

## A FATHER IN ALL SEASONS



My mother, Adela Negrón, Delmira Isis standing on the left, Delia sitting on the right.

The little girl in mama's lap was a friend's Dtr.

Jesus exhorts “love one another as I have loved you.” My Father’s devotion to our family is an example of love for me. I pray I have shown such love to my own family. As the reluctant unofficial family historian, I cared for the Negrón family photos, stories and documents. My intention was to preserve my dear Father’s yellowed paper articles, stories and his book Palabras. They patiently waited for posterity in boxes, gathering dust. True love blossoms into joyful sharing. Now, with grateful heart, I share this humble Poet’s story and evocative words. I pray his children’s children and lovers of the arts will embrace him. The Poet DELIS NEGRÓN deserves to be known and loved as he loved. Hopefully he will touch hearts and inspire imaginations.

**SUMMER:** My earliest memory of Papá is of that ONE Honeysuckle-scented summer night in our front yard. I was a giddy baby as he held me up and twirled me around. Proudly he called to Mamá, “Listen! She said her first word!” Pointing to a passing car, he asked, “What’s that, how does it go?!” Excited with my response of “vroom, vroom!” he threw his head backward laughing, revealing his generous smile. I was happy about the approval of my Papá, with contagious laugh and smile as white as his shirt. At this moment I understood how precious I was to this man and how precious he would be to me.

**SPRING:** Under his direction (and as co-laborers), our family cleared out rocks and pulled weeds in our big back yard. The Visionary and his crew transformed a weed-infested backyard into a fantastical garden. We prepared the soil, planted seeds, watered and cultivated corn, carrots, tomatoes, cilantro, cantaloupes and onions! We helped one another

to fight weeds and dry spells. We admired living things and understood our responsibility as caretakers. Sister Delmira and I sneaked fresh eggs from cackling mothers.

Along with bees and butterflies, our well-designed orderly garden attracted many neighborhood children. The garden was a jungle where we hid from lions and monsters as we ran in and out of tall corn stalks. Our theatre was a chickenwire arbor lined with clinging vines and multi-colored Morning Glories. In that mystical place we inhaled nature's sweet fragrances. Our lovely garden yielded a bountiful harvest of healthy vegetables, curiosity and love of family!

**AUTUMN:** On my first day at a new school, Papá held my hand as we walked into Ms. Lloyd's second grade classroom. I stood with him as she introduced me to the students. She directed me to my desk as I managed a shy smile. Next to me sat a little girl with big beautiful brown eyes. During recess Diana instantly approached me asking "Would you like to play with me?" Fortunately for my family and me, Diana grew up and married my brother David. All our lives she would recount how we met, and how it was impossible for her NOT to notice me that morning. (I am certain Papá had insisted I wear a big RED bow in my hair, for a good first impression.) Although Diana never let me forget the "Red Bow Incident," I am so grateful to Papá— and so glad I did. We remained best friends until her untimely death seven years ago.

**WINTER:** On my 12th birthday, Papá presented me with a Cinderella watch in a "glass slipper." He explained, "THIS is a child's watch, but on your 15th birthday we will have a big celebration, and your gift will be a REAL ladies' watch!" My birthday is February 17.

In 1955 on December 24, I was on my way out to my best friend's home for Christmas dinner. I kissed my parents goodbye, but as I turned to go out, Papá touched my shoulder saying, "Wait, there is something I want to give you." He went to the bedroom and returned with a small box. While he was handing it to me, Mamá complained, "Ay, Delis, you're spoiling the surprise! You promised me you were saving it for her 15th birthday!" Neither Papá nor I paid attention. I hurriedly opened the box and therein lay my early surprise: a gold Bulova ladies' watch! It took my breath away! Squealing, I hugged him and gave him a big kiss. I continued my exit— barely hearing his soft poignant response to Mamá, "Ay, Mujer, only God knows where we'll be then."

The following month, Papá had a stroke and died on January 24, 1956—23 days before my 15th birthday. I treasured his gift dearly and wore it every day.

Two years later, my mother purchased an old car for me. When I was not driving it, it was parked alongside the curb in front of the house. One weekend I drove Mamá and Delmira on a four-hour trip to visit my brother Victor and his family. We planned to stay the entire weekend. Upon arrival, I realized I was not wearing my watch. I remembered picking it up as we left on the trip. My family and I searched frantically, but sadly without

result. I was very upset. Mamá tried to comfort me, suggesting I might have left it at home. The trip was not the happy visit we had planned.

As soon as we got home Sunday, I rushed into the house in search of the watch. We turned the house upside down— nothing. I prayed fervently to God to help me. Monday morning I drove to and from work. I returned home, resuming my search— retracing each step. The following morning, as I opened the car door, I spotted a shiny object on the pavement— between the curb and the car tire. In spite of the passage of time, neighborhood delinquents sitting on that curb— in spite of car traffic going by, and my driving to and from work my precious Bulova lay waiting for me, unscathed! Thank you Papá for my ladies' watch, and thank you Jesus for Papá!

— Delia Negrón García, July 24, 2018