

Manuel de Atocha Quintana and Family

Stanley A Lucero, 29 May 2007

My grandfather, Manuel de Atocha Quintana, was born in Trampas. During his first marriage to my grandma Lupe Martinez from Santa Barbara, he worked in Wyoming as a sheepherder during the Spring, Summer and Fall. I remember he had a dog with eyes of different colors - now I know he owned a sheep dog. He would leave my grandma and children alone in Llano on their 12 acres by the acequia madre until he came back in the winter.

My grandmother died when my Mom was seven years old. Since grandpa was in Wyoming at the time, all of the children were taken in by different relatives. My mom ended up with a family in Leadville, Colorado. It took her several years to find her brothers and sisters.

My mother told me that as a young girl she had a vision where grandpa told her he was OK and would be coming home soon. It turns out that he was being dragged by a horse in Wyoming at the time.

My grandfather lived with Gabriela Ortega from Peñasco following my grandmother's death. He had two children from her. Most of the family learned about the other two sons at his funeral. My mom already knew.

My grandfather came back later and gathered together his children from all of the relatives. He came home one day with a new wife, a 17 year old girl, Emilia Valdéz. My Aunt Lucille and my Aunt Daisy were 18 and 19 years old at the time. This new young wife waited for her step children to do all of the work around the house. As you can imagine, this caused a lot of friction and disharmony.

Eventually my Aunt Lucille and my Aunt Daisy left home, got married and moved to California. Their visits home were rare. When my two aunts left home, my Mom became the "mom" for her younger brothers Ben, Nelson and Tony.

My Uncle Ben learned how to shoot turkeys in the head so that the meat would not be damaged. When he went to the Korean War, he became a sharpshooter. He served on the front lines for 10 years. After the war he worked as a dynamite blaster for the highway department. Eventually he became a heavy drinker and ended up in prison three times.

My Uncle Nelson was in a mining accident when he was 19 years old and remained blind the rest of his life. He played saxophone and drums with various bands in New Mexico.

My Uncle Tony fell from the kitchen counter when he was three years old and became deaf. He learned to speak but was hard to understand. I remember him writing notes to my mom instead of talking. My Aunt Lucille and Aunt Daisy kept in contact with him via the special phones for the deaf. He was taken from the family to attend the school for the deaf and we almost lost contact with him.

Mom married Juan Amadéo Lucero in Peñasco. I was born the following year. When I was one they went to Oakland, California with the idea of living there but mom didn't like it there and

they returned to Llano. We moved to Kansas City because Dad was enrolled in a Mechanic School while mom worked at an egg sorting packing house.

Mom and Dad argued and fought a lot until they got a formal divorce when I was in 10th grade. They also had formal separations when I was in 1st grade and 3rd grade. Our father was in and out of our lives from the time I was in 1st grade so I didn't really get to know him.

My Mom worked for most of her life as a waitress by day and a barmaid by night. She worked 12-14 hours almost every day. My Mom raised her three sons with little or no alimony help from my dad. As the oldest son I was in charge of my little two brothers, cooking, and cleaning.

We moved a lot to wherever Dad found a new job. When he was laid off, he would go looking for work and eventually we would move to another city. This was the time when the policy was "Last hired, first fired." It seems that Dad and my Uncles were always selected to follow this policy. Mom changed her name to Nadine and Dad changed his name to Mo. They gave all three of their sons English names in the hopes of avoiding discrimination.

In Colorado we lived in Stringtown, Bucktown, Leadville and Denver. In New México we lived in El Llano de San Juan, El Prado, Taos, Santa Fe, Alamogordo and Albuquerque. We also lived in Green River, Wyoming and Kansas City, Missouri when I was less than one year old.

Almost every time we moved Grandpa Manuel, his wife Emilia and children; my Uncle Ben, Aunt Wanda and children; and my Uncle Nelson, Aunt Emilia and children lived nearby. In Denver we even lived in the same apartment in the projects with my Uncle Nelson and family.

Grandpa used to take his children from his 3rd family along with his sons, daughters and grandchildren fishing high in the mountains above Leadville, Colorado. We would leave before dawn and follow the highway above Leadville and then drive for miles on trails that were no more than tire tracks until we came to isolated rivers. Grandpa always fished by moving his fishing line in the air above his head. I learned later that he was a fly fisherman.