



## I made tortillas

By Ernestina Perez

I would help my mother make tortillas. Many times I would burn them. In time she let me do them all by myself. I never really liked to make them. Some would be thick, and some would have holes and were in all kinds of shapes. No one would eat those.

What happened to those tortillas? Then I got older and I worked and did not have to make tortillas anymore. Now I buy them. I am glad I learned to make them but they are too much work.

They are so good freshly made with some butter on them. I don't want to eat too many tortillas because they are fattening, and then we get high cholesterol, high blood pressure and many other problems. Now I need to take care of myself. I need to make better choices in making healthy food and not use so much shortening or grease. The doctor said that grease will plug the veins. That is the way people get heart attacks and many other problems.



## My day care story

By Mae Nelson

When I was a cook in 1974 in a day care center, my daughter, Melissa, stayed in the next room with the other infants. All of the preschoolers stayed at the day care center, and others went to kindergarten or first grade. I made snacks after lunch, and I cleaned up.

When I was a little girl I would watch my grandfather cook. When I worked in a day-care center. I was the cook, and I made cookies and snacks for the kids. I also cooked liver and onions and rice. I mixed the liver and onions. It looked like ground meat—everyone loved it.

## A special jacket

By Omar Cunningham

When I was about ten years old, my father gave me a jacket for my birthday. I had it until this day. It's really colorful: red, green and yellow. In Jamaica we say ice, green, and gold. And that is my favorite jacket. I want to wear it but I love it so much I'm afraid the color will wear out. When I look at the jacket I remember the day I got it. Every day I look at it and feel I owe my father an apology. It is the one and only jacket I ever had in my life.



## First communion dress

By Easllyn Williams

When I was seven years old, I had a beautiful white dress made up with blue roses. It was made by an aunt of mine for my first Holy Communion. I was so happy that day that I sang beautiful hymns that I learned at school. I am remembering the dress up to this day, especially when I go to church in the Roman Catholic Church and see small girls dress up in lovely white dresses on their first communion day!

It always made my heart rejoice. The material was silk. It was taffeta, made up with frills and bows. She made me wear a can-can underneath so it was rounded out very nice and firm. It made me sort of dance when I walk.

## My childhood town

By Barinedum "Gift" Mene-bie

My family has a nice golden house in a little town called Anya. That is where I grew up. The house has five rooms but all the children slept in one room, because one room was for cooking. One was for my dad. Then we had one room as a living room. My dad rented one of the rooms to a stranger who after a while became a good friend.

I like my childhood house because it has a lot of different kinds of fruit trees around it. We had three coconut trees and also more than twenty plantain trees and a guava tree also, which I love so much. Also there were other fruit trees.

What I really love about that town was that all the children used to come outside and play together, and it was safe to do that. In this town there were lots of different kinds of people from different villages who came in every year. This village was good.

## Fetching water By Beauty Citron

I loved fetching water with my friends when I was young. I liked when people sent me to buy something or when my mother or aunt said, “It’s water fetching time,” because I got to spend time playing with my friends. Sometimes I played with different people. One day I played with one person, and the next day I played with another person.

Okay, fetching water in the U.S. is not like fetching water in Ghana. In Ghana I have a pipeline into the compound where I lived, but sometimes the company turned off the water due to problems in the area. Most of the time we fetched water down in our containers. So you have to be constantly fetching water. Like an hour away from my house I know somebody, and they know my house, my mother, brother, sister, father and extended family, and I knew them as well. When it comes to kids playing, all you had to do was find someone who was free to play. When I was growing up you were taught that you must respect your elders. It was natural for an adult to tell you to stop what you were doing, even though you were not her or his kid. She or he will tell your parents. When the adult passes by your house and sees your parents, they will tell what you did. They always say, “I will tell your parents.”

One day I went to fetch water and I left the bucket in line and I was playing on the side, but for some reason I forgot and the bucket was stolen. I was worried. I cried and went home. “Where is the bucket?” said my aunt. “I cannot find it. It is lost,” I said. Since then I never use metal buckets. My Mom bought me a rubber bucket to fetch water with because it cost less money to buy. My mom knew I was playing and didn’t keep my eye on the bucket, but I denied it.

## A peaceful place to live

By Beauty Citron

My grandmother taught me how to farm and harvest during the seasons. I lived in Accra, Ghana, and I went to a village called Tapa Abobouse in the Volta Region. The first time I saw a crop grow out of the ground it was amazing to me. I asked, “How does it work?” She said, “I am going to teach you, but you have to be nice to me,” with a smile.

She didn’t show me right away. I began following her around, like I followed her to the farm to bring back firewood. She sent me and I asked her if her clothes were dirty, for me to wash. I tried to do stuff that would help. We would talk and do things together, and that is how we bonded.

She did show me how to farm the next planting season. My first plants were okra, corn and cassava on my own piece of land that she gave me. My grandfather gave me some too. Now that I am not using the land any more, I gave it back to her.

It was a happy time for me, and I learned how to raise plants. I enjoyed living in a peaceful place like Tapa Abobouse, and I enjoyed my relationship with my grandmother, grandfather, and my whole family.

## About forgiveness

By Barinedum "Gift" Mene-bie

I think when we forgive others it sets us free from what we have done wrong, such as when we are mean to others. Forgiveness is so powerful that you can be healed if you totally forgive others. My husband says that forgiveness is a blessing to have in your life, to show others how it works.

The thing is that forgiveness is not only for the other person, but is also for you too. It is very important to forgive others so that you can be forgiven.

Unforgiveness is so bad that it can make you sick. I remember a time that a friend did something bad to me and did not say she was sorry. That made it very hard for me to forgive her, and it took a long time to forgive her. Eventually, I did forgive her, for myself.

If I may say so I will encourage you today to forgive anyone that has hurt you in any area of your life, because it feels so good to be able to forgive, as well as to be forgiven. As we consider forgiving each other, may God bless us all.

## Music fills my life

By Easlyn Williams

When I, Easlyn, was about seven years old in Grenada, I used to play Mas. My Auntie Monica used to be with me on the road! She gave me a shack-shack, and she made up a song for me with a can of powder in my hand. And I used to be shaking the shack-shack and singing and dancing to the rhythm of a song:

Nice, nice, nice,  
Sweet, sweet, sweet,  
What causing the jealousy  
Because I used more  
Powder than them.

Over and over with the same rhythm, and the people used to crowd me and throw money all over me. And I used to be so happy all day long for two days.

When I was about ten years old I used to sing in the choir in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin: Kyrie eleison and Gloria:

When I had my first child I used to sing for her, and also my second child, I used to sing for him too, songs I learned in school:

The happy days we spent at school are quickly passed away,  
And never come to us again, wherever we may stray.  
Those happy days, no other scene, no other days so bright,  
And yet vacation we will hail with feelings of delight.  
With feelings of delight,  
With feelings of delight,  
With feelings of delight,  
And yet vacation we will hail with feelings of delight.

Now I am seventy-eight years old. My two children have passed away and now I have only sad memories. I embraced Islam, and now I pray in Arabic, because my son became a Muslim, but I am still singing with the congregation in the Roman Catholic Church.

## My song for peace in the world

By Omar Cunningham

When I'm in Jamaica, me and friends love to sing and dee-jay. But the music was so much fun, and that became the most popular thing in the village. We do that every day and night. We have a sound system and play every weekend. We love to go and entertain. I want you all to know that Jamaicans are really talented and we love music a lot. Music makes us feel so alive. This is one of my songs—to each and every one of you:

### CHORUS

No gun, no gun. (Literacy Connects!)<sup>1</sup> Me no want no gun.  
Because too much blood a run.  
Time for me and the youth to have fun.  
A thing like a gun would make so much blood run.

### VERSE ONE

It kill your mother and your father and her first son.  
And the killer don't get catch – he took off and run.  
And me was walking the other night and somebody kill and gone  
Like he took off and run – and him feel safe  
Because he did not pay the price.

### (REPEAT CHORUS)

### VERSE TWO

Bad man kick off me window and me door the other night,  
And come in and do as he have a like.  
He take away my Clarks, my Fila, and my Nike –  
Material things. Thank God me got me life.  
A different day me put all that behind me.  
Love! Yes, the youth them join me.  
Me know that the wicked peoples them still they eyes me.  
Any day now, -- Ja –them cannot surprise me.  
Because – Ja Ja – me know You will guide me.

### (REPEAT CHORUS)

<sup>1</sup> Musicians always address the persons to whom they are singing

## Dusty memories

By Ernestina Perez

I was born in Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. I remember living in an adobe house, one room with one door in the front, and one window tin the front. The street was just dirt. I remember seeing old trucks pass by and all the dust would fly around. We couldn't see with all that dust. People were sitting outside, and kids were playing out there.

I remember there were no colors. The houses were the same color as the street. There was a little hill the same color, no color anywhere. However, once we headed to town I saw some big signs of

Pepsi Cola  
drinks. They were  
bright red and  
different colors.

That made me happy.

