

Luis Nunez (Julia Martin House)

Interviewed by Eric Robinson

My name is Luis Nuñez. I was born in the Dominican Republic, April 27, 1940 in Bani City, which was a very small village. Then there was a program to increase the population, and now Bani City is big like a city. I grew up with my mother, Francesca, and my father, Andres. I have a grandfather, Carlos, and my grandmother, Mercedes. I have one brother, Fernando, and my sister, Lydia. I also have cousins, and my nephew, Frankie, and my niece, Kelly. Growing up, we all lived in the same neighborhood. We learned to be respectful and honest, and my parents took me to church and sent me to Sunday school. I sing now in the church with my guitar.

My neighborhood was full of old fashioned people. They worked hard on the farm. I worked on the farm too, with the cows, horses, goats, and other animals. When I wasn't helping out on the farm, I went to school. I enjoyed school, and I had a wonderful teacher. He had a good heart and was willing to teach me the right way. I am thankful to him for what I know today. He trained me how to study and how to be a good person in the world. My favorite classes were history and geography.

I have memories from my childhood like one time I fell off a horse and landed POW! But in the end I was all right. Or, sometimes, I'd fight with the children in school everyday. And, sometimes my brother and me would fight, but then we'd be friends again. When we would fight, we didn't use guns like today, only our hands. When I was growing up, children didn't kill each other. We have to stop the killing kids are doing today. I put in my heart how to be a good person, how to love people. I believe in that, and in God. I read the bible everyday. The best thing is to be a good person all our life, because you will die someday and you want to have something good inside of you.

In the Dominican Republic, baseball was the main game we played for sports. When I was a teenager, I was strong and had lots of energy. People encouraged me — they used to like to watch me pitch. They loved me because I was funny and I was a good ball player. I played sports with all my friends when I was growing up — there were like 15 of us! Sometimes we played basketball, but baseball was my favorite thing to do as a teenager. I pitched for 20 years.

Yes, my parents had rules about when I had to be home. Sometimes I would miss my curfew, and my parents would hit me. As I got older, I couldn't play as much because I had to work. My family had a mechanic shop so I learned how to work

as a mechanic. I worked with my cousin, and we fixed tractors as well as cars. I drove a Ford.

The best job I ever had when I was young, was working as a mechanic in the Navy. I remember thinking how great the Navy was because we were there to protect the people from evil people. My dream as a teenager was to travel, and working with the Navy, I traveled to more than 70 countries. Every country has something different I have enjoyed. Spain is beautiful, and so is Canada.

There were a few dangerous times like when I was on a ship in Honduras. We were afraid the ship was going to go down and everyone was ready to swim! Then there was another time, I was on a ship between Miami and Cuba and there was an angry storm. Luckily, at last, we were able to control the ship. I have sailed around the world from the Pacific to the Atlantic and more.

For the first month I was on a ship, getting used to all the movement, I would vomit. Then over time I'd begin to hear mysterious sounds in the ocean that other human beings can not hear. It was really an experience. There was a time, when I didn't see land, only water and sky, for three months.

Besides loving travel, I love music. Everybody can do it. It is part of being human. With practice you can do so much. The first time doesn't sound good, but over time it gets better. And, you know, older people can learn just like young people. We all have abilities inside. I play the guitar but don't sing much. The language is hard. Playing guitar is a hobby for me. I didn't have the opportunity to play the guitar when I was young, a teenager, because I grew up on a farm. Then I traveled so much, but now I am studying music. I have it in my heart— music — and so I still study how to read it and "1,2,3,4" --how to count time. I play guitar and piano, a little bit. Music is wonderful. You feel something special. God gives you knowledge. Don't stop in your life. Continue to learn, learn, learn because it keeps you alive. I am almost 70 and it makes me feel new inside.

I am retired now, and I visit the Dominican Republic every year. Sometimes when I go there for a month, I want to come back here. I love to travel but coming home feels so good. Now Boston is my home. I used to live in Uphams Corner, Dorchester, near The Strand Theater. I lived there for maybe 15 years.

My favorite television show is the local news. I like to know what is going on around me. My favorite color is sky blue. I like this color because when I was young my mother gave me a little blue car. I was maybe 4 years old. Now this color reminds me of her.

I have a friend Fernando but my best friend is Elizabeth and she is the person I admire the most. She has compassion because she was very good with her father, her mother, and her husband. She gave her life for them. She has compassion for me also because I am a foreigner. We are not husband and wife, we are friends, but we have been friends for many years, maybe 25. Many people have children and separate. I don't have kids because I traveled so much in my life. I think it is important to keep that feeling you have inside of you. When you are with someone, stay with them.

If I could give young people any advice it would be to know in life that you can do everything. That is what I believe in my own life. I don't need to be sad or afraid. God has given me hope.