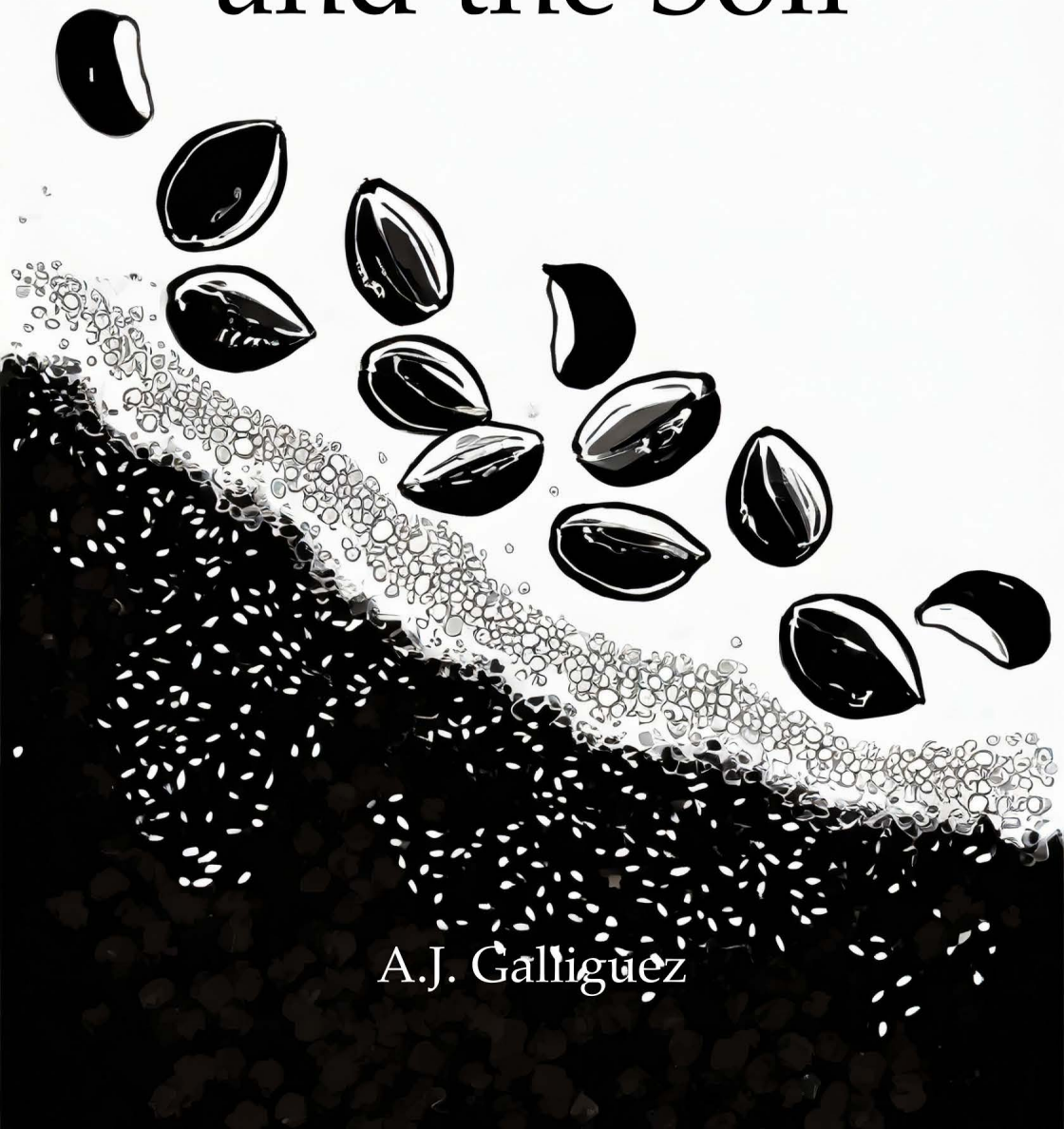


# The Seeds and the Soil



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A Galliguez Journey to America

**Bainbridge Books**

LOS ANGELES

2024



This narrative essay was an assignment written for the California State University of Fullerton and is based on the real lives of Juanito and Priscilla Galliguez in their pursuit to America.



## Author's Note

As his name is Juanito, most people know him as “Papang”, a wise centenarian that walks the earth with ease. I am one of the great grandsons and one of the few that are blessed to carry the last name. Although I was not born with that title, I was dubbed the name as a token of honor as I am considered the eldest grandson.

Now unfortunately, I have never met Mamang . However, through hearing about various stories and learning a lot about her, I really wish I did. From what I have collected, I assume she was as tough as nails and someone who consistently inspired everyone to push boundaries.

Originally, I wrote this narrative essay for an assignment as something that inspires

me and would inspire others. I thought, why not write about the origins of my family? In writing this, I was fortunate enough to learn a lot about the 2 humans responsible for paving the way for most of the Galliguez relatives in the U.S. Through all the stories and research conducted, it becomes apparent that the sacrifices made along with the hardships endured, help set a precedent for generations to come.

The purpose of this piece is to establish a deeper understanding of the sacrifices that are made in the immigration process that promotes empathy towards immigrants of the United States in displaying the high levels of resilience and determination. The struggles of the Galliguez family becomes palpable through the weight of their sacrifices and the warmth of unwavering love. The story looks to serve as an example of the true testament to the

resilience and nature of those looking to live  
the American Dream.





## The Seeds and the Soil



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When planting seeds into the soil, there are many variables that can dictate the outcome of their growth as success is heavily dependent on the steps taken before and during the process. In the Philippines, climates are known to reach extreme temperatures that sometimes cause typhoons. As these limits the length of the growing season and create living constraints, one can only hope to watch their seeds grow to their fullest potential.

In the late 1950's, Juanito and Prescilla Galliguez were determined to get their seeds on the soil with a better environment. Now, what defines the essence of the American Dream? Does it encompass the journey of coming to America? To the average modern American, the sacrifices of immigrants may sometimes be overlooked but the story of Juanito and Prescilla Galliguez exemplifies the level of resilience, sacrifice, and determination needed in pursuit of the American Dream. This is the story of a man who always believed and a woman who dared to dream.

To begin, Juanito Mangsat Galliguez was born to Marcelo and Macaria Galliguez in the summer of 1923. He was the fourth born out of the six children Marcelo and Macaria had. Marcelo was a son of a rice farm tenant and Macaria was a daughter of a Betel plant farmer. From the beginning, Marcelo had very positive hopes to attain a better standard of living for his family

as he did not want his children to pasture the animals that he cared to cultivate the farm. Instead, he truly wanted his children to concentrate on their studies. Sadly, Juanito's father died when he was a child, leaving his mother, Macaria, to raise him and his siblings in the city of Manaoag. Juanito's family were far from rich however, they were not poor as his mother owned land. Despite living within the means, Juanito and his siblings had to learn various skills to work and provide the necessary contributions for the family to stay afloat. Weekends would be the busiest for the early Galliguez clan as they would go to the Betel farm to pick the leaves and help load them to the market where Macaria would sell them. During Tuesday and Thursday mornings, a young Juanito would have to help her carry the Betel leaves to the market before attending school. Very quickly, Juanito would learn the hardship to earn a penny and saw to it that it was spent wisely. From working in the transformative years

of his life, Juanito developed the life skills that would help him grow for many years to come.

In attending high school, a young Juanito Galliguez would become faced with maintaining the pressures of attending school and his responsibilities as a member of his family. Like anybody who has ever experienced being a teen and going to high school, it could certainly become difficult and hard to comprehend at times. Going to high school was not a joke for Juanito as he would have to prepare firewood to cook food while attending high school about twenty miles away from home. Juanito explained, “One of us had to go home to get our food supply and have our clothes washed. If our food supply was short, we had to go to the beach to pick small clams for viand and soup.” It was then, where Juanito would start to understand how to navigate through the highly stressful situations life would throw at him. Nevertheless, Juanito felt immense

gratitude toward his mother for the high school education she provided him, especially since many of his more fortunate cousins hadn't attended high school. As those four long years were one of the most difficult stages of his life, it conditioned him for whatever problems he might face down the road.

After graduating from high school in 1941, Juanito initially planned to take a gap year before securing a job and preparing to attend university the following year. Unfortunately, some unforeseen circumstances would prevent him from ever enrolling in college. Later that December, it just so happened that Japan attacked the U.S. bases in the Philippines along with a U.S. military base in Hawaii known as Pearl Harbor, marking the event that started World War II. Amid the global conflict, Juanito found himself with limited options and was compelled to find a job to support his mother and his siblings. Eventually, Juanito would begin to work as a laborer



by the age of twenty. The job required various labor-intensive tasks such as digging trenches; however, Juanito understood the sacrifice to provide for his family. Considering the lack of technology in the 1940's, labor was even more mentally and physically taxing. Nonetheless, a resilient Juanito would take each day as a learning opportunity as he believed he would someday change his living conditions.

During the early months of the sugar milling season of 1942, a starving Juanito decided he wanted a rice cake from one of the street vendors on his break. To his surprise, he was helped by a beautiful young woman that caught his attention. Juanito was immediately attracted by her neatness and became a victim of the love bug. At that moment, he realized exactly what he needed to do so he took his chances to ask her out for the evening. The risk that Juanito took would be the first of many that would change his life. That woman would accept

his offer and later become the love of his life, Prescilla. From what it seemed like, Prescilla meant the world to a young Juanito just as he was everything to her. However, their love for each other would be put to the test in the years to come.

From being raised by a single mother to being raised by her grandmother and elder relatives, Prescilla learned how to navigate through the most trying times at a young age. She was born to Victoria Mendoza Flores and Epitacio Dulay Abellera, and first saw the light of day October 12, 1927. The warmth and love of her mother would not last very long as she would die of influenza. A six-year-old Prescilla would be left to her grandmother, Juana Mendoza Flores, when her mother. As her grandmother was raising seven other children, Prescilla had to hold her own. She would soon learn the hardship to survive as she was brought to the field to pull rice seedlings, plant, and harvest them. As she grew up without the love and advice of her

parents, she also had to learn how to think for herself and develop her own identity very quickly. In doing so, she learned how to hustle and earned money through her own blood sweat and tears. She would learn to buy bread and cakes and resell them for a profit. From understanding how the harsh reality of surviving in a cruel world, Priscilla developed the grit that would make her tenacious for whatever difficulties life had for her.

In the events after Juanito and Prescilla had met each other, they would swiftly get married and start their family, welcoming their first daughter, Fely, on November 29, 1946. Following Fely, came Lourdes, Danilo, Edna, Gil, Elmo, Lurna, Annie, Presilo, and Jane. As the family continued to grow, so did the problems and the idea of an American Dream would start to creep. Now, Juanito never forgot about his father's vision to attain a better standard of living for his family or how he had always

wanted Juanito and his siblings to concentrate on school. Priscilla also understood the importance of finding a better life as she knew what it was like growing up as an orphan. After some thought, they collectively decided to move the family to live in the mines of the mountains of northern Luzon as an American mining company provided free education for children until the sixth grade. At that time, education was not free like it was in the United States. Juanito and Priscilla anticipated the brutal conditions attached to living in the mines, but it was a risk worth taking. With a free education plan set until the sixth grade, Juanito and Priscilla really hoped to see their seeds grow.

Now, as living in the mines presented a new set of challenges for a growing family, it was nothing Juanito and Priscilla could not handle. Similar to the indigenous Igorot tribe that lived near, they would eventually learn to adapt to the harsh reality of subsistence living.

The house they lived in was described as a 600 square foot bunk house with a family of twelve. For perspective, it would be like living in a studio apartment with twelve people. During that time, Juanito would only make eight pesos a day as a clerk typist in the mining dispensary and Prescilla sold fish and vegetables at the market to supplement his income. Watching their parents working hard, the kids understood their contributions were essential for the family's survival. Some would carry people's bags from the market and others would sell bread known as pandesal. Just as their parents did when they were young, the children learned the meaning of sacrifices and selflessness.

Juanito and Prescilla knew that living in the mines was only temporary for the educational benefits. As the two began to reevaluate the strategy for the future, Juanito and Prescilla always dreamed of a better life elsewhere. While they understood their sprouts might not

flourish in the Philippines, they were determined to get the soil that would provide better opportunities for growth. One might ask, “Where would there be such a land of opportunity?” well, that would be the good ol’ U.S. of A. where a free education is provided until the twelfth grade. Regardless, a better education there would instantly increase the potential of their children’s outcome. There was never uncertainty for Juanito and Prescilla as it was worth risking everything if it meant a better future for their children.

In the late 1950's, Prescilla would make her first attempt to complete immigration paperwork for the entire family. During her visit to the U.S. embassy in Manila, she discovered how selective the U.S. was towards granting access. In other words, getting into the U.S. was like getting accepted into an Ivy League university. However, Prescilla remained determined and added her name to that list of applicants. It was

always her dream to move to America, where she knew life would be better. Between the two, there was never a disagreement as the motives for the future were set in place. As Juanito's son, Gil recalls, "It was never really a matter of, if? But more so a matter of, when?" as they patiently waited for the right time to execute their plans.

Fast forward to October 3, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill that would forever change the landscape for immigrants coming to America, known as the Immigration and Nationality Act. This allowed a greater number of immigrants to enter the U.S. as laws were changed to admit people based on their occupational skills instead of their country of origin. Just as they hoped, their time had come to initiate the migration process. The goal Juanito and Prescilla formulated was for her to get a job, establish a base, and save as much money as possible. Juanito was to remain in the Philippines, taking care of the

family. When Juanito's side of the family caught wind of the motion, disagreements about their decisions would arise. Understandably so, Juanito's family had concerns that Prescilla was going to leave entirely and never come back. There was never a reason for Juanito to seem stressed, as he was confident Prescilla would execute everything as planned.

When Prescilla first arrived on U.S. soil, she worked as a seamstress. By day she was in a sweatshop in downtown Los Angeles. By night, she would attend nursing school. Prescilla was no stranger to adversity as she worked endlessly every single day including weekends. Eventually, she would collect the right amount of money to bring over their two oldest daughters, Fely and Lourdes. When they arrived, they would repeat that process in hopes of bringing the rest of the family over to the U.S. the following year. Of course, Fely and Lourdes would sometimes come home crying with



aching bodies and exhausted from long hours. Despite the incredibly demanding days, they never complained as they believed their sacrifices were crucial for the final stretch.

Finally, Prescilla and the girls realized that all of their hard work and tenacious efforts had finally paid off. That following year, they had saved enough money to bring every single family member over to the United States all together. A few months later, Juanito would describe the day of departure a “tearful departure” as leaving behind his mother would be hard. However, he was sure that was the sacrifice he had to make for his children. Upon arrival, the family would be seen jumping and screaming in the halls of the LAX airport with only the purest emotions imaginable. Finally reunited after being separated for two long years, Juanito would recall it as, “the greatest day of my life.” Their ultimate goal of coming to the United States of America had been accomplished and it

couldn't have been more of a kodak moment.

In the years that followed, Juanito and Prescilla welcomed their last child, Carol, planting one more seed to flourish. Through the trials and tribulations that they endured; their love would last the test of time. Tragically, in 1985, Prescilla would pass away at the young age of 57, cementing a legacy for generations to remember. Juanito would continue the journey, turning 100 years-old on June 23, 2023, with nine of his eleven children residing in the United States of America. Today, the centenarian resides in Los Angeles with his second wife. As told by his son Gil, Juanito's only regret is that "Prescilla did not live long enough to see how her children became successful members of society in the United States of America."

Now, what defines the American Dream? Is it the notion of living in a country full of opportunities to achieve success through hard work and

determination? Does it encompass the journey of coming to America? A man once told Ronald Regan, “You can go to France, but you cannot become a Frenchman... you can go to live in Germany, Turkey, or Japan but you cannot become a German, Turk, or Japanese. But anyone from any corner of the Earth can come to America and become an American.” To become an American, means a lot to individuals who are not as fortunate with their current living conditions of their country. The many opportunities and the fresh start are something a lot of immigrants hope for in the land of the free. From the story of the Galliguez family’s journey to America, it becomes evident that being born an American is a privilege through the freedoms and opportunities that are automatically granted which other immigrants have sacrificed for. As for that nine-letter name, it has been proven to come with great responsibility as it holds an incredible weight of honor. The

story of a man who always believed and a woman who dared to dream serves as a constant reminder of the sacrifices made and the determination for a better future in pursuit of the American Dream.