

STORIES ABOUT A GRANDMOTHER-LAURA G. RODRIGUEZ

NEWSPAPERS

My grandmother was an avid reader. She read every day. Her two favorites were the local newspaper and Reader's Digest. Laura wrote letters to the Editor of The San Diego Union or The San Diego Tribune often and she was really good at expressing her opinions! She also liked Newsweek and Time news magazines.

She always clipped out newsworthy and/or interesting articles and either sent them to you in the mail or gave them to you when you went to visit. I always kept a special file just for the articles Grandma gave me to read. My grandfather, David, Sr., also read the newspaper every day. My sister, Gail, and my father really like to read the newspaper, too. They got that from my grandparents. My sister reads articles aloud to me, just like my grandmother used to.

READER'S DIGEST

Laura loved Reader's Digest magazine. She had a subscription to it and the latest issue was always open to the "Word of the Day" section. She would learn the new word and use it the whole day. She would repeat the word over and over and would try it out in sentences. She always made me take the multiple choice word quiz in Reader's Digest every month. She was very particular about grammar and pronunciation. She always wanted to make sure we spoke properly. It was very important to her. If she had to remind me too often when I mispronounced a word, she would smack me on top of my head. I was always very careful using the word "didn't" around her. She didn't like the way I pronounced it.

When I told my grandmother about my favorite word game was, she really liked it and had me show her the game. Everyone had to learn synonyms when I was in elementary school. It's still one of my favorite games and even though I no longer write down the words, I play the game in my mind. The game is writing down as many synonyms as you can think of.

Here are a few:

Flour and flower
Bread and bred
Blue and blew
Bored and board
See and sea

I am grateful to my grandparents and my parents for giving all of us the love of reading and learning.

STORIES ABOUT A GRANDMOTHER-LAURA G. RODRIGUEZ

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Laura had lots of girlfriends. Whenever one of her friends came over to the house to visit, they would sit outside on the porch and talk and talk. Sometimes they talked and cried. She was a good crier. Sometimes they talked and laughed. My grandmother loved to laugh. She loved jokes and stories. Sometimes she would argue with one of her friends and they would be mad at each other for a while. But, eventually, they would make up and be back on the porch again talking.

My grandmother was a good neighbor. She was a troubleshooter. Whenever anyone in the neighborhood had a problem and needed assistance, they would consult my grandmother. Usually, it would be a lady neighbor who would initiate the contact. If the problem involved the husband, his wife would come over first and discuss it. Then, the husband would come over. My grandmother would listen, make suggestions, make telephone calls and advocate in any way she could. Sometimes, it was a school issue. Sometimes it was a discrimination issue. My grandmother was always there to help.

Laura was also the neighborhood interpreter. For her neighbors, she translated correspondence, completed forms, prepared Federal and State Income Tax forms. She would accompany people to translate in person. It was always like that, my whole life. Everyone in the barrio came to my grandmother for help.

CAFETERIA FOOD, CHINESE FOOD AND SEE'S CANDY

My grandmother always took us shopping with her when she went Downtown. She never drove, so we always took the bus. She used to give us each a nickel to pay for our bus ride. It always made me feel very responsible. Even if the shopping trip wasn't to buy me anything, I always wanted to go for two reasons. The first reason was that I got to be with my grandmother and the second reason was that we were always treated to a meal. In those days, all our meals were homemade. We ate breakfast, lunch and dinner at home. It was a major treat to have a meal in a restaurant.

Laura loved to eat in a cafeteria, where there was a great selection to choose from. We would eat meat loaf and mashed potatoes or turkey and stuffing or macaroni and cheese. She had a sweet tooth and loved cakes and pies, but her favorite sweet was See's candy. She didn't often allow anyone to buy her gifts, but she would accept See's candy. She would get mad when we spent money on her, but she always ate the See's.

My grandmother also liked Chinese food. When I was little and we used to go to Tijuana, we would eat Chinese food. It was fascinating to see the Chinese people speaking English, Spanish and Chinese. Her favorite Chinese restaurant was Nan King, which was Downtown on Island Street. We went there for special occasions. The owners were from China and they used an abacus instead of a cash register.

STORIES ABOUT A GRANDMOTHER-LAURA G. RODRIGUEZ

LAURA WASHED ALL THE MONEY AND THE GROCERIES

My grandmother was a clean-a-holic. She had a dirt phobia. We always had to enter the house through the back porch and leave our shoes outside. There was a big sink in the back porch where we had to wash our hands and feet before we were allowed in the kitchen.

One of her obsessions was washing money. There was a tin bucket on top of the washer and dryer that all the coins went into for cleaning. There was always a towel under the bucket and after the coins were washed, they were laid on the towel to dry. It was the same thing for the bills. They were washed and then dried. Our great-grandfather, Lito, always gave us coins. The minute we stepped into the back porch, we had to wash the coins, then our hands and our feet.

Laura also washed everything she brought home from the grocery store. Everyone does that now, but in those days, it seemed very strange. She washed all the cans and all the packages, even the loaves of bread! A lot of bread got thrown away because the loaves got wet when they were washed.

You don't even want to know how mad Grandma got if the back of your neck wasn't properly clean or if your ears were dirty, or, heaven forbid, if your underwear wasn't clean!!

*These stories were collected by Marian Anne Rodriguez
(Laura's Granddaughter)*