing in the choir and then I took a liking to her. So then I started singing in the choir also. She didn't pay much attention to me but I sure did pay attention to her. In fact, I begin to forget about Lupe. I had been



praying for something like this and it looked like my prayers were being answered. There is a Yiddish Proverb that says “If you want your dreams to come true don’t sleep”.

I started called her on the telephone and picking her up at work. She started working in a garment factory. She didn’t speak English and everybody there thought she was Italian. I really had a lot of respect for her and always talked to her in the “usted” manner, which in Spanish is the formal way of respecting your elders or persons that are not your close friends. I very soon quit going to the dances on Sunday nights and concentrated on Ruth. Meanwhile my friend Jesse had met a girl named Esiquia but was called “Chickie”. He started dating her and soon forgot a girlfriend he had in Austin or Pflugerville.

I went through so many experiences while living in Kansas City that I’ll never forget. I recall that one day I was walking down 12<sup>th</sup> Street going East when I saw a real pretty girl sitting in front o a desk with a Crystal Ball. She looked Hispanic and smiled at me and then motioned me to come in. Well that was exciting so I went inside. When I sat down in front of her, she got up and her mother took her place. She was a fat lady kind of dark complexioned. I said to myself, “What’s going on here?” I found out they were just Gypsies and the young girl was the ‘bait’. The lady read the palm of my hand and told me I came from a good family and had a good mother. Then she asked me for a five dollar bill temporarily so I handed her one. She spit on it and placed it under her foot. She then asked me what I wanted most, the \$5.00 or my health. I told her my health but I wanted my \$5.00 too. She told me this wasn’t a laughing matter, that she was serious. To make a long story short, I never got my \$5.00 back and I never saw the young girl again. Another time I went to a dance marathon. Couples would be dancing for days and nights. Some were dragging their feet until they would collapse, fall and would get eliminated from the contest. There was a place called The Plamor where they had big name bands playing for dances. I went to see Tex Beneke play. He took over the Glen Miller band. He had a good band and naturally played like Glen Miller. He had two girl singers.

Time went by and I joined the V.F.W. Well, it was alright for a while but I soon quit going to the meetings and social gatherings. I had been receiving compensation from the V.A. because of the malaria I got in Okinawa but all of the time I was in Kansas City it never came back on me. The three times I got it I had chills and fever. The V.A. wrote to me and told me that if they did not hear anything from me or a Doctor, they would quit sending me the check. I could not lie to them so I told them it had not come back anymore so they stopped sending me the checks.

One Sunday a group of us young people went to St. Joseph, MO to visit and participate in a program that a Baptist Church was having. On another occasion I went riding in my 41 Ford by myself and ended up at Leavenworth, Kansas. I saw the Federal Penitentiary in that city. It is quite a sight. While I was in San Francisco I had seen from the shore on a clear day the Alcatraz Penitentiary. Now they say it is like a museum for tourists.

My brother Sam decided to come and see me in Kansas City. He went to church with me and met my friends. He, Jesse Riojas and I went to see a Baseball game at the Kansas City Stadium. We saw the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League with Satchel Page

pitching that evening. At one point the game was held up for some reason. All of a sudden Sam got up and said before in front of all of the black people around us, "WELL GAME CALLED OFF ON ACCOUNT OF DARKNESS". For a minute Jesse and I thought we might be kicked out of the stadium, but nothing happened or maybe they did not catch it! Sam also went to a picnic with me and my friends and we had a good time. I already had a guitar then so we sang some songs. Later on in 1949 Daniel also came to visit me and also attended church with me. By that time I was already thinking of quitting my job as a baker at the hotel and returning back to Texas.

There are many songs that remind me of Kansas City: Songs like "Slow Boat to China", "Evening Shadows Make Me Blue", "By the Light of the Silvery Moon", "Now Is The Hour", "Pistol Packing Mama", "Forever And Ever", "Paper Doll", "Red Sails In The Sunset", "Dolly With a Hole in Her Stocking", and the song they were all singing when I hit San Francisco, "Symphony", also "Star Dust", and "I Got A Gal In Kalamazoo".

At the hotel I kind of got angry with the Pastry Chef, Henry Woods because he would not let me take off on Easter Sunday. I was working every Sunday and he was not much of a church going person but he was a good baker, cake decorator and candy maker. I would get off work at 3:30pm and then would go work out in a Gym on E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway. One afternoon I was boxing with a black guy there in the Gym and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round he was hitting me so hard that I had to quit. He was in training for a fight. I think I mentioned before that I boxed in the Navy for a while. They called them "Smokers". I did not do well since I didn't have a knock out punch. I would lose the bouts on decisions. I enjoyed being a member of the Baptist Church there in Kansas City. After I met Ruth I started attending more often. Ruth was living with her sister, Esperanza and her husband Adolph at 1812 Broadway. That's where I would pick her up to go on dates. I always brought her back home early. Well, the time finally came for me to say goodbye to my Kansas City friends. I said goodbye to everybody at the hotel, the Charay family where I had been living and to Modesto Cantú and the Zúñiga family. That is the family Modesto married into, and also Larry Barron and family and all the church people. I came back to Texas in my 1941 Ford with my brother, Daniel. Of course, I also said goodbye to Ruth and the Martinez family. I told Ruth that I would write to her and she promised to write to me too. Jesse Riojas had already married "Chickey". It was during the summer of 1949 when Daniel and I left Kansas City. Daniel and I stopped in a small town in Okla. to eat at a restaurant and to rest a while. When we finished eating I walked out of the place first and after a while when Daniel walked out he couldn't find me at first. He finally saw me. I was sitting on the sidewalk talking with two full blooded Indians as if I knew these guys. Daniel thought it was funny.

We finally arrived in Austin and everybody at the old homestead was glad to see us. The "prodigal" son had come back. I had gone to Kansas City for an 8 month school course and ended up staying there for two years. The Texas Mexican Baptist Convention met at our church in Austin in June of 1949 and we arrived in time for that convention. Sam, who had played baseball with the Austin High Maroons and with the American Legion had been hired for batting practice and as Bull Pen Catcher by the Milwaukee Braves at the AAA training camp in Austin with the Austin Pioneers of the Big State League. He

then signed up as a professional in the Lower Rio Grande Valley League with Donna, Texas. I believe he had been dating Tony Martinez, a member of our church even though Sam had been attending the Hispanic Methodist Church of Austin. The Martinez family had moved to Austin from San Antonio. Tony's two brothers were Evangelists. They are Angel Martinez and Homer Martinez. Bro. Carlos Paredes was still the pastor at our church. He was doing great work and had been the pastor there since 1942. Our church was organized by the Rev. Santiago Muza on March 24, 1899. My mother was the church historian in the early years and had met Bro. Muza personally. Our church has its beginning in the 500 block of San Antonio Street, where the Covert Buick Agency later took over the site. In those early years the majority of the Mexican American people lived on the west side of Austin. The Guadalupe Catholic Church was also there on the west side of Austin in the same neighborhood. The Mexican Methodist Church where my dad went and the Mexican Presbyterian Church were both also in the same area. Years later they all moved to the east side of downtown Austin.

In 1949 when Dan and I returned from Kansas City, the young people of our church were getting ready to go to Palacios, TX where a Baptist Encampment was located right on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico so I decided to go also. Marcelo Gonzalez, a member of our church and Sam and I made the trip to Palacios in my car. We had a pretty good time at the Camp because of the many young people that went there from other Texas cities as well as from our church. One night a sermon was preached by an Anglo pastor. He said that while his son was in the military during the war, the guys in the service with him tried to lure him to do bad things but he stayed firm in his convictions. That comment made me think of my situation because in the military I did what everybody else was doing. I was very grateful because I had returned from the war without a scratch, except for the malaria that I caught overseas. So, during the invitation I went to the front in tears asking God to forgive me and promising Him that I would stay active in the church. There was a big group of young people up in front with me and everybody was in tears. The Lord was touching everyone's heart and it became emotional. Some were up at front dedicating their lives for special service. For recreation we were permitted to swim in a bay of the Gulf of Mexico. We also went skating at a skating rink downtown in Palacios. Everybody came back to Austin real happy after having a good time. I then got me a job at the Picadilly Cafeteria downtown at 8<sup>th</sup> and Congress in Austin. We made pies, cakes, sweet rolls, cornbread muffins, bread, etc. We would get a free meal there at the cafeteria. I was sporting a good mustache which made the girls call me Pedro Armendariz and Luis Aguilar, Mexican movie stars

I was still working there at the Picadilly when I decided to go with Rudy Huber on a trip. Rudy was Moses' friend from U.T. and in December he was traveling all the way to his home in Chicago. I had already bought Ruth's engagement ring and had planned to get engaged with her in December 1949, so the trip with Rudy was very convenient. He took me along and left me on the way at Kansas City. Another friend, Robert Flores from our neighborhood in Austin went with us. He went with Rudy all the way to Chicago. All of this time Ruth and I had been writing to each other pretty steady. My folks were all in favor of the engagement even though they did not know her yet, although they had seen pictures of her and they knew that she was very attractive and a nice Christian girl from

Mexico City. One song I remember in 1949 that was being played a lot was "Again". I believe the singers were Mel Thorne and Doris Day. Well, I saw Ruth and went out with her with the permission of her brother in law, Adolph Martinez. They were still living at 1812 Broadway and one night on the front porch of the house I gave her the ring and she accepted it. Actually, she had not known me for a long time and didn't know my family. I came back to Austin with Rudy and Robert since they picked me up in Kansas City on their return trip from Chicago. During my brief stay in Kansas City I had the opportunity to visit the Muehleback Hotel where I had previously been employed. I saw Larry Barron the Pastry Chef Henry Woods, Chester and Meyer, two other bakers and a Greek guy that used to help us in the bake shop, along with the cooks, butchers, waiters and waitresses. I also managed to see the church members that I knew as well as Modesto Cantú. I don't recall if I saw Tony Casas because he had his family there and his mother and stepfather, Mr. & Mrs. Ochoa.

Back in Austin our church young people's department was pretty strong. There were the Rincóns, the Martinez sisters Gertrude, Frances, Cincy, Josephine & Rosie. Also Tony & Virginia Martinez, the Buitrons and us Alemans. We had big Valentine & Christmas Parties. A young girl that had graduated from Mary Hardin Baylor was there too. She was Emma Herrera. She came to be our Kinder Garden teacher. We were proud of her because besides being smart, she was real friendly and sociable. Orfalinda and Olga Gonzalez were there too. Bro. Paredes was real proud of us. We also had a real good choir, which Bro. Paredes originally directed but later my brother Moses took it over and directed the choir while he was attending U.T.

Well, I heard that my father and mother were talking about making a trip to Mexico City to ask for Ruth's hand in marriage. I had not even thought of that. Dan was dating a young pretty girl by the name of Rose Marie Graham. Sam was dating Tony Martinez and Moses was seeing a girl by the name of Frances Garcia. Meanwhile Eunice was in the process of growing up to be a pretty young lady. Marcelo Gonzalez, his cousin Edmund, Jesse Peña and his sister Gloria were also in the young people's group along with some nursing students at U.T. that were from the Corpus Christi area. In January or February of 1950 my father made the trip to Mexico City to speak with Ruth's family and ask for her hand. He was accompanied by a Methodist minister from Mexico City. Ruth's mother, Mrs. Margarita Rodriguez gave the O.K. Ruth's father, Juan Rodriguez, had passed away in 1944. My father returned to Austin with the mission accomplished as he had an affirmative pledge.

The Baptist Church in Mexico City where Ruth was a member was being remodeled. That was the Primera Iglesia Bautista, so my father wrote a letter to the Pastor of the Methodist Church "La Santísima Trinidad" asking him if we could use their church for the marriage ceremony. He, of course, asked Ruth's family too. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1950 we received a letter from Pastor José Velasco, LLB of Santísima Trinidad giving us the O.K. to use their church for our marriage ceremony. The date was set for June 18, 1950. He advised us to come with plenty of time because of the Civil Ceremony which had to take place before the religious ceremony. That was the law in Mexico. We also needed the time required for the taking of blood tests and some snapshots of the Civil Ceremony

Certificate. We began to make preparations for the wedding in Mexico. Their law states that the Civil Ceremony must take place, otherwise you are not considered married since the church or synagogue ceremony was not compulsory in Mexico. We wanted both. The church where we were married was located on Gante Street in the heart of Mexico City. The stationary used by the pastor for his letter to my parents indicated that their members consisted of a total of 2,700 people. The Co-Pastor was Daniel Gonzalez. My parents also spoke and wrote to my cousins in Puebla, Irma and Eva and asked them if they would be bridesmaids. So they started communicating back and forth regarding the kind of dresses and the color. Meanwhile, in Austin I was also getting ready for the “main event” myself and still working as a baker at Picadilly Cafeteria on 8<sup>th</sup> and Congress Ave. The cafeteria used to be the Milam Cafeteria in the early 1940s. I was getting ready to be the first Aleman sibling to get married. Bro. Paredes promised a reception at our church in Austin.

The song “Sentimental Journey” was popular and was being played a lot around that time but it wouldn’t be a sentimental journey to Mexico City. Ruth was still working with the Mexican Government in a secretarial position but not for long. Those of us planning to make the trip were my mother, my sister Eunice, a friend of the family Marcelo Gonzalez my brother Moses and of course me. The return trip for my family members had been prearranged by Moses with his friend Rudy Huber who was already in Mexico but offered to bring them back since Ruth and I would be on our honeymoon and they needed transportation back home. So it all worked out very good. On the way to Mexico I drove my first car, the 1941 Blue Ford Coupe that I had bought in Kansas City. Ruth’s sister, Esperanza from Kansas City came to Mexico also as she was selected to be “La Madrina de Honor”. Daniel, Ruth’s only brother was chosen to give the bride away. My brother, Sam was in school in Los Angeles and in September of 1950 he was recalled into the U.S. Navy because of the Korean War. Daniel was busy working at University Press on the U.T. campus. We left Austin in the first part of June 1950 and crossed the Mexican border at Laredo. After a short delay we headed for Monterrey and then Mexico City. My father had stayed behind in Austin to take care of the small grocery store that he ran.

Somewhere on the high Sierra we stopped on the highway to take a picture. We noticed that we were so high above the clouds that we just had to take a picture. When we arrived at Mexico City we drove to Colonia Romero Rubio near the Airport where Ruth and her family lived. We met Ruth’s mother, Margarita Rodriguez, Virginia her sister and her husband Gilberto De La Rosa, another sister Josefina and her sister Esperanza who had arrived from Kansas City plus her only brother Daniel. Also there was her grandmother, Mama Simona. Another sister, Paz was in Kansas City and could not come to Mexico. Edith and Martha were also there and they are Ruth’s nieces. After talking things over about the wedding, we went into downtown Mexico City and got rooms at the Hotel “Chicago”. We also got in touch with my cousins Irma and Eva who agreed to be bridesmaids at the wedding. They were then living in Puebla, a big Colonial and Historical City south of Mexico City. I visited the offices where Ruth worked as a secretary in “Correo Mayor” (Main Post Office. She had a nice job and I met her boss but there I was, to take her away from there. Ruth and I went to take some photographs for our marriage certificate. We also got blood tests and the license. On another day we went to the ‘Mercado’ to order flowers for the church. I had an accident on that day. At an intersection I tried to

avoid being hit by a street car and accidentally hit an old man. I hurt his leg and he seemed to be in pain. The people who were bystanders got mad at me for being negligent. They knew that I was a tourist from Texas because of my license plates. The policeman got us away from there and the maddening crowd and took us to a doctor's office with the hurt man. It was there that the "bribe" took place. He told me to give the man some money for his injuries and some money for him, the policeman, and the whole thing would be forgotten. So we did but I don't remember how much I gave them. We didn't have to go to police headquarters or as they called it over there, "Delegación".

Well, then we talked with the pastor at the church and the time and date for the wedding was established. It would be Sunday morning June 18, 1950, which happened to be Fathers' Day. It was really a special Sunday with other activities held besides our wedding. The marriage should be like a duet; when one sings the other applauds then you are in HARMONY.

At this point of Arthur's memoirs, Arthur stopped writing so we later assumed that he was unable to because of an illness that made it difficult for him to write. His illness kept him from finishing, unfortunately, and he passed away on August 4, 1992. These last few words of his memoirs were completed by his brother, Moses, all done in the loving memory of his dear brother.

The wedding in Mexico City took place just as it had been planned, on June 18, 1950 at La Santísima Trinidad Methodist Church with the pastor, Rev. José Velasco officiating and it was a gorgeous wedding, with the church well decorated and well attended. Just as Arthur already had written, he and Ruth proceeded with their plans for an Acapulco trip for their honeymoon while those of us from Austin returned home with Rudy Huber. Later, Arthur and Ruth returned to Austin and lived there happily for 42 years until his untimely passing in 1992. Their children are identified as Arthur R. Alemán III, who passed away on June 21, 1987, Carlos David Alemán of Austin, Cynthia Ruth Alemán Gonzalez of Douglasville, GA and Robert Edward Alemán of Austin. His widow, Ruth is also in Austin. As of this writing, as descendants of Arthur G. and Ruth R Alemán, there are eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Moses A. Alemán  
McKinney, TX  
July 2, 2013

