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### Jose Speer Family Heritage

Jose Speer

jspeer@gus.pittstate.edu

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# **The Family History of**

**Jose Speer**

**21 November 2017**

Jose Speer authored this family history as part of the course requirements for HIST 550/700 Your Family in History offered online in Fall 2017 and was submitted to the Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. Please contact the author directly with any questions or comments: [jspeer@gus.pittstate.edu](mailto:jspeer@gus.pittstate.edu)

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GENERATION ONE

A1. Jose Speer (1994- )

**Jose Alejandro Speer (1994- )** was born at Freeman Hospital in Joplin Missouri on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1994 to Neysa Zahira Rosario (**1969- )** and **Brian Ray Speer (1968-)**. Jose was born three days after his original due date of October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1994. He was born a healthy baby, but had some breathing issues that resulted in specialized care for the first 24 hours after his birth. Brian and Neysa were unable to be with him during those 24 hours, but once all testing and treatment was completed they were reunited with their newborn baby. They had to stay in the hospital for a few days longer than usual, but visitors were allowed and many family members from Puerto Rico flew in to meet Jose.

Jose was born at a relatively large size of 12 pounds. He was bound to be bigger than most children his age his whole life, and indeed he was. Neysa and Brian lived in Joplin, Missouri at the time of Jose's birth and that is where they raised him during his first year. After that year, they decided to continue to co-parent Jose but no longer be together as a couple. Neysa moved 10 minutes south to Webb City, Missouri and Brian continued living in Joplin, Missouri. Jose's paternal grandma, Shirley Turpin helped Brian raise him and babysat him often while both parents worked. He developed a close relationship with his paternal grandmother that has continued to grow throughout his life.

Jose spent his week days with his mother in Webb City, Missouri and his weekends with his father in Joplin, Missouri for the first twelve years of his life. He attended La Petite Academy Preschool in Joplin, Missouri from age 3 to 5. La Petite Academy is a non-traditional preschool that focuses on Science, Math, Technology, and Engineering schools. It is also considered a Montessori school. He learned a lot here, and was prepared for the next step in his academic career when he went to kindergarten at Harry S. Truman in Oronogo, Missouri. Harry S. Truman

is in the Webb City, Missouri School district. He went here from kindergarten to fourth grade, then he attended Webb City Middle School for fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. This is where he began playing football and basketball. He was always the tallest kid in his class.

When Jose was a freshman in high school, his dad gained full custody of him and he had to move to Joplin, Missouri to attend high school. Luckily, it only lasted one year, and his dad was able to move to Webb City so he could continue his education where his first eight years of school took place. He spent his sophomore, junior, and senior years at Webb City High School and played for the football team. This is when he found his passion for the sport, and learned about the college opportunities he could have from the sport. He graduated in 2013 and chose to sign with Pittsburg State University to play football and further his academic career.

Jose moved to Pittsburg to begin school and football at Pittsburg State University in the fall of 2013, and chose to major in Physical Education with an emphasis in coaching. In the spring of 2016, Jose decided to add history as a minor to his degree because he wanted to pursue a career as a history educator in the future. Now, Jose is a fifth year student at Pittsburg State University, recently completed his football career, and has two semesters left of college before he will graduate.

Jose has many plans for post graduation. His first goal he will be seeking to reach is to become a graduate assistant at a different University to gain experience in the coaching world. He then hopes to become a teacher and football coach at a high school. He has been anticipating this chapter of his life for a long time, and he is ready for the next step.

## **GENERATION TWO**

**A1a. Brian Speer (1968- )**  
**A1b. Neysa Rosario (1969- )**

Brian Speer was born to **Shirley Garnett (1945- )** on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1968. He was born at Freeman Hospital in Joplin, Missouri. Shirley was a single mother at the time of Brian's birth with one other son, Randy Speer. We do not speak about Brian's biological family in our family, so there is no information regarding that part of his life. When Brian was five years old, Shirley met Dan Turpin of Joplin, Missouri and they began dating. Dan stepped in Shirley's life and helped her take care of her two boys without any question. He helped raise Brian and Randy as his own, and they had one other son later in life. Shirley and Dan got married in 1971. Brian is of Native American descent.

Back in the early 70s, they did not attend preschool as commonly as they do now. Brian never attended preschool; therefore, he immediately began kindergarten at the age of 5 in Carl Junction, Missouri. He then attended Ronald Heights Elementary School in Joplin, Missouri. While he attended the elementary school, he played football and ran track. This is where he developed a love for sports that continued throughout his life and he passed down to his son, Jose. He then went straight on to Junior High School because they did not have Middle School in the late 70s and early 80s. He attended North Junior High School, where he began playing basketball competitively. Brian finished junior high and moved on to high school at Memorial High School. At Memorial High School, Brian stopped playing football and became more serious about basketball and track. He then graduated and attended Missouri Southern State University to pursue a degree in social work.

While Brian was at Missouri Southern State University, he developed an interest in bodybuilding and other cultures. He joined many clubs on campus where he got to know foreign exchange students and help enhance their experience in the United States. Brian has made it a point to keep the Native American heritage alive in his family through passing down traditions to his children. Although his family did not celebrate Native American traditions because it comes his paternal side of the family that he does not have contact with, he grew to appreciate as a young adult in college when he joined clubs to learn more about his culture.

During this time, he met Neysa Rosario, a foreign exchange student at the university, and began dating her. To get more serious about his bodybuilding career, Brian moved to South Beach, Florida and Neysa went with him. They lived in South Beach for a few years and Brian trained for the bodybuilding competitions. During this time, they found out they were expecting a baby boy and decided to move back to Joplin, Missouri. When they moved back to Missouri, Brian began a career as a social<sup>1</sup> worker for the State of Missouri in Jasper County, Missouri. He welcomed his son into<sup>2</sup> the world in 1994, and raised him together for one year with Neysa before they split up and decided to raise their child separately. Soon after, Brian met a woman named Janelle and soon married her. They welcome twin girls into the world, Jadyne and Jordyn. They were married for ten years before separating. After Janelle, Brian did not

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<sup>1</sup>Speer, Brian R. Interview by Jose A. Speer. November 10, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> 1. Claude S. Fischer and Michael Hout, *A Century of Difference; How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 26.

remarry as he has focused on his children instead. Today, Brian resides in Webb City, Missouri and works at the Jasper County Juvenile Detention Center as a social worker.

Neysa Zahira Rosario was born on June 26, 1969 at Hospital Episcopal San Lucas in Ponce, Puerto Rico to **Jose Manuel Rosario (1941- )** and **Brunilda Rivera (1942- )** of Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. Neysa was born an 8-pound healthy baby, and was the second child of Brunida and Jose. They had previously had a son named Manuel Rosario. They raised Neysa and Manuel in Juana Diaz for most of their lives. Neysa did not attend preschool, but her mother, Brunida, was a school teacher her whole life so she worked with Neysa on her basic education skills before sending her to elementary school.

In Figure 3.1 "Distribution of the Population, by Race and Hispanic Origin", Fischer & Hout show the results of the Census Bureau when asking Americans two key questions about members of their household. The questions focused on whether they were Hispanic and what type of race they were. From the figure in 2000 The graph shows the correlation of the Race and Hispanic Origin by the percentage of population. It shows results: three fourths of the population were white with 6 percent being checked Hispanic and white. The other 69 percent was checked not Hispanic and marked white. Of all Americans 12 percent were marked African American or black. The other 11 percent were American Indians or Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander. Hispanic portions of the population made up about 13 percent of the total population of American races. The study also says you could cut immigration out of the factor and there would still be an increase in many mixed backgrounds and races.



Neysa Rosario was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico and grew in Juana Diaz. Puerto Rico is primarily inhabited by people of Hispanic origin, but with a multitude of different race backgrounds of Eastern European, African American and White. She moved to the states with a few classmates for a study abroad type program. They all began their academic careers sometime in the early 90s and most of them as well as Neysa stayed here in the states to build a new life for themselves. They all started families here and like the statistics show that people like her may have a majorly dominate Hispanic background, but their spouses were not from the same background as them, which produce people who may have a race of White, Black or etc., but have a strong or small presence of Hispanic Origin somewhere in their family. With people migrating to the state's increasing yearly, only time will show how connected everyone will be in the future with their backgrounds (Claude, 2006.)

Neysa attended elementary school at Colegio de San Ramon in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico until she was in sixth grade. She then attended Felipe Colon Diaz Junior High School in Juana Diaz before attending Carmen Belen Veiga High School also in Juana Diaz. While she was attending high school at Carmen Bella Veiga, she had the honor of taking mathematics classes from her mother, Brunilda, who was a teacher at the high school. After high school, Neysa moved to the United States through a foreign exchange program at Missouri Southern State University. She wanted to pursue a degree in mathematics to follow in her mother's footsteps, but she after a few years of school and meeting Brian Speer of Joplin, Missouri she decided to take a break from school. She moved with Brian to South Beach, Florida where she lived for a few years but worked in Orlando, Florida. Neysa worked at Disney World in Orlando, Florida for

two years before she found out that her and Brian were expecting, and they decided to move back to Joplin, Missouri.

When Neysa moved back to Missouri, she gave birth to Jose and raised him with Brian for a year before they separated. She then began dating Eddie Colon and soon married him when Jose was three years old. Neysa and Eddie had one child together, Trystan, who is four years younger than Jose. Soon after Trystan was born, Eddie tragically lost his life <sup>3</sup>in a car accident leaving her with the two boys under five. Luckily, she had a lot of friends who became more like family from the foreign exchange program at Missouri Southern State University who helped her raise the boys and she pursued a career in the healthcare administration industry. When Jose was ten and Trystan was six, she married Robert Castillo who adopted Trystan soon after. Together, Robert and Neysa had one child, Isabella Castillo. The family resided in Webb City, Missouri where all three children have attended school and grew up in a great community. Today, Neysa still lives in Webb City, Missouri and she still works in the healthcare administration industry but now works in Neosho, Missouri. <sup>4</sup>

Neysa has raised all three of her children to know about their Puerto Rican culture. Each year while the children were young, they would travel to Juana Diaz to spend two weeks of the summer with their family in Puerto Rico. Now, they still go for at least a week out of the year even as the kids have become older and busier. Her Puerto Rican culture is alive and well in her household, as the kids are accustomed to her traditional foods that she often cooks, and they prefer the Hispanic dishes over the

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<sup>3</sup> Rosario, Neysa Z. Interview by Jose A. Speer. November 12, 2017.

<sup>4</sup>

American dishes. She has celebrated Puerto Rican holidays with her children such as Three Kings Day and New Year's Day. Every New Year's Day, she takes her children over to the home of her friend (who has become more like family) who is also from Puerto Rico. They cook a large bowl of seafood paella. First, they boil crab, shrimp, scallops in a bowl then use the leftover water to cook a large amount of rice. Once the rice is cooked, they add all the seafood back into it. Then, everyone eats together from the large bowl to enjoy a feast on New Year's Day. It is a great way to kick off the new year while surrounded with friends and family. While they are enjoying to paella together, they often play Hispanic music and dance along in a traditional manner.

### GENERATION THREE

**A1a1. Shirley Garnett (1945- )**

**A1b1. Jose Manuel Rosario (1941- )**

**A1b2. Brunilda Rivera (1942- )**

Shirley Garnett was born on July 13, 1945 to **John Marion Garnett (1909-1980)** and **Jennie Pearl Willis (1910-1971)**. She was born at the home, a traditional way to have a child back in the 40s. Shirley was the sixth child of John and Jennie's to be born at the home. She did not have any complications. Shirley was the last child Jennie had, and she was the sixth girl that Jennie gave birth to. She was raised with 5 sisters.

Shirley attended Washington Elementary School in Joplin, Missouri for the first six years of her education. That school is no longer open, but she can remember exactly where it was and what it looked like. When Shirley was ready for seventh grade, she moved to schools and attended East Junior High in Joplin, Missouri. She went there

for the two years before attending high school at Joplin Senior High Parkwood also in Joplin, Missouri. It was not common for people to go directly to college back in her day, but she chose to attend. Shirley attended Joplin Junior College, which is the former name of Missouri Southern State University today. She did not graduate, and decided to pursue a career as a Nurse Assistant.

She began her career as a nurse assistant in Joplin, Missouri at a local doctor's office before she moved to California for a few years because her mother's family was living in the Los Angeles area. She lived in California and worked in the theater industry. The theater industry was <sup>5</sup>a main form of entertainment in this time period because there was not technology as advanced as today. She enjoyed this time in her life greatly and was able to get to know her mother's siblings while she lived in California.

Shirley moved back to the Joplin, Missouri area after she had one child, Randy, and was expecting<sup>6</sup> a second, Brian. She lived in Joplin, Missouri because that is where her family was and it was easier to raise her two boys on her own there. After she had Brian, she met Dan Turpin and they got married. While she was married to Dan, they had one child together and he helped raise the two boys she had before meeting him. She continued to work as a nurse assistant once the boys were older and in school. She worked at various doctors offices in the Southwest Missouri area. Now, Shirley and Dan are retired and still live in Joplin, Missouri. She is involved in the lives of her grandchildren, and enjoys going to Pittsburg, Kansas on Saturdays to watch her grandson, Jose Speer, play football.

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<sup>5</sup> Turpin, Shirley.. Interview by Jose A. Speer. November 11, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Rosario, Neysa Z. Interview by Jose A. Speer. November 12, 2017.

Brunilda Rivera was born to **Alejandro Rivera (unknown-1998)** and **Maria Eides Colon (unknown-2012)** on September 16, 1942 in Villalba, Puerto Rico. She was born in her home into a large, Hispanic, Catholic family that all reside in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. While conducting interviews for this project, it was difficult to find out information about Brunilda because she speaks no English; however, there is some information that was uncovered. Brunilda went to elementary school in Juana Diaz and then she attended middle school at Felipe Colon Diaz Junior High School. Next, she went to high school at Carmen Bella Veiga High School where she later became a math teacher.

Teaching was a passion of Brunilda's for many years, and it is still is today. After high school, she went to college at La Universidad de Católicas, the Catholic University in Puerto Rico. While she was there, she studied education and worked as a high school mathematics teacher for many years where she had the honor of educating her children during their high school years. Brunilda met Jose Manuel Rosario earlier in life, but she got to know him in college and married him soon after. They were married on July 3, 1968 in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. They had two children together, Neysa and Manuel, and they are still married today. Brunilda worked for the Puerto Rican Department of Education for the last half of her career before retiring a few years ago. Her son Manuel and his children still live in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico near her, but her daughter Neysa lives in the United States with her three children. Brunilda has come to visit her grandchildren in the United States every few years, with her most recent visit being in the summer of 2016. She does not speak any English, so it is not easy for her

to travel to the United States but she enjoys being able to spend time with her family here.

Jose Manuel Rosario was born to **Jose Rosario (unknown-2005)** and **Rosalia Zambrana (unknown-1998)** on July 12, 1941 in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. He, like Brunilda, was born into a large, Hispanic, Catholic family that all resided in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. Also like Brunilda, Jose does not speak English so it was difficult to uncover information about his past. Jose went to elementary school in Juana Diaz at a school that no longer exists. It is know that he then attended middle school at Felipe Colon Diaz Junior High School. After junior high, he went to high school at Carmen Bella Veiga High School.

Jose did not go to college after high school, but instead he pursued a career in law enforcement. Jose went to the Law Enforcement Academy of Puerto Rico right after high school and became an undercover policeman. He worked as an undercover policeman for many years before he began working with juveniles at the Juvenile Detention Center in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. He spent the last majority of his career working with juveniles before he retired about five years ago as his health began to decline. Jose has only been to the United States one time to visit his family, but he looks forward to his family coming to visit him in Puerto Rico. Currently, he is still living in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico and is retired with his wife, Brunilda. They spend their Saturdays in the fall livestreaming their grandchildren's football games in America.

#### **GENERATION FOUR**

**A1a2a. John Marion Garnett (1909-1980)**

**A1a2b. Jennie Pearl Willis (1910-1971)**

**A1b1a. Jose Rosario (unknown-2005)**

**A1b1b. Rosalia Zambrana (unknown-1998)**

**A1b2a. Alejandro Rivera (unknown-1998)**

**A1b2b. Maria Elides Colon (unknown-2012)**

John Marion Garnett was born to Marion Garnett (unknown-unknown) and Alma Butterfield (unknown-unknown) in Golden City, Missouri in 1909. It is unknown what year that Marion and Alma were born or passed away in because the records are not clear and John did not pass the information down to his children. John lived in the Southwest Missouri area while growing up and he had a minimum amount of education. It was common in this time period for people to not attend elementary, middle school, and high school. It is believed that he attended elementary and middle school, but when he was of age 14 he went to work in the coal mines instead of finishing high school. John worked as a miner for many years, as the Southwest Missouri area was a prime area for coal mining back in this time. He made many friends during his time as a miner, and this is when he met Jennie Pearl Willis (1910-1971).

John and Jennie dated when they were young, and they got married when they were only 18. However, this was expected of people during this time. While he was a miner, he also worked nights at a tomato canning factory. This is where he met the love of his life, Jennie Pearl Willis (1910-1971.) After his days as a miner were completed, John became a moonshiner. This is not something that his family is proud of, but it is something that many miners did after they could no longer work in the coal mines. He distilled the alcohol with the help of his fellow former miners, and sold it to people in the area. It is claimed that he even shipped the moonshine nationwide for a period of time.

Jennie Pearl Willis was born in Sampson, Missouri to Willie Francis Bennett and Tom Willis. It is unknown the birth and death dates of Willie and Tom because the records cannot be found and the information was not passed down to Jennie's children. Jennie grew up in the Southwest Missouri area, near Sampson, Missouri, and she completed high school unlike many in that time. It is unknown what high school she attended, but she always told her daughters that she did. Her family migrated from Southwest Missouri to the Los Angeles, California area when Jennie was around 19 and she went with them.

Jennie lived in the Los Angeles, California area for less than two years with her four siblings and then for an unknown reason she decided to move back to Southwest Missouri. She moved back to Southwest Missouri and worked at a tomato canning factory. While she was working at the tomato canning factory, Jennie met John Marion Garnett and they were married soon after.

Right after Jennie and John got married, they began having children together. Their first child was a baby girl and she quit working at the factory to stay at home and raise the child. John continued to work to provide for the family. Jennie and John then had six children, all girls. They raised the girls in the Joplin, Missouri area and majority of the girls remained in that area to raise their own families.

Jose Rosario was born in a year that is unknown in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. There is not any information known about his life, other than the fact that he married Rosalia Zambrana in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico and had children with her. They had a

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<sup>7</sup> Turpin, Shirley. Interview by Jose A. Speer. November 11, 2017.



son on July 12, 1941 named Jose Manuel Rosario who is in this direct lineage. Jose passed away in 2005 in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico.

Rosalia Zambrana was born in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico and she passed away on December 3, 1994. There is not any information known about her life, other than the fact that she married Jose Rosario and they had children together. They had a son on July 12, 1941 named Jose Manuel Rosario who is in this direct lineage.

Alejandro Rivera was born in an unknown year in Villaba, Puerto Rico. There is not any information known about his life, other than the fact that he married Maria Elides Colon in Villaba, Puerto Rico and had children with her. One of the children was Brunilda Rivera, who is a direct member of this lineage. Alejandro passed away on July 13, 1998 in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico.

Maria Elides Colon was born in an unknown year in Villaba, Puerto Rico. There is not any information known about her life, other than the fact that she married Alejandro Colon in Villaba, Puerto Rico. She had children with him, and one specifically was Brunilda Rivera, who is a direct member of this lineage. Maria passed away on January 25, 2012 in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico.

#### **GENERATION FIVE**

**Al1a1a1. Alma Butterfield**

**Al1a1a2. Marion Garnett**

**Al1a1b1. Willie Francis Bennett**

**Al1a1b2. Tom Willis**

It is known that the fifth generation of Jose Speer's lineage includes the parents of John Marion Garnett and Jennie Pearl Willis. Jennie's parents are **Willie Francis Bennett (unknown-unknown)** and Tom Willis (**unknown - unknown**) and John's parents are **Alma Butterfield (unknown-unknown)** and **Marion Garnett (unknown-unknown)**. There is no other additional information known about either set of parents because the information is not clear in records and it was not passed on to their grandchildren who are still living today. On the other side of the lineage, there is no information about **Jose Rosario (unknown-2005)**, **Rosalia Zambrana (unknown-1998)** parents, **Alejandro Rivera (unknown-1998)**, or **Maria Elides Colon (unknown-2012)** parents. This is mainly due to the language barrier between the living residents in the United States and the living family members in Puerto Rico.