

Dr. Christine Marin: Archivist/Historian

By Christine Marin. 2009

Letters and a horse-shoe-shaped magnet. It began when I was a child, growing up on Euclid Avenue in Globe, Arizona. My introduction to preserving history came from my parents, Lupe Trujillo Marin and Eulalia Rentería Marin. Euclid Avenue: the street where copper miners and their families struggled to make ends meet. Euclid Avenue: that dirt street surrounded by mesquite-hued hills dotted with modest wood-frame houses built on uneven terrain. After a hard rain, the street became a roaring *arroyo*, carrying water from the hills above. And Euclid Avenue: the street that sent thirty Latinos to war in Europe, four of whom were killed in action. That's a fair amount of patriotism for a street that was less than a mile long. One day, my father opened his Army footlocker trunk and pulled out some souvenirs he brought back from his time overseas: a kimono; a Japanese flag; his dog tags; and some letters from my mother. He didn't talk much about his time in the service, except to say how much he missed her, and that he hated war. He didn't let me read the letters, but I understood their sentimental value and why he kept them: because of their power and the strength of the words and because they told *his* story. No one had ever done that for him: told his story.

And it was a child's toy, a horse-shoe-shaped magnet that taught me the importance of saving history and writing it. My grandmother gave it to my mother as a gift so many years ago, and she cherished it. You see, her mother died in childbirth when she was only five years old. And she kept that magnet, wrapped in a handkerchief, in her purse. She took it out of her purse to look at it from time to time. But she always wrapped it up, and returned it to her purse. I was a

child too; but I recognized that message behind her secret smile and I knew what it meant. It was *her* saved history.

Now, years have passed and I have learned that in our own daily lives, families and individuals create and keep information and materials about their personal and business lives. These records are their archives. Archives have value. Archival records come in the shape of photographs, scrapbooks, letters, diaries, videotapes, financial records, artifacts, or manuscripts. And the places where they are preserved and kept are called “archives.” And Archivists like me collect and preserve them for use by students, researchers, scholars, writers, teachers and the general public.

Mexican Americans from throughout Arizona have donated their family and historic papers, records, photographs and archives to the Chicano/a Research Collection and the Hayden Library at Arizona State University. Founded in 1970, the Chicano/a Research Collection is the premier archives in the state of Arizona with a mission to preserve and document the Mexican American/Latino experience. Doing so helps to ensure the celebration of Mexican American history, culture, literature, and legacy to the state of Arizona.

The Chicano/a Research Collection holds a wide range of documentary and archival materials that support the study of Mexican Americans in the Southwest, with an emphasis in Arizona. The Collection houses primary sources that provide materials leading to a Master’s thesis or a Ph.D. dissertation. Scholars from around the world come to the archives and conduct research on their topics.

My role in preserving the Mexican American heritage and experience connects the past to the present. I am the Historian for the Chicano/a Research Collection and an expert on the

Mexican American way of life in Arizona. My work with students and the general public has created new scholarship in the fields of History, Chicano/a Studies, and Borderlands Studies.

My academic journey from Euclid Avenue and Globe, Arizona to the archives of the Chicano/a Research Collection at the Hayden Library at Arizona State University began with World War II-era letters and a child's toy magnet. My success and accomplishments belong to my beloved parents: Lupe Trujillo Marin and Eulalia Renteria Marin.