**Topic:** My parents migrated to the U.S.

**Abstract:** The romanticism of coming to the United States brought my father and my mother to San Jose and then to Hollister. Through hard work and money management they were able to achieve their “American Dream” and provide a better life and set as examples for my sister and I.

**Key Words:** Hard Work, Values, “American Dream”, Money, Family, Saving, Fundamentals, Challenges, “El Otro Lado”

As we transition from adolescence to adulthood, we commence to realize the morals instilled to us by our parents. During our adolescence, these morals are almost always ignored and sometimes go unnoticed. See, at that age our mindsets are oblivious to the sacrifices made by our parents. We tend to focus on their flaws and our minds are set on the present and the troubles of juvenility. While we think that the problems of that age are significant, we make the mistake of not realizing, that our parents have already gone thru some of life’s experiences and furthermore fail to pick up on the morals being instilled in us subconsciously. We don’t become conscious of these morals until we realize that we are more like them than we once imagined after so many years of trying to distance ourselves from them.

As we make the transition from adolescence to adulthood, we begin to mature in our way of thinking. Our priorities begin change and our outlook focuses more on the
future than the past and present. We are forced to deal with life’s hard decisions and the unpredictability of tomorrow. And one day when our minds begin to wander, we are struck with the realization that we are more like our parents. The thought of that idea once brought fear to us, but now puts new found prospective and admiration towards our parents.

My parents have always tried to teach me the value of hard work and that there are no short cuts in life. You have to work hard for everything you want and no matter what challenges are presented, you must and will overcome. As I dive deeper into adulthood, those core fundamentals my parents have, are the same values I believe in. As a youth, I never thought about the sacrifices and obstacles my parents had to overcome to reach the “American Dream”. I mean, I knew that I had to work to support myself, but at that age I always thought that life was going to be obvious.

As a child my father, born in Mexico, heard the stories of romanticism of making it in “el otro lado”( the other side). With nothing more than a 6th grade education and few hundred dollars, my father at the age of 24 decided to make the journey to San Jose, California in 1980. During summer of 1980, he made his first attempt to cross the border illegally but failed after he was picked up by the Border Patrol. However, towards the end of that summer he successfully crossed and made his way towards San Jose. His oldest sister had already established herself a couple years prior to his arrival in San Jose and offered him shelter while he looked for work.

My father’s admiration of automobiles followed him to the field of body technician in auto collision. He never had any real schooling other than working in body shops in Mexico. He made a good living of 5 dollars an hour at the beginning. After a
two year hiatus, he would return periodically to Mexicali. During this time, he won the affection of my mother and in the early part of 1983, brought her to San Jose, at first living with his sister.

As a youth, my father was always a hard worker but never thought about the value of saving money. He would spend his entire paycheck as soon as he received it on his love for cars. My father credits my mother for changing his life. As he puts it, “she’s the one that got me to think of the future, and showed me the value of saving money”. It wasn’t long after she came that my parents moved out and got a place of their own. Granted, it wasn’t anything luxurious, a small studio in downtown San Jose, but it was a start.

Soon I was born in fall of 1984, and my parents realized that they had out grown that small studio and need something more adequate. My parents were forced to make more sacrifices for the added pressure of not only having and raising a child, but the increase in rent of having a bigger place. I still remember that first place after all these years. It was a three story apartment building in downtown San Jose. I can picture the beige exterior and the cement stairs that I often would play on. We lived there until I was five. The reason: my younger sister was about to be born in the fall of 1989. Now by this time, my father was earning more money than when he first started, but with another child on the way, better money management was needed.

We moved out of that one bedroom apartment in downtown San Jose to a two bedroom apartment in Sunnyvale in the summer of 1989. Once my sister grew older we had to share a room. Over the next few years, it was something I had grown accustom to. Watching us grow older, my parents soon began to realize that we were going to need
something bigger. They knew that we would out grow that two bedroom apartment. They were dreaming of the “American Dream”, to own their own home with the white picket fence. When I talk to my parents now, they tell me of the struggles they went thru to save money with the added pressure of having two children and my father being the sole provider. They had to make cutbacks and sacrifices for their dream to come true.

My father worked long hours and made good money. He did it to support his family and for as long as I can remember, he never complained about anything. Before the thought of owning his own home entered his mind, with him as the sole provider, we did ok as a family. We never had to wonder about when and where our next meal was going to come, or if he would have enough for the rent. As he tells me today, the decision to become a homeowner never really crossed his mind until he realized that my sister and I would soon out grow the shared room we had.

Some uncles and aunts began to move into houses. I remember going over for family events and seeing the big back yard, my cousins having their own rooms with the posters all over the walls. My father saw the same thing, although not from my prospective, but still had the same effect. He realized, and he told me this, “Why can’t I own my own home? They did it”

Soon after that, my father had a conversation with my mother about taking the required steps to become homeowners. Not only would our family be better off, but it would be a wise investment. So, my mother, after so many years of being the typical Mexican housewife, entered the work force. She worked long hours, not coming home till late in the evening. At the age of 11, I had to take care of my sister after she came home from school. My parents wouldn’t make it home till late in the evening. My mother still
had to make dinner after the long work day so we could have a family dinner and watch television as a family for a couple hours then we all went to bed. That was the typical work week. Till this day mother also has never complained about working the long hours and still coming home to work some more.

It took my parents five years from the moment they had the conversation to save the required money it took for a down payment for a home. I remember going to real estate offices at that time. We went to many different areas looking for homes, but mostly around the San Jose area. It’s all we ever knew with most of my family concentrated in that area.

With the amount of money my parents qualified for a home loan, they started to look at the east side of San Jose as a possibility. My mother never liked the homes being shown by the real estate agent. I’ve never asked my mother was she was looking for in a home as she is sometimes very quiet, but I do know with most certainty, that it was the neighborhoods. She was thinking about my sister and I. The area we where to grow up in mattered to her.

After a few months of looking for homes, my father started to become discouraged, until he spoke with my uncle, who was living in Salinas, to look into Hollister. At first my father thought about the distance from his job. It would be a long commute but it was worth a look. I remember coming here for the first time. It looked vastly different from what I was accustomed to. Seeing all this farm land and the small town, I was very disappointed and hoped that my parents didn’t find what they, mostly my mother, was looking for. With what they qualified, Hollister was a perfect. They looked at two homes. I remember the first, nice big house in the Sunnyslope area. My
mother seemed to like this house, first time she ever said anything. But it was a little out
of their price range.

Then we came to look at the second home, very different from the first. The price of the home was perfect, $156,000. Sure it wasn’t the first home, but with time and effort, my father knew he could envision our family here. After my parents talked it over, it took them a week to close the deal. We moved to Hollister in March of 1998 and things have changed since then. I remember the house being an ugly grey with green trim color, two towering trees in the front yard and large weeds on one side of the property. Since then, the trees have been removed, the weeds have been replaced with grass and the house was repainted a sky blue color. No longer was this house the eye sore of the neighborhood. We, as a family, worked to get this house into the shape it is today.

As I’ve aged and my way of thinking has matured, I look back to the road my parents have taken to accomplish their dreams. Life is unpredictable and you can only hope that you have the necessary tools and mindset to accomplish your dreams and aspirations. You become a mirror image of your parents. As much as I hated the idea when I was younger, I realize that I’m much more like my parents than I would have imagined. I do believe in the value of hard work, and making the required sacrifices to achieve my dreams.