

Topic: The Holding Fort

Abstract: My grandfather has always been the fort that holds the bond in my large family together. He was well respected and liked by his family and close friends. Even those that did not know him personally had heard of him in his small town. He was hard working and talented. In Mexican tradition, there is usually a member in the family that makes everything right. It usually is an elder who has gone through so much in their life and gives advice when needed. They settle disagreements in the family with much dignity. That person for me was my grandfather.

Key Words: grandfather, family, tradition, respect, honor

Ethnic Designation: *Mexicana*

Cultural Category: Respect for Elders

The One That Holds the Family Together

Who is the one that your family looks up to, admires, and respects? Who is that one individual that holds every member together with so much force and guides the family with much wisdom? That member in my family was my grandfather. My grandfather raised his seven children in Guerrero, Mexico. He was a hardworking farmer and merchant who raised and sailed bananas, coconuts, mangos, watermelons, tomatoes, corn, cows, and sheep. Since his family lived near the ocean and a lagoon, he traded his crops for salt that the locals made. He used salt to feed the animals and to make cheese in order to eat and sell. Even with little education and no money to start a business, he was successful in prospering his family. In the small town that he and his children, my uncles and aunts, lived in everyone admired and respected him for his caring and honorable character. This man is the one that I admire and am honored to call my grandfather.

Tall, light brown eyes, white golden hair, skinny but strong, this is how I remember him. He was always serious when you were around him. When you entered a room, you felt his strong presence. A member in the family made sure to speak properly to him because he was venerable. When people greeted him it was always by the title Don, meaning Mr. He had gone through so much in his early childhood, suffering from hunger because of poverty. He put all his effort that his children would not go through the similar circumstances and he ended up succeeding.

I was taken care of at a young age by my grandfather and grandmother since my parents decide to work at my grandfather's farm where there was no school nearby. He was willing, along with my grandmother to take care of me even when it was not there responsibility. They fed me, clothed me, washed my cloths, and took me to school. Spending time with them, I got to feel a closer bond with my grandfather. I noticed how he woke up every morning at five, had breakfast, and then left to work at the farm feeding the animals and raising the crops so when I woke up to go to school he was already out the door. He had so much responsibility to take care of the family that I looked up to him. On Sundays, after he and my grandmother had the family tradition of going to church, a Mexican culture tradition as well, we had a huge dinner together where the family gathered at his house. Famous foods cooked by grandmother were tacos, chilaquiles, queso relleno, pozole, and mole. My grandfather had known most of the neighbors since they were children, having a very close bond in the neighborhood. They would come and visit my grandfather at his house where they would socialize. When they did, I had to make sure not to disturb the elders since I was a child, so I got the chance to go and play outside of the house.

Things have not been the same since my grandfather passed away. The family bond is no longer the same. My uncles and aunts constantly argue and disagree with each other. That strong

bond and power that held the family together is no longer there. The force that made my uncles and aunts shake their hands in agreement and forget their wrongs. The family no longer has dinners and holidays as constantly as before. The new world in America has changed much of their closeness as well. That Mexican tradition that used to be strongly in place is slowly shattering. Without my grandfather, there seems to be little hope that the family will ever be back to the same way it used to. My grandfather has thought me that family bond and love is very important, that one should appreciate it because when it is no longer there one will long for it.