

# Questions Posed to Angel Rañon by His Family

## A Work in Progress as of January 26, 2010

Note to Readers: This document represents an effort by the sons and daughters of Angel Rañon to retain for posterity the remembrances of Angel's life. The original thought was to have Angel respond to a series of questions posed by his children. This led to an initial set of fifty questions prepared by Juan. Follow-up questions to the original fifty were prepared by Juan, Maria, Alicia, and Carlos.

Since we (the children of Angel) had the good fortune of starting our lives with both sets of grandparents living and since we got to know them well, the questions often not only touch on Angel's remembrances, but also our own. For this reason and because Angel also refers in his remembrance to his own grandparents, the following brief description of our family relationships is provided in the hope that it will help the reader better understand who is being referred to in the narrative. Additionally, a crude and as yet, incomplete timeline is presented at the end of this document.

Star of the Show  
[Angel Rañon](#)

Paternal Grandparents <a href="#">Domingo and Maria</a>	Maternal Grandparents <a href="#">Manuel and Benita</a>
Angel's Father <a href="#">Domingo Rañon</a>	Angel's Mother <a href="#">Ramona Fernandez</a>
Angel's Brothers <a href="#">Juan Francisco and Jose Antonio</a>	
Angel's Wife <a href="#">Eusebia Fernandez</a>	
Angel's Children <a href="#">Juan, Maria, Alicia, Carlos</a>	

*Q-1 What are your earliest memories of life in Spain?*

A-1 A most difficult question. The answer is not going to be given in the order that I remember. Faintly remembering the big house we lived in and where I was born. Moving to a much smaller house across the highway. The smaller house was part of a three-unit building. Living in that small house with my mother Ramona, my paternal grandfather Domingo, my paternal grandmother María and my aunt Digna. My father Domingo had already left Spain to live and work, first in Havana, Cuba and then in Tampa, Florida in the United States of America. The first school that I attended was directly across the highway from the small house we lived in the second was in La Rochela, two or three kilometers west of our house in El Rato. While living with my paternal grandparents I remember that I dearly loved my grandmother, but was not very fond of my grandfather. Growing up the only chore I remember doing is taking our only cow to pasture, a chore that I didn't particularly enjoy.

The first school that I attended was a one room, co-educational, taught by a stern male teacher by the name of Don Alejandro. The students were overwhelmingly male, we numbered over fifty. I have a photograph of the class, perhaps the last year that I attended the school that I attended in El Rato. The photograph clearly shows that the male students far outnumbered the females.

My best friend was Alfonso Ventoso, the youngest member of the family who bought our first house. Since it was across the highway from ours we played a lot together. I remember trying to make cookies with him. What I don't remember is whether they were real or made of mud.

The winters were very cold, and humid. We didn't have any heat other than from the fire in the kitchen over which the cooking was done. We didn't have running water, electricity or indoor plumbing. All the water consumed had to be brought from a public fountain in a vessel that the women had to carry on their head. The village of El Rato and all others in the area were electrified in the late nineteen twenties. Running water and plumbing were nonexistent when my mother, my brother Juan and I left Spain for Tampa. The only bicycle that I rode belonged to my cousin Carlos Fernández. He was the oldest child from Esteiro, the place/house where my mother was born. I believe that Carlos had the only child's bike in the Parrish of La Devesa. The only time I rode the bike was the day before we left La Devesa.

When we needed to go to Ribadeo we would go on a horse drawn wagon that made the trip on a daily run. Ribadeo has many Parishes, one of which is La Devesa. We would usually return by walking the five or six kilometers from Ribadeo.

I wore wooden shoes very much like the Dutch wear. I did have leather shoes but those were worn only on Sundays and holidays. The size of the wooden shoes (zuecas), when a new pair was needed, was measured by taking a stick and measuring your foot, going to Ribadeo with the stick and finding a pair that fitted the stick, not your foot. This method usually worked.

Given time I can probably come up with more information but at this point I want to move on to the second question. I will be glad to elaborate on any of the above.

*Follow-up to Q-1:*

*A. How old were you when you were entrusted to take the family cow to pasture?*

Answer: I don't know but I must have been about nine or ten years old.

*B. Did you look up your friend Alfonso Ventoso when you returned to Spain in 1970?*

Answer: No, he had moved to Sarria to work at a cement manufacturing plant, I believe that he was a chemist for the plant. Sarria while in Galicia is quite some distance from La Devesa. I did visit with him during one of the later trips when he came to La Devesa.

To visit his sister Pepita. During one of our later visits I was driven to Sarria by either José Antonio Molejón or José Cuestato see him.

- C. *Was the road between La Devesa and Ribadeo paved when you were a child? Do you remember seeing any automobiles? Motorcycles or other modes of transportation?*

The road between La Devesa was indeed paved. The base was crushed rock, the top was liquid asphalt. Yes, I not only remember automobiles but bicycles, buses, buses and horse drawn carriages.

- Q-2 *How much do you know about Abuelo Benito's family? What village were they from? Do you know what Abuelo Benitos's father did for a living?*

- A-2 I know very little. Most of what I will tell you is hearsay. I didn't know him until I visited him and his family when I went to New York, the first time, in 1946. I wasn't very inquisitive and he didn't volunteer any information. I know from records that I have that he was born in Havana, Cuba and that he went to Ribadeo or La Devesa at a very early age. His father came to Tampa and died in Tampa the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1915. He is buried in the Centro Español cemetery on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue. I don't have any information about where and when his mother died. He was raised by two spinsters that your Mom referred to as las tías. I assume that that they were Abuelo Benito's aunts on one or the other side of the family. He inherited some properties in Ribadeo, the house in La Rochela and a few parcels of land in La Devesa. Sometime after your mother and I were married he decided to sell all. He gave my Uncle José a power of attorney to sell them, which he did. Your Mom was quite put out when she found out that he had sold everything without telling her. She really wanted to at least keep the house in La Rochela. In retrospect, it probably was a good thing because the house was empty and deteriorating. A second cousin and her husband bought the house and they did a great job in restoring it. The couple that bought it still live there .

As to what Abuelo Benito's father did I can only speculate. Perhaps you can find something about him at the Tampa Bay History Center or the Hillsborough County Library.

- Q-3 *How did Abuelo and Abuela María meet? Where did they live after they married?*

- A-3 They probably met at some fiesta in San Miguel or La Devesa. The two villages are not very far apart so it could have been anywhere in the area.

- Q-4 *What did Abuelo Benito do support Abuela and Mama before they came to the United States?*

A-4 I don't know, but I understand that Abuelo had inherited some money and spent it in some business ventures that failed.

*Q-5 How did political conditions in other parts of Spain affect life in La Devesa in the 1920's?*

A-5 I don't have a clue.

*Follow-up to Q-5: Ok fine, but thinking back was there any conversation within the home, at family gatherings, at fiestas, at church about politics, national foreign adventures, and the like?*

Answer:

I don't recall any such conversations.

*Q-6 How would you describe economic conditions in La Devesa in the 1920's?*

A-6 Same answer as (A-5).

*Follow-up to Q-6: We realize you were just a youngster of 10 when you left for America, but can you remember any details about economic life in a rural village far removed from the nearest big city? Was subsistence farming the norm or were some farmers able to grow cash crops? How did campesinos raise cash to buy goods and commodities? Was the barter system almost exclusively used among neighbors in the village? In general, did most families have enough to eat?*

Answer:

I can't give you any details as I was not concerned about those things. I do remember that we didn't lack for anything to wear or eat but keep in mind that in rural areas most people plant a garden and do with what they have. Most had chickens for eggs and meat and at least one cow for milk.

*Q-7 How widespread was electrification in place in the coastal area around La Devesa when you were a child?*

A-7 Electrification was non-existing in my early years, it did come a year or two before we left for the U.S. of A.

*Follow-up to Q-7: When you say that electrification occurred close to the time the family left, do you mean in your home or merely in the neighborhood?*

Answer:

In the house we lived electric power was installed for lighting and nothing else. We were limited to two bulbs burning at any one time. We paid a flat rate for the power we used. All those in the neighborhood who could pay were provided with metered power.

*Q-8 Was the school you attended run by the church? If not by who? Did your parents have to pay for you to go to school? If yes, did the requirement to pay greatly affect attendance in the La Devesa area?*

A-8 No, the school that I attended was not run by the church. I believe that it was run by the national government. My parents did not have to pay for my schooling.

*Q-9 How would you characterize the quality of the education you received in La Devesa?*

A-9 Since I don't have any other system to compare it to I believe that it was quite adequate.

*Q-10 Were radios commonplace in La Devesa? How did you get most of the news of the day?*

A-10 To my knowledge there were no radios in La Devesa until 1928. My father who had returned to La Devesa in 1927 collected sufficient funds from the neighbors to buy one and install it at the Circulo Habanero De La Devesa, for community listening. As I recall the quality of the transmissions was very poor but the people enjoyed it anyway. There was no news of the day as such. The news came from a newspaper that was published in Ribadeo. I don't know how frequent the newspaper was published but I believe that those who wanted to read it had to go to the Circulo. There were no individual subscribers that I know of in La Devesa.

*Q-11 You were 7 years old when Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic. Do you remember if it was newsworthy in La Devesa?*

A-11 I never heard the name of Lindbergh until I came to Tampa.

*Q-12 Did Abuelo Domingo learn his craft from his father or by some other means?*

A-12 He must have learned it from his father. I remember hearing that my Abuelo had a shop in the house that he had built and that he had some foot-powered tools in it. I don't remember seeing any.

*Q-13 How did Abuelo Domingo and Abuela Ramona meet?*

A-13 I haven't any knowledge of their meeting. But like your other grandparents probably at some fiesta or church function.

*Q-14 How much do we know about Abuelo Domingo's family?*

A-14 Very little; besides his parents Domingo and María, he had at least three brothers and at least two sisters. Of the brothers, only Ángel survived to adulthood. Ángel was born in Habana, Cuba. At some point he came to Tampa, died here and is buried in the Centro Español de Tampa Cemetery.

Of the sisters, only Digna survived to adulthood living to age eighty-eight. The other sister, also named Digna, died very young. Abuelo Domingo had two aunts and perhaps an uncle. The aunts were María and Nicolasa. María died in La Rochela and Nicolasa in Argentina. She never married and returned to La Devesa once for a visit. She and I communicated by letter for a short time. Of the uncle that died in Tampa I know very little. The above mentioned were from the Rañón side of the family. From the Fernández side there were seven sisters, María (my grandmother), Celsa, Francisca, Dolores, Amparo and three others that I can't recall.

*Follow-up to Q-14: Do you know if Angel was the only sibling that was born in Havana? Do you know if your Uncle Angel ever traveled to Spain or did he spend his entire life in Cuba and Tampa?*

*He probably went to Spain when his parents returned by I don't really know*

*When did you correspond with your Aunt Nicolasa: when you were young living in Tampa or after you became an adult? Do you have any of her letters? Do you know what year she returned to Spain?*

Nicolasa was my father's aunt. I corresponded with her after we were living in Tampa. No, I don't have any of her letters, she must have returned to Spain in The mid-twenties. I remember seeing her in Spain.

*Q-15 Our name is uncommon even in Spain. You mentioned once that Abuelo D had a hunch that its origins were in Israel. Was it a hunch or did he have some specific information or insight that lead him to that conclusion?*

A-15 We never discussed the reason for that statement. He sometimes said that it might be of French origin.

*Q-16 Why did Abuelo Domingo's father immigrate to Cuba? Did he go to live there by himself? Did he ever return to Spain? Did any of his siblings or your grandmother travel to Cuba?*

A-16 I have no information about the reason for his emigration to Cuba. However, it must have been to earn a better living for themselves. Abuela María must have come with him because their son Ángel was born in Cuba. I have no knowledge of how long they were in Havana but they went back to Spain sometime. No

siblings of my grandfather or grandmother traveled to Cuba. At least I don't have any knowledge of it.

*Q-17 You may have touched on this in Question 6, but if not tell me why so many Gallegos and Asturianos leave Spain for the new world in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Was it to escape the dire economic conditions, political instability, an oppressive church or a combination of these factors?*

A-17 The two factors that most influenced the exodus of so many, mostly young men, was the economic conditions and the fact they had compulsory military duty. I understand that the living conditions for the military were very poor. Many of those that went to Africa for training became sick and some even died. I don't believe that the church wasn't involved, nor the political conditions. It was not only Gallegos and Asturianos that came to the new world, young men and a few women from all over Spain did the same thing.

*Q-18 What year did Abuelo Domingo leave Spain for the first time? Did he go directly to Havana?*

A-18 I believe that he left Spain the first time in 1919. He did go directly to Havana where he worked for a short time before coming to Tampa. I also believe that he and his father came together.

*Q-19 Did Abuelo Domingo work for his father in Havana? I remember that you have commented that the two didn't exactly get along. Is this correct? Did this problem exist before Abuelo went to Cuba? Do you know what was the source of the discord?*

A-19 No, he didn't work for his father but both worked together for a relative who had a furniture factory. The relative was José Acevedo but I never found out what the relationship was. I remember saying that they did not get along, this is an assumption on my part from bits and pieces of conversations that I guess that I heard. I understand that my grandfather had a domineering personality and that may have been the reason he came to Tampa. He needed to get away from his father.

*Q-20 How long did Abuelo live in Havana before he came to Tampa?*

A-20 I don't know the exact time but from dates on photographs I believe it was a relatively short time, probably less than a year.

*Q-21 Did he ever describe his life in Havana?*

A-21 Not to me.

*Q-22 Did he ever return to Spain before he came to Tampa?*

A-22 No.

*Q-23 Do you know the year of his arrival in Tampa?*

A-23 1921.

*Q-24 Do you know specifically what prompted him to come to Tampa?*

A-24 No.

*Q-25 By the time Abuelo Domingo arrived in Havana, Cuba had been independent for only a few years. Did he ever tell any stories about how Spanish nationals were treated there?*

A-25 No.

*Q-26 What kind of permission did Abuelo Domingo need to travel to US? Was a Spanish passport plus visa sufficient? Did the permission allow him to work here or just visit?*

A-26 I don't know the answers to any of the above.

*Follow-up to Q-26: I understand that entry permits from Spain to the U.S. in the early 1900's were quite limited (I assume because the U.S. and Spain fought a war at the turn of the century) and that this circumstance affected how Spaniards immigrated to the U.S. By this I mean that it was easier for Spanish nationals to first travel to Cuba and then to the States. Do you know if the length of time Abuelo Domingo spent in Tampa before bringing you, Abuela Ramona, and Tio Juan over was related to immigration documentation issues or was it related more to his desire to be reasonably well established before bringing the family over?*

Answer:

The limited immigration to the USA was not only for Spain but other countries as well. The delay in us coming to Tampa likely was because he did want to establish himself in Tampa but to some extent because he needed three visas together.



*Q-27 Do you know if he first stayed in a boarding house when he arrived or was there family already here?*

A-27 I don't know the answer to this question, but initially he probably stayed either with his sister-in-law Concha (Marujas's mother) or his aunt Francisca (Paca Vigo).

*Follow-up to Q-27: Concha was Abuela Ramona's Sister. We know that Concha and her family lived in Tampa for a considerable length of time, long enough for Maruja to attend Hillsborough High School and become very proficient in English, which she put to good use when the family returned to Spain. What do you know about Concha's immigration to Tampa? When did they come? How long did they stay? Why did they go back to Spain?*

Answer:

I am quite sure that Concha, her husband Pedro and Maruja came to Tampa together in 1918 or 1920. Why did they come to Tampa? I assume it was to find work. They went back to Spain in 1933 or 1934 because Pedro was not well and he thought he could get well in Spain and come back. Unfortunately he did not and overstayed their permit and were not able to return.

*Q-28 What did he do to support himself when he first arrived?*

A-28 I don't know.

*Q-29 How did his work life progress over time?*

A-29 He did small carpentry jobs, formed three contracting partnerships. The first one was with a gentleman named Badia, a second one with another one named Blanco and finally with Maximo Jimenez. The first two, I believe were short lived. I think that Badia and Blanco both wound up in Miami. The third was formed in 1930 with Maximo. This one lasted until Maximo passed away.

*Q-30 How long do you think it took him to decide to live here permanently?*

A-30 I don't even know if he even considered living anywhere else.

*Follow-up to Q-30: That's not what I meant. After moving to Tampa to "test the waters" and finding work, do you have any idea how long it took him to decide to make the mover permanent and bring the rest of the immediate family over?*

Answer:

No.

*Q-31 Do you know if he was able to send money back home to support Abuela, you and Tio Juan? If yes, how were those transfers made? If not, how did Abuela support herself back home?*

A-31 He would send some money to both my Abuela María and your Abuela from time to time. The amounts were not very large but enough to keep the family going. The transfers were made through a bank in Canada. I believe that he used the Bank of Ybor City for that purpose. Abuela Ramona lived with her in-laws and Digna. I don't know if she got any help from Esteiro. I still have some copies of the transfers.

*Q-32 How was life in Spain for you and your immediate family with Abuelo Domingo in the new world?*

A-32 Remember this: I never saw my father until I was seven years old when he went back to La Devesa to see his father who was dying. He didn't make it in time and stayed there for about a year before returning to Tampa. I was not to see him again until we arrived in Havana in January of 1931. He had gone there to meet us. Other than that I lived the good life of a Spanish village.

*Q-33 Do you know if there was frequent communication between your mother and your father when he was away? Was there talk in the household about possibly moving to the States? Do you remember when and how the decision was made?*

A-33 I know there was communication between parents because I sometimes addressed the envelopes for the letters that my mother and I wrote to my father. The frequency of those letters I don't remember. I don't recall any talk about moving to the States but obviously, there had to be or we wouldn't have come. Yes, the decision was made when my mother received notification from the consul in Vigo that three permits were available to us to come to the States. I have the original letter from the Consul.

*Q-34 How emotionally wrenching was the departure?*

A-34 Very for me! As I may have stated earlier, I was very attached to my Grandmother María with whom we lived. I did not want to leave her behind. However, once we departed, I accepted the inevitable and accepted the fact that I was going to meet my father for the second time.

*Q-35 Do you know what prompted Abuelo Benito to leave?*

A-35 No.

*Q-36 Do you know what year he left? When he left, was he accompanied by Abuela Maria and Mama or did he leave alone like Abuelo Domingo?*

A-36 Abuelo Benito and Abuela Maria left together and that must have been in 1924. Your mother was born in 1921 and I was told that she was three years old when they left her with Abuelo Benito's spinster aunts.

*Q-37 Did Abuelo Benito travel to Havana first or did he travel to New York first?*

A-37 Abuelo Benito and Abuela María came to Havana first where they both worked for a short time. They then moved to Miami where they also worked for a short time. They then went to New York and settled there until they retired to Tampa.

*Q-38 If he went to Havana, what did he do there and how long did he stay?*

A-38 Both he and Abuela Maria lived in Havana for perhaps a year. While there he was a taxi driver and Abuela a seamstress.

*Q-39 What prompted the move to New York and when he left did he have any prospects for employment? What did he do when he first got there?*

A-39 I don't have the answer to the first question. I believe that his first job in New York (Brooklyn) was with Edison Electric Company as a blacksmith.

*Q-40 How did Abuelo Benito and Abuela Maria come to settle in Brooklyn?*

A-40 Probably because they met a fellow Spaniard in Miami who had family in Brooklyn. They traveled together from Miami, by car, to Brooklyn and settled there.

*Q-41 Was Abuelo Domingo fairly well established or at least had steady work here before the effects of the Depression hit? What about Abuelo Benito?*

A-41 I believe that Abuelo Domingo was fairly well established. Abuelo Benito also had steady work as an auto mechanic.

*Q-42 How would you characterize the Depression years in Tampa? Had Abuelo Domingo established his own business by 1930 or 1931? What did he do to survive in those years?*

A-42 As you know, we arrived in Tampa in January of 1931. The Depression was in full swing at the time and it was to last a year or two longer. I wasn't aware of any problems. We always had food on the table, clothes to wear and all we needed to live. So from my perspective everything was as good or better than in Spain. In 1930, Abuelo and Maximo Jimenez had agreed to work together as builders. Somehow they managed to get enough odd jobs to satisfy our needs. As an example I remember that they re-roofed a house with corrugated tin for a grocery merchant. When the time came to get paid the grocer didn't have all the money necessary so they agreed to take out the balance in groceries.

*Q-43 You were in Tampa in the early 1930's. How would you characterize home life and economic conditions for the family during those years?*

A-43 I believe that I more or less covered this question in the previous answer.

*Q-44 Did Abuela Maria enter the work force in New York soon after their arrival or later?*

A-44 I believe that she found employment in an olive packing plant early on. She told me that they received the olives, packed in brine, in barrels and repacked them in small containers for the retail trade.

*Q-45 How do you explain Abuela Maria's apparent mastery of English - a necessity borne of the need to enter the work force or just a natural affinity for language?*

A-45 She found employment first and learned the language on the job. None of the ladies she worked with spoke Spanish. Most of them were of Italian heritage probably first or second generation who spoke nothing but English with a Brooklyn accent. So, it was a matter of being surrounded by Brooklyn English and having to learn it to get along in her job. She worked in the same job until she retired, as supervisor of her department.

*Q-46 I always considered Abuelo Benito and Abuela Maria as an odd pair in that they had markedly different temperaments and outlook. Was their marriage arranged? Did they consider having more than one child?*

A-46 You are exactly right about them being an odd pair. No, the marriage was not arranged. Abuela María once told me that she was not attracted to him but he was so persistent that she gave in and married him. As to having another child, we

never discussed it. Your mother was twelve when they brought her to Brooklyn and the age may have been a deterrent.

My own observation was that they didn't want to be bothered with another child. I say they but it was mostly he.

*Q-47 How would you characterize the Fernandez' Depression years experiences in Brooklyn?*

A-47 During those years, I believe that they both jobs and no children so life must have been good.

*Q-48 Did Abuelo Benito or Abuela Maria ever go to Spain after they arrived in the States?*

A-48 Abuelo never returned, Abuela went back in 1933 to bring their daughter to live with them. Abuela went back a couple of times after Abuelo passed away.

*Q-49 My memory of Abuelo Benito in Brooklyn dates only to 1950's when he worked for Park Slope Chevrolet. How did he come to work there? Did he work at other places before Park Slope? If yes, do you know where he worked?*

A-49 Abuelo Benito became an auto mechanic while in Brooklyn. To my knowledge, he only worked at Chevrolet dealers. As you can imagine there are many in New York. He eventually became a service salesman and then a service manager, all for Chevrolet. He did move around from dealer to dealer a lot. At one time, while we were there he worked for a dealer in Manhattan. He must have been good at what he did because I only remember him being out of work once and that was for a short time. When they came to Tampa to live the first time he wanted to work but only at a Chevrolet dealer. I knew Bo Wood from the Sertoma Club and got him an interview. He wasn't hired. I have reason to believe that he talked himself out the job. After that they soon went back to Brooklyn.

*Q-50 Do you know if Abuelo Benito and Abuela Maria considered moving to Tampa at any time prior to your marriage to Mama? Do you know if they were aware of the thriving Spanish colony in Tampa?*

A-50 I don't think so, they were very happy in New York. I am sure that they knew of the Spanish colony here. Abuelo Benito had a cousin in Tampa and they corresponded, at least your mother did, that was Celestino Lopez. Also, Celestino had a brother that was steward on passenger ships. He was very fond of your mother and he would come to Tampa to visit Celestino and your mother when he

could. His homeport was in New York and he would go visit your Brooklyn Abuelos when he was in New York. He received his mail at the Abuelo's house.

*Q-51 Tell us about the transit from Spain to Tampa in late 1930, early 1931: did you depart from Vigo? How was the voyage from Vigo to Havana? How were the accommodations on the ship? How long did the transit take? Where did you stay when you were in Havana? How long were you there? Did Abuelo Domingo introduce Abuela, you, and Tio to anyone he knew or was related to while you were in Havana? How was the transit from Havana to Tampa? Did you disembark at Port Tampa? How did you get from the point of disembarkation to your new home? Did the family immediately move to the house on 10<sup>th</sup> Street or did you start out somewhere else? Do you remember your first day in Tampa?*

A-51 Answer:

We left Spain from the port of La Coruña in late December and arrived in Havana in early January. The accommodations on the ship, for us, I would describe them as Spartan. We had a small stateroom but it was in third class. The trip, soon after leaving port was very rough. It seem like the waves were taller than the ship and we were like a cork riding up and down those waves constantly. When the ship was at the crest of the waves the propeller was out of the water and it sounded like the ship was going to fall apart. Thankfully after we turned south and into warm sunny days the rest of the trip was a lot of fun. All the children on the trip came out to play on the deck. On arrival in Havana we were met by my father Domingo, my aunt Remedios and it seemed like a lot of Devesanos. I don't recall any other names. I am sure that we were introduced to the people that met us at the port, but again, I don't remember any other than my aunt Remedios. We stayed in Havana a very short time, probably less than a week. While there were stayed at a hotel whose name I never knew.

We left Havana in the evening and arrived at Port Tampa where we disembarked. The trip from Havana to Tampa was very uneventful, the weather was good and it was smoothly sailing. Abuelo Domingo had booked us on the lower priced accommodations but since some of the seamen were from La Devesa we were upgraded to the best available at no additional cost. Upon arrival at Port Tampa we had to go through a medical exam, immigration, and customs. We had no problems withy any of the requirements. We were met at Port Tampa by several members of the family. I recall Pedro García, my aunt Concha, Maruja, abuelo's aunt Francisca (Paca) and some of her family. I don't recall how many or who they were. We were transported to Tampa by Pedro and Benny Vigo (Paca's son). We were first taken to Paca's house and I believe we had lunch there. Benny Vigo owned a Ford or Chevrolet coupe and he drove us around some until it was time to go to our new home. Our new home was at 2913 ½ 10<sup>th</sup> Street in the bungalow at the rear of the house where Pedro, Concha and Maruja lived until they returned to Spain. Several years later Abuelo bought the two houses and we moved to the front.

*Q-52 Did you begin school right after you arrived in January, 1931 or did you begin at the start of the new school year in September? What was the first year at Robert E. Lee Elementary school like? How long did it take you to learn English sufficiently well to prosper in school? Did you walk to and from school by yourself at the beginning or were you accompanied by an adult? Did you take your lunch from home every day? Were there any Spanish speaking teachers at the school to help you? Did it take you a short time or a long time to make friends at the school?*

A-52 Answer:

I started school at the beginning of February when the second part of the school year began at Robert E. Lee Elementary School. I was placed in the first grade (the Baby class as it was known) in class 1A. I was much older than the other children in the class, I was close to eleven and the rest were six. The first year went well as I recall, my math skills were way ahead of my classmates but before long as I learned the language I was double promoted two or three times while at Robert E. Lee. I walked to school from the very beginning, by myself, as soon as I learned the way. I don't recall who took walked me to school those few first days.

I took my lunch from home everyday and ate outside in good weather, on cold days, I ate in the lunch room and had a cup of hot soup with the nickel I was given. The soup that I bought was paid with a token that I purchased in the classroom.

There were no Spanish speaking teachers at Robert E. Lee School at that time. I was on my own, to which I attribute my quick learning of my new language. As one might expect, at that age, one makes friends easily.

*Q-53 What do you remember about the first couple of years in Tampa with respect to life in the neighborhood? Was it easy to make friends? Did you accompany your parents in trips outside the neighborhood to the commercial/civic center in Ybor City or elsewhere? Where did Abuela Ramona buy groceries? Did Abuelo Domingo have a car in those early days?*

A-53 Answer:

When we arrived in Tampa we lived in the Bungalow at the rear of Tio Pedro's and Tia Concha's house. The Bungalow at that time was one story structure, we lived there until Abuelo Domingo purchased the property and he raise the house so he could have automobile storage (two cars) under it as well as laundry room and shower. Eventually he remodeled the house and we moved into it. I and your mother lived there when we married. You, Maria and Alicia were born while we were living there. Carlos was born after we moved to 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I had the

advantage of having Maruja living so close I am sure she helped me a lot with my English. She would read me the comics and I would ask questions about what was written. I remember one in particular that always ended with the words “wait a while”. I asked Maruja what that meant and she answered “esperate un momento”. I waited a while and when she didn’t say anything else I asked her again what it meant. She responded that it meant what she said “esperate un momento”. As to friends, there were several children of my age living in the block and we played a lot so that also helped with the language. At R.E. Lee I was accepted very well but a very few of the Spanish speaking male kids teased a lot. That went away quickly and some of them became my life long friends. It was the custom of those days for the father to go to the clubs and cafes to chat after dinner so I spent a lot of time with my mother visiting friends and relatives. As I grew older Abuelo would take me with him to Las Novedades Restaurant sometimes. His early hangout was Las Novedades and later the Columbia. He didn’t go the clubs except to a Picnic once in awhile. To those we went as a family. There were many neighborhood meat and grocery markets in the neighborhoods and she went to those she thought had the best prices. The nearest fish market was on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street and it was my job to go there to buy fish. Poultry markets were mostly on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and I would go with her on Saturdays to buy a “Gallina”. Papa did have an automobile when we arrived in Tampa. It was a 1926 Ford Coupe. That was his transportation until somebody stole it on night when he had gone to Las Novedades. As I recall it was quiet a while before he could by another car, it was a second hand 1932 Plymouth sedan. I learned to drive with that Plymouth.

*Q-54 When did you start delivering newspapers and how did that job come about? Which paper did you deliver first and for how many different newspapers did you deliver? Did Abuelo Domingo buy your first delivery bicycle? Was it new or used? What can you tell us about the routes that you traveled? Did you deliver morning papers exclusively or did you also deliver afternoon papers? Did you get to keep your earnings all to yourself or did you contribute to the family coffers?*

A-54 Answer:

I started to deliver papers, The Tampa Daily Times, an afternoon paper while in the sixth grade. A second cousin, Charlie Fernández, had a route and he is the one that got me started. I delivered papers even after I graduated from Hillsborough.

*Q-55 Did you use the city’s extensive street car system to explore the city? Did you explore it on your own or with your neighborhood friends or both?*

A-55 Answer:



I did not use the streetcar system to explore the city. I did, however, use my bicycle extensively, not to explore the city but to deliver my newspaper routes in various parts of the city. In that way I did explore the city on my own.

*Q-56 Your exposure to and interaction with the Centro Español spans 80 years. During the early years when you were a youngster and later when you were a teenager leading up to WW II, how would you describe your involvement with the Centro? How about Abuelo Domingo and Abuela Ramona? Was there any interaction with the Centro Asturiano? I've heard you relate how Abuelo Domingo participated in efforts to merge the two clubs. Can you recall any of the details? I recall that you said that you were the recording secretary for the Recreation Committee and that you meticulously kept minutes of the meetings. I don't remember if you told me that those records are lost or are part of the USF Special Collections – please comment.*

A-56 Answer:

My first exposure to the Centro Español was through my father. He was a longtime member and in those early days the dues collector came to our house to collect the monthly dues one every month. I did not join the Centro until I graduated from Hillsborough. The first month (March) when the collector came by I asked my father if I could join. Since I was almost twenty at that time and already working as a carpenter apprentice with Rañón and Jimenez he agreed. I signed up that very day and was accepted at the next Board of Directors meeting. Very soon after my membership was accepted I was contacted by a member of the Recreation Committee and asked if I wanted to become a member. I accepted the offer and soon was named Secretary. I believe that the job was given to me because I was fluent in the Spanish language and it was a requirement that the minutes were recorded in Spanish. I was Secretary several years but I don't remember when I resigned. As Secretary of the Recreation committee I was a member of the Board of Directors of the Centro. All the members of the committee were responsible for the many activities of the committee such as the general membership dances, club fiestas, matinee dances. Our duties were the organization of the events, setting up tables in the ballroom, arranging for dance bands, attending the events taking up admission tickets, maintaining the facilities, working at the bar and everything else in connection with the events.

Abuelo was a member of the general Club board of directors for a short time. Abuela, since females were not allowed as members, only participated in some of the events as the wife of a member. While a member of the Board, Abuelo did participate in an attempt to merge with the Centro Asturiano. The committees came to an agreement on all issues except on the name for the new organization. Abuelo told me that since they couldn't agree on such a minor issue he decided to resign. He told me that the problem was that the Asturianos did not want to give up the Asturiano name.

*Q-57 By the time you arrived in Tampa, Abuelo Domingo had forged his partnership with Maximo Jimenez. Was their office already at the corner of Oak and Nebraska Avenues? My recollection of Maximo is vague; I don't ever recall seeing him at the Oak Avenue office, only at his home in Palmetto Beach. Was he older than Abuelo Domingo? Do you remember what year he retired? How would you characterize their partnership? How would you describe their respective roles in the business? Was Maximo's family also from Galicia or elsewhere?*

A-57 Answer:

No, there was no office as such. All the business was conducted from our house on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. They didn't even have a telephone. It was several years before they opened an Office on Nebraska and Oak Avenues. Abuelo always wanted a small hardware store and cabinet shop. There was enough room in the building on for all thee activities and that is how Central Builders Supply was started.

Maximo Jimenez was born in Belmonte de Miranda in Asturias. Belmonte is somewhat in the interior of Asturias in absolutely beautiful valley. Your Mom and I visited the family a couple of times where we were treated as family. Maximo left Belmonte at a very early age going to Madrid to work. Two brothers, Luis and Arcadio, were already in Tampa and at sometime he found his way to Tampa as well. Maximo was a little older than Abuelo. If you want this information, including the year he retired, I can obtain it for you. His wife Antonia (Nini) was born in Tampa to Italian parents.

The partnership, I think, was ideal, they complimented each other. Abuelo took care of accounting, planning, purchasing and everything else pertaining to the business end and Maximo was the outside man, including working on the job in the early days.

*Q-58 You had been in Tampa only a few years when you began your years at George Washington Junior High. By then your mastery of English was probably significant and you must have made many friends. What do you remember about those three years?*

A-58 By the time I started in George Washington Jr. High in 1934 or 35 I was well on my way with the language, even being double promoted during the eight grade.. During those years I made friends that have endured to this day.

Answer:

*Q-59 I recall you saying that Abuela Ramona worked outside the home at a small cigar making operation (buckeye/chinchal?). What can you recall about that experience? Did she work outside the home in other endeavors?*

A-59 Answer:

Abuela did work at a CHINCHAL but only on part time basis for a short time. Her job was to put the ring bands on the cigars and insert them in a cellophane tube and put them back into the box that they came in from the selectors. That was the only employment other than at home looking after Abuelo and her boys.

The small cigar factory was know as Vicente Nieto and Brothers. The brothers were Vicente, Antonio and José. There also was a sister named Pastora. All worked in the factory except Vicente who lived in California sold their cigars in that market. I believe that was their only market outside of Tampa. I sometimes helped prepare wooden crates for shipment to California.

The three brothers and sister were from Meirengos, one of the many villages in La Devesa. I have a copy of their label somewhere in my files.

*Q-60 Prior to your fateful visit/vacation to New York after the war, did the family take any trips/vacations? If yes, where did you go, when did you go, how did you get there, and who did you visit?*

A-60 Answer:

We had no vacations at that time. My first venture outside of Florida was my trip to New York in 1946.

*Q-61 Please relate the story about your fateful trip to New York and Brooklyn from which sprang so much family history?*

A-61 Answer:

The story to which you refer started in the summer of 1946. The neighbors, the Weinstens, lived in the house in front of the bungalow where we the Rañóns lived since our arrival from Spain and they were the ones that made it possible for me to go to New York. World War Two had ended, gasoline was again available and people could travel without fear of running out. The Weinstens, Dave, and Ann had been born in the Borough of the Bronx in New York City and wanted to visit their family that they had not seen since the beginning of the war. It was a twelve hundred mile trip one way. Dave was the only driver so he asked me if I would consider going with them and help him drive. I had never been out of the State of Florida since our arrival in Tampa from Spain and had a great desire to see some of the U S of A, especially New York City, so it was a very easy decision. I accepted on the spot.

Dave and Ann had two small children, Ira and Sharon both born in Tampa. The trip was uneventful as I recall. When we arrived in New York City we went straight to the Bronx. I spent the first night in one of their apartments, it was a large family that all lived in the same area. The apartment was owned by Dave's sister whose name I don't recall. The following day we drove to Times Square in Manhattan where we found an available room in a hotel on forty-fourth street, about a half block from Times Square. After I settled down in the hotel, a flea bag, cheap but convenient to all of New York City, I went down to the street to start looking around. It may have taken a day or two to go down to the subway station where most subway lines meet. I found a subway map posted on one of the walls and looked to find a particular street, the one that led to your mother's house in Brooklyn. As you may already know we lived perhaps two or three kilometers from one another in La Devesa. I had obtained her address from Celestino and Lola. Celestino and your abuelo Benito were cousins and kept in touch by mail.

On a very hot sunny June afternoon, wearing a coat and tie, I went down to the subway station and found a line that had a station on 19<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn. I took the first train that was headed to Brooklyn thinking that if it stopped on 19<sup>th</sup> Street it would be easy to find the house. The train did stop on the 19<sup>th</sup> Street Station below ground. I walked up the stairs to street level, found the street, determined which direction I should walk and got started. It must have been miles to the house but I did find it, tired, sweaty, hot and in poor state of mind. I knocked on the door and a lady appeared, she didn't know that one day she would become my mother-in-law. I told her who I was and she invited me in. She seemed glad to see me. Benito and Eusebia had not yet arrived from work. While we waited she told me that she had know Abuelo Domingo and Abuela Ramona in La Devesa and that she had held me in her arms when I was only two or three days old.

Abuelo Benito always wanted his dinner ready when he arrived and Abuela never failed to comply. After a short time of small talk I excused myself to leave but they insisted that I stay and have dinner with them. I did stay and enjoyed the meal with them. I was to have more in the days to follow. After dinner we sat in the living room until I felt it was time to leave but before I left I asked Eusebia if she had time to show me around New York City. She did, so that weekend after lunch at their house we left to see the "Big Apple". As it turned out we went to one of the best known attractions in the city, The Statue of Liberty. Although she had been living in Brooklyn about nineteen years she had not been to been to it. We went to all the way up to the crown for a magnificent view of the city. I don't remember how long I was in New York but it must have been at least three weeks. During the remaining days we went to the movies at Radio City Music Hall, the theater on Broadway, visited some of their close friends and neighbors. During the day while she was at work in Manhattan I explored the city by myself, visited a friend of our family in Newark and many other things that I can't

remember. That was the beginning of our relationship. I will forever be thankful to the Weinstains for inviting me to go to New York with them.

When I returned to Tampa I started corresponding with her and for the next three and one and one half years we would write each other two or three time a week. I went back to New York the following summer to see her and soon she decided to go to Havana to visit a relative of her mother with the purpose of coming to Tampa on the way back. She had taken the train to Miami because her father didn't want her to fly. I was waiting for her at the station in Miami. She then flew to Havana, visited the family, returned to Miami and then we drove to Tampa. I recall that she called her employer to ask for a few more days of vacation time to stay in Tampa, I assume to be with me. The extension was granted. When the time was up she went back to New York on the train from Tampa. Thereafter I went to New York and she came to Tampa each year until I got the courage to ask her to marry me. She accepted without hesitation and I asked her to set the date, which she promptly did. We were married on February fourth nineteen fifty in the church of the transfiguration on Third Avenue in Manhattan, the church is commonly know as "The Little Church Around the Corner"

Note! Juan I am sure that this will prompt you to ask more questions so please ask.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
<b>1899</b>	
<b>1911</b>	Domingo Rañon (Angel's Grandfather) visits Tampa.
<b>1919</b>	Doming Rañon (Angel's Father) travels to Havana (assumed date per Angel).
<b>1920</b>	Angel is born in La Devesa.
<b>1921</b>	Domingo Rañon (Angel's Father) moves to Tampa. Eusebia is born in La Devesa.
<b>1924</b>	Benito & Maria Fernandez (Eusebia's parents) immigrate to Cuba then the U.S. sans Eusebia who was left behind in Spain in the care of Abuelo Benito's aunts.
<b>1927</b>	Domingo Rañon (Angel's Father) returns to Spain to see his dying father Domingo.
<b>1928</b>	Domingo Rañon (Angel's Father) returns to Tampa.
<b>1930</b>	Domingo Rañon (Angel's Father) and Maximo Jimenez become business partners.
<b>1931</b>	Ramona Rañon and sons Angel, & Juan move to Tampa via Havana.
<b>1933</b>	Maria Fernandez returns to Spain to bring Eusebia back to Brooklyn.