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Valley Junction Neighborhood Reunion Labor Day Weekend 2013

sponsored by Taste of the Junction, Inc.

Friday, August 30: Taste of the Junction at 5th Street & Railroad 5-10 PM
Saturday, August 31: The Junction Speaks at Valley Community Center 12-6 PM

About Us

Taste of the Junction was incorporated in February 2013; a nonprofit created to advance the awareness and preservation of the diverse cultures of Valley Junction.

This is accomplished by a diverse collaboration of Iowans presenting an annual enrichment celebration day and education day which bring to life and introduction cultural foods, arts, music, culture, history and historical acknowledgment to “all” cultures.

Rachelle Long, Founder and President convened a diverse group of Valley Junction descendants to assist in the creation of the first festival for the organization “The Valley Junction Neighborhood Reunion.”

These premier events include, however are not limited to, presentations by historians, food vendors, contemporary educational professionals, performances, demonstrations of Gospel influence which may include writers, producers, dancers, painters, actors, musicians, and other artists who positively influence Iowa’s Cultures.

Taste of the Junction, Inc. may also highlight cultures by making outreach opportunities available to other cultures in Iowa or other states throughout the year. In addition to their Festival and Educational Day, the organization provides all sorts of touring artistic and educational projects to all cultures. A collaboration with other faith based cultural events, exhibits and presentations based on faith may be presented.

TASTE OF THE JUNCTION INC.

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Founder & President:

Rachelle Long

Officers:

Mark Rocha, Vice President
Reike Plecas, Secretary

Steering Committee

Barbara Long
Gerald James III
Dino Rodish
Larry McLachlan III
Robert Parks
Vincent Valdez

Commemorative Booklet

Julia Page
Annissa Page

History

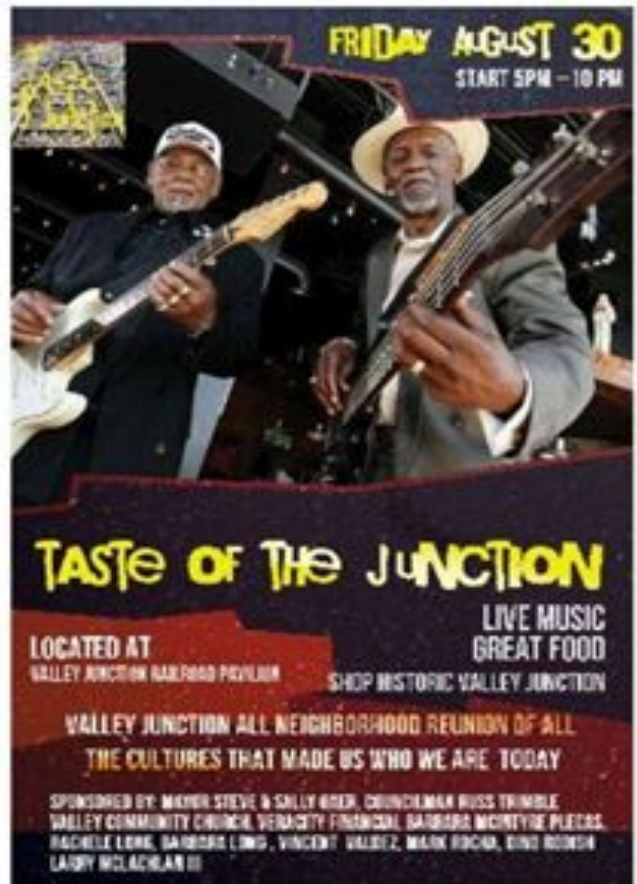
Dr. Vicky Long Hill
Jana Sue Wat



The people,
culture,
cuisine... Aaah
The Taste of the Junction

Friday August 30 from 5 pm - 10 pm We cordially invite residents of old and new to stroll the streets of Valley Junction as we present a weekend of family events, celebrating the rich cultures of Valley Junction that spans five generations. Enjoy the festivities and be entertained by **Emma Negrete** and headliner group **“Sumpin Doo.”** Street vendors will present the **“Taste of the Junction”**, experiencing the food and cultures from many diverse backgrounds.

Friday event will be in the Railroad Park & Pavilion located at 5th & Railroad in Historic Valley Junction.



Saturday, August 31 Schedule " The Junction Speaks"

12 pm-1 pm Taste the Junction...Meet n Greet

1 pm-2 pm Jovenes Embajadores Latin Dancers

2 pm -3 pm Vincent Valdez Slide Show

3 pm -5 pm The Junction Speaks...Open Mic

5pm -515pm VCC Praise Dance

515pm - 6pm Contemporary Praise





Bill and Mary 50th Anniversary

Mary Diaz Alcantar, 90th Birthday



+ The Mary Agnes Alcantar Story

La Verne, California

Hello!! My name is Mary Agnes Alcantar (married name Ortega). I am a descendant of the Diaz Family. My grandparents were Cruz and Gregoria Diaz. They came from Aguascalientes, Mexico in the early 1900's. My mother, Mary Diaz, was born in Topeka, Kansas. Her parents came to Valley Junction, and my grandfather, Cruz, worked for the railroad.

My paternal grandfather, Arcadio Alcantar, also came from Mexico, from Michoacan. My father, Ruben Alcantar, came to Valley Junction also in the 1900's to be with his father. In 1934 my parents, Ruben Alcantar and Mary Diaz, were married. I was born in 1935, across the tracks, in a little white house that no longer exists. My sister Lupe was born in 1939, also in West Des Moines. We then lived on 7th Street. We were both born and raised in West Des Moines, a wonderful place to be raised.

My father worked for the Marquette Cement Plant for many years until his doctor advised him to leave the cement plant because it was affecting his health. We lived in Guadalajara, Mexico for a couple of years, but then came back to the States and settled in Pomona, California. I graduated from Pomona High,

but my 1953 classmates from Valley High have always invited me to their class reunions, including their 60th this weekend, which I am looking forward to attend. This shows the beautiful, caring, friendly, people that are from this wonderful place called West Des Moines. I am so proud to say that this is where I was born and raised.

I met and married my husband, Guillermo (Bill) Ortega in Pomona, California, in 1957. We have 5 Children, Rebecca, Leticia, Yolanda, Jay, and Cathy, eight grandchildren, and three great grandsons. I live in La Verne, California and our children all live nearby. My husband was a carpenter and I worked for the Los Angeles County Fair, Exhibits Department Administrative Assistant, for 37 years. My husband, of 55 years, passed away in October of 2012.

I thank my Lord for my wonderful life, for my grandparents, parents, sister, husband, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and all the wonderful relatives and friends of West Des Moines, Iowa, my hometown.



Joe Rodriguez & Shelly



Roberto Palacios & Shelly



Mary Ellen Rodriguez

The Rochelle "Shelly" (Palacios) Blanchard Story



Robert, Shelly, & Roger



Scot & Shelly Blanchard



Joel, Scot, Shelly, & Ryan



Shelly & Denise Diaz



Julie & Denise Diaz

My grandfather Adrian Joseph " Joe " Rodriguez came to Valley Junction in 1911. He worked for Rock Island Railroad for 44 years. He and Mr. Leon, a friend, were the first Hispanics employed by the railroad. He was willing to take the raise of four cents. He married Lillian Hernandez and they had seven children, all were born in Valley Junction! My mother Mary Ellen Rodriguez was the youngest child, her other siblings were Jesse, Raymond, Dolores, Robert, Velma and Henry. My mother Mary Ellen met and married my father Roberto Palacios.

We briefly lived in Chicago when I was very small. But we moved back to West Des Moines, and I grew up in Valley Junction. I have two brothers, Robert " Bobby " and Roger Palacios. They both attended Valley High School, and I attended Dowling High School. I married Scot Blanchard, who is also from West Des Moines. We have two amazing son's, Ryan who is 33 and Joel who will be 30 soon. I have no grand children yet. Scot and I continue to live in Valley Junction on 5th St in West Des Moines. I have many amazing cousins from the Diaz and Rodriguez family I grew up with that were also raised in Valley Junction! I still love hearing the trains on Railroad especially at night. When they sound their horns I always think of my grandpa Joe, and say out loud or to myself " Hi Grandpa Joe! "



John Valdez & Shelly

5th Street Pub



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The Diaz Family Story

by Mary (Diaz) Murillo

The Diaz family is proud to be a part of the history of Valley Junction, having lived in the area for a little over 100 years. Cruz and Gregoria Diaz came to Valley Junction from Aquas Calientes, Mexico. They resided in Hyde Park, located just west of Valley Junction and south of the railroad tracks. Many other families from Mexico also settled there to work on the Rock Island Railroad and raise their families.

The family eventually moved and purchased a two-story home on the corner of Lincoln Street and South 4th Street. This became their home until the children grew up and moved out on their own.

Cruz and Gregoria had nine children, six boys; George, Nacio, Joe, Julie, Jess and Tony; three daughters, Mary, Maggie and Lupe. George (my father) attended Longfellow school, but being the oldest in the family, he left after finishing ninth grade to find a job and help his family financially.

George along with his two brothers; Nacio and Jess followed in their father's footsteps and took a job working on the railroad. Joe and his brother Tony opened a barbershop on Vine between 4th and 5th

Street and called it The Diaz Barber Shop. Julie went to work for the Penn Dixie Cement Plant. Mary and Maggie stayed home to take care of their family and Lupe worked various jobs.

The children, who eventually married, continued living in Valley Junction raising their own families. All of their children attended Phenix grade school and went on to graduate from Valley High School, located on 7th Street.

The families all resided in West Des Moines and stayed very close. Many times they would get together at each other's homes for family fun and good food!

A few of the cousins continue to live in West Des Moines and stay in touch. They all have great memories of growing up in Valley Junction with all their uncles, aunts and cousins. They often share those memories with their children who will pass this history on to many more generations to come.

The Mike Gustafson Story

+ “It’s been a long time coming, yes it’s been a long long time gone.” (Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young late 1960’s)

It’s also been a long time coming for a Valley Junction Reunion. Thank you Rachelle Long for your time, effort, and thoughtfulness to make this event possible.

This is Mike Gustafson and I will share with you my roots and memories of my life experiences growing up in the Valley Junction Community. I need to omit any specific names of people and stories of Valley Junction because Rachelle ask me to write a letter and not a book. Believe me because it would be a really thick book!

The 50’s, 60s, and 70s in Valley Junction will be forever etched in our minds of those who lived, breathed, and led their being during that moment of time that will never be forever more! What a time, what a place, what a life!

In 1953 my father and mother moved from Des Moines south of University on 24th Street. We moved to 516-13th Street in West Des Moines. 1 ½ story house (cost \$9000). I and my four brothers shared one big room upstairs. I can still remember the distant whistle of the trains at night time as they passed through the Junction.

Life was simple, life was good. The bridge over the Raccoon River on 63rd Street was of one lane steel and wood bridge.

All located on 5th street were our family doctor, dentist, eye doctor, clothing stores, bike shop, hardware store, malt shop, a little hamburger joint, and a movie theater (now the Theatrical Shop). Within blocks were all the grocery stores and church, all within walking distance.

At the earliest age I learned very quickly and eagerly to play outside-summer, winter, day or night. That meant playing and meeting new friends of all colors in all of the Junction area. Discovering things to do, places to go. To this day, 50 and more years later many of those friends are still in my life and we greet one another with a hug and say the “love” word. (But no kissing!)

As a young boy I know where all the sweetest apple trees were, the plums, cherries, pears, the grapevines, the raspberries, vegetables gardens. It was like the Garden of Eden-and yes IZ did eat of the forbidden fruit!

We played baseball in the streets by day and hide and seek at night. Holiday pool all summer long, baseball diamonds,



sledding on the golf course in the winter, ice skating at Legion Park, the roller rink.

I once wrestled a live black bear on 5th and Maple and have pictures to prove it!

I remember a band of gypsies the early 60s came to town and set up in “Annie’s Bottom” full of rides, games, gambling, and strip tease shows. I saw it all! Valley Junction had it all and all within walking distance.



Fishing by the hog bins exploring the many sandpits swimming in Jordan creek (some places had six foot of water) Hunting where the Raccoon River Park is now, shooting rabbits, squirrels, and pheasants. Racing on the flats (stretch before Commerce on Grand Ave) Driving over the Commerce bridge to get to “Muscle Beach” (a whole book could come from stories about that place!)

The many pool halls and taverns on 5th street. “Rake em up macho!” The best pizza for evermore came from the Tavern, the best tacos came from LaBamba’s.

We had no cell phone, I pads, only two, three, four, five, six or more kids from 6-16 years old walking and a talking and driving and exploring the streets of Valley Junction.

Now over 60 years later from moving to Valley Junction four of five Gustafson’s brothers still live here, our Mother of 91 years old also. Some of our children –four generations.

God has truly blessed our community! I feel unique, humbled, wonderfully created by being blessed to have called “Valley Junction” as where I grew up and call home, because home is where the heart is!

I will close by paying tribute, honor, and prayers who grew up in Valley Junction but are no longer of this world. We know who they are and how each one impacted our lives. My God have mercy on their souls!

See you at the Junction!

The Dorothy Page-Hawkins Story: Eldest Daughter of Alonzo Page

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Mom's story as we knew it as told by Robby Lynn Warren:

Mom was the eldest of Grandfather Alonzo, "Blue Jay" by his first marriage to Ivana Hill. Life during this time was rough for most African Americans and Ivana and Alonzo(Blue Jay) departed due to economic issues...I am told.

Mom stayed with her father, Alonzo, and while he worked to feed and care for the two of them, mom was cared for by many friends and relatives of her father. This experience was a very sad one for mom because she no longer had a connection to her mother. Because she was moved around so often, she was disconnected and did not know a lot about her dad's family. Overtime, mom's dad, my grandfather, met and married Jencie, my step-grandmother, and was able to live with them and remain in one place as she was growing up. I understand she still had a little connection to her mom, Ivana Hill who had moved to Kansas City, Missouri and did live with her for a short time where she enrolled at Lincoln high school.

My mother married early and shared with her children that life was not easy during those times and many people married just to set up a home and settle down. Mom and dad had six children and we lived in Des Moines, Iowa. During our young years we had occasion to visit mom's family in West Des Moines. As the years progressed, the visits diminished and everyone went

about their lives. One memory I have of going to West Des Moines ,as a child, was playing in the neighborhood, going to the corner store and eating some very delicious cooking of Grandmother's. My favorite meal was fried chicken, mashed potatoes/gravy with creamed peas on top.

Finally, on August 31st 2011, mom passed away at the age of 90 years old. She spent her last birthday(July 3) in West Des Moines with her family as she always had during the 4th of July holiday. My siblings and I often came home to be with her, and she enjoyed going to West Des Moines to see her stepsisters. Her children were: Michael E. Hawkins(deceased), Rodney D Hawkins, Jackie C. Hawkins-Cooper(deceased) Robby L. Hawkins-Warren, Lorene A. Hawkins-Jones, and Iva C. Hawkins.

Mom was married to Edward R. Hawkins(deceased)



The James Hughes Family Story



The Hughes Family (James and Genovia settled in West Des Moines, Iowa in 1946 following their parents (James' parents Elizabeth and Step-father Johnny Perkins, 1029 Maple Street) and (Genovia's parents Willie and step-mother Blanche Brown, 1017 Maple Street). Willie Brown was in the construction field, Lab or Union Steward and later President. Johnny Perkins was also in the construction field.

Landing a job in construction brought James and Genovia along with Lee Earl the oldest child to West Des Moines to settle at 103-11th Street in 1946. Soon after bringing James, Jr., Freddie Lee, Jane and JoAnn into the world.

With their hard work James and Genovia were able to buy a larger home at 127-11th Street where they brought their son Terry into the world. With their six (6) children they continued their hard work to care for their family.

Memories of growing up in West Des Moines are still fresh today. Close family and community; living off the land; gardens, fruit trees (apple, cherry, pear, peach, plum), mulberry bushes, and rhubarb in our back yard. Climbing the trees to pick fruit so mom would bake fresh pies. Mom's lemon meringue pies and fried chicken. Getting sick from eating too much fruit while picking.

Raising chickens and ducks; Daddy Blue Jay raised hogs; slop buckets in the kitchen to feed the hogs; when it was time for slaughter all the neighbors gathered and took meat home to put in the deep freezer.

Neighborhood family, doors were always open. We got in trouble a lot for running in and out of our houses. Kick soccer and baseball in the street; homemade basketball hoops; mud pies, tootsie roll (dirt) pops; piggy puff factory; Holiday Park, swimming and baseball.

Dancing in Daddy Blue Jay's back room for change so we could run over to Brody's store to spend it all. Jam sessions, put a lamp outside and danced so much that there was no grass in our back yard; playing those 45's and albums on our record player; played the record player so much, had to have a weight on the needle for it to play.

Neighborhood singing groups; Freddie acting like James Brown; that's why he wore his hair like he did. Jolly 16 Club

We could go on and on.....Memories of West Des Moines, Iowa will always be remembered!!!

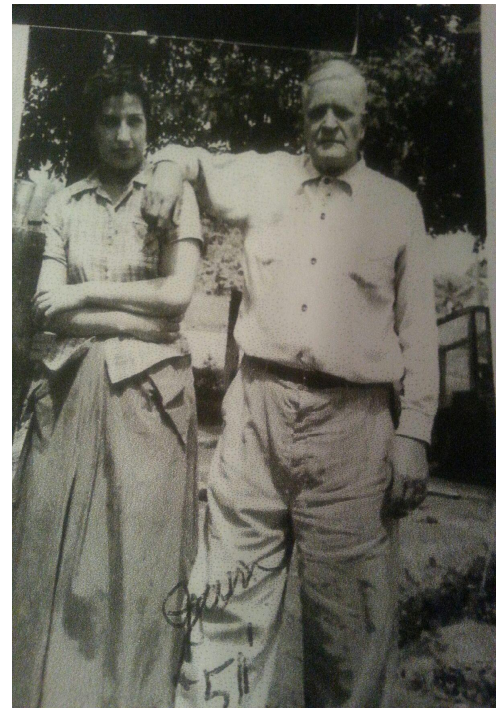


The Long Family Story

The Long family history in Valley Junction began when David and Viola Eppright moved the south side of Des Moines to work at the old Hawkeye Cement Company, later known as Marquette and Monarch Cement. Johnny E. Long Jr. is the son of their daughter Mae Ella and John Long Sr. Johnny had seven siblings (John, Betty, Lucille, Robert and Patricia, Marion Eppright and Jackie Logan). Due to the pollution emitted by cement plant, the family moved to the one hundred block of 6th Street in Valley Junction when Johnny was ten years old.

Johnny Long attended West Des Moines schools and went to work at the Marquette Cement Plant in 1951. He also married Barbara Jean Page that same year. They lived on 11th street most of their 59 years of married. Their nine children included, Gerald (Page), Gregory, Stephen, Vicky (Long-Hill), Valerie (James), Rachelle, Darryl, Johnnetta and Margaret. In the mid-sixties after several attempts to purchase a home in the Ridgeway and Fairmeadows additions, they built a new house at their 11th Street location. Their home became a center of attraction for many of the areas youth.

Johnny was known by many as “June Bug”. He worked at the cement plant for 34 years. Johnny was recognized in the book, “Outside In”, as the first African-American heavy equipment operator in the state of Iowa. He also became the first African-American foreman of a major company in Iowa. Barbara worked for the city of Des Moines and WDM Opportunity Center where she later became its director. After retirement, they became dedicated community activists on behalf of the historic Valley Junction. They were founding members of the Valley Junction Residential Association where Johnny served as president and later vice-president. Barbara and Johnny were also the chief cornerstone in the creation of the Eddie Davis Community Center. In 2009, Johnny and Barbara were crowned Iowa’s Juneteenth King and Queen recognizing their longevity in and years of service to the community.



+ The Meza Family Story

God gives serenity to families in comforting words from brother's and sister's. Sometimes if, one is very lucky, He gives comfort by love. Family is a word that implies solidity; a rock-solid foundation, a place to go home to, to grow out of, to grow away from and yet, to remember and hang on to. The place where one begins and they hope to end. The thing one works hard to build on one's own. Family, what images that brings to mind. What memories... what dreams...

FAMILY HISTORY

Benjamin (Ben) Meza was born in Michoacán, Mexico. He had two brothers and one sister. Ben Meza and his brother, Merced, and a friend, Rueben Alcantar, came to Valley Junction to work at the railroad. Then, later at the Marquette Cement plant. Ben left his parents and one sister behind in Mexico, but brought an Uncle Donato, who lived with Merced on the 100th block of 8th and Railroad.

Magdalena (Maggie) Diaz was born in Topeka, Kansas and then lived with her parents, Cruz and Gregoria (Delprado) Diaz across the tracks (south of Railroad) in Valley Junction. Cruz and Gregoria Diaz had nine children. Six boys: Romo, Ignacio, Julie, Jesse, Joe, Tony and three girls: Mary, Maggie, and Lupe. Julie Diaz never married. Lupe Diaz moved to California for some years, then returned to Valley Junction and married Roy Garcia and embraced many stepchildren and grandchildren. Mary Diaz married Ruben Alcantar and

had two daughters' and lived in Valley Junction before moving their family to Guadalajara, México for a couple of years. Then, came back to the states and settled in Pamona, California. Maggie Diaz married Benjamin Meza and had seven children. Joe Diaz married Margaret Vallejo and had two children. Tony Diaz married Velma Rodriguez and had seven children. Ignacio Diaz married Trini Murillo and had three children. Romo Diaz married Lucy Munoz and had fice children and lived across the tracks until he moved his family to California.

Ben Meza and Maggie Diaz were married at Sacred Heart Church April 17, 1941, witnessed by Luz Freyre and Josephine Barron. Ben and Maggie had seven children. Three boys: Primativo (Primo), Anthony (Tony), Benjamin Jr (Ben) and four girls; Angelina (Angie), Marcelina (Marcy), Ramona (Mona) and Consuelo (Connie). Tony was born in the home with Maggie's good friend Josephine Argumedo as her midwife. Maggie was chosen as queen of West Des Moines for her beauty and charm, which never left her all the days of her life.

Ben and Maggie Meza bought a house on the 100th block of 10th and Railroad. Ben paid only \$500 but fixed it up for his family. Ben Meza retired from Marquette Cement Plant. Ben passed away in October 1970 and Maggie passed away in September 1977. Ben and Maggie passed away at the same age, 63, seven years apart.



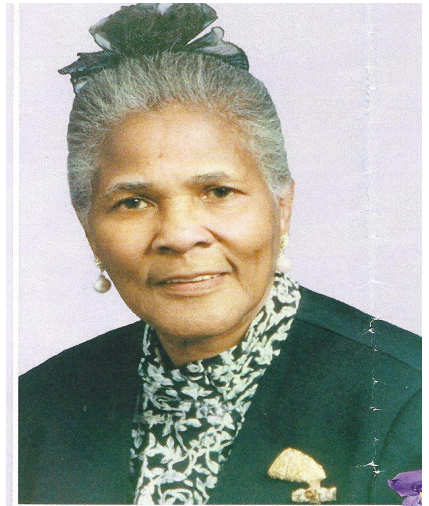
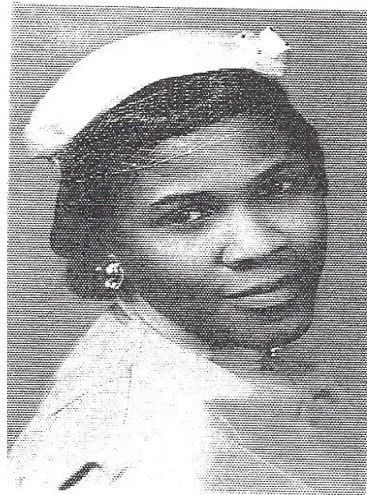
The Kenneth Miller Story

Evelyn Fox followed her sister, Edna Elliott to West Des Moines in the late 1930's. During her stay in West Des Moines, Evelyn raised her seven children; Charles, Carolyn, Alberta, Kenneth, Joann, Sharon, and Annette.

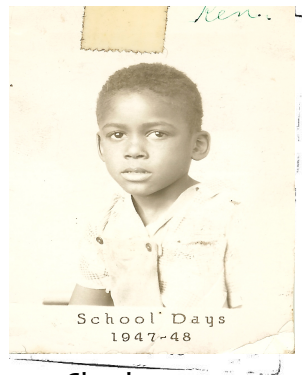
Ken Miller, the middle child, was born in 1942 and lived and attained his education in West Des Moines: Phenix Elementary, Valley Junior High, and Valley High School. Ken graduated from Drake University with a Bachelor of Science in education cum laude. He also attained a Master of Science in elementary and secondary administration. Ken was a teacher in elementary and middle schools and a high school Vice Principal.

Ken served his country in the U S Army as a warhead missile specialist and received an honorable discharge.

For 35 ears Ken was active in athletics as a player, coach, an umpire in the softball league. He also officiated basketball games.



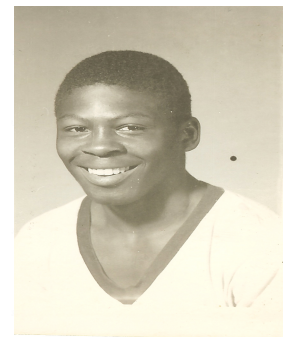
Evelyn Fox



Charles



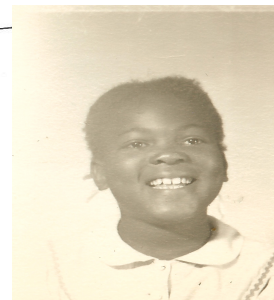
Carolyn



Kenneth



Joan



Sharon



Annette





The Page Family Story



From Bard to Barbecue

Alonzo Page was born and raised in Eldorado, Arkansas. He had a good voice, a quick wit, and a never failing sense of humor. While attending public schools in Eldorado, he became acquainted with Dusty Fletcher. Together, Alonzo and Dusty started out to achieve fame and fortune in show business. The two young men formed a minstrel troupe. Alonzo performed with Lucille Vaughn as Lucinda and Blue Jay. The nickname, “Blue Jay”, stayed with him the rest of his life. The troupe toured the Southwest in Vaud Ville for ten years playing the small towns, one night stands, carnivals, or any other event they would book them.



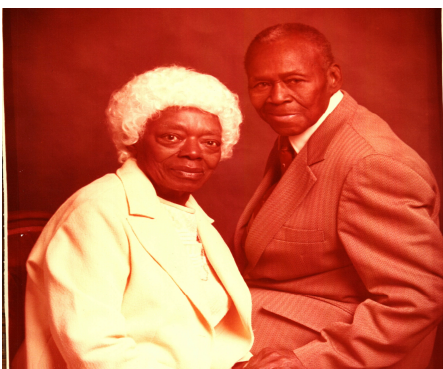
In 1927 Alonzo married Jencie Mae Reeves. Together they later raised Dorothy Lee (Hawkins), Geraldine (Allison), Barbara (Long), Shirley (Ramirez), Sheila (Pedigo), Gerald, and Deborah.

That same year Alonzo’s, Blue Jay, and Dusty’s troupe joined the Barnum and Bailey Circus and toured for six years. During this time, Blue Jay, always a lover of good food had learned the art of cooking and developed into an amateur chef. Show business was one of the first to feel the impact of The Great Depression in the 1930’s causing the minstrel troupe to fold.

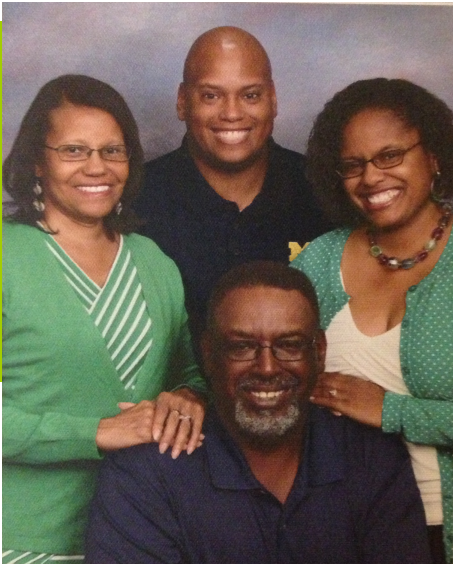
After the show failed, his cooking ability was his means of salvation. Alonzo started cooking for a railroad repair crew. He was stationed in Manely, Iowa which was a railroad division point. Alonzo plied his culinary arts for eight years. But in 1942 the railroad converted to diesel locomotives and the need for the large mobile repair crews diminished. Alonzo and Jencie were left in a little community to the west of Des Moines, Valley Junction, where he once again was looking for a job.



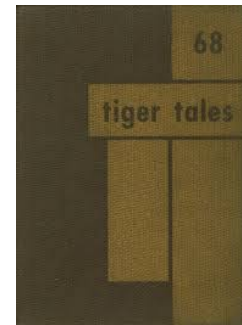
In the early spring of 1942, Alonzo joined the janitorial staff at the Armstrong Rubber Manufacturing Company in Des Moines. After a few months of the work-a-day routine, his fascination for cooking again came to the surface. So to help make ends meet, he opened a small barbecue establishment, Blue Jays, in his Valley Junction home. His specialties were barbecued ribs, beef, ham, and wild game all smothered in his delicious secret sauce. Alonzo retired from Armstrong in the early 1960’s. But he continued to cook at Blue Jays until the late 1960’s. People all over Des Moines still smile when they remember Blue Jay’s delicious barbecue. Alonzo and Jencie celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family and friends in 1977. Alonzo “Blue Jay” Page and his wife, Jencie, passed on in 1982 leaving their family to live, grow, and support Valley Junction into the future.



The Gerald Page Story



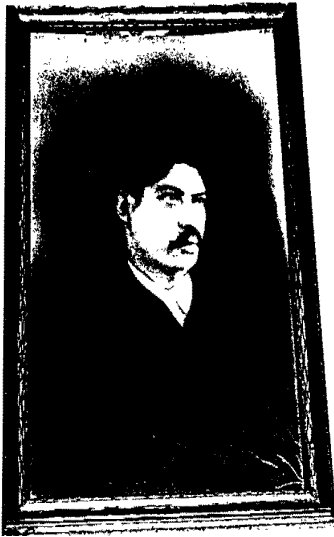
Gerald (Gerry) Page is the son of Barbara Jean Page(Long). He was raised by his grandparents, Jencie and Alonzo Page, on the one hundred block of Eleventh Street. Gerry attended Phenix school, Stilwell Junior High and Valley High Schools. His class was the first to graduate from the new Valley High School in 1968. Gerry was probably known best for his participation in football. He also participated in band, orchestra, chorus, wrestling, track and student government. The summer of 1967, Gerry became the first African-American drum major to lead a high school marching band in the Iowa State Fair parade. At graduation, Gerry was recognized as a "Top Ten Outstanding Student" in his class.



Gerry received a full scholarship to attend Drake University graduating in 1972 with a BA degree in Elementary Education. He received a Masters Degree of Science in Education in 1974 and completed graduate work for administrative certification in 1984. After teaching two years in Des Moines, Gerry transferred to WDM where he had a successful career teaching at Stillwell and Indian Hills Junior High Schools. In 1984, he was asked to represent the staff at Indian Hills to receive the Excellence in Education Award from President Reagan at the White House. In 1990, Gerry became the first African-American to become an administrator in the WDMCSD. He was named the principal at Westridge Elementary School in 1992 where he was well respected and appreciated. He retired in 2005.



Gerry married Julia Johnson from Franklin Ohio in 1970. They have two children (Annis and Warren), five grandchildren and three step grandchildren. They have resided in Clive since 1988. In retirement, Gerry and Julie have become world travelers visiting locations in Europe, Asia, South America, Australia, Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean. Hawaii, Savannah, Ga. and Phoenix are annual stops for the two during the cold months. When in town, you will see Gerry hauling his personal golf car to the golf course.



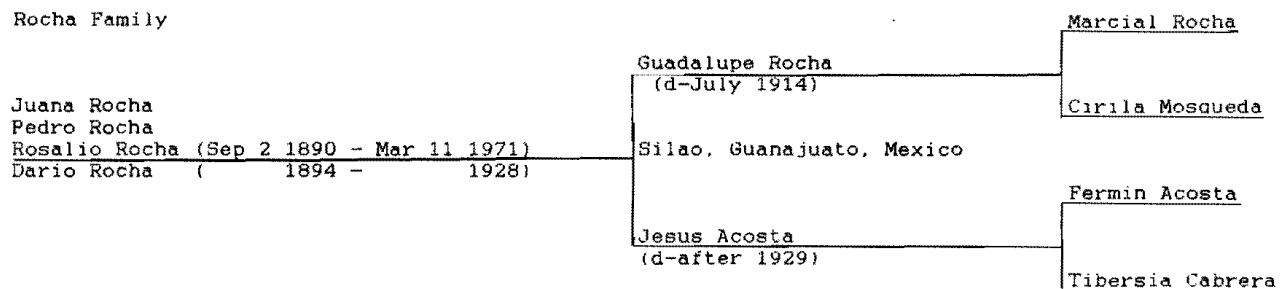
Dario Rocha
(1894-1928)

Younger brother of Rosalio and
Grandfather of our 3rd generation
cousins in Texas.



The Rocha Family Story

Rocha Family



Guadalupe and Jesus Acosta Rocha had four children. Juana, Pedro, Rosalio and Dario. Jesus Acosta Rocha is remembered as a "small, wonderful woman" by Frank Rocha, oldest son of Dario.

Juana Rocha was the oldest. Frank Rocha and Pedro Rocha (Carmelo's dad) say their Aunt Juana was tall and looked like Carmen. Juana Rocha married Emilio Salazar and they had three children. Juan, Tomas and Viviana Salazar. Emilio Salazar also had a son Luis from a previous marriage.

Pedro Rocha married Carmen Gutierrez and they had two children, Pedro Rocha Jr. (July 20, 1914) and Maurilia Rocha. Pedro and Carmen Gutierrez Rocha died when their children were very young.

Rosalio Rocha married Prisca Lopez on June 3 1911. They lived with their parents in the Hacienda De Trejo, Estacion Villalobos in Silao. They left Mexico and Uncle Jack wrote for the Aunts their progression: Laredo, TX-1916, Dodge City, KS-1917, Kinsley, KS-1920, Larned, KS-1921 and Valley Junction, May 5, 1923. They had 12 children:.

Angelina	(b in Silao	- d in infancy)
Filiberto/Gilbert	(Aug 22 1914, Silao	- Dec 1 1994)
Guillermo/George G.	(Jun 25 1916, Silao	- Jul 29 1968)
Guadalupe/William G.	(Jul 18 1918, Dodge City, KS	- May 30 1982)
Maria/Luz	(Mar 1 1920, Kinsley, KS	- Feb 18 1993)
Rita	(1921, KS	- 1923)
Rosa	(1923, West Des Moines	- 1924)
Madeline	(May 29 1925, West Des Moines)	
Tiburcio/John T.	(Aug 11 1928, West Des Moines	- Apr 7 1981)
Ramona	(May 16 1930, West Des Moines)	
Lena	(Sep 23 1933, West Des Moines)	
Benjamin	(Mar 31 1936, West Des Moines	- Jan 12 1937)

Dario Rocha was the youngest and was 6'5" tall. In the same ceremony as his brother Rosalio was married, Dario married Paula Rangel. They had planned to move to the U.S. but Dario Rocha died of pneumonia in Matamoros, Mexico in 1928. Paula Rangel Rocha moved the family near El Campo, Texas in 1929. They had six children:

Nieves	(Aug 5 1914 - Mar 6 1978)
Frank	(Oct 4 1916)
Carmen	(- d in infancy)
Victor	(Mar 6 1920 - Nov 14 1993)
Lupe	(Jul 31 1925 - Nov 2 1993)
John R.	(1928 - 1977)

The Rodich Family Story



Between 1904 and 1911, two young men by the names of Jovo Radocaj and younger brother Rada Radocaj set their sights on immigrating to America. Over time they shed their Serbian names and came to be commonly known as Joe Rodish and Ray Rodich. The family set down permanent roots in the small village of Krcana located near the market town of Udbina in the region of Lika, Croatia (see map). They farmed a small plot of land. The soil was rocky, but yielded to the calloused hands of the Serb farmer. When word of growing immigration to America as a land of opportunity reached the village of Krcana, the Radocaj boys left the village. Ray departed the port of Le Havre, France to sail to America. Joe left home first immigrating to America in 1904. He was married, but left his wife, Mary, behind to join him later in America. Ray immigrated in 1911 at the age of 17. Other brothers came for a short time, but returned to the family in Krcana.

Each of the brothers arrived through Ellis Island, New York. Joe first settled in Chicago where there were a large number of Serbian immigrants also working in the steel mills. Census records later show them living in an immigrant neighborhood of South Chicago near the rail yards. Later they moved to the Earlham, IA area where there was work in the mines, a rock quarry and cement plant.

Ray joined brother Joe in Earlham, IA in 1911. Records show him working for a rock quarry. In 1914, he wrote to his brother, Arsa, back home and asked him to find a young Serbian woman willing to come to America to marry him. Arsa picked Duka Popovich, the prettiest girl in the area to ask. Only 18 years old and speaking no English, Duka faced the hardship of sailing for 8 days alone in Steerage without privacy or any comforts. Arsa paid for Duka's passage and gave her \$25.00 for her needs at sea and transportation from New York to meet Ray. Duka landed in Ellis Island, New York and was placed on a train with a note pinned to her coat, "Destination – Earlham, Iowa." Conductors along the way must have looked out for her and other immigrants on the train. Ray and Duka were married for 52 years.

Both families left Earlham settling in the Valley Junction area where Duka came to be known as Julia. The railroad hired Julia to cook for the rail hands. As a part of the deal, the railroad provided them a converted railcar near the tracks where they could live and Julia could do her cooking. While living in the railcar, two children, Ely and Zona were born. Ray purchased the food stores for Julia to cook, and Ray went to work for the Rock Island Railroad as a laborer. By 1920, they bought a little acreage at the end of the lane at 61st and Railroad Ave.



Standing: John Rodich, Andy Rodich, Mildred Kibbe, Pete Rodich and Sam Rodich
Sitting: Mary Dicklich, Mike Dicklich

It appears that Ray lost his job as a result of one of the railroad strikes of the 1920's. Ray then worked in the coal mines and later went to work for the Union Pacific Railway in Council Bluffs, IA. He lived in Council Bluffs for several years returning home as he could manage. When he retired from the Union Pacific, he returned home to live out the rest of his life. Ray and Julia died within months of each other in 1966 and are buried in Jordan Cemetery where many other Serbs from Valley Junction lie in eternal rest.

Ray and Julia had nine children: Son Ely (unmarried, died of cancer as a young man of 21 yrs); daughter Zona (husband John Grgurich, children Sandra & Michael); daughter Luba (husband Dave Fillman, children Judith & Ronald); son Steve (wife Pat, child Sheila); son Pete (wife Lois, children Julie, Linda, Susan & Kathy); daughter Mildred (unmarried); son Dan (wife Eleanor, children Misty & Robin; son Mike (wife Joan, children Rebecca & Debra); son Stanley (wife Harriett, children Bob, Cindy, Tami & Connie). The Rodich family in America now counts six generations.

Joe and Mary moved back to Chicago sometime after 1914. Joe passed away around 1920 and is buried in the Chicago area near the burial site of a young son. Joe and Mary had seven children: Son (child buried in Chicago, Illinois area); son Ely (died as a 12 yr old youth buried in Glendale Cemetery, Des Moines, IA); son Pete (wife Vivian, children Patricia, Joe, Helen & Mike); son Andy (wife Mary Francis, children Brenda, John, Steven, Sharon, Daniel, Linda, Dennis & Dino); son Sam (wife Anna, children Mary Ann, Judy, Sammy & Ron Smith); son John (child Joe); daughter Mildred (husband Floyd Sr., children Floyd Jr., Mary Louise, Henry & Scott). After Joe's death, Mary married Mike Dicklich. Mary and Mike Dicklich had three children: Daughters Helen (died in 1967), Amy & Anna.



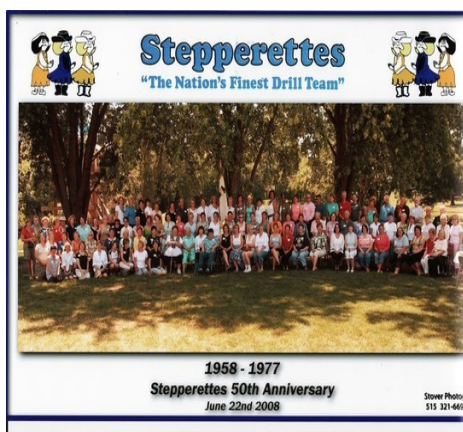
Rodriguez & Medina Family And Plasencia



Pablo (Paul) Rodriguez was born in Jalisco, Mexico and Pillar Medina was born in Guanajuato, Mexico. They met and married in 1914 in El Paso, Texas. Pablo was recruited to work in Earlham, Iowa in a rock quarry. Pablo and Pillar had five children: Maria, Pablo Jr., Basilio (Buster)Doloris, Adalita (Lita) and Bernardo Navallo was brought into the family with Pillar.

In 1930 Pablo Rodriguez, Sr. was transferred to work at the Hawkeye Portland Cement Company in Des Moines, Ia. He purchased a farm near the cement plant until World War II. When WWII was declared in December of 1941, Bernardo who had already enlisted in the US Army was stationed in the Philippine Islands. In 1942 Bernardo was commissioned to Second Lieutenant. Bernardo survived the Bataan Death March and was a Japanese Prisoner of War until his death in February 1945. Buster enlisted in the US Air Force. Eight months after his enlistment Cpl. Buster Rodriguez was killed in an air crash. In the spring of 1942, Pablo and his only living child, Lita, moved to Valley Junction. Lita graduated from Valley High School in 1945. Lita married Ralph Plasencia

Ralph Alexander Plasencia was born on September 8, 1925 in Valley Junction to Rufus Plasencia and Nora Snodgrass Plasencia. Ralph had a sister, Savina, and five brothers: Freeman, Luther, Gordan, Howard, and Morlock. Rufus was born in Zacatecas, Mexico and came to the United States to work on the Rock Island Railroad where he met Nora Snodgrass in Avoca, Iowa. They married and moved to Valley Junction in 1918. All of their children attended Valley High School. Ralph met and married Lita Rodriguez, a Valley High graduate and they had four children: Paula, Raphael, Brian, and Lisa Plasencia. Raphael, Brian, and Lisa graduated from Valley High School. Paula graduated from St. Joseph Academy. She was member of the “Stepperettes.” They all live in West Des Moines except Lisa who lives in California. Savina married Wayne Shofstall and had four children: Sandy, Betty, Jackie, and Dennis Shofstall. Savina’s second marriage to Joseph Fucaloro produced one child, Joseph Fucaloro, Jr.



The Minnie Lizzie Slaughter Family

Minnie Lizzie was born to Hanna Slaughter in Opelika, Alabama two centuries ago. She acquired a 6th grade education. It is unknown when she moved to Chicago, but she also had 2 sisters that lived there, Omega and Mary. Omega Gothard eventually moved to Des Moines caring for her great-niece Jaquinta and great-nephew, Tristan Cherry. Mary Charles moved to Los Angeles and became a pastor.

Minnie had three children, Wilbur Cherry, Thressa Cherry, and John Henry Robinson.

Thressa graduated from Windell Phillips High School in 1939 along with Reese (Goose) Tatum, the original clown prince of



basketball that acquired thy name while playing center for the Harlem Globe Trotters. Other classmates were Nat King Cole and Johnson, the publisher of Ebony and other black magazines. Ting (Wilbur Cherry) was a very successful barber and businessman. He was able to buy himself a house complete with basement and pool table. It was in a nice area of Chicago, 94th and Union. In 1957 he showed up in West Des Moines in a brand new '57 black Ford hardtop convertible.

Thressa had a child, Wilbur Eugene Cherry '39, with Eugene Blue. Eugene is the cousin of Vida Blue who pitched for the Iowa Oaks before becoming famous as a star pitcher for the Oakland A's. A few years later, she



married John Lamar and had seven more children: Michael, Larry, Dennis, Carl, Pamela, Wayne, and Diane. Diane died in childbirth.

Doc Slaughter left Minnie's property in New Jersey and West Des Moines. Then she met and married Robert Love, an employee of Meredith Publishing Company.



Minnie Love moved her daughter and six grandchildren to West Des Moines in 1955. Eugene and Michael both suffered from asthma and arrived in Des Moines with puffy runny eyes and sneezing fits.

One of the West Des Moines residents, Thressa, met a navy hero, Omar James. In 1958 they had a daughter Omega, the name signifying the last in the Greek alphabet. However, soon after Judy was born. Minnie Lizzie Loved died at the age of 81, but her legacy lives on in her grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren. Among them is a great grandson that graduated from Duke and Columbia Universities and is currently a lawyer. There

is also a great granddaughter that is an artist. And a great-great granddaughter



who won the 100 yard dash at the Drake Relays 2 years in a row. 1 great granddaughter plays for UNI, won state championship in high school, a great grandson All American football player wanted by Kansas, & another great grandson currently playing for a semi-pro football league.

How My Family Arrived in Valley Junction, Iowa

By Marilyn Septer Coleman



I am grateful and blessed to be from Valley Junction ... and I owe it to my brave (paternal) grandparents, Oran Curtis Septer (1885-1963) and Eva Jane Sargent Septer (1883-1941) who came from Indianola in a horse-drawn wagon right after they married in 1910. Oran was born in New Virginia, Iowa to Joseph Emanuel and Mary "Molly" Henson Septer. Eva was born in Indianola, Iowa to Ezekiel and Tamzy Mayra Willis Sargent. They came to Valley Junction so that Oran could work as a hostler for the Rock Island Railroad. (In the United States railroad industry a hostler is a type of railroad engineer who drives locomotives to designated stations in railroad roundhouse to be cleaned, serviced, or repaired. Per Wikipedia)

My grandmother died during World War II, so I never got to meet her; Grandpa Septer died when I was in Kindergarten so I do have some pleasant memories of him. Their children were: Dorothy Mae Septer Allen (1911-1978); Harriet Louise Septer Phelps (1913-2003); and my dad, Joseph Ezkiel Septer (1919-1993). I adored my aunts "DeeDee" and "Hattie" and my dad "Joe."



My dad met and married my mom during WW II. My mom is Marjorie Ann Ault Septer Hargens, born (July 10, 1924) in Elkhart, Iowa on her family farm. She has lived in West Des Moines since she married my dad in 1943, and although Elkhart will always be her hometown, she has loved and served our community for many decades. She's an amazing woman of faith and I am so blessed to have her for my mother. Their children are: Joseph Ezkiel Septer, Sr. (Class of 65); MaryAnn Septer Brammer King (Class of 69); James Edward Septer (Class of 70); Marilyn Ann Septer Coleman (Class of 76); and John Eric Septer (Class of 79). They now have a whole bunch of wonderful kids and grandkids. I also have a sister in heaven who was born in 1948 but only lived 48 hours - Kathy Ann (buried at Resthaven next to my dad. My parents were divorced in 1964 and my mom remarried Wayne "Nit" Hargens from Manning, Iowa, who also had 5 kids. They called our house "Yours, Mine and Somebody Else's" as they welcomed our friends, and some came to live!



Dad graduated in 1939 and had the privilege of running track with some of the greatest ever: Charlie Swink, Harvey Florer & Cal Luckett come to mind. He had a lot of great stories about growing up in Valley Junction, and made a good living driving semi's (hauling fuel for Sinclair Oil and later Ruan).

In my humble opinion, some of the best people on earth are from Valley Junction!

I am married to Steve Coleman, a wonderful man, and we have 3 awesome kids who have blessed us with 3 more by marriage plus 4 truly amazing grandchildren. Steve and I met while working at Penn-Dixie in 1978, and he became "Valley Junction by marriage" (and he's glad he did and so am I :)

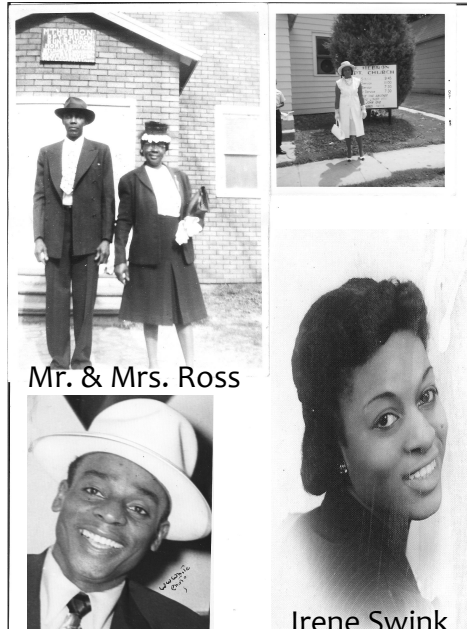


The Swink Family Story



Charles "Charlie" Swink

Charlie was born on March 4, 1918 Little Rock Arkansas and moved to WDSM, Iowa in 1922 when his father, James Swink, was transferred to work for the Rock Island Railroad. Charles attended WDSM schools and graduated from Valley in 1939. He was an outstanding track and football athlete. Charlie held a record in, the then, 400-meter race for 50 years from 1937 to 1987. Later, another African American Valley athlete, Carlos Kirby, broke this record. Charlie attended Drake University for a semester before being drafted into the U.S. Army. Charlie wedded Irene Melcina Ross at Mt. Hebron Baptist Church on October 6, 1940. Charlie worked for Penn Dixie Cement Corp. the majority of his working life until his retirement in 1976. Charlie died March 14, 2007 in West Des Moines, IA. He was 89 years old.



Irene Swink

Irene was born on November 11, 1921 Vinita, Oklahoma and moved to WDSM, Iowa in 1925 with her parents Helen Flax-Ross and Ewing Ross, Sr. and brother, Ewing Ross, Jr. Her Father was looking for work. Irene attended WDSM schools and graduated with honors from Valley in 1940. She received a scholarship to AIB and when she went to enroll she was told they didn't accept Negro students. They did offer her a job to do domestic work for the school, but she declined. She went back to WDSM, married Charlie, and did part-time housekeeping immersing herself in raising children and church work until her death. **Irene died** January 20, 1995 in Des Moines, IA. She was 72 years old.



Swink Children

Patricia Karen Smiley born 1942; three children; graduated from Valley 1960; living in Ohio; retired.

Pamella Marie (Fant) Garr born 1945; two children; graduated from Valley 1963; living in Waukee, IA; graduated from Des Moines School of Practical Nursing (LPN); retired. Pam's daughters Alana & Andrea Fant also graduated from Valley.

Phyllis Anne (Hubbard) Swink born 1948; two children; graduated from Valley 1967; living in Urbandale; graduated from DMACC Associate Degree Nursing (RN); graduated from University of St. Francis BS Health Arts; retired.

Paula Roberta (Williams) Chaney born 1954; three children; graduated from Valley 1973; living in Maryland; Certified Personal Trainer

The Vincent Jesse Valdez Story: 3rd Generation Mexican American

Born: July 11th, 1953 to John Joseph Valdez and Maria Dolores Fernandez

John Valdez' parents, Manuel Valdez Sr. and Guadalupe Sapien came to West Des Moines from the state of Michoacan, Mexico in 1919 after their marriage in the city of. Mr. Valdez worked for the Rock Island Railroad as many Mexican immigrants did. They lived south of the railroad tracks near Fifth Street in Valley Junction and later bought a home at 116 12th Street where they raised 13 children.

Dolores Fernandez' parents, Jose Jesus Fernandez and Maria Victoriana Epigmenia del Carmen first came to San Pedro California sometime before 1930. Maria Dolores Fernandez, their only living child, was born on February 18th, 1930 in San Pedro. About three years later they moved to Valley Junction so Victoriana could be close to her sister Maria and her husband Francisco Salgado who were already living here and raising a family of their own. Dolores and her parents first lived in a boxcar provided by the Rock Island Railroad that was situated somewhere across the tracks south of Railroad. They later bought a house at 136 8th Street which is still in the family and now owned by a great grandson, Nicholas Valdez.



Family Shout Outs

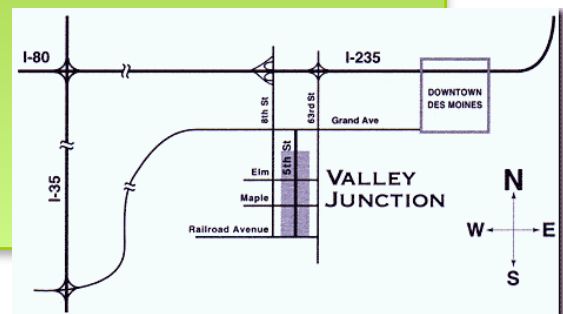


The Renteria Family Story

My grandmother, France V. Renteria, worked for Human Services. She lived in the junction for many years. France passed away in 1998. My uncle, Rick Renteria, also worked for the City of WDM. He passed away in 2008. Currently Ralph Jr. Renteria works for WDM Water works as an engineer. I am proud of my family history and with Cindy, Mario Sr., and Mario Jr. Barrueta, we had tons of family in the junction area. We were raised in the Junction. I have very loving memories of when I was a child. I loved living there and growing up. We are related to the Salazar Family. On hot summer days, the children always went to Holiday Pool and Recreation at the school for the summer. I am very proud to a Junction Gal!!!!

The Fran Jackson Story

I lived in the 500 block of 4th St in 1970. I was going with Herbie Underwood. I later moved to the 200 block of 6th St, across the street from "The No-Where." "The No Where" was a place where the kids could hang out, have refreshments, and dance, dance, dance! A church is in that spot now (6th and Elm Street.) I later moved to Omaha, where I went to college. I stayed five years before moving back and lived just north of Dorothy Pryor in the 204 block of 8th St (wished I had that house now!) In December 1986, I moved to the 500 block of 4th St, where I still live. I raised my 5 children in this home and known to many of their friends, as "MS JACKSON", the mother who can cook up some pretty good grub....morning, noon, or night, clean up a wound and make it feel all better....even clean up after the effects of too much booze!!!! My children are Michael Banks, James Jackson Jr, Shane Jackson, Lance Jackson, and Ashley Howelton AND the proud grandma of 7 grandchildren. I can't wait to see everyone.



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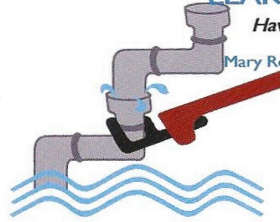


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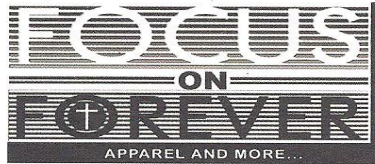


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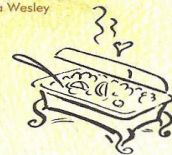
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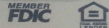


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