

These writings were prompted by the absence of those gatherings around the hearth that were common to the families of my ancestors. It was especially during those times that stories like these were captured forever in the minds of the listeners. So that we do not lose this heritage, I have tried to "capture the essence" of times past while sharing my

MEMOIRS`

Penned in 1994 by

Gregory E.L. Sanchez

"Memories are the canvass of an artist named the MIND."

Join me as I recall my Memoirs'!

Such an exciting time, especially for my mom and dad! It was to be our first house. It didn't matter that it was someone else's house previously (a used home instead of a brand new one). It didn't even matter that the site was once a landfill for a young metropolis. It only mattered that it was to be ours!

Though I was only four, I will never forget my first trip to see our new home. It seemed huge by contrast to the apartment across the street from my grandmother's house. It only had two bedrooms. There was also a living room and a dining room, (both of which were the wrong color according to dad). There was also a back room that was still very rough in appearance as it was a converted garage area. This room would later become my bedroom, solace, and place of retreat.

But best of all, this house offered a fenced yard! In fact it was a fenced yard with grass and two large trees in the back yard. These trees, which were distinguished by the names "Mama" and "Papa", complimented our culturally diverse neighborhood. (They were Chinese elms.) As I would grow up, the 'papa' tree would eventually harbor the neighborhood tree house. There was even a dirt street that divided our back yard from our adjacent neighbor's back yard. The dirt street was called an alley and was also the resting place for later to be extinct items called incinerators and garbage/grease pots as well as the regular trashcans. The alley would be the scene of many adventures to come.

I can remember opening every door to every room, cupboard, and closet that first day. It was the excursion of a lifetime in my very own house. It even offered a reward to such an inquisitive youngster as myself as I peered into a dark coat closet. There in the back of the closet was an artifact of the previous inhabitants. But this was not just any artifact. Since I was the one who found it, it was now mine. How appropriate that the small broom in the corner was one that was made for use by a youngster, a youngster around four years old. I knew that from that day on that I would like this house. It was to become the house that I would eventually reside in for (14) years. Yes, I would like this wonderful, generous house very much!

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As I look back at that day, the excitement of that FIND in the closet is as real as if it were yesterday's excitement. Imagine that, excitement over a mere collection of straw at the end of a cylindrical piece of wood. It was more excitement though, than the last watch that I received. It's almost ironic. I suppose that some would label this fact as "POETIC JUSTICE". I label the contrast a misfortune of the transition from youngster to adult.

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 2

The unknown has a "sweet & sour" characteristic about it. It offers a mystical lure of adventure and enhanced awareness tempered by the reluctance and apprehension fueled by fear of the same unknown!

So it was on my first afternoon of Kindergarten. I awoke earlier that morning with a feeling similar to how my stomach would feel when dad would drive fast going over a hill in the family car. Mom diagnosed the symptoms as "butterflius intestinitus". She also assured me that the feeling would be gone later in the day!

I must admit though, there was a brief sense of insecurity as mom accompanied me to the door of my classroom and advised me that she would not be staying. After all, this was much different than the infrequent stays at my grandma's house for similar periods of time. The biggest difference was that my two younger brothers were not accompanying me either. Oh sure, there were times over grandma's that I had wished they weren't there but this was one of those times that "sibling bonding" would have been appreciated!

My anxiety was somewhat overcome as I looked around the room and saw about (20) other kids my own age and all of those toys, books and desks. The teacher ushered me to a desk that I would come to grow fond of even though someone else in the morning undoubtedly shared it.

By 3:30 that afternoon, mom's prediction of my earlier illness had more than come to pass. In fact I felt terrific! I could hardly wait to get home and tell my family about **everything** that had taken place. The distance between the school & my house was just three blocks but it seemed like it took forever to see the corner of my block. When I did see it though, I also saw my mom waiting there with my brothers. This was the busiest corner of those streets that I needed to cross and I'm sure that mom just wanted to make sure that I remembered everything she told me earlier about crossing safely and looking both ways. I didn't disappoint her either as I didn't want her to have to worry about me.

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As I look back at that day, I realize that a threshold was bridged. I also grew immensely in stature that day, though remaining the same physical height. Since then, I have come to welcome the challenge of the unknown because of the anticipation of the reward that it offers. That day seared the desire to pursue the unfamiliar, the unpredictable, while responding to the beckoning of the unknown.

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 3

***Trauma & tragedy seem to go hand in hand.
Each seems to reveal inadequacy!
Each also reveals strengths!***

Our neighborhood was a diverse blend of ethnicity. The two rows of a dozen or so houses across the street from each other were occupied by the Millers, the Kellys, the Rubios, the Vigils, the Nunns, the Delanos, the Chavezes, and the Bundys to name a few.

Most of these households harbored kids with ages comparable to our household making for very interesting summers and weekends. Games of kickball, baseball and hide & seek oft-included participation from each family. The competition being in full view of all prompted the cheering and jeering of any front yard bystanders.

I especially remember one particular baseball game comprised mostly of the older kids on the block. Those qualifications of age and experience resulted in my being the smallest of players. It also meant that my younger brothers were only spectators. Unfortunately, this also meant that I was one of the less desirable players. My size and lack of experience mandated that my role be that of the catcher. And this only after the two captains argued over whom would default by having to select me in order for the teams to be equal in number. Needless to say, this was not the best "ego-builder" for a youngster, but I was willing to overlook the circumstances that facilitated my neighborhood baseball debut.

What I was not able to overlook was a naivety of the position that I was playing. I didn't realize that in addition to trying to retrieve the ball thrown by the pitcher at the batter; that the bigger challenge was to do so without being hit by the bat being swung by the behemoth at the plate. Needless to say, I failed at the latter of these two challenges. This prompted screams by my younger kinfolk as they saw hemoglobin dripping from the gash on my upper lip.

I began to seriously question my future in baseball as a result of this accident, especially as Dad was taking me to the hospital to become exposed to the healing properties of the **needle & thread**.

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I also gained an added appreciation for my father who gave me strength and support through what would be the first of many such traumas associated with life. And though it revealed my own frailty, the scar on my left upper lip brings to mind an enhanced love for my father and a "triple jump" towards the building of character in the journey of life!

Memoirs' 4

A less emphasized truth about "backbone" today is that it is the direct result of "posture" yesterday. Similarly, it's difficult to produce a straight piece of lumber out of a crooked tree.

Mom and dad brought home another one today. We were all anticipating the new arrival, though we were also hoping for a "she" as opposed to another "he". That made for a group of four male siblings. As the eldest, and being almost seven years old, I was already being groomed to *some day* make *some* woman a wonderful life mate! Little did I know then, just how marketable my skills of cooking, ironing, cleaning, and child care would someday be in addition to my charm and quick wit, when marriage would later be a consideration.

There were of course, those times when I felt sure that the responsibility would kill me or at least the consequences of poor administrative skills would at the time. I recall especially, a day in the summer when mom was still sleeping (she worked the graveyard shift). The neighbors to the **south** of us were away on vacation and at the time we were not on particularly good terms with the kids of the family who were "brats". One of my younger brothers had a devious mind and without even consulting me, felt compelled to put the grease & leftovers from last night's dinner to comical use by throwing the collection onto the **north** wall of their house. Had he at least conferred with me prior to the act, I would have certainly advised that a less incriminating **south** side of their house be selected as the easel for this classic work of art. When the family returned and the 'rocket scientist' head of household saw the evidence; an accusation, trial and sentence was quick to follow.

The easiest part of the judgment was cleaning up the mess that I was indirectly held responsible for. The tougher part was the group of us having to make a formal apology. But only after all were "adequately disciplined" for the act. The punishment was compounded because none of us would divulge (tattle-tale on) who was directly responsible for the act. I began to question the extent to which we carried our sibling bonds and our "one for all, all for one" mindset.

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It means all the more to me now than it did then, that as brothers we would be compelled to support each other. The need for that support was indifferent to the ethics of our actions. Recognize though, that support is not synonymous with condone or moreover approve. But rather, when the consequences and/or rewards of one's actions and decisions are on the line, that the support from friends and especially from family members is invaluable!

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 5

Alleyway, according to Webster, is "a narrow street giving access to the rear of buildings." To a certain group of youngsters, an alley was an adventure land unsurpassed!

Unlike most newly developed neighborhoods today, more than streets and fences separated the rows of houses where I grew up. Another common easement to our community was the alley. This alley is now paved, though it was originally dirt. Though much narrower than a street, it provided a different type of playground than the street where we played baseball. Alleys were perfect for playing marbles. I am certain that you "purists" of the game of marbles will agree! There is no better surface for being able to employ "reverse English" than that afforded by the proper blend of dirt, sand & gravel. This surface is not unlike the felt of a quality billiard table for being able to draw the ball back or have it remain at the point of impact. Many a "championship" marble ring was traced into the floor of our precious alley.

But do you know what our alleys were best for? **Alleypickin'!** "And what is that?" you ask. Well, no differently than it is today, the trash was gathered by the city but once a week. What this meant was that a day or two before the designated date of collection a treasured opportunity existed. In fact a "treasure" is often what awaited a group of youngsters who were not too proud. "Too proud for what?" you ask. Well, not too proud to "pick" through the trash. "What kind of treasures?" you ask. To name a few, how about one nearly brand new (except for one hairline crack) bowling ball or a brass birdcage that we tried endlessly to catch a bird to utilize (but that's another story in itself). And of course we mustn't forget the countless "pop bottles" that could be redeemed for one-cent candy at the little neighborhood store.

Alleys were also less traveled byways! Roads that revealed events taking place in an otherwise "private" environment (at least more so than the front yard). Parties, barbecues, **sunbathing** and anything else that took place in the backyard were privy to the vagabonds of the alleyway.

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In a sense, I am convinced that we were Christopher Columbus of our day. Truly those adventures sometimes discovered trouble as well. But, I ask, what real adventure does not also flirt with disaster? What real adventure does not also test the boldness of the true pioneer? What real adventure does not appease and satisfy our innermost childish curiosities even as adults!

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 6

It has been said, "A tree is God's umbrella gift to the earth". To our household a pair of Chinese Elm trees was our aerial playground!

The two trees were the neighborhood's natural giants. A matched set lined up side by side in the middle of our back yard. There was only a slight difference in size; hence the distinction between them was the mama tree and the papa tree. The more effeminate was situated near the direct center of the yard while its counterpart stood in a more **protective** location, which was closer to our house. These elegant specimens of the *ULMACEAE* family served as a refuge for many critters of the neighborhood including robins, sparrows, and squirrels. They are all to be commended for their tolerance of our youthful inquisitiveness, especially during spring nesting times.

Of course, what would the papa tree have been without our utilizing its strong limbs to support our tree house? It wasn't an engineering phenomenon, but it was our solace and our refuge. It was a place where only the "guys" were allowed. The mama tree was distinct in that she had a swing (made from a discarded car tire) that was suspended from one of her limbs. This furthered our perspective of her usefulness.

Rumor had it (among the neighborhood) that the young leaves of the Chinese Elm endowed "machismo" to any and all of the gullible male youth who were brave (dumb) enough to ingest them. Though the leaves didn't have a too bad of a taste they did leave a slight green discoloration on the hands and teeth of the partakers.

It was a sad Sunday morning following a severe Spring snow storm when we awoke to learn that the loud "*crack*" that we all heard the night before was unfortunately the demise of our mama tree which was split down the middle by the weight of the snow on its nearly full blossom of leaves. It was several weeks before we would let dad begin the cutting down of what had become a part of us. I'm not sure if it was the hope that somehow new growth might appear, or that it was "out of respect" and a longer mourning period was yet needed, or a combination of the two.

There was some comfort knowing that the papa tree had weathered the storm and that a healthy sapling was also growing along the fence near the spot that now lay bare and never did seem to sustain the growth of planted grass; seemingly also "out of respect"!

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Though I couldn't have known it then, it was life experiences and events like the demise of the mama tree that early on would prepare us for dealing with the eventual death of other loved ones. This was such an intense concept for any youngster to have to deal with. Such an undesirable event to be confronted with and yet, a reality of life itself!

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 7

My mother and father instilled "respect for one's elders" very deliberately. Gramma's stature commanded that respect even though she stood no more than 54 inches tall.

Gramma's house! A trip to visit my grandmother & my great-grandfather was always a treat. Though the house is still standing, its original purpose has since been re-defined... a victim of the downtown Denver "urban sprawl".

The two-story structure was always very well maintained and had a front porch as wide as the house that overlooked a then rather peaceful Champa street. It was at this front porch that my great grandfather would sit and greet the passersby. Some would occasionally stop and chat, joining him on this huge veranda. I can still see him sitting with his arm propped up by his cane. Sometimes the cane would be leaned aside in order to produce a Velvet tobacco tin and rolling papers to fabricate a "roll your own" cigarette.

The house had a steep stairway that led to a pair of upstairs' bedrooms at the front of the house. The lure of climbing up the stairs was a bumpy ride down the stairs while in a sitting position with legs out stretched. Too many trips down the stairs in this fashion would normally prompt a stern request from my grandmother for the guilty party to cease and desist or suffer the formidable consequences. We respected my father's mother and moreover did not want to experience her wrath for such a trivial pursuit. I do recall being at the receiving end of this wrath on more than one occasion.

I remember especially, a trip "downtown" with Gramma. We boarded a bus operated then by what was known as the Denver Tramway Corporation. A short ride to 15th Street was required so that she could pay her utility bill (little did I know that this utility would eventual be my employer). I received an early lesson in etiquette when, as we were walking down the sidewalk, we encountered an individual walking towards us. Gramma sternly steered me to **our** right of the oncoming pedestrian. Politely waiting a few moments, she reiterated that in the future any similar situation should prompt me to always move to my right. Of course this recognizes that if the other person does the same that both parties may pass without hindrance.

The highlight of the trip though, was a jaunt over to Walgreen's for a dish of ice cream! This was definite "bragging material" when I returned home and gloated over the trip "downtown".

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Great-grandpa {Gramma's dad} passed away when I was still just a lad and it wasn't too many more years before my dad's mother moved to a more suburban location to live in a brand new home next door to my dad's oldest brother. Somehow the trips to visit Gramma lost some of their appeal. This was undoubtedly the combination of my growing older as well as her newer neighborhood not being nearly so intrinsic. To this day, I value & cherish antiques!

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 8

"Boys will be boys!" It goes without saying that with a household of four boys, this expression was in fact reality. If you are faint hearted or weak stomached you may prefer to stop reading. In which case, I am sorry.

Kick ball was always a favorite pastime! During one particular challenge between our brood and the family next door, a rather unplanned ending to the game took place. The score was closer than usual and as I dove underneath one of the lofty apple trees to retrieve a well-placed line drive, I neglected to beware of the new growth that was sticking out from the lowest part of the trunk. As I grabbed the ball and turned to throw it at the runner, my younger brother screamed! About the same time, I came to the awareness that there was something dripping from my face and moreover, something sticking out of my face. To be more specific, a stiff twig pierced the soft tissue between my nose and the corner of my left eye and broke off as I jerked from underneath the tree. How in the world this happened, despite my glasses being in place, is to this day a mystery to me. At any rate, I leapt over the chain link fence that separated the premise of the accident from my hospice. Oh, by the way, as I was running it was instinctive to extract the protrusion and of course the wound began to bleed profusely. It was indeed a miracle that I didn't lose an eye through this trauma. Humor me and put your finger to the corner of your eye and you will notice a minuscule pocket of flesh that separates the eye from the bridge of the nose. I can still feel scar tissue under that spot but there are no other indicators of the event, aside from the "gray matter" that houses this vivid memory.

And then there was the time when we were playing Gladiators in our front yard that had a slight hill. On this day two pair of horseman & steed made up the participants on our arena. Being the eldest, I carried my brother who is only 3 ½ years younger than I, while my brother who is just a year younger than me bore our youngest brother on his back. The competition was once again fierce but I grew evermore confident in a certain technique. My cargo and I would wait at the rise of the hill for our opponents to be on a lower part on the hill. We would then rush down the hill towards them. The gravity-aided momentum of our collision alone would prompt their loss of balance assuring our conquest. But victory was short lived. Somehow, during the last repetition of this sequence I lost my balance. As we fell, with my brother's legs grasped under my arms, I heard a loud snap! As we scrambled to regain our positions my brother screamed as he put weight on his right leg and he immediately went down on all fours. Though I was indeed concerned, I also recognized that if he was hurt, I might somehow be at least partially responsible for the injury. As we pulled up his pant leg we viewed an abnormal bump around the shin. The adjacent area had already begun to swell. I urged him, "Please don't say anything to mom and dad!" Of course we quickly realized that there would be no other way for him to get to the hospital so that the bone could be re-set and the leg put in a cast other than our telling mom and dad. But, "boys will be boys", won't they?

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His leg healed as well as the corner of my eye. I would go onto learn that a broader perspective places more emphasis on the winning of the war and not just the winning of the battle!

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 9

Most anything liquid will take the shape of whatever defines it. A similar result takes place as you and I "pour" our lives into that of another. Oddly enough, the limitations are determined by the extent of the "pouring".

Sports and scouts were key components of occupying the spare time of dad's four sons. Come to think of it, they occupied a pretty good chunk of dad's time too! Boxing (dad was a former Golden Glove's champion), baseball, and football were utilized to instill an appreciation for fitness, achievement and competition. These same activities would also serve as the catalyst for my appreciation of a dad who always either coached or assisted.

I enjoyed baseball the most. As a "Little Leaguer", my role as the pitcher was certainly a limelight opportunity! Speaking of limelight, during this same era a highlight of my youth took place. The event involved a choir that my younger brother and I sang with. A then popular folk-singing group known as the Limelights asked us to accompany them at a Red Rocks Amphitheater concert! My only regret was that mom & dad could not attend. My grandmother (mom's mother) passed away and the funeral in California prompted their absence. This was one of the extended stays at grandma's (dad's mom) that I alluded to in a previous memoir. My aunt and uncle used the two tickets that accompanied this unique opportunity. The evening was awesome!

Cubscouts (Does it even exist anymore?) served a somewhat different role in that we were introduced to the humanitarian side of life (I think this area is also waning). This organization helped to instill the awareness that "No man is an island, no man stands alone." The needs of others in the community yet permeate my life today as the result of my interaction with Cubscouts a 'score & fifteen' ago.

Mom shared an equal involvement in these participatory events. Many times the activities of six children demanded a number of different directions being traveled at once. I'm sure that she wished more than once that she had the qualities of the character that Barbara Eden played during this era.

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So much of how my parents chose to involve themselves in our lives was instrumental in the type of parent that I would later become. For those of you who are yet to be parents or still have young children, I cannot over emphasize the everlasting significance of the time that you spend with them and how it molds the nature of the person that they will become. Some day they too will pass those traits to yet another generation.

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 10

Show me a man or woman who has earned a living by "commission" sales and I will show you a self-starter with determination, charisma and perhaps a tad of masochism!

I suppose that even as a youngster the qualities that develop entrepreneurs, though lying dormant, were none-the-less present. I was inspired by a man who would appear every other week or so during the summer months. He drove a not so fancy but still very clean, pick-up truck. We new him as the "fruit man" and he would go door-to-door peddling fresh produce and fruit. We would scurry to round up any and all paper sacks that were in the house. In exchange for them, he would gladly swap a piece of fruit or two depending on the quantity of sacks. I had a much higher regard for him than I did the Fuller Brush man or the Watkins man who also came to our door. (Probably because they didn't want to be bothered by us kids if mom couldn't come to the door.)

I sent away for my first opportunity to "Strike It Rich" by filling out the insert to one of my favorite comic books (Green Lantern at the time). Within just a couple of weeks, (though it seemed like it took forever) I received a case of World Famous Salve. Now this was not just any old salve mind you! This was, as the name indicates, my opportunity to be the only distributor in our area of World Famous Salve. Some of you might be asking, "What the heck is salve?" Well it is kind of a "cure all" for cuts, burns, bug bites, arthritis, rheumatism, and hair that just wouldn't lay right otherwise (my favorite use, since I sported a "flat top" at the time).

After exhausting generous aunts & uncles, grandparents, and neighbors I ended up with just enough "profit" to pay the postage needed to return the remainder of the case that mom & dad had predicted I would never be able to sell. Well, perhaps my expertise was not meant to be in the "medical" profession but rather the "stationery" business. My venture into the solicitation of greeting cards was short lived due to an incorrect choice. In October I sent away for (12) boxes of all occasion cards not realizing that by the time they would arrive (6 weeks for delivery) that Christmas cards would have been the better choice. The results were somewhat similar except this time I did sell all the cards and besides the \$6.00 that I earned, I became eligible for the "grand prize" drawing which could have taken me and guests to Hawaii (I suppose that I'm still eligible, but I still haven't been there!).

Later, I found something that I actually got pretty good at. It was delivering and selling newspapers. Initially, I was a paperboy for the Denver Post. It was delivered in the afternoon then, except for Sunday when it became a morning delivery. Because of the courage that I developed selling salve & greeting cards door-to-door, it was nothing for me to go up to a stranger's abode and knock on the door to persuade them to sign up for an "introductory offer" that most could not refuse. Purchase one month and get one month free AND most of all, "You will help me to win an all expense paid trip to Cheyenne Frontier Days!" I did win this trip (the only one in my district to do so) and to this day I still remember that Greyhound bus ride and all the "freak & side shows" included with the "granddaddy rodeo of them all"!

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To this day I pride myself in the ability to positively influence the decisions of others!

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*

Memoirs' 11

So much seems to be restricted today by economics. It used to be that ingenuity and creativity were the only limitations to good clean fun!

Entertainment expenses were very limited around our household. In fact, things like going to Denver Bronco football games were unheard of. Unless you want to count the many times that mom & dad would pile all of us into the car and park where it is now an "official" parking lot at the current Mile High Stadium. It used to be, before the expansion that added the South stands, that those who parked in this area would be able to see most of the game from **outside** the stadium! Of course, as the field of play was focused at the South goal line, one could only rely on the radio broadcast and/or the jeers of the crowd to know exactly what happened at that end of the field. (The same would hold true for hits to right field during baseball games of the Denver Bears, a minor league baseball team.) As we boys reached an eligible age, we became vendors of popcorn, soda pop, peanuts, etc., in order to earn money and moreover, to see a football game from **inside** the stadium.

I will never forget the time that dad came home after work one evening (a school night at that), and told the three oldest sons that he was going to take us to the movies that night. Mind you this was not a drive-in movie (where we normally went as a family), but the Paramount Theater in downtown Denver! In fact, this was the opening night for GODZILLA! I could hardly wait to brag to my friends at school the next day!!! It was something never to be replicated, but at least it happened once and the spontaneity was a total surprise.

Around home, I remember things like rubber-band guns that were fashioned by dad out of scrap wood and clothespins with the ammunition coming from old rubber inner tubes. We youngsters even got creative after seeing an experiment on Mr. Wizard. We fashioned our own time bombs. The essentials included old prescription bottles (today's childproof ones would not work), water, and you guessed it, baking powder. Just add a pinch of baking powder (the bigger the pinch, the bigger the pop) into the bottle, add water, and quickly insert the cap or cork (depending on how old the prescription bottle), shake (we learned to do this with the cap/cork pointing away from us), set down on a flat surface and wait! It is recommended that this be done out of doors, lest you too be compelled by mom to wash the kitchen ceiling in order to remove dried baking powder stains.

Tops & yo-yos were considered to be a more elaborate way of passing the time but we eventually all had them as kids. Remember the first time you tried to do the trick called "Around the world"? I hope it was outside; otherwise, you probably broke a light fixture like I did. I could also, "Walk the dog", and "Rock the baby" with the best of them.

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It's unfortunate that rubber band guns have been replaced with Uzis and car bombs are more commonplace than baking powder explosions. And yet we call this progress?

Memoirs' 12

I am convinced that after it has all been "said and done" that what has been done will ultimately be longer remembered than what has been said! Do it!

Holidays! Regardless of one's level of affluence, there is always a hopeful anticipation present during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. Our household was no different. We would usually have the "traditional" turkey for Thanksgiving, but I can remember one year when the pair of geese that had been raised since Easter met the chopping block. We were all amused as we watched beheaded fowl scurrying around the back yard of our suburban house. The only exception was the older of my two sisters, Julianna. She would have no part in the feast that followed the sacrifice. For us boys it was no different than partaking of the harvest from dad's successful venison hunts. That Thanksgiving mom prepared a sauce that featured orange and brown sugar, and walnuts. I still use this sauce to occasionally diversify the preparation of chicken. But there's nothing quite as tasty as goose gravy!

Christmas around our household of eight was unique each year. As the girls became older it was peculiar around our "male dominated" home to see things like Barbie dolls and baby strollers being unwrapped after midnight mass on Christmas Eve. It was even more peculiar to see all the preparations that went into the hair curling and other stuff associated with little girls getting all dolled up. It seemed like an unreasonable and unnecessary amount of time that mom spent just getting them ready to go to church.

One particular year I remember having another difficult time falling asleep on Christmas Eve. Just as I nearly dozed of, I heard a noise that sounded like someone trying to open the door to our cellar, which was outside the boy's bedroom window. As I drew the curtains and looked out I saw what appeared to be my father maneuvering a cumbersome object out of the cellar. There was simply no way that I was going to be able to fall back asleep now! I conjured many different visions of what I thought I saw being brought into the house; none of which were correct. That year we were the envy of the neighborhood as we sported a toboggan-like sled that had a steering wheel to guide the front-runners and handles on the back that afforded a handy means of pushing 3-4 passengers. It even had a double handled brake system that was to be well used. I especially remember sledding sprees at Barnum Park (we could sled right onto the lake when it was frozen) and Ruby Hill, which eventually became restricted because it was so steep that it was dangerous!

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Doesn't it seem that these long awaited celebrations have lost some of their flair? Have the times changed or have the times changed us? Alas, for the loss as yesterday's memories are all too often the only barometers for measuring today's events. Why don't we give tomorrow a strict standard to aspire!

Penned by *Gregory E.L. Sanchez*