

## **STOCKTONSpeaks!**

### **JOHN JOSEPH ARGUELLES**

In the United States, the word *machismo* often connotes forceful, even aggressive behavior. Some see its meaning as the basic ability to take care of oneself, to endure difficult times, to build a family foundation. *Machismo* is a code that embraces self-mastery, courage, consistency, fair dealings, and personal honesty. John Joseph Arguelles achieved *machismo*, a mark of maturity, through his commitment to family, his success in achieving goals despite adverse conditions, and his pride in his Mexican heritage.

As the first-born son, John expresses his maturity through his dedication to his family. While growing up in Stockton, he often cared for his siblings, Michael and Andrea. Family gatherings were important in the Arguelles house, where celebrations of Mexican identity centered on mariachi music, traditional foods, and religion. He honored his parent's wishes by attending Catholic school and going to church every Sunday.

Even at twenty-five, John continues to go to church and maintains other cultural aspects of his heritage. John also shows a great love and duty towards his family, especially his first-born daughter. Her birth was surely a rite of passage from being a youth to becoming an adult. Seeing his child come into the world created a sense of responsibility for John, further motivating him to support his wife and new family.

Outside the boundaries of family and community, John learned to navigate a bicultural community. He followed time-honored customs of family and culture at home, while being influenced by American culture values of independence and goal-setting in school. By focusing on present goals instead of looking too far ahead in life, John successfully managed the travails of growing up. "I didn't really contemplate my future," he says, "I keep my mind on the present."

John faced the challenges of high school, graduated and continued his schooling in college. College provided yet another important stage of maturity since John was outside of his parent's direct influence.

John comes from a culturally rich family environment that honors the hard work and the commitment of earlier generations. Even though the most recent member of the family to immigrate to the United States did so in 1959, the Arguelles family continues to keep their heritage alive without regular infusion from Mexico. Maintaining his ethnic heritage is an important part of John's day-to-day existence. He continues to follow the guidance of his parents and intends to pass the customs and beliefs of his culture on to his children. "I would like my children and grandchildren to know about my parents' and grandparents' generations; I learned a lot from them," he says.

In the United States, many cultures are lost in the melting pot as different ethnic traditions give way to a single way of life. The spirit of *machismo* endures through the honor, courage, and love of men like John Joseph Arguelles, who keep their heritage alive.

Author: George Kim

Interviewer: Amy Her

Ethnic Group: Mexican American

Generation: Youth