

Music, my life;
my life and music

Guadalupe Ambriz Piñón

INTRODUCTION

At over twenty years old I faced the sadness of having suffered the injustice of leaving the National Symphony Orchestra for not having accepted to be part of a simulation to remove a mate from the orchestra, in addition to the commitment to help support my five younger siblings and the newborn baby of my sister Luz Maria; I felt that the challenge grew day by day and I no longer had a secure job. That was a moment of great sadness. However, I had in my mate Angel Cu León a support which I did not have before. I met him at the nightclub where I worked after my departure from the Symphony. He was a pianist there and little by little he became my confidant; he was attentive and respectful.

Alone I got through my childhood when I was at boarding school and I learned incipiently to play the double bass. And I was also when I started singing very young on the radio stations; when I worked in the carps, in the Rios Art women's orchestra, and I arrived to the Conservatory, and the same thing happened when I worked in the nightclubs downtown in Mexico City.

I want to underline the solidarity and sweet words of my grandmother, which contrasted with the inflexibility of my mother, who sometimes bordered on cruelty. Despite the fact that I always helped her take care of my siblings and that at the age of sixteen I started to contribute financially to the house, she was always very hard on me. I was very afraid of her.

My siblings, in chronological order, were: Martha, the only one with whom I shared both parents; Luz Maria, who

later added her baby to the family list; Elias, son of the same father as Luz Maria; Rosa and Margarita. My uncle Jesus, my mother's brother who did not work, and my grandmother, also lived in the house with us. With what my mother earned at the Principal Hotel and with what I contributed we supported the whole family.

That way I went from orchestra to orchestra, from group to group, either as a singer or as a double bass player, until I was fortunate enough to enter the National Symphony. I was not there for many years, but it opened me a wonderful horizon that permanently enriched my life. The people I met, the music I studied, the concerts I played, and the discipline to which I forced myself, ended up forging my character. I realized that I was capable of achieving what I set out to do despite my mother.

Altogether was an apprenticeship that gave me the tools to face the enormous challenges that life had in store for me. Also, I did not feel so lonely anymore. Angel was married, much older than me and with commitments that I never imagined, but he listened to me, he advised me, he had a great heart and was very honest.

From then on I was no longer the young lady that many fellow musicians thought they could take advantage of. I was no longer the daughter to whom my mother, with words, threats or blows, managed to bend at her will. I already had someone to tell everything to and who would advise me, even if it was only in the moments that he could be with me. I was no longer so alone.

I. UP TO THE ALTAR

Angel told me: “With all the pain in my heart, I am going to take you home so you don’t have problems with your mom”. I no longer wanted to separate from him, I did not want to return to reality. It was our first date, we had danced softly to the rhythm of Carlos Campos’s live orchestra, and that night I merged with that man, something that had never happened to me. My mood was not for realities. Finally, from the little hotel where we were, he took me back home, and since it was not late yet, I had no problem.

The next day my mom told me that the following Tuesday she would take the rent money to court, but that she did not see the situation well. The property was in dispute and they wanted to evict us, so we protected ourselves legally. Her words worried me. I was feeling very tired, so that Sunday I stayed at home until it was time to go to the dance hall where I worked, because I had just been taken out of the Symphony through tricks.

On Monday I decided that I had to get an extra job to deal with the eviction issue. Coincidentally that day Mr. Toussaint called me to invite me to lunch. I thanked God thinking it was a work appointment and I accepted.

The next day, at two in the afternoon, we met at the Sanborns of Madero in the Historic downtown. Mr. Toussaint commented that he was impressed to see me play the double-bass and to hear me sing. At some point I told him about the eviction problem we had and he offered to help me. He wrote down the data from the file and we agreed to meet at that location on Wednesday, a day after he coincided with my mom in court.

Thanks to that first meeting we found out that the owner of the house had agreed with one of the tenants and with the lawyer who supposedly represented us, to mislead us. He would tell us that it was no longer necessary for us to deposit the rents in court and thus they could evict us for non-

compliance. Toussaint warned my mom, who made the corresponding payment. At home, my mother told me her version of events and was very grateful to the lawyer for having warned her of the bad move that had been prepared. When I asked Mr. Toussaint how much I owed him, he said that with my friendship he felt as paid.

As always, I looked for job opportunities in the cafeterias that were in front of the XEW radio station (the W, as we the media knew it), where artists and musicians gathered. I did not succeed; however, before the weekend a colleague told me that they were looking for singers for the variety of a nightclub. That Friday I went to the union of the National Association of Actors (ANDA) and signed in order to start that same night. It was an extendable contract for twenty-eight days in a cabaret in the street Niño Perdido (Lazaro Cardenas Avenue or Eje Central).

The variety was opened by a tenor, then some flamenco dancers came, then it was me singing my boleros and the closing was by the Tres Caballeros trio, where the young Roberto Cantoral was. The rest of us were accompanied by an orchestra whose elements knew me, except for a green-eyed boy who was called *el Gato (the Cat)* and who played the saxophone.

That boy played there at night, and in the morning he studied medicine at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Sometimes we talked at breaks. Little by little we became friends. In one of those talks he told me that I looked as if I was sick. I described to him some discomfort I was feeling and he said: "Oh, Lupita! You are pregnant". I replied that he was correct, and that what I feared the most was the storm that was coming with my mom. At that time I never imagined that *el Gato* would eventually become part of the orchestra of my children's father and that they would become good friends.

Mr. Toussaint continued to invite me every week for coffee, but I did not always accept, because the discomfort of the pregnancy worsened. At night, at work I used to drink Coca-Cola to calm nausea. Coincidentally, at that time, came to live in our building who was my embroidery teacher during the boarding school; she taught me how to operate the sewing machine (a skill that would later allow me to earn some money when I worked for an uncle making raincoats). She came with her husband in a wheelchair, because he had had an embolism.

The first to realize my pregnancy was my grandmother: “Daughter, tell me that it is not true that you are pregnant”. I confirmed it to her. “Hail Mary Immaculate! How’s your mom going to get!, God help you”, she concluded shaking her head.

My mom always chased my siblings with a very energetic voice to get ready for school in the morning. Her voice boomed in my head, especially if I had come home from work at four in the morning. Shortly after my grandmother’s comment, after dispatching my siblings, my mom entered the room and told me: “Guadalupe, stand up!”, and immediately she began to say hurtful things to me: “How is it possible that you get pregnant now that you have so much work?, Money is needed!”, and stuff like that, always focused in the fact of having to bring her money. I was afraid that she would hit me as in other occasions. I was stunned and I replied: “If you touch me or put a hand on me, you will never see me in the house again!” My granny chimed in: “Leave her alone, Antonia! She has the right to live her life and she does more than enough by bringing you money so that you can support all your children”. My mom controlled herself and went to work.

The next day she came home early from work and said to me: “What are you going to do? You are not going to be able to work, I better take you to Dr. Mañón so she can take

out what you have inside”. I stayed quiet. I hurried to get dressed and went out. Since I had time before work, I went into the first restaurant and ordered a tea and a sandwich; my head was spinning.

I did not want to leave the house at the time because I did not want to leave my mom alone with the eviction problem, but neither I wanted to do what she was planning for me. I felt totally disoriented and I did not know anything about Angel, except what he had told me the day we went dancing and we were together. On that occasion he told me that he had to go to Campeche (his land) due to a very delicate family problem and that he did not know how long he would stay there. I did not know about him.

Weeks passed and I signed another contract at the cabaret. My mom kept pushing me daily to take me to the doctor; she said that the more time passed, the more difficult it would be.

Finally, a few days after starting the new contract, she sat next to me while I put on makeup to go to work and said to me: “Look, daughter, I would like you to have a family when you have a partner. Listen to me! It is a matter of a day. You will be able to continue working. Tomorrow, Tuesday, I rest, Dr. Mañón awaits us; she already knows”. I thought about it all day, until I concluded that my mom was right.

The next morning, my mom called me kindly for breakfast and when we finished she told me to get ready. The doctor had a small sanatorium in Colonia Doctores. She applied an intramuscular vial to me and told me that the next day I would start menstruating, that if I had any problems, I should phone her. That same day I was no longer with nauseas, I felt better at work and I did not tell anyone about my situation, because I felt remorse.

The next day I went to Sanborns for coffee with Mr. Toussaint. In addition to having a very pleasant talk, he

insisted that we shouldn't stop paying the rent in court to win time and thus have the opportunity to find another place to move.

So I got to the fourth day with bleeding that was gradually increasing. I mentioned it to my mom and she said that it seemed natural to her, that we should wait a little longer. On the sixth day, with heavy bleeding, I felt my body very tired, as if I had a cold, but I went to work, until one day my temperature rose. The effort of going out to sing to entertain the people in the cabaret was too much. I waited for the delegate of the ANDA and communicated him how bad I was feeling. He promised to get a substitute, but he asked me to bring a medical justification after.

I got home and woke up my mom. "Oh, you look very bad!", she told me. I asked her to take me to the doctor, but because of the hour, we found no open place to call her. She took me to the General Hospital and they sent me to the emergency room, they gave me serum and gave me the indication to enter the operating room. At six in the morning I entered the operating room.

I woke up in a huge pavilion full of beds with patients. When the doctor came to check me, he told me that the ovule had not come off completely and that he had made a big mistake by injecting me, that I could have died from the bleeding. He indicated me that he would be there for three days and that I should bring blood donors. My mom could not get them and my sister Martha donated twice; I stayed one more day.

One night we heard a woman who was screaming a lot. The next day we found out that, upon leaving the operating room, they had forgotten the patient in the elevator and the next morning she was dead.

At the end of the pavilion we ate the food at a very long table. We were served in aluminum plates and mugs, all crooked and blackish. Whoever served us, being so many

patients, threw these implements across the table towards the person whose turn was, so much of the food and drink was spilled on the road. It was gross. We were not allowed to get up nor speak.

Next to the bed I was assigned was a woman who had to be injected with antibiotics every twenty-four hours, but the nurse forgot and left the ampoules, the cotton balls, the alcohol and the syringe in the bureau. Time passed and there was no sign of the nurse. Finally, I offered to inject her. I put myself in God's hands and injected her that day and the next. On the third day the nurse appeared, who was very angry about what I did, she yelled at me and almost hit me. "You touch me, and if I get out of here alive, you are going to have a very bad time", I defended myself. She turned around and left.

I left the hospital and now I had to get the medical justification. I told my mom to ask Dr. Mañón for it, but she preferred to ask for it to a spiritualist doctor who she frequented. The report was given to me for "amoeba crisis". I took it to the ANDA and I decided to leave the job to my substitute in order to recover myself.

For my mother it was not enough and she decided to offer a mandate to the Virgin of Guadalupe, so, a few days later, she told me: "Come with me, let's go to the Villa". Arriving at the atrium, she told me: "I promised the virgin that if you got better, you would go to the altar on your knees". My knees peeled and they were very difficult to heal. I complained to her: "You made the promise, why should I be with these sores?". It was a tremendous passage of my life that left a great mark on me.

II. CHANGE AND EVOCATION

In the building where we lived, only one lady had telephone, and I paid her a sum for taking my messages. That time, to hide the situation I went through, I told her that I had gone on a trip for work and she informed it that way. Such was the case of Mr. Toussaint, who called urgently.

We saw each other at the usual place and he asked me about my trip. With great shame I had to lie to him. He informed me that the final hearing was imminent, that there were only a few days left and that he would go in order to advise my mother. That is how it went. Seven hundred pesos were given to each tenant who was up to date with the payments and they gave fifteen days to vacate the house instead of eviction. However, my mom gave two hundred pesos

to the other lawyer, the one who had tried to cheat us, colluded with a tenant, and who had suggested us not to pay the rent. I got very angry and I complained. She replied to me: “You are to blame for not having a job”.

My granny witnessed the above and began looking for a place to rent with her acquaintances from the Church of the Josefinos, a place that she frequented. A few days later, my mom told me: “Guadalupe, come with me so you can see what I found. I already made a deal, it will cost us one hundred and fifty pesos a month. I hope you like it; it has floor-to-ceiling windows to the street”.

They turned out to be two large rooms with windows to the street, no bathroom, no kitchen, and no place to wash or hang clothes, on the second floor of a very old house on Peralvillo Street. A very ugly place. I said to her: “Will you bring your little daughters to live here? I will not live here”. So, she sent for the owner. The one posing as the owner was a very bad looking woman in her sixties, and when my mother told her that I did not like it, she answered in a bad way that she would not give back a peso from the three hundred she received when signing the contract; not even a penny. We got out of there. My mom was very serious and did not speak to me at all the whole way. Upon arriving in Bolivar, my mom headed to work without saying goodbye.

Shortly before the deadline to vacate the house, my granny arrived in a hurry saying that we had to sign the contract for an apartment, because it would vacate the next day, that her friend had already spoken to the owner of the condominium.

I went up to the hotel Principal, where my mom worked, to let her know. She asked for permission to leave earlier and in the afternoon we went to the street of Eligio Ancona, where the owner lived. I had my savings and completed for the rent and the moving expenses. That apartment was a blessing. It only

had two large rooms, but it had a kitchenette, bathroom and patio with a laundry room.

The condominium was at Fresno St. 195-5. All the apartments were on the left side of a very large patio and, at the end, there was a very high wall that belonged to the church on Sabino St., where my granny used to go.

My uncle Jesus married a woman much younger than him, Adela, in order to have children, so he no longer lived with us. It was a much healthier environment: my sister Martha was now close to the Polytechnic, so she no longer needed to take transportation. My mother quickly placed my sister Margarita in the teacher-training public School (at that time they entered very young) and Rosita in a private school for teachers; my brother Elias enlisted in the Navy, and who suffered the change was my mom, because she needed more time to get to work and she had to take the bus. We had good neighbors, so at the end we won despite the fact that we were nine in the family: my granny, my mom, Martha, Rosita, Elias, Margarita, Luz Maria and her baby Ceci, and me.

Nostalgia invaded me. There was no telephone where my colleagues could call me to find a job. My mom was tense with me, because I gave her less and less for expenses. The money was running out despite me taking too little for my personal use, until one day she said to me: "I need fifty pesos for tomorrow; I don't know how or where, but tomorrow you'll have to give them to me". From what little I had left, I gave her the money, but that demand from her was like a dart that hurt me, and so much so that a new resentment was generated.

I had fifteen pesos left. I walked to the Alameda of Santa Maria, sat on a bench and sank into some memories of my life, events that happened while I lived in the previous house.

I remembered my first concert, when I was studying at the night school of the National Conservatory of Music. At that time I made myself a white dress and, since I did not have money for a taxi, I walked to the Bolivar amphitheater. When

people saw me go by, they said: “There goes the lady of the night”. Three concert bassists were invited to that concert. One of them, on the first music stand, was maestro Pepe Luis; I never imagined that later he would be my double bass teacher and partner in the Symphony.

I also remembered when I was queen of the mariachis in the Garibaldi square, a November 22. They used a moving truck adorned inside and out with multicolored Chinese paper and lots of balloons. Inside was a very large image of Saint Cecilia, a flower arrangement and many white flowers. Along with the virgin was the godmother, at the other end, the queen, who was me.

Little by little, all the mariachis arrived with their families. The place was very crowded, the music started at ten in the morning, the mariachis agreed among them and they played very beautiful waltzes. We arrived at the entrance of the temple that was in front of the square. The ladies carried a white flower which they placed where the saint would be placed. At the entrance was the priest; he blessed the image and the mariachis. A very solemn ceremony was held in the crowded temple. In the end they gave us *tamales* and *atole*.

It came to my memory when I went on an excursion with my granny to San Juan de los Lagos by train. The departure was at seven in the morning from the Buenavista station, but we had to be there an hour early. There were so many people that there was a huge line and we could not get into the car that was assigned to us. Some boys recommended to us that we wait for the eight o'clock train because the wagons were full and there was no more space for people, that people were sitting on their suitcases. That if we waited, they would help us get on the next train.

So we did, we waited and the boys helped us get on so we could get a seat. The train was taking too long to leave, and it was not until after more than an hour that an employee informed us that the seven o'clock train had collided with

another freight train at the Cazadero station and that we had to wait. We left until twelve, and as we passed the scene of the accident the smell of burning meat was unbearable. The wagons were overturned on both sides of the road where our car ran; it was a gloomy scene.

In San Juan de los Lagos we went to church. The lines were huge, but my granny was happy that she took me to see the virgin. Then we ate at the market and my granny gave me to drink mead in a clay jar. We stayed overnight at an inn near the church. They gave each of us a mat and we looked for a place in one of the spaces that people left, since they all slept on the floor. We left very early the next day. The scene of the accident was worse and the smell even more terrible. My granny said: "Those stubborn boys were our angels of salvation; I never saw them again".

In Mexico City, the news spread everywhere and my mom was very distressed. At my school, classmates from my classroom cooperated to say a mass in my memory. When they saw me come in, they applauded. The teacher asked me to tell them about my trip.

I remembered, sitting on that bench, about my apprenticeship in the Rios Art orchestra, which was integrated by the family of Mr. Arturo Rios, a trombonist. Although he did not play in the orchestra, he put together the repertoire of that epoch and rehearsed us. We were four young ladies from fourteen to eighteen years old (his two daughters, his niece and me), his wife, a sister of him, and a magnificent Cuban pianist who was in Sonora Matancera. We toured much of the republic, we did several seasons at the Follies Theater... Working, we were dynamite!

I remembered the large number of dance orchestras I played in, but my greatest achievement and best memory was having been in the National Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of masters Carlos Chavez and Pablo Moncayo, and having had as a double bass teacher at the Conservatory,

teacher Pepe Luis Hernandez. After a long time at the alameda, I decided to go back home; it was late. My last thought was that I wouldn't give up. Those fifteen pesos I had left had to be enough, because I was going to get a job.

III. THE PIGALLE

The next day, at a right time, I went to the W. My colleagues asked me where I had gone, if I had gone on tour. I told them about my change of address and that, at the moment, I did not have a phone for messages. I called Mr. Toussaint to thank him for his help and he invited me to lunch. He told me his anecdotes, but I was not with him for a long time, since I wanted to return to the W to continue looking for a job. I did not give him my new address, I barely commented that I lived in Santa Maria la Ribera and said goodbye.

When I got back to the W, there were still quite a few people in the coffee shops. A man approached to me and asked if I was Lupita, because someone had recommended me. His name was Manuel and he was going to form a small orchestra to open a French type place called The Pigalle, with six elements: piano, bass, drums, two violins and him playing the cello. The place was in Santa Maria la Redonda and it would start that same Friday, but we needed to rehearse at least twice. He told me that he had been given as loaned a studio from the XEB ready to start the next day. I accepted and went to my house thanking God.

I took the tram from La Rosa and, when I reached into my bag, I found two hundred-pesos bills. I did not even feel at what time it happened! Surely Mr. Toussaint had put them there. "At least I don't come without money. I am going to borrow them, since I can already pay them by working", I thought.

I started at El Pigalle and the manager approached to me to ask me to wear a black skirt, white blouse, red scarf on the neck and black beret. When I asked the reason of the scarf and the beret, he answered that this would be the way the girls who

worked there would be uniformed. “I am from the orchestra and not just one of the girls. I will wear a black suit and white blouse just like my colleagues”, I replied, and he finally agreed.

For hiring the girls, they auditioned. They selected the most beautiful and best-bodied. The uniform was a white satin mid-calf skirt, with an opening on the right-hand side that reached all the way to the start of the panties, the red scarf around the neck and the black beret; they looked very pretty.

We played two orchestras, the one that accompanied the variety, which was very complete, with five saxophones, three trumpets, a trombone, piano, bass, drums and rhythms, with very good elements, and we, three violins, piano, drums, me on the bass and the conductor on the cello, all good musicians, except the conductor, who hardly knew French music. Perez Ibañez, one of the violinists, was the one who provided the French music to the group.

We started at ten at night and ended at four in the morning. In the variety was a magician who made a nice show with a girl. The second number was made by Sergio Corona and Alfonso Arau, who were emerging with great success as comedians and magnificent dancers. A French singer who was the star of the moment closed and was very successful every night.

I left my house before nine at night to go to work. I would take the bus at Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and would drop me off half a block from the night center, which was on the corner of Violeta and Santa Maria la Redonda. One of those nights, when I left my house, I had barely walked half a block when I felt steps behind me. I turned around quickly and saw that indeed two men were coming behind me. I quickened my pace and they did the same, indicating me that they were following me. I took off my sneakers, I lifted my skirt until I could move freely, and started running as fast as possible. They ran after me, but I was fortunate that a bus was stopped at the corner. The driver was shocked when he saw me with shoes in hand

and skirt up. “Sir, two men are following me!”, and I got into the bus. At that moment the men arrived and the driver closed the door and started the bus. He said to me: “You sit down and be calm, they won’t be able to get in”. Indeed, despite the fact that one of the men banged on the door and the other was almost run over, they were unable to get in. The driver did not check the card in order not to stop and to avoid that the passengers be scared about the guys.

Despite that I arrived with torn stockings and scared, the night ran smoothly; since that time I started to leave my house at different hours.

I became friend with one of the *fichera* girls who always arrived before her companions; she was their leader. Every Monday she appeared dressed in a tailor suit, sneakers and a handbag of the same color; she looked very elegant. As she liked me, one day she explained to me the reason why she arrived dressed this way. She told me that she had four children and was a single mother, that with her work she bought a piece of land in San Juan del Rio, where little by little she built four apartments in the front and, in the back, a four-bedroom house for her, her children and her mom. She used to tell her mom that she worked in a very important company, that is why she dressed like that.

One night she arrived very upset saying that no one would make fun of her and that whoever tried to do it would regret it. The night of work passed normally, the variety flowed until it was the singer’s turn. He could not finish the first song because my friend got up from where she was and began to whistle insults to him (with the two little fingers in her mouth), very loud, and shouted: “This despicable man said he would pay me as a guide to get to know Cuernavaca, but where the miserable saw more depopulated, he tried to abuse! He said he would not pay me a penny because I was a tramp, then he insulted me because I did not allow him to go ahead with his intentions. I struggled, in the jerking he pulled me out of the

car and, as an addition, he kept my bag. I got here on foot and hitchhiking. Look at my shoes, the heel broke! I could not walk anymore!”. Then, addressing to him: “You are a pimp, exploiter of women! You are a son of a bitch! Go back to your land, you have nothing to do in my country!”. All the girls started hitting the tables with the glasses. The manager, on the microphone, asked for silence, but nobody minded him. The story is that the singer went to his dressing room and we never saw him again; his contract was canceled.

The company tried to suspend the workers who participated in the scandal, but the union did not allow it.

Manuel, the conductor of our orchestra, was a tailor and made uniforms for members of other orchestras. He made the wine-colored jackets and black pants for the waiters there, which were visually complemented by the uniforms of the girls. I asked him to make a coat for me. He measured me at work and I gave him half the payment in advance: one hundred and fifty pesos. Time passed and he gave me nothing; on the contrary, he told me that I had to pay off the bill so that I could pick up my coat at his workshop. I mistakenly gave him the other 150 pesos. The workshop was on Madero Street and I went several times without Manuel giving me my coat nor returning my money.

Due to the novelty of that place, different fellow musicians began to go there daily to see the ambience; among them was a friend I had in the Salon Mexico, a boy who helped me enter to the place so that I could listen to the orchestra he conducted and, in addition, he gave me the opportunity to “echar la paloma” (*when a musician plays spontaneously in a group or place*) playing blues.

Another musician who arrived there was no other than Angel Cu León.

IV. END OF A FRIENDSHIP

Angel was accompanied by two mates that did not stop laughing because he was too drunk from cognac and, as he got out of the taxi, he slipped and fell down on his ass. They had to help him up because he couldn't. They saw all the variety and, in the end, his friends left. He waited until we were done and insisted on joining me. I did not allow it because I couldn't get out of my job with a drunken man.

I suggested him to go home: "You are at my job. The state you are in is not correct and I take great care of my image; I am sorry. I am going alone, as always". I quickly took

a taxi, but Angel took another one and followed me. On the way I thought I couldn't get home with him. I had barely gone to bed when he started calling out to me: "Lupis, Lupis!". My mom said to me, "Go out and take care of that man!". In a little while she ordered it again, but I didn't go out. I was determined to erase him from my life, what would I do if I got pregnant again? Finally he left.

Our contract at The Pigalle was not renewed because the conductor of our orchestra did not have the professional capacity to expand the repertoire of French music. My mom was upset with me because the expenses at home were many; especially because of the costs of the schools of my siblings.

I had been going to the W, but work was scarce, so I tried at all costs to rescue the money that Manuel owed me. I walked from City Hall, where the XEW is, up to Madero, where he had his workshop. In one of those times, when passing by Sanborns of Madero Street, I ran into Mr. Toussaint at the entrance of the place. He approached and invited me to eat; I said to him I was on my way to see a person. "I also have an important matter to discuss with a colleague – he replied –, but I will wait for you inside when you become available."

After my unsuccessful attempt to recover my three hundred pesos with the informal tailor, I returned to Sanborns with the intention of clarifying with Mr. Toussaint that event of the two hundred pesos that I found in the pocket of my jacket. He did not let me to return them to him on the grounds that we were friends; until then he asked me to talk between us informally. "Do not get me wrong – he said –, you are young and I am fifty years old. It was good that we ran into each other because I could not leave without saying goodbye!".

That Friday, colleagues from his office would organize a farewell party for him and he wanted me to accompany him. He told me: "My son also studied Law and went with a mate to the United States; he is married, he has no children yet. My wife has relatives there and she is determined to go with my

daughter-in-law and with him, she feels very confident. We talked about it and we are all going. I will quit my job and I'll see how the panorama is over there; for now, I will not sell my house nor my car nor my wife's. I am happy that my son continues studying”.

On Friday we met again at Sanborns, but Mr. Toussaint clarified me that the meeting would be elsewhere. We arrived at the canteen La Opera, in Cinco de Mayo Street, around the corner of Madero Street. We were five people and it was a very pleasant coexistence, full of anecdotes. At the end of the meal we toasted with champagne to wish Mr. Toussaint good luck in his new adventure.

The first to leave were his friends and he offered to take me home. The champagne made me sick; I was not used to drinking. He ordered a strong coffee for me and we left the place. He took me to my house and, before getting out of the car, said to me: “So that your mom doesn't scold you, tell her that you went to work”, and he put money in my hands. I didn't know how much it was. He helped me out; the coffee had not worked yet for me, I almost forgot my bag in his car. I put my money under my bra to take the key out of my bag and open the door to the garage. He waited for me to enter, started his car and left. When I opened my sister Lucha (Luz Maria) saw me and she was shocked by my condition. “You had too much to drink! I am going to help you get undressed”, she told me, and when unbuttoning my bra the bills flew. Lucha quickly picked them up. “Get into bed, my mom still has not come home from work; I will make sure she don't notice it.” I went to bed.

Many years later it happened that Eduardo, my second son, who then was about thirteen years old, and I, were walking through downtown, when, looking at the door of the canteen La Opera, as if it was an apparition, there was Mr. Toussaint. I introduced him to my son and he remembered when I sang in a fifteen-years-celebration, he recited a piece of

the poem that he had dedicated to his goddaughter at the time, he said goodbye and I never saw him again.

V. MY DEPARTURE FROM HOME

My life followed its course. The next day I went to look for a job to the ANDA and a colleague, Negro Perez, told me that they were looking for artists for the Rio Theater, that is, a possibility as a singer, that I should go to the Ministry of Labor of the union to see if I could take advantage of that opportunity.

Indeed, in the Ministry they gave me a memorandum for Mr. Pepe Guizar, who was the businessman of the Rio Theater. I went until the following Monday, because I felt sick about the effects of the champagne from the previous day. My mom was becoming more tense with me and my granny said to me not to listen to her, but my biggest concern was my sister Martha, who with great effort was doing very well in her career at the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN by its acronym in Spanish).

On Monday I showed up at the River, which was half a block from Salto del Agua, on Niño Perdido Avenue. I arrived asking for Mr. Guizar's dressing room and handed him the memo. He ordered his secretary to call the conductor of the

orchestra to test me...What was my surprise to see that it was Angel Cu Leon! He was as surprised as I was and said:

-There is no need for a test; she is a professional.

-If you know the work of the comrade, let's reach an agreement – and he commented to me –: I am preparing a great tour to Central America. If you accept, prepare your passport.

-I do not have a passport.

-You have time to get it, we will be leaving in about two months. Contact the director; he will tell you the place and time of the rehearsals, we have to know your repertoire. He will also tell you when the departure will be.

We left the dressing room and Angel said to me: “What a pleasant surprise! You don't want to see me and the destiny insists in uniting us. I invite you to eat; I will be done in forty minutes. Wait for me to update you on how the tour is”.

I stayed and saw much of the rehearsal, I watched as all the artists treated Angel with great attention. We left the theater and went to eat at a nearby restaurant. He commented to me: “Pepe has been having for me great esteem, he is very happy with my work; he sees me as a friend, he tells me all his plans. He is just starting to plan all about the tour; he wants to do it big. Try to put Pepe songs. He plans on bringing regional music, Aztec scenes and its music. He has me working as a slave making arrangements” (at that time the arranger used to write paper by paper what each member of the orchestra had to play). In addition, he is in talks with a new company for the theater, so that the artists and all the theater staff can be insured in good hands when we go on tour. I think that the tour will not be able to take place in two months, as he plans, but we are going to work so that everything turns out well”.

I told him that I did have an interest in the tour and that I would get my passport. We ran out of time and he accompanied me to my house. By bad luck we arrived at the same time as my mom. I saw the bad face she had when she

saw me with Angel, who before saying goodbye told me: “Tomorrow, bring your music to review your material after the theater rehearsal”, and he left. The reprimand was so hurtful that I couldn’t even comment to her about the job.

The next day I went to find out what I needed to request my passport and I saw that I had several things to solve, including that I had no birth certificate.

The next day I returned to the W to look for a job while it was time to go on tour with Pepe Guizar. From there I walked up to Salto del Agua to the Rio Theatre so that Angel would rehearse me. Again he took me to my house and the scene was repeated; we ran into my mom again. They were very difficult situations for me, so I did not want to tell her about the tour, because she would surely try to prevent the trip.

My granny was aware of the situation and said to me:

-Don’t listen to your mother.

-It’s always the same, I can’t stand this situation anymore. It makes me want to leave home.

-Where would you go alone? I would stay here worrying. Think about it and be patient.

The days passed and the situation with my mom was getting worse, until I said to my granny:

-I am leaving tomorrow.

-Wait a few days in order to get yourself a safe place.

That day, after rehearsal, I told Angel that I wanted to get out of my house. I needed to tell him the truth of my situation, including my transit through the General Hospital and the troubles that I experienced.

-Why did not you tell me?

-Where would I have told you? You disappeared! – I complained to him.

He remained very pensive and again he accompanied me back to my house. As soon as I entered, my granny, with great discretion, informed me: “I found a little room for you! I will have you very close. You will not be alone; it is in front of the

hotel where I work. The owner is a musician who lives with his wife; they rent and right now they have a small room unoccupied”.

The next day, as soon as my mom left, I packed a small suitcase. I took my toiletry bag and my double bass. My granny took me to the place; it was on Galeana Street in front of the Salon Mexico. The room was divided by a wooden gate; it was a long room with a single bed, a bedside table, a chair, a small bookcase to put clothes on, and there was even space for my bass in a corner. The door to my room was very close to the front door. The owner of the place turned out to be a former mate of the Symphony, who was an loan-shark and who had even lent me money on one occasion to get my uncle Jesus out of jail.

I settled in and my granny visited me both in the morning and in the afternoon. Angel did not like it because there was a by-the-hour motel, and he said that he would get me something better.

Luckily, I started working in two of the dance halls called Victor's. There were three in total: two were in the Lomas de Chapultepec, where I worked, and the other one I don't even remember where it was. With those two days of work a week I was able to survive, but it was not enough to give my mom money.

My granny told me that my mom ordered my siblings not to speak to me for any reason. I felt very unhappy. I told Angel everything and he comforted me by saying not to worry, that after the storm peace returns and that my mom would react; that she would surely think it more than twice: “Her expenses are very high and she needs you”, he concluded.

I wanted to see my siblings, especially Martha, but she was threatened. I sent her the money I could through my granny, but she was checked by my mother every time she approached my siblings...It was so difficult!

Angel accompanied me to the door where I lived, I used to tell my granny that and everything I talked with him. Finally, one day Angel told me: “I already found where you are going to live; very close from where you are, but better”. He took me to a guest house where he signed the contract himself. It was on Hidalgo Avenue, almost opposite Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts), where so many days I studied, rehearsed and gave concerts with the National Symphony Orchestra.

Honorable people who worked, lived in the house, and the place was attended by a woman of about seventy years named Maria, who everyone called Mary. Angel introduced me as his wife, and on June 8, 1954 I moved in. Thereafter, we set that date for our anniversaries.

VI. TOGETHER

Mary rented the rooms with food and she cooked very tasty. The room was spacious, with a double bed that had an inflated mattress which went all the way down when one sat down on it, but that is how I began to live with Angel. I felt protected and happy...very happy to be with Angel!

My granny kept visiting me and even became friends with Mary. One day I said to Angel: "Don't take me to our new home, because I am going to Madero street to collect some money". He replied: "I will accompany you, since later I have to go to my house before the theater performance". On the way I told him the story of the coat and the tailor. When we arrived at the workshop, Angel went ahead and said to Manuel: "Mate, I am already aware of the deal you made with the lady here. In front of your employees, I am paying Miss Lupita three hundred pesos." He took out his wallet, counted the money and gave it to me in front of everyone's amazement. "Comrade Manuel, now you have the debt with me and tomorrow I will come for the money." We left the tailor shop, I thanked him and told him that Manuel was going to do the same to him as to me. "Don't worry, I assure you that tomorrow he will pay me." He accompanied me to buy a coat. I chose a gray one, very beautiful, of good quality and even cheaper.

Angel kept me aware of Pepe Guizar's plans, of how he was excited: "Imagine! He told me that he wants to bring forty artists including a mariachi band. He already asked me to get a good orchestra conductor that can stay in charge of the theater, because I will be the only one who will go in order to lead everything. It will be hard, but everything with a solution. I solve everything. In every place we go I will rehearse an orchestra. I hope that everything turns out well, because each

plaza will be covered in propaganda, and you – he said to me – , will go directly to the musicians’ union of each place so that you can hire the best elements. Pepe has it well planned. You, Lupita, try to get your passport so you don’t have problems at the last minute”, he concluded.

I did it like that. I went to the offices of the Civil Registry of Salto del Agua and I was surprised that I was not registered. Legally I did not exist! I immediately went to the Hotel Principal, where my mom worked, and I complained to her: “I come from the Civil Registry, I wanted to get my birth certificate, but I do not appear. Mom, I don’t exist!”. She coldly replied:

-You are not registered. What do you want certificates for?

-I am going to get my passport because I will be probably going out of the country.

She was surprised and said to me:

-I think you are wrong, but I know that you are going to do whatever you want.

-Mom, I want you to register me. I will see that my dad is present.

I knew that my dad worked in a bakery on Del Carmen Street and I went to see him. He did not agree going to the registry because he would miss a day of work, so I offered to pay him. “It would be fifty pesos. If you give me that money, I’ll go”, he said. He gave me the phone number of his work and I agreed to let him know the day and time we would go to the Civil Registry. I agreed with my mom and we attended but when the judge asked if they were married, my dad hesitated and said no, so the judge recorded in my certificate “natural daughter” instead of “legitimate daughter” as I wanted it to appear, because that was how it was in the certificate of Martha, my only consanguineous sister. That bothered me a lot. “If I had known what was going to happen – I told my dad –, just as I paid false witnesses, I would have paid the first man

about your age who had passed along here to be my father for an hour and I wouldn't have bothered you."

The next day I went to get my passport, but they asked me for my baptismal certificate, because the certificate showed that I had just registered, so I had to cover that new procedure. I told that to Angel and he said: "Don't you worry, you are going to succeed and your mom will change with you for good; time will prove me right". I can't explain how my mom found out about everything, but one day she went to look for Angel at the Rio Theater. He didn't say anything to me, but he started with comments regarding me not to be mad at my mom, that she was jealous of how much she loved me, etc. That made me mad because of how she had been treating me for so long and so long, so different as how she treated my other siblings. I felt that he was beginning to defend her, to the degree that I asked him not to speak about her again, because I felt a great resentment which did not fit in my chest.

The days passed, and I continued working in the Victor's classrooms for two days, and another two I went to the Rio Theater to have Angel rehearse me. After one of those rehearsals, he invited me to eat kid goat meat in a restaurant on Bolivar Street, where they were specialists; he knew I liked it very much. We sat in the center of the restaurant and I was right in front of the entrance door of the place. We didn't have much of having been sat down, when my mom showed up. I did not know what to do! Angel got up and welcomed my mom: "Mrs. Antonia, be welcomed at our table". He adjusted the chair for her. He commented on the best kid goat pieces for her to enjoy it. "This part is very fleshy and very soft", he said. My mom no longer had the despotic air: she looked self-conscious! Angel took the baton of the conversation, he spoke without details about the tour and he even commented to her that she had to join us more often. When we finished he said: "I am going to make sure that we come together to eat every fortnight; unless because of work it is not possible, but I will call

you, at the end it is close to you and we will eat kid goat again”.

On the way home, he was telling me that I had to be kinder to my mom, because I had not spoken to her at all at the table, and that, even if it bothered me, we would eat together every fortnight. This is how I restarted my relationship with my mom, each time we ate together, she felt more comfortable.

On one of those occasions, Angel clarified to her: “Mrs. Antonia, I do not invite you to where we are living now until I find a more decent place and that will be until we return from the tour”. He followed saying: “I would like you to do us the favor of keeping the bass while we are away. Also I tell you, Mrs. Antonia, that your daughter will surely have a lot of success singing”.

VII. THE TOUR WITH PEPE GUIZAR

The tour date was finally approaching. About fifteen days before, they gave Angel the airline tickets of the TACA airline for Guatemala. The flight would leave at eight in the morning, but we had to be three hours before takeoff. Angel picked me up at seven in the morning saying: “Don’t worry, the plane leaves at eight”. And yes, we arrived at eight, when the plane

was taking off. They told us that they had been waiting for us and that the flight was delayed because of us. Angel quickly asked if there was another flight to Guatemala. They replied that it would depart at twelve and that we would have enough time to complete the procedures, and that we had to register three hours before.

We arrived to Guatemala, which would be our first place, and both the mariachis, the girls from the ballet, as well as Pepe Guizar and the other boys, were waiting for us. Pepe was so fond of Angel that, on arrival, he said to him: “I never thought you would leave us stranded. I knew you would take another flight; thank God you are already here”. Angel’s responsibility was very big, since he carried the weight of the entire company. We stayed in a hotel that would now be five stars.

The next day, Angel went to the union to hire the right musicians to form the orchestra and to get acquainted with the huge program that was as follows:

El Gimnasio Olímpico

Hoy, grandioso debut del más sensacional espectáculo que ha visitado
GUATEMALA

Viernes 15 de octubre de 1954

¡DOS FUNCIONES!

Matiné a las cinco en punto Noche a las diez en punto

Mexicana de Espectáculos, A.C.

A beneficio de la construcción de la

Iglesia Santa Teresa

La deslumbrante producción musical del mundialmente famoso compositor

Pepe Guízar

el Pintor musical de México

“ACUARELAS MEXICANAS”

Una fiesta mexicana llena de color, risas, bailes, canciones.

CON LA ACTUACIÓN DE REFULGENTES ESTRELLAS

DE CINE, TEATRO, TELEVISIÓN Y RADIO.

ENCABEZADAS POR LAS ESTRELLAS DEL CINE MEXICANO

Luis Aguilar

Famoso “*Gallo giro*”

Cantante y astro del cine

Rosita Quintana

Cantante y actriz estelar

Película: “El valor de vivir”

Queti Clavijo

Faraona del cante

y el baile flamenco

Gilda Grey

Vedette ranchera

Bernabé de Morrón

Guitarrista español

Los mexicanos

Reyes del requinto

¡LOS SENSACIONALES EMPERADORES DE LA RISA!

Régulo y Madaleno

Kiko y Karlo

¡Los duetos cómicos más sensacionales del continente!

¡Un ejército de liberación de la tristeza!

Los trovadores de México

Alicia de la Gala

¡Voces y guitarras!

¡Ensueño de la danza!

Conjunto Aqualulco

Música típica de México

Alejandro Alvarado

Lupita Briss

Silvia Duval

¡Charro solitario!

Susurro ensoñador

Vedette encantadora

¡Y las más y mejores bailarinas! ¡Un conjunto de preciosidades!

Rosa Alicia Fernández-Blanca Elizalde-Martha de la Gesla-Nora Damián-July Damián-

Rosa Rodríguez-Elvira González-Gloria Chávez-Martha Hernández.

Dirigidas magistralmente por el coreógrafo más prestigiado del cine mexicano:

Ricardo Silva

Dirección de la orquesta a cargo del maestro **Ángel Cu León**

Acompañamiento musical a cargo de la orquesta de **Guillermo Rojas**.

Productor: **Luis Alberto Montes de Oca**

PRECIOS POPULARÍSIMOS

Sillas: Q 1.25 Preferencia: Q 0.75 General: Q 0.40

Un espectáculo para todas las edades

¡Diviértase!, y coopere con la construcción de la

Iglesia Santa Teresa

Taquillas y ENTRADAS A SILLAS por el frente del gimnasio **“12 Avenida”**

Taquilla y ENTRADA A PREFERENCIA, por ambos lados del GIMNASIO.

Taquilla y ENTRADA GENERAL, por ambos lados del gimnasio.

NO VALEN PASES DE CORTESÍA

Habrá servicio de camioneta para toda la ciudad después de las funciones.

Pepe Guizar's objective was to publicize Mexican music and its roots. For example, in this program an Aztec ceremony was recreated: Alicia de la Gala represented an Aztec princess, the town was made up of the entire group of dancers; including the choreographer Ricardo Silva who made a couple with Alicia; and to us, Maria Trinidad y Lupita Briss (me), who were singers. The line was made up of dances to the rhythm of drums that ended in a fence to give the entrance to the princess moved on a wooden pedestal and, later, the duet dance of Alicia and Ricardo. Angel had hired the musicians of the orchestra, but since there was not enough time to rehearse, the drummer never understood the rhythm that had been given to the Aztec dance; so a drum was brought to Angel and some

drumsticks on the right side of the piano and sometimes alternated playing the piano and then quickly turned to play the drum. The audience noticed and when they finished, they applauded and shouted: “Much for the teacher!”

This program was presented in each of the shows. In addition, the first two weekends Pedro Infante was there, who gave a bouquet of flowers to an old lady at each show. The public was going crazy! On the third and fourth weekend appeared Columba Dominguez singing boleros with her soft voice. She was very well rehearsed and wore beautiful clothing; all of her looked like a doll. The first figures were always Luis Aguilar and Rosita Quintana.

At that time the bolero *Espinita* premiered, which I sang with great satisfaction, and at each show they asked for it again, the public even called me “Espinita” instead of Lupita. I thank God, because despite the great figures of cinema and theater that participated in the program, I had great acceptance among the public.

Later, another stage was set up for us, this time in the 1920's, and the orchestra, conducted by Angel, began with the theme *Chapultepec*. Silvia Duval sang and danced a Charleston, and I got a polka called *The Bicycles*. I made couple with one of the dancers and carried an umbrella. We entered dancing and then I sang.

To close the scene of the twenties, the group of dancers performed the cancan and it was a total success. One of the days we were in Guatemala we were surprised by two strong quakes, and Angel discovered a new part of me: before it trembles, a few hours earlier I get a severe headache. That time particularly I had a headache and so was the quake, things jumped on the table that moved from one side to another of our hotel room.

The breakfast and lunch, was greatly enjoyed by the coexistence between colleagues, nurtured by anecdotes and laughter from everyone, except from Alicia de la Gala, who

did not like to laugh so as not to wrinkle, she did not want to get folds on the face. More eagerly, the members of the mariachi told jokes and imitated her expressionless way of laughing.

Later, a Guatemalan businessman of Jewish origin hired Angel to record two songs that he had “composed” for Guatemala; one like a bolero and another ranchero style. It turned out that the “composer” only hummed the compositions to Angel and he had to write the music correctly, both the melodic line as well as the arrangements corresponding to each song. To record the bolero-style, Angel brought the singer with the first voice of the trio Los Trovadores, and me in the choir as a duet, and the ranchero-style song was recorded by me with the mariachi band.

When leaving the recording, the “composer” was going to pay the musicians of the group two quetzals to each one, but Angel intervened and said: “I pay the musicians”, and in front of him he took out his wallet and gave twelve quetzals to each one. The so called “composer” alleged that in Guatemala they were not paid as much.

I still have the results of that recording in original, 78 rpm acetate records, with three holes, very heavy and brittle.

VIII. GUATEMALA AND ARRIVAL TO HONDURAS

We spent four weeks in Guatemala and, from the first to the last day, it was a total success, with the gym completely full in all shows; I even received a beautiful bouquet of flowers from an admirer, dedicated to the “Espinita”...Angel just remained unsmiling.

Until that moment and throughout the tour, I did not receive any payment. At first I spoke to Angel, but he clarified me that he would charge on my behalf, because from there I would get for my food and hotel expenses... I remained silent, but all that time I couldn't send money to my mom.

Angel wouldn't allow me to go out if it wasn't with him. He always left me at the hotel and went to rehearsals, which were two hours long, but he took much longer and arrived until lunchtime. The company rested on Mondays, therefore, that day there was no rehearsal and the fellows together went out to get to know some place, except Angel and me.

At one of the meals a visit to Antigua Guatemala was organized and all of the company went, except Angel and me... I was really looking forward to going. Finally, on one of the last days in Guatemala, upon returning to the room after breakfast, a letter appeared under Angel's pillow. It was addressed to his wife and he commented to her:

Osita (*little bear*)...in your letter you tell me that with the money I sent you they made the sloping wall of the house's façade and that it looks very nice. I do not want the construction of the house to be suspended. I'm doing very well; aside from my salary, I am doing arrangements for a singer named Briss. I am going to keep sending you money...

I couldn't continue reading. The world came over me! It was a punch... I did not know what to do, what to think. Angel had the plane tickets and I did not have a penny in my bag. I did not complain to him; I was afraid he would leave me in that country and without money. To complete the picture, that same day a colleague approached to say to Angel: "Master, the man from the post told me that you already have a letter, to let you know". As soon as he left, I said to Angel: "The month is going to end and I have not been able to write to my mother. Where is so much attention that you had for her?" He answered: "Go ahead, in the room I will give you a paper and an envelope; you write to your mom and I will take the letter to the mail". I really did not know him. My attitude towards him was no longer the same from then on, as in addition, I got sick with the flu and became hoarse. Pepe Guizar was very attentive to me: "What is wrong with my Lupita? Isn't my best weapon going to work for me?", he said. "Don't you worry, I am going to keep singing", and so I did.

In the letter I wrote my mom, I told her exactly my situation (except for the letter). I think God has always been with me. Angel resented my change and tried to be more

attentive to me and always with cheerful spirit. One day he invited me to visit the market; I accepted, but I did not speak to him all the way. As we passed through the university, the kids screamed from the windows of the building: “She is too big for you, better pass her! How pretty you are!”. Once in the market, the soaps caught my attention; they were very white balls with blue stripes, I bought some, because I washed our clothes in the bathroom of the room, they made very nice foam.

My illness worsened and I was taking only aspirins. Angel was already very worried, he said that in pharmacies they did not know how to cure me. Almost at the end of our stay in Guatemala, Angel took me shopping to a very distinguished area. He bought me a blue skirt embroidered with fretwork, typical of Guatemala. Also a pair of earrings with three little bells in each one that sounded very nice; I really liked them. He bought an embroidered folder in which he kept the propaganda.

The day of saying goodbye to Guatemala arrived and the public enthusiastically surrendered to the program of that occasion. Among other artists were the eccentric dancers Corona and Arau and the incomparable vedette and movie star Ana Bertha Lepe.

One day before leaving for San Pedro Sula, it had been predicted bad weather for the day of our trip, and when we arrived at the airport we were informed that the whole company could not travel together because the planes had only space for twenty people. The first stars would not travel to Honduras, because they had to return to Mexico, so the group was reduced a little. A lot of people had come to the airport to say goodbye to us with great excitement. They shouted at me: “*Espinita, Espinita*, we love you!”. At the moment a woman approached to me saying: “*Espinita*, I give my daughter to you because she will be fine with you without so many shortcomings. Please, receive her!”, and she stretched out her

arms to give me the girl. I told her that I could not accept her and explained to her that, in addition, they would not allow me to get on the plane with her. I felt very sad to see that woman so desperate.

Given the fact that the company had to be distributed on two planes, Pepe sent the choreographer, Kiko and Karlo, two singers, one of the trios, the Spanish dancer, a vedette and the mariachi, in the first plane, and he indicated them that they had to start the show on time in case the second plane, where the rest of us would go with him, arrived very late.

The first flight left at nine in the morning with no problem. Ours was scheduled for twelve at noon, but it clouded over and the bad weather began to feel very strong, so the departure was postponed, first for an hour, then more and more, until finally we boarded I don't know at what time. The only crew that was going was the pilot; neither co-pilot nor stewardess accompanied him. Once in the air, the plane began to thunder like an aluminum mug; it was a double-propeller airplane for twenty passengers.

We felt the force of the air, it moved it so much that it seemed like it was going to disintegrate it. The dancers began to cry. Pepe Guizar, to console them, told them that nothing was going to happen, that it was better if we started praying. He took out his rosary and they prayed harder and harder. They were all hugging and Angel wanted to hug me, but since I was sick, I felt that my head was going to explode from the pressure changes, so I leaned down, I grabbed my hands together and put my head between my legs. Then we heard when the pilot was ordered to return, but he clarified that he could not do that because the fuel was not sufficient.

The plane sometimes rose and sometimes plummeted, so it was until we arrived at the airport, but since the runway was not visible, we were circling until the pilot told us: "All passengers, bow down on your knees and embrace your legs because we are going to descend abruptly. You will feel the

blow, although I will do it with the greatest of care. God help us”.

I felt my stomach plunging and then the plane’s strong jolt against the floor. Thank goodness we arrived well! The first to descend was the pilot, who was already awaited by four armed soldiers. Two took him by each arm and the other two behind him and took him away; we saw him through the windows. Finally, Pepe asked us to make a prayer because we had arrived safely.

Very worried, the other colleagues were waiting for us. We headed to the hotel for lunch, because we had little time for the first show at the Salón Tropical (Tropical Lounge). As the first stars were not going, the program changed.

Salón Tropical

JUEVES 4 DE NOVIEMBRE, A LAS 7:30 DE LA NOCHE,
por primera vez en
SAN PEDRO SULA

Mexicana de Espectáculos, A.C.

PRESENTA
A beneficio de la
Benemérita Cruz Roja H.

Al inspirado compositor mexicano:

PEPE GUÍZAR

Quien estrena su canción: “**HONDURAS**”, en sus famosas
“**ACUARELAS MEXICANAS**”

CON UN DESFILE DE ESTRELLAS DE CINE, TEATRO, TELEVISIÓN Y RADIO:

KIKO Y KARLO

Los amos de la risa

GILDA GREY

Vedete ranchera

RICARDO Y ALICIA

Los ases de la danza

Los trovadores de México

El mejor trío armónico de la XEW

María Trinidad

Alma de Jalisco

ALICIA DE LA GALA

Ensueño de mujer

Conjunto Ahualulco

De los hermanos Valadez

Lupita Briss

Cálida voz

Y UN PRECIOSO RAMILLETE DE BELLAS BAILARINAS:

Rosa Alicia Fernández, Blanca Elizalde, Silvia Duval, Elvira González, Gloria Chávez, Martha de la Gala, Rosa Rodríguez, Nora Damián, Martha Hernández, July Damián

Director de orquesta: **Maestro Ángel de León***

Acompañamiento musical a cargo de la orquesta. **H.R.Q. Radio Suyapa**
SILLA DE PREFERENCIA 1.2.00 SILLA GENERAL 1.1.00

Diviértase y coopere con la *Cruz Roja*

Salud y alegría con Cerveza SALVAVIDA

* Since then, Angel appeared as Angel de León or just Angel León, according to him to avoid the rascal game of words which implied his first and second surnames when saying them quickly: Cu León. (big ass in Spanish).

In the Salón Tropical (Tropical Lounge) were some dressing rooms that looked more like fitting rooms, because they were improvised; we were only a week performing there.

I continued with my bronchial infection and Angel was very mortified. Finally, he applied to me a few vials of antibiotic Respical and that stopped the infection and I could continue singing without discomfort, but... I got pregnant! When Angel found out, he became even more nervous and, a few days later, he arrived with a big fist of pills and said to me: "Take this!, with them you are going to get your period and won't hurt you". I had a hard time swallowing so many pills. Finally, they worked, but I was stunned for two or three days. Angel asked me to lie down and he sent for me in order to go out to sing, so I wouldn't be in the cold.

The following week the company moved to a theater named Clamer. The previous weekend we were invited to present a matinee on a beach called San Juan. Early we moved on a narrow gauge railway. The wagons were long and a little small. We traveled very happy and we sang along the way.

The show went very well; the time was calculated to start the matinee at seven in the afternoon; however, when we

returned, when we got off the train, a large military escort was waiting for us, who fenced us off with their rifles pointed at us and stopped us. Among the soldiers were two people dressed as civilians, who, together with one of the soldiers, approached us asking who Pepe Guizar was. He identified himself and they took him away, because the advertising expenses and the taxes corresponding to the presentations had not been paid. We were very alarmed because at that time there were conflicts with the guerrillas in Honduras, the city walls had bullet holes everywhere. Angel went with Pepe, who from his wallet paid the debt and a heavy fine.

The problem was that, in the business association for the tour, it was Kiko and Karlo's responsibility to have well in advance the contracts and publicity distributed in each city where the company appeared. Pepe's commitment was to hire the artistic cast, supervise the rehearsals and structure the shows with the choreographer and the conductor of orchestra. Hence his ideas of "Acuarelas Mexicanas" (Mexican Watercolors), the pre-hispanic dances or the remembrances of the twenties were captured.

The problem was caused by Kiko and Karlo, who neglected their responsibility of paying the advertising and taxes of that first week in San Pedro Sula; they did not do the corresponding thing in El Salvador either and they gradually left Pepe with all the debts.

IX. REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR AND THE RETURN

Pepe Guizar gathered the entire company to ask us for cooperation, since there was not enough money to pay everyone as he had been doing. We would work in order to collect the money and normalize the payments. He said to Angel: “Maestro, you have two salaries: yours and Lupita’s. I am going to give you only yours to pay Maria Trinidad, who is travelling with her mom”. Almost every day of that week we got together with Pepe, the owner of the hotel where we were staying, Ricardo the choreographer, those from the mariachi, the mother of Alicia de la Gala, Angel and I, in order to see how the money would be distributed and to know who would be paid and who would not. The first to protest were those from the mariachi because of the limitations. Pepe tried to be almost up to date with the hotel payment and the owner was happy to have us there; he commented, as a joke, in his bad Spanish (he was from the United States): “All the boxes of chili habaneros would have spoiled if Mexicans had not arrived”. That way we spent that tough week in San Pedro Sula.

When we finished in Honduras, Pepe gathered us to inform us that the trip to El Salvador would be by bus and not by plane. If the plane on which we traveled from Guatemala to San Pedro Sula was so uncomfortable and unsafe, I cannot find a qualificative to describe the foreign buses: the seats were lined boards and very narrow, with a completely straight back. Angel, who was chubby, and I was very tall, we were very tight in those “seats”. Finally we arrived and stayed at the best hotel of that time, the Astoria, and the company debuted at the America Theater with the following program, published in the *Diario Latino* and *Diario de Hoy*:

Diario Latino

“El diario de la voluntad nacional”

SAN SALVADOR, C.A. Lunes 22 de noviembre 1954.

HOY LUNES 22 EL ESPERADO DEBUT DE:

PEPE GUÍZAR

El Pintor musical de México

Presenta su primer programa de
“ACUARELAS MEXICANAS”

CON LAS MÁS DESTACADAS ESTRELLAS DE CINE, RADIO, TEATRO Y
TELEVISIÓN DE MÉXICO:

Gilda Grey, Alicia de la Gala, Ricardo y Alicia, “Los trovadores de México”, María Trinidad, Alejandro Alvarado, Lupita Briss, Los hermanos Valadez, Alfredo Quintana, Martha de la Gala.

EL MARIACHI “**LOS MENSAJEROS**”

Y UN GRAN DESFILE DE BELLEZAS ENCABEZADO POR:

**Blanca Elizalde, Rosa Alicia Fernández, Gloria Chávez, Rosa Rodríguez,
Nora Damián, July Damián, Martha Hernández, Elvira González**

Y LA ACTUACIÓN DE LOS MÁS SENSACIONALES CÓMICOS
DE LA RADIO NACIONAL.

Director de orquesta **Ángel de León**

PRECIO C 1.50 Y 75 C.

The same program was published in the *Diario de Hoy* everyday of our stay. The premiere was so successful that the Astoria hotel company asked Pepe to perform a small variety at lunchtime. Pepe chose the group of dancers to make the

entrance and closing of the spectacle, a trio, a singer, Alicia and Ricardo (a dancing couple), me singing my boleros (among them *Sin ti* by Pepe Guizar himself) and, of course, Angel to accompany the variety only by playing the piano.

On one of those afternoons the President of Nicaragua with his wife was visiting San Salvador. The man liked a lot the way Angel played the piano and the bolero *Bésame mucho* which I sang, so he invited us to his table. The president of Nicaragua and Angel were in great conversation when the waiter turned over the soup bowl on Angel. It was all chaos! He was wearing a black suit and noodles were dripping all over from his head. He quickly got up and the waiter was terrified. The manager moved fast to get him another suit, because we still had later the theater show, but he couldn't. Pepe walked from one side to the other and said to Angel: "No way I will lend you a charro suit, because it won't even fit you", since Pepe was tall and thin and Angel came to his shoulder and was chubby. I don't know how the waiter did it, but he gave us the suit clean minutes before leaving for the theater.

The president of Nicaragua became ill with the flu and asked to listen to *Bésame mucho* from his room, which was near the dining room. And so, when we finished the food show, he expected to see us pass in front of his room to chat with Angel and me for a while. He commented that whenever he got sick he did not use to call the doctor, but stayed in bed with a bottle of good cognac. Family De la Gala, Alicia, Martha and her mom, looked for a way to relate to the president and went with him to Nicaragua at the end of our season in the theater.

One day of many, while Angel went to rehearse at the theater, someone knocked at the room. I asked who it was and a man answered that he had music for the maestro. I opened the door, he was one of the mariachis and he came in quickly. I saw that he had no music with him and I quickly grabbed the chair of the room by the back to defend myself. We struggled for a few moments that seemed eternal to me. Because the

door was left opened, footsteps were heard down the hall and the guy went out. I yelled at the wretch man that I would put him in jail, so that the person who was approaching, who turned out to be a hotel cleaning staff, could hear him and caught sight of him leaving my room. When I calmed down, I looked for Pepe and told him very upset what had happened, asking him not to tell Angel. Pepe promised me that nobody would bother me again.

On Friday, November 26, the report on *Acuarelas Mexicanas* by Pepe Guizar was illustrated with a very large photograph of me. That same weekend we moved to a guest house, as members of the mariachi and ballet groups claimed that the hotel was very expensive for them. The only one who stayed at the hotel was Pepe. The guest house was very comfortable, with a bathroom in each room and a patio with sinks.

The following week Pepe was asked to appear on *La Hora Nacional* on the radio and asked him for his song *Guadalajara* and I was rehearsed another theme. Angel wrote a musical arrangement with violins for the song *Violetas imperiales*. It sounded very beautiful and it was a success, so much that the next day an admirer who listened to the program came to give me an orchid to the guest house where we were staying. Just when I was in one of the sinks, almost finishing with the clothes, he approached me and gave it to me in a box saying: "Lupita, I congratulate you. I loved *Violetas imperiales* which you interpreted in *La Hora Nacional*". When Angel saw me with the box and the orchid inside, in a firm tone of voice he asked me: "And that?". I told him that it was a gift. After sixty years I still have the melodic guide of that score that Angel wrote in music for that occasion.

We ended the contract for the theater and some of us continued to work at the Astoria hotel and others at events that Pepe arranged for them, but the entire company already had a

job. Finally, three days before finishing at the hotel, Pepe decided that we should return to Mexico.

We all had airline tickets; however, Angel wanted the two of us to return by land. It was a martyrdom to travel again in those buses to Guatemala. There, as I was very upset, Angel agreed to buy me a loose blouse and denim pants (at that time women did not wear pants, much less denim) which I wanted in order to travel more comfortably. While there, he decided that we should go to Chiapas by railway. The trip had its drawbacks: at the departure station a foreigner wanted to extort me with two hundred dollars and in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, when taking the train, a soldier confused me with a boy and gave me a spank in the back to hurry me on getting on the wagon. I protested, but Angel condemned: “Do you see the result of your pants?”.

Finally we took the plane back to Mexico City from Chiapas. Angel explained to me that this way the ticket had been much cheaper and that later he would go to reimburse the tickets that we had not used; however, he did not get a reimburse at that time, but he never stopped insisting, from time to time, on his refund, and ten years later, yes!, ten years later!, he entered the house very happy saying: “they paid me the plane tickets, here is your share!”.

We left the airport and went to Mary’s guest house, where we lived, but he did not stay, because he had an urgent need to go to his house. He promised me to return the next day, but it was not so because he devoted himself to finding a better place for us to live. He found a small apartment on a third floor on Medellin Street, in Colonia Roma. It had a very large bedroom, bathroom and a small kitchen. Next to the building was a sports club and adjoined the market gate; I really liked the place. It had a double bed, but what I didn’t like was that the mattress was very dirty, so I covered it with newspaper to sleep the first night.

The next day I contacted my mom to inform her that we were already back, I gave her the address and that same afternoon she visited me. A few days later she gave us a small table, Angel bought a chair in the market so we could sit down to eat; me sitting on the chair and Angel on the bed.

Soon after, to my surprise, Angel asked me to leave the music entirely. Neither sing nor play the bass again. I darkened, I turned off, it made me very sad and I told my mom; she did not like that request.

One day when I was preparing stuffed chiles, someone knocked at the door as if it was my salvation: it was Negro Perez (the same one who had told me about the job with Pepe Guizar), to invite me to sing Friday, Saturday and Sunday of that week at San Juan del Rio, Queretaro, with a very good salary (my mom had sent him warning him that my husband no longer wanted me to work).

Negro Perez told me: "I leave the contract with you, tell your husband. If you do not accept, call me to find another singer, although at the moment I have no one to send. If you agree, sign it. The departure is tomorrow at six in the morning by railway. I will wait for you at the Buenavista station. I hope everything goes well, don't forget the contract". Within minutes of his leaving, Angel arrived. The contract was on the table. I was still preparing my chiles and the only thing I could think to say was:

-If you want, I don't sign it.

-Don't you sign what? – he asked.

-The invitation from Negro Perez.

Angel also knew him, since he was a contractor representing artists and musicians. He read the contract and said to me:

-Tomorrow I will accompany you to the station.

So it was, he accompanied me and through the window I saw how he stayed there chatting very cordially with Negro Perez.

The job was in a nightclub and the variety was formed by another singing colleague, the presenter at the microphone (who told adult jokes) and me. Fifteen minutes for each one, which limited us to sing only four or five pieces to each one. Then the orchestra played. The next day I went to give thanks to church, because somehow Angel had already retracted from his idea of not letting me work on music. That's when I was approached by one of the girls who "worked" the night before at the nightclub. She told me very sad things, such as the police controlled them and that a "lady" was the one who "managed" them. In that formula they were tied and could not be free to get out of that circle, because they always had some type of debt with their employer. Without giving me her name, we said goodbye. That night she requested for two songs and, in exchange, the "client" with whom she was with, sent me a beautiful peach shawl as gratitude. I completed the presentations and returned to the city late at night by rail. Angel welcomed me at the Buenavista station.

The next day, without me knowing it, my mom went to look for Angel and spoke to him.

-Don Angel, I sent Mr. Perez, because he went to my house to hire my daughter, since he was her agent; don't even think that Guadalupe looked for him. I emphasize that I am not seeking profit for myself; it is my daughter who I must protect. And I am telling you, Don Angel, it is a serious mistake to prohibit her from continuing her career. You have no right to take her away something that with so much effort and sacrifice she has accomplished. Look, if you continue with that plan, I will see to it that my daughter does not stay with you, because you have your wife and your family. Follow as you go and you will have to stick to the consequences.

-Don't get mad, Mrs. Toñita. I promise that your daughter will continue playing her double bass, but not singing. I don't like my wife to be getting gifts. I promise you that your daughter will work, but only with me.

That December 1954 was very satisfying for me, because apart from being very happy with the apartment, I had a very good relationship with my mother and my beloved granny who supported me so much. Also, for a while I took swimming and gym lessons at the sports club near my house, as it turned out to be for women. Interestingly, they asked for a church recommendation and an acceptance letter from the spouse to enroll us. At the end I left it after a few months because Angel went up to the roof and saw the women sunbathing in bathing suits around the pool and he alleged that they were naked and that I could not do those things.



Lupita Briss singing *Espinita* in the Olympic Gym of Guatemala.



Cast of the tour at the Olympic Gym of Guatemala.



At her presentation in the Salon Tropical, in Honduras



Lupita Briss interpreting
Las Bicicletas in Guatemala.



Sign of "Angelito y su conjunto" at the nightclub La Terraza.



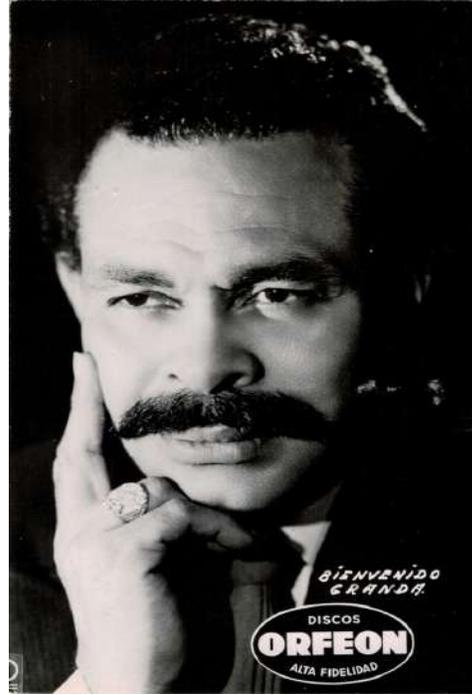
Lupita Briss in the mid-1950s.



Musical ensemble of Angel Cu at La Terraza, 1955.



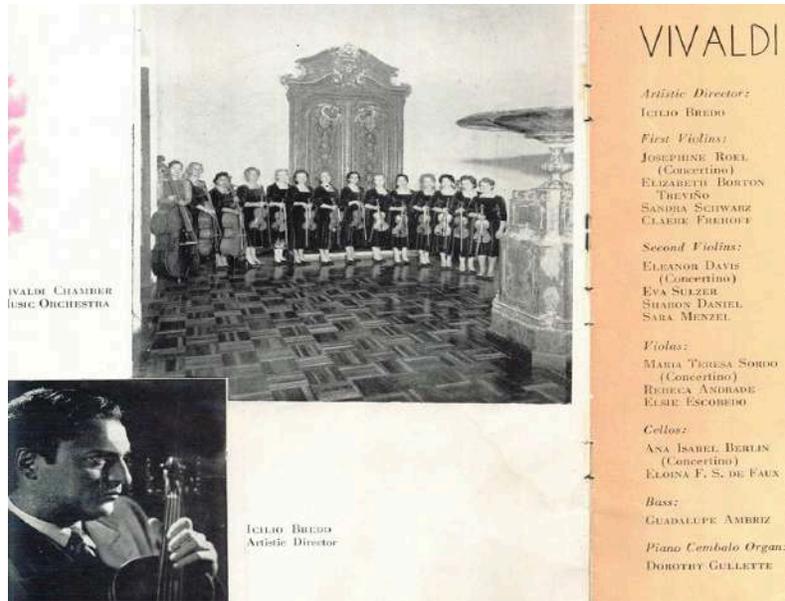
The maestro Angel Cu León.



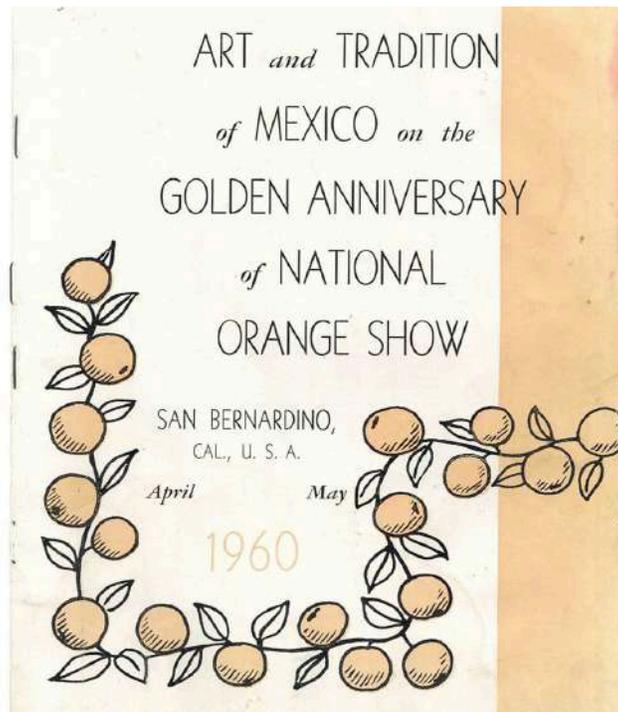
We played during a year with Bienvenido Granada in the XEW.TV.



Maestro Angel and his Ensemble in channel 2 of Televiscentro.



As member of the Vivaldi Orchestra, 1959.



Program of a concert of the Vivaldi Orchestra.



Venustiano Reyes López (Venus Rey), second from left to right.
Right next, maestro Angel Cu.



In the female Voices, lead by Mr. Angulo.
In the first job we had, we played on the television programs that Mr. Paco Malgesto conducted.



In Rios Art group.



Reunion of Iztaccihuatl Rios and Lupita Briss,
Members of Rios Art group.



Pedro Infante



Záizar brothers.



Evangelina Elizondo.



Marcelo and Tintán.



Alfonso Arau and Sergio Corona.



Trio Michel brothers.



The Platters.



Vitola.

X. LA TERRAZA, FIRST PART

My joy continued, since that same end of the year, Moises Alatorre, conductor of orchestra, recommended Angel to play at *La Terraza*. They asked for a tropical music ensemble and we, six elements, integrated it: trumpet, singer (who played maracas), conga drummer (who also sang backing vocals), a drummer, Moises Alatorre, Angel on the piano and me on the bass. We started with a three-month contract just before Christmas.

The restaurant and nightclub *La Terraza* was in Insurgentes Sur, at the entrance of the *Ciudad de los Deportes* neighborhood, near the plaza de toros (arena). We began the work alternating with the Ray Montoya orchestra, who spent several years playing the trombone in the best orchestras in the United States. The fellow workers commented that he made his trombone sing incomparably and that there was no other like him.

Moises Alatorre was a friend of the local businessman, Mr. Soto Maines, who was nicknamed Sordo Soto, because he had his hearing-device in his ear in order to hear better. He was a very kind person, but of great character. The master of ceremonies or conductor of the artistic program was Nono Arzú, a South American. Two varieties were presented, one at eleven and another one at one in the morning. Our work began at six in the afternoon, then the orchestra at seven and from that hour we played alternating for half an hour. The variety of that first moment was Lupita Torrentera (who was Pedro Infante's sentimental partner), Mary Esquivel and Tony Lamar (international dancers). Mary Esquivel (Cuban rumbera) who, from that year, was a sentimental partner of Juan Orol and protagonist of some of his films.

Our group's debut was a great success. Angel took on the task of putting together and rehearsing very select tropical music. The first half hour we played soft music and then we added more rhythm step by step until playing chachacha impeccably; arrangements that Angel made, since in his land (Campeche) he had acquired experience in these rhythms; besides, with him on the piano there was no theme that was not played.

Shortly after having started, we changed the drummer, who we nicknamed *the Gallito*, because he didn't have the precision and rhythm that the group needed. The company released Ray Montoya's orchestra, that went to open a new center: *El Patio*. Ray Montoya kept going to *La Terraza*, he said he admired me for the way I played the bass and that Angel was great among the pianists.

In place of Ray Montoya's orchestra, Moises Alatorre joined the Moises Alatorre orchestra and its violins, and so we continued working, until in February we went out to play at the Campeche carnival at the invitations that Angel received from the government of that state. By then the ensemble was called "Angelito and his chachacha". In additions to playing, I also sang, and I invited my sister Martha on the trip so she could see how beautiful Campeche is. The union sent a group to replace us for that week in La Terraza, and Sordo Soto reluctantly accepted; but we left and we were very successful.

Already on the way back it was getting better and better for us at La Terraza. The variety changed, now it included the trio of the Michel brothers, the Uruguayan tenor Rey Alvarado, and *Sevillanito* and his pharaohs. This poster did not last long; then entered Mary Lopez (sister of Marga Lopez), singing, and the dancers Lui and Nely; instead of the tenor and the *sevillanitos*, the trio continued. Mary Lopez was accompanied by her husband, also from Argentina, who played the trumpet. The company imposed this man on us in the ensemble, but he was not a good performer and did not

read music at first sight, which caused us a disorder in our musical performance. Mary Lopez approached Angel to hire him as a musical arranger (to write musical scripts according to the singer's tessitura). At first they met during the day, then also in the afternoons, until Angel no longer returned with me, but he sent me with a young taxi driver to the house. The taxi driver studied at the university and we called him Juan Chino, because he had the appearance of a cute little Chinese and every night he took each musician to his house. He was very punctual and we all trusted him.

The meetings continued under the pretext of the arrangements, until one day *La Jarocha*, the lady who looked after the ladies' restrooms, told me: "Lupita, Mary Lopez is very affectionate with Angelito. I heard that she wants to take him to be his pianist".

At first I did not give it importance, but she kept telling me things that she listened to, until she told me: "Mary said to Angelito: 'Leave your wife, I leave my husband and you and I leave together. Lupita will stay working, you have no children. What is the problem?'". I asked *la Jarocha* how she was able to find out and she explained to me that she used to climb on a chair and listen, since the wall of Mary's dressing room adjoined the ladies room, and at the top of it was just divided with a thin panel of plastic.

Later, the waiters occasionally commented to me: "Lupita, Angelito is going to be at such or such table with Mary". If it was not a waiter, it was another, and so frequently. Finally, one day I went to the bathroom and *la Jarocha* told me: "Get on the chair, Lupita, and you will see that I am not lying!". That is how I did it and I heard Angel's voice: "Look, pretty lady, wait until your contract ends and maybe I will go with you". I did not want to hear more!

I got down from the chair, left the bathroom and with a push I opened the dressing room door. Angel had Mary

hugged by the waist and they were kissing... Both were surprised... and, like all those days, I returned home alone.

The next day I went to work very well groomed and, going up the entrance ramp, from where the cafeteria of the restaurant could be perfectly observed, I saw Angel, Mary and her husband sitting at the table, who quickly went up and caught up with me at the middle of the lounge and said:

-Lupita, your husband asks you to come down to eat with us.

-Tell my husband that if he wants me to come down, to come and get me. Tell him not to send Mary's ox, because his horns won't fit through the great door of the lounge. If you stand up in front of me again, I don't respond.

That is what I told him, among other things, everything that came to my mind, and I went out the kitchen door. At night that man no longer was there to play the trumpet with our ensemble; nobody commented anything.

The next day I was very depressed and I went to eat to the restaurant of the artists, in front of the XEW, and I ran into Negro Pérez. I told him that I wanted to separate myself from the ensemble and leave town. He told me that he had seen me play at La Terraza and that I played very well. He added that they were asking him for a bass player for the Guadalajara Symphony, but he had not succeeded because it was to reside there.

-Negro, I am interested – I assured him –. I have to quit my job and ask the union for a substitute.

-Is the problem so serious? I give you a week to solve all your things. I have a guest house where you can stay, where I send all my artists. Also, I could get you radio shows for you to sing.

-I would not want to go alone, my granny will come with me. He said goodbye and I felt happy!

I went to my granny's house and asked her to accompany me. She regretted Don Angel's behavior, and I didn't want to tell my mom.

The next day I went down to have a milk shake at the cafeteria of *La Terraza*, when a colleague came to tell me that my mom was talking to Angel, to go up to greet her. I stayed talking to my friend the cashier. At that time Angel came, he took me by the waist and said:

-So you want to leave? Well, do you know something? I will not let you go!

-You can't prohibit me anything! You will go with Mary Lopez and everything ends here! I don't want to put on a show at work; we will arrange it at home, and it should be today, because if not, you will not find me anymore.

We went up to work and the rest of the night passed without comments.

Already back at the house, Angel told me that my mom had gone to talk to him, because she told him that it was a fact that I was leaving. "Forgive me, Negrita (that is what he called me affectionately). Your mom told me that you want to take your granny because she is your best mate. I promise you this will not happen again! The musical arrangements are finished". Thus he released infinite excuses. He had the gift of the word.

I accepted his apology and did not go to Guadalajara.

At that time the Michel brothers recorded their beautiful song *Luna de octubre*, the author was the youngest of the brothers and the success of our ensemble continued to rise. The administrator (the Sordo Soto) asked us to play an extra hour after hours, because people kept asking for the chachacha ensemble. There were times when we stopped playing until five in the morning! Later they recorded us to appear on a Radio Mil program; fifteen minutes the orchestra and fifteen minutes the ensemble. Angel suggested that I sing a bolero within the

fifteen minutes between each group; it was very successful, they announced me as “Lupita Briss, the voice from the heart”.

XI. UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE

Everything was going very well, but I got pregnant again. Like the previous time, Angel brought me a fist of pills to swallow, it was quinine, and like the previous time, I was left very dizzy and it was very difficult for me to concentrate while playing. The worst happened when we were paid, because I was the

union's delegate; that is, who received the money to pay each one of the musicians in the group. I signed the receipt and didn't wait till they gave me the cash. When I got to where my colleagues were, a few steps between the cash desk and the center of the lounge, I realized that I did not have the money! I went back to the cashier quickly, but he assured me that he had given it to me. It was impossible to lose it in such few steps...! But I had already signed. It was useless to argue. I had to go the next day to withdraw money from my savings to pay all the members of the group (including Angel, who did nothing to help me).

In my house everything was calm, I loved my apartment, I arranged it beautifully and always had fresh flowers because a few steps away was the Medellin market, where I could buy everything, even a whisk. Turns out I bought a hand-held one, made from galvanized wire. When I told Angel and showed it to him, he was surprised, because he thought I wanted an electric one.

My granny visited me two or three times a week and brought for Angel a pumpkin candy or sweet potato. He was very flattered and thanked her: "Mariquita, I really like the pumpkin candy or sweet potato that you bring me". One day my granny told me: "You left the Virgin of Guadalupe that your dad gave you. I brought it to you to keep you company, because you need it. I am going to take her to get blessed". At the market she bought her a frame and a bouquet of beautiful flowers. That is how I saw her through the window of the bus: my granny walking towards the church of Rosario with the image of the virgin in her hands. I still have that beautiful image on the bedhead, with a small oval photograph of my granny in one corner. She was the greatest support of my life.

Angel used to stay with me one night yes and one no... I got very sick with the flu and Angel commented: "You know, that when my wife gets the flu, I apply to her a vial of Respicil

and it quickly cuts off”. He bought the medicine, injected me, and precisely that night I stayed alone.

He had just left, when I started to feel sick. My mouth was getting stuck and my body was shaking. I put a coat over my nightgown, crawled down the stairs, took a taxi, and went looking for Angel, instead of going to the Red Cross or some hospital!

Angel got scared and took me to a public clinic. They injected me and I was normalizing. They prescribed me some tablets of charcoal which made me get hives that lasted several days. I had my face and neck swollen. I consulted several doctors, until one stabilized me based on cortisone. Since then I became allergic to penicillin.

A little later, the downstairs neighbor, with whom I occasionally got along, told me that she would leave her apartment and that she would like us to stay in it. It was more spacious and with two bedrooms, but there was a problem: an intermediary abusing from the advanced age of the owner, a former police officer who lived next to my friend and he received the leases and collected the rents for his own benefit; that is, he subleased them. So my friend advised me not to do anything until she would tell me the exact date she would be leaving the house, in order to find the owner and make the direct deal. I discussed it with Angel and he agreed.

After four months, my friend told me that she was leaving and that she had already told the owner about our agreement. I told Angel and he did the same with the rightful owner so that the month of the deposit would start, but as soon as the payment date of the month of rent passed, the wife of the police officer came knocking on the door. I told her to talk to my husband, because the deal was with him.

From that day on she came knocking, increasingly aggressive. I told Angel, but he said to ignore her. Finally, one day, when I left the market, the lady appeared in front of me screaming: “You miserable thief, you are stealing my income!

Pay me, miserable!”. That night I talked to Angel, who continued to minimize the problem.

The next day, very early, the lady knocked at the door, Angel came out and she yelled at him that he was a parasite pimp. He was not able to open his eyes and only managed to tell me when he closed the door: “If that lady yells at you again, hit her!”.

At night, when I was changing to go to work, someone knocked at the door. The same lady started insulting me and slapped me. I closed my fist and hit her I don’t know how many times on the face, until she stopped putting her hands in, she leaned against the handrail and fell down the steps. Everyone had poked out the window! Her husband came out with a baton and shouted at me: “Get down!” I got in and grabbed the bar which I used to remove the combustibles (*rough paper bags filled with oil-impregnated sawdust that were used to burn inside water heaters that did not have gas installation*) from the boiler and went back out again. The guy told me a lot of swearwords and went in. I quickly dressed and put on makeup, but I arrived when the second shift started.

I told about it to Angel and showed him my swollen hand from the blows I gave the woman. That day we had to stay in a hotel, because there was a patrol waiting outside the apartments, and the next day we had to take out a legal protection for myself. The judge, upon learning about the details, told me: “I am going to issue you a broad legal protection to protect her from all the police. You can give that lady another warm-up, but clench your fist, otherwise your hand will swell again”.

Angel was the first to enter the building and the neighbors welcomed him with applause, because everyone feared that lady and her husband. They were glad that I had set limits to them. In the end, we stayed the entire month at the hotel. Angel found another apartment in the Doctores neighborhood and he bought me a double mattress; I bought a

bedroom to my liking on Sabino Street, behind my mom's house. I also bought a luxury stove and a breakfast bar with four chairs.

The apartment was spacious, with two bedrooms, a magnificent bathroom with a tub, a small kitchen and the entire wooden floor. Angel had the floor polished, we put new curtains and it turned out beautiful. Later I ordered a specially designed console, with its twelve-inch speaker, which had a pleasant, pasty sound. Everything, the whole place was a beautiful and cozy home for me.

XII. IN THE RECORDING STUDIOS

While we were in *La Terraza*, around July, we started a long series of recordings. Firstly, in the RCA Victor, that was in Cuatro Caminos (at that time were the boundaries of the city), we recorded the first album of Bienvenido Granda, *el Bigote que canta*, who had just arrived from Cuba with his family.

Bienvenido had listened to the ensemble and asked Angel to record all his music with four trumpets, piano, bass, tarolero, conga drummer, maracas, guiro and bell, as well as three chorus girls. In total we were twelve elements and we recorded quickly all the record that contained, among other eleven songs, the one of *Oyeme, mama*, which made the singer popular. We only had a half an hour break to eat a sandwich; by the way, someone stole Angel's sandwich.

We started recording at eight in the morning and we finished at six in the afternoon. Precisely the time when we should start the first shift at *La Terraza*. Angel went ahead while we collected our things and get changed to put on our uniforms. He started playing the piano alone in the restaurant. The ensemble accompanied Bienvenido Granda at the Follies Berger theater, at the Teatro de la Ciudad, and during a year we were in *La Hora Nacional* on XEW.TV, with great success for Bienvenido.

Among the many anecdotes that happened to us during that year at XEW, one day Angel was late to pick me up and it was raining. We lived on a second floor and, when he went down, at the last step, he slipped and fell into a puddle. The bad thing was that the papers in the archive flew away and got wet. Upon arrival, the “*secres*” (the *secre* is the musician’s assistant, who had musical notions to know how to place musical instruments and papers in its place. Now must be able to connect electronic equipment) helped me get my bass from its case and helped Angel to distribute the papers from the archive to each musician in their corresponding music stand.

We were barely in time when the green light that indicated the start of the transmission came on. In the end, the musicians commented that thanks to the fact that they already knew their part because of how many times they had repeated it in the programs, they were able to play, since the ink of the writing had run on the wet papers; Angel used to write everything with a fountain pen.

Throughout that year, Fernando Fernández and Luis Demetrio went through the *Esmeralda* program, which presented Armando Manzanero for the first time. The main star was Bienvenido Granda. Later we recorded the rest of the music of Bienvenido in Columbia (CBS). Bienvenido was very kind to us, he invited us to his house, we met his wife and children. He was going and coming from Cuba bringing men

who later trained because they wanted to overthrow Batista's tyrant .

The following series of recordings was for an executive of Panamericana de Publicidad: José del Rivero. The first recording was made in the RCA studios, but the others in a studio on Vallarta Street, where the CTM building is now, and before that, the SUTM (Only Union of Music Workers). Behind that building was the Teatro del Músico (Musician Theater), the CTM and the recording studios.

For this occasion they asked for a full orchestra and was included the Harmonic Quartet, which was one of the most sought-after vocal groups of the time and which would later become in *Los Tres con Ella*. They also recorded with us the *Tres Conchitas*, and the first voice in almost all the songs, Mr. Tony Camargo. We entered the studio on Ezequiel Montes street to prevent union officials from noticing, since Pepe del Rivero was making these recordings without declaring them (to save the cost somewhat); in the middle of the publicity recordings that were being made for Mabe, Café Oro, Tomate del Fuerte and Jarritos soft drinks.

Pepe wrote beautiful songs for every corner of his land, which was Tabasco. Among others, *A Tabasco* (“*ven, ven, ven; vamos a Tabasco que Tabasco es un edén...*”)(“come, come, come; let's go to Tabasco because Tabasco is an Eden...”). We recorded for a long time, from 1956 to 1958, for him and with him.

For Angel it was very hard. Pepe used to make an appointment with him to present him the songs on guitar. Angel rounded and adjusted the musical phrases and the beats. Later, he “dressed” each song with extraordinary arrangements that gave the tropical flavor to the music of Pepe del Rivero.

The time passed and I even recorded being pregnant (1957), Pepe said that I was not the Sleeping Beauty; if not the Ruminant Beauty, because I kept on eating because of the pregnancy. Because of his music, the governor of Tabasco,

Carlos Alberto Madrazo Becerra, gave a recognition to Pepe and, logically, we went with the entire orchestra to play Pepe's music at the annual fair. The same happened the following year. Pepe ended up being the godfather of our first son: Angel Cu Ambriz. Luis Spota wrote an article about Pepe's music that among other things says: "José del Rivero, it is easy to see, recreates in these precious songs the spirit of that dazzling tropic. From its rivers, from its towns, from its public markets; from his customs he takes the materials to compose his works. Hence, its thematic richness is so great, the musical treatment is so abundant in hits of all kinds; so flattering the result".

On the back cover of the first two albums, in their first edition, the photos of the two were printed side by side: composer and arranger, Pepe del Rivero and Angel Cu León.

XIII. LA TERRAZA, END OF A CYCLE

At that time, in *La Terraza* the variety changed. Lidia Cáster and Chava Flores entered instead of the Michel brothers, whom we missed, but Chava's wit gave an original touch. He was a very simple, attentive and very pleasant man. Shortly after, the variety changed again, this time Carmencita del Corral, Corona and Arau, and Lolita Marquez joined. We, the musical groups, remained the same, as we were the base. Thus some artists came out and others came in: for a few months the Miguel Lerdo de Tejada orchestra, the Tierra Blanca ensemble, arrived, and in place of Corona and Arau, Viruta and Capulina entered.

By October of 1955, a note appeared in the newspaper with the photograph of our ensemble that said: "Angelito's musical ensemble is teaching chachacha at *La Terraza*. Its mission is to inject encouragement to the couples who go to that place with the desire to forget their worries".

The end of the year at *La Terraza* was very happy, with more public than the previous year. People were in the street waiting for a table, the orchestras, the mariachi and the variety took care of making a night of joy.

For the first time since we entered that place, the entertainer and master of ceremonies changed. Nono Arzú came out and Pancho Córdoba, who was a film producer,

entered, so he lasted very little due to his commitments, but he had such a good humor and charisma that he made the variety run with great fluidity and in a very fun way.

There were other changes. Mr. Soto asked Angel to take over the orchestra and I was in charge of the ensemble, The Cuco Valtierra quartet entered and, as entertainer, there was Manuel “el loco” Valdez. He was a dancer and that was the first time he worked as a conductor and entertainer, but he had a lot of charisma and in front of the microphone, addressing to Angel, he asked: “Angelito, and what do I do now?” Angel replied: “Aren’t you a dancer? Well, dance!”, and he would play a mazurka or some strange rhythm. Manuel danced about six beats snapping his fingers, then said: “Tan tan, and the music stopped to introduce the next artist. Sometimes he would run to the orchestra and ask Angel to tell him a joke in order to say it in front of the microphone, but he almost always would forget them and turned to the orchestra saying: “What else is next in the joke?”, and to the people he seemed very nice and they had a lot of fun.

As in the previous year, there was a parade of artists in *La Terraza*, among others, Elena Luquín, the Cuatro Soles, Nicolás Urcelay, Los Panchitos, Los Tex-Mex, Amor y Bartolito, María Azucena, etc. Some artists returned to that stage alternately. Amor y Bartolito were a marriage of South American artists; she played the saxophone and he, the trumpet, very mediocre, they already were older and did not last long on the billboard. Nicolás Urcelay always recognized in front of the public the way Angel and the orchestra accompanied him saying: “I appreciate this great applause, but it is not for me, it is for the maestro who, without rehearsal, accompanies all my music with great wisdom”.

Angel Cu León was a musician with “absolute ear”. His academic training in music was limited to a few months of piano lessons when he was a teenager and to playing the timpani from an early age in his father’s orchestra (who played

the clarinet), in Campeche, for several years. Thereafter he was self-taught. He read music at first sight and wrote sheet music for any instrument with a very clean and clear point* (*point, in musical writing, was the aesthetic clarity with which the musician wrote his scores*). Although he had some limitations of formal piano technique, his fingers ran the keyboard with great ease, harmony and rhythm. To accompany someone, sometimes he just asked the singer to hum part of the tune. With this he already knew the tonality, the rhythm and the musical sequence that this song would surely carry. He simply lead the orchestra saying, for example: “Fa major four quarters! One, two, three, let’s go!”. There was no one who did not respect him as an excellent musician, arranger and conductor of orchestra, nor was there a piece of music, of whatever style, that he did not dominate.

In October 1956, the Governor of Campeche awarded Angel a medal as “illustrious Campechano” due to his success as a musician. Angel took the orchestra *La Terraza* for a week and was replaced by Cuco Valtierra, who already had been “behind that bone” for a long time.

Almost closing the year, Chucho Martinez Gil, composer of beautiful ranchero songs, among others, *Dos arbolitos*, began to sing. He was missing an arm and used a prosthesis to go upstairs to sing; however, he drove his car, a blue Ford coupe, like a two-seat hatchback in the trunk and three speeds behind the wheel. He became friends with Angel and in his talks he said: “I do acrobatics in order to drive the car”.

Thus ran another year and another parade of artists of the time: Bárbara from Cuba, the great prestidigitator from India Maestro Delhi, Liza Rossel, Evangelina Elizondo (who had recorded for Disney studios), Moises Alatorre, Toña la Negra, Paco Michel, they came back among others.

The Cuban dancer, while dancing, fluttered her eyes at Angel and he bent down, but didn’t stop looking at her. She began to send him little paper notes to him with the waiters,

but when she herself approached to give him one, without thinking, I hit him with the double bass arch on the head. From then on, as soon as the comrades saw something suspicious, they said: “Here comes the arch, Angelito”.

I also had my admirer, he was a doctor who attended *La Terraza* very often and, with the consent of Angel, he began to play the maracas with the ensemble and shouted: “Vitamin A is needed!”. By that, he meant that people should tip us in the glass. As it was a place where mostly high society people attended, a very good tip was gathered. Thus he came frequently for a long time; suddenly he stopped going for several months. When he returned, he was dressed in mourning and said goodbye to everyone. Then he asked to talk to me and explained that his father had died and, since he was an only child, he had inherited a line of foreign buses. Then he added: “Do you want to marry me? You have been the reason I have been coming so often. I know that Angelito is married to someone else; you deserve another place”. I replied that even if I was not married to Angel, I would never betray him; as I would neither betray him, if that was the case. He regretted my decision and insisted that he wanted me as his wife, he shook my hand and left.

Cuco Valtierra always wanted his orchestra to be “the one at home”, as we had been until then; Angel’s orchestra and the tropical ensemble of which I was in charge. Finally, with the support of the union, in August 1958 Cuco Valtierra put pressure on the businessman, Mr. Soto Maines, to finish us off. He said: “I am the most affected because I do not want you to leave. But are too many the trade union economic commissions that they want to impose on me to continue with you. Angelito, with great sorrow I give you termination of contract; I am just going to have you this month”. That was how Mr. Soto informed it to us, and by September 1958 we left *La Terraza* to someone who did not know how to win the

place with musical quality, but with pressure from the union, affiliated to the CTM, that was already showing signs of being the cradle of politicians from the worst sort.

XIV. STORIES THAT BEGIN AND OTHERS THAT END

As it happened the first time, my sister Luz Maria got pregnant without anyone at my mom's house expecting it. She was almost eighteen years old, but her baby, my goddaughter Ceci, was barely over a year old. This time she gave birth a boy: Mario, who had serious respiratory problems from a very young age, but gradually overcame them.

At this time the family suffered another shock when my granny died, it was also surprising for everyone. She used to go to the dispensary of the Sabino Church to be attended to for any inconvenience. This time, she was treated by a nurse who, we did not know for what reason, injected her into the vein, which caused a reaction to my granny. The nurse freaked out, she hastily pulled out the needle, and cut her ten centimeters in the arm. She then left her alone at church, instead of seeking medical help.

My mom called me at *La Terraza* to let me know that my grandmother was very sick. The next day I went to see her and she was no longer talking, but I still asked for her blessing. He had had a stroke, apparently caused by misapplication of the injection into the vein; within a week she passed away. My mom insisted on keeping vigil over her at home and that was another sad transit, because, for the last day, worms were already coming out from the box. I am sure that my granny occupies a special place with God because of her teachings, her support and so much love that she gave us.

Since Angel introduced me as his wife on June 8, 1954 until 1957, every time I got pregnant he would give me quinine in a fistful of pills so that I could recover my period, but it always made me very ill, until finally I told him that I refused to take more quinine. So he went to talk to my mom, they agreed on it, and I ended up like the first time: in Dr. Mañón's office (the one responsible for whom I arrived to the General Hospital due to a major hemorrhage), who injected me with something again (like the first time) that gave me back my period.

After four months I got pregnant again, but because I had a post-complication again due to the injection to abort, she had to make me a curettage after three days. About three months had passed when I became pregnant again. This time I went to the musician's union doctor, who in turn referred me to Dr. Anderson, an excellent gynecologist who immediately began to take care of my pregnancy through monthly check-ups and tests. Thus, almost five months passed, until Angel realized it and I warned him: "I am sorry, Angel, but you can't do anything anymore; if you don't agree, leave. I will not be the first woman to be left alone with a child", but Angel accepted willingly.

My son was very restless during my pregnancy. When I was working, on certain notes of the instrument, I felt how he kicked me and pushed the double bass, sometimes it even slipped out of my hands due to the blows my son gave me. His birth was also accompanied by incidents. Dr. Anderson charged too much to attend the delivery, so they took me to the Rio de la Loza Hospital and we covered the expenses with the support that the musicians union gave us. The hospital was not so bad, but the delivery was getting passed the time because the attendant did not want to take care of a first-time pregnant woman. I already was feeling very sick, and when they finally took care of me, my son was born purple because he was suffocating. Finally he cried and cried until he regained his tone. My mom was the first one to hug and change my son. The first thing she said was: "A dimple is created in his cheek!".

I think I remember that it was about twenty times that I got pregnant and that, either with quinine or with the tricks of Dr. Mañón, I avoided carrying it to term, until that time, September 1957, when my first son was born, Jose Angel Mauricio, (José Angel because that was the name of Angel's grandfather, whom he loved very much and who was an

outstanding Campechano; his name is taken by a school in Escárcega, Campeche: Primary José Angel Cu Lara).

When my son was not yet a year old, Angel rushed in to tell me that we had a job at a dance in the Piedmont ballroom. He rushed me to get ready, but I protested, because there was no one to stay with our little one. Angel carefully approached to make sure the baby was asleep; he barely showed his face when the boy threw him a trumpet. Angel said: "Let's go, this boy is just making fun of me". We left leaving the baby alone.

At work we alternated with Moises Alatorre's orchestra and, suddenly, Agustin Lara appeared from a closed cabinet. He approached to me with an expression of surprise at seeing me playing the double bass. He stared at me for a few moments, then came closer and said: "How beautiful you are!". Moises Alatorre ran to ask me what he had told me. I lied, saying that I had not heard, but the one who did hear it perfectly was Angel, who was not amused at all. I only wanted to return with my son and I warned Angel: "I will not leave again suddenly if there is no one to stay with Angelito".

XV. THAT IS HOW HE WAS

Angel was an excellent musician, admired by friends and recognized by not so friends. From his native land, Campeche, he excelled with his orchestra in every place they played and, precisely there, he had his first love and a son, whom he was never allowed to see.

Later on he married a Yucatecan with light colored eyes, who was unable to give him children. At some point he met another woman, they established a relationship and they had Carlos. The boy, according to Angel, was the reason to change his residence to Mexico City, because he did not want to be

away from him. Due to how discreet he was, I did not know when he came into contact with his first son, José Luis (who could not bear his last name due to the violent restriction that was imposed on Angel by preventing him from seeing him), nor that he had met his grandchildren, to which, to the best of his ability, he supported. Almost simultaneously he came into contact with his son Carlos, whom I got to know, a well-behaved boy who wanted to spend time with his father.

Angel was a hard worker and, although we left La Terraza, we were not short of work; especially him. And just as I drew people's attention because of the instrument that I played, Angel always had a woman's gaze on him for his wonderful way of playing the piano, and this led us to live difficult situations for me.

It happened when we went to entertain the anniversary meal of Pepe del Rivero's company. I had already noticed that the cashier at Pepe's company pouted at me when we went to his office. That day, after finishing our work, I found them: she was on Angel's legs... just as it happened with the Argentinean Mary López in *La Terraza*. I took a taxi and left. On this occasion he pretended to be indignant and stopped going to our house for a week.

Soon after, he began working for Carlos Amador, whom we met as an announcer and producer very close to Emilio Azcárraga. His first program for Televisión was *Reina por un día*, in which they gave out groceries to the mother who would arrive carrying her son. Angel forbade me to go, because he was afraid of the comments of the brothers Amador, but I ignored him. I went there and received my gift after queuing up. Three days I went carrying Angelito and I received a lot of groceries.

Angel musically accompanied the piano for the broadcast of that program, which, by the way, lasted a long time on the air. Subsequently, Mr. Amador produced and was the

announcer of another highly successful television program on channel 2: *Variedades Ossart*, where he also included Angel.

At that time a couple of Spanish dancers arrived with their twelve year old son who was phenomenal dancing. In total there were two hundred dancers on stage and they required an orchestra to perform at the National Auditorium, since the only musician they brought was a drummer, indispensable to give precision to music with clacking. There was no one who wanted to enter into the commitment to direct the orchestra that would play Spanish music, since the reading had to be exact. No one, except Angel, who conducted the orchestra and even became friends with the drummer. For me it was a very fruitful experience in my performance of the double bass.

Another job he had with Carlos Amador was when he brought La Batucada from Brazil. The first dancer was the director of the company consisting of eight dancers and six percussionists. Angel selected the best musicians, some from the symphony, and he summoned us minutes before the first performance for a short rehearsal.

The spectacle of the dancers and the rhythm that the percussionists put together was extraordinary, but the orchestra, all of us, did not know where we were! At the end, an out-of-tonality thunder was heard: a string from my double bass broke! One of my mates asked another, referring to the score: "Toño, where are we going?" and the aforementioned moved his palm in circles around the paper, indicating that somewhere in the entire score.

At the end of the show, at the initiative of one of the mates, we stayed to study the pieces beat by beat. We did not go out to eat, I changed the string on the double bass and we finished the rehearsal shortly before the next performance. That presentation turned out great, so much so that when it finished, the director told the public that it was the first time that an orchestra had accompanied him so wonderfully well.

Then he personally congratulated Angel. The season lasted for a month.

Later, Mr. Amador asked Angel to take charge of an orchestra, but to include a trombone. Amador's idea was to put a circus in the National Auditorium. He brought trapeze artists, tamers, acrobats, and clowns from other places and commissioned Angel to write a representative fanfare of the circus for the entrance. The result was a very happy piece, the conductor was Rafael Martinez, brother of Carlos Amador, with whom he had the magazine *Teleguía* for many years. The circus was a success, and even my little Angelito had the opportunity to participate in a micro-contest, before the first shows of the circus, in which the children were given a ball for scoring a goal.

The season ended, and sometime later we went to work in a town near the city. As we arrived in advance and there was a circus in the town, Angel invited me to see a show. What would not be his surprise when, at the beginning of the show, the entrance music of the artists, the fanfare, was the same one he had written for the circus of Carlos Amador! In the intermission, Angel told me that by chance he had the original score of the fanfare in his portfolio, and we headed to the musicians' pit. We greeted them and Angel took the opportunity to show the conductor of the orchestra that he had written that piece, to the surprise of the conductor himself and his musicians.

We generally moved by taxi to workplaces, as very few musicians had their own car. Whether it was in the "cotorras" or in the "cocodrilos", as we called the taxis because of their colors, we transported ourselves, and sometimes we went up to five musicians, their instruments and my double bass and we cooperated to pay for it. Finally, Angel made up his mind and bought a 1947 Ford car, with three speeds behind the wheel and two doors. It was a very strong egg-shaped car. The day he bought it, he got in it and drove it up to the house, although

Angel did not know how to drive! With that car he jumped sidewalks, median strips, went to gutters and more than once got stuck in mud or sand, but it was the joy of my children and a help for our work.

Around the same time, Angel got an accordion, and just as he learned to play the piano in a self-taught way, he bought a method and came to perform the accordion quite well, which on many occasions got him good jobs.

When Carlos, Angel's second son, got married, he went to liven up his party, but it coincided with a previous commitment that, year after year, he had with a client from Las Lomas. He sent the ensemble with a substitute pianist so as not to fail his son, and I was part of that ensemble. It turned out that the substitute only knew how to accompany music in the key of G major, which resulted in a disaster. Angel arrived almost at the end of the party and made a wonderful atmosphere, but it was already irreparable: he had lost an important client.

Shortly afterwards, they hired Angel to work in a nightclub, El Social, which was on avenue San Juan de Letrán, corner with Independencia. There we alternated again with Cuco Valtierra, Luis Arcaraz was also there with his piano and his beautiful music: *Bonita*, *Viajera*, *Prisionera del mar*, etc. As main stars were Los Platters, and Kiko and Karlo coincided with us. Other artists who came to be at El Social during our stay were the Reyes Brothers, Lupe Silva, the Iruña Ko ensemble from Madrid and the entertainer Chavalo Saldívar. Angel wrote all the music he played and made a musical script in a notebook to consult it and remember his arrangements. He used to leave that notebook on the piano and one day it disappeared. He told me that he could not find it, and soon a Cuco Valtierra album came out with the arrangements and music that Angel had written in his notebook. That is how he was: Angel was not used to registering his works in copyright.

XVI. THE VIVALDI CHAMBER ORCHESTRA AND THE SONORA FEMENINA

TWO MUSICAL GROUPS WITH EXTREME FLAVORS, BUT WITH WOMEN'S ESSENCE

At the beginning of 1959, when Adolfo López Mateos was President of the Mexican Republic, I was called to join the chamber music orchestra organized by Mrs. Josefina (Joe) Roel, wife of the Secretary of Treasury. They lived on Street of Luisiana 113, Colonia Napoles, near Insurgentes Avenue. Rehearsals were at their house three times a week. Angelito was one year and five months old and one of the house employees looked after him.

The orchestra consisted of fifteen elements: Mrs. Roel (American), nine foreigners from different countries, wives of engineers that the Mexican government hired to build the Miguel Alemán Viaduct, in addition to a young violinist, a family member of Mrs. Roel. We played in many places: the amphitheater Bolivar, the Manuel M. Ponce hall, in convents, in the UNAM, etc. When we had concerts in the province, I

did not accompany them because my son was very young, but my substitute played with my double bass.

In 1960 we toured Los Angeles, USA, and at that time I was pregnant with my second child. My sister Martha stayed in Angelito's care. We started in San Bernardino with great success, and there a group of Fine Arts dancers also appeared with a scene of Efren Orozco. Then we moved to Bakersfield, where we stayed at the house of the sister of one of our mates who played the violin.

We gave the concert at the Bakersfield Conservatory, the double bass was lent to me on the place. We played *Las cuatro estaciones* (*The Four Seasons*) of Vivaldi. The next day, the director of the conservatory called Mrs. Roel to congratulate her and offer a scholarship for the double bass player to stay studying at the Conservatory. All my mates congratulated me and Joe commented that the director had said that he saw in me a great future, if I stayed. The owner of the house where we were staying offered me her house to live with them and, in addition, they wanted to be godparents to the son I was expecting.

The first thing I thought about was my Angelito and I could not accept. Our orchestra was called Vivaldi, and Joe was a magnificent violinist who put together all the pieces we played. She had had a very fruitful musical career since playing in the Chicago Women's Symphony Orchestra. He received the highest prize for chamber music, awarded by the Association of Critics of Music and Theatre of Mexico.

Our repertoire included: Vivaldi, Chávez, Ponce, Sandi, Lavista, Locatelli, Respighi, Hindermith and Debussy, among others. Angel was very grateful to Mr. Roel, who communicated with him daily to update him on our activities and the triumphs that we accumulated. When I came back from that tour, my son was happy and Angel told me that the boy had said, one of those days, half speaking, that his mother had left him alone.

It was indescribable for me to listen to the chamber orchestra made up of just women, regardless of creed or nationality, all united by the great love of music and its great authors. I felt happy with the coexistence between us, beautiful in their way of being. Here I transcribe one of the many programs that we present:

I. Manfredini

Concerto in G minor Op.3 N.X
Adagio-Allegro-Largo-Presto

Vivaldi

Concerto in D minor Op.3 N.XI
Allegro-Adagio-Allegro

INTERMISSION

II. Luis Sandi

Quartet:
Molto energico-Adagio-Allegro

Samuel Barber

Adagio for strings

Albinoni

Concerto Op.5 N.7 in D minor
Allegro-Adagio-Allegro
Christmas Concerto

Corelli

(Vivace-Grave)-Allegro
(Adagio-Allegro-Adagio)
Vivace- Allegro-Pastorale

The son of the marriage Roel began to stand out in his career as a singer, and according to his mother, they had to change the last name of the boy (matters of show business) to César Costa, because his father being an important official of

the Mexican government, it was not convenient for his image as secretary of Treasury.

When I finished with the Vivaldi Orchestra, the union called me to become part of the Sonora Femenina, whose director was Mr. Angulo. Most of them were girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, the director's daughter participated, Vicky, who played the trumpet, like her father. In total we were seven: two trumpets, piano, bass, tumbadora, tarolera and vocalist.

The first job we had was to play on the television programs that Mr. Paco Malgesto conducted. In the first, he interviewed each one of us. We worked in several dance halls, among them *El Esmirna* (where I encountered with a former mate, who at that time played with Acerina), the Los Angeles ballroom and almost all the major dance venues, as well as small towns close to the city.

We entered the Follies Berger with great success. As there were some mechanical games behind the theater, the girls went to the fair. I did not accompany them because my hairstyle and makeup would mess up, and besides that I had to go to work. The tumbadorista (conga drummer) was nineteen years old, she was chubby and had heart problems. I commented to her that it was not convenient for her to go to the games, because every time she seemed more deteriorated. About three weeks later, she died of cardiac arrest. We were all affected by the event, but especially Vicky, Mr. Angulo's daughter. As she liked to drink brandy, one night she went to work in a very inconvenient condition. The businessman, who was Palillo, noticed it and ordered to check the dressing rooms because the artists were prohibited from drinking. They found the bottle in Vicky's dressing room, but since I was the first to come out from that area, Palillo wanted to reprimand me. I reminded him that we had already worked together in the Rios Art orchestra and that he knew I didn't drink. Later he spoke with Mr. Angulo, but I did not like either Vicky's behavior nor

Palillo's attitude, added to the fact that I had already noticed that Mr. Angulo was exceedingly attentive to me. All this made me feel very uncomfortable and that night I gave up the Sonora Femenina.

XVII. WORKING WITH MOISES ALATORRE AND MY SECOND CHILD

Moisés Alatorre was a very audacious man and highly skilled in public relations. He liked our work very much and became friends with Angel. It was because of him that we entered La Terraza, and from then on he included us, whenever he could, in the jobs he got for his orchestra, forming a kind of combination or package, with his orchestra and our tropical ensemble.

He had friendships and countless relationships in the political ambit of the high sphere of the time. His orchestra was the first element for birthday celebrations, anniversaries, weddings and special events for a multitude of officials and businessmen close to the government.

At the Hippodrome de las Americas we started to work in the local party halls because Moisés was a friend of Mr. Bruno Pagliai, businessman and notable visionary of betting affairs, with ties even in the incipient city of Las Vegas, from where he emigrated with his project to build a modern hippodrome. President Avila Camacho gave him the permission to build his beautiful Hippodrome de la Americas in Mexico City.

In words of Ramon de Florez, journalist of the time,

The Hippodrome de las Americas, with its luxurious and magnificent facilities, its race track, its stables of thoroughbred

horses, its comfortable grandstands with a spectacular view to contemplate the development of the races in a dreamy landscape. The tops of the best grandstand were conceded by Bruno Pagliai for the installation of the exclusive Mexican Jockey Club, where luxurious balconies were built, the rooms were decorated with exquisite taste with period furniture, beautiful paintings, a large bar covered in fine woods, sumptuous banquet halls and an elegant ballroom. The place quickly became the most important gathering center of our high society and its golden youth, these sumptuous and unforgettable Jockey dances were only comparable to that of the famous Black and White of the Churubusco Country Club.

All the events there were livened up by the Moisés Alatorre orchestra, who in turn included us. I was already eight months pregnant with my second child when we went to play with Moisés. I had a special tailor suit made so that my belly would not be visible at side view. Moisés stared at me, especially when the baby kicked the bass. On one of those occasions, he said to Angel: “I want to be the godfather of that child”. And so it was that, because of my son Eduardo José, we became compadres.

My son was born in 1960. Guayo was a very big and strong baby; Angel chose his names: Eduardo, because he said that the Eduardos of his land had been successful men, but we always called him Guayo, because that is what they call them in Campeche, and the second name was in memory of my father, Don José Ambriz. I saw how happy Angel was about his two children and he said that he had two arms to carry them and to see baseball with him.

Then, Moisés was hired for a party that was thrown by the secretary of Treasury at his house in Las Lomas, which was built next to a ravine. It had a large parking lot, a huge esplanade and a staircase that descended through a garden with intervals for resting distributed along it, ending up in a huge pool with flamingos. It was a Red and Black party; the

ladies wore red and the gentlemen in black tuxes, and the decoration was also set in those colors.

We liven up the event, the orchestra of Moisés, our orchestra, Acerina and its orchestra, a mariachi, and for variety they had the ballet Bolshoi. Between turns, a gentleman approached me with a young woman and asked me for *Los patinadores*; it was president López Mateos accompanied by his daughter Vecita. Moisés came to ask me what I wanted, and it turned out that none of the conductors of the orchestras, Angel included, who was known for knowing a lot of music, remembered the requested musical theme. One of the Acerina musicians remembered it, we agreed and the three orchestras played together *Los patinadores*. It sounded spectacular! This party was held for three years in a row.

Moisés always dressed very well and was witty. To enliven a party, he was able to do a pirouette on stage and invite the stiffest assistant to do the same. On another occasion, he lost a shoe in the atmosphere he created by having the guests take off their shoes, in the style of the famous dance *La bala*, but thirty years earlier thanks to the ingenuity of Moisés Alatorre. Another anecdote tells that, when he went to visit one of his clients, he left driving a luxury car that the client had spontaneously given to him so that he would no longer ride a taxi, since he did not know how to drive.

XVIII. MY THIRD CHILD; END OF A SEASON OF GOOD WORK AND THE FAMILY OF ANGEL

We moved from the apartment which I enjoyed so much in the neighborhood Doctores to the neighborhood Roma Sur, in Tehuantepec Street. I had my son Angelito enrolled in a kindergarten very close to the house, Guayito was very young, and a collection was organized to make a basket of goods that would be raffled on May 10 among the mothers who were pregnant.

When I gave my cooperation, the principal told me that no candidate had yet signed up to participate in the raffle, to which I replied: "I am pregnant!". The pregnancy from my third child was hardly noticeable in the first months. When the raffle of four pink and four blue baskets was held, my number had a prize. So my son received his first gift before he was born, although one of the ladies who were there thought I was cheating because I did not seem being five months pregnant; I received my basket with a huge blue ribbon.

From then on I increased my volume a lot. According to the doctor, my son would be born in the last days of November or the first days of December. On one occasion, while I was washing jeans of Angelito, on November 15, arrived the wife of a colleague we called *el Forcito*. When she saw me she alarmed and told me to stop what I was doing and that she would accompany me to the doctor. I listened to her and hurried out.

When we arrived with the doctor, he reluctantly repeated that he had already told me that still it was not time yet; however, he checked me out, and immediately instructed me to be admitted. I commented that I had no clothes and that I needed to go back home. I went out looking for a taxi and none was passing. That was when the pain started. I stopped a

private car and asked for a ride. It was a young student who was going to a business meeting and did not stop talking on the way; pains came to me one after another. Finally I went home and returned to the hospital in very advanced labor.

The doctor, who was from the union, was very concerned because at that time Angel was the treasurer. Although they wanted to give me the best room, I preferred the most intimate to avoid noise, and among my children Eduardo and Angel they chose the name that their little brother would have: Jorge and Francisco respectively.

From then on we had more sporadic, but secure jobs. We were playing during ten years in a row at the annual *Mexicana de Aviación* party. Angel always used to put his photo at the entrance of the lounge and, after so many years of working for them, one of the last times a pilot approached Angel and said: “Angelito, change your photo for a current one. You look like the father of the one in the photo”.

For several years we were working in the social events of Don Manuel Espinosa Yglesias, CEO of Bancomer and prominent businessman. Angel was always present, either with the orchestra or with the ensemble, depending on the meeting. At the end of the parties at his house, after he dismissed his guests, Mr. Espinosa Yglesias asked that the piano be brought to the breakfast room, because he liked Angel playing romantic music, especially from the southeast. He said: “Maestro Angelito, now you and me are going to enjoy the music. Meanwhile, let our wives chat”. Sometimes it was only an hour, but other times, we stayed until dawn, but of course, with a very good attention.

On one occasion we played at the wedding of one of his daughters, in which the President of Mexico was present. A party with a lot of movement due to the number of guests at home. The variety was headed by comedian Leonorilda Ochoa.

The contracts of that kind became more scarce. A couple of years later we alternated with Moisés Alatorre's orchestra at Mr. Bruno Pagliai's house, a residence on the way to Toluca, where he lived with his wife, an American artist. It was a meeting of people with great economic influence, which was also attended by Don Manuel Espinosa Yglesias, who cordially came over to greet us; it was the last time we coincided with him.

The relationship with Angel was very difficult for me. Just as I supported my mother for a long time so she could support my siblings, Angel did the same with his family. His father died relatively young and he financially helped his siblings, since they were younger than him. Neither Carlos nor Candelario nor Guillermo accepted me, but they dissimulated it. Those who really appreciated me were his brother Enrique and the other Candelario (who ironically was married to Susana, Angel's sister who, along with her daughters, never, but NEVER, stopped actively attacking me). There were long seasons when I was telephoned two or three times a week, whether it was Angel's wife, sister, nieces, or even friends of them, to insult me in the most rude way imaginable. They had a vocabulary that would embarrass a bag carrier from La Merced. When this happened, I would take Angel's slippers, his dressing gown and pajamas and put them outside the entrance of the house so that he would not enter and lock the door well. When he arrived and could not enter, he returned to the house where his wife and Angel's mother lived, but the next day, very early, he would return with his slippers, his dressing gown and his pajamas, because he knew that he could already enter. I explained what was happening and asked him to leave me, to leave at once: "You know very well that I can pull through. If I do not work, it is because you won't let me", I said to him. He excused himself, he said that he had already spoken to them, but that he could not compel them, that they ignored him.

One of those days Angel arrived with a pistol that was sold to him in the union, a thirty-eight caliber squad. I pressed it, it was very heavy and the bullets were the size of my little finger. I protested and asked why he had brought the gun. It was a month and a half before my third child was born, it worried me. He explained that it was in case he ever needed money, he would sell it.

My son was born, and when I was forty days after I had given birth, the phone rang. It was a teacher from Campeche who was a friend of Angel's wife. Without further warning, she began to insult me as they used to. I replied to her: "Madam, I do not know you, but tell Angel's wife that I am going there right now, and that I am taking Angel's gun because I am going to use it with her". I made the mistake of taking my three children, including the newborn.

I took a taxi and arrived to Angel's house. There was no one. Angelito was five years old and he knew the place well because I used to take him often so that he could get together with his grandmother, while I stayed outside. He started playing jumping the fence. A long time passed, and I took another taxi to go to a restaurant where Angelito and Guayo could drink warm milk. After that, we returned to our home.

When we arrived, there was Angel's car with the door open, as if he had rushed out. We entered...he walked very nervously from one side to another. "Your wife wants to see me dead, doesn't she? But she ran away like the most coward. Even if you do not believe me, as soon after I recover, I am going to put a stop to her. She will not want to bother me again! You and I are also going to talk seriously." Angel remained silent. "And go close your car, you left it with the door open!"

The most absurd thing that Angel proposed to me was that I leave my son Angelito, to be raised and educated by his wife and mother, "because they loved him very much", since I

already had my other children (Angel's wife had an infantile womb, so she was never able to have children).

Why did I stay with Angel? Firstly, because of the image of the father, a dad for my children...a dad that I did not have. Second, because of the teachings I acquired with him, which were many, and because he was a good man, hard-working and loving.

XIX. HOUSE FOR MY CHILDREN AND FOR MY FAMILY

Around 1965, my sister Martha finished her career in the IPN as an industrial chemical engineer and started working in the laboratories of the Ministry of Finance, at Palacio Nacional.

My brother Elias usually left for very long seasons because he made a career in the Navy; we knew very little about him. My sister Luz Maria, Lucha, married to Pedro Garcilazo, a good man who loved her and her children very

much, whom he took as his own and gave them education and a career. He was a bartender at the Hippodrome de las Americas, a hard worker, and he became our compadre when he took Jorge Francisco for confirmation. My sister Rosa finished her teaching career and married a young teacher, Rodolfo, younger than her, with whom she had a son at this time (later they had another). My sister Margarita also finished her teaching career and was dating a painter, Rubén Tapia, who loved to “live life”. My mom continued working at the Principal Hotel and had few years to go for retiring.

We lived in the Roma Sur, in a condominium of twenty-two apartments. Ours was small and modest, with a bedroom, living room, a small kitchen and an internal small patio. It was well located, everything was close to us. We had a great church around the street, Angelito’s kindergarten one block away, the Medellin market three blocks away, and Insurgentes Avenue was not far either, and many other businesses were just steps from our home. Also, the central courtyard in the neighborhood was very safe for children to play.

Despite the disagreements with his family, Angel’s mother loved our children very much and began to tell him that he had to buy a house for the children, that he could not have them forever in apartments. So we went looking for a house and he took me to see some in the Portales neighborhood. I did not like the options at all and we did not agree. Finally, a real estate agent went to the union to promote houses in Ciudad Satelite, which were being sold as pancakes. When we went to see them, there were only rods and foundation pits in almost the entire division...but, we made up our minds!

It was throughout a year that we saw how our house was built. Every weekend we went to see how it was transforming, but it was very difficult to get up to there because they were just starting to build the Periferico [ring road]. Once, even, the 1947 Ford coupe got stuck in one of the roadside ditches that

would later become the Periferico, and there was no way to get it out of the sand, until half a dozen workers helped us.

Seeing the projection that the division was going to have, Angel set aside several lots and spoke with my family to motivate them. This is how my mother was able, after a lifetime, to have a house of her own (which was bought by my sister Martha), in which the two of them and my sister Margarita lived. My sister Lucha and my compadre Pedro also bought, and the three houses were quite close to each other. Also, apart from the house for us, Angel bought two pieces of land and an average residence for projects that he had. The other house was a few steps from what is now Plaza Satélite. It was a residence built with very good taste and very modern, but he sold it when it was just finished for the benefit of his wife and mother. Our house was (and is) much more modest. There we went to live. At sunrise the horizon could be seen, framed by the two volcanoes in the Valley of Mexico.

Thus, from 1965 to date, I have my home here. My children took their way and Angel is with God. Angel benefited my entire family.

XX. TRADE UNIONISM AND CORRUPTION

In 1959, eight months to go before the change of board of directors of the Union of Music Workers of Mexico City, which was renewed every two years, and since Juan José Osorio, the current secretary-general, had already been re-elected and everything pointed to that he would do it again, an alternate union was formed, with Joaquin Perez Monroy as secretary-general. Juan Jose Osorio looked for the means and Joaquin Pérez ended up in jail. After three months he came out and joined the ranks of Osorio, which indicated to us that something was wrong.

In that same 1959, a movement was organized to force the departure of Osorio because there were enough irregularities, but our blankets were ripped off and men with weapons were placed on the roofs of nearby buildings. Osorio called a general assembly to re-elect himself, but only notified

his supporters. For that reason, when those of us in the opposition found out, we entered the premises (el Teatro del Músico) surreptitiously so as not to be detected, but Juan José did not arrive. In that period, my mom appeared and asked about me in each row and gave a sweet to each one. I was pregnant and she feared for me, but she did not find me. She did not stay long, as she had asked for permission in her work. I found out later, because my colleagues told me. I don't know how she found out, but she went there concerned about me.

Angel had gone to the rows close to the forum and I stayed higher up, to protect him, because I had spoken to my colleagues in order to support him in case he went towards the quorum. Angel was known for his dominion of the word and the defense of his arguments, and for being an opponent. When Juan José Osorio arrived at the forum, he looked annoyed when he saw him. The worst was the boo that greeted him. Journalists attended, so it could not be hidden that it was a list with the desire to be re-elected and that it had very strong opposition. He could not organize anything, so as Osorio arrived he almost simultaneously left, carrying a world of papers with which he intended to support his reelection and which he had not been able to expose to the plenary.

Because of his departure from the assembly, an impromptu vote was organized to elect an alternate board of directors. There was no lack of the “spontaneous” who proposed Venustiano Reyes López for the General Secretariat; he quickly took the stand and appointed an interim board of directors. In order to get rid of Osorio, we approved his proposals.* (What I describe here is the narration of my experiences, are my disappointments and sweetnesses, and I do not intend to contaminate it with something similar to a complaint, so from now on I will refer to the general-secretary of the only union of music workers (SUTM) simply as “the secretary”.)

In that inter, Carlos Amador hired Angel for a tour accompanying Mona Bell, therefore, we were unable to attend

the first assembly of the union's acting general-secretary, where he was formally appointed and he elected his final board of directors. In this structure, without him knowing it, Angel was included when he was appointed secretary-treasurer, because thanks to his accounting studies they thought he could carry out that portfolio, although they never proposed it to him directly. However, when he returned from the tour, he accepted the position, of Treasury which he received with three pesos and two ruled embargoes: that of the old union and that of the Teatro del Músico (Musician's Theater), as well as a monthly fine of twelve thousand pesos and a financial problem with night center El Patio.

Angel had a very prepared secretary named Josefina, honest and loyal, and a messenger named Manuel whom we all called *el Güero*. The first thing Angel did was to fire an alleged lawyer who charged a lot a month for alleged repairs and procedures for the union buildings, which he could not verify due to lack of invoices. Thus, with great care in expenses and in the collection of fees, in one year Angel managed to make the Treasury solvent again. He commented everything to the *secretary*, of whom he had an unbeatable opinion; however, that man gave me a bad feeling.

He had an orchestra designated with an apocope of his name, for that reason that's how everyone called him. The Teatro del Músico was awarded to Mr. Manolo Fábregas, who owed the union 250,000 pesos, in addition to the fact that the place was in poor conditions. Angel discovered that the lawyer who had Mr. Fábregas as an intermediary was stealing, so, operating together, Fábregas and Angel untied the financial problem of the theater. Manolo could then pay off his debt to the union. These and other tricky situations were resolved in the Treasury over a couple of years, and the *secretary* was very happy with Angel's work. Although it seemed that everything was normalizing, one day the *secretary* asked Angel that from

the check of 250,000 pesos that the union would receive from the theater, instead of depositing in the bank, to take a hundred and give the rest to him.

Angel told me about the proposal and I told him that was the reason why I did not like that person; however, he argued: “He is a good person, every time I go up to see him, he is meditating with his legs crossed and his eyes closed”. “He must be meditating with the devil”, I replied to him.

I started going at night to help Angel put stamps on receipts and solve other pending issues. At first I went from nine to twelve at night, but the work was so much that I started returning to the house at two in the morning. I watered holy water in his office and I prayed so he would be protected. The messenger Manuel was always in the *secretary's* office, and Angel's secretary, Chepina, was bothered by this behavior; she also advised him to be very careful. Manuel was from Chiapas and traveled to his land very often.

One day when I went to pay my dues, the secretary was waiting for us on the ground floor of the building in a taxi (because he had no car). When he saw us, he got out of the car and asked us to go up and I was left in the middle of both of them.

-Maestro Angel, I want to have a little party because my wife's saint day will be soon, and I would like you to support me with some money.

-No problem, maestro. You fill out a receipt with stamp and signature for me – Angel replied.

I noticed how the *secretary* was deprived oxygen, we came down and went back to the union building. I said goodbye to both saying that I was going home. On another occasion, I went up to the floor of the office of the General Secretariat. The *secretary* saw me arrive alone and made a happy face. He tried to go overboard with me, but I pulled out a huge six-inch steel latch that was used to hold the ends of coats or scarves and told him: “This is the first and last time you disrespect me.

Next time I will stick this pin in you, I do not care about the consequences!” He was speechless. However, despite that proposal, Angel bought a beautiful flower arrangement for the *secretary’s* wife for the occasion. Henceforth, on saint days, anniversaries and birthdays, Angel gathered a small group of musicians to go and play for the wife, of course, free of charge.

Time passed and there was a reception in honor of Juan García Esquivel. The *secretary* asked Angel to say a few words to the celebrated and, despite not being prepared for the moment, his speech resulted very eloquent.

The *secretary* tried to keep Angel close, and on one occasion he invited him to lunch. On his return, he said to me: “What do you think, Negrita? He keeps insisting that I give him the check that Manolo Fábregas is going to give us. That I should take a hundred for the house of our little children and give the rest to him”.

From then on, I could not be calm, I kept watering holy water in Angel’s office, but the dark situations were repeating, one after another. I feared for my children.

The worst moment arrived: Angel would receive the check of Manolo Fábregas in two days and he insisted on the proposal. On the day of payment, Angel did not arrive at the house. The next day I asked him:

-How are you? Why did not you come? Did you get the check?

-Yes, Mr. Fábregas gave it to me. But I couldn’t, I couldn’t take any of that money... I deposited everything. I didn’t show up for work yesterday. The *secretary* was very happy, until I told him that I had deposited everything as it should be. He was furious, very angry, and told me how it was possible that if he had given me an order, I had disobeyed him. I told him to forgive me, but when I realized it, I had already deposited everything”.

The *secretary* was very serious with Angel for a time, but the history repeated itself. The nightclub El Patio had closed

and had a debt to the musicians for 80,000 pesos of fallen wages. Angel went to speak to the owner of the business and unlocked the process. As soon as the *secretary* found out about this, he said to him: “Angelito, now you give me those 80,000, don’t let it pass”.

Angel did not inform when the check would be delivered to him, but he summoned the affected colleagues for that day at an exact time, with the warning that they had to be punctual, because he was doing it behind the back of the General Secretariat. I stayed at the entrance of the building, and Angel’s secretary at the entrance of the Treasury, while he paid everyone in his office their outstanding wages. They were very grateful to Angel, but two days later the *secretary* asked him about the money.

-I already distributed it to the musicians in El Patio – Angel replied.

-You don’t know how to obey orders! Kindly go out and close the door – the *secretary* replied angrily.

Before long, he sought re-election.

XXI. THE SLUR

A time passed, it was 1969 and it seemed that everything was normal. I stopped going to the union at night because Angel went to work in a restaurant in the downtown area, near Madero Street. Angel did not agree with the possibility of a new reelection of the secretary and many colleagues sympathized with this concern. Manuel, *el Güero*, began to be very attentive and very kind to Angel, and Chepina got a bad feeling about this messenger's behavior change, which was usually lazy and spent the time on the floor of the General Secretariat. So she told me once on the phone and recommended me that I should not stop talking about the matter with Angel. I did, but he minimized this change.

One day the home phone rang, it was Manuel to notify us that he had been run over. At the moment I was shocked, I asked him where he was and how I could help him. He replied that it had not been serious, that only the tip of his feet were crushed. I did not like his explanation, nor that he did not tell me where he was, so I contacted Angel at the union and gave him the details about the call and I expressed him my mistrust.

Angel was shocked because Manuel had documents in his portfolio worth 150,000 pesos. He quickly called the secretary, told him what had happened, but he took it very calmly: "Poor boy, he is surely very hurt and that is why he has not contacted us", he alleged.

Angel came home very distressed. I told him not to listen and to denunciate the messenger to the authorities, that what they were doing was buying time. Manuel had a brother who was a teacher in the IPN and Angel went to look for him to inform him of the whereabouts of the messenger, but he claimed to know nothing.

The next day, the union's General Secretariat filed a lawsuit against Angel for stealing the documents. Some fellow

musicians notified Angel of what they had done and that he had five days before the arrest warrant was released. I told my mom what was happening and she said it was urgent that I take him to see Dr. Guzmán. This doctor, in addition to being a doctor, was a counselor; he supported people with serious problems through their relationships, but he also ran a spiritualist center at his home in Alfonso XIII neighborhood.

I could not contact Angel until the fourth day, because he was looking for a way to locate Manuel. As soon as he got home, we went to see the doctor, but he could not see us right away because he was having a surgery. Angel became desperate and left because he was late to go to work. My mom and I stayed. When the doctor came out and we told him, he regretted that he had not waited, because something serious was going to happen to him that night: they were going to execute the arrest warrant.

The doctor informed me that they would assign me three “brethren” of the spiritual center: Antonio, brother of la Selva, Mr. Rafael and Mrs. Elvira, that he was going to prepare them and that I had to attend there every time I was indicate to.

At two in the morning, Leo Acosta, a fellow drummer, called the house to inform me that they had apprehended Angel when he was going out from work, that they had him in the holding cells and that he only had three minutes to speak with a relative. I quickly got dressed and left in a taxi. I arrived and Leo told me to hurry, because they were about to take him away. I barely had time to speak to Angel when, he handed me his briefcase, watch and wallet, and he was taken to the Lecumberri prison.

There were three days left for my children’s New Year’s vacations and I needed time to do Angel’s defense paperwork. My family supported me one hundred percent. My brother-in-law Pedro Garcilazo told my sister that he wanted Eduardo and Jorge to go to sleep to his house, although in the mornings they could not take care of them because they both worked,

but since my sister Margarita was a teacher at the school of my children, and during holidays she regularized children to earn extra money, she decided to do it in my house to be with my two children in the mornings. My son Angelito was taken by my sister Rosa to her house in Santa Maria la Ribera, she was also a teacher, like her husband, and they had a young son. So I had to separate my children, who were very close.

My sister Martha gave me a red dress and a perfume and she told me: “Wear the red dress the whole time you go to court for Angel’s problem. Spray the perfume in your bag and in the portfolio so that you leave a trail of your aroma”.

That first weekend in the courthouse to which Angel’s case was assigned, it was filled with fellow musicians supporting him. I sat on the last bench on the right side in a corner; it was all bustle. At that point the *secretary* arrived with his court of followers, approached to me and said:

-Madam, do you want Angel to be released from prison?”

-Yes, I want him to come out.

-I can get him out right now. You only have to accompany me to the union to sign a paper.

-Do you think I am going to sign a paper without knowing what is written on it?

-The paper is a declaration about you being aware that Angel is responsible for the missing money in the Union Treasury.

-Sir, you know very well that Angel is innocent. I am not going to accuse him of a crime he did not commit!

His companions began to surround me and he insisted:

-You have to come with me.

In a loud voice I said to him:

-I am not moving from here!

-Angel is going to stay in here a long time; until I want to – the *secretary* concluded, and he and his court withdrew.

At that, a voice was heard shouting: “Everyone out! Nobody buys me!”. The room was vacated, but I stayed in my

corner. The one who had screamed was the judge's secretary, who upon seeing me there requested me to come closer and asked me:

-Why didn't you go out?

-I don't bother anyone, I am the wife of Angel Cu.

-Tell me the truth.

-I'm not really the legal wife, but we have three children.

It turned out that Angel's wife and sister had come to offer her money to release him, that is why she had cleared the room: "Nobody buys me", she concluded.

She recommended me to find a criminal lawyer for my case, but the musicians sent me a person: Mr. Duarte. As soon as he arrived he asked me for three thousand pesos to legally represent Angel. In the holding cells, Angel had told me to locate his brother-in-law Candelario if needed. So I called him, told him what was going on. In a little while, he brought me the money that Duarte asked for and left.

For the most part, my fellow musicians stopped talking to me or turned around from me so as not to run into me, even the godfather of my third son kept away from me. I ate near the court, went quickly to my house in Ciudad Satelite and then went to the colonia Alfonso XIII to the spiritualist center, where the brethren received me. Mrs. Elvira entered into a "dream" state and spoke to me on behalf of another brother to give me advice according to what he saw. The most important recommendation was that I should not speak to any person and not to give information to anyone. They warned me of how the secretary would continue to insist on me signing and would send someone to convince me; that I should not give in.

That day I arrived to Lecumberry with an atole that I bought for Angel. They checked my bag. In a small room they asked me to take off my clothes until I was left in my underwear. After the revision I went to a huge patio. Angel was walking towards me and suddenly I remembered the atole that I left in the little room. I turned around and went back. A

guard stopped me pointing at me with his gun and shouting he asked me where I was running: “For an atole that I forgot”, I replied. “Please, do not run because we can hurt you!”, the guard informed me. During that time, Angel’s family entered: his wife, his sister and two nieces. The girls clung to Angel so they did not allow me to speak freely to him. Very quietly I said to him: “You should not sign papers. Promise yourself; you must not sign. I have been going where you knew and they are helping me. The children are fine, they are distributed among my sisters so I can move freely”, and I said goodbye to him.

I used to get up at five in the morning to arrive at seven to the courts which opened until nine. Sometimes I had for breakfast a tamale with atole at a cart which was near there, and sometimes I also vomited the breakfast due to emotional pressure.

The judge’s secretary, seeing me sitting day after day, called me and told me that Mr. Duarte was not a criminal lawyer, and that there the benches and everything else had ears. That whenever I wanted to talk to her, or she wanted to talk to me, we should exchange glances, that we should indicate everything with our eyes. Once, while I was going to the bathroom located at the end of a long corridor, I saw in the distance one of the *secretary’s* close people getting out of a car, to then enter the court with a folder in hand. I hid in the bathroom. Thereafter, that man arrived daily with his folder at the courthouse; I would wait in the bathroom until he was gone.

The idea came to me about going to the CTM to ask Fidel Velazquez for help and I went to the offices on Vallarta street. When I arrived, he was leaving his office, always surrounded by his bodyguards. I went close to him and asked him for a few minutes of his time.

I hurriedly told him everything, how *el Güero* Manuel had disappeared with the papers, emphasizing that Angel was

innocent. He did not let me continue talking, he took a step forward and I was left very close to him, almost pressed against his chest because he was very tall. The six guards surrounded me and he said: "If that man is in jail is because he stole. And that has a title". I did not move... he turned around and left. At that, on the other side of the office I saw Leo Acosta, the drummer who informed me of Angel's apprehension.

XXII. THE STRUGGLE

I really regretted having gone to the CTM, but my attempt had served to discover that Leo Acosta was an informant.

In the afternoon I went to see the brethren of the spiritualist center. Mrs. Elvira, already an older woman, very short in stature, when she prepared and entered into the "dream" state, or as the brethren from there said, she "slept", she spoke for the person of Brother Rafael. A being who had already been gaunt and, as a free spirit, could see things more clearly than me. They were all believers in God and in his word, but they also practiced methods by then unknown to me, which helped me a lot.

That afternoon, Mrs. Elvira, in the voice of Brother Rafael, told me that I had made a mistake when I went looking for Fidel Velázquez, that they should not see me so that they would not pressure me to sign, and that Angel should not sign either. At that, she shook herself a little, threw her shoulders

back, and began to speak in a different, slow voice, as the *secretary* spoke! I shuddered, it seemed as if I had him in front of me, he said: “What do you think, Mr. Velazquez, if we set a trap to the honest treasurer?” ... “It seems perfect to me; do it and we will see the result”. Mrs. Elvira shook her shoulders again, and in her normal voice she said that I should not have gone to see that man and that from now on I should consult them before doing anything.

The week went by with my routine of staying all the time sitting on the bench of the courthouse. A pseudo-lawyer trickster tried to surprise me, but the secretary stopped him in his tracks and sent him out of the room. Already alone, she told me: “The judge announced he was ill. He does that every time he does not want to return a verdict, because since the first week he had to have done it. Let’s see if this week... Don’t let anyone trick you, because there are many middlemen (coyotes)”. Then she asked me what I did to earn my living and she told me that she had no children, but that there in Lecumberri she had many: the boys who were arrested in ‘68. She told me how she tried to protect them and that they used to give her flowers on May 10.

I kept slipping away from the guy with the folder, until he arrived again on Saturday. The judge was still ill and the hearing did not happen either. By the next visiting day, Angel was already getting desperate. He told me that he was subject to limitations and humiliation. I told him that he had to hold on and not to sign any paper. Again our communication was very limited, because the same group of people of his family was present.

The *secretary* sent me a piece of paper in which he summoned me at the union offices. I told my brother-in-law Pedro about the summons and he advised me to attend, that he would accompany me. We did so, we arrived in good time and I was surprised that, among the *secretary’s* retinue, there were members of the symphony.

I asked him why he had summoned me and he replied:

-I summoned you in order that you pay what your husband stole from the union.

-Did you call me so I pay? You are sick! Crazy! I cannot call you a motherfucker, because you deny having one. You are devilish and I am very sorry that you contaminate all the staff you have. As I only came to waste my time, I am leaving.

I turned around and left. When I told everything to the brethren of the spiritualist center, they advised me to tell the judge's secretary.

The next day, with my eyes I let the secretary know that I wanted to talk to her and, in a very low voice, I told her everything; I also told her about the musician who arrived there daily with a folder. She confirmed that a person of that description was peeking in there as looking for someone. She suggested me to change my lawyer, because he had not done anything, and she also advised me not to attend any appointments.

I took the opportunity to tell her that it was urgent for me to speak to Angel, because we had a contract signed to work with Marga López and I did not know how much I should charge or the time of the appointment. "Oh, my lady! You put me in a tight spot", she murmured, and on a piece of paper wrote: "The judge received 250,000 pesos and her husband is uncommunicated, he cannot receive anyone behind the window". Then, in a very strong voice, she said: "Madam, think very carefully about what you are going to say to the prisoner. You have five minutes and this is the only time that I give you this permission, because I am exposing myself". I assumed she had raised her voice for the others who worked there would hear her.

Soon after, Angel appeared at the window with his face distorted. The first thing he told me was that he was being pressured to sign and that he was ready to do so. I hurriedly replied that I had been given five minutes to speak to him and

he must not sign. I was already ready with pen and paper where I wrote the information I needed to fulfill the contract we had. When the secretary said: “Time is over!”, the window closed. The secretary stared at me and murmured, almost without moving her lips: “Patience, a lot of patience”.

I continued with my routine: getting up at five, arriving at seven, having breakfast in front of the park, praying for something good to happen in the day and sitting on my bench.

Shortly afterwards, the secretary signaled me to come closer and asked how my commitment to Marga López was going. I explained to him about the ritual of looking for musicians in the cafeterias of the W and the performers that Angel had indicated to me. She told me that she was fond of classical music and opera and how she enjoyed it when she got home from work playing a random album.

The performers Angel indicated to me were two trumpeters, four saxophonists, a pianist, a percussionist, and me on bass. The first one I found on the W was a trumpeter who helped me locate the other musicians, except for the pianist indicated by Angel, who he did not find, but took me to another musician who promised to assist with his electric piano.

I was in that, when another colleague came to tell me that the maestro Juan García Medeles wanted to speak to me (he conducted one of the most recognized orchestras in Mexico, comparable to any in the United States), that he was in his office to receive me. The office was a few steps from where I was, and when I walked in, all his musicians were there. The teacher got up from his desk and shook my hand saying: “Colleague, I am very sorry about your difficult situation”. He placed himself in front of his musicians and added: “How many of you have helped her? Because I know that out there all of you turn your back on her. Who of you has given this colleague a sandwich or a soft drink? Are we exempt from going through this same situation? In front of everyone, I

am making you a loan that will help you with at least something”. He took out five hundred-pesos bills from his wallet and handed them to me one by one for all to see it. “Also – he added –, you are invited to eat at my house, in the company of all the members of my orchestra. I’ll wait for you at two in the afternoon.” We all had a surprised face.

At the house of maestro García Medeles I was received by a domestic worker. The house was very big, half of it was parking, with a very wide staircase of pink quarry that descended to a very large lounge with a forum for musicians. The teacher was already waiting for me. He introduced me to his wife and they treated me very politely. The food was delicious and maestro Medeles approached to say to me: “I want maestro Angel to go out soon from where he is. Besides, what I gave you was not a loan, but a gift from my wife and me”. When I was about to leave, aloud I said goodbye to my colleagues and the maestro directed me to the exit.

Walking through that colonia Del Valle, I looked for a place to have a coffee and assimilate what had happened to me, thanking God that, in reality, I was not alone.

That afternoon, the brethren from the spiritualist center were happy to hear my events, but they warned me, because a very dangerous person would approach me: a stocky woman, of medium height, who would try to extract information from me. They told me not to talk to her. At the end of their advice, as in each of my visits, they made me the traditional ritual of cleansing, leaving me full of optimism and hope.

That Saturday the judge did not appear either and I was nervous, because it was the day of the commitment to Marga López. I arrived with much anticipation to the place where we would work and also all the colleagues, but the piano player, arrived without a piano! He alleged that later he would have it taken to him. In short, the musicians tried to take advantage from me financially, they did not speak to me all night, the quality of the work was mediocre and Marga López was not

happy; she reluctantly paid me and asked me why Angel had not come. I thanked God for having already gone through that commitment.

The next day, on the family visit, I told Angel what had happened, but since his two nieces were there, attached to him, I could not give him details. What I did emphasize to him, was that he had to put an end to that distressing situation about his nieces not letting us be alone in order to talk. I insisted him that he had to be strong, that he was going to get out of there.

A few days went by when one of my neighbors came to tell me that she would no longer speak to me because my husband was a criminal. That she and her husband had read it in the newspaper. I worried about what I was going to do if they would say the same to my children.

In court, I occasionally talked to the judge's secretary about matters outside my case, about my career or about my children, interesting or fun things, I even told her how I had solved the job for Mrs. Marga López.

On a Tuesday a lady approached me with the characteristics that the brethren had described to me. She approached me trying to offer me help, because she knew about my case, but I told her that I already had a lawyer and I left running up to the courtroom.

On Friday of that week, almost after finishing the office work, as usual the secretary called me with her eyes and, in a very low voice, she said to me: "Tomorrow, you come early, and inside the portfolio that you bring put some clothes for Mr. Angel, because if we are lucky, maybe he will come out. Do not even mention it to your shadow. And if he comes out, send him out of the city, where nobody knows, just after going through the prison door. Above all, he should not be reachable in the first seventy-two hours".

That afternoon they could not attend me at the spiritualist center because they had many people, but they gave

me a cleansing and Mr. Rafael commented that he saw a lot of light in me.

XXIII. THE STIGMA

That Saturday, when I arrived at the court, Mr. Duarte was already there. There were hardly any people. After greeting me, Duarte stood in front of me to explain that a hearing was opening and that I had to give him three thousand pesos for him to be Angel's defender.

-I have no money. A month has passed and you haven't shown up here for a day; I am sorry, I cannot give you anything.

-Well...I'll go ahead to the courtroom.

At that, the judge's secretary's assistant approached me and said:

-The judge is not going to appear. The licenciada (referring to the judge's secretary) will take his place if you send three thousand pesos.

-Wait while the money is brought to me – I pleaded –, and I will give it to you. It won't be more than twenty minutes.

I quickly contacted Candelario, I asked him for the money, and told him to hurry up and look for me in court number six.

The room was full of people, I stood next to the secretary who had given me the message. Angel appeared at the window and then the lawyer who had offered me help the previous Tuesday entered...she was the accusing party! She was the first to speak and attributed to Angel the embezzlement of the Treasury and other previous shortages. At that I saw my watch and left the room looking at the assistant, she followed me with her eyes. Almost immediately Candelario arrived, he handed me the money and told me that he had to leave, because he had not asked for permission in his work, that he would return later.

I quickly told him that if Angel came out, I was going to put him in a taxi, because he could not arrive home. He had to get out of town. At that moment the assistant came out of the room and I handed her the three thousand pesos, taking care that no one would see us.

As soon as I entered the courtroom, I heard the judge's secretary saying: "Due to lack of evidence and since there is no crime to pursue, the accused is free to go". And addressing the prosecuting attorney, said to her: "And I am going to keep all this documentation on my desk with a key. Because I already know your tricks, lawyer María de los Angeles. If these documents are not here on Monday, I will sue you!".

I could not hear any more, I was happy! Mr. Duarte approached me saying: "Angel is coming out right now. I go with you". All the way to the exit door he would stop in front of me and asked: "What did you do to get Angel out?". Almost at the entrance to the prison, he took my arm and insisted: "You have to tell me what did you do..." "I am going to scream!", I warned him... he let me go and we went inside.

A worker from there welcomed me and asked: "Did you bring Mr. Angel Cu León's clothes?" I opened the portfolio and handed them to him. Duarte was surprised and commented: "So you brought the clothes; that means that you already knew that Angel was going to come out". In a few minutes Angel arrived and, upon signing his exit, the worker said to him: "I congratulate you: you are coming out, Mr. Angel Cu León, because of lack of evidence. You are innocent, I wish you good luck; you are an example". Another worker told him: "I am going to recommend you that, when leaving this door, do not go home. Go out of town, at least for three days".

We waited for a taxi. Angel boarded it and I told him: "Do not call me, do not tell me either where will you be. Do not worry about the children nor me; we will be fine. Try to be

away as long as possible. God bless you”. The taxi left; Angel was very pale and emaciated.

I arrived home very tired. It had been a very long and tough month, I went to bed and slept I do not know for how long. When I woke up, I called my family to let them know that Angel had already gotten out. The first one was my mom; she was very pleased. One by one I communicated the news. Everyone gathered at the house, I cooked rice and I bought roasted chickens. My brother-in-law Pedro bought soft drinks and it was a happy gathering.

The next day, early, I prepared food. I told my oldest son, Angelito, to feed his brothers because I had a meeting. I went to the W to see the reaction of the guild.

There were small groups everywhere. Suddenly, a colleague approached me and said: “Maestro García Medeles wants to speak to you”. I crossed the street and entered his office, which was packed with musicians. He greeted me with the usual cordiality, led me to the front of everyone and said: “We have already found out that maestro Angel was released from prison because the damage could not be proved. Tell your husband that I wish him good luck”, he said goodbye to me and left the office.

When I was leaving, I ran into Leo Acosta, he took me by the shoulders, hit me against the wall and asked me:

-Where is Angel?

-I do not know!

-You must know where he is!

-I already told you I do not know, and if you do not let me go, I am going to kick you.

As some colleagues were watching him, he let me go. Angel returned home two months later. He was never able to get over that trance.

The *secretary* reelected himself in the position in the SUTM as many times as could be throughout the dates from 1959 to

1989, which meant the demolition of our musical career. All the important places in Mexico City, hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, radio, television and recording studios, had an exclusive collective agreement with the musicians union. Also the artists who required a group or orchestra in order to accompany them, always had to go to the union to be provided of musicians. For that reason, neither Angel nor I could return to work in those places. Our scope was restricted to private events or small businesses that did not arouse the greed of a collective contract. In addition, no union musician could work with Angel under penalty of facing the consequences that the *secretary* would impose on.

Of all those colleagues that Angel benefited and who at the time wanted to work with him or called themselves “friends”, barely a handful of them were supportive.

The musicians union of Mexico City is a wing of the CTM, at that time led by Fidel Velázquez, whose power was immense. In his shadow the *secretary* was enthroned, who apart from controlling the membership fees and the commissions of the aforementioned places, was a deputy for PRI on two occasions and was also compadre of Fidel Velázquez. That was the power that Angel had dared to challenge.

Thus, just when our children were going through the stage that required the economic strength of our home, we were “snapping our fingers” to go forward.

XXIV. MY SISTER MARTHA...
MY LITTLE SISTER FROM ALL TO ALL

Few months after Angel came out of Lecumberri, I received a call from my sister Lucha, who told me that Martha had been locked in her bedroom for several days and that a notice had arrived from the laboratory where she was working informing about her termination due to abandonment of employment. That same day, my sister Rosita and my brother-in-law

Rodolfo told me: “Martha is really upset, she is not the same as before, her behavior is not normal. Days ago, Rodolfo was driving and Martha covered his eyes. Neither my sister Margarita nor I, together, could make her release him, until Rodolfo was able to stop the car”, Rosita affirmed.

I had already noticed that at family gatherings she was very quiet, when before she was the witty one, the salt and pepper of the parties. They told me about the frequent trips he made driving to the United States, and they concluded that precisely because of those trips the cessation had been caused. Finally, they narrated me how, when trying to enter their room, she had received them by throwing a large bottle of soda at them.

They questioned me about my misinformation of these events and the reason why my mother had not told me, since she lived with Martha less than a block from my house. I only argued that my whole life my mother had been very indifferent to me, so she rarely commented to me anything.

Rosita informed me that they had already contacted a doctor, who was deputy director of the Fray Bernardino Alvarez psychiatric hospital, and that we could go together to see him that same day before his service hours ended. So we did. We left in a hurry, since the hospital was at the other end of Satelite City. When we told the doctor the details of Martha’s behavior, he said: “It is urgent that your sister be hospitalized”. He gave us a formal request for acceptance and gave me five vials to be injected to her: “This makes even an elephant sleep”.

The next day I arrived to Martha’s house, I knocked on her bedroom door and got her to open up. I explained to her that I was going to inject her some vitamins because I had been told that she had not eaten. As soon as she felt the liquid entering, she perceived that it was not what I had told her. “You have tricked me”, she yelled at me and ran down to the kitchen. She ate some raw eggs and locked herself in her room

again. That is when another of my brothers-in-law, Ruben, arrived, and between him, Rosita, her husband and I, we entered her room. She was crying at the window. With difficulty we were able to get her down...and we took her to the hospital.

We were seven siblings, six women and one man. I am the oldest. I was five years old and we lived in a neighborhood on Calle de Dolores, close to the Alameda Central. My granny Maria used to take me to kindergarten, but we were late very often and it made me very angry because they did not let me in anymore and I had to run back to catch up with my granny. At home they said my mom was pregnant, but I never saw my dad around there.

One day my mom got sick and they took me out of the house. I stayed watching the cars go by on the avenue, they seemed very ugly to me, because they were all square on the roof. It was 1932. After a while I heard baby squeals, it was my little sister Martha who was born on December 15... beautiful time of the year.

Shortly after, my grandma got a doorkeeper (that is what the tenant who was in charge of a neighborhood was called) in the town of Tacuba, on the corner of the avenue Mexico-Tacuba and Reina Xóchitl. It had two entrances: one through Tacuba to the main house, and the other through Reina Xóchitl to one more house and the porter's house, which consisted of a very large room, a small kitchen, a patio with a laundry room, a covered bathroom and a small access door to the main house; what placed the aforementioned porter's house in the middle of the two houses.

The people who lived in the main house were Spanish: Don Rosendo and Miss Paz, one of their daughters; the rest of the family lived in Veracruz. He wore long socks which were held with a kind of bendlet on the knee and had huge mustaches that curled up to his nose.

Miss Paz was a dressmaker and was my godmother in my first communion. My mom took me to the parish of San Miguel to get me prepared. At first she took me, then I went alone, since it was close to the house, on the street Tacuba. I liked to stay in the park that was in the atrium of the church, where there was a tree with a very wide trunk, surrounded by a railing and it hardly had any green twigs. I was told that it was the Tree of the Sad Night, where Hernan Cortés wept.

My godmother had told me: “I am going to make you a dress as beautiful as a bride’s, so, if you do not wear white when you get married, at least you have already dressed in white for your first communion”.

My mom used to ask me to carry my little sister Martha for a walk along the block, but I could not hold her in my arms, so my mom settled her on my back. Martha quickly learned to hold on to my neck and so we arrived up to Mar Mediaterráneo. Along that street, there were almost no houses at the front, it was a plain with many pumpkins and my grandma said to me: “Come with me to bring pumpkins”. They stewed the small ones and cooked the big ones with brown sugar.

Martha learned to walk very early and she liked getting into the garden of the Spaniards house, who had a sheep, a huge loft and many ducks. My little sister loved to get into the huge tub where the ducks were bathing, where a huge scandal was created. My mom scolded me for not taking care of her, but she did it many times and came out with her shoes flowing with water. She also put her hand in the dovecotes to remove the eggs and ate them raw, although the pigeons were stinging her.

My godmother was very pretty, she had beautiful hair that reached her hamstrings. Frequently my mom combed her hair, she used to make to her a huge braid! Martha and I used to go to see how she did her hair. My sister would get a candy lollipop and sat on the floor to play; I liked to stay close to see.

On one of those occasions, my sister moved a brick that supported one of the legs of a huge cupboard and it fell on us. All the pottery broke, and a splinter leaped into the side of my eye, causing a large flow of blood. It was not that serious, but the scar never faded.

During that time, many events rushed: a bump appeared in my little sister's armpit and she was taken to healings, I passed out in the first one because blood came out of it. Later, my mother tried to speak to President Lázaro Cárdenas, as being a rural teacher from Michoacán she asked for help to support her family. Although the president did not receive her, they offered her a place for my sister and me in the children's boarding school. There they housed the children of the Spanish Civil War refugees. Shortly after we entered, my sister Martha became sick with chickenpox and was unable to continue.

For me it was a blessing to be in boarding school, because I was well fed and I entered the typical orchestra, which led me to my career in music. Six years later I left the boarding school, when General Avila Camacho reached to the Presidency of Mexico, because they closed it due to lack of resources.

Martha and Luz María studied at the Santo Domingo School, although Martha was one year behind because my mother took her out of school in order to take care of my sister Rosita. The family had already moved to Santa Maria la Ribera, to my grandma's house. She worked at the Buenavista Hotel.

She was a Franciscan all her life, so she continually took us to the church of San Fernando, which was of that religious order. By then we were five siblings: Martha, Maria de la Luz, Elías, Rosita and I. By indications from the priest's, my grandma would leave them in the sacristy so that the children would not run through the church, and I stayed with her while she was praying.

On one occasion when Rosita complained of thirst, Martha tricked her into drinking from the wine barrel to consecrate by saying to her that it was water. She helped her by opening the little faucet and all the children drank, although they complained that it did not taste well. They all ended up asleep. They were never left in the sacristy again.

Because my grandma worked a lot, she used to fall asleep at prayer time, and on one occasion, while she was sleeping, Martha put long plasticine nails on her. When she woke up, she screamed: "Hail Mary full of grace, the devil is here!". First she turned to see me, but immediately she noticed that my sister was carrying a ball of plasticine.

When my granny took us to San Fernando, since she could not pay everyone's fare, on our way there we would walk and on our way back by tram. Before going up there she would tell us: "I am going to pay two pay-slips: the ticket of Guadalupe and mine. The rest of you make yourselves short so they won't see you and won't charge us". The collector was sitting on a bench, in front of a counter, and he received and sold the pay-slips in strips of ten, this was when getting down the train. The children bent their knees and helped each other getting down, but the collector stretched out and caught sight of my little siblings. He only moved his head.

Through her labor union, my mom arranged for Martha and Luz Maria to be given breakfast in a hotel. Since they knew they were the daughters of a colleague, they cared for them very well. When Martha was in the sixth grade, a proficiency contest was organized in all Mexico City. I accompanied her to the library to prepare the work she was going to present. The test was done and my sister got the first place. She received a huge diploma from Alma Rosa Aguirre, famous actress of the time.

Finishing elementary school, Martha decided to enter the prevocational school of IPN, a secondary school that led the students to their entry to the vocational. Due to my mother's

work schedule, I introduced myself as responsible for my sister at the time of her registration. It was on the street of Peralvillo, and since we lived in Belisario Domínguez at the time, it was very close.

She chose the carpentry workshop, but began to feel rejected by her colleagues for being the only woman. She used to tell me how they bothered her, they did not lend her the tool and they told her that this workshop was not for women. Finally, on one occasion a colleague tried to snatch the wood brush from her, but since she was holding it firmly with both hands, the boy cut himself with the blade of the brush.

I got an urgent summon from the head teacher. When I arrived, the boy's father was already arguing. My sister told the facts and the man said that they were just lies, and the head teacher asked the student's father to leave, that he would solve the situation. When we were alone, the head teacher told me that he knew that my sister had good grades, so he proposed to move her to the Santo Tomás quarter, which were the main facilities of the National Polytechnic, so that she could continue her studies until finishing her career without changing schools. I thought it was a very good alternative, he gave us a letter for the change of assignment and he asked my sister:

-What carpentry job did you do?

-A little stool.

-Well, go get your things and take your little stool. Next Monday you will show up at the Polytechnic.

XXV. FROM PREVOCATIONAL TO ENGINEERING

My sister really liked the change to the IPN facilities of the Santo Tomas quarter. There she finished prevocational and followed to the vocational. Like me, she told everything to my granny, who told me that she was already the girlfriend of the best football player of the IPN football team. She and her boyfriend competed to see who got the best grades.

In one of the games, the boy had his leg fractured and was taken to the hospital Rubén Leñero. My sister visited him frequently; however, the day he was scheduled to be discharged, Martha ran into a scene which she did not expect. She saw how a doctor approached the boy's mother and she burst into tears. My sister approached another doctor and asked him what was going on. "We could not save him", he replied. My sister, surprised and not understanding, answered: "Why? Yesterday he was fine, happy because today he would be discharged". The doctor explained: "Sure enough, however, he got infected with a bacterium, probably when washing in a sink, he presented symptoms of suffocation and we did not manage to do anything for him". There my sister stood without

knowing what to do, with an apple in her hand which she brought as a gift to her boyfriend. An apple that my granny had gotten her to celebrate the occasion.

My sister was strong-willed, but she had a very good sense of humor and was a joker, but her friends were few and very dear. Rosita was her skinny, curly-haired neighborhood friend, the youngest of six siblings, and a stutterer. They went out for a walk together and on Sundays they went to mass, they understood each other very well.

On one occasion, a group of boys who gathered to play football in the first courtyard waited for my sister and Rosita to go through, who were returning from mass, in order to kick the ball hard. It hit Rosita in the back and made her fall head-on; the ball was marked on her white dress. The kids burst out laughing. My sister helped her friend up and walked towards whom had kicked the ball. "You are very brave with women, right?", she said to him, and she kicked him in the shin with all her might.

When I was returning from work, I ran into the boy and his parents at the door of my house and I saw that they were insulting my mother and sister saying that she was a mule and that we would have to pay for the cures. I asked what was going on and, faced with the uproar and the accusations, I said to the boy's parents: "Something very simple is going to be done here. Either the three of you, Martha and I go up to talk to Rosita's family, or Rosita goes down with her five siblings, after all, the eldest is studying medicine". There the incident ended.

After the vocational my sister wanted to study chemistry and the only career then was Industrial Chemical Engineering, which she chose. In the professional, she helped her colleagues with their jobs and, sometimes, she was even paid, a situation that once caused her to be sent to an extraordinary exam because the teacher believed that she was the one who requested the help and copied the work of her colleagues.

It was until then, in the professional, that Martha had a boyfriend again. My granny told me that they were very much in love and she described to me how he gave her a diamond ring that he had received from his grandmother. She gave it to the boy when he confessed to her that he was very much in love with my sister. It had been the gift she received from her late husband in their time of dating, when they were most in love with each other.

Subsequently, the boy showed his grandmother a photo of my sister wearing the ring as a sign of his appreciation. Shortly after receiving the ring, my sister Luz Maria kept asking Martha to lend it to her, so much she insisted that she finally lent it to her, but it was too small and she put it in with a lot of effort. It turned out that she could not get it out. They did everything possible, but they could not, Luz Maria's finger began to swell and on the third day it turned purple. They looked for a jeweler who very careful cut the ring. When he finished, he said to my sisters: "I saved your sister's finger; I keep the ring". I came to know about this incident many years later, when Martha was already ill.

On having finished her career, my sister went to my house and told me that she had no one to type her thesis for her. Angel offered: "I have a typewriter, I offer to write her thesis, but she has to be there so that I do not make any mistake". Angel had excellent spelling and typed better than many professional secretaries, without watching the keyboard. Martha handed over her thesis without any problem.

She received her certificate from president Ruiz Cortines and only four women were graduated in the generation 1954-1958. The presentation was at the theater Del Bosque, and the dance was at the disappeared Del Prado Hotel. In the handing over of documents and rings I was very happy, I had my first son, Angelito, and I bought him a little white suit; I dressed in black and I arrived up to the theater. My sister Rosita was waiting for me at the entrance, who told me that my mother

had told her to tell me that she did not want me there, that I should leave. I felt a lump in my throat, I barely managed to answer: “Take this money to my mother to pay for Martha’s photographs”, and I left.

XXVI. A SHORT PROFESSIONAL CAREER

The first job of my sister was in a factory, but it did not go as she expected. Afterwards, she took an exam to enter the Salamanca refinery, but she did not pass the exam. My brother-in-law Candelario (Susana's husband) worked there, and he explained to me that she had not passed the test because the criterion was that there should be no women in the refinery. Finally she entered what would be her definitive job in the laboratories of the Ministry of Finance; she was a color analyst and specialized later on, which allowed her to give lectures on her professional activity.

My sister was full of love for her nephews: Cecilia, Mario (children of my sister Luz Maria), and my children, Angel, Guayo and Jorge. On one occasion she came with a hill of coats: one for each of her nephews and two more, for my mom and for her. She also took Cecilia and Mario to their respective schools for three years because they were on their way to her job. She always loved her family very much.

Every two years athletic games were held at the government level. My sister represented the laboratories of the Ministry of Finance in javelin and bullet throwing. In those games, she and the Army representative were the most outstanding women; coincidentally, her name was also Martha. My sister got a gold medal for her throws and got a beautiful trophy for the Ministry of Finance.

When we saw each other, she would tell me about her work and mention how volatile the coloring chemicals were and how the vapors stained her robe and even her underwear. I told her that she should take protective measures, because she was exposed to those vapors. She told me that, in counter-corner of Palacio Nacional (where the laboratories were), she

had consulted with a liver specialist, and that he had prescribed to her, serum once a month; that it would be fine with that.

On another occasion she told me that she had had a serious complication at work because she had been given a dark bottle with a liquid to analyze. “And what does a chemist do?, well, first he or she smells, and in doing so I lost consciousness. I woke up in the laboratory infirmary. They were all gone already, only the watchman was still there. I grabbed my car and went to buy milk to detoxify. The next day, my colleagues being alarmed asked me how I was doing and complained about them sending a bottle with cyanide to analyze; I could have died.”

During the conflicts of the '68 movement, when she arrived at her work at Palacio Nacional, my sister was detained by the military, mistaking her for a student. It was thanks to her boss, who was entering at that time and shouted at them that she was a worker of Palacio Nacional and that they should see her “charola” (“*badge*”) (metal identification of government workers with a certain degree of influence), to let her go. Shortly after, when coming out of work, she cut her way to Satélite by a road near Tlatelolco and found herself involved in the running of people persecuted by the army who was shooting everywhere, while unarmed innocents fell. She sped up as much as she could, and when she was leaving the danger zone behind, terrified teenagers waved at her in an ice cream parlor. They asked her to take the girls because all of them would not fit in, to please keep them as far away as possible. She did so; it was a shocking event for her. Having the “*badge*” allowed her to travel frequently to the United States, since she did not need to show either passport nor a visa. She shopped for her and brought creams to my mother, with whom she lived; she was always a good daughter.

Martha and I saw each other very little, despite living so close, because of my work in music. I used to have the Sunday

walks and holiday gatherings with Luz Maria, her husband Pedro and their children, who also lived close to us.

A couple of years passed and my sister told me that some new laboratories were going to be opened and that her boss had been changed to a law graduate, which had made the atmosphere rarefied, since the work that would correspond to him, he distributed it among the other chemists, and he had them threatened that he was going to renew the personnel.

That was how the time passed until that morning when my sister Luz Maria called me to tell me that Martha had been locked in her bedroom for several days and that a notice had come from the laboratory informing about her dismissal due to job abandonment; it had been four days without her showing up for work.

XXVII.MARTHA'S ILLNESS AND ANOTHER UNEQUAL STRUGGLE

I received a call from Cristina, Martha's co-worker, who asked me why we had not turned up for my sister's dismissal appointment. I explained to her that we did not know until the paper arrived. She suggested me that I go to the labor union to

file a complaint because it was unfair, that she only deserved a temporary suspension and the head of the laboratory was taking advantage in order to remove the personnel. Angel offered to draw up and write the letter of complaint about my sister's unjust dismissal.

As I said, my mom was very secretive with me. She lived under the same roof as Martha and never told me about my sister's radical changes in behavior. We hospitalized her in Fray Bernardino Alvarez on March 12, 1971, under the care of Dr. Raya, who informed me that I should report there daily at seven in the morning until further indication, to monitor my sister's evolution.

The day after the consultation, I went to the labor union of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, which was located in the streets of Lerdo and Nonoalco, to deliver the letter that Angel had written. I was unable to speak to the secretary-general because he was at a meeting. Angel drew up another letter in order to take it a day after, which I had the opportunity to personally deliver and he treated me in a bad way.

When I argued to him that my sister's dismissal had been unfair, he replied: "A crazy schizophrenic has to be removed". I replied that my sister had a brain injury from the chemicals she had worked with for so long. That the head of the laboratory had not complied with the provisions of the regulation, which stipulates that two witnesses from the employers' part, two from the workers, a doctor and a labor union representative must be present for the dismissal. He had ceased her with the only presence of other area chiefs.

Then, the secretary very angry ordered:

-Get this woman out!

-If you put a hand on me, tomorrow a paid page will appear in the newspapers with a review of what I just went through with the secretary-general of this union! – I complained.

The guy made a sign to his guards and I left by myself from there. A few meters later, a man approached me and said to me he had heard everything. He introduced himself as Mr. Taylor and asked for my permission to speak to me. He was an adviser to the union and he told me that what had happened did not seem correct to him and that he would like to advise me, but that he would not be able to sign any document. He indicated to me that I should give notice to the Public Ministry through the appropriate court on the fact of having interned my sister. That I should go accompanied by someone else.

I went to my house and gathered my sisters Luz Maria, Rosita and Margarita, the last two went with their husbands. I related everything to them in detail and the answer from Margarita (the youngest) was that she had two jobs, not to count on her; her husband endorsed her with much verbiage.

Luz Maria also separated herself and, along with Margarita, argued that I did not work during the day, that I should take over; instead, Rosita and her husband Rodolfo told me that she worked the evening shift and that, as far as they could support me, I could count on them.

That was how Rosita accompanied me to the court to declare that her half-sister Martha had been hospitalized and described her inability to shift the process to the Public Ministry and appoint me provisional guardian of the patient.

I had the support of a judge who sped up the necessary procedures. For its part, the union asked the psychiatric hospital for the opinion of three doctors to find out the diagnosis they made then: Paranoid schizophrenia.

However, on one occasion, when I went up to the seventh floor of the hospital, where Dr. Raya's office was, I ran into a doctor in the elevator, who kindly asked me if I had a patient there. I briefly told her about my sister's case and she told me that she worked on the fifth floor, where they sent the patients of Petroleos Mexicanos, who arrived with injuries to the brain because they worked cleaning tanks with benzene

and that the authorities did not recognize this risk. That when barely improved, they returned them to clean tanks: “So they relapse. If you are struggling, I wish you good luck”. She said goodbye and left me thinking.

My sister was hospitalized for nine months. Sundays were visiting days in that huge garden. Most of the family gathered with Martha, her little face lit up and her eyes sparkled. We coexisted with many families who went to visit their sick people. In the place they had four sheep, and on one occasion, unexpectedly, one bumped into my brother-in-law Pedro and sent him to the ground; from then on we fled from those animals.

On another occasion, when I was going down the elevator, I coincided with a sick man and suddenly the electricity went out and we were in the dark. After a few minutes the light returned and the boy was standing against the door with wide eyes and an expression of fear. When I told my son Angel, he advised me to look for a tree with a wide trunk, to ask its permission and to hug it to unburden myself. So I did, but I made the mistake of choosing one on the way out of the hospital, and when I opened my eyes, I was surrounded by people looking at me.

At that time we worked at the Journalists Club from ten at night to five in the morning. From there I would take the bus in Cinco de mayo to arrive at the hospital at seven, to the appointment with Dr. Raya. When I left, I went to the courts to follow up on my tuition process and to be able to start the trials against the ISSSTE, because when my sister was considered dismissed, they had withdrawn her right to medical service, and another against the Ministry of Finance. The first procedures were difficult because I had to change my lawyer several times: the first one charged me twenty thousand pesos and he did not give results. Then I hired lawyer Marquez, who charged me thirty thousand. But I still was in contact with Mr. Taylor, adviser to the labor union.

My sister began to gain weight and, at nine months, when she came out from Fray Bernardino, I took her to Hospital de Nutrition (*Nutrition Hospital*), where I had to arrive at four in the morning to get a turn, because they only gave out ten, from eight in the morning. There she was given follow-up for a long time.

At first my sisters supported me financially with some expenses, but little by little they stopped doing it, despite going and coming to ask them for support, at least for the medications, which were very expensive. Only Rosita brought me packages of diapers every time we saw each other.

So I waited two years of paperwork, going and coming, until Mr. Taylor was released from his relation with the union and was able to go to court to read my lawsuit. After doing so, he informed me that he was not advancing because I was misguided. That the next step was to pay to have it disappeared and to start a new one; that it would cost me ten thousand pesos. We did it and, effectively, the new lawsuit began to move, so much so that they requested a curator who cost me thirty thousand pesos to hire him and forty thousand more for the legal notification to the curator. Thus, over the years, they were twenty thousand, thirty thousand, etc; I spent around three hundred thousand pesos, but Mr. Taylor encouraged me by saying that the demand was going well, that my sister would get around twenty million pesos.

It had been five years with the lawsuit. In the mornings, the fight was against ISSSTE; in the afternoons, in the courts against the Ministry of Finance, because I managed both lawsuits simultaneously, and at night to work.

I received some papers from ISSSTE in which they indicated me that I no longer had anything to do in the Balderas offices that my sister was assigned to ISSSTE Coyoacán. When I got there, I was pleasantly surprised that the secretary of the head of those offices had been my schoolmate in the children's boarding school, Yolanda Islas.

The encounter was very emotional and, of course, I told her about my problem. She asked for my documents and told me that two other mates from the typical orchestra of the boarding school also worked there, that I should go to greet them while she passed my papers to the chief doctor.

So I did, and when I went in with the doctor he informed me that it was a difficult case due to the diagnosis. The paranoid schizophrenia had to be erased and a thorough study had to be done. The next day I was summoned along with my sister in order for her to be checked by the toxicology specialist. Dr. Antonio Esquivel had a post graduate degree from a university in the United States, he became very interested in the case, he ordered special studies to be done to her, and began to give her follow-up on time. He told me about a book that would be very useful to advance on the report. At that time, a former mate and friend of my sister had asked my mom for permission to visit Martha: Ofelia. By seeing her with my sister in the afternoons, I started trusting her and, at a meal, I told her about the toxicology book which Dr. Esquivel had mentioned to me.

My sister had improved a lot and she spent part of her time regularizing students in physics, chemistry and mathematics. Over time, she had acquired a large library of literary themes, more than three hundred books by the great universal authors, in addition to entire collections of science and history dissemination. She also had a lot of classical and instrumental music. With her friend Ofelia, she began to visit museums and prehispanic centers near the city.

In my desperation to rush the legal procedures, I sneaked into an official event in the laboratories on the Ministry of Finance attended by the Attorney General. I circumvented security, I stood in front of him and I told him as briefly as possible the injustice they had committed there with my sister. The man who had orchestrated her dismissal was present. I

thanked the procurator for listening to me and nothing happened.

At some point I told Dr. Esquivel that it was difficult for me to buy the medicines, because I did not have the financial support of my other brothers. Then he lent me a credential so that my sister could be treated at the Hospital 20 de noviembre. Thereafter, Martha had appointments every month including studies and medications.

At that time I received a letter from the Public Ministry requesting that I register my sister's property in court. Upon ending that process, Mr. Taylor who had helped me so much told me that he had received a job offer in ISSSTE that was convenient for him, reason why it would be the last procedure he would do for me, since he could not be judge and jury, so he would put me in contact with another lawyer who would continue with my judicial procedures: Mr. Flores.

At that same time, Ofelia, Martha's friend, surprised me by having gotten the toxicology book that Dr. Esquivel needed. She handled it as a present for my sister and gave it to me after inviting me to eat, an invitation that gradually became more frequent. The book described in detail the damage that all the products my sister had worked with caused to the organism. Dr. Esquivel marveled when I brought the book to him. He commented that it would be extremely useful for the final report.

Time went on and my sister relapsed, she had another crisis; it was necessary to hospitalize her again in the psychiatric hospital; this time she spent two months and, for a while, she spent two months outside and two hospitalized. Thereafter her general health began to deteriorate seriously; especially due to the liver and diabetes caused by being overweight.

At some point I received a pass of validity of rights. I took Martha to the survival department, they took a photo to each of us and gave me a credential and a counterfoil indicating that

I could go to the bank to collect Martha's pension; it was April 6, 1987. It was the first paycheck for my sister, worth one hundred twenty-eight pesos and eighteen cents, since she had been dismissed in 1970; the second worth four hundred and fifty-nine pesos and thirty cents, and the third worth six hundred and twenty-six pesos and forty cents.

It had been more than fifteen years since I began the fight against the injustice committed to my sister. And in that course day by day my mom went off like a candle. I used to bathe her and, sometimes, my sister Luz Maria replaced me, until finally my mother passed away. Martha also required special care, so I went daily to inject her insulin and to bathe her; on weekends Luz Maria supported me.

Thus, between courts and attending to my sister, time passed. One day I started to feel burning in my body, an intense pain. I had herpes on my waist, two-inch plates that turned from my spine to my navel. I could not straighten up, I could not even get out of the car. I gave notice to Mr. Flores that I would not be able to attend to do paperwork for a while. When my sisters saw my state of health, they were alarmed and Luz Maria started helping me bathing Martha. The treatment was very slow, the pain very, very intense. It was 1997.

XXVIII. UNTIL THE END WITH MY LITTLE SISTER MARTHA

My oldest son, Angel, and the youngest, Jorge, went to live to Baja California Sur, and the middle one, Guayo, had already become independent, he lived in an apartment.

On the advice of my husband, we took Martha to live with me, in the bedroom that belonged to my son Angel, so that I could take better care of her and I would get less tired, but since the bedrooms were upstairs, one night she fell off the stairs when I was sick with herpes and could not help her up. She ended up embedded in the intermediate rest, where the steps widen. I checked her as best I could and nothing hurt her, but she could not get up. I said to her: “Chaparrita, let’s play climbing the stairs on all fours”; only then I was able to bring her up to her room. Another night I heard very loud groans. She said to me: “I am dying”. I replied that she was not going to die and I started calling an ambulance by phone, to the 20 de noviembre, to Tacuba and finally to the Red Cross, which was from where they sent it. Then I called my sister Luz Maria, who was the only one nearby.

Since only one person could go in the ambulance, I asked my sister to follow us in her car, but she did not want to: “I am so scared – she said –, I better stay so you can call me if you need anything”. We arrived to the hospital of Tacuba and they kept Martha in the emergency room for a long time without doing anything to her, since they had no beds. They asked for support from the hospital Fernando Quiroz and took us there

in another very dilapidated ambulance; it was five in the morning.

A very young doctor received my sister and commented that she was suffering a diabetic coma. He asked me for my credential, but I was not carrying documents, so he attended to her with the recommendation that I go to my house for her credential and to be back before the shift change.

I left the hospital with the pillow I had put my sister in the first ambulance and some covers with which I had wrapped her, I could hardly see where I was going. I took the bus to Satélite. I arrived home and when I entered to my bedroom I saw my yoga books lying on the floor and my sister sleeping in my bed. It caused me great disgust. Quickly, I grabbed what I needed, started up my car and we went to the hospital.

At eight o'clock in the morning, several doctors entered the area where my sister was and we, all the visitors, were taken out. Almost at once the doctor who attended to Martha came out and informed me that they were going to put catheters to extract fluid from the left lung. "Do not leave". So we stayed all morning until we were told that, from then on, we could be half an hour in the morning and half in the afternoon with our sick person. I went home, because the herpes scars still bothered me and I could not bear the legs of tiredness.

Over time, the doctors allowed me to spend more time with Martha, and one afternoon the device that was connected to her to monitor her heart began to make very large stripes. I ran out to notify the doctors. The stripes were already very small. They took us out and they took a long time. When they came out, one of them told me: "The patient had a cardiac arrest, but she is stable now".

Martha spent ten days in intensive care, where a smelly liquid was drained from her. When they moved her to a floor, it was to prepare her, since she would undergo a long operation; she was already conscious. My sisters could hardly be with me. Margarita went for a while in the afternoons, since

she lived far away, and Rosita, who had a job and took care of her granddaughter, was very sporadic in her visits, so I spent day and night waiting for the operation. Luz Maria had a cold, she did not go.

The operation lasted many hours, but it went well; she spent twenty-four hours in therapy and then they moved her to the floor. A nurse called me to bathe my sister and they moved her from the bed to a wheelchair. At that I saw that when being carried she was leaving a thread of blood on the road. I notified the nurse, but she insisted: “You bathe her”.

The showers were big and had a lot of pressure, when I turned the tap and the water fell on her back, I could see how the wound opened, like when a big piece of meat is cut, and a lot of blood started to flow. I ran to tell the nurse, and she in turn called the doctors screaming: “The wound of the patient in bed one opened!”.

They took a long time, I was shaking of cold, because I had gotten wet from head to toes. Finally the nurse told me that everything had gone well and that I should go home, because my sister was going to take long time to wake up from the anesthesia.

The next day Margarita arrived and told me that my son was outside, to go out and see him. I went with my son and suddenly Luz Maria came out crying: “Margarita threw me out”. When she came out, she said: “We’ve been already one month here and Luz Maria barely got rid of the flu. I come from far away to support you for a while in the afternoons and she arrives without notifying, there’s no way I am going back!”.

My son invited Luz Maria and me to eat. On the way she began to narrate that she had not had enough sleep because she went to a birthday party of a friend, where there were mariachis and they had sung and danced. I could not stand it anymore, I burst into tears and told everything that had happened in the hospital with my sister, the waiting, the wound that opened, I cried, cried and cried.

Martha was hospitalized for another week and then she was discharged.

When the next court hearing came, I told Mr. Flores that I had already received Martha's first pension, to which he replied: "Now we do have to drop the lawsuit against ISSSTE". I suggested him that we wait, but he insisted: "The thing is that they already recognized the rights of your sister". At the end of the hearing, the lawyers of ISSSTE celebrated: "We already won!". I became uneasy and we went to Mr. Taylor's office. When I told him about the result of the hearing, he commented: "I wouldn't have waived, but it's done".

As the decision of Mr. Flores had not seemed right to me, the next day I returned to the court and asked to speak to the procurator, but the sub-procurator attended to me. I explained to him my annoyance about the lawyer having dropped the lawsuit against ISSSTE. The sub-procurator carefully read and checked the papers, he got mad and said: "Who's that stupid? if I waive, then I break a leg, how can I demand to be taken care of?... I already waived! What you have left to do, madam, is to go to these offices (he gave me a piece of paper with the information) and ask for what corresponds to you. I am very sorry, that "little lawyer" made you lose twenty million pesos".

I hurried to find Mr. Taylor, but to whom I ran into there, was Mr. Flores. He tried to greet me and go after me, but I yelled at him what the sub-procurator had just told me and I repeated to him that he was a lousy lawyer. I went to the offices that the sub-procurator indicated to me, I showed my credential. I waited for a long time until they came in with a check. They gave it to me, it was for fifty-seven pesos. I went down to the parking lot, I stuck myself in the steering wheel of my car and cried. It was more than twenty years of hearings, paying lawyers and spending a lot of time fighting for my sister's rights!

I kept going to the hospital 20 de Noviembre every eight days and, finally, Dr. Esquivel gave me the good news: he had finished the study of Martha's medical report, which he had handed in and the ISSSTE had already sent it to court and from the court it would be sent to me: "Occupational illness". There was no need for me to keep going. I thanked Dr. Esquivel and left.

Indeed, I received the report in legal size copies and an extensive book describing the chemicals and the damage they had caused to my sister. I read it all and copied the most important: "carcinogens, protein and cell destroying elements, highly poisonous substances", etc.

The expenses of transport, food, payment of external consultations and purchase of medicines for my sister and the payment of the mortgage, became unaffordable, none of my siblings supported me. So my son Guayo and I thought that maybe my sister's house could be rented or re-mortgaged, but over the years, without maintenance, it was already in very poor condition. It had holes in the ceiling, cracks in the walls, rotting window structure, and water leaks.

I hired an architect to do the appraisal and filed it in court in order to be allowed to mortgage the house to repair it and then rent it. The judge denied to me the permission to mortgage, but he did authorize me to rent it, ordering me to present a curator from the Public Ministry, who would check that the rent money would be applied entirely to my sister's expenses. I rented it and little by little I repaired it.

Martha's left foot started to hurt a lot, she had developed an ulcer. I took her to Dr. Esquivel, who instructed me to quickly transfer her to the Hospital of Tacuba, since she could lose her foot. In that hospital, the previous emergency was repeated: they had no bed and asked the hospital *Primero de Octubre* for support. There they admitted her to the emergency room and told me to go home, that they would inform me the next day.

I told my sisters and, the next morning, when I arrived, they were already there, very alarmed, because a doctor explained to them that since Martha was diabetic, the disease was progressing rapidly and that she would probably lose her foot. I had to leave, because I had the appointment to get the report from Dr. Esquivel.

The next day, when I got to the hospital, they were crying inconsolably. Rosita came over to tell me that they would cut her from the knee because the infection continued. I stayed there, my sisters went home. It was long time before a doctor came out. The infection continued, they would wait twenty-four hours and if there was no change, they would cut her leg in order to save her life.

I went to a corner to pray and ask God for a miracle. I stayed in the ER for many hours. The next day, at eight in the morning, a doctor informed me that the infection was subsiding. Later the doctor ordered a nurse: "You will cure her foot for five days, and in that time you will teach the lady how to do so that she can continue the treatment later on". That was how I learned to cure my sister's wound. I bought gauze, scissors and tweezers and attended the healings with Martha at an ISSSTE clinic in La Florida, near my house. I carried her in a wheelchair which had belonged to my mother, but since she weighed a lot and had to go up the stairs, I paid the policeman at the entrance twenty pesos to help me. They had to remove horrible scabs to clean her foot; you could even see the tendons. I cured her daily and took her to checkup every eight days, until she was healed.

A small bedroom with a bathroom was built in what was the patio of my house in order to bathe her more easily and to prevent her from falling off the stairs again; however, on one occasion she fell off the bed and I was unable to lift her. I had to ask for help to a neighbor to get her up. My son Guayo spoke to my sisters so that each one had Martha at home for a couple of weeks, on a rotating basis, but not one of them

wanted to support me, they gave different excuses, so my son concluded that the best thing would be that, with the money from the pension, to intern her in a nursing home.

We looked for places, but we did not find a suitable one. Talking to my friend Gloria (she lived in a residential area adjacent to Satélite), she told me that from her kitchen garden you could see umbrellas on the other side of the grove and only white little heads. It was a very nice place, with little houses around a park and in the center a little chapel. I found a beautiful place for my little sister Martha. The person in charge of those who were there, was a young man who had studied medicine. Every Sunday was a visiting day and I gathered there with my sisters Margarita and Luz Maria. Sometimes Martha had crisis because of her diabetes and I had to take her out of the residence and take her to the hospital for them to normalize her. Little by little my sister lost her sight.

Seven months passed and, at some point, Gloria told me that a Colombian pianist was in Mexico giving concerts in hospitals and nursing homes, that if I would like him to give a concert where Martha was. I told her that of course, that she really liked good music.

I asked the owner of the house for permission and the concert was scheduled for the following month. The pianist gave those concerts every Sunday, and our turn was four Sundays after. Two weeks passed and, in that period, they notified me that Martha had had a heart attack. I ran out there; upon my arrival they had already normalized her. The next Sunday, when I saw my sister from afar, I felt a terrible thing. I told Margarita: "Martha is going to die, I see death on her face", and I cried. Margarita insisted that she saw her well, but due to crying I could not stand up.

As the next Sunday was our concert, the necessary preparations were made and chairs were rented. On Thursday November 15, before the concert, my sister passed away.

The following Sunday was the concert. It was beautiful! Many people came, some were standing. The concert artist told stories from each composer before playing the piece. My friend Gloria told me: “Martha is here listening to the concert”. We left an empty chair for her at the front.

From then on my half siblings drifted apart from me. About Elias, of whom I knew little before, today I know nothing. Rosita passed away last year. I think that Margarita and Luz Maria see each other occasionally... who knows what became of them.

XXVIII. MORE MUSIC FOR MY LIFE

When we came to live to Ciudad Satelite in 1965, barely half of the huge residential development was built, and perhaps a third part was inhabited. The distance was considered “enormous” up to the center of Mexico City. Just upon arriving at Toreo de Cuatro Caminos, one felt entering the city. The advantage lay in the peace of mind that our children could go out to play wherever they liked, in an environment of nature and security; in fact, sometimes my son Angelito and his cousin Mario (son of my sister Luz Maria) arrived with obsidian arrowheads which they found on the land of what is now Plaza Satélite.

My sister Martha, my sister Margarita and my mother lived almost one street from us, and my sister Luz Maria, with her family, six small streets away. Schools were close and we had (to date) a large park less than a hundred meters from our house. I enrolled my children in the Cuauhtémoc Unit of the

Mexican Institute of Social Security, to where we could go by bus that did not take longer than twenty minutes to get there. There they took gymnastics and swimming in facilities of excellent quality. At first I waited during the three hours that their activities lasted, either reading or knitting, but later I signed up for yoga classes myself, an activity that I practiced for more than twenty years.

I tried to start a home-delivery clothing sales business using part of my savings, and I was doing excellently, to extent that I invited one of my most reliable clients to participate with me. That was when Angel's problem broke out. By the time it was all over, my "business-partner" had taken advantage of my sales portfolio, my security deposits and of the credit that the clothing factory had given me.

Despite the distance and the commitments, I continued visiting the brethren of the spiritualist center of the Colonia Alfonso XIII. They had given me the strength to support Angel and they were about to continue their work facing the very sad situation that I lived with my sister Martha. Through an initiation ceremony I had been appointed as a sister to join an alternate spiritualist center, but I declined because my children were little.

I became friends with Mrs. Elvira, sister in the center (who "slept" to help me as the voice of Brother Rafael); she gave a lot without receiving anything in return. Elvirita worked ironing clothes at a dry cleaner in Las Lomas. I visited at her work whenever I could. I also invited her to the movies, to lunch or to the theater. She felt happy and said she had never had a friend like me. She was very short, barely a meter and forty centimeters tall, with wavy gray hair, chubby and with a huge smile, small hands and a huge heart. She retired prematurely due to health problems and with her daughter (who was the other side of the coin), and went to live alone in a small apartment that was offered to her at the spiritualist center.

Angel began to teach music to the students of the primary school where our children were going. Coincidentally, the school was owned by a family of teachers from Merida, which was a remembrance for him and helped him partly overcome the emotional consequences of that stage. Then she was a piano accompanist at the National Dance School (behind the National Auditorium) for a couple of years. Due to the lack of work, he bought a restaurant on Monterrey Street (a business that his wife managed) and to which my children used to go during vacations to work as “little waiters”. The profits were meager and the effort much. He lasted with the business for about four years, when his health began to weaken.

At some point the CTM began to lose strength and the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC) took spaces and channeled part of its strategy towards the musicians’ guild; that gave us one last chance to work in important places, but Angel was declining. Nevertheless, we were still in a trio (Angel on the accordion, a drummer and I on the bass) for a while at the Hotel Chapultepec, at the restaurant Chapulín in 1978-1979, shortly after its opening.

El Rincon Gaucho, owned by Wolf Ruvinskis, was the last international-style place where Angel worked for about two years. Mr. Ruvinskis appreciated him very much, to the extent of allowing him to “inherit” his place as a pianist to Jorge (our youngest son), who followed in his father’s footsteps, and who, despite his father, studied for several years at the National Conservatory of Music.

XXX. NINETY YEARS

It is difficult to close this series of stories that I have been capturing throughout the recent years without being overwhelmed by emotion, because the experiences continued intensely until my ninety years of age that I have just reached.

Angel underwent surgery three times for a brain tumor caused by a heavy fall in which he hit his head, and after, he went to live full time with his wife (shortly after we took Martha to my house) because we no longer understood each other.

A few years ago the phone rang, it was none other than Iztaccihuatl Rios! We greet and agreed to meet at the Museum of Anthropology. At first I did not recognize her, but she ran from across the plaza to hug me. She was the drummer from the Rios Art orchestra, her sister Tenochtitlán played the accordion; her mother, the guitar; her aunt, the saxophone; one more colleague (who was not from the family) played the piano and I, the double bass. We played Glen Miller music, among other styles... fifty years ago of that!

-Iztac, how long were we playing at the Follies Bergère?

-I remember it was three years. My dad signed the contract with Mr. Palillo's company. We worked three months and rested three. Not for nothing, but we competed with Tongolele.

-We traveled through different states. Do you remember when we went to the Palenque in Córdoba, Veracruz, and that I fell into a sink where they washed the tables of the roosters, I fractured my ankle and came out with all the dress full of cock poop?

-Yes, Lupita! We could not get close to you because of the foul smell you had, ha, ha, ha!

The talk continued because very few of us, women, were able to have that kind of experience in a distant Mexico that has changed a lot in a few areas and little in many others.

What is missing here to reach today's date also has many colors, emotions, disappointments, but with music. Struggles that I have undertaken for decades, spiritual goals that I have achieved, disciplines that I have mastered and unspeakable dramas through which I never thought of transiting or overcoming. I had the invitation to join the Symphony Orchestra of the State of Mexico, which I rejected, since my children were little. I worked with Tin Tan until a fire on the stage, where I burned my hand, made me appreciate that my children were waiting for me at home.

Finally, in 1995 I went to play for two months to San Jose del Cabo, BCS, with my husband and older son Angel. When I returned, I loosened the strings on my double bass, I put it in its cover (I wrapped it), I leaned it in the corner of my bedroom, and I thanked it for having accompanied me for so, so many years on the beautiful path of music... I would not play it again.

I joined the practice of *tai chi* for eighteen years, until a hip condition impeded me. I sang in the choir of the church Circuito Navegantes. When the choir turned fifteen, we had the opportunity to sing in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City. After all...more music for my life.

I no longer know if emotionally I can relive the other trances that are still missing here as to write more, so, finally, I share this beautiful event that my son Guayo gave me.

Guayito, who for many years has been my financial and emotional support; the one who always is there, my friend and adviser. The one who takes care of my health. Who takes me to the theater, to the cinema, to concerts and, in other times, to dance. He is the one who brings the family together, taking us to his brothers (whom he loves so much), or bringing them to me.

Guayito gave me as a present a meal for my ninety years on the exact day of my birthday. It was in a hall of the Civic Center of Ciudad Satelite. My tai chi friends attended, and my friend Maria Elena helped me communicate with each of the members of the Redemptoris Mater choir where I sang, and they gave me as a present their participation. The choir director, maestro Ramon Tovar, was considered one of the best organists in the country and selected the scores and sang his part with very soft and beautiful high notes. They sang *Entre tus manos*, *Salmos*, *Ave Maria* and *Aleluya*. In the hall they set up an altar with everything that should include and a priest was hired to officiate a liturgy. He addressed very beautiful words to me.

At the end of the ceremony, the choir dedicated to me *Gracias a la vida*. My friends interpreted *A la orilla de un palmar* by Margarita Arauco, *El andariago*, and *Maria Elena Perdón*, by Pedro Flores; all of them choir-mates. Then, I got up from my wheelchair to talk about my first participation in the contest Los Aficionados, when I was sixteen years old, and I finished off singing for all the guests of that meal *Flor de azalea* and *Noche criolla*... despite the fear I had of being short of breath, but I sang well.

My three children dedicated some words to me, each one with their own style, and my son Guayo did the closing by singing to me *Mi vieja dama*. The event was attended by Carlos Cu (brother of my children) and his beautiful family, my dearest friends and neighbors and my only two and beloved grandchildren: Angelito Cu Valderrama, Guayo's son, and Itzá

Cu Fernández, Angel's son. It was a very musical, beautiful celebration.