

## Aunt Pat Remembrances

REMEMBRANCES BY THE LAST SURVIVOR – A Brief glimpse into the dim past of the Pino Family.

I was born in Carrizozo, New Mexico on March 23, 1923, the 6<sup>th</sup> of 7 children born to Gregorio Pino the First and Raymunda Silva Pino.

[Grandpa Preciliano Pino I actually had a brother Gregorio who ran away from home due to a mean stepmother, according to Dad, Presiliano II. Dad said Grandpa Pablo and Preciliano I mourned him often but after the second time he ran away, they never saw him again, although they went North looking. She was Great Great Grandpa Pablo Pino y Pino's second wife as his first wife had only Preciliano I and Gregorio I. After he married Maria Chavez, Preciliano I did have half siblings. I did locate an old 1880 Census showing a Pablo Pino from New Mexico who'd gone to Colorado to work on the railroad. He was rooming and working with a whole crew of men—maybe he died in those parts]

We had a house in town, [Where the Gallegos family was later raised] and across the street my Grandpa Preciliano Pino I had built a big adobe house. [An artsy type of store/home now].

My first memory is of my young Grandma (Grandpa's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife) [Isidora Chavez], my sister Emma and I sitting on the floor by a heater, supposedly playing dolls. I remember the feel and cracking sound of something I was chewing on as they played. Suddenly they stopped—aghast that I'd chewed up the leg of a little celluloid doll. I don't remember understanding why they disapproved and I must have been very young.

I must've been 6 or so when one evening Grandma sent several of us kids to deliver a bottle of milk to someone down the street in town. The others wanted to walk on the sidewalk. There was a hedge and I preferred to walk in the street because it was getting dark and I was afraid there might be tarantulas there. The others went along with me. Suddenly something struck me hard on the ankle. A horrific pain enveloped me and I fell. The kids, older than I, half dragged me to Grandma's and I said a tarantula had bit me. She picked me up and brought me into the house. "You just got scratched by a wire" she said, but I could see the shock on her face and I felt my head fall back over her arm. I don't remember when or how she told my folks.

Next thing I remember is being in Paden's Drug Store at night. The pharmacist was reassuring "Piquete de tarantula no mata," he said. ("A bite from a tarantula won't kill"), he said. Again, the feeling that I was going to faint. He swabbed the ankle, made little cuts, sucked the blood and got it out. After bandaging it, my Dad carried me to the marble counter where he'd brought me an ice cream sundae—the most glorious sight I'd ever seen. I couldn't eat a bite. Later that night, my sisters found the sock I'd been wearing with 2 fang marks in blood. Then Dr. Paden recognized it was a snake bite. There was no anti-venom in town at the drugstores. Dr. Johnson, who had just returned to town, told my Dad that without anti-venom, I couldn't survive. As a matter of fact, he said, it may be too late now. My leg was swollen up to the hip, the size of an adult's leg. There might be a chance, if my Dad chartered a plane, to get anti-venom from El Paso. If the venom had reached my body cavity, however, it would be a big risk to charter a plane. My Dad interrupted, "Damn it—charter a plane!"

At the same time, Dr. Rolland had found a little vial of anti-venom that had fallen behind other bottles! It was rushed to our house. I was terrified of the shot, but quit objecting when my

sister Bea bribed me with a silver dollar and my parents promised me a little red dress with a bolero.

It was fall when the snake bit me. The trees had lost their leaves. It was bleak and dismal. I developed gangrene as the swelling went down. Very day the Dr5. And a nurse came over, bandaged my leg and poured a cold pink liquid on it. Alcohol? It was painful. Then Dr. tried to forcefully straighten my leg, which was growing in a bent position. That was torture. At some point, I got pneumonia. I lost track of time, it was interminable; nighttime—waking up in pain and asking for my Mom or Dad. One of them was always with me while the other took a break.

Then one morning in my dreams, I became aware of honeysuckle fragrance and the gentle breeze coming in through the white lace curtain. My spirits soared. Could it be? Winter was over? Between my Mother and dad, they led me to the door where I saw the ...vines thick with new leaves.

The people in Carrizozo had been most kind and helpful, I learned. Sending cards and little gifts, etc. My would-be 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher, Mrs. Nickels, had her daughters send me this tiny set of dishes, including tiny goblets. Wish I could thank all those people but “Hardly a man is now alive”...so I’ll do my best to thank them in person (smile).

Time passed in therapy, etc. My sisters all had tonsillectomies at the same time, except me, nor was I allowed to go into 1<sup>st</sup> Grade because I was too puny. My oldest sister Bea, 16, got married around that time. Her husband was going to work for an uncle who owned a farm in Sierra de la Gallina. It was a beautiful place, up in the mountains. She begged my parents for permission to take me and nourish me back to health.

She was so good to me. I enjoyed the food and her company. A jar of preserved grapes, yummy. After meals, we’d go down into the spring house. It was a few steps underground with a clay floor. She would sprinkle the floor, sweep it and unroll a mattress on a tarp. It was so blissfully cool and comfortable as Bea read to me out of her True Story magazine—such interesting stories. She always quit when the suspense was the highest, promising “after you’ve studied your lessons and we eat, we’ll come back.”

Once we walked to another house nearby to visit another sister in law. Bea explained she’d brought beans over that she had to clean, but she had to go for a walk. Would I clean them? I said I didn’t know how. She explained that I’d be able to tell which to keep when I picked through them. There were a few really ugly ones and a few pebbles which I discarded but I didn’t know what I was doing, and worried that I would disappoint Bea. How smart Bea was, to keep me thus occupied and safe while she visited with her friend. I was skipped a couple of grades because of my sister’s help.

At some point, we moved to the ranch, which my Grandpa Preciliano Pino had homesteaded around the 1800s. He, my Dad Gregorio’s mother, and my Dad had all been born in White Oaks. Carrizozo at that time promised to be a booming town because the new railroad, so much of White Oaks moved to Carrizozo.

My Grandma Donaciana [Chavez] died before they moved and is buried in White Oaks. [She never had a gravestone but they marked her grave with large stones from the mountain but the cemetery has been fixed up and there is no trace of the boulders now]. My Dad’s classroom picture is still at the White Oaks School house (a Museum now) as a little boy standing in front of a big blackboard with his classmates and teacher.

So during my illness in town, work on the ranch house was going on. (I don't remember ever not having the ranch.) I loved the ranch. That's where my Mother and Dad were. The older girls were involved in school activities as well as dating. (My parents insisted on being introduced first). Sometimes some of the girls chose to take the school bus and come to the ranch. From the highway to Capitan, the bus only drove til the first cattleguard where he left us. The two washes [arroyos] after that were impassable, so we walked to meet the bus also.

My younger sister Minnie, God bless her, had polio as a baby and was considered handicapped by my mother. To me she was "just my sweet, kind and lovable little sister." I didn't see her as handicapped because she was so courageous and capable otherwise.

I taught her to dance when the girls were in town cause I had no one to dance with. She did very well and looked beautiful dancing. Though one leg was a bit shorter, she compensated somehow and was very graceful.

I did well in school. The Lyric Theatre gave free tickets every 6 months to the boy and girl in each grade with the highest grades. In every class, I won it for the girls and Dewey Stokes for the boys.

Usually when I took the school bus, as I walked toward the ranch house<sup>4</sup>, I'd spot one of my parents emerging from a wash walking to meet me, bringing me a warm jacket if it was cold, or just to help carry my books. Usually I brought a small special treat for them. This is one of my happiest memories—arriving at the house, the warm kitchen and the smell of a good supper to eat with my parents.

My Mother's brother, Henry Silva, had a ranch up in the Capitan mountains. He would take the shortcut to come down the mountain to our ranch in the foothills. It was called "La Vadera", the trail. It was high in the side of the mountain before there were road building machinery. He would be driving a little black wagon, horse drawn.

He'd say my cousin Addie sent him to bring me over for a visit. My Mom was reluctant; school was starting soon and she still had to get me ready. He reassured her that he and Aunt Rebecca would see to that and they did. I was ready with everything I needed when I returned.

On the way to Sierrita [where the Silva ranch was located in the Capitan or Tucson Mountains as the family called them.],

I was excited to see so many flowers in the mountain. He asked if I'd like to pick a bouquet for Addie and Aunt Rebecca. Of course I was delighted. Busy man that he was, how kind of him to spend such time on me. He and my Mom, brother and sister, were very close, quite a bit older than she, he was married and had several children, some girls around her age. When Mom was a girl, their father died; he took in his Mom and his sister. After their Mother died, my Mother took charge of the housework, as Aunt Rebecca preferred helping their boys in the field. The love was mutual between her and her nieces and nephews. She married my Dad at his house.

Our house was built out of cedar trees, cut at Carrizo Mountain, north of us, they were brought down by horses and wagon. They were buried in straight vertical lines to form walls, tied together with wire. Mud was forced into the gaps, first outside, then inside. Mostly clay, the walls were strong weather proof and had a pretty white sheen when whitewashed, as all the inside walls were.

Whitewash was made out of white rocks (lime?) found in the mountains, baked in the oven and crushed into a powdery material. Placed in a tub with much water added, after a

couple of stirrings by hand results in a thick white glossy mixture. It was easy to apply with a clean piece of wool. You approach the house from the back, come around to the front and into a square room, called the saguan, with a door in each wall. Your left was a bedroom directly ahead was another bedroom. To your right the kitchen, followed by another bedroom.

The ceiling here was covered with magazines and newspaper pages glued to the ceiling with a boiled mixture of flour and water.