

## My Journey to the Eastside

By Isaac Esquivel

From Guerrero Mexico, the vacant almost dustbowl like town in which I grew up. To Eagle Pass, a small border town of the Lone Star state that resemble a town in Mexico. Green River; the small secluded town in Wyoming where I spent my school years and got my senior ring, which I still have today, almost 50 years later. After years in Green River, my husband and I moved to San Jose California to seek better opportunities for our future kids.

I was a small rambunctious kid; I wasn't that tall in high school. I had short curly hair with rather large eyeglasses that made my eyes look like an owls. My name is Maria Elena Martinez, but they decided to change my name to Helen since everybody in Mexico was named Maria. Helen seemed more Americanized. It stuck, and I blended in well with everyone since I wasn't as dark as the typical Mexican. Since we all worked in the fields and we always in the sun, we were as dark as coffee with a hint of milk. Not me, I never tanned, my skin was the color of a Spaniard, with a slight tan hue. One thing I couldn't believe was that I had to walk three miles to school every morning because our kind wasn't allowed to ride the bus to school. This made me feel rather indifferent but I just kept on walking and walking in rain, heat or snow. I was freezing my ass off every day in the snow that was as cold as the North Pole. I believed that this would only make me stronger when I got older so I never complained.

This experience meant a lot to me since now that I live on the east side of San Jose where I've been for the past thirty plus years, and since the only jobs I could find here were one that basically no one wanted. I spent a few years working in the fields, countless hours of picking pears, cherries strawberries. Every month there was something new to pick. The hard strenuous hours of countless picking in the sweltering rays of the summer sun, did not stop me from feeding myself and my soon to be family. After the fields I decided to work in the canary, a less strenuous job but still an unwanted one. Filling jars of jam and fruit preserves isn't something I would have liked to do either in life. But it must have been done. There was a lot of prejudice, but my husband and I were still able to carry out a rather successful life for being Mexican immigrants that had to deal with all the bullshit in society. Times have changed now though, the east side is now a giant melting pot; there are so many different cultures here that have a big impact on their different communities. I feel like I have been sent into the future with all this new technology and how everyone of every race can play a role in society. Right down the street there is little Mexico, as I like to call it. Then just a little farther down is Chinatown. The town is just so diverse now. I tend to forget about the prejudice that once existed and that I once experienced firsthand.