

True Value

In the late 1970s, Hispanic writer Victor Villasenor decided it was time to write his big book. He envisioned a book that would inspire Hispanics, who he felt were desperately in need of heroes. His own personal growth is quite remarkable.

Raised in a family of comfortable means on a 166-acre ranch in Oceanside, California, Villasenor spoke only Spanish until he started school. After years of frustration with language barriers, discrimination and undiagnosed dyslexia, he dropped out of high school in his junior year. An extended stay in Mexico changed his life, and Villasenor finally experienced pride in his Mexican heritage.

He did intensive research of his family's story, traveling to Mexico, interviewing family members, corroborating stories, checking and re-checking details. The story, which he titled *Rain of Gold*, took him 12 years to write and filled 3,200 manuscript pages.

With a great sense of satisfaction and anticipation, he sent the manuscript to his publisher. Sometime later, he received shocking news. The publisher intended to publish his book as a fictional novel called *Rio Grande*. Villasenor was outraged.

The publisher had already given Villasenor \$75,000 as an advance for the hard-cover rights to the book. The book had the makings of a big seller. It was already set up as an alternative selection for the Book-of-the-Month Club.

Villasenor didn't care about all of that. He cared about giving his people a true story that would inspire them for hundreds of years to come. Said Villasenor, "Until a human being does it, we don't know if it's possible. And not knowing if it's possible kills us. That's why it has to be real people that did these things. It stretches human reality."

So Villasenor traveled to New York and shocked the publishing world by buying back the rights to the book. He then sold the book to a small university press for an advance of \$1,500. That cost him big money and massive exposure, but it ensured that the book would bear the original title, *Rain of Gold*, and be published as a true story rather than fiction.

Villasenor's experience proves that pursuing our vision of what is truly valuable is often done at a steep cost. Time after time, day after day, the associates of Life Care, American Lifestyles and Life Care at Home are involved in a journey worth more than a pearl of great price – the mission of caring for God's children. Their work doesn't come without personal sacrifice, but the inner reward is most satisfying.

--Beecher Hunter