

Everyone is born with a facility,
I was born to teach
Maria Teresa González de Girón
Rural teacher

Interview and edition:
Ana Victoria Jiménez Alvarez

I, in a moment of lucidity, asked my daughter for a cassette to record, to say who I am, when I was born, how many siblings we were, who were my parents and my grandparents. Just a few months ago of my illness, and that is why I am here sitting down, motionless, and when a reflex comes to me, I speak immediately, because if I do not say things in the moment, I forget them. That is why I came up with the idea of recording, and I am glad they are doing it.

We were a family of seven. Chelo, my older sister, was born in Tula, Tamaulipas. In fact, twins were born, but the other girl died – according to what my mom told us –, she died very young; then I followed, in Cerritos, and Francisco, who died. Then Amparo, Paco, Toño, Eloisa and Everardo were born in San Luis Potosi. We were all Those. Later, we saw Guillermo as the youngest brother, my nephew, son from the first marriage of my sister Amparo. Soon after she divorced, she remarried, and because Guillermo was very young, my dad said that there was no need for the child to suffer, so they left him to my parents.

I was born on May 28, 1914, around three in the morning – as I am told –. My family remembered well because an uncle was going out with one of my aunts, and that day he gave her a serenade, which in my town it was common between four and five in the morning, and by that time I was already born. My mom used to say that, before, a luxury of the people was having a gun and at the end of the serenade, shooting a bullet through all the town.

I lived my childhood between my town and San Luis, just like the first years of school. Although then, they did not even give you a certificate.

My dad was a merchant and he brought everything by railroads cars, I never saw them buying little by little. There was everything in my house and almost everything was in the warehouses. For example, in the salt cellar, which was a room of about five by five meters, fitted a rail car full of salt that they brought from further than Tampico, from a place called Salinas. My dad explained to us the procedure of how salt was made, that is why I know many things, because he told us everything. Thus, the salt in storage supplied all the small shops of Cerritos. Also the piloncillo came like that. He used to buy what is called here *pip*, and we call it pumpkin seed, to send it to Mexico.

He helped many farmers who planted, and when they picked the harvest, they would sell it to him, he paid them well, and he shipped the corn.

My father always bought a cart of mesquite wood and another one of white wood and we heaped it; then the coal by tons, so there was always everything. Because he was merchant, he got the fruit by trays. I remember that my sister Chelo and I took a newspaper, we sat in the hallway, we pulled towards us the tray of mangoes and started to eat and eat, God knows how many we ate! The nuts! Those that are squeezed, they bought them by measure and we also ate them.

They seldom bought milk, because after work, they sent the animals from the pasture and there my dad also had his little cows. At least, there was milk, it was when the cows were born; they sent them down and my dad milked one or two cows, but there was always milk for us. That is why, the process of milk, the milking and of the products that are made with it, I know it perfectly, because mom made us jocoque, cream, and when nobody wanted cream anymore, she would whisk it up by hand, because before there were no appliances and like that, were made the butter balls, the cheeses and all the products of milk. I know all that well.

From the sowing, the same, because we saw when they opened the bags of corn and then they sowed it, then came the threshing, pick up the harvest. I saw all that at home and in the country. From the cornfield were brought dozens of tender ears of corn and what they call here huitlacoques, the black mushrooms, for my mom to stew them; they were very tasty, and I know how to cook them as well as she does. So, when there was corn, they took us to the cornfield. It was totally a field day! Mom would go with us and one of the servants to prepare and distribute the food and roast the corn. Before, you could have two or three maids, now it is not possible. Besides, we have those wonderful devices and everything is different, it is something else.

Before, only people with a lot money had a car. Everything that was loaded was by cart, donkey and horse, but no cars. There were horse carriages, but not many motorized cars. In my town there were no more than three. I remember that when we were a little older, my dad put a cart full of salt and sold it to some Spanish people who were not able to pay him, I do not know why, and in exchange they gave him a Ford car; since then we had a car. My dad drove and also Chelito, my sister, and sometimes we had a driver.

Cerritos was then a small town. It was said that it was formed in the wake of the Revolution, in 1911, with the people who left, for example, from Tula, Tamaulipas, where my parents lived as newlyweds, and from other cities of greater importance. At that time, those cities communicated by carts and carriages, but Cerritos had the good fortune that the railroad would pass by. My dad and my mom stayed with the people who accompanied them. They went along with a sister, a daughter, and two siblings of my father, and they stayed there because the railroad that went from San Luis Potosi to Tampico was passing through there; and because the mom of my mom lived in Tampico, they were very well connected. We lived all that, nobody told us about it, in my moments of lucidity, I remember it. There are things that for a moment I forget, even if I have them in my hand.

Before leaving Tula, during the Revolution, from part of their parents and aunts, they had a ranch, which is still on the map of San Luis Potosi, it is a little thing that says: La Yerbabuena! My dad, in Cerritos, had eight bushels of field, because in that time that was how it was called where the corn was planted, and among the corn they threw beans. Then, he harvested barley and, in the good times, cotton; he had a cotton corer. Besides, as everyone, he had his animals: his riding horse, working animals and mules.

The town then, was not as big as now. It will be about fifteen years since I went and there was already, besides the government school, private school, school of nuns, secondary and high schools. They also had drinking water; it was very changed.

My dad was president of Cerritos. Not because he wanted to – he was completely apolitical, he did not like any of that –, but when Professor Manriquez visited town by town and arrived to ours, he spoke loudly at the pavilion. When he knew how everything was, he shouted loudly that he wanted the most honest men, and then Anastacio, Tacho Puente, and some more, said that it was my dad, Francisco Gonzalez, and they put him as president. Tacho Puente no longer exists.

My dad, right away, took a sample of the smithy from the pavilion to the Pisuto foundry, in San Luis Potosi. It was a very big and nice pavilion, and the plaza was too; he took that sample so they could make the missing trellis. After, they put metal tubes to carry the light, because there was no light in my town. The light was handled by young people named Pedroza and they turned it on from six or seven in the evening until twelve at night, or when there was a party, so then the town would wake up illuminated. Later, they

put the water in, because when I was a child, the drinking water was bought and transported in carts and barrels. In addition, we had large water tanks and cisterns where the rainwater was kept, so that all year round there was water, but the drinking water was bought by containers. During the time that my dad was president, after the municipality owed the teachers more than a year and a half in salaries, in six months everything was paid to them.

I have a portrait of when my dad was president. He is with those who formed the government. I think that the president was paid two pesos with fifty cents a day, and my dad donated them to the municipality. In that photo he is with the governor of San Luis Potosi, professor Aurelio Manriquez, Geronimo Perez, professor Tomas Gomez, police commander Jose Lejia, and Pedro Najera, who was a debt collector. Don Refugio Vargas and his brother Luis, kept the books, the accounts, they were called then "bookkeepers", today they are called accountants; Don Francisco Lopez, Camilo Balderas, and then Toribio Flores who worked in the payments office.

The house of Cerritos was wide, like every town house. We had a patio, garden, backyard and corral, so we could do what we liked best: run around all day. The games of before were like those now: "Naranja dulce, limon partido", "A la vibora de la mar"; "encantados", and another that said: "El patio de mi casa es particular". They are the same, because the games and the customs are inherited.

We had, rather the boys had their circus, but they shared it with us, the girls. My brothers and cousins who lived near us, gathered and made a circus in the corral of the house. My act consisted in throwing alcohol on the floor and lighting a match, and while dancing on the fire, I tried to extinguish it. It was alcohol with water. Those were the nonsense we invented. We had a trapeze and a swing with which the boys made circus acts.

Because it was cooked with firewood, all the jugs were black, so they grabbed a big one and painted eyes on it, then they tied it to their back, covered with an old bed sheet and they walked on four feet with the jug. At night they went out into the street and frightened all the people and the other boys. Mom used to give them all that so they could play. A town is like a family where they take care one another, one takes care of the children of a friend, it is not like in the city.

When one is young is tremendous, and I was tremendous. What I liked was climbing the trees, especially when it was windy. I stayed there like a tied up monkey, hugging the branches, with the risk of falling down. But they

were childish things. We had a childhood – for me – beautiful. More beautiful than what I see now. Then, there was no television or anything to have fun. The phonograph was of glasses and the needle of diamond. We heard music from those times. I do not know the names of the pieces, but it was pretty music, of Juventino Rosas, who has beautiful waltzes. It was the music that my mom liked. And that phonograph, where did it end up? maybe in the trash? because one does not know what one has until one sees it lost.

In our time, the days of going out to visit or to go for a walk were only on Sundays. In the early morning we woke up, we got bathed, we got ready, our old mom would take us to mass, and later we would go back to the house with her.

If there was a circus, puppets or something else, my dad would take us in the afternoon. We saw the famous puppet company of Rosete Aranda, when visiting town by town it came to mine. I remember one occasion when a little clown was dancing, then a crocodile on the other side and in two bites ate it. For our age, it left us with our mouths open and drooling. I have told it to my granddaughter and she laughs because it seems silly to her. They took us to the movies only when there were movies we could see.

I know a lot of things because my mother was an ambitious person. She was a very prepared woman, because in those days, ladies were educated in schools of nuns. She attended a very famous one, “Verbo Encarnado”. She knew music, English, painting, drawing, and everything related to education of before, which was not like the one from today, and everything that she learned she transmitted it to us. Then, there was no secondary nor high school nor anything like that. In the Verbo Encarnado College, all the nuns were foreigners, precious, how gorgeous and well-prepared women! There she studied primary, but nor papers nor certificates were given, so there is no record. She studied in Tula, Tamaulipas, where she also married.

For the readings, my mom. First, she told us stories, but later they bought to us beautiful books to color, in which when passing them a wet cotton, the colors appeared, they were German books. Precious stories! Then there were no such things here, nor fabrics, all were Swiss, very fine, of bride, which is a precious, thin fabric. From that fabric I made the shirts of my daughter, old-fashioned shirts, because now they are no longer in use; my grandchildren worn them, and I still keep them for when they have their children. The embroidered strips, the lace, everything was Swiss, because there was not any here.

Before, all the clothes were manufactured at home: bottoms, shorts and dresses. The moms sewed, and as now the television – that Even in cardboard housings there is an antenna – before, in the humblest house there was a Singer sewing machine. I have a simple Singer, of those that goes backwards and forwards, which were in those days a great thing. In San Luis, I took several classes at the Singer to learn how to machine embroider and make dresses. Before, they used to teach us since a young age how to do the “repulgo” (*hemstitch*): two or three little threads are taken out to be used as a bastille and the hem is sewn with the knot. Then they taught the white embroidery, which first consists in filling the little leaf and then the thread is passed through the top. All were imported, legitimate cotton threads, the DMC, English, and The Cross (Le Croix), French. They are already manufactured here, but not with the quality of those. Plus, they are now nylon, but they are horrible, because with the hot water or with the iron they fall apart and the clothes come unstitched. On the other hand, with the cotton threads, there was no way of pulling it and breaking a seam! If something turned out wrong, my mom made us unstash it and sew it again. This way was the education we received.

Everything was made at home. For example, before, we did not go to buy jam, it was made for the whole year. It was called cajeta, not like here, that it is called “ate”, quince jelly, apple flavored quince jelly, no, for us, there in San Luis, it was cajeta and it was made at home. The cajeta was made from the pulp of the quince and with the center it was made another kind of sweet, which by the way it was spread on a cotton cloth, was put it to dry, it was detached and it was like if it was meat, it was very nice and it was said that very nutritious, although the quince jelly is very sticky, in that way it tastes very good. I remember that in season of quinces, they were cooked in large pans. After they put us all to peel them and get the center out of them to do what they call “mucus”. In a hand mill, the assistant used to grind the pulp of the already cooked quince; mom used to beat it with sugar and cooked it in a large saucepan. There was the assistant, moving it and moving it, shaking and shaking, to a certain point. Then, they took it out and wrapped the molds with some china paper squares, but china paper of those days! And they threw in there the cajeta. The same thing was done with the apple, the Mexican Hawthorne and the guava: cook, grind, add sugar, move, strain it in order to take the seed out until it reaches its point. That is how they did it and that is how I saw it, because when one is young, always peeping, always getting in the way! as the old ones said; but we learned.

Chorizo and sausage were also made. The pigs were killed and cans of lard came out from there, one refined and one of pork rinds, which were for the house service. With the meat the chorizo was made: the meat was ground and chile ancho toasted was deveined. After, the meat was spread with the already ground chile and different condiments, such as garlic, oregano, pepper and salt, it was left for seasoning in vinegar for several days and then it was placed in beef entrails.

As for the milk, mom used to let it stand and with a spoon she took away all the fat. She filled jars and jars, one for each one, with which she made the jocoque, which is Arabic style, and that was given to us every day, we used to put salt on it and with just a spoon we finished it. I still make jocoque when I go to Cuautla, because there they sell “leche bronca” (*unpasteurized milk*), as they call cow milk. I fill a plastic container, I leave it overnight over the pilot light and the next day it dawns curdled. I place it in the refrigerator and the jocoque is ready. To the other milk, my mom would add to it a pill and leave it to curdle, strain it, all the water was removed, because the serum was for the pigs. Once the milk was curdled, she squeezed it to make the cheese and we also ate the curd. In the house there was a cow, at least, for our milk, and when it was not enough, mom would buy it from people who had cows, but that was real milk! With cream! To make it butter it has to be wagged for a long time until the balls of butter go up.

The tortillas were made by the maid. She picked the cobs, she threshed them and in the afternoon she put the nixtamal (*ground grains of corn mixed with water and lime to prepare tortillas*). When it was ready, they washed it and left it without water. On the next day, early, take it to the mill, and in the metate (*square stone for grinding*), lower it, take away “testales” (*portions of corn dough*), and “tortear” (*do the tortillas clapping*). And after that, to eat, what tortillas those made on clay griddle, to which they called “sapos” (toads)! After that, the corn did not even break, nor the nixtamal was ground at home, because the mills began.

My mom made bread and also cakes, and usually many things for “Todos Santos”. She used to make baked gorditas and we used to be nosy. We had furnace to which the assistant put in wood. When the coals were already hot, he swept it, and he put the sheets of steel with gorditas of corn flour with butter, piloncillo (brown sugar) and cinnamon. Many years later, the bread was also bought, because staff from the bakeries came out with some baskets and distributed the bread all over town.

The enchiladas of San Luis are very tasty. The dough is beaten with the ground chile ancho and the tortillas are made, which turn out red. When they are cooking on the clay griddle, cheese is added on it, and with the dough it sticks itself. Chorizo is added, carrot, potatoes and green beans. Recently they started to be sold in boxes to keep in the freezer.

In my house irons were used, of those that were placed over a clay griddle in the wood stove. About half dozen or eight irons were placed, they were grabbed from the griddle and with them we ironed. Then, came the ones of hot coal, which were placed inside the iron and were used by the tailors, they blew them and the ash came out. Then came the electric irons and, now, the steam irons. In those days my grandmother ironed the shirts with the hard front, which was like flour, like alum. Now, on the other hand, it is very easy, there is starch with which the clothes do not turn out hard. Everything has become easier, it is not like at that time when one was crying and crying, because if the firewood was wet, it would not ignite.

My maternal grandmother was the daughter of a Spanish woman and a French man. The lady had eyes of a divine blue and she was white, as a magnolia. She was with whom we got along best. I remember that every night she took off her black stockings and I liked very much to lift her skirt up so I could see her white legs, like porcelain. Girl! – She told me – Her name was Engracia and everyone called her Engracita, for us she was Mama Chita. She was like me, that I cuddle my grandchildren. We always loved her very much. The father of her dad came from France and here he got married and all his children were born here.

My grandmother told me that this man, my great-grandfather, had an alembic and that he lived in the old Morelos. In those years there was a French general surnamed Lupin, who went to have his drink and came screaming. My great-grandfather had a train of mules and horses, and – Momma Chita used to tell – traveled from Baja California to Guatemala; from Guatemala he carried pearls and other products to sell, in trains, because the carriages were for the city. It was said that Lupin came with all the cavalry and the bemused animals, and he exchanged them to the great-grandfather. Who was opposed then? My grandmother also said that she was about six or seven, maybe eight years old, and waist-length blond hair, and that the guy used to lift her and kiss her, still with his mustache full of “cañazo” (that is how it was called the pure hard liquor), and would tell her: this one looks like

if she was from my country! Because that guy was French. That was what she used to tell us. My grandmother died at ninety-something years old.

She married my grandfather, Francisco Ramirez Ayala, who was a lawyer, and from there were born my mother and my aunt and uncles Socorro, Jose and Pedro. They had more children, but they died. She was the one who we saw the most, because my big mom lived with us for a long time. She liked to read to us, she read to us a lot, like that novel, *Virgin and Martyr*, about a girl, Genoveva de Brabante, who was not allowed to get married, of whom she read to us a chapter and told us about it, until she read to us all the book.

Grandmothers are a little bad, but I was also kind of bad. I remember that she had a jasmine from India, a white carnation, I placed one in Cuautla to remember her. She had it in a barrel, she appreciated it like her eyes and I used to go and steal the flowers. One day she caught me and pinched me: "Ouch, big mom, calf nails", I told her. And we were not even a thousandth part of how rude the children now are. How have the generations changed, when would we joke or had an exchange with our parents that now have my grandchildren with theirs?

My grandmother, the mom of my dad, was called Adelaida. She was a short lady with her white blouse, sleeves with lace, from which showed her white fingers; black skirt, which it let only see the tip of the shoes, and a little pocket also black. She smoked Carmencita cigarettes of five cents. She used to send me to light it, because she was always sitting in the hall watching who came in and who came out. Because there, it was a habit leaving the door widely opened all day, I do not know if now, but there, there is no evil people as I have seen here. Then, she would sit down to watch when the shippers came in, what they took out, what they were carrying, she was the one who inspected. She told me: "Maria Teresa!", so that I go and light her cigarette; I went across the whole patio, all the way to the kitchen and on my way back I was taking drags and jumping in one foot, when I gave it to her I had already taken some drags, and those were the drags that I took, because I never liked to smoke.

In Cerritos there was a revolutionary man, Adalberto de Avila, who was out there, risen up in arms. My mother used to say that from time to time he would go in to see who he could extort, but there, there were no battles nor things like that, maybe there were some place else, but about that, mom did not tell us. For example, the train from San Bartolo to Cerritos was once

bombed and they took us to see it. The most innovative walk was to go to the station, one walked to see the railroad pass with all the cars, one half with floor and the other not. That revolutionary was very bad, because they said that he made the passengers get down the train, he cut off the soles of their feet and made them walk on salt. They cut the women's breasts, it was a horror what happened in the Revolution! But as in Cerritos lived his family, I think that is why they did not attack. My mother said that once all the merchants were called, my dad among them, to demand him large amounts of money, but as the order for them to retire arrived, he did not have to give anything. But they always lived with that fright until the Revolution ended.

I remember that my dad bought a furnished house in Quinta and Altamirano, Altamirano number 43, in San Luis, which no longer exists. When we were in San Luis, there was where we lived. My dad went every eight days; he spent half of the week with us and the other half in Cerritos, which was where he had his business. It was so close by train, I think it was an hour and a half or two hours; so we went and come back; well, just in vacation time.

As girls, as it was customary before, mom played dolls with us. She did it every afternoon. She had bought us some furniture which a man made in San Luis for our dolls.

We were in one of the main schools, Las Santos, ran by the major Sister, Clementina, Ester and Maria. The school of the Santos ladies was for boys and girls. There I was for First Year, because Second Year I studied in Cerritos as well as part of the primary school, in a private school for boys and girls, with a graduated teacher whose last name was also Santos. The principal was called Juana Santos, and her sister, Angela, was the one who taught us needlework and, sometimes, she checked our drawings. We used to call her Angelita and she was about twenty years old. They were two sisters and their mother. At that time no papers or civil registry were used, nor birth certificates, nothing. My dad used to tell me that in his time, a promissory note, my foot! If you had lent to someone an amount of money due to pay such a day, such day you would have been paid. The word was worth and I am that way.

The private school was called Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez, and there was taught Primary, elementary and High School. In the second semester of Third Year, I got a prize for my performance, I received a Diploma on December 1923. About my certificate, I do not even remember where it is. In those days, there were no photocopies or anything like that, as there are

now; you would take the papers and all them would be taken to the archive, they probably do not exist anymore!

And in the Elementary School Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz in Cerritos, I concluded primary. The principal was Ester Mendez Lopez, and my certificate says: "The girl Maria Teresa Gonzalez concluded her primary education, approving all subjects, in the City of Cerritos, on November 27, 1929". The subjects were those that were taught in primary: geography, arithmetic (not mathematics), grammar and history. Music was separate. Mothers who had better education were those who sent their children to study music with a private teacher. My mom, for example, because she was educated in a school of only nuns, she knew how to play instruments, sing, paint, draw. Now, in high school they teach dressmaking, but before, in elementary school they used to teach us needlework, sewing and embroidery, although not embroidery as in high school, that was until secondary.

We belonged to the Santos Angeles Society, by the way, I still have my Manual, already damaged, but I have it somewhere, after so many years. We had our First Communion together, my sister Chelo, my friend Toña Avila, Ernestina and others that I do not remember, about six girls, because we belonged to the Society. My dress was Swiss Lace, I still remember, it had like little flowers, three-quarter sleeve, simple, princess style, round neck, the slip of embroidered strip and the bottom all lace. I do not remember my sister's dress, but I do remember mine because I enjoyed it, I very much enjoyed it!

We were also going to offer flowers in May, every afternoon of the month, in a very beautiful ceremony. Those of us who were in the Society of the Santos Angeles prayed after the mass. There was a president, Clemencia Castillo, who read us a long manual, and then we prayed I do not know which prayers and we went home. That was every eight days, in the church, in the chapel of the Sacred Heart. We were about twelve or fifteen girls. In front of the church was Mr. Priest Ramon Gonzalez, distant relative of mom, her godfather, who must have been of Spanish origin because he was white and green-eyed.

When I turned fifteen years old, my mom made enchiladas for me and she prepared a simple supper, because it was not a custom the big celebrations of today, no fifteen years nor all those silly things! I call them silly because I think that is for those who can spend in a party and not wake up the next day knocking at the door of the "comadre" (*close friend*), asking for money in order to buy tortillas. The enchiladas were stuffed with cheese and

topped with chorizo and vegetables, and we shared with my friends, the closest friends. The supper, as it is called, of coffee with milk, because here they drink atole (*corn flour drink*) with chocolate, and the tamales are eaten with atole and the chocolate is for the fine cakes.

We had friends chosen. My mom chose them from marriages as decent as hers. Above all, that the parents, as they sometimes say, would not have skeletons in their closet. Before, there were no divorced women, where would there be divorced women! A marriage made friendship with another marriage that was equal to them.

I do not know how the festivities were celebrated in San Luis, but in my town, Cerritos, they would only give little gifts when it was someone's birthday, everything very simple. Before, giving away or asking for money was an offense, how could I ask for it to a relative? My dad and my grandmother used to give us a Sunday weekly allowance, but asking to an uncle, as now happens, never! Everything has changed. I was telling my granddaughter that in my time, we never spend the night at the house of a friend. We did stay with my grandmother, but, in the house of friends? And now it is normal: I am staying at the house of so-and-so!

I was not with those of the Vela Perpetua (*Perpetual Candle*), because that was for older ladies, and gentlemen. I did not know well what that was. Claudita Rocha was the president and she was it her whole life; it made us laugh because they said to her: Here is Porfirio Diaz! Precisely with her I practiced the making of cloth flowers. My mom was from the Vela Perpetua, and although I never went, I imagine that it was a matter of praying. I think that everyday it was the turn of some ladies to be on guard from early until the gentlemen who kept a vigil over had entered, they spent the night accompanying the sanctuary where the communion wafers were, and they prevented the candles from being extinguished. At night, the gentlemen arrived, they made the exchange and took turns. They had, for example, three days some and three days some others, as I believe, but in front was Claudita Rocha, whom we called mom Claudita.

Maybe there were other congregations, but I did not even notice. Later, when the years passed and the churches opened, a priest arrived, Contreras, I do not remember his name. he organized the Society of Catholic Ladies, to which also belonged mom and whose meetings were once a month or every two months, and agreed what they had to do. But that was after, and there were also those of Santa Teresita, in which each of us, of the girls,

was given a certain amount of buttons with a picture or an image to go and sell them, because that father looked like the devil's boot, he only asked for money, just money; every year he changed his car, and after three months of being there the nephews began to arrive, who were as if he had had his head cut off and placed it on his nephews.

In the time of Calles, the churches closed, and the religious ceremonies were hidden. Masses or marriages were celebrated where people lived. At that time, a friend of mom got married, I do not remember what her name was, but I do remember that she came to the house, and also the boyfriend, and my parents were the godparents. There were hidden masses anywhere. They did not persecute, that happened in Michoacán. Well, I read that later, because my husband bought me the collection of three books about the Cristero War (*Catholic militant War*) and I read them; now, already married, being old, is when I have reasoned and thought more about that. At that time, only the churches were closed. They said that Calles visited Rome and that he saw a piece covered with gold plates that was made with the money that was collected from the people, and that was why he forbade it. In my house there were never ceremonies, but there were on the other side, because there lived a priest with his family and there they celebrated mass. Later, when the churches were opened, that priest formed the Catholic Association and of Las Santas Teresitas. In my town, there was never a revolt nor uprisings nor anything about the Cristeros (*catholic militants*).

Since I was very young I was ready for everything, because everything that was to learn, mom would make us do it. I was about eight years old when they taught me how to make flowers in Cerritos. I learned with Pachita Vazquez, who taught me how to do it starting from the paste, how well she taught me! And when I went to school, I had already seen all that. Then I practiced it with Claudita Rocha, the president of the Vela Perpetua. From the cloths of the old dresses of the saints, we made flowers, which were made then of satin, now who knows what they are made of.

Claudita Rocha lived in a very big house and under some beautiful large trees, I think they were fig trees, she had a table where the old dresses were placed, for example the one of the Virgin Mary, and we made white lilies; of the cloak of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, red flowers, and so, according to the flowers, we prepared the fabrics. She taught us how to paint fabrics with anilines, all German. First they were diluted in alcohol, and then, with some little paintbrushes, or with larger brushes, we gave the cloth the green of the

leaves or the different colors. Later, we cut the leaves, we ironed them and placed them on special molds. For example, for the chrysanthemums they were iron molds with which we leveraged each little leaf. Then, we stuck them in a wire, which was already covered, and behind, with another piece of paper, we pasted them. They turned out precious. There was a crepe paper brand Deminson, I think German, which was like silk. We used it to make the roses. I have never found such a paper again, because when I was a teacher, I taught how to make paper flowers, but the paper was not that beautiful anymore. It was really nice to go, because we gathered together about six girls in order to work and also to talk.

Frankly, now I think about how I was able to learn so much. For example, I know how to make the bobbin lace by hand, there I have all my bobbins and the sample that I made. A teacher from Lagos de Moreno taught us. As among the students, I was the youngest, I sometimes tangled the bobbins, but a girl, whom I loved a lot – it is said that she died –, used to tell me: “Do not worry”. I untwisted the bobbins and did them again; and because the teacher liked me, she always lent me the samples already advanced so that at night, in my house, I would take them out and return them the next day. That is how I learned to make the bobbin lace. The bobbins are sticks where the thread is rolled up and then in a round pad it is pinned with pins, with only pins, and then, they were removed. You can do different very beautiful things, but in order to do it, it would take a lot of time, not even cleaning the house, nor making the bed, nor anything, must dedicate to only that, like when you are a kid, that you are like a little bird and is given everything in the mouth.

I learned haute couture, to make dresses. I learned with the Martinez de Micé, which is a method of measurement, and then, on the same fabric, goes the making of the dress, or the pattern as they call it now. That was taught to me by my aunt Domitila, who was a haute couture dressmaker, although I also took classes to learn the Acme method. It began by sticking the necks, the twist or making armholes. I do not remember what was the name of the teacher of the sewing class, who was very competent, and taught us through measures to make the patterns. Now I see the dresses, well sewn, well done, and I made them many years ago. The last dress that I made with a pattern was fifty years ago, when my sister-in-law got married and invited me to be the godmother. And I made myself a dress. That is why I ordered the fabric, I ordered it to San Luis Potosi and they sent me a taffetas

sampler, then they were actually silks, not like now that everything is acrilan, although it has its advantage, because it does not wrinkle like a linen dress, with which one can not even sit down. That was the last dress that I made. For many years I made for myself dresses, robes, and simple clothes for being home, but I no longer made high fashion clothes.

I think that everyone is born with a skill. For example, if I saw a stitch that I did not know in the fabric of two needles, then I would go walking for one block behind the lady who was knitting, and arriving home I would get the stitch. Angelita only taught me back and right, and my grandmother the knot and a few little waves. As the balls of crochet thread, both, of La Cruz as well as of La Cadena, brought a piece of paper in which came the samples of the *frivolite* tatting, I took them out. The one who knew how to make that kind of lace was my maternal grandmother, and I spent a lot of time behind her – mama Chita, mama Chita! Teach me! –, until one day she said: “Okay, girl!”, and she began to teach me. I did not know those things in which one rolls up the thread, the shuttles. Now I have them by dozens because I have knitted a lot and I have made a lot of lace. My grand mommy rolled up the thread on a cane of corn, and there she pinned it in a little crack, I used to call to the lace of double knots: “orejitas” (*little ears*) although it had another name.

Each one chooses. When I was still a girl, or very young, I saved some money and asked for an encyclopedia that was called “*Labores de Mujer*” (*tasks of a woman*), which I still have around there. Now, I can not work hard anymore, because I get sick; I can not even read because my pressure goes up. I have very beautiful books of two needle stitches, encyclopaedias and Italian and French notebooks, to which I understand a little, in order to make sweaters with those beautiful stitches. It seems that in Europe, they start at the neck, from there they bring out the sleeves and end up at the bottom; we, or at least me, I start from the bottom and finish the sweaters at the top.

It is a skill with which one is born. I used to knit little coats for my goddaughters: I made a yellow one with brown flowers, carded, and with its little hat. I knitted socks, gloves, sweaters, shawls, jackets, scarves. When I still did not know how to knit shoes for children, a friend of my mom with a little girl in her arms went to visit us – now I will be great-grandmother –, I looked at the knitted shoes and took one. I checked it and, after a lot of struggling, of knitting and unknitting, I managed to get the sample out of the shoe. In these times, there are very few people who knits. In my daughter’s

time, and now in my grandchildren's, it is very different. I begged my youngest granddaughter to knit: "Yes, grandma, I do know how to knit with two needles". "But you have never made a sweater, not even a scarf for your boyfriend." Now, women and girls are preparing in a very different way.

I learned to do **smock**, and above all the cross stitch, because that was how we were educated. Before, they used to dedicate to needle-working, sewing, knitting, and I, about sewing, thank God, I master everything: unraveling, netting, machine embroidery, as used before, although that has ended. Everything is history now. In addition, now there are those blessed machines that you just put the foot on and they make cord, paste laces and whatever you want. I embroidered by machine and embroidered to the past, which was with a lot of needles with the thread of silk, the *filosel*.

When we were young, we also went to cooking classes with a newly married lady, whose name was Maria Luisa, wife of a machinist. She taught us pastry classes in San Luis Potosi. I and my cousin who is already dead, Azucena, and another girl, Lupe, used to go. The lady had a Chinese cook who taught us how to cut the vegetables, because each one has its way of being cut, as well as the onion and the carrot: "No, dear, that is not the way to cut them; an onion is cut like this!" He taught us how to choose vegetables and fruits. About the squash, the little one, the one with the little white tail is the good one, because the brown one, bitters. And I practiced what I learned at my aunt Domitila's house when I spent some time with her. They invited me, I would go for eight days and I stayed there for three months, they did not want me to leave, because as they did not have children, I had three months of vacations until my dad went to pick me up. Let her, Don Panchito, let her stay a while more!

There was no television, but we had phonograph and piano. We also liked a lot reading. I always had the habit of reading, and when I was young I read a lot, almost all the French classics, because we had an uncle who left all his library at the house of my parents and from there we grabbed books to read, but mom started us in reading with stories from all the classics. Later, when I was older, the reading increased, because it is when you are at the age of wanting to know what you do not care or what you should not. I read a writer of whom my mother never learned to pronounce his name, and she called Montepan, Montepen, Montepin to Maupasant. Later, I read Pierre Loti.

My mom taught us how to paint in oil when we were girls, and the colors cost fifteen cents. Later, a young lady who went to my land taught us to paint in organdy, of before, because of that one there is none now. With the lithography by hand, one's eyes run out. I like painting, I like the beautiful. Whenever we traveled to New York, we went to the museum and I would sit in front of a Joan of Arc who is in a forest and who even seems to speak.

To this day I keep reading, and I read a lot. I like to read "El Búho", the cultural supplement, because there come the writers of recent times. I do not like the poetry of today, I liked that of my times, that of Amado Nervo; I was from the Romantic Era because I also read all the Mexican romance novels.

A couple of married arrived to my town. The man was inspector of rural schools, this was in the time of Lazaro Cardenas. Samuel Ordaz was his name, from Puebla, very decent. You have to appreciate people for their qualities and not for their defects, one dies with them. He made friends with us, he was a close friend of the family. He met us because he was looking for teachers, certainly not people of money but of good behavior, and that also knew. They asked me if I wanted to teach, and I did want to. Besides, I was prepared for everything from a very young age.

In town, there were very big boys, who could not read nor write and some of them worked with my dad. There was a lot of illiteracy at that time, and we had already taught, because my father always taught those who did not know; he taught them how to read and write and I helped him. I taught my friends how to make little covers of *frivolite* lace and other things that I had learned. The man saw that I knew. My mom and my dad did not want me to go, but I insisted so much, that I got them to let me go.

I started working at the mine of Huascalámá, which is of sulfur, it is said that it is the second in the world. We lived in front of it. In the garage of what had been the house of the engineers, which was very big, we founded the little school. With a cloth board and each one would take its own chair or little bench, because there were no desks, everything was improvised. There we started school with children from seven years old to up to boys of fourteen.

I lived with a married couple, Mrs. Anita, who was the wife of one of the foremen of the mine and daughter of a worker of my dad. I had their children at school and I taught them how to read and write. I taught sewing,

improvement of writing, reading and accounts to the ladies, as long as they did not exceed a hundred. On Saturdays I taught cooking and, sometimes, I even cleaned the class rooms.

After about a year – I do not remember well – I went to the Hacienda de Peotillos, to take charge of the school that was bankrupt. It was a dead school which nobody wanted anymore. My uncle Silvestre lived there with his wife, my aunt Domitila; he was the buyer of ixtle, because those haciendas were ixtleras.

Peotillos was an hacienda about fifty kilometers from San Luis Potosi. It was very important in the state because it was very rich and big. During the war of independence, there, an insurgent called Mina had a battle. The big house had a huge patio, corridors and houses, where they made mescal.

In the school of the Hacienda de Peotillos, there were already desks, although they were all broken. Even so, classes began. The parents were called to a meeting and the committee was formed, one was appointed to be in charge of the responsibility for the committee and of what the parents had to do. The owner of the hacienda was the one who paid me, among the old papers I have copies of the receipts. In 1934, I was sent a letter with the original of the appointment made to me by the Secretariat as a rural teacher of the school Article 123 of the Hacienda de Peotillos, in order to present it to the owner or representative of the property, which was Mr. Jose Muriendas, so that he would pay me the salary of 54.74 pesos per month.

In that school I also had classes with boys in the afternoons, and in the morning and at noon with the children. They came in at eight and left at twelve; then they would come in at three and leave at six; after that, two hours for the nocturnal. In the mornings and afternoons, the ladies also went to sewing. That is how it was all day, everyday.

When I was in the other schools, for example in La Libertad, I was already the principal. There I gathered a group of boys and taught them what I knew about music, so they were encouraged and we formed an orchestra; later they got a teacher, they bought their instruments and learned more music. Now they say that all that is changed.

The Hacienda de Peotillos was already Rural School Article 123, then I went to La Libertad, but that one belonged to the federation. Those were schools from the time of General Cardenas. There, no religion at all.

My big sister, Chelo, was also a teacher at a school called Del Ranchito. She played the piano perfectly, because my mother was our first teacher; before reading and writing, I played a four-hand piece with her. Chelito was a

teacher thanks to all the preparation my mom liked to give us, but they were only six months because she retired to get married. I lasted many years working because I liked it. At the same time, I kept on learning, whatever it took, all that I could, because when you like to learn, it is like someone who is hungry and eats; for me it was learning and learning. I lasted as a rural teacher about ten years. That way was my career.

The Secretariat of Public Education was very attractive. They made many meetings to train us. I have kept letters or invitations to improvement courses for rural teachers, so that we would be up-to-date with the knowledge and, above all, so that we would know about socialism and socialist education. I have an invitation from the Department of Agriculture Education and Rural Teaching, in which they wanted me to participate in a Cultural Mission, a reunion in San Jose del Corte, Municipality of Mexquitic, in April 1935, from April 18 to May 12, which was organized by the Magna Institute of Professional Improvement.

We boarded the train, I do not remember if it was paid by the federation or the municipality, but we left. They divided the group, because we were many teachers, married couples and single girls like me. The groups in which they divided us were like this: the young people were the waiters and we went to the kitchen to make the food; we were five female teachers and three male teachers who we catered, it was okay with me because I was prepared, instead, the bursar who guided us did not know much.

A large group of teachers from Mexico who went to train us, gave us classes to us teachers. There was a knitting teacher whom I had taught; they also gave sewing classes, and since I was fascinated by that, and I knew many things, I was very attentive in order to learn the new. There was also a painter, and teachers of arithmetic, mathematics, and all the higher subjects, of course. We had music lessons, but for beginners; I already played the piano, I think I had finished the second method of Slava of voice practice, and I was with people who did not even know the O by the round of music. There were also young musicians who already played instruments, like guitar and violin.

Then they gave us some papers with the grades of what we studied. The subjects were: National Language, 7; arithmetic and geometry, 7; social sciences, 7; nature science, 8; singing and music, 8; physical education, 7; writing 7; drawing, 8; and domestic economy, 7. In the subjects of socialist orientation they taught us: general concept of socialism, history of the

worker's movement, origin of religions and cooperative movement, and I got 9 in everything. My overall grade was 9. They also estimated personality and conduct, 10; enforcement, 10; cooperation, 10; solidarity, 10; spirit of service, 10. They gave us a diploma and a laudatory note that read: For having studied at the Magno Institute of Professional Improvement, demonstrating with it the desire to serve with major effectiveness the cultural task that is entrusted to you". With that were increased the points of the promotion ladder for the ascents, the same as with punctuality and improvements. By the way, the inspector was the one who named the laudatory notes; they were distributed to one as distributing propaganda, they went and winnowed them, like giving leaflets.

Later, that same inspector was in another area of San Luis Potosi and changed me to another school, La Libertad. I do not remember how many houses were there, it was of a single street, milk region, a little ranch where they had cows, they milked and delivered milk to San Luis Potosi.

I have a manuscript describing the conditions in which I received the School Rancho de la Libertad, in san Luis Potosi, in 1935. So also, one had to turn over inventory of everything there was: books, desks, blackboard, and all that, and when you left, you had to sign receipt. In the School Rancho de la Libertad, I already earned sixty pesos monthly, and it was from the federation.

From there, I was transferred to Guadalupe Victoria, from where I left because of an exchange with a girl who worked in a nearby town called El Tepetate – better said, a community –. The inspector told me to go to that school because it was the federation's, since the teachers of the state school, to which the municipality paid them, owed them so much that they were not going to teach anymore, they went on strike.

I was commissioned as principal in El Tepetate, Municipality of Cuatro Ciénegas. When I was there, it was when happened the Cedillo event, in the time of Cardenas. The General was very good, he proposed that people could read and write, he promoted rural schools and did much to help those who had nothing. In addition, at that time the Secretariat gave us notebooks and pencils. Still in El Tepetate, Cerritos, I was given a large mural board. I made a manuscript, I do not remember for who, so they could give me sorghum seed to make the brooms.

In Mondays my dad took me to school very early, and on Friday afternoon the boys took me, by donkey or by foot, to my house, which was

not far away. When I was in school, an old lady accompanied me and stayed with me. My dad used to go and see me often with my mom, and also a sister, who was always with me, the youngest, who is now a widow. So I lived in school, I did not come and go to my house everyday, only on weekends. There was a small room that was the house of the teachers, but I preferred to stay in the classroom, where everyday six or more girls stayed with me. They gathered the benches to make their beds and we were happy and made a commotion. There I had an accident. One day a whirlwind came and lifted the roof of the school. The hall was long, it was about eight or ten meters, more or less, and the roof was made of sheet or calamine, as they say to it. It had four windows and a back door and another in the front, due to the heat we opened all the windows.

That day a whirlwind came, and as if turning a sheet of paper, the wind lifted the roof. We were in the sewing class for adults, around four or five in the afternoon, when the whirlpool took us out as if we were paper, I through the front door, behind two girls, while the ladies of the class got out through the back door.

Altagracia was left behind under the sheets of iron, with scrapes on her back, and another girl who broke her leg. After they got us all out, they lifted the sheets of iron. What a tremendous scare we had!

In September 1940, the First Interejidal Meeting of Athletics was held, in which the groups from my school participated. In the invitation it read: "Playing sports is making Homeland". The physical education teacher who did the program did not put the names of the people, nor of the ejidos, nor of the schools, nor of the teachers who participated. As always, others took credit for it. A lot of sports was done: participation in races, pole vaulting, jumping of objects; even my youngest sister competed, she jumped a meter and a half, we called her *La Marota*. That was in the ejido of Tepetate, when I was in charge of the school.

In October 1943 I retired, I asked for a license and I left. By then, my degree was rural teacher class C, with 90 pesos monthly. The director of Federal Public Education of San Luis was Mr. Hilarion Rubalcaba.

After I resigned, I went to my town. I was home, but just arriving, I was asked to teach at the private school in Cerritos. For a while there was no private school, only the public school, but the parents who had more money, had had it built. They asked for teachers to help them and there I was. One

season, I also worked in the semi-urban school, as assistant director in the first year. After, I retired definitely and did not practice my profession again. I do not remember quite well how much I was paid. Maybe, 60 pesos, of those which you winnowed and sounded like a bell. Then, it was raised to 72, I think, and when I retired it was already 90 pesos.

I feel very proud of my work, especially because I never cheated, from Monday to Friday, and even on Saturdays, I taught. Thank God it was that way; that satisfies me. Because I got to see teachers who had no interest, such as, for example, the one they took to La Libertad, where I was very well organized, but since it was a union thing, he only went the day he could, and if he could not go, he did not. Some teachers came on Wednesday, and on Friday they returned to their homes.

When I was a semi-urban school assistant in Cerritos, we had to sign a paper stating that we had given classes in order to be paid more. That did not bother me because I always taught my classes, I was never absent nor I was late. Besides teaching, which was what I liked, I had a great time. Since my parents were people of position, I gave them gifts, because they were never abided by me giving them money nor to my work.

To those of us who were decent people and did not go around with rubbish or immoralities, they always treated us well in haciendas and communities. People liked me, loved me; of course, I never went dancing nor got into their joy of them. Precisely when I arrived in La Libertad, they told me: “Miss, when are you going to do a dance?” “Dance, me? Why? I did not come to do dances; I came to teach”.

On the other side of the school was the church, the little chapel, and they were in the habit of taking out benches and tables from the school to lend them to the church for parties, and even when the children died. When I arrived, I told them: “Not even one bench will go out of here for those things; on the other side is the temple of God, and the school is the temple of knowledge.

Everyone took care of me. When I was transferred from La Libertad, an old man said to me: “They are already taking the girly, why are they taking her?” They changed me by order of the inspector to place a boy, and oh well. I do not complain, there was never any contempt towards me; everyone tried to serve me always, wherever I had very good acceptance, I was never bothered.

When I was in El Tepetate, a boy named Jaramillo was shot, also a rural teacher – although I do not remember in which community –, and the chief

of the shareholders of common land, who had a bullet entered in his shoulder and came out of his back. He was treated and cured in Cerritos, and he was taken to a hotel room, where all the teachers had to attend to him one day. At that time many rural teachers were killed, I think that because of politics. There were enraged young people wanting to put in ideas from other countries, and I used to say: "If we have our Constitution, which is so good, why are we being apprentices?" But, every head is a world! On the other hand, in the pulpits they were always talking badly of the teachers, of the socialist education, of the government, all that they said! That is why, I am not a supporter of anyone.

The school calendar was like this: six months working, from January to May, and in June there were vacations. Classes started in July, and in December there was another month of vacations; then, the calendar changed and also the schedule, which was continuous. One entered at eight and left at twelve, then we returned at two-thirty or three, and we left at six. The afternoons were always dedicated to sewing, drawing or manual works. Then we had the nocturnal, from seven to eight, with the big boys. All that happened as who goes on skates, and I never had difficulties because I liked to teach.

All my siblings studied their primary and secondary school, but they dedicated to work. Paco worked at the Cigarros La Moderna Company, I think that he started in Mazatlán, where he got married. Toñito went to the cookie company Famosa, and when he retired, he worked with Paco. They all came to hold management positions, because they are very hard workers, and they have already retired. Paco has an office dedicated to advertising, makes commercials, and it is on Zaragoza Avenue, where his sons-in-law and his son also work. Everardo lives in Puebla, and although he finished high school he started as a travel agent, he liked more traveling and earning money than studying, because for the studying you need to have what it takes. My nephew Memo, helped by everyone – from his grandparents, who were like his parents, and my brothers –, he became a doctor, and then he specialized as a cardiologist; he lives in Baja California, where he has his clinic and lives with his wife. He has four children, two men and two women who are already married.

Chelito, my oldest sister, was a teacher for about six months and then got married. Later, Locha followed, who only finished elementary school, and at sixteen she married a military captain; she had eight children, of whom

seven are already married, four men and three women. Then were Amparo and Paco, and only Toño, Lalo and I were left.

I, as a teacher, was dedicated to preparing the classes and reviewing the lessons. In those times one was a teacher of everything, not of one or certain classes but of everything, so that in school the days passed quickly. On the one hand it is beautiful, because one lives among children, but also the mind atrophies, because I only knew what was taught to children in the first year. I lasted many years working because I liked it and, at the same time, I kept learning everything I could.

Although I had already studied music with my mom, it was in Cerritos, as an assistant in the semi-urban school, when I dedicated myself to study more advanced piano, and I even participated in concerts. I was in one for the end of the school year in November 1943, and in the program it says that I played the waltz *Fausto* de Gounod. I did not remember until I read it; there were Guadalupe Ruiz and Delia Diaz, all disciples of Luchita, the director of the Durand Academy. It was around that time when I met my husband and, after being a federal teacher, I was a master in house and floor cleaning, scrubbing, and in all housework.

My parents, when they were left without children, went to establish to the Rascon station, San Luis Potosi, along with their grandson, Guillermo. My brother the oldest had married and lived in Mexico City, and Toño was about to go to the United States, as so many boys.

He already had everything arranged, he had quitted his job and went to Rascon to say good bye to my dad, who told him: "I do not want you to leave". "If you do not want me to go to the United States, let us go all to live to Mexico".

It was when we moved away from the house in Cerritos. I had to arrange the moving and pack, I left everything stored and went to Mexico. The house was closed with everything packed, it was rented and later it was sold. My dad sold his business. We arrived to Mexico City almost fifty years ago. My dad started a business in the street of Guerrero, he bought a miscellany and started a business of candy and fine fruit – apple, grape, cherry and pear –, with my brother the one who wanted to go to the United States. After that, I got married, and then Toñito. My mom and dad were the only ones left and with the grandson who they saw as their son, and no one helped my dad with the store.

After the private school I went to the semi-urban as a helper, and from there I retired definitively. I went to spend some vacations in Rascon, where my parents were, and back to my town, on the train, I met the one who is my husband now.

I had bought a second class ticket because I was only going to travel for a few hours, but since there was no place, they upgraded me to first. He was going on a study trip, he had concluded his degree, although he had not yet done his thesis. There was a free place, "Hey, sit here". I was with another lady who used to take her daughter, Pachita, to a school in San Luis and I said: "Pachita, sit down!" I sat her next to him and, as soon as the train started, he began to talk. After, the girl stood up and went with her mom, who had sat down more to the front. We continued talking. By then, I was not so fallen behind, I read and studied, and we talked about many things. Because he did not see me as illiterate, he asked me for my address and I gave it to him. The one who would later be my wedding godmother, arrived that weekend to the house and I told her what had happened. She told me: "Answer him, answer him to see what happens!" And that is how we started writing to each other. He sent me a card and I answered it, from there, we spent about four years writing to each other.

I arrived to the Street of Valladolid, because my sister-in-law lived there. The apartment had a living room, dining room, bedroom and another room where I stayed, but those were apartments with only one bathroom. My sister-in-law wanted me to teach her how to make baby clothes, shoes, and all kinds of clothes. In the same street, a half block away, was the little store of Mrs. Cardenas, Hortencia, who already died, and who was the mother of Elsa Cardenas. The store was small, it was called La Cigüeña and I went to buy yarn. That was how we met. One day she asked me: "Do you knit? Do not you have hand-knitted things to show me?" and I brought to her a finished sweater for woman, and a small one for girl and everything else that we did. Then, she asked me to knit for her: "Make me some baby clothes!" and she gave me the yarn. Together my sister-in-law and I wove for her, because by then she knew already how to weave little shoes and little clothes. When we were going to deliver the orders, we talked.

In La Cigüeña she sold everything for the baby; she bought clothes in different factories and sent some to her brother, who lived in the boarder and who also had a store La Cigüeña. He, at the same time, sent her things

from there. I started helping her fixing the store window. One day she told me: "I am going on vacations; do not you want to stay in charge of my little store?" "Oh, ma'am! But if you do not even know me, how do you know that I will take good care of the store?" "Decent people, right away can be known. Just by seeing you, I can know who you are", she said to me. When the lady returned, I gave her account of what I had sold and told her what had happened.

By then I was my husband's girlfriend. When they are dating, they just haunt you, so when I got out of work, he went to see me, although not every day because he was studying to get the degree and doing his thesis. We got married in February and he got his degree on may 3.

Later, I went to attend to another store, and Mrs. Hortencia went where her brother lived, to Tijuana, to the other Cigüeña. She met my husband. Being already married, I invited her to eat, and she invited us to her house too.

On the corner of Londres and Varsovia was a store. The owners had a home for assistance and were looking for someone to leave that corner. They asked for references to the Taylor's, a family who knew me: "She is a decent girl – they were told –, and her parents live here in the city". And I stayed in charge of the store of Londres and Varsovia. They did not have it well-stocked, many things were missing, but they sold on credit. All the people, even if they were of high rank (there were embassy attachés and who did cultural things), bought on credit from the big stores and also from that one. Overall, the store was almost empty, but as I had experience of having been with Mrs. Hortencia and she had taught me to go to the factories and buy the yarn in the Uruguayan warehouses, I bought it and they took it to us directly to the store. I got to know the streets those of La Lagunilla, where all the clothing factories for boys and girls were, good clothes. There was a factory of beautiful poplin dresses, for girl, with *smock*, very good and beautiful. I remember that sometimes I carried a dozen and immediately they were sold. Ladies came to learn how to weave, some were wives of the cultural attachés or worked in the embassy. There I met Cuquita, the wife of Mr. Valadez, who was a storyteller, and I also met him. Several ladies came together in the afternoons to weave and they bought me the yarn.

I handed over the store in 1949, precisely the year I got married. I gave the ladies a notice of my forthcoming wedding and several went to the church. Cuquita Valadez went to the church and then to the house to congratulate me. I still have portraits and memories of then.

We got married in the Civil Registry, in front was the judge, the matchmaker of the artists, Prospero Guerra. That was on February 2, 1949 and on the 4th we got married by the church, in La Coronación.

It was a beautiful wedding; my godparents were Don Ricardo, who has already died, and his wife Lolita; the other godparents were my siblings Toño and Amparo, of wedding cord. The Church La Coronacion was beautiful as a reliquary, but I saw it now that they repaired it and they left it horrible; buildings and monuments should be let to die like people die, as one dies.

My dress was very simple, with buttons at the back, the fabric that was used then was satin, or something like that, but very simple because I have never liked things with so much adornment, nor the earrings nor the great hairstyles, I think that I have always been very dull.

I did not even have a chair where to sit on, so we got into a furnished place. We went to live to Bucareli, in one of the Ideal Cul-de-sac, because a woman from the same place my husband is, she rented there and rented to us a very large room, with the right to kitchen and bathroom. I lived very well, a luxury apartment, they look like houses, very clean and very spacious. After giving my husband something to eat, he would go back to work and I would start knitting and reading.

The city looked calm, there were not that many cars or as much traffic as now. We lived in Bucareli, and in the back street there was a cinema, to which we several times went because my husband is very fond of the cinema.

From there we went to the streets of Guerrero. My dad told us that a soldier could pass us his apartment. We washed it, we bought linoleum, we sprayed it because there were bedbugs, we painted everything, even the floor, and I made some curtains for the windows. Everything changed for us, because then, we were just beginning and we did not have much money.

Later I got pregnant and my daughter came. I went grocery shopping with a handkerchief soaked in alcohol because I passed through a street of fried food and the smell disgusted me. Alicia was born in the Sanatorium of Lourdes on the Avenue of Chapultepec.

In that apartment we lived until our daughter was about six or seven months old. I went up to the roof to hang my clothes and took along the girl in order to sunbathe her. Nearby was the garden and I took her for a walk in the stroller. From that suburb, what I miss the most is that there was

everything around: dairy, tortilleria, bakery; and in the building, downstairs, there was a beauty salon, and a little forward, a canteen where there were always drunk people and I had to go through there almost running. It makes me laugh to remember that I used to buy quesadillas of zucchini flower because I craved it. We went to live to the suburb Industrial and it was different. Everything was far away, we had to carry the groceries from the supermarkets and there was nothing nearby.

Then, it was saving and saving money. One day when we visited my mom in the suburb Industrial, we told her that we were looking for something else, not downtown. She told me that there was an apartment on rent on the ground floor. About five or six months later we were told that the building was on sale, with two apartments and the upper rooms for the service. That house cost us 55,000 pesos, which for us was a capital, but with everything that we had saved we bought it, and the other part was loaned to my husband by a co-worker who appreciated him a lot, he did not ask him for a promissory note or anything, but religiously he paid him, he has also always been a man of his word.

I went to North 24, and after six months we bought all and fixed it. We joined the service rooms above and made another little apartment; over time we joined the ground floor with the first floor and that was my house. When Alicia was already a little older, in the second or third year of elementary school, she had her little bedroom with a closet, her bathroom and a lot of repairs were done at home.

Also, I lived near my mom, as close as I am now to my daughter. So that is where she grew and I registered her in the School Colegio de Guadalupe, in Lindavista. She studied kindergarten, elementary, high school and baccalaureate. Then she went to the university and we started looking for a house near there, because that suburb was far away. We spent a year searching until we found the house on the Street of Cabrio, behind Channel Eight, in San Angel.

From the street of Guerrero, we moved on the eve of Day of the Dead to North 24, and seventeen years later we moved to Cabrio, also on that date. Through the windows of the dining room I looked at the Camposanto Garden and saw many people, so I realized that it was Day of the Dead, there we lasted again, seventeen years.

The terminal of the Algarin was in Potrero. It came from Real del Monte, passed through one side of La Lagunilla and went straight to the suburb of

Algarin; on the way back it passed through downtown, to go to its terminal in Real del Monte, the street where also went the buses of La Villa in the suburb Industrial. It cost five cents. From North 24, where we lived, I only walked a square and was already in Potrero, where I took the one of Algarin to go to La Lagunilla, and to go back I took the same one. To La Lagunilla we went to buy several things.

When we did not have a car, we used to take that bus to go to the cinema or the theatre. I think they were the Regis Cinema, the Alameda, the one in Hotel del Prado, although on my area we had the Lindavista Cinema, where two or three films were played. We would take Alicia with a bottle of apple soda and something to eat, and to films she could see. The theatre to which we went was the Virginia Fabregas, to watch plays like *Don Juan Tenorio*. We had a Fotingo – that way was called the Ford –, and it was the first car with which my husband learned; I accompanied him, and I was very scared because he learned to drive already old.

The offices of the Light and Power Company where my husband worked were downtown, behind the post office in the Condesa Building. We would go and wait for him in order to eat at the Vegetarian or at El Horreo, where kid (*goatling*) was served. That was on Saturdays. On Sundays we got up late and went to the park 18 de Marzo, we took the tricycle for the girl and we had a field day. By then, Lindavista was not as it is now, there were only pretty, small houses with gardens; today, that hardly exist, it is a horrible stacking since it was made a commercial area.

As a newlywed, I suffered when cooking. Since I am from the center of the country, I do not know how to cook fish well; now I do. I remember that once I threw in the fish with everything; eyes, bones and rice. Sometimes I cooked something from my town, for example, cooked guava, ground in the blender with sugar, but I did not have a copper saucepan.

At that time, I did not have a washing machine yet and I washed by hand and ironed; my husband wore a white shirt daily, starched in collar and cuffs.

My husband used to go home for lunch, and when he arrived, food was ready and the table set. They had limited time for eating. Sometimes in the morning, he would go in the little wreck he had bought, and when he came to lunch he would leave it and go back to work in a bus Algarin-Potrero.

One day my daughter said to my husband: “If my mom knows so much sewing, why does not she ask to teach at the school where I am?” “Poorly,

but your mother has no need, plus, I married to have my wife at home.” And so it has been. Poorly I have not lacked, what can I complain about?

He taught math in schools, one in the street Moneda and then in Camarones. He started very early, but after having a very good breakfast. Before entering to the Light and Power Company, he already had taught. All his life he has been wearing himself out by teaching and working very hard. Me too, with all the chores, because it is not the same getting up and get ready to go teach some classes than wearing yourself out with the house work. That is why, girls today do not like housework. Even though I was prepared for everything since a very young age, because at the age of my granddaughter Carolina, or younger – I was about eight years old – I went to learn how to make flowers in my town, Cerritos.

My daughter enrolled in the language school in order to take advanced English classes and to perfect what she already spoke. When she was in high school, she played the piano quite well. In the suburb Cuauhtémoc, lived Carmelita Corona, who was my piano teacher for a while, when I still was not married. Afterwards, already married, Maria Macedo – may she rest in peace – she went to give us classes when we lived in the suburb Industrial, to me and to my daughter Alicia. She lived in the streets of Acequia and was a very good teacher, she sang beautiful, above all. I also took the class because I was already forgetting it. I have a piece of furniture full of scores with all kinds of music.

As I was taught, I also wanted my daughter to learn many things. She was in a *smock* class and other embroideries; in high school I encouraged her to study typing, because the only one at home who typed was me, and after I married, I had to do papers for my husband and then for my daughter. I learned shorthand, Pitman and Greg shorthand. When I worked, all the conferences and courses, when we had teacher meetings, which were monthly, I took them in shorthand and then translated them.

Already in the house of Cabrio, Alicia got her degree and married. She continued studying, she did her masters and her doctorate, she was awarded the Gabino Barrera Medal. I thank God because she found fulfillment and she has managed to be what she has wanted.

When they moved, my son-in-law said that it would be good if we lived nearby, because in case of illness we could help each other. Plus, we have been able to support them with the children.

Between my husband and I, we almost raised the older grandchildren. Wherever he went, the boys went, we went around with the grandchildren as if they were our children. The boy is very affectionate; he tells me things that I would never have talked with my grandparents nor my parents, I would never have talked about boyfriends! And our grandchildren, with me as well as with their grandfather, they have confidence and talk to us about everything.

When the older granddaughter comes, I give her advice, I tell her that it is good to start having her own personality and not because she sees one hundred of her friends smoking, that she smokes. That if she drinks, the man who chooses her to be his wife, will not choose a vicious woman. My granddaughter is good, quite good, but I always tell her that physical beauty is a flower of one day, instead I advise to her another beauty. The grandchildren, Daniel and Alicia, arrive from school and, instead of getting into their house, they get into ours.

On May 11 of six years ago, I got up as usual, I bathed early, at about seven, and prepared my breakfast. I had heard the talk of a dietitian and she said that one should take care from three things: flour, oil and sugar. That day I prepared for myself nothing more than a quesadilla and tea.

My husband went to pick up Carolina at kindergarten and I gave them lunch. When I was serving the food I noticed that instead of grabbing the soup spoon I grabbed a large spoon and upside down. Now that I remember it makes me laugh, but then it did not, because I also got tongue-tied. I said to my husband: "Hey, what a weird thing!" That was on May. I went to the cardiologist and he did to me an electrocardiogram, and he told me that everything was fine, that we had to look somewhere else. Already at home all I felt was dizziness. I sat down and told my husband: "It is not possible". He spoke to the Insurance and a doctor came, supposedly very good, but one of those who lack the gift for dealing with people, despot; she did not even want to sit down, she took me the pressure and gave me a pass to La Raza.

I saw that my dad, when he was in the sanitarium, was stripped, and I said no! I, who had not even undressed in front of my husband, I said, no! And then the cannula they put inside you for you to urinate and those things. That everyone sees you without clothes. Totally, I resisted.

The next day I got up early, at six o'clock, as always, I bathed, I got ready and said to myself: "I am going to eat only a quesadilla and my coffee". I was about to sit down for breakfast, when I suddenly wanted to urinate. In

the bathroom everything spun, I felt dizzy, as if I was in a tremor. God, it is trembling! I went to the toilet, I held from the towel rack and I slid little by little. The woman who looked after me did not know what to do and I said to her: "Bring me my lotion!" And I started to sniff it. She went out to tell my husband, they got me up and they took me to bed... I did not know about me until two weeks later, when they brought me from the sanitarium.

From the sanatorium, the only thing that I remember is that I fell out of bed. I woke up around four in the morning, I do not know quite well, I only remember that I asked for the potty and they did not give it to me. As much as I stretched, I did not reach it and I fell watching the potty. I did not know who got me into bed later. That is why I did not want to go to the sanatorium, and if I get sick again, I will die in my house. I used to say to my daughter: "Now I can go out to the patio or to the street naked, because if all the people in the hospital already saw me, now I have no shame". And we used to laugh.

It was six years ago. I think I was in the sanitarium for twelve days, in a coma.

I remember that they said to me: "You are in your house". Lie! Until one day I raised my eyes and looked at the lamp: "Where have I seen it?" I thought that in the house of Cabrio, but it was not the bedroom in Cabrio. I asked: "Where am I?" They insisted that in my house. I saw nurses, because they hired a nurse for the day and another for the night. They rented a hospital bed for me, and that is why when I woke up I thought that I was still in the sanitarium. My bedroom no longer looked like mine, they packed away my suitcase, my sewing machine and there were just the bed and a small piece of furniture that someone lent.

Memory comes in bursts, it comes and then it goes away. When I had more use of reason and the gusts of memory came to me, of memories, I began to ask people: "What is your name?" because I did not even know the name of the girl who helped me and who already had been eleven years working in the house, she was almost raised in my house; nor the name of the nurses, who were two. The one in the morning sat all day next to me and helped me bathe.

There came a moment when I more or less began to remember, and I thought about what had happened to me. Until one day the memories returned and I asked my husband to lay off the nurse of the night and he could stay with me.

It was hard for me to recognize, I only saw shadows and could not distinguish who they were; some voices, like my husband's, I did recognize them. Then I asked for my things that they had packed away. Also my glasses, because I could not see well; besides, my hearing failed and I had the left side of my body death.

Later on, they brought me a wheelchair, and that day I tried to go on my own to the bathroom. I fell. I went to the ground, I could not get up and I said to myself mentally: "You are screwed Teresita, you fell behind". But I pulled out strength; as I could I got close to the toilet, I held on tight and I managed, after long, to sit on the wheelchair. It was when I thought: "I have to move forward even if it is with this gadget". After being so active, I move myself in this chair, and I always thought that I would be a very active old woman. But this is the way it is. I say to my sister Chelo: "In this life I have already been in hell and in purgatory".

I went to the sanatorium to revive. I had colds and simple illnesses as everyone, but never as serious as now. The doctor says that, despite what happened to me, I am not as bad as other people. Maybe it helped me the way that I lived, because I never got into alcohol nor smoked, and also the strength of will that I put in when I fell and saw that I could not get up.

What mortifies me is that I want to say one thing and another one comes out of my mouth. Sometimes I can not read, I spell, I go from letter to letter as if I was learning; and if there is a word with too many letters together, for example, p and r, or double "r", I find it difficult; that did not happen to me before and, how could I not feel bad? how could I not cry?

When one can no longer fend for oneself, that is not life. At least I was not used to that. It worries me, for example, that I never needed a maid, and now I depend on them. I was in the hospital and there I did not even like watching TV. In the house I can read as long as there is light, with what little I have left of sight, because I do not want to force it anymore. I watch television when there are scientific programs, which are the ones that I like seeing, for example, those of the human body and the wonders of nature; I also entertain myself with some soap opera. After five, I get comfortable and fall asleep, but not before saying to the maid: "Look carefully, so you can tell me later!"

I am left blank, and I ask myself: what do I do? Who am I? What was I thinking? Well yes, I am left blank, and after a while, I do not know how long, I come back again. It is as if it was an hallucination, as when one sees in the

sky those shooting stars that fall. Since my illness, it happens to me sometimes, when I am holding something in my hand, and I keep looking for that because I do not know where it is.

Memory began to fail me when I was a teacher in the Tepetate community. After the whirlwind came and lifted the roof from the school, I noticed that my memory was failing when I was teaching. I used to say to the students: "Let's see! What was I saying?" and then one or the other raised their hand and told me where I had left and I started to remember. My dad took me to the doctor, who prescribed vitamins to me and with that I was cured; since then I had a very good memory.

When the physician visited me, after leaving the sanatorium, he told me: "You are going to recover, but you will not be the same as before. Maybe you will not remember from the day you were born"; and the doctor also told me: "Just settle for, that is how you will be all your life!" I tell my husband: "I am going to tell the doctor to give me only one thing: the mood I had before". I have told everyone: "If you notice that I do not bathe and that I am not with my knitting, it means that I am sick". That is why I want to finish knitting all that thread that I have, I am making squares; plus, by knitting I have memorized how I have to think, how many threads were used? When I finish, I will see what to do with all the squares that come out, maybe another quilt! I have always liked handmade things; my bedspreads, my curtains, are woven. I gave my daughter a quilt and said to her: "Take care of it, it is the last one that you are going to have of mine because I am not going to knit anymore!" I weave in order to remember and count, because when I was recently out of the sanatorium I could not even hold the diary, my husband used to read to me.

I am not in the mood, sometimes I do nothing. This hand does not help me even to thread a needle, although I am not like when I came from the sanatorium. Now I do not care about many things, I dress with the clothes and shoes that are brought to me.

I used to get up so early, that at one o'clock in the afternoon the house was already arranged, the food ready and the garden watered. Now, at six in the morning I have my pressure taken, and then I go to the bedroom to do my exercises and I fall asleep. At eight I wake up, I have breakfast late, and I eat at two thirty. On Saturdays and Sundays, we do nothing, we order chicken or pizza.

I am always talking alone with my paraphernalia. Almost fifty years of marriage. It seems like yesterday, only today, I am an old lady. I am more than eighty years old – and the only thing that I color up is my hair, because my grandchildren do not like to see my gray hair. “How do they want me to look like? As if I was fifteen years old?” The doctor also says to me: “Ma’am, you look great”, and I, inside myself, I see myself and I laugh. I compare myself with others who before the eighties are already like raisins, because there are people of half my age that are as it is said, totally worn out! But I can not complain about my life. I have really enjoyed it. I traveled with my husband, we went to Peru many times, we stayed there several months and we toured all over the north of the country. I got to know Cusco and we went up to Lake Titicaca. Also my daughter Alicia, since she was young – about nine years old, when she was in Year Four –, has traveled with us. My marriage is registered in Peru, in the town of my husband, I saw the record because we requested permission. I went with my mom to the archbishopric to request marriage permission, so to know if he had been married, the marriage banns were read here and there, in each place where we lived.

We went to Europe, we visited Russia – I loved Saint Petersburg – and other countries. I was in Prague, Madrid and Turkey. A few years ago we returned to Europe. I have been in New York and other American cities. The museums were my taste.

From the Mexican Republic, I know several states, mainly mine, San Luis Potosi; I knew by heart the names of almost all the towns of the north, and now I am kind of forgetting them, and I got to know many of them. For example, the Huastecas. After my town, the one that follows is Cardenas, then Tamazula, Estacion Rascon, Valles City; I know very well the route from San Luis Potosi to Tampico.

My oldest sister lived a long time in Valles; my brother-in-law, may he rest in peace, was a telegrapher and worked there. We used to spend all holidays with her. I also visited Tampico several times, because my two brothers, Paco and Toño, worked for a long time in the La Moderna Company, and they took us to travel around, to the theatre and to the cinema.

I can not complain about my life, because I got married and I retired from teaching. Fortunately, I was blessed with a man like my father, who had no vices; the only one has been: studying, being a bookworm. His sin was work and more work. Instead of spending the money, he separated the

expense and the rest was for saving. I was taught that the best was for the husband, besides, now he is my hands and my feet.

The first thing that I arranged for my husband when we moved from one house to another was his library. I ordered to be made his shelves and in his study he had a blackboard. Now he no longer teaches, since he retired he does not teach in schools, but sometimes comes a boy who has failed, in order to be trained in mathematics. His study is full of diplomas and certificates. He was always very studious.

I liked to teach, and still I would do it today, but I am not in the mood anymore and I can not do it like I used to. I never had a predilection for schools, for me they were all the same because I liked to teach. I formed little schools in the sulfur mines of Huascama. We used to work in the garage, in patios, and each one brought a little chair. I also worked in haciendas, like the one in Peotillos. Afterwards, they transferred me to La Libertad and Tepetate, which were little ranches or small communities. Being a teacher left in me a lot of joy.

I had my friends, and they already are all grandmothers. In the other suburb, as we were closer, we got together eight grandmothers, like me, and the stitches that we did not know, we taught them to each other; later, they brought their married daughters, because as everything became so expensive, the moms began to weave for their children, and the group became big. On Wednesday, we gathered one day in one house, another day in another; we drank our tea or coffee. And they were all people as before; about the gentlemen, it was known that they had their flings, their affairs, but not the ladies, what a barbarity!

My mother in the house, with the swarm of children, because then, they had them as rabbits, she was a very hard-working lady, dedicated to her children, to her house and to teaching us as much as she could. I think that comes with oneself, and that was what I learned. My life too, all the time, has been of working at home, sewing, embroidering, weaving, cooking.

My dad was a very mentally active person for the age in which he died, because he died being more than ninety years old. I remember that eight days before he died, he was in his total understanding, he understood and talked, but he died because his heart began to fail.

We could have canonized my father as a father, he was a saint: he did not smoke, he did not drink and he was very gentle when he gave us advice. Only once I saw him scold my brothers, Francisco and Antonio, and hit them with the belt, because he caught them sticking like flies to the train, sticking

to the railroad, which was very dangerous. He was very good and he always spoke to us with diminutives, always without insolence.

Now, in these circumstances, I ponder that I inherited longevity from my mother, because she died at eighty-five years and was very active, and also like me, she was sick from blood pressure. But also from my dad, because he got to the nineties lucid.

I can not complain about my life, because now that I have the time, I have seen the family tree, the family portraits that my daughter has at home. There is the family of my dad, my paternal grandparents, my grandfather Jose Antonio, my other grandmother, my father and his siblings. My Spanish great-grandmother, my French great-grandfather and my grand-mommy Engracia, to whom we called mother Chita, very affectionate and playful.

Came to me memories from my brothers Jose Francisco, Jose Antonio and Everardo, the youngest one who lives in Puebla. My sister Chelo, the first-born, is in her eighties and, because she is the oldest, we have always respected her. Poor thing, she is very sick because she has decalcified, she lives with her son and daughter-in-law. Consuelo, like me and all the sisters, knew everything that moms taught before. Amparo has already died, and after her it is me and then is Eloisa, Locha, the youngest.

There are pictures of when I was young, when I am with my sisters. I had a camera when I was a young woman, when I was already working and I could buy the film rolls. It was a camera that an uncle gave to my mother and that she gave to me. Before, nobody had a camera in their house nor photography was so popular.

Since the day I had the heart attack, I do not make much effort, I do not want more illness nor more pain in my life. I try to live peaceful and, now that I was able to tell my story from the day that I was born, that I was able to talk about the day I got married, about my husband, my daughter and my family, about my job as a teacher, I can not complain about my life.