

What acequia culture means to me
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The summer of 2022 was very different. I am thirteen years old and I learned a lot about survival. We live in Chamisal and would visit our elderly Grandparents in Vadito daily.

Every morning smoke and wind traveled towards Vadito and COVID was spreading fast. All of us got our shots except for Grandpa Adonais. He would tell us to accept what was happening. He would say, "in life you will always face problems and God will help us handle whatever comes." Someday the smoke will disappear and the sun will shine again.

Days before his 91st birthday, he invited his family to come early to celebrate. Enjoying his family he invited us to the garden and said that the celebration included planting seeds and hoping for a good harvest.

Earlier that week, Tio Tony had spread fertilizer and turned the ground. My 6 year old brother, Zachary, collected worms to go fishing. We celebrated by planting havas, sweet peas, lettuce, carrots and 10 spaces for calabasitas.

Acequia water was very low and the parciantes were using it for their animals. We piled dirt around the pumpkin seeds and carried buckets of water from the river and the acequia. It was fun but hard work.

Two weeks went by and all we could see were weeds. Grandma Alice taught me to recognize the good plants such as spinach, verdolagas and dill which have grown from fallen seeds. We would pick them daily and prepare them for our meals. That is when I learned the meaning of "garden to table". We also picked a remedio wild lettuce which we used a lot.

Pulling weeds continued daily. Suddenly beautiful, yellow flowers appeared on the pumpkin plants. Pulling weeds around the plants was a daily routine. My Grandparents would sit on a wire basket and would pull weeds with us.

During July calabasitas started growing like magic. Our ten plants produced so many and we prepared them in different ways. Grandma Alice fried them, cooked stew and she taught us how long ago they were dried to use during the winter. It was such an interesting experience. She cut them in circles and we would tie them into a string. They were so cute that we hung them around our neck as necklaces.

Grandpa and I had our picture taken with our harvest. Seeds were from a very sweet pumpkin that I had saved from last year. Collecting the seeds from a fresh pumpkin is also a great experience. Our plants produced many baskets of calabacitas and 20 large pumpkins "del casco duro" as described by my Grandparents. The biggest ones weighed 30 pounds. They were too much to store and we gave them to family members, friends and neighbors.

Autumn arrived and my Grandparents were saved from the fire and also from COVID. Grandpa still doesn't believe in shots. He says that we have to trust in God.

I enjoy learning about our traditions and culture from my family. Best of all we are H-H-H, meaning that after a long day of working in our garden we are Hungry-Happy-Healthy.