during Edisto Island vacations with my parents, aunts, and uncles. I imagined them slurping cocktails and playing games until the wee morning hours. I thought about how that could one day be my cousins, my sister, and me.

EVEN THOUGH I'D been eating potato rolls for years, I'd never heard the story behind them. Aunt T's maternal grandmother used to make them. Craving the rolls as an adult, Aunt T searched for a recipe in her mom's cooking notebooks (of which there were, by her estimation, "4,782"). No dice. When Aunt T's brother was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma, she wanted to bring him familiar comfort. She would perfect the potato roll recipe on her own. Aunt T tried a handful of variations. She let each one rise for hours, globbing off a handful of the mound of bread dough, slick with oil and dusted with flour, the way her grandmother taught her. When Aunt T thought an iteration was close, she FedExed them to her brother in Dallas. She shipped probably a dozen batches before he gave the seal of approval. He died in 2011.

The six of us sat around Aunt C's long counter that summer night in Mount Pleasant, sweating glasses of Summer Drink in hand. Aunt T chopped a large potato and mashed it tender. She melted Crisco in a pot over the glowing stove eye and mixed it with whole milk and water, heated to exactly 123.5 degrees, measured with her candy thermometer. She mixed King Arthur flour with sugar, a dash of kosher salt, and a whole packet of fresh, active dry yeast. She greased the bowl, dumped in the dough, and kneaded like hell. That's where we came in. We floured our hands and took turns pinching and knotting dough.

We placed the rolls on greased pans and let them rise overnight. The next morning, Aunt T slid the pans into the oven. After seven minutes, she turned the pans and let the rolls bake for seven minutes more. The oven timer beeped as we dragged our duffels downstairs and into our respective cars, bound for our respective lives. I left Mount Pleasant with a belly full of rolls—one steaming and hanging out of my mouth like a puppy with a chew toy—and a few tossed in a Ziploc freezer bag.

Next summer's cooking weekend is already in the works, and each person will bring her signature recipe. I make a mean white-wine orzotto. Now, when I think of family gatherings, I taste Summer Drink and see flour-dusted dough. I feel comfort and belonging. I can't wait for next year.

Keeping Your Cool, oil on canvas by Hayley Gaberlavage

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MY FATHER'S SOUTH

Old lessons ring true

BY MARIA GODOY

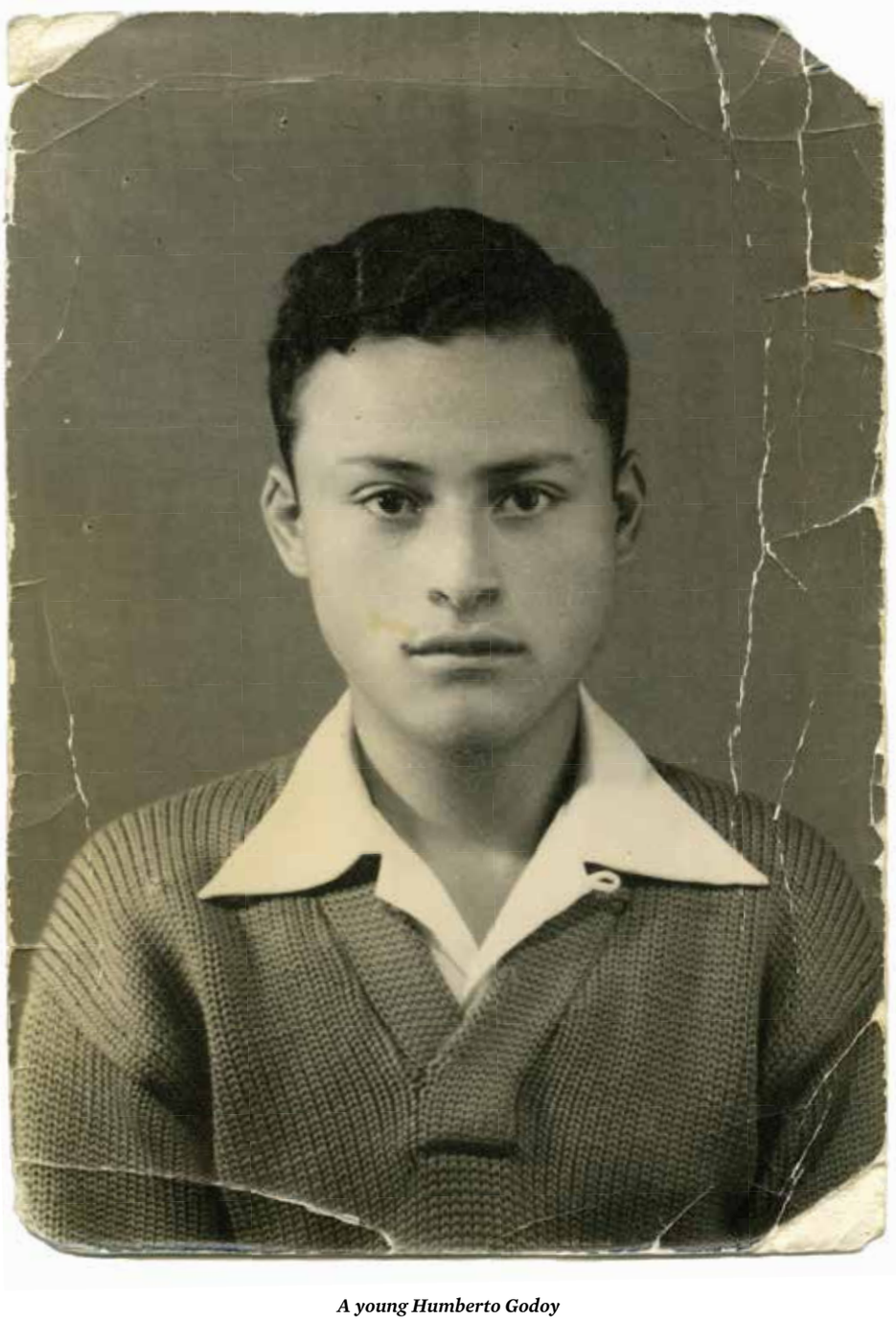
I WAS BORN IN GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala, and moved to the suburbs of Washington, DC, when I was almost five. For years, every time I've been faced with that loaded question that immigrants know all too well—*where are you* from*, really?*—I've often answered, "The South...you know, the *Deep* South." It's a corny joke, but it's grounded in reality. My American story does begin in the Deep South, in Alabama, with my father.

Jacksonville State College cheerleaders. "Bert" Godoy stands second from right.

Humberto Godoy was born and raised in Guatemala City. He wasn't dirt poor, but he was poor enough that he had to shine shoes to buy pencils for school. Those pencils wrote him a new destiny: In 1954, he won a scholarship to attend what was then called Jacksonville State College in Jacksonville, Alabama (now Jacksonville State University).

The scholarship covered tuition, but Dad still needed to pay for living expenses. Like many immigrants before and after him, he gained his economic foothold selling food. He rented a hot dog cart and went door to door in the dormitories during exams. The way Dad told it, he made friends with just about everyone on campus, including the football players. In Alabama, being friends with the football team meant that he was *in*. Papi was too small to play football, so he joined the cheerleading squad instead. (Judging from his yearbook, male cheerleaders were apparently a thing back then.) Dad was short, brown, and charming, full of hustle and spark. In my favorite yearbook photo, he's dressed in a crisp white cheerleader outfit, huddled with his white Alabama pals, all wearing big smiles—the very picture of 1950s Americana. For a time, Papi even dated the homecoming queen, a blonde, blue-eyed Southern belle.

But the acceptance he found in Jacksonville was limited. Off campus, he faced racism. My father was a dark-skinned man. This was Jim Crow–era Alabama. When Dad boarded a bus, the driver would sometimes tell him to sit in the back. My father would explain that he was not colored, using the terminology of the day. He'd say he was



A young Humberto Godoy

Photos courtesy of the author

Spanish. The driver would let Dad sit wherever he pleased.

When Dad told me this story, I asked why he didn't say he was from Guatemala.

"Because they'd just think I was Mexican," he answered, "and they didn't really like Mexicans."

"But you don't have a Spanish accent!" I countered.

"Ehh," he said, "they didn't know the difference."

When I look at my father's yearbook from Jacksonville State, I can't find any entries for Humberto Godoy. But there are several photos of "Bert" Godoy, as his friends called him. They had another nickname for him, too, one I discovered in a handwritten message scrawled in the pages. It read, "Good luck to the best wetback I know!" When I probed him about it, Papi told me that was his friends' nickname for him. It was all in good fun, Papi assured me. But wasn't it only funny to them because they found some truth in it?

My father found acceptance in Alabama at a time when the state's Latino population was miniscule. He did so against the backdrop of a national milieu in which Mexican Americans faced discrimination and segregation. The same year my father came to Jacksonville, the United States government launched Operation Wetback, an initiative to round up and deport undocumented Mexicans. By the time he graduated in 1958, more than one million Mexicans had been deported, mostly from the Southwest.

AFTER GRADUATION, my father went on to earn a master's degree in public administration at Syracuse University in New York. He then returned to Guatemala for many years until his work with the World Health Organization brought him—and the rest of our family—to Washington, DC, in 1980. Though he never lived in the Deep South again, the place stayed with him. He loved him some fried chicken. For years, he tried to recreate the Alabama white barbecue sauce he ate in his college days. Except he was kind of clueless in the kitchen, so he'd experiment with mixing bottled barbecue sauce with vinegar and mayonnaise—a truly disgusting combination, let me tell you. Finally, one of my sisters looked up the recipe and sorted him out. When he died, my father asked that we scatter his ashes across the state of Alabama. He said it was the place that gave him his first big break in life. It had been his gateway to the American Dream.

While I am not from the South, I am of the South. I would not be who I am but for the South, and the hospitality and opportunity it gave my father. In many ways, the region has been transformed from the place my Papi knew: Today, horchatas and baleadas, tacos and tortas are as common as biscuits and barbecue. In this Nuevo South, as in the South of my father, divisive rhetoric reverberates, echoing a larger national debate about what it means to be American. But so, too, does the welcoming Southern spirit that gave a bright, scrappy young man from Guatemala a shot and embraced him as its own. Dad was, as one of his old friends from school told me after his death, "the best of us."

Maria Godoy is a senior editor for NPR's *science desk and host of* NPR's *food blog,* The Salt. *This piece is excerpted from her 2017 SFA Fall Symposium talk.*