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THE BASQUES OF NEW YORK: A Cosmopolitan Experience

Gloria Totoricagüena

With the collaboration of

Emilia Sarriugarte Doyaga and Anna M. Renteria Aguirre

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Aurkezpena

JUAN JOSÉ
IBARRETXE
MARKUARTU
Lehendakaria



1994 urtean *Eusko Legebiltzarrean Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoaz Kanpoko Euskal Gizatalde eta Etxeekiko Harremanei buruzko Legea* onartu zen, kontrako botorik jaso gabe. Legebiltzarreko Taldeen jarrera bateratu hau, Euskaditik kanpora bizi diren euskal herritarrekin eta euren ondorengoekin Euskal Gizarteak duen konpromiso atzeraezinaren erakusgarri onena da. Konpromiso horrek, halaber, Euskal Etxeen aitorten ofiziala eta Euskal Erakunde Publikoekiko harremanen instituzionalizazioa ahalbidetzeko duen borondatea adierazten du.

Lege horren bidez, lau urtero egin beharreko Euskal Gizataldeen Biltzarra instituzionalizatzen da ere bai, euren helburuak betetzeko lau urteko plana prestatu ahal izan dezaten.

Ikuspegi horretatik, Euskal Etxeen eta Euskal Erakunde Publikoen arteko harremanen instituzionalizazioa, horiek etorkizunean jarraipena izateko asmoaren seinale da, ekintza bateraturako estrategiak, aldian-aldian, gaur egungo mundu gero eta globalagoaren errealitate historiko berrietara egokituz.

Hain zuzen, etorkizun asmo horrekin jardun zuten euren jaioteritik urrun elkartzea eta euren “Euskal Etxeak” sortzea erabaki zuten euskal herritar ospetsuek. Elkarri laguntza eta babesa ematea eta Kultura sustatzea zuten helburu, Euskal Herriaren partaide izatearen sentimenduak eta harrera egin zieten herrialdeekiko elkartasuna uztartuz.

Gaur, Euskal Etxeen historiaren berreskurapenean berriro lagundu nahi izan duten profesionalen ikerketa-bilduma aurkezteko ohorea dugu. Euskal Etxeak nazioarteko euskal presentziaren historia instituzionalaren zati dira eta, aldi berean, kokatuta dauden herrialdeen araberako legediaren aitorten ofiziala izan dute.

Bilduma honetatik, milaka euskal gizon eta emakumeri elkartasunez harrera egindako herrialde horiei omenaldia egin nahi diegu, baita Euskal Etxe eta Gizataldeei ere, fundazioko helburuak betetzeko eta Euskal Herriak historian ezaugarri izan dituen baloreak defendatu nahiz zabaltzeko egindako ahaleginagatik, adibidez lanerako gogoia, nazioarteko elkartasuna, printzipio demokratikoen defentsa eta emandako hitza betetzea.

Espero dut ahalegin profesional eta instituzional berri honek Euskadiren errealitate soziopolitikoia ezagutarazten lagunduko duela, baita Euskal Etxe eta Gizataldeek Euskal Erakunde Publikoekin duten harremana estutzen ere.

Presentation

JUAN JOSÉ
IBARRETXE
MARKUARTU
Lehendakari



In 1994 the Basque Parliament passed the Law on Relations with Basque Associations and Centers with no dissenting votes. The Parliamentary Groups' unanimous attitude clearly demonstrates the desire of Basque society to lend their unequivocal support to the Basque people and their descendents residing outside of Euskadi. It also leads the way to the official recognition of Basque Centers, and to formalizing their relations with Basque Public Institutions.

The law also establishes the celebration of a World Congress of Basque Organizations every four years to draw up a four-year plan of action aimed at achieving the objectives.

From this perspective, by institutionalizing relations between the Basque Centers and Basque Public Institutions the long-standing nature of the project is understood. New joint action strategies must be adapted regularly to meet the new historic realities brought about by today's increasingly globalized world.

Far from their native land, the illustrious Basques who decided to form partnerships and create "Basque Centers" also had their sights set on the future. Spurred on by mutual support and the desire to defend and promote their culture, they managed to combine their feelings as part of the Basque nation with their feelings of solidarity towards the countries that took them in.

Today we have the honor of presenting a collection of research projects put together by experts who, once again, have made an effort to recover the history of the Basque Centers. Officially recognized in accordance with the laws of the host countries, the Basque presence around the globe is further enriched by these contributions to Basque history.

We would like this collection to be seen as a tribute to the countries that welcomed, protected and supported so many thousands of Basque people. It is also meant as a tribute to the Basque Associations and Centers themselves for their work in carrying out the organizations' objectives and in defending and disseminating the values that have characterized the Basque nation throughout history—hard-working spirit, international solidarity, defense of democratic principles and a people who keeps its word.

I trust that this new professional and institutional effort will contribute to a better understanding of the social and cultural reality of Euskadi, and to strengthen the bonds between the Basque Associations and Centers and the Basque Institutions.

Hitzaurrea

Ellis Island-en bizitakoa da, Ameriketako Estatu Batuetara 1892-1942 urteen artean New Yorketik sartu ziren milioika emigranteren ustetan, bizi izandako gogoetarik hunkigarrienetarikoa. Bertan, makinatxo bat azterketa mota egitera behartu zituzten, ez bakarrik osasun aldekoak, baita aduanetako kontuak ere, Manhattanen lur hartu aurretik. Gaixorik edo gabeziaren bat zutela antzematen zituztenak etxerako bidean ontziratzeko arriskua izaten zuten. 1900 urtean, esaterako, 1000 lagunetik gora hil zen New Yorkeko sarrera, kokatutako uharte hortan, ametsetako lurraren aurrez aurre. Beste askok beren buruaz beste egin zuten.

Halere ehundaka izan ziren lurreratzeko beste bide bat aukeratu zutenak, itsasontzietatik isilean lehorreratuz. Itsas-gizonek erraztasun handiagoa izaten zuten, baimen bereziak bait zituzten denbora batez itsas-portuetan ibiltzeko. Guzti horregatik, Ellis Island-eko erregistroetan ez daude jasota sasoi hartan Estatu Batuetara sartu ziren euskaldun guztien izenak.

Bizitza berrirako bidaiaren hurrengo urratsa, senitartekoen edo lagunen bila Mendebalderantz zihoazten beste euskaldun batzuekin elkartzea izaten zen, eta hori Valentín Aguirrek Cherry Street-en zuen Santa Lucia hotel ezagunean egin zezaketen, *home away from home*, Mendebalderako bidairako indarrak hartzeko gehienek erabili omen zuten hotelean.

Aguirrek Jai Alai izeneko jatetxea eta bidai agentzia ere bazituen. Sollube mendian jaiotako bizkaitar hau sareko informazio iturri nagusi bilakatu zen, berak jakiten baitzuen une bakoitzean non behar zituzten langileak, eta bera arduratzen baitzen heldu berriak Mendebalderantzko trenetan sartzeaz. Tren gehienek Ogden izaten zuten helmuga, Utah-n, eta han ere bertatik bertara zituzten euskal ostatuak, bidairako euskal arnasa.

Valentín Aguirre *Centro Vasco Americano* lagun-arteko elkartearen hamairu sortzaileetako bat izan zen 1913 urtean, eta elkarteko Lehendakari kargua ere behin baino gehiagotan bete izan zuen. Hiru hamarkada geroago, bera izan zen gainera New York-era iristear zeuden Eusko Jaurlaritzako Aguirre Lehendakariari eta bere emazteari harrera formal eta berezia egiteko proposamena luzatu ziena Zuzendaritza Batzordekoei 1941an.

Gaur egun New York munduko hiririk kosmopolitena dela esan ohi da, mundua bera txikian. Eta egun ere etxetik kanporatzea erabakitzen duten euskal gazteen helmuga izaten jarraitzen du, Ameriketako sasoi bateko beste tokiak ez bezala. Halere, gaur egun, Ellis Island-en erregistratuak izateko euren hatz-markak paperaren gainean jarri beharrean, gehienak unibertsitateetatik ateratako gazteak izaten dira, Manhattan-eko etxe-orrazetan lan egitera doazenak, edo baita ere sorterrian arrakasta lortu ondoren nazioarte mailan jarduteko harra sortzen zaielako joaten diren hainbat arlotako gazteak

IÑAKI AGUIRRE ARIZMENDI
Kanpo Harremanetarako idazkari nagusia

Preface

Ellis Island constitutes one of the most moving remembrances for those millions of migrants who entered the United States of America via New York in the period 1892-1942. There, they were obliged to go through medical inspections and other kinds of tests, as well as customs, before they could land in Manhattan. Those who were ill or had any physical disabilities could be forced to embark toward home again home again. Only in 1900 more than 1000 people died on the island, just in front of the land they had been dreaming of for so long. Many of them committed suicide.

But hundreds preferred to jump ship; it was even easier for seamen, who were allowed special passes and time in port cities. That is the reason why the Ellis Island records do not include all the cases of those Basques who emigrated to the United States at that time.

The next step in their trip to the new world (mostly to meet their relatives or acquaintances on the west coast) would be to contact other Basques for whom their first *home away from home* was Valentín Aguirre's well-known Santa Lucia hotel on Cherry Street, a consummate transit hotel.

He also owned the Jai Alai Restaurant and a travel agency. Born in Monte Sollube in Biscay, Valentín Aguirre was the one who knew where the workers where needed, and sent newly arrived Basques to their final destinations putting them onto the trains that in a few days would place them in Ogden, Utah, where they could easily spot another Basque boarding house near the station.

Valentín Aguirre was one of the thirteen founders of the mutual assistance association *Centro Vasco Americano* in 1913, and he was elected president several times. Three decades later he was the one who proposed that its Board formally receive the President of the Basque Government and his wife upon their arrival in New York City in 1941.

Nowadays, New York is the epitome of cosmopolitanism, as it is said to be a small World itself. Even today, it is one of the few cities in America where Basque youngsters do emigrate, but instead of stamping their finger prints to be recorded in Ellis Island, they are mostly university educated people who get jobs in the skyscrapers in Manhattan, or those who are trying to look for international recognition after they have been successful in their homeland.

IÑAKI AGUIRRE ARIZMENDI
General Secretary of Foreign Action

Ackno



wledgements

This book publication is the result of a collaborative project initiated by the Basque Government to research the most significant Basque communities in the world. Thank you to Josu Legarreta, Director of Relations with the Basque Collectivities, and especially to Benan Oregi, Director of the Urazandi Collection for their support and work in the preparation of this volume. Zachary Bilbao Berhau, former President of Euzko-Etxea, and Luis “Koitz” Foncillas Etxeberria, current President of Euzko-Etxea, answered a myriad of inquiries and provided facts, figures, and corrected details. Margarita “Margie” Oleaga Martinez Abadia, Mario and Miriam de Salegi, Noriko and Oscar Espina-Ruiz, Rosa Aberasturi, Iñaki Aberasturi, Gloria Aberasturi, Ana Mari Oleaga, Xanti Mendieta, Karlos Iturralde, Manny Zuluaga, Vivian Zuluaga-Papp, Father José

Mari Larrañaga and Steve, Elizabeth and Liz Aspiazu, all extended friendship and many hours of meaningfully fond and nostalgic memories regarding their lives as Basques in New York. The Aspiazus shared the personal papers of Steve's father, Esteban "Txarron" Aspiazu, and I am grateful for their trust and confidence. Centenarian Gabrielle Bidegain Amestoy and her great-niece Suzanne Noguere participated with many hours of sharing valuable personal items, stories, and song. I am an enriched researcher and better person as a result of having the privilege to meet and know these people, and expect that I have accurately told their stories here.

The Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno has provided me with several specialists to assist with various segments of this project. Pedro J. Oiarzabal, Kate Camino, and Bernadette Leonis listened to, indexed, and transcribed nearly one third of the audio taped interviews. Demosthenes "D" Papaeliou, Assistant Librarian, and Marcelino Ugalde, Head Librarian of the Basque Studies Library, aided with the digitization of *Centro Vasco-Americano* ledger books, minutes from meetings, and events flyers, which I discovered in a remote corner of the Euzko-Etxea of New York building on Eckford Street in Brooklyn. These historical documents were thought to be long lost, and no one knew they still existed. Perseverance paid off when after searching for more than a year, I found a stack of old, semi-damp, and very dirty clothbound books, protected from any sunlight- and almost any researcher- under columns of accumulated boxes, videotapes, old *Euskera* lesson plan notes, LP records, and historical paraphernalia in the Jon Oñatibia Library. I had pre-

pared my research in this small library of the Euzko-Etxea countless times, inspecting every document and book and scouring every corner, and when especially frustrated I looked long and hard at the name on the library door. I was especially fortunate to have met Jon Oñatibia when he taught Basque language classes in Boise, Idaho with my mother Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica (Totoricagüena) in 1974. A few years later he returned to Boise to work with the Oinkari Basque Dancers and though I was only twelve, I understood that this man, a perfectionist and human Basque encyclopedia, was always testing us to do our best. “*Berriro*,” “Let’s do it again,” he said hundreds of times until we had every step exactly in time with his *txistu* and *danborra* drum. Twenty-five years later I would look at his name on the library door and talk to him in exasperation: “Where are all of the documents? Where is the information? Where are the records of this community? How will I ever figure this out and piece the puzzle together?” And I’d answer myself, “*Berriro* Gloria. Look for it again somewhere else. Ask someone else. Do it one more time. Start over.” Thank you Jon Oñatibia, for lessons of life and for the safekeeping of this community’s memories in your library.

Alys Mason Viña’s articles from the *Voice of the Basques* publications of the early 1970s were invaluable for maintaining exact dates and names for those years. She reported monthly on the New York Basque community and educated west coast Basques about their friends across the country. The first time I telephoned Lily Aguirre Fradua from my Manhattan hotel to explain my project and

who I was, she said she couldn't help me because she really didn't know anything.

However, after talking to me for more than thirty minutes, she decided that if I wanted to come by and visit a little, I was invited to her apartment the next morning. Lily and I talked –and laughed- non-stop, into lunch, and then dinner. A few days- and a notebook full of information- later, we repeated thoroughly enjoyable afternoons. During 2002, and 2003, I was fortunate enough to accept invitations for what I warmly think of as “afternoons with Lily” when I listened to this remarkable woman's detailed descriptions of life in the original Basque neighborhood. Lily's expert observations and personal testimony have greatly enhanced this history of the Basques in New York and I thank her, *mil esker bihotzez*. Expert editing by Anna M. Aguirre, Emilia Sarriugarte Doyaga, Tatia Baum Totorica, and Gloria Aberasturi has assisted to correct errors and help the readability of the manuscript. Of course, all remaining errors are the responsibility of the author. Linda McCormack, Emilia Sarriguarte Doyaga and Anna M. Renteria Aguirre conducted numerous personal and telephone interviews and Emilia and Anna facilitated nearly two years of fieldwork and original research. I met countless Basques through their networking, and would never have been able to complete this project without their cooperation and support.

This book is dedicated to those Basques who were willing to invite us into their homes and to give us their life stories; some joyous, others painful, but all full of vigor and pioneer spirit. The Basque community of New York exists to this day because of their dedication to

maintaining culture, values, and social systems of family and friends.

I present this book in memory of Marcus and Eugenia Renteria Sarriugarte, and their extraordinary daughter Emilia, and in memory of Andoni and Irene Renteria Aguirre, and their remarkable daughter Anna. *Eskerrik asko* to Emilia and Anna who have devoted their lives' works to ensuring that there *is* a New York Basque community, one which could very well redefine the concept of "Basque Center," and reinvent the meaning of "Basqueness."

Eskerrik asko

Introduction

The mission of the Basque International Cultural Center is to spread knowledge of Basque culture on a global scale to Basques and non-Basques. The purpose of the Center is to promote a little known culture to a wide population by offering services and activities that include Basque cuisine, history, art, language, sports, music and dance, etc.

(Basque International Cultural Center newsletter 2002, Vol. 1, Issue 1.).

Dr. Emilia Sarrigarte Doyaga and Anna M. Renteria Aguirre traveled from New York City to Santa Monica, California on August 22, 2002, in order to meet with world-renowned architect Frank O. Gehry and his associate Randy Jefferson. The topic of this initial meeting focused on the location, design, and construction details of a future multi-million dollar Basque International Cultural Center in the South Street Seaport area of lower Manhattan. Doyaga exclaimed, “Gehry’s offices were amazing—they were completely stark. The secretary’s desk was really just a table made of plywood. And in his office the walls were mostly bare except for one shelf. On it, he had gifts that the Basque Government sends him every year. Can you believe it? Of all the things he might have displayed, he displays the Basque things!”

This meeting was emblematic of the circumstances of this distinct Basque community in the world’s most influential capital of culture. Doyaga and Aguirre are representative of first and second generation Basques born in New York, who typically



Emilia Sarrigarte Doyaga, a first generation Basque born in Brooklyn, has served in numerous leadership roles in the Basque community and is the initiator of the Basque International Cultural Center.

were raised prudently, and often through financial hardship, to uphold their Basque identities and to become leaders in their fields and professions. They cherish their Basque identity, traditions, and culture, and want to promote them to the world. Gehry is a non-Basque world-class architect inspired by the Basques and interested in knowing more. When the New York Guggenheim Museum exhibited Gehry's works in 2001, the presentation attracted more visitors than any other showing in the entire history of the museum. Frank Gehry's interest in the Basques and the Basques' interest in Frank Gehry result from his creation of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, and his spectacular artistry has served as a significant factor in the remarkable renovation of the Bizkaian capital city of Bilbao, in the Basque Country. He agreed to listen to Doyaga and Aguirre because, in his words, "I like a challenge and a dream."

For years, Doyaga has been advocating a collaborative idea to establish an international center to promote Basque culture, networks, information and exchange, commerce, literature and the arts, and music, etc. "We've got to get our story out to the world," she explained. "We have to promote all the amazing things that are part of our Basque existence. Why Manhattan? Because Manhattan is the cultural and fi-

nancial center of the world and forty million visitors from around the planet are in Manhattan every year and there's no better place to get a message out to the world than to have an impressive presence right here in New York City." Luis "Koitz" Foncillas Etxeberria, native of Pamplona, Navarre and a BICC Board Member, producer for MTV and correspondent for Radio Euskadi in New York agrees, "We need to have our own place to showcase our Basque inventiveness and genius, and to facilitate opening up to the entire world these Basque artists' talents. Numerous Basque artists have displayed in New York City at its finest galleries and museums, the latest being the works of Jorge Oteiza at the Haim Chanin Fine Arts Gallery in 2003. Our Basque International Cultural Center, the BICC, will have an exhibition and concert hall to make sure we are promoting our own story." The Center is planned to include trade offices for Basque businesses, a world-class restaurant, a bar with *pintxos* or snacks, a small library with research archives, information regarding Basque genealogy, a multi-functional exhibition hall for art display and musical recitals and performances, a classroom, a gift shop, and tourist offices to promote travel to the seven Basque provinces. The location would serve as a place where Basques and non-Basques alike could educate themselves and celebrate Basque culture and identity.

Never underestimate the power of a Basque woman, and if these two are involved, one probably should consider surrendering immediately. Doyaga and Aguirre proved to be an extremely effective couple, and Gehry subsequently enthusiastically agreed to participate in the project as an Honorary Board Member, and possibly, as Chief Architect.

KALETARRAK AND BASERRITARRAK: THOSE FROM THE STREETS AND THOSE FROM THE FARMS

It is fitting to begin this volume's investigation of the Basques in New York with a discussion of the future, and not the past, because of the nature of the community here and its presence in this multicultural and transnational capital of the world, the greater metropolitan New York City. The Basque experience here shares little with the communities of the American west, or with those of Central or South America. New York's proximity to the homeland—closer to Bilbao than it is to Boise—has facilitated constant travel and exchange, and the surrounding influences of living in the immigration gateway to the United States have impacted these Basques' cosmopolitan definitions of Basqueness. They share multi-layered identities and have no problems whatsoever describing themselves as "Basque-Gallego-Hungarian-American", as does Vivian Zuluaga-Papp, or, as "Italian-Irish-Basque-American," like Elizabeth Aspiazu. Others, such as Xanti Mendieta and Karlos Iturralde simply define themselves as "Basques living in the United States."

Baserritarrak, literally “those from the farm” or rural, versus *kaletarrak*, literally, “those from the street” or urban, understand life and identity differently. The differences between people of the streets and people of the farms from Basque Country homeland society have been transplanted to the new host country and its east coast “city Basques” and west coast “rural Basques”. Western Basques have a stereotype of the easterners, and the easterners also have many misconceptions of western Basques in Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and California. Not every Basque heading west became a shepherd! New York Basques I interviewed for this project consistently asked me many questions about those of us in the west, and the overwhelming majority believed that “the Basques out there in the west” still live on vast ranches with massive land holdings and work in agriculture and commercial gardening. Correcting this misunderstanding became a segment of almost every encounter. The same is true of today’s west coast Basques’ lack of knowledge and understanding of the United States’ first incorporated Basque organization in New York and the thousands of Basques who live and work on the eastern seaboard. Most do not live in fifty-story apartment buildings surrounded by gang violence, screeching busses, or pollution. Most of “those New Yorkers” own peaceful homes with gardens, drive their children and grandchildren to weekend soccer matches, and enjoy Sunday barbecues at home. Yet there are obviously differences that attribute to life as a Basque in New York City, where one is merely from one of thousands of ethnic, cultural, or religious groups, as opposed to a Basque in a more homogeneous Buffalo, Wyoming. We will explore the aspects of Basque connections with each other and the influence of the North American Basque Organizations’ activities on New York Basques. The influence of the Delegation of the Basque Government-in-exile in New York from the 1930s to the 1960s is also described and analyzed for the political differences between New York and western United States Basques. However, a clear understanding of life for the typical Basque family has also been constructed here through careful and comprehensive research utilizing New York’s several historical societies, numerous early sources of print media, personal photo albums, and hundreds of hours of recording oral histories, testimonies, and interviews.

While historically, the majority of Basques in the American west experienced a country-to-country cultural shift from agricultural life in the Basque Country to agriculture in the United States, those moving to New York City experienced an additional country-to-city life cultural crisis. The overwhelming majority of Basque immigrants to New York had never lived in a city, had never seen a building taller than three or four floors, and had never seen live Asian, Middle Eastern, or African people. Angel Elustondo Viña left Ea, Bizkaia in 1930, and while waiting to board his ship in Le Havre, saw a black musician playing on the boardwalk. “Oh my God. I was shocked! I can’t even tell you the look I must have had on my face. I couldn’t stop staring,” he still remembers seventy years later. “There were people from Lekeitio [a small fishing village in Bizkaia] with me and they had never even seen a woman wearing pants, let alone all those other people and their ethnic clothes! New York was incredible for us,

you know, we just couldn't believe that all those things were real!" exclaimed a 1920s immigrant Fulgencio Aldape. The images upon arrival were truly traumatic for some, though liberating for others. Life in the city created completely different categories of stress factors for immigrants. These were no more, or less, significant than those of young Basque men who were left alone in the Nevada mountain desert with responsibility for 1500 sheep for weeks at a time. Immigrants to New York did not face the loneliness of the desert and physical isolation from other humans. They suffered from the bombardment of hundreds of unknown languages, foods, styles of dress, religious worship, and human lifestyles, which they had never even imagined existed. Human activity, noise, smell, and movement were inescapable in the early 1900s. It is not surprising that many of the Basque community activities involved day-cruises on the water, or day-outings to natural parks away from the concrete and noise of Manhattan. They were attempting to re-create a typical Bizkaian day's outing to the beach or a picnic with nature.

Basques in New York were confronted with, and eventually enjoyed, contact with a myriad of distinct ethnic groups. Iñaki Aberasturi, native of Arteaga, Bizkaia remembers that his grammar school classes in the 1940s had "Everything, you name it. We had Italians, Irish, Jewish, Polish, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Gallegos, everything all mixed up. But, I never tried to blend in. What would I blend in to? I have always been just Basque." Basques in the western United States communities were not typically exposed to so many different cultures nor surrounded by hundreds of thousands of recent immigrants on a daily basis. The New York experience is cosmopolitan, influenced by the rhythm of the city and the uniqueness of the access to culture, which has shaped and helped to construct and re-construct Basque identity. However, both groups have similarly maintained Basque cuisine, dance, music, song, and sport and festival days such as St. Ignatius and *Aberri Eguna*, or Day of the Homeland.

The overwhelming majority does share an emotional attachment to the Basque culture and to the Basque Country, as exemplified by Angel Bidasolo Zuluaga and Nicolas Luzuriaga. Luzuriaga was born in 1887 to Zenona and Felipe Luzuriaga in Los Arcos, Navarre, and immigrated to New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. He married María Altuna in New York and they had five children whom they educated as Basques. His nostalgia for the Basque Country was so profound that he asked his friend Pedro Toja to bring him a bag of soil from Los Arcos, which Pedro did, and which he had verified with the signature of the Mayor of Los Arcos. When Nicolas died in New York in 1967, this soil of Navarre was buried with him. Angel Zuluaga arrived to the United States in the 1920s, and twenty years later, his brother Hilario had the opportunity to come to New York while working in the Spanish Merchant Marines. Angel had not seen any of his family for decades, and asked his brother to bring him only one thing: the old cast iron kettle -cracked from multiple decades of use- that hung in the family's farmhouse hearth. For Angel it represented his ancestry, his family, his history, and his

memories of his own father making the morning coffee. Brother Hilario arrived in New York in 1945, and departed his ship carrying his suitcase with one hand, and in the other was the weathered Zuluaga family coffee pot. Today, Angel's son, Manny, safeguards this treasured piece from the Basque Country.

The *Euskaldunak*, or the Basque people, here do share the desire to utilize their unique position as New Yorkers to promote the Basque cause to the world's media, intellectuals, academics, and general citizenry that pay attention to cultural, political, economic, historical, artistic and social developments. According to the Basque Government Department of Industry, Commerce, and Tourism, in 1992, the three Basque Country provinces of Araba, Bizkaia, and Gipuzkoa received 11,500 visitors from the United States, but by 1999 that number had multiplied to 53,000 and in 2000 there was another twenty percent increase. New York Basques see these indicators as a significant opportunity and hope that a future international cultural center here could help in that advocacy. While other Basque communities around the world have tended to focus on their ancestrally Basque memberships and the *preservation* and *maintenance* of Basque culture and identity, the concept of a proactive offensive strategy to assertively promote Basque themes to the entire world is an unprecedented and unequaled New Yorkers' interpretation of a "Basque Center".

As the reader will see in the coming chapters, throughout the decades this colony of Basque immigrants and their descendants have consistently demonstrated innovation and ingenuity. In times of institutional crisis and need for diversification, leaders have made difficult decisions to change course, made significant financial investments, and further developed their community and its objectives. The Basques of New York have again arrived at such a crossroads, however, this time the gravity and the implications are monumental. Julen Abio queries, "We used to get involved with everything. We had our own club within the club, we had dances, we had the youth group. We were here every weekend. What happened? What happened to this club?" Perhaps it is not the club that changed, but the people in it, and precisely because the club did not change with the people, fewer Basques now make the effort or take an interest in its activities. I will detail the development of the Basque organizations through their waxing and waning and attempt to explain the variations and transformations of Basque ethnic identity maintenance in New York through cultural and social activities. Membership and participation in organized activities are dramatically decreasing and fewer in the next generation know the history, current events, dances, songs, sport, language, or food preparation of their own Basque ancestors. How will they be able to maintain their identity and what will make them Basque if these cultural markers are lost?

Basque people do not tend to be self-promoting, and this modesty in turn often tends to be self-defeating. When accurate information about the seven

Basque provinces in northern Spain and southern France is generally absent around the United States from libraries, newsrooms, travel agencies, academic, cultural, economic, and political institutions, that vacuum is either ignored or filled with misinformation by other agents. In the western states, where Basques reach a critical mass in smaller cities and towns, information about Basques seems to be more prevalent because there is so much less ‘competition’ for attention from other ethnic groups and news items, and of course, the local paper from Fresno, California, cannot be compared to *The New York Times*.

This study will demonstrate that the Basque community was originally extremely exclusive, to the point that in order to join the established Basque mutual aid society one had to have a Basque father. A Basque mother married to a person of another ethnicity “was not enough because your surname wouldn’t be Basque.” What would the founders have thought of the Zachary Bilbao Berhau family, which represents the multicultural and transnationalism of New York City? Zachary’s wife, Kathleen, is Polish, Irish and German, married to a “one hundred percent Basque man.” Her three brothers married Japanese, Puerto Rican, and German women. Zachary and Kathleen’s daughters have partnered with Scottish German, Jewish, and Italian men. “This is normal in New York. We can’t be thinking of Basques as only those people whose parents were both Basque. We have to open it up and share our culture with everyone,” stated Zachary Berhau. Ambrosio Goikoetxea has been married to Danish, French and Iranian women. He sees himself as a part of a world structure, not only as an individual of a city or of a country. “I also think that this is an international world,” he said. “It was not for our parents. It was not for my parents. Now my generation, we see it differently. To me it is one whole world and I can make my identity today, and tomorrow.”

The exclusivity of defining “Basque” by ancestry only, may be one of the most significant factors for debate in this east coast ethnic colony, as it is also becoming important in other Basque diaspora communities spread in twenty countries throughout the world. A formerly accepted definition of a Basque was a person born in the Basque country, of Basque ancestry, and who spoke the Basque language. Can a person who has none of these attributes be, or become, Basque? Today, many of the hundreds of New York Basques who left the homeland for economic opportunities and for political exile, and their descendants, are answering ‘yes’.

In the United States, census results show that with each decade, higher numbers of people are claiming Basque identity. California has the largest Basque population by state boundaries. However, Basques are simply one more ethnic group of hundreds and are not as noticeable as they are in Idaho or Nevada, where the overall population is much lower.

**UNITED STATES NATIONAL CENSUS 2000.
NUMBER OF PEOPLE REPORTING THEMSELVES AS BASQUE**

Alabama 107	Louisiana 354	Oklahoma 126
Alaska 276	Maine 57	Oregon 2,627
Arizona 1,655	Maryland 399	Pennsylvania 278
Arkansas 71	Massachusetts 383	Puerto Rico 187
California 20,868	Michigan 306	Rhode Island 23
Colorado 1,674	Minnesota 195	South Carolina 76
Connecticut 262	Mississippi 64	South Dakota 64
Delaware 12	Missouri 180	Tennessee 145
District Columbia 180	Montana 564	Texas 1,691
Florida 2,127	Nebraska 85	Utah 1,361
Georgia 282	Nevada 6,096	Vermont 34
Hawaii 175	New Hampshire 158	Virginia 515
Idaho 6,637	New Jersey 643	Washington 2,665
Illinois 533	New Mexico 600	West Virginia 8
Indiana 168	New York 1,252	Wisconsin 98
Iowa 50	North Carolina 330	Wyoming 869
Kansas 146	North Dakota 39	
Kentucky 55	Ohio 230	TOTAL 57,793

The 1980 Census total number for “Basques” was 43,140 and the 1990 Census showed 47,956 Basques in the United States. The increasing numbers are more likely from already existing Basques who are just now claiming their ethnicity on this form, and not a result of new immigration. The following chapters will look at the historical and contemporary connections among Basques in New York and Basques in the homeland, as well as institutional and personal relations with other Basque Centers in these States, and a more inclusive definition of Basqueness. Perhaps the idea of promoting Basque identity to the world is one whose time has come.

BAKE SALES VERSUS BOND SALES

The birth of the Basque International Cultural Center originated with President Emilia Doyaga. The South Street Seaport area was selected for the future home of the international Basque center because of its promise for future expansion and also because of its location in the financial and cultural center of New York, where millions of visitors pass every year. Younger members have forgotten, but this is also a serendipitous “return” to the old neighborhood. The original Basque neighborhood of Water and Cherry Streets (now the Alfred Smith housing projects), Catherine, Madison, and St. James Place, was within a few hundred yards of the property at the South Street Seaport. Should the BICC come to fruition in this area, the Basques of

Basques and non-Basques participated in the inauguration of the Basque International Cultural Center at the South Street Seaport Seaman's Church Institute April 28, 2002.



New York would be building their new dream almost exactly on the same grounds where thousands of Basques lived, worshipped, shopped, sang and danced nearly a century ago.

Fundraising for the Cultural Center project has taken serious commitment, and as BICC Board Member and civil engineer Martin Fradua explained, “We need MILLIONS, not thousands. It is a lot of money I know, but we are asking people to make a pledge to the future of promoting Basque culture. We have to do it.” Fradua says that he preserves his Basque identity because he was born into it. Martin Fradua Jr. was born at home at 48 Cherry Street on the fourth floor, right above the first *Centro Vasco*, or Basque Center building. While Basques in the west have typically considered successful fundraisers to be those which raise five to six thousand dollars, and for others five to six hundred dollars, the New York activities for the future Center will have to create tens of thousands of dollars in profits at each event. Western Basques have not regularly utilized plans to approach foundations, corporations or estate planning, but these are precisely the New York Basques’ intentions. When Doyaga gave a brief update of the BICC plans at the February 2003 conference of the North



Marilu Echave Navas and Anna M. Renteria Aguirre, Board Members, take registration information for membership in the newly established Basque International Cultural Center. 2002.

American Basque Organizations, the Winnemucca, Nevada delegate Miguel “Mike” Olano whispered, “We’re lucky when we sell lots o’ pies and cookies after church and make a few hundred bucks.” Many Basques on the west coast, who also have established thirty-three Basque Centers, do not understand the concept of the BICC, nor the reasoning for promoting Basque culture to non-Basques. They more likely have restrictive membership rules and have activities that are closed to the public and only for members who must demonstrate ancestral and biological ties to the Basque Country- similar to the existing New York Basque organization, the Euzko-Etxea of New York.

The Basque International Cultural Center plan for raising money begins with individual donors and foundations giving support, with recognition publicly displayed on an artistic representation of the Tree of Gernika and the Historic Town Hall of Gernika, Bizkaia painted on the inside walls of the Center. People may choose to have themselves, a family member or friend, or a deceased loved one recognized and put their name on the wall or on a plaque. Depending on the amount of the donation, rooms, halls, and sections of the Center can be named or sponsored, and all contributions

are tax deductible. “Supporters” have given \$500 or more, “Patrons” are \$1000 or more, “Special Patrons” have donated \$5000 or more, “Benefactors” have given \$10,000 or more, “Special Benefactors” contributed \$25,000 or more, and “Founders” will commit \$50,000 or more to the project. Donors endowing larger amounts will have rooms, halls or sections named. By March 2003, more than fifty individuals or families had donated funds for the Basque International Cultural Center. The BICC Board is also visiting numerous foundations asking for financial support. Zachary Berhau, former President of the Euzko-Etxea of New York believes that perhaps selling bonds may be another successful avenue for raising funds, “You know, our grandparents sold bonds to build the old *Centro Vasco-Americano* at 48 Cherry Street, and people back then probably thought they were crazy. That was ninety years ago and they made it. Perhaps, we will too. Whatever we do, we need good business managers to help us make sound financial decisions.”

In the 1990s, the City of New York had plans for various renovation projects in Manhattan. The BICC wanted to buy property, or a building, whichever is the best opportunity, in the area of the South Street Seaport, Pier 17, and the historic Fulton Fish Market, which still functions as such. In 1998, the New York City Economic Development Corporation advertised their willingness to accept proposals for available properties in a competition to acquire real estate. The BICC board created a rushed, though incomplete proposal and submitted it “in order to get their comments and to learn as much as we could about the entire process.” Gloria Aberasturi, Enrike “Henry” Arana Jr., and Emilia Doyaga suggested to the Economic Development Corporation their idea to construct a cultural center. They presented their proposal to bring a spotlight to minority groups that are not well known, and because New York was the historical entry port for migration to the United States, they argued it was the perfect theme for land use approval. However, they were told they did not meet the suggested requirements. The area had been established as a retail center some years before; however that had failed.

The attack on the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, devastated the economy of New York City, and one of those casualties was real estate in lower Manhattan. The city now plans to entice new businesses and ventures to locate in this area, and to the South Street Seaport, which is also in this general vicinity, but according to Gloria Aberasturi, “Things are still in flux.” The BICC may actually save millions of dollars in real estate expenses because of the decline in the value of the property they wish to purchase. Interest rates are low, and it may be a good time to buy property for which the city is trying to give incentives. Once again, the BICC is currently attempting to convince the city to develop it as a cultural center with restaurants, shops, museums, and libraries, etc. Board member Enrike Arana thinks it is a good time to purchase because “New York will come back as it always has.”

“A CHALLENGE AND A DREAM”

At the first BICC Board meeting, participants decided that the name would be “Basque International Cultural Center” and according to Emilia Doyaga, the mission would be “to spread our culture on a global scale to Basques and non-Basques. We would offer services and activities that include Basque cuisine, history, art, language, sports, music and dance and more.” The members of the Board initially contributed the seed money to get started, and they are now an incorporated not-for-profit organization. “The 9/11 episode set us back somewhat because we had planned a fund raising reception at the South Street Seaport and the fallout from the bombing of the nearby Twin Towers closed off entry to the reception hall. So today we are concentrating on funding and location. We know that it will take time and that it will be a tough road to get the necessary funding, but we are encouraged by the response we have received,” claimed Doyaga. What happens if this attempt to establish a Basque international center for culture fails? Doyaga’s answer: “Someone else will pick it up later. It simply has to be done.”

The initial public reception for the kick-off of the Basque International Cultural Center was held at the Seamen’s Church Institute, located at the South Street Seaport Museum in Manhattan, on April 28, 2002. The impressive list of participants and talent included Iñaki Astondoa singing and playing his guitar “Gernikako Arbola”; Oskar Espina-Ruiz on clarinet and John Ehlis on txistu, mandolin and guitar playing a selection from Sorozabal’s composition “Eresi”; and author Mark Kurlansky’s impassioned speech requesting that attendees recognize the 67th anniversary of the bombing of Gernika during the Spanish Civil War, and urging support for the BICC to promote Basque identity and culture to the world. Singer Rebecca Copely performed a section of Guridi’s “Amaya”; Idaho’s Secretary of State, Pete T. Cenarrusa, and Idaho State Representative David Garmendia Bieter recorded a videotaped message appealing for support of the Idaho Memorial of 2002 to support peace in the Basque Country; Jorge Aguirre presented a slide show and information about the BICC plans, their mission, activities and funding etc.; Emilia Doyaga described a program to promote Basque art and explained an exhibition of works by Nisa Goiburu; and Dominique Villalba danced a welcoming “Auresku”. Guest Joe Arralde remembers, “I was so impressed with their plans. I had just moved to New York from Washington state where my contact with Basques was mostly historical and from my *abuelita’s* [grandmother’s] boarding house, and now, I am really excited to be a part of this great futuristic venture!” Attendees enjoyed gourmet Basque cuisine from five-star chef Iñaki Lete, and txakolin, an alcoholic apple cider, brought from the Basque provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. In a taste competition the Bizkaian brands won. “Now that was just a coincidence,” laughed Oscar Espina-Ruiz, a Bizkaian from Bilbao. “The labels were covered up, but it is true that most Basques here are Bizkaian, so maybe we just have it in our blood to recognize our own as the best?”

*Ainhoa Arteta,
of Tolosa, serves as an
Honorary Board Member of
the Basque International
Cultural Center.
She is an internationally
renowned soprano.*



The 2003 working Board of Directors included Gloria Aberasturi, Financial Vice President and Comptroller of a New York organization; Anna M. Aguirre, Assistant Vice President of Deutsche Bank of New York; Jorge Aguirre, President of a shipping company; Pierre Amestoy, restaurateur; Enrique Arana, consultant to a New York architectural firm; Dr. Emilia Doyaga, professor and administrator at New York City and New York University; Luis “Koitz” Foncillas Etxeberria, journalist and producer at MTV; Martin Fradua Jr., principal at a consulting firm of engineers; Marilu Navas, Assistant Principal at a Long Island school; and Ray Yturraspe, Vice President of Navigation Management Systems. Honorary BICC Board Members, in addition to Frank Gehry, include Ainhoa Arteta, of Tolosa, Gipuzkoa. The soprano has performed in lead roles at famous opera houses around the world, is a leading artist at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, and has performed at the White House where she was a favorite of President and Mrs. Clinton. Mark Kurlansky, a New Yorker, worked as a correspondent in Europe, where he covered Spain during the last years of the Franco dictatorship and the transition years. He authored *The Basque History of the World*, which became a Canadian and United States Best Seller and was translated into several other European languages. He also authored several other publi-

cations where he gives special attention to Basques and their culture in the publications *Cod*, *Salt*, and also in *Choice Cuts*. Kurlansky serves as a kind of unofficial celebrity spokesperson for the Basques and has written:

I regard the work I have done on the Basques to be among my best accomplishments. To make people aware of something little known and completely misunderstood, to be able to set the record straight on a maligned people, is as good a reason for writing as I can think of.... Today New York City is the cultural center of the world. Every culture has a presence in New York. And so, since the Basques have survived with their culture intact and flourishing, they need to have a presence in New York City that says, 'We are still here,' and more importantly, 'This is who we are- a people with a language, a literature, music, painters, and sculptors.' An age-old argument has been: Who speaks for the Basques? Let their writers and musicians and artists speak (BICC newsletter Vol. 1, Issue 2 fall 2002).

Ray Yturraspe recommended that it would be necessary to build a mailing list and commence sending out informational newsletters immediately, and once again, Anna Aguirre and Emilia Doyaga have tirelessly carried out the work with production and editing, copying and posting BICC bulletins. "There are so many Basques in New York that we don't even know about. It's difficult to find them and then to keep in touch with them. The first newsletter was issued in June 2002, stressing the importance of 'giving visibility to Basque identity, and our mission is to spread knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Basque culture,' and from there we have received a lot of interest," affirmed Aguirre. Much of that interest comes from latter generation Basques trying to find family histories, and the BICC is working with a genealogist from Berango, Bizkaia, to help Basques interested in researching their genealogies.

Several board members have traveled to Euskal Herria, the Basque Country, for personal business and pleasure and made a point to promote the ideas of the BICC to homeland politicians, businesses and non-governmental organizations. Though many Basques living in the seven provinces of the homeland do not understand the concept of a transnational multi-layered Basque identity, and perhaps even think of Basques in the diaspora as "not as Basque as" those living in the homeland, the BICC takes a leap into the actuality of a globalized transnational reality that is New York City. In 1993, Andoni Aguirre asked for the North American Basque Organizations to hold its annual summer convention in New York in 2013, commemorating the 100th year anniversary of the first Basque cultural organization in the United States, the *Centro Vasco-Americano*. That meeting could very well be at a new BICC. Andoni's daughter, Anna, who in addition to her bank employment and Basque volunteerism, is also a lecturer at New York University, stated her view of the situation as such: "We can't wait around for the world to go to *Euskal Herria* to discover Basque culture and who we are, so we'll bring *Euskal Herria* to the world, and we'll start with New York City."



Homeland and Basque

(01)

History Factors of Emigration

Basques have to make a tremendous effort to save our identity. Everything is against us. Other peoples like us have disappeared.

Julen Abio

What is this identity and culture that the supporters of the Basque International Cultural Center are attempting to bring to the world's attention? What exactly has the Basque community of New York worked to protect and promote for more than one hundred years? The story includes history and anthropology of the Basque Country from the last two millennia, Basque dispersion through centuries of emigration out of *Euskal Herria*, the Basque Country; Basque foral and traditional self-governance and battles for Basque autonomous status; contemporary Basque ethnonationalism as manifested during the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent Franco dictatorship; and a Basque diaspora of more than one hundred and ninety organizations in twenty-one different countries that continues to grow.

BASQUE ETHNICITY

Basques who are dispersed throughout the diaspora communities around the world tend to idealize their homeland as envisioned from parents' and grandparents' memories and myths. Centuries old whitewashed farmsteads with red tiled roofs

stand strong and sometimes defiant on the deep green hills and Pyrenees mountains. Elderly men, wearing widowers' black and gray, dress with black berets and walking sticks, and sit for hours in the church plaza in order to scrutinize the latest construction project. These images have not changed for centuries. The geographical borders of the seven provinces of *Euskal Herria* have helped to shelter it from invasion and infiltration by other cultures and military forces as well as provided a gateway to the rest of the world. The major physical border is the Bay of Biscay, a factor that has played an important role in the history of Basque maritime expertise, emigration, and has fostered the relative ease of mobility for the population. The Pyrenees' imposing peaks have until recently created communications barriers between the Basques themselves as the mountains separated the northern and southern provinces. The range also created a political barrier as the official state border set by France and Spain in 1512.

The Basque Country is small in both territory and population. The total population (which has the lowest per capita birth rate in the European Union) is nearly three million. In today's political terminology, when Basques refer to "the north", *Iparralde*, they are referring to the three provinces that are in France, "to the north" of what many see as an artificial political border. "In the south", *Hegoalde*, denotes all four provinces that lie in Spain. Because these are also administratively differentiated in the current Spanish state created with the Constitution of 1978, the Gernika Statutes of Autonomy passed in a 1979 referenda established that together, the provinces of Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Araba make up the Basque Autonomous Community of *Euskadi*. *Nafarroa*, or Navarre, has its own separate autonomous statutes negotiated between the *Diputación* of Navarre (executive branch) and the central government in Madrid, and also maintains a permanent right to join with the Basque Autonomous Community. These perimeters are a part of the political reality of today and have caused identity divisions in the Basque population in the homeland and in the diaspora as well. We will see that the New York "French Basques" and "Spanish Basques" did not share organizations or activities. Instead, they were often thought to be French, Italian, Puerto Rican, or Galician, but not Basque. Leonie Amestoy, who emigrated from Macaye, Lapurdi in 1918, was known as "Frenchie" by her friends, and John Bilbao, a dock boss in New York in the 1940s was always known as "Johnny Spanish". The skyscrapers of Manhattan were symbolic of the peaks of the Pyrenees.

Homeland and diaspora Basques refer to themselves as "*Euskaldunak*" or "speakers of *Euskera*", the Basque language. Despite five centuries of speculation by linguists and philologists, no studies have indicated a conclusive relationship between Basque and any other language (Michelena 1985; Tovar 1957). This makes *Euskera* unique among Western and Central European languages and is often pointed out by New York Basques as a sign of difference, and prestige. Although language has played a more symbolic role in ethnic identity in New York, diaspora and homeland Basques continue to utilize *Euskera* as one of the unifying factors of "Basqueness" because it was a common element of ancestors. Many of the interviewees were proud to use a

few phrases of Basque in our conversations, even if they were not fluent. “Something is always better than nothing,” according to the language teacher Karlos Iturralde. However, in the New York Basque diaspora, one does not have to speak the language to be defined and accepted as *Euskaldunak*; one must have Basque ancestry.

Ethnic claims to physiognomic distinctiveness are not specific to Basques, and certain features in physiological makeup point to uniqueness and are utilized in Basque nationalist rhetoric. Basques differ from their surrounding populations in their blood types, for example; they manifest the highest rate in any European population of the blood type O, and the lowest occurrence of blood type B. They also have the highest occurrence of any population in the world of the Rh-negative factor (Cavalli-Sforza and Cavalli-Sforza 1995). This evidence suggests the Basque people have remained, over a long period of time, a small and isolated breeding population (Irujo e Irujo interview 1997; Mar-Molinero 1996:8). These factors are salient because of their perceived importance to Basques themselves. They are elements used to argue that Basques are linguistically and biologically distinct from any other population, and therefore deserving of political recognition and status.

Basque collective memory includes the possibility of a history that stretches to cave populations and human occupation since the Stone Age (Caro Baroja 1958). Some authorities suggest that the Basques are the direct descendants of cave painters who created the sites at Lascaux and Santimamiñe. Skeptics place the modern Basques in the Pyrenees from approximately 5,000 to 3,000 B.C., well before the invasions of the Indo-European speaking tribes into Western Europe in the second millennium B.C. What is certain is that there are no recorded histories or information describing the Basques specifically until the Romans targeted the Iberian Peninsula and wrote that the Basque population was organized into small tribal units inhabiting the valleys of the western Pyrenees- and also beyond that according to later linguistic studies. They originally did not form a single civic unit and spoke a variety of tribal dialects of *Euskera* whose diversity persists to the present day. Although until recently Basques have believed otherwise, the latest scientific research demonstrates that the Basque territory was indeed subject to Roman administrative, political, and military domain until approximately the 4th century A.D., though doubts arise regarding the linguistic and cultural Romanization of the existing populations (Sayas Abengoechea 1999). The Christian religion was introduced into the Basque region during these Roman times, but it scarcely spread beyond the southern fringes of lower Araba and Navarre.

HOMELAND HISTORY

The debut of the Basques as a separate entity in the history of Western Europe follows the fall of the Roman Empire and the establishment of the Germanic kingdoms. The era’s chronicles describe the staunch resistance by Basques to the Visig-

othic powers in Toledo, and to the attempts at assimilation by the Franks from the north (ibid). The perseverance of the early Basque resistance through the seventh and eighth centuries again indicates that some manner of civic cooperation may have been established among these tribes.

Contemporary Spain arose from an unstable alliance of independent Christian kingdoms defending their interests from Islamic invaders. Unlike León, Aragon, and Catalonia, the new Castile had no previous political existence and was basically a product of the long *Reconquista* (718-1492). The historic Spanish kingdoms did not have their roots in Roman or Visigothic origins, but in the defensive reaction against Muslims in the early Middle Ages that led to the process of regaining lands. During the eighth century the independent and Christian populations in the northern sections of the peninsula began to coalesce around geography, ethnic identity, and prevailing politico-military pressures. Historians write that Basques in the area of Pamplona constituted a kingdom in the Middle Ages by the 8th century, and by the 12th century as a result of gradually joining other lands free of Muslim occupations (as were Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba) became to be known as the Kingdom of Navarre (Lacarra 1972). For the next years all of the Basque inhabited territory south of the Pyrenees recognized a single Basque political sovereignty for the first and last time in its history thus far. The centuries of political unification were ended in 1200 when the western Basque territories were militarily occupied by Alfonso VIII of Castile. From this point their development was tied to the powerful kingdom of Castile and their incorporation was interpreted as a bilateral pact, with Basque liberties protected as the status quo. Gradually, this democratic self-government of communities grew as recorded in the Basque *fueros*, or local, traditional, and customary laws and citizens' rights.

Basques emphasize that the three western territories' association with Castile was conditional on the crown's recognition of the local *fueros* and on the autonomy of each province. By the beginning of the modern age, Araba, Bizkaia, and Gipuzkoa possessed their own political system inside the Kingdom of Castile. There was universal nobility, personal and procedural or due process liberties, commercial freedoms, and exemptions from conscripted military service and from taxes. According to specialist Gregorio Monreal Zia, this political arrangement was protected by the mechanisms in which the foral authorities evaluated and accepted, or rejected, provisions and orders submitted by the Crown.

Homeland and New York Basques underscore the fact that the Basque territories retained their *fueros* and exemptions from crown regulations longer than any other region. The *fueros*, in what are today's seven provinces, played a role in establishing farther-reaching regional Basque identities, beyond that of connection with simply village or town. The Basques set themselves apart from the Castilian population and control because of this separate political structure, reinforced by their linguistic and ethno-cultural uniqueness. Simultaneously, because of the excess population in the

Basque region, Basques formed significant migrations and repopulated areas of Castile taken from the Moors and also served important functions in Castilian bureaucracy.

The Basque region entered advanced development during the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the growth of maritime and commercial activities. Later, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, using their independent diplomatic relations, they signed naval pacts with the English crown. The Bay of Biscay, and particularly Bizkaian shipping, dominated the peninsula's trade with northern ports in Europe. Basques combined the Nordic and Mediterranean traditions to produce advanced shipbuilding that allowed for heavier cargoes and longer voyages (Doyaga 1990:1). Selma Huxley Barkham has researched Basque whaling off the Labrador coast of Canada and excavated the remains of three Basque galleons, smaller boats and twelve Basque whaling ports along the coast. She has demonstrated that there was a thriving Basque whaling business in Labrador by 1500, and she argues that Basques very likely reached North America before Columbus (Huxley Barkham 1989). Their maritime expertise was especially necessary for the New World exploration, while at home in the interior of the Basque Country, the production of iron expanded and its operations moved into the river valleys for easier transport (Suárez Fernández 1959; García de Cortázar J.A. et al 1979). Christopher Columbus' flagship "Santa María" belonged to a Basque, Juan Vizcaíno Lacosa or Lacotza, who served as its pilot with many other Basque officers and crew.

Though the peninsula had been divided between the five Christian Kingdoms of Castile-León, Portugal, Aragon, Catalonia, and Navarre since the Middle Ages, between 1479 and 1512 these were united under the Trastámara-Habsburg dynasty, which created the Spanish monarchy, including Portugal in 1580. The Spanish-Habsburg state of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a pluralistic royal confederation composed of the kingdom of Castile-León and the three separate Basque provinces of Bizkaia, Araba, and Gipuzkoa that were associated with it; the kingdoms of Aragon, Navarre, and Valencia; and the principalities of Catalonia, and of the Balearic Islands. The business of colonization in the Americas was mainly a function of the Kingdom of Castile-Leon, which greatly advantaged the Basques because of the legal exclusion of the other kingdoms. The 1512 conquest of the Kingdom of Navarre and its incorporation into the political suprastructure of Castile-Leon granted the Navarrese the same privileges in the New World. At this time, most of the political and economic attention was turned to the colonies and the opportunities and problems presented by their administration. The Basque Country was oriented toward the Americas and in providing maritime expertise in shipbuilding and navigation, and a Basque bureaucratic bourgeoisie developed within the organs of the central government and in colonial administrative posts. Basques were present in every colonial administration and more often than not, were leaders in commerce, politics, and religious activities.

The sixteenth century was a period of continually expanding economy and social change in the Basque provinces. Throughout Bizkaia (1526) and Gipuzkoa (1610) the struggle had been won for royal recognition of the “noble” status of *all* their native inhabitants, and today each family’s Coat of Arms is available at the Town Hall of Gernika. Every person would enjoy equality before the law and freedom from most common taxes (Kamen 1983:226). The integration of the Basques into the Spanish monarchy entered a crisis at the beginning of the 18th century with a change of dynasty. The Bourbons consolidated the Spanish crown, and, following the French tradition, unified it by dismantling the confederal structure. They implanted a centralized state system with a single Cortes, or legislature, and ministers whose powers extended over all territories. Nevertheless, once again there remained an exception to the unification: the four Basque territories. The *fueros* of the four territories remained valid and were enforced. This maintained the political differentiation of *Vasconia*, the Latin term used to refer to the Basque Country.

The Basque presence in Madrid, the Philippines, and in the South American colonies continued to be significant in the 18th century. The creation of the Guipuzcoan Company of Caracas demonstrated the great Basque mercantile society involved in the colonization of Venezuela, and the Consulate of Bilbao produced the Ordinances that served as the model for commercial trade in all of Spain and in all of the Americas. The cultural influence of the Basques in the colonial diaspora extended throughout the new territories, and the Royal Basque Society of the Friends of the Basque Country, initiated in 1765, had hundreds of illustrious Basque members throughout the Americas and also a branch in Madrid.

In 1808, the influence of elite Basques in the New World was also pointed out to the French. Napoleon had gained control of the Iberian Peninsula that year and had decided to endow Spain with a new constitution. He planned to submit the text and amendments to a reunion of the Assembly of Notables in Baiona, or Bayonne, in the province of Lapurdi. The attending representatives of the Basque territories in France reminded the Emperor that the four Basque territories in Spain already had their own constitutions and therefore should be exempt from the new Charter developed for Spain. They reminded Napoleon that Basques from the four provinces controlled the colonial administration in the New World, and that these people could be decisive in the emancipation and independence of the American territories if Napoleon deprived their homeland of its original historical constitutions, or *fueros* (Monreal Zia interview 2000). After the final incorporation by the French monarchy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the northern Basque provinces retained their local privileges and governmental structures to almost as great a degree as did the southern four. Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa, and Xuberoa had representative assemblies, elected town mayors, and also had the codified *fors*, or *fueros*, of customary laws and citizen privileges. For Basques from *Iparralde*, the notion of a common history through self-government and representative politics is potent, and Basques see this as another link connecting north and south.

DEPARTING EUSKAL HERRIA

In the Basque case, the political, economic, and social factors of migration are numerous; they are epoch-specific, and person-specific. This work utilizes the academic term “diaspora” in reference to Basque populations living outside their homeland as used in sociology, political science, psychology, and anthropology. When differentiating “diaspora” populations from “immigrant groups” academics specifically look for maintained networks of exchange, and an ethnic consciousness that spans temporal and spatial constraints. Throughout the centuries, one can trace the expansion of the Basques from a homeland territory in search of work, trade, or to further colonial pursuits as they did since the Middle Age’s “Reconquista” to fight back the Muslims of Al-Andalus (Andalusia). Many Basques left the north and colonized southern regions of today’s Spain leaving towns called Bäscones, and Villabäscones, in Castille. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, colonies of Basque merchants were located in cities and ports, especially in Seville, where their commercial networks were essential to Basque participation in the conquest of the Americas. Maritime whaling expeditions brought Basques to the coasts of Newfoundland where we know of indigenous peoples who have Basque words in their vocabulary. Basques consistently helped each other and created networks of other Basques to fill most every need of their life in the new society (Totoricagüena 2003 “Identity”).

Until the beginning of the 1800s, trade, and military and religious conquests were the reasons for Basque emigration, an emigration that took place both inside the Basque trans-Kingdom of Navarre and later inside the framework of the Hispanic empire. Basque emigration to the Americas and the Philippines was the transfer of the skilled and influential elite from an imperial country and its regions to its colonies- a colonial diaspora. The third phase of Basque emigration was as part of a European wave of mobilization to the former colonies in the Americas, a transfer of people who were economically and/or politically oppressed. The Basque community in New York resulted from this political and economic emigration. Yet the act of immigration itself was not necessarily inconsequential and could lead to a worse fate.

In 1793, there were hundreds of death penalties pronounced in Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa, and Xuberoa for “complicity in illegal immigration or correspondence with Basque priests in exile (Jacob 1985:83). Basques were deprived of their lands and livestock, were interned in camps by revolutionary officials, and suffered forced deportation while being accused of treason with Spain (Jacob 1994:33-35). Napoleon’s rise to power and push to conquer the Iberian Peninsula resulted in several wars being fought in the Basque Country, with Basques themselves being recruited and conscripted by both sides. From the north side of the Basque Country in France, it is estimated that between 1832 and 1907 the provinces of Zuberoa and Behe Nafarroa lost between twenty and twenty-five percent of their total population to emigration. The entire population growth in the French Basque Country for the last half of the

nineteenth century was completely cancelled by emigration (Jacob 1994:46). A part of this exodus headed to New York. For example, in 1874, the steamship Lafayette embarked from Le Havre, near Paris, and voyaged to New York with the Amestoy family: Mrs. Marie Amestoy, Jean Amestoy, Antoine Amestoy, J.B. Amestoy, Jules Amestoy, Louisa Amestoy, and also the Aguerre, Haizaguerre, Daguerre, Arraimbide, Hirigoyen, and Etchepare families.

Gabrielle Bidegain Amestoy, centenarian born in Macaye, Lapurdi in 1902, remembers that in other cases, Basques living on the border acted as smugglers and helped fellow Basques from Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa, and Xuberoa escape the French authorities by camouflaging them inside of hay wagons and taking them into Spain. She explained, “Basques deserting the French army escaped to the south, you know,

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO BE GIVEN TO
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

No. 4224864

CITIZENSHIP

Petition No. 275294

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age 36 *years sex* female *color* white
complexion fair *color of eyes* brown *color of hair* dk brown *height* 5 feet 1 *inches*
weight 135 *pounds visible distinctive marks* none
Marital status married *former nationality* France

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

ORIGINAL

Gabrielle Amestoy Canaff
(Complete and true signature of holder)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Best known to Gabrielle Amestoy Canaff
then residing at 350 East 67th St. New York NY
having petitioned to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, and at
a term of the District Court of The United States
 New York City *held pursuant to law of*
 March 28th 1938
the court having found that the petitioner intended to reside permanently in the
United States, had in all respects complied with the Naturalization Laws of the United
States in such case applicable, and was entitled to be so admitted the court thereupon
entered that the petitioner be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.
In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 28th
day of March *in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and*
 and 38 68nd

Charles Weiser
 Clerk of the U. S. District Court.
 By *W. C. ...* Deputy Clerk.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Gabrielle Bidegain Amestoy, born in 1902 in Macaye, Lapurdi, emigrated to Milltown, New Jersey to join her sister Marianne “Marie” Amestoy Noguere in 1918.

crossing the Spanish border and into the southern Basque provinces and then from there they attempted to get to England. They were smuggled across the border by Basques from Navarre. Then they would get messages back to their families that they were safe. I remember one time a neighbor got the message from an unknown Basque from Nafarroa, ‘The cart of wheat has arrived safely,’ which told the parents-whose baserri [farmstead] grew wheat- that their boy had arrived to England.” There was a small colony of Basques living in Liverpool, England and several continued their migration experience with another move to New York, as did Carlos Goenaga in 1881 and W. Borda in 1882, and Juan Cruz Aguirre in 1903.

Evading the mandatory service to the Spanish military was also a reason for leaving the country. On the southern side, in the Carlist Wars of the 1830s and again of the 1870s, Basques fought on the losing sides- both times- and then endured the war reparations. In between wars, they suffered a corn crop failure and the famine of 1846-1847. South America’s newly independent states encouraged immigration to Uruguay and Argentina with more than twenty-five travel agencies in the Basque provinces alone and free land and free passage were especially enticing packages for Basque families to emigrate together and settle permanently. Zachary Berhau’s grandfather left St. Jean-de-Luz for Montevideo in the 1880s with this very plan, and then in 1906, his son migrated, this time to New York.

This constant massive emigration created social problems in Basque society such as lack of youth and laborers, and especially lack of males for marriage, and fatherless families. It significantly affected the roles of women in a society with scarce men, and single parenting is by no means a new phenomenon in the Basque Country. When Jean Amestoy returned to Macaye, in the 1880s, after twenty years in Montevideo, Uruguay, he was forty-four years old. Perhaps the lack of eligible younger suitors helped him convince the seventeen-year-old Catherine Bidegain to marry him. Countless families were divided between continents, such as siblings Valentín Irusta in New York and his brother, Eluterio, in Venezuela, and the Rufino Lopategui family with son John in Sao Paulo, Brazil, daughter Marie in Bilbao, and daughter Josephine in New York. Angel Bidasolo Zuluaga emigrated to New York, brother Hilario stayed in Ibarangelua, Bizkaia, brother Vicente left to Argentina, and brother Ricardo, departed for “somewhere in South America, we don’t know for sure, but maybe Venezuela” and no one from the family ever heard from him again. In other cases, father and sons left their wives and mothers to “make it big in America”. Inocencia Arana stayed in Oñati, Gipuzkoa alone and never came to New York once, though her husband and son lived in New York for decades.

By the late 1800s, Basque seamen from Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa were quite familiar with the ports of New York and the eastern seaboard of the United States as a result of their constant commerce in the Americas. Many Basque seamen from Latin American countries had also frequently visited the ports of Norfolk, Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and New Jersey. Those Basques interested in immigrating and settling

to work in the United States were most likely to choose the west coast because of the initial California gold rush of 1849. They departed the South American capitals and the vast stretches of farmland in the pampas and traveled by ship up the Pacific Coast line to reach California. Before the Transcontinental Railroad connected the east and west coasts of the United States in 1869, Basques migrating directly from Euskal Herria endured weeks of crossing the oceans and trailing the coasts of Central and South America on the Atlantic and then continuing past the Strait of Magellan and round the Cape Horn before heading north past the coasts of Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, past Central America and Mexico to finally reach their destination of California. It was dangerous, expensive, and what must have seemed like a never-ending voyage.

It is often forgotten that “the trip” from the Basque Country to the United States was not only the crossing of the Atlantic, but actually began days earlier with travel by horse or train from a rural town to the cities of Bilbao, Donostia-San Sebastián, Biarritz or Baiona. Another entire day would include a train trip north to the French ports of Bordeaux or Le Havre. There, emigrants waited additional days completing paperwork and eventually boarded a passenger ship if they were lucky or wealthy, and a cargo ship if they were not. The journey for most Basques at the beginning of the 1900s was lengthy and frightening. Crossing the Atlantic could take anywhere from fourteen to thirty days depending on the itinerary, weather and storms, and the type of ship traveling. Hundreds of interviewed Basque immigrants remember the fear of the voyage and the seasickness they experienced, and advancing the last miles to the entrance of the port of New York was overwhelming for many. It also augmented a new fear of the metropolis, which was far beyond the stature any of them could have ever imagined from their experiences in the rural Basque Country.

The Transcontinental Railroad’s tracks were at last united at Promontory Point, Utah in 1869, greatly facilitating the journey west. Now, Basques could make a fifteen day voyage across the ocean to the east coast of the United States, and then continue on by rail across the continent with a much safer, faster and cheaper arrival. Numerous Basques in California, Idaho and Nevada have mentioned in interviews that they do not believe their parents would have made the trip west had it not been for the possibility of moving by train once they had reached New York. “Going to America in those days was like going to Mars,” one woman mentioned. The first settlements of numerous Basques to the United States east coast followed this construction of the Transcontinental Railroad because this brought immigrants to the port of New York where they disembarked and then continued on with their direct movement by rail to the west. Many of those first waves of Basque immigrants to New York did have plans to continue west, but instead found employment in the ports of New York and New Jersey, and a few had reached the end of their tolerance for traveling and simply refused to move any further.

ARRIVAL TO NEW YORK

The concepts raised in Emma Lazarus' 1883 poem in honor of the Statue of Liberty were hypnotic for Basque immigrants and their descendents:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glowes world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor;
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The "golden door" in reality was the opportunity of hard work and self-reliance for economic advancement, and most Basques were quite accustomed to hard work. Emigrants arriving in New York between 1855-1890 were processed at Castle Garden as were eight million other arrivals. Ellis Island officially opened as an immigrant processing station in 1892 and remained active until the 1924 National Origins Act was passed by Congress, which allowed potential immigrants to undergo their inspections before they left their country of origin. There were medical inspections, literacy tests, and hearings from a Board of Special Inquiry for those who were detained at the island. In 1900 alone, 3,500 people died at Ellis Island, including 1,400 children. Unescorted women and children were detained until their "safety" was assured by the arrival of a relative, a pre-paid ticket, or the arrival of a letter or telegram from a trusted official regarding their financial ability to care for their costs. There were various other tests immigrants had to pass such as drawing a diamond shape. Officials watched the person pick up the pencil and looked at the grip and the manner in which the person positioned the pencil with their fingers and thumb. The test was actually to measure if the candidate held the pencil correctly as if to write words, which supposedly inferred some level of education. Persons with physical deformities, sickness, or disease could be refused entry and sent back to their countries, and not surprisingly, there were also suicides at Ellis Island. Inspectors worked from 7am-7pm, seven days a week, and generally questioned and inspected four hundred to five hundred immigrants each day (Totonicagüena 2002).

Others preferred to take a chance elsewhere with entry to the United States and "jumped ship", by simply walking off their military vessels or Merchant Marine ships after they docked for unloading. Seamen were allowed special passes and time in



The Statue of Liberty, gifted to the United States by the Republic of France, was inaugurated in New York in 1886.

port cities and then reported back to their ships for sleeping, although many never returned to report in to their Captains. At the beginning of the 1900s, Melchor Rentería, a sixteen year old from Bakio, Bizkaia, jumped ship in Philadelphia “with a trunk on his back and thirty cents in his pocket” (Doyaga 1983:73). He traveled to New York and eventually specialized in the restaurant business, operating successful establishments in Harlem and on Madison Avenue in Manhattan. Esteban Aspiazu, born in Gernika, Bizkaia, in 1902, jumped ship in Baltimore in 1920. He was working on a merchant ship as a chef’s assistant and general kitchen helper, and after entering port he simply walked off the boat and never returned.

Angel Bidasolo Zuluaga, born 1899 in Ibarangelua, Bizkaia, commonly used his mother’s last name because he had also jumped ship to get into the USA. Angel illegally left his ship in Philadelphia in his early 20s and continued on to New York because he knew there were Basques there. He had seamen friends who had already visited or lived in New York and he had contacts in the city. He eventually lived in the Migues Colon boardinghouse in White Plains, New York with Victor Bezañes from Ea, Bizkaia. He also met his future wife, Helen Migues-- the granddaughter of the boardinghouse owner. Most of the boarders were Galician, or Basques, from both northern and southern provinces, and Angel and Helen’s son, Manny, remembers that French, Spanish, and Basque were all spoken when he was growing up at the boarding house. Angel worked as a chef in a restaurant in Brooklyn and later at the Commodore Vanderbilt near Grand Central Station, but after years of evading the immigration authorities, eventually he had trouble with the United States government intending to deport him. At the deportation court proceedings his young child, Manny, was asked if he wanted to live with his father in Spain or with his mother in White Plains. “Well I couldn’t even believe the Judge was asking me such a stupid thing,” exclaimed Manny Zuluaga years later. “My parents loved each other and wanted to live together, and I wanted to live together with both of them. I had no idea what he was talking about, so of course I gave him an honest eight-year-old’s answer, ‘I want to live with both of them, and I want to live here.’ And I guess the guy finally understood the gravity of what he was about to do to us. He let my father stay.”

Between 1897 and 1902, there were 636 persons with definite Basque surnames that entered the country through the immigration offices in New York. Eighty-six percent were male and seventy-seven percent were single. There most likely were many other Basques who also entered but were not counted in the 636 because their surnames were not so obviously recognizable and their hometowns were not recorded. They were simply listed as “French”, or as “Spanish.” We do not know if these people stayed permanently because there are no centralized records for out-migration of those leaving the United States. It is possible that like the M.J. Aspillaga family returning to Le Havre on *La Bretagne* with all of their goods in 1890, other Basques also likely left New York and returned to the Basque Country.

The years between 1900 and 1914 registered the largest European migration to the U.S. in history, and Basques participated in this movement. Those Basques with formal education, commerce, or urban backgrounds were more likely to emigrate to the Philippines, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela, or Mexico where their Spanish language skills helped them participate immediately in their host country economy and culture. However, for those with agricultural skills, or the undereducated, their choice of destination was not greatly affected by language ability because they thought that their employment in the new host society would continue to be in agriculture. In the Basque Country, most occupations, regardless, were family affairs for centuries, and in those times they believed they would be doing the same things for future generations no matter where they lived. Ambrosio Goikoetxea, born in Biasteri, or Laguardia, Araba, recalls, “The Goikoetxea’s were the carpenters for the entire town and the region. Until he emigrated, my father was a carpenter. My grandfather was a carpenter. Our family had been in that business for generations. For many, many generations.” Upon arrival though, Basques realized that they could learn new languages and new skills, and that the opportunities in the city were expansive and doors opened to honest, responsible and hard-working immigrants, regardless of English language ability.

Chain migration theories argue that social and familial networks play a significant part in migration destination decision-making and this helps explain Basque patterns of settlement in New York. Gabrielle Amestoy’s father, Jean Amestoy, died in 1917, leaving his young wife Catherine with three daughters in Argentina, one daughter Marianne and husband Joseph Noguere in Cuba and about to move to Milltown, New Jersey, and six children in Macaye. At this time, Catherine’s son, Eugene, was drafted into the French army but was talking about deserting to go to California and work in the sheep business. However, if Eugene did indeed desert the army, the entire family would have been punished, and none allowed to leave the Basque Country legally. Marianne had written to invite her sister Leonie to the United States to help care for her son. All of these circumstances converged to force Catherine to make a monumental decision to sell all of the family’s possessions and to take all of the remaining children to Milltown, New Jersey. The Bidegain Amestoy family held an auction in 1918, and Gabrielle watched as “so many people from our mountains and valleys” made bids and “years and years of all of the family’s possessions were auctioned off on a Sunday afternoon.” A few months later they boarded a ship for New York. The Bidegain Amestoy family’s trip to the United States was on a ship full of soldiers, and they were the only family aboard. French, Belgian, and United States soldiers were on their way to the United States to practice military operations. “We were only children when we left and we didn’t understand that we were leaving forever! We had new clothes made and my mother had new suits made and we even had fancy walking canes. I had a beautiful white linen and lace dress with a blue ribbon tying the waist, and Leonie had a yellow dress with pink flowers and ribbons.” Mari-



Leonie Bidegain Amestoy, one of ten children born to Catherine Bidegain and Jean Amestoy, emigrated from Macaye, Lapurdi with her family in 1918 to join her sister Marianne “Marie” Amestoy Noguere.

anne and Joseph Noguere had written to invite her one sister to come and help care for their newborn, but instead received her large family.

Families called for relatives; fathers called for sons, wives joined husbands, and villagers trailed fellow villagers. Angel Viña was sixteen when he returned to New York in 1930 to meet his father for the first time since infancy. He “traveled in third class because in first and second class, passengers were expected to change clothes and dress formally for dinner,” but Angel had only one suit, so his mother had to buy him a third class ticket. The ship had many Basque shepherders going west and he spent the days with the other Basques. When he arrived in New York, “they threw off the ship my two large *maletas de cartón* [cardboard suitcases], my *alpargatas* [traditional hand-sewn shoes with a rope sole] and my *boina* [beret] and the other two thousand passengers unloaded after me. I had about thirty cents in U.S. coins.” Homeland Basques knew about remittances to families in their areas and could see the construction of farmsteads, churches, and improvements in agricultural equipment as results of those remittances from America. Friends of the relatives of Esteban Aspiazu from Gernika might have known that he regularly sent money to his

brothers and sisters, or in Bakio, Bizkaia, neighbors of the Renteria family saw boxes of used clothing and household items being sent from Eugenia Renteria Sarriguarte.

Though several specialists argue that access to information was critical in the selection of the destination, I argue that *mis*information was equally influential. Emigrants were likely to send only good news home, not wanting to worry their family members. Basques who could afford photography sent images of themselves in suits and tailored garments, the women in feathered hats and silk gloves. The majority of Basques in the home provinces had no such clothing, and the photographic sites of tall buildings and manicured parks with landscaping was one of modernity—the opposite of the Basque countryside and fishing villages. Modernity was equated to good and desirable. Felix Amestoy returned to Macaye and built a villa named the “New York”, which demonstrated his accumulated wealth from having emigrated. Escolástico Uriona returned to Busturia, Bizkaia from his years in New York in the early 1920s with enough money to build “a magnificent home” in Canene near Busturia. These were examples to those who had stayed that it was very possible to leave, strike it rich, and indeed return to the Basque Country. Uriona was the example for the entire town, and also for later generations. It seems they blocked out the much higher numbers of emigrants who never returned. They also likely did not know that photography studios often had fancy clothing for people to use for the photographs (they did not notice the tattered shoes which did belong to the subjects), or that inside those tall buildings of New York entire families were crammed into three room apartments.

Missing from the letters sent home was information regarding the expensive cost of living, the stresses of urban life, and the reality of twelve to fifteen hour workdays. Adjusting to the city life of immigrants included changes to hygiene and health, and exposure to diseases with which Basques had never had contact. Mortality rates ranged with the ethnic neighborhood. José Achabal and Laureana Barainca married in the 1880s in Ea, Bizkaia, and immigrated to New York together, where José worked on the piers as a watchman. They had nine children, four of whom survived to adulthood.

Basques immigrating to New York not only endured the frustrations of changing from one continent to another, but also from changing from an underdeveloped to modern lifestyle. For example, many Basques had never experienced, seen, or even heard of, natural gaslight or gas jets, gas cooking, or gas heating while in the Basque Country. They had only known kerosene lamps for lighting. They did not understand that to turn off the light, one did not blow out the fire, but instead needed to turn off the gas spigot and completely stop the flow of natural gas into the room. Two young Basques, newcomers to New York City with dreams of building their economic futures and remitting savings to their families, were casualties to their own innocence. After surviving the arduous ocean crossing and immigration acceptance, and settling in to their Basque boarding house bedroom, they blew out the fire of their lamp and re-

tired to bed for their first night in America. They were found dead the next morning of asphyxiation. One can only imagine the difficulties of wording the letters written by the Basque boarding house owner to the families of these boys, and one most likely cannot imagine the families' disbelief and anguish at receiving such a notification.

Though most Basques that stayed in New York did find work and adapt to their life in the city, several members of the Basque community decided to move out west and try their luck at sheepherding, ranching, and mining. Hundreds of other young Basque men traveled through New York and stayed one or two nights at the Basque boarding houses before moving on to Idaho, Nevada, California, and to a lesser degree, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Lily Aguirre Fradua maintains strong ties to her cousins in Oroville, Washington who are "real cowboys" living on the ranch her uncle Victor Lezamiz established in the 1920s after staying in the east briefly. Basques who resided in New York knew there were job opportunities in the west, and several were aided in their decisions to depart by the fear of conscription into the United States Army for World War I. Many immigrants were mobile and experienced numerous moves and different employment such as Agustin Mendezona, born in Lekeitio in 1894. In 1911 though his two sisters stayed in New York, he departed for Boise, Idaho, where he worked in construction on the Arrow Rock Dam for six years. In 1917 he moved to Butte, Montana, where he married Eustaquia (also originally from Lekeitio) and he worked in the copper mines. In 1924 they moved with their three children to Brooklyn Heights, New York, where Agustin worked in construction and later got a job working at the Sucrest Sugar Refinery with his brother-in-law Joe Gainsa. Gainsa married Agustin's sister Margie Mendezona, and Reggie Mendezona married Mario Arazosa in New York. In the late 1920s, Alberto Uriarte and his brother Angel immigrated together to the United States. Alberto stayed in New York and Angel moved on to Boise, Idaho. During the next decades they never once met again until they got to see each other briefly at Kennedy Airport while Angel, traveling from Boise, waited for his flight from New York to Madrid. It was 1976, and almost fifty years had passed since their previous goodbye.

"MODERN" DAY EUSKAL HERRIA OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

For many women, leaving the family farm and its never-ending commitment to non-stop work with animals, gardens, fruit trees, hauling water for the *baserri* etc., immigrating to New York City was actually quite liberating. Living in the most modern of societies meant conveniences of gas stoves, washing machines for laundry, and numerous electrodomestics. Eugenia Renteria Sarriugarte credited the gas stove as the most attractive factor that kept her in the United States after her arrival in 1922. When her husband, Marcus Sarriugarte, passed away in 1929, she was advised repeatedly and urged by her family to return to her home in Bakio, Bizkaia with her

daughters, Mari and Emilia, ages six, and four. However, she specifically mentioned that her decision to remain by herself and single parent her daughters in New York City was influenced by her refusal to go back to a “cumbersome wood and coal stove.” She had grown accustomed to the household conveniences of indoor plumbing and instant running water, assured electricity and natural gas. She sought employment and earned her living as a housekeeper often cleaning six days a week, ten hours every day, for her numerous Irish and English customers. She wanted a meaningful education for her daughters, and Emilia and Mari were enrolled and cared for at the Bay Ridge Nursery in Brooklyn, where they received the highest quality care and educational instruction, and were read to in English everyday. Emilia Sarriguarte Doyaga, Ph.D., has never forgotten the exemplary encouragement she received at Bay Ridge, and still in 2003, she returns regularly to the same day care facility to volunteer and read to the children.

In the first half of the 1900s, a formal education in the Basque Country was a luxury. Classes usually included a heavy dose of Catholic religion, were taught in Spanish with curriculum glorifying Spain, and *Iparralde* experienced the same in French with the same objectives from Paris. Most classes were segregated by gender. The quality varied radically, and often children did not finish more than a few years of formal education. Luis Amesti, born 1936 in Ibarangelua, Bizkaia, attended school until he was twelve years old and then was needed to work on the farm helping his father. At twelve years of age, Amesti was “responsible for the corn, the wheat, three cows, and a few bulls.” Leonie Amestoy was educated in Macaye during the late 1890s and early 1900s and her great-niece, New York poet Suzanne Noguere, has kept Leonie’s embroidery samples from her primary school in Lapurdi. They are the workbooks of an artisan. In *Euskera*, schoolgirls embroidered the words, “Work, Pray, Sing” into their handkerchiefs, and daily school lessons for the girls involved hours of painstakingly stitching through fantastic patterns and designs. Young girls from five to eleven years old created and copied fine artisanship and crafts, fashioned clothing patterns, and designed dresses, curtains, and tablecloths. Leonie’s sister, Gabrielle, remembered, “Everyday we practiced for more than an hour. We learned to make beautiful quilts for the beds -and socks- oh, you should have seen the socks we made.” Gabrielle was not allowed to finish her education and earn her primary diploma. Her mother took her out of school to have her work on the family farm. “We had a field of fruit trees with peaches, cherries, pears, apples, and we had grape vines and we made our own wine and cider at home. We made *piketa* [a sweet fruit drink] right at home.” At age eight or nine, Gabrielle led the oxen for plowing “with a big *makilla*,” or stick, and her brother directed by pulling the reins from behind. In the early 1900s, a formal education for a female was not thought necessary, but her extra hands at the *baserri* were definitely needed.

José Ramón Cengotitabengoa, born in Zaldibar, Bizkaia in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War, asserted, “Primary school was really bad at that time because it was during the fascist regime. And so, coming from the farm to the village we had to

learn to speak in Spanish, and we even had to sing the Spanish national anthem *Cara al Sol* on the very first day. I had to learn it immediately. That experience was very bad –really- very, very bad. School was separated by sexes from seven to fifteen years old, and all boys in the same class. The girls were all together in a different class, but there was only one teacher for all of us. The teachers were all quite bad, they only taught in Spanish, and we could not speak Basque because it was not allowed.” Later, he found a different school managed by the Jesuits, though not a seminary. It was in Tudela, Navarre and the academic preparation was excellent. Cengotibengoa went on to become an engineer. Andoni Aguirre was born in Manila in 1921, and sent to Madrid for his early education, but “hated it.” His parents then enrolled him in the famous Capuchin Monks’ school of Lecaroz in Elizondo, Navarre where he also learned to play txistu and to dance the traditional Basque dances. This school was one of the pillars of Basque culture and housed the most recognized master teachers such as Father Donostia and Father Jorge de Riezo. Lecaroz finished its glorious history in education in 2003 when the doors were permanently closed.

During the elected Spanish government of the Second Republic (1931-1936), Basque nationalists demanded and worked almost exclusively for a Statute of Autonomy. By 1936, Basque nationalism had become the most powerful political force in Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa by attracting support from both the rural traditionalists and the local bourgeoisie for a conservative middle-class program. Electoral results and outcomes of the referenda for the approval of the drafts of the Statutes of Autonomy demonstrate that there was no great support in Araba, or in Navarre. The Statutes were first presented to the Spanish Parliament in 1931, and by October 1936 they had approved a fourth draft, which did not include Navarre. However, by this time the Spanish Civil War had begun.

Diasporas are conceptualized as groups of people who have experienced traumatic expulsions and dispersals from their original homeland as a result of war, famine, poverty, and political persecution. The greatest number of diaspora Basques around the world who are living emigrants themselves, left the Basque Country in the 1930s, immediately before, during, or after the Spanish Civil War. Their perceptions of what they lived through, passed on to their children and grandchildren, have prominently influenced the diaspora communities that received this phase of Basque emigration. Though the emigrants may not recall the historical facts correctly, what is pertinent are the emotions, attitudes, and opinions that correlate with diaspora rhetoric of traumatic dispersal; collective memory of ills to the Basque population; solidarity with co-ethnics in the homeland and in the diaspora; an enriched ethnic life in the host society, and a maintenance of links with the homeland.

Displacement from rural society, changing urban society, unemployment, unrest, labor strikes, arrests and imprisonments related to a lack of civil rights, all preceded the cataclysm of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). None of the previous battles with the central government over the *fueros* could prepare the southern Basque Country

for the repercussions of the aftermath of fighting to preserve an elected republican form of government, nor had *Iparralde* ever received such a profuse influx of exiles requiring immediate aid. Urban and rural dwellers, widowed mothers and children, orphaned teenagers, and Republican soldiers -thousands who had the connections and the means to escape the political and military crush- did so. Most evacuated initially to France, where Basques from the north took care of almost 150,000 refugees from the south. War refugees then chose their final destinations usually based upon family ties to regions in the New World or information they had obtained from family and village networks. Many stayed permanently in Lapurdi and Behe Nafarroa. Mario de Salegi, a New Yorker who escaped the Franco terror, stated, "All Basques owe an incredible debt of gratitude to our brothers in the north for how they saved lives. What they did was an incredible human sacrifice- for almost each home to bring in strangers and all they cared about was that the person was Basque. No questions, just come inside and we will help you. And they gave everything they had and took from their own children to share with the others. We were all Basques."

Once the Spanish Civil War commenced, Italy immediately sent men, air power, and one billion lira to the Franco forces (N. MacDonald 1987, 36); additionally, the German Condor Legion was used for air raids and in the destruction of Durango, Gernika, Bilbao, and Santander. The United Kingdom, France, and the United States declared neutrality and gave no aid to the democratic government of the Republic, necessitating reliance on munitions purchased from the Soviet Union. Diaspora Basques recalled how they sent financial aid home to their families, and in the majority of communities in Argentina, Uruguay, and the United States, Basque interviewees could recall at least a few men from their areas who had returned to Euskal Herria to fight with the Republicans (Totoricagüena 2003 "Identity").

This civil war was not only a delineated conflict between two political ideas; it was also a civil war between Basques in the four provinces, and siblings fought against each other, and sons fought against their fathers. On October 1, 1936, the Spanish Republican Parliament approved the Basque autonomy statute, which established an autonomous regional government for the three provinces of Araba, Bizkaia, and Gipuzkoa, although all that remained free at this point was Bizkaia and a section of Gipuzkoa. The *Lehendakari*, or President, of the new Basque government was elected by municipal councils, and the unanimous choice was José Antonio de Aguirre y Lecube. Basque nationalists were divided in support of the autonomy statute, and many perceived it as a sell-out to the Spanish government because of the lack of a clear total independence. When Aguirre swore his oath of office under the traditional Tree of Gernika, as Basque representatives of fueroist governments had done for centuries before him, many onlookers jeered and protested for independence (Payne 1975, 179).

The war in the north of Spain entailed Basque nationalists, leftists, and elected Republican government supporters, fighting against other Basques, Spaniards, Ger-

The President of the Basque Government, the Lehendakari, Jose Antonio de Aguirre y Lecube, led his political administration from exile in Paris, New York, then returned to Paris in 1946 until his death in 1960.



mans, and Italians. On 26 April 1937, the most famous incident of the war occurred when General Franco approved the German saturation bombing and partial razing of the historic foral center of *Gernika*. Worldwide condemnation of this deliberate bombing of civilians, and subsequently the Catalan Pablo Picasso's painting "Guer-nica", demonstrated the horrors suffered in this war. There is a commonly repeated story regarding Picasso's exhibition of his work at the World's Fair in Paris, and when a German soldier snickered at the cubism and asked him "Did you do this?" Picasso answered, "No. You did this." Because the entire town of Gernika was destroyed, except for the church, the parliament building, and the Tree of Gernika where representatives had met for almost one thousand years, Basques have promulgated as a part of the common history and Basque myth that the symbolism of Basque nationalism, history, and identity can never be eliminated. Tree of Gernika symbols, posters, paintings, and sculptures decorate the New York Basque center, restaurants, and homes.

An estimated 30,000 children were evacuated from Bizkaia to refugee camps in safer locations in *Iparalde* and to other parts of France, England, Belgium, the Soviet

Union, Switzerland, Denmark, Mexico, and Cuba, but the United States refused them entrance. Many were orphans, or soon to become orphans, and, having no families to which to return, many remained in their host countries. The end of military struggle for the Basque nationalists came with the fall of Bilbao on June 19, 1937, leaving nearly all of Bizkaia now in the hands of the Spanish Nationalists. The Spanish Republic finally collapsed in 1939 after an estimated 600,000 deaths, thousands more left homeless, about 150,000 exiled, and the majority on both sides economically, psychologically, and emotionally devastated. After the elected Republican forces were defeated in 1939, Franco's victory guaranteed a central policy of Spanish nation-building and Basque nation-destroying. Basques suffered horrendous indignities such as the dismantling of Basque institutions, the outlawing of manifestations of Basque culture, the dictatorial repression and lack of human and civil rights. Defeat halted the growing institutionalization of the Basque nationalist movement but failed to eradicate nationalist sentiments. On the contrary, for many, Basque nationalism intensified because of their suffering and losses.

The collective memory of victimization during the Franco dictatorship is shared by the New York Basques. The anti-Basque nationalist purge extended from schools and churches to businesses and factories. Properties of Basque nationalists were confiscated, teachers and civil servants were fired and replaced, and Basque priests suffered imprisonment, deportation, and execution. Because Basque nationalism relied so heavily on the linguistic identification of race, culture, and nation, Madrid placed a special emphasis on the destruction of this aspect of non-Spanish behavior.

Basques, as well as Catalan and Galician peoples, were required to "become" Spanish. The Basque language was removed from school curricula and from the streets. The names of newborns recorded in the civil registry had to be Spanish, not Basque, and the spelling of Basque surnames was hispanicized. For example "Etxeberria" was changed to "Echeverria". Names of towns were changed to Spanish spellings, streets and plazas were renamed to honor Spanish Nationalist war heroes. Cemetery tombstone names were erased and in some cases re-engraved with a Spanish equivalent, "Miren" was replaced with "María". Masses were allowed in Spanish only, and non-Basque clergy were brought in to administer to the Basque Catholics. Non-Basque teachers were brought in from the south of Spain to instruct the Basque children. Ana Mari Oleaga, born in Mundaka in 1936, "never spoke Basque outside because it was prohibited. There was a lot of pressure, because we couldn't speak the language. We could not even wear a dress with the Basque flag colors [red, white and green]. We had to be very careful. We went to school and church in Mundaka, and the town priest did not speak Basque at all either, only Spanish." Most noticeably, Bizkaian and Gipuzkoan security forces, the *Miqueletes*, disappeared and non-Basque Guardia Civil—Spanish military civil guards—occupied the provinces for policing the population. Civil liberties were non-existent.

Esteban Aspiazu, born in Gernika, Bizkaia, jumped ship as did many other Basque seamen in order to enter the United States. He later became a United States citizen and volunteered for the military service in World War II.



After the conclusion of the Civil War in 1939, Franco promulgated the infamous “Law on Political Responsibilities,” which made it a crime for anyone over the age of fourteen (1) to have “helped to undermine public order” at any time since 1 October 1934; (2) “to have impeded the Spanish Nationalist movement” even by being passive at any time after the beginning day of the war; or (3) to have belonged at any time to any leftist political parties, to any regional nationalist parties, to the Liberal Party, or to a Masonic lodge (Clark 1979, 82). Anyone convicted of any of these crimes could have all properties confiscated, be deprived of one’s nationality, be deported to Africa, or be sentenced to a prison term. Mixed military-Falangist tribunals conducted trials and there was no right to appeal. Thousands of Basques, such as Mario Ostolaza de Salegi, had to emigrate in order to save their lives. Angel Zuluaga and Esteban Aspiazu both had brothers imprisoned, and the ability to understand this horror was surely one of the reasons they were such good friends. Even later in the 1950s and 1960s Father José Mari Larrañaga worried about petitions he signed against the abuse of civil and human rights by the Franco government. “When I told my father I was leaving home for New York, he was very, very upset and did not want me to go. At that time when people left the Basque Country, they never came back.

He thought he would never see me again. Going to America was forever.” Larrañaga thought it might be safer to leave his country for a few years and accepted a post at St. James Church in Manhattan from 1962 to 1968, and he did return often to see his father and siblings. The political influences on the New York community of the Basque Government-in-exile is significant enough to warrant its own chapter, and one is dedicated to those circumstances and events.

The late 1970s and 1980s transition to a democratic Spain, consisting of seventeen autonomous regions with differing degrees of political and economic power, is being chronicled with numerous successes as well as failures. Though much of the political oppression of Basque culture and politics publicly ceased for twenty years after Franco’s death in 1975, in 2002 and 2003, the Spanish central government of the right-wing *Partido Popular* has outlawed three Basque political parties and closed down two Basque-language newspapers- arresting and charging workers with terrorism and aid to the separatist group *Euskadi ‘ta Askatasuna*, or Basque Homeland and Liberty, ETA. While the political scene in the new millennium looks to be less democratic, the entrance into the European Community and the conversion of the Basque industrial society to a post-industrial information society with a large service sector has created thousands of additional jobs. The open doors of European Union labor markets have facilitated Basques seeking employment and emigration to European countries rather than crossing the oceans to different continents where visas and work permits are required. However, New York remains the top desired destination for artists and musicians, Basque graduate students who want to perfect their English, and Basque Country business leaders and trade specialists. The older Basque political and economic immigrants would not recognize these new Basque immigrants such as artists Iñaki Lazkoz, Amaya Gúrpide, or Guillermo Zubiaga, who are educated with higher degrees, who speak Basque, Spanish, English, some French and German, and who come to New York in order “to expand personal and professional repertoires.”

CONCLUSION

Throughout the centuries, the majority of Basque emigrants vacated *Euskal Herria* in search of economic opportunities and/or for political exile. They departed from each of the seven provinces from both sides of the Spanish-French state border, speaking Spanish, French, and a variety of dialects of Basque. Regardless of their local diversity, once in their new host societies, they united to form Basque institutions with similar goals of maintaining their traditions and ethnic identity, fomenting the music, dance, poetry, cuisine, history, sports, language, and religious practices of their ancestors. These are not exact reproductions of Basque Country religious institutions, cultural institutions, or networks, as seen in Greek or Armenian diaspora communities, but instead are immigrant-specific organizations to aid themselves,

Karlos Iturralde, former priest for fifteen years, and New York public school teacher for twenty-five years, is currently the Basque language instructor at the Euzko-Etxea of New York.



and later to preserve Basque culture and traditions. Women have been instrumental in constructing and maintaining the transnational networks of communication. Interviews demonstrated that in four out of five Basque households, the females (even if she was a non-Basque married to a Basque) were the communicators and sharers of familial information and greetings. They have served as the social agents who maintain nearly all of the family communications between those in the diaspora and those in *Euskal Herria*. With the advent of cheaper telecommunications and the Internet, many men now call home regularly or send frequent emails to friends and family.

Do these self-defining Basques actually constitute a “diaspora”? I will show that Basques in New York do tend to describe themselves in diasporic terms and do fit the diaspora categorization of political scientists and sociologists, and best specifically defined by Robin Cohen a population who shares:

- (1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically;
- (2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- (3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland;
- (4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral homeland;
- (5) a return movement;
- (6) a strong ethnic group

consciousness sustained over a long time; (7) a troubled relationship with host societies; (8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries; and (9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries (Cohen 1997:180).

They imagine themselves as connected to the Basque Country and to each other as Basques in New York, in the United States, and in the world. I suggest chain migration and constant interaction with Euskal Herria have strengthened this diaspora consciousness in the Basques. I will argue that a resurgence in Basque ethnic identity is related to globalization but is not a partner in a causal relationship, nor a defensive reaction to it. The tools of global communications such as utilizing the Internet to read the Basques newspapers, as Gema Aure does daily, or Luis Amesti, Karlos Itrurralde, and many others, daily watching Basque Television and Radio, EITB, *teleberri*, or news, are being embraced and utilized to educate and to inter-communicate. Global technology networks are perceived as positive mediums for Basque diaspora ethnic identity creation of interest, maintenance, and enhancement, however, do they merely fortify and simplify transnationalism- an already existing phenomenon in this community? Does gender affect Basque ethnic identity maintenance, or the definition of “Basqueness” itself? Is there any difference in how these males and females perceive and understand the act of immigration and the process of acculturation? I will demonstrate the New York Basques’ similarities and differences.

Unlike many other group memberships, ethnicity is often oriented toward the past, the history and origin of family, the group, and the nation. However, Basque ethnic identity and diasporic imagination combine the past with one’s present and future selves. Immigrants to New York consistently explained feelings of “life in limbo”. They often unconsciously made the hand gesture of cutting or chopping something in half as they verbalized their life experiences as a Basque in New York. There was one life before the departure, and a different life after. Later generations continue this conception, especially noticeable in those who have visited the Basque Country. They had one understanding of their Basque identity while growing up in New York, and a different one after experiencing the Basque Country. “I am not the same person I was before my trip to Euskadi. I understand a lot more about myself now. And the intense feelings I had when I was standing at the steps to my grandfather’s home in Gernika answered many questions for me. I used to only *know* I was Basque, now I also feel I am Basque,” explained second generation Liz Aspiazu after her first excursion to *Euskal Herria*.

Let us now turn to the subsequent phase in the story of Basque development as the early immigrants reach and settle in to New York. Early Basque immigrants worked on the docks, in the ports, on the tugboats and ferries, in brick factories and sugar refineries, and on the railroads. They established grocery stores, restaurants,

food and wine delivery businesses, and distribution centers for imported European foods. They worked as tailors and seamstresses, in furniture manufacturing, in the hotels, and as artists, musicians, engineers, teachers, policemen, and business leaders. Once in New York, Basques provided a social space for each other where they could create a sense of continuity between their historic homeland and their new reality in New York. This resulted in commercial networks, collective political action, mutual health and economic assistance programs, a choir for Basque children, a dance group, publications, festivals, classes for the maintenance of Basque language, culture, and traditions, and the longest enduring permanent Basque association of the United States.

Adaptation in the

(02)

to Life New World

It is an ugly city, a dirty city. Its climate is a scandal. Its politics are used to frighten children. Its traffic is madness. Its competition is murderous. But there is one thing about it - once you have lived in New York and it has become your home, no other place is good enough.

John Steinbeck

Unlike the beginnings of other North American communities, New York was not established as a religious colony, but as a business colony managed by investors. The first European residents were employees of the Dutch West India Company and they inhabited New Amsterdam with the goal of making profits in trade and commerce. It is said that by 1644, eighteen different languages were used on the streets of today's Manhattan, and this capitalist and multicultural foundation of New York continues to this day. New York's ethnic communities in the late 1800s and early 1900s were also, to an extent, geographic communities. New immigrants tended to look for the cheapest rent and the areas where they could understand the local business, shop, and market language. In different sections of New York City, the language of the neighborhood could be Russian, Italian, German, Hebrew, Polish, or even Basque. According to U.S. Census information, in 1900 only sixteen percent of white household heads in New York City had United States born parents, and by 1930, this number had only increased to eighteen percent (Rosenwaik 1972:91). English was not the first language of this city of immigrants, nor the language of family, or of busi-

ness. In the mixed residential and small business neighborhood of the lower east-side of Manhattan near the footings of the Brooklyn Bridge, the languages were mainly Spanish, Italian, English with an Irish brogue, and Basque.

The minimal information recorded about early Basques in New York illustrates only those of power and wealth, otherwise there would have been no reason to record their names. The 1880 telephone exchange directory for New York City included prominent Basque names such as Echeverria, Zarza, Echarte, and Aranguren. It can be assumed that these families were relatively wealthy to have enjoyed the luxury of telephone service at this time period and to have afforded paying to advertise their names in this directory. The majority of early Basque immigrants lived a quiet existence, describing themselves as “normal”. However, I will demonstrate many were, and are, quite extraordinary in their abilities to adapt and overcome the intense psychological and emotional crisis of leaving one’s family, friends, homeland, and culture, and in their ingenuity at successfully raising families and maintaining their Basque identity. A considerable number impacted the small business world as entrepreneurs and a few even left impressive permanent markers on New York City’s landscape.

BASQUE PIONEERS OF NEW YORK

José Francisco Navarro Arzac, born in Donostia-San Sebastián, Gipuzkoa, in 1823, emigrated first to Cuba and then to New York where he became a renowned engineer, inventor, and businessman. He first studied at the Spanish Royal Naval Academy, and in 1838 departed for Cuba with his uncle Basilio Navarro, and later entered the United States for further engineering education at the Jesuit school at Saint Mary’s. Navarro conducted long distance education courses with the eminent engineer Stephen Van Rensselaer, founder of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. At twenty years old, he returned to Cuba in 1843 and worked in engineering. In 1855, Navarro reestablished himself in the United States and created the Bank of Mora Navarro & Company in New York, and two years later married Helen Drykers. He was responsible for the construction of the first iron steam ship in the United States, the *Matanzas*, and also for New York City’s Sixth Avenue elevated train, the world’s first elevated train. He created the Commercial Warehouse Company in 1858, and he also owned a fleet of ships known as the United States and Brazil Steamship Company, which traveled a New York–Río de Janeiro route. In 1881, Navarro returned to his engineering interests and began the construction of what would be the first “sky scraper” apartment houses of New York City. A chain of apartment blocks known as the Central Park Apartments and also known as the Navarro Apartment Houses, covered the block between Sixth and Seventh Avenues and Fifty-eighth and Fifty-ninth Streets in the center of Manhattan. There were eight large buildings, each with eight floors of apartments housing thirteen separate families per building. This

was the first block of apartment homes ever built in New York and was copied widely thereafter. Navarro amplified his entrepreneurship and established the Atlas Portland Cement Company, which would serve as the main supplier of cement for the Panama Canal project and for improvements to the New York Erie Canal, and later the insurance company Equitable Life Assurance, also known as The Equitable. He was a collaborator with Thomas Edison and one of the founders of Edison Electric Light Company in 1870, and later the Ingersoll Rock Drill Company. A century later, there still were Basques, such Joseph Martinez from Mundaka, Bizkaia, working for the Con-Edison that Navarro helped create.

In 1882, Navarro was listed as one of the top twenty wealthiest people in the United States -his family was a neighbor to the Vanderbilts- and the Navarro family fortune was estimated at five million dollars. Navarro also experienced hardship when several of his other business ventures and inventions collapsed, but he continued on investigating and discovering new engineering concepts. He made numerous contributions to charitable societies and was a major donor to the construction of St. Patrick's Cathedral. At the age of 81, he published his financial memoirs, *Sixty-six years business record*. Navarro never became a United States citizen, and during the Spanish American War in 1898, he even staunchly and publicly favored Spain. He served as President of the Spanish Patriotic Board of New York and encouraged support of the Spanish Armada. Because of his genius, wealth, philanthropy, and charitable works, when Navarro died in New York in 1909, his obituary was carried in the newspapers across the United States, the Basque Country, Spain, and many countries of South America. Amazingly, almost none of today's Basques in New York had ever heard of him.

Unlike the scarce available homeland news for Basques in the American west, those in New York did have regular access to Basque Country current events covered in the media. *The New York Times* placed a correspondent reporting from the Basque Country as early as 1873, from Hendaye, who informed the readers about the gendered division of labor in Basque society and the characteristics of Basque men and women (NY Times Feb 20, 1873). "A Basque peasant does not indulge in luxuries, and can live very well indeed on a *real* (5 cents) a day." Reporting on the Carlist War during 1875, the author wrote that the Basque soldiers were "fighting much more for their own rights than for the cause of Don Carlos... a strange anomaly is presented in the Basque Provinces by the religious independence secured by the *fueros*...." Several articles in the 1870s referred to Basque hospitality, Basque dance, Basque soldiers, and Basque priests. *The New York Times* regularly defined Basques as Basques -not as French or Spanish- in obituaries, and in reports of the many diplomats and aristocrats living in New York who were of Basque origin but representing, or native of, South American countries. For example the Arostegui family, the Marquis and Marquesa de Santa Ana y Santa María, had a son who married into the Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt family. The Marquis Julio J. Apezteguia also married a prominent New Yorker, Helen Seagrave in 1880. After living in New York briefly they

moved on to Cuba. The Antonio Lazo y Arriaga family began in Guatemala and moved to New York in the early 1900s. The frequent announcements of many upper class Basques' social events, marriages and divorces, and international travels graced the pages of New York's news dailies, as did communiqués from Spain and France and the Basque provinces themselves. Obituaries were paid advertisements and were often a single sentence such as, "Manuel Arteaga died at 41" published in 1903, or, "Reta E. Arostegui died in Brooklyn in 1899 at 42". A myriad of persons who died in New York never had any type of public recognition of their lives because they could not afford it, and/or it was not the custom in their culture and no one even thought of notifying a newspaper.

La Prensa and *El Diario de Nueva York* published information daily in Spanish and were also utilized by the Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Hispanic businesses for advertisements, and also for personal obituaries. Pedro and Mary Altuna Toja kept copies of the publications ABERÍ from the Basque Country issued in the 1920s, and often received publications from the Basque Country that they shared with the Basques in the neighborhood. Basques in New York had the unique position as the immigration, transportation, and commercial crossroads to receive information from Basques in the Basque Country, Cuba, Mexico and Central America, Argentina, Uruguay, and to a lesser degree Chile. When the Basque Government-in-exile opened offices in Manhattan in 1938, New York Basques were privy to current events from the entire Basque international network.

Numerous Basques chose New York after having migrated to another location previously. Lily Aguirre Fradua remembers her father-in-law stating that there were several hundred Basques living near him in the Boston area at the end of the 1800s. Ocean liners, cargo ships, and Merchant Marines arriving from the Basque Country and Europe docked there, and many of the crew abandoned their ships. Cristobal Fradua jumped ship in Boston in the late 1800s, and worked in construction and on the Boston ferries for years. His sons, Castor and Martin Fradua Sr., were born in Boston, but after their mother died of the Spanish influenza in 1918, Cristobal sent his sons to Bermeo, Bizkaia to be raised by his own mother. Martin and Castor later returned to Boston, and to Brooklyn, where their Aunt Concha was living. Ana Botanzos Madariaga also had family in Boston, though she migrated to New York and stayed in order to marry Pedro Madariaga.

Others made their way to New York from various points in the east, such as Gabriel Elustondo, born in Ea, Bizkaia in 1886, who first immigrated to Philadelphia and later New York where he met and married Tomasa Gainsa from Gernika, Bizkaia. Esteban "Txarron" Aspiazu jumped ship in Baltimore in 1920. On his worker's permit "green card" application, Aspiazu told officials that his entrance point was Norfolk, Virginia, however, he always told his son, Steve, that he entered in Baltimore. Esteban migrated to New York and stayed at Valentín and Benita Orbe Aguirre's boarding house in lower Manhattan. He likely knew of its existence from the informa-

tion network of previous emigrants from Gernika who had passed through the city on their journeys to Idaho and Nevada.

Juan Cruz Aguirre migrated by himself from Arrieta, Bizkaia, to Liverpool, England. There was a small community of Basques in Liverpool, complete with their own boarding house, and the majority worked on the boats, or on the Liverpool docks and shipyard. Aguirre jumped ship on one of his trips from Liverpool to New York. Here he met his wife, Josefa Lezamiz, who had traveled to the United States to accompany her godchild, Antonia Orbe Aguirre, on her return to her family in Brooklyn. Juan Cruz Aguirre came to “the land of opportunity” thinking he would go back to *Euskal Herria*, as did Josefa Lezamiz, but they never did. They married in 1908, their first child, Joe, was born in 1909, and three more followed. Eva Fernandez Fradua, whose family came to New York from Mundaka, also had relatives in Liverpool and had heard her parents speak of networks of information and commercial connections between the Bizkaian coastal towns, Liverpool, and New York.

Basques also migrated to New York from South America. Several Berhau brothers departed St. Jean de Luz for Uruguay in the 1880s. In 1906, one of the offspring, Juan María “Zacharias” Urrutia Berhau, traveled to New York working on a windjammer ship from Argentina. One day when in the port of New York, he simply walked off the ship and disappeared into the city. Joseph and Marianne Amestoy Noguere moved from France to Argentina to Cuba and eventually settled in New Jersey in 1917. When Marianne’s entire family also migrated to join her in Milltown, New Jersey, they worked for the Michelin rubber plant during WWI. During the war, several other manufacturing plants offered their services to the federal government to aid the military effort in any way, including the E. de Lascurain Company, in 1917.

A *New York Times* 1916 headline “Basque Miners Here to Get Work,” covered a rare occurrence in Basque migration. Though the century old established pattern of Basque re-location to the United States had followed chain migration and departures of individuals to join their families or close friends, this story illustrated an aberration with its short article, “Among the 479 passengers landed yesterday from Bordeaux by the French liner *Rochambeau* were 100 miners from the Basque Provinces of Spain, who were on their way to work in the Pennsylvania fields, where they had been informed labor was in demand. It was suggested by an officer of the steamer that the miners might have had a hint that Spain was going to enter the war and that they wanted to be out of it.” No further information was given, however, it would be interesting to attempt to find and track these individuals’ movements, as no known Basque community was ever established in Pennsylvania. No *Centro Vasco-Americano* minutes, notes or ledgers make any mention to any Basque miner in Pennsylvania, nor did any of the interviewees for this project remember meeting or hearing about any such Basques. There were many more Basques who traveled through New York to the west coast, than those who actually stayed. Thousands of emigrants left

the seven provinces to make their fortunes in mining, agriculture, sheepherding, and cattle ranching in the American west.

Juan Cruz and Josefa Aguirre used to help Basques obtain employment and travel information in the U.S. Their daughter Lily explained, “You know a lot of these people had information before they came to New York. I don’t know if they got it from Idaho or if they got it from other people who had been here before and then went back to Euskadi. But a lot of them didn’t know anything, and they came all alone. They went by train to the west. My mother would prepare the lunches for them, and often give them a couple of bucks too. I know they really helped people and took them to the train stations to get them on their way.” Lily’s brothers, Joe and Johnny Aguirre, accompanied numerous Basques to the train stations to translate and help them purchase the correct tickets for their ultimate destinations. Regardless of what these immigrants knew about the United States, they landed in New York first and needed accommodation, meals, and information before continuing their voyage by rail. Basque boarding houses, hotels, and restaurants sprung up to serve the waves of clients, mainly from Bizkaia, but also from the other six territories.

VALENTÍN AND BENITA ORBE AGUIRRE

Valentín and Benita Orbe Aguirre’s *Casa Vizcaína*, Bizkaian House, later named the Santa Lucia Hotel, was the ultimate example of the “transit” boardinghouse as defined by Jeronima Echeverria in her 1999 publication *Home Away from Home*. In addition to this significant establishment, which lodged thousands of Basques over the years, New York also had several other more traditional Basque boardinghouses. The smaller boardinghouses were typically owned and managed by a Basque married couple, and customers stayed for months at a time and in many cases for years. For example, Guillermo Garay boarded at the Marury boardinghouse at 56 Cherry Street for more than thirty-five years. However, attempts to piece together bits of information about these lesser known businesses in New York were hampered by several factors: Basques did not tend to register or incorporate these institutions with the State of New York as official businesses, and therefore, there is a lack of statistics regarding ownership, dates of establishment, and descriptions of the properties; several families did not consider that receiving four or five people at a time into private homes, who then paid for their own room and board, equated to “operating a boardinghouse”; and many of the earlier Basque settlers in New York who lived in, or managed, the boardinghouses eventually returned to the Basque Country to retire, or are now deceased, and numerous Basques moved on to various States decades ago, their existence now unknown and their families not locatable. Because of Aguirre’s personal notoriety and the longevity of the business and the high numbers of people who were customers of the Santa Lucia and the Jai-Alai Restaurant, more extensive knowledge exists of this enterprise.

Juan Cruz Aguirre emigrated from Arrieta, Bizkaia to Liverpool, England, then to New York City. He met Josefa Lezamiz, of Busturia, in Manhattan and they married in 1908. Josefa assisted many Basques with their travel arrangements when they headed to the American West.



Valentín Aguirre was born in 1871, in Monte Sollube, near Busturia, Bizkaia. After the death of his father he departed his home at the age of ten and gained employment on the ship *Alceda*, one of those owned by the famous Sota family of the Bilbao, Bizkaia area. Aboard the *Alceda*, he traveled from *Euskal Herria* to numerous ports in Central and South America. Though he spoke only Basque when he started, he learned Spanish on the ships. In 1895, Valentín Aguirre decided to settle in New York City, where he worked on the Staten Island ferry, and as a stoker for the tugboats of the harbor. By 1899 his English proficiency was high enough to pass the United States Civil Service Exam, which qualified him to work in government transportation and with the New York City boat lines. When he was twenty-six years old, Valentín met and married Benita Orbe. Emilia Doyaga tells the story that Valentín had actually gone to meet Benita in order to ask for her hand in marriage for his friend. “However,” chimed in Margie Fernandez Abadia, “the story is that when he saw the eighteen year old beauty he decided to ask her to be his own wife. And she said ‘yes!’ Can you imagine that?” The young couple produced a family of eight children along with several successful businesses, which were fundamental to the development of an organized and self-conscious Basque community in the New York City area.

There were several Basque boardinghouses on Cherry Street in the early 1900s, and numerous families who took in occasional single Basque boarders. At this time, Valentín and Benita Orbe Aguirre established the *Casa Vizcaína*, which eventually gained an international reputation with Basques traveling to New York from *Euskal Herria*, from Central and South America, and with those on the United States west coast on their way returning home to the Basque Country. The Aguirres moved this business several times in Manhattan and then finally located in Greenwich Village at 82 Bank Street, at the corner with Bleeker Street, where they opened a business in 1910 as the Santa Lucia Hotel. Because they also assisted many Basques with their travel plans to the west, they simultaneously added a travel agency, Valentín Aguirre's Travel Agency, in 1910, and advertised it as "Al Servicio de la Colonia", or "At the service of the Community". When Benita's Basque cuisine gained such fame that non-Basques began patronizing regularly for meals, the Jai-Alai Restaurant was founded in 1922, next door to the hotel property. Her cooking was known and recognized for quality throughout New York City. She used fresh ingredients only and foods delivered by the Basque owned *Astarbi* import-export business for both the Santa Lucia Hotel customers, and for the Jai-Alai Restaurant. Benita actually learned to cook on the job at their *Casa Vizcaína* boardinghouse. Many business people regularly enjoyed their lunches at the Jai-Alai Restaurant.

After crossing the Atlantic Ocean and gaining entrance into the United States, the fear of the unknown and of city life in general, could be overpowering to many immigrants. Valentín, or one of their sons, Peter, Tommy, or John, would go out to the docks of the city and meet the passenger ships that brought the new immigrants in from Ellis Island once they has passed all of their inspections and paperwork. One can certainly imagine the overwhelming relief the Basques felt when from the busy docks of New York City they could see men with black *txapelas* on their heads and hear the shout of "*Euskaldunak emen badira?*" "Are there any Basques here?" Basques on board shouted back with joy, "Bai, bai! Ni euskalduna naiz!" "Yes, yes! I am Basque!"

The typical customer to the Santa Lucia was a new arrival from one of the seven provinces, but more often was from Bizkaia. Because Benita's and Valentín's family connections were to Bizkaia, they promoted their business with relatives and friends, and even their children promoted the businesses on their frequent trips to the Basque Country by giving people information about their services and abilities to complete travel plans for customers. Angel Viña first met Tommy Aguirre in the Basque Country and became friends with him when he returned for various summers. Tommy frequently discussed his parents' hotel and restaurant and explained to Angel what it would be like to arrive in the city. He knew the details by heart because he was at the docks almost everyday waiting to receive Basques. The next time they met, Angel was on the waterfront in Manhattan.

It is not clear if the Aguirres had their own car for the business. Some interviewees believe that when they reached the docks and the Aguirre boys helped them with their luggage, that they were taken to the Santa Lucia in the Aguirre's own business car. Others relate that the Aguirres hailed them taxis and gave the driver the address at 82 Bank Street. It may be that when Tommy and John were old enough to drive, Valentín allowed them to transport the customers directly to the hotel in his car, but in the early days, the boy put the new arrivals into taxis. It is also interesting that though the name was changed to Santa Lucia, decades later, Basque immigrants still disembarked in New York looking for the *Casa Vizcaína*. For Basques, the "Santa Lucia" could be the name of anything—a church, a school, a ship—but the *Casa Vizcaína*, was the house of Bizkaians, and that registered as the nearest thing to home.

Teodoro Totoricagüena departed Gernika in 1934 and upon his arrival in New York City was puzzled by the thin layer of black dust covering everything in what he referred to as the Casa Vizcaína boardinghouse. "I didn't know what city pollution was. I had lived in Txamporta [a small area outside of Gernika] all of my life. I was only seventeen years old and my mother arranged for me to come with another Basque man who was also traveling to the west, and I was going to Mountain Home, Idaho. She knew about Aguirre's boardinghouse, and he was Bizkaian, so we stayed there. I never forgot that black dust all over everything. It was how the city people lived." He had never seen policemen on horseback either. "That loud noise of five or six horses' shoes clomping on the brick and stone echoed down Aguirre's street, and big men, ten feet high on their horses, these were all quite impressive for a young Basque boy like me. No, I didn't want to stay or live in a city. I was scared."

Most of the Aguirres' customers experienced a very comfortable and safe stay with tasty Basque meals and warm camaraderie. When they had the occasion they suggested Aguirre's to others traveling to the United States, and to those returning to the Basque Country through New York City. "Oh, they made a lot of money you know. They had people going both ways and they could charge just about anything they wanted," remembered Felipe Aldape who continued on to Idaho. "Benita made a huge basket of food for me, with ham sandwiches, a whole chunk of cheese, and fruit, and one of the Aguirre boys arranged my train tickets. It was a long stub pinned right here to my front jacket lapel, and at each station, the conductor came by and tore another section from the bottom. The shorter the ticket stub got, I knew I was closer to seeing my father in Boise. I don't know if I'd have made it without those people in New York helping me." Thousands of people arrived to their destinations nourished because of the lunches Benita packed for them. Almost none of the Basque immigrants at this time could speak English, nor had they any travel experience, and they "had no idea how to order food on the train. Most of us just pointed at what someone else was eating, even if we didn't know what it was," said Totoricagüena.

Valentín Aguirre maintained communications with other Basque boardinghouse owners in the United States, with sheep and cattle ranching operations in the west, and with travel agencies. He knew where workers were needed, or that there were certain ranches in Idaho, or a construction project in Nevada where they needed immediate help, and he would send his customers to where the job opportunities awaited. Owners of Basque boardinghouses across the west also kept in touch with each other, and of course the constant flow of Basques from east to west, and from west to east on the way home, kept communities informed about new businesses, changes in immigration rules, and employment openings. Aguirre consistently worked with shipping agents, passenger liners, and travel agents and gave his customer information to other businesses. In the early 1900s, Ogden, Utah was the end of the rail track line for direct travel from New York toward the north and west of the United States. Aguirre would make arrangements for Basques to stay at Basque businesses in Ogden, and then, according to their direction of destination, he might also make arrangements for a boarding stay at the final stop until relatives were available to come and collect the newly arrived immigrant. Jeronima Echeverria's exquisite study of Basque boardinghouses in the United States described Aguirre's as "the consummate transit hotel in that it served more Basques than any other boardinghouse known in the recorded history of these establishments, and in the United States it was the only one that operated a travel agency as part of its business. Among Basques who came to this country before the advent of air travel, it would be difficult to find any who had not stopped at Aguirre's" (Echeverria 1999:45).

Valentín Aguirre had a special attraction to sports and especially boxing. He dreamed of being a boxer as a younger man, he followed the sport closely, and he exercised with a punching bag and lifted weights in the basement of his Ovington Avenue home. During summer vacations, Emilia Doyaga used to baby-sit Lucy's son, Iñaki, and would arrive to the Aguirre house each morning. She remembers, "He followed the same routine every morning. There was an entire basement with different kinds of weightlifting equipment and he would work out until about 10:00 a.m. and then he'd come up and play with the dog a little and give Iñaki a kiss and talk to me. He was crazy about sports and he talked about all of these famous boxers and athletes -whom I, of course, had never heard of- then he'd get ready for work and he and his daughter Anita would go in to the Jai-Alai restaurant everyday at about the same time."

Observers remember that the Aguirre children helped with the businesses. Valentín and Benita and children lived at the boardinghouse for years until they saved enough money to buy their own home with a large patio in the back of the house on Ovington Avenue in Brooklyn. Peter worked in the travel agency and later earned a law degree with a specialty in immigration law. This greatly facilitated helping new arrivals, and augmented the available services to customers. He took charge of the daily business with his sister Anita when Valentín died. Peter was also an excellent chef, and though he cooked at home, he did not work as such at the Aguirre busi-

nesses. John and Tom received clients at the docks and arranged for their transportation to the hotel, and for their transportation out of New York City. John later “went west” to Elko, Nevada, and Tommy died very young. Lucy, Valentina, and Antonia helped their mother with meal preparation at the Santa Lucia and at the Jai-Alai. They performed domestic chores, cooking, serving dinners and the following clean up after the meals, and they helped with laundry and linen preparation. Anita worked everyday with her father, in bookkeeping and office management. Later, she and Peter together managed the Jai- Alai, the Santa Lucia Hotel, and the travel agency. It seems that the older children –Lucy, Valentina, Antonia, Peter, Tomas, and John were expected to contribute regularly, and that the younger ones had the advantages of the money the family had made. Anita and Mary were sent to a convent in the Basque Country for their educations and in hopes that they would become Catholic nuns (Valentín also wanted Peter to become a priest), though none of the three did, and none



Valentín and Benita Orbe Aguirre established the Santa Lucia Hotel (1910), the Valentín Aguirre Travel Agency (1910), and the Jai-Alai Restaurant (1922). The combined services for traveling Basques were invaluable to thousands of immigrants over the years.

of the three ever married. The youngest child, Mary, is now the only child living, but does not give interviews and does not participate in the Basque community functions. Unable to obtain the information from her directly, others do not believe that Mary ever worked at the Aguirre businesses.

The Aguirres made a fortune with their investment and hard work. “Sure they helped a lot of people, and they made a lot of money doing it. These were businesses you know and everyone wants to make a profit,” said longtime Reno, Nevada boardinghouse and restaurant owner Louie Erriguible. The Aguirre operation was on a much larger scale than others in the United States. They attracted the short-term patrons and could charge a higher fee. “They had many more customers, plus the travel agency, plus the restaurant and bar, and people both coming and going, from and to, the Basque Country,” remembers Mario de Salegi. “He made a lot of money off of the Basque people, no question about it. And he helped a lot of people too.” Non-boarders, such as Esteban Aspiazu and numerous other Basque seaman, regularly frequented the bar to catch-up on news they had missed while out to sea, and to socialize with other Basques. Salegi recalls Valentín Aguirre saying that during Prohibition, he brought his alcohol to New York from Canada, and the bar was never dry. “There were customers from Venezuela, and South America docking in New York, and there was a lot of ship traffic in those days, much more than now. Those Basques from those ships used to go stay at the Santa Lucia and eat at the Jai-Alai restaurant and loved talking to Aguirre, and he really enjoyed being with them too,” Salegi said.

When Valentín died in 1953, Peter took over the business with his sisters Mary and Anita. They leased it to a Galician family who managed another restaurant “*El Faro*”, the Lighthouse, on Bleeker Street and were quite profitable. When the Galician family asked to purchase the business, Mary Aguirre refused to sell it to them. When Peter died, sisters Mary and Anita Aguirre sold the Jai-Alai Restaurant and the Santa Lucia to someone else. The restaurant retained the “Jai-Alai” name in the 1970s when Juan Perez and Manuel Vales managed it. Several Basques in the New York community wanted the Basque organization *Centro Vasco-Americano* to buy the properties, and the board of directors made an offer to the Aguirre sisters, but instead of accepting and keeping it in the Basque community, they sold it to a Jewish businessman. This Jewish man then rented out the Jai-Alai as a Vietnamese restaurant, and he completely renovated the boardinghouse section as small bachelor apartments for rent. Valentín and Benita Aguirre’s Jai-Alai Restaurant was then divided into three different restaurants serving Vietnamese, Thai, and American West cuisine. The original Basque murals are still on the walls.

In the early 1980s, the Jewish owner called the Euzko-Etxea of New York (the current name of the Basque organization in the city) to inform them that he had found an entire trunk full of ledger books of records with people’s names from the Aguirre boardinghouse, and that someone should come to get them from him. For decades, Valentín had kept detailed records of his customers and their destinations in the

United States. Rosa Aberasturi, who has been a part of the New York Basque community since her childhood in the 1930s explained, “They were full of our history. They had the information of who came, where they came from, and where they were going. It had everything about that person, and there were thousands of people that traveled both ways between the Basque Country to New York, and from New York back to the Basque Country. People from the west stayed here on their way back to Euskadi, you know.” Emilia Doyaga recalled her many conversations with Andoni Aguirre of the *Euzko-Etxea* of New York, “Well, we thought it was only right that Anita and Mary Aguirre should have the books since they belonged to the family, or at least they should have the first say about what would happen to them. We realized they were fundamental to Basque history in this country. Andoni Aguirre called Mary Aguirre and said that if she would give her permission he would go and get them from the Jewish owner. Andoni waited for her to give permission but she never did. The Jewish man called again to ask us to come get the trunk. We called Mary again. Mary Aguirre would not give her permission for us to have those records. Consequently, no one from the *Euzko-Etxea* went to collect the trunk full of records. And after waiting months, the new owner of the former Santa Lucia Hotel and Travel Agency, and the Jai-Alai Restaurant too, threw away all of the papers and the trunk of ledger books to the garbage collection, and they were never seen again.”

In 2002, this author called the New York City Department of Sanitation with several questions and an unusual request. Was it possible to look through records and determine which New York landfill might have received garbage from the 82 Bank Street area during the early 1980s? If the ledgers and papers were still in the trunk perhaps they were protected and might not have begun to disintegrate. Could a person gain permission to ‘dig through’ a landfill? I was willing to do it. The records were the history of Basque migration to the United States, and back again. The *Casa Vizcaína* and the Santa Lucia were the crossroads of Basque migration traffic. Details and dates about every person’s hometown, destination point -and their connections to people there, were all recorded by Valentín, Peter, and Anita. Every person staying at the *Casa Vizcaína* and the Santa Lucia left their prints in the ledger books regardless if they were traveling to the American west, the Argentine pampas, or returning to *Euskal Herria*. Valentín Aguirre’s travel agency kept the details of exactly *who* went *where*, and *when* they went. After several weeks I received a definitive answer- in the early 1980s, that sort of trash collected in Manhattan was incinerated.

When Valentín Aguirre died, the members of the Centro Vasco-Americano. held a religious ceremony to honor his devotion to the Basque community. Members also voted unanimously to have a photograph of him enlarged and framed for permanent display wherever the home of the organization might be. That same photograph hangs in the Jon Oñatibia Library in the *Euzko-Etxea* on Eckford Street in Brooklyn in 2003. Valentín was honored posthumously by the Society of Basque Studies in America at its Second Annual Hall of Fame celebration at Milford, Connecticut, on October 10, 1982. His biography can be read in the chapter covering the Society of

Basque Studies in America, and the reader will also see his name repeatedly in the chapter on the *Centro Vasco-Americano*. He was one of the founders and was President of the C.V.A. for years from its second year in 1914 through the end of the 1920s. He did not serve on the Board during the 1930s, but returned in 1942 as president, which coincided with the arrival of the President of the Basque Government-in-exile, José Antonio de Aguirre (no relation). He participated and led various commissions for the Basque community in New York and donated funds regularly for prizes for soccer matches, Basque dance exhibitions, and special events with the Basque Government-in-exile Delegation.

Valentín Aguirre was also a bit controversial and several of the older community members agreed that he liked to have things his way, or not at all. The most striking example of this part of his character is revealed with his reaction to his daughter Valentina falling in love. When Valentina became engaged to marry a Galician man, her father would not accept him as a son-in-law because he was not Basque. Valentina married him anyway, and was then forever ex-communicated from the Aguirre family. “He was a big man, overpowering for some people. He liked to be in charge of everything, and actually, he would do a good job. He would pound on the table during the *Centro Vasco* meetings and no one dared dispute anything with him. Valentín was outgoing and spoke to anyone! There is good and bad in everyone and, you know, people’s personalities are very complex. What people thought of him varies, but I think everyone would agree on Benita- she was the sweetest thing on earth,” suggested Margie Abadia.

A SELECTION OF BASQUE BOARDINGHOUSES

Though on the surface it may seem that an Aguirre monopoly controlled Basque immigrant traffic in New York, in reality there were several other Basque boardinghouses. Relying upon the ledger books of the *Centro Vasco-Americano* organization, whose secretary of the 1920s through 1940s meticulously recorded the addresses of its members, and in addition to the testimonies of elderly Basques still present in the New York community in 2003, I have concluded that there were approximately ten establishments that accommodated an estimated fifteen to twenty people -usually single males- in each business. However, what seemed to have been more prevalent in Manhattan and Brooklyn was for a family to rent out two or three rooms to other Basques in their own private residence.

An analysis of the members’ official addresses recorded demonstrates that forty-one of these members listed their 1919 residence as 43 Cherry Street, just a few doors away from what would become the first physical building location of the *Centro Vasco-Americano*. Juan Polo Pedernales originally established this business at 43 Cherry Street. In the 1934 program of the Basque festival picnic at Ulmer Park, the

then current owner, Francisco Santa María, advertised his *Fonda y Posada* boardinghouse at 43 Cherry Street as “the oldest of the Basque colony with fastidious and careful service.”

Twenty-four Basque men lived at 41 Cherry Street. Lily Fradua used to play there as a child and she recalls the boarders being mainly seamen and men who worked on the ships themselves or on the docks loading and unloading. They would come and go based on the length of their ship’s voyage. Several Basques worked as cooks on passenger liners that traveled to Cuba and other ports in the Caribbean. They would be away from New York for two weeks and then back for one week. Lily explained that her husband, Martin Fradua Sr., “worked on the *Oriente* of the Ward Lines when he was single. When he came in to port he’d been in for week or so, and that’s when we’d go out on our dates.” Lily is also sure that Juan Polo Pedernales managed a boardinghouse at 32 Cherry Street, and it seems that he would have worked there after the establishment at 43 Cherry Street. Still in 1919, sixteen Basque men lived at 38 Cherry Street. That brings the total to four known Basque owned and operated boardinghouses at 43, 41, 38, and 32 Cherry Street.

In 1924, ten members of the C.V.A. listed their permanent address as 106 Roosevelt Street. Escolástico Uriona, Felix Uriona, Eugenio Urrutia, Juan Zavala, Daniel Echevarria, Saturnino Legarreta, and José Larralde Aguirre all lived at 82 Bank Street in 1924, which was the Santa Lucia Hotel operated by Valentín and Benita Aguirre. Valentín listed his own address in 1924 as 213 52nd Street in Brooklyn. In the 1930s, Aquilino Zubillaga owned and managed the boardinghouse and restaurant *El Mundo Bar and Grill* at 489 West Street. During 1943-46, nine men lodged at 94 James Street, and 59 James Street was listed by four more members of the C.V.A.. On July 1, 1948, nine new members simultaneously signed up to join the *Centro Vasco* and each one gave 95 Madison Street as their home address. Nine existing members gave this same residence, showing a total of at least eighteen Basque men living there at the same time. A few blocks down, 77-79 Madison Street was the home for four Basque males from 1943 to 1946.

In the mid 1940s, the name and address register of the C.V.A. shows several Basque males living at 258 William Street in Manhattan: Francisco Santamaría (which very well could be the same Francisco Santa María who earlier owned the boardinghouse on Cherry Street with a slight error in how his name was recorded), José Ugalde, Amalio Elorriaga, Tomas Uribe, Luis Salazar, and Severo Ybarguen, all lived there from 1943-1946, and possibly before and after as well. The same register shows that numerous Basques were clustered at different addresses on the following streets: Oliver Street, Roosevelt Street, Monroe Street, Madison Street, Atlantic Avenue, Cherry Street, James Street, Catherine Street, and William Street.

Angel Viña remembers that the Spanish neighborhood around State Street in Brooklyn was mixed with Galicians, Asturians and Basques. The 1943-46 ledger

shows twenty C.V.A. members lived at 14-15 State Street in Brooklyn. Fifteen lived at Columbia Place in Brooklyn. Angel Viña lived with his aunt and uncle Gabriel and Segunda Gainsa Elustondo in their Brooklyn boardinghouse at 187 Atlantic Avenue. He remembers at least seven or eight men eating dinner there nightly during the 1930s. “My Tía [aunt] had a reputation for good food, and she always cooked good food and had lots of it. People paid fifty cents a meal.”

Because Basques and Galicians worked together on the ships, patronized each other’s businesses, and socialized together, it is likely that Galicians would also have stayed at these boardinghouses, and it is also possible that the boardinghouses were actually Galician owned. These are commonly called “Basque boardinghouses” because Basques stayed there, but there are no existing records that demonstrate who actually owned and operated the businesses. In White Plains it is certain that many Basques lodged at the Galician boardinghouse of Juana Migues. Her family immigrated first to Puerto Rico and stayed there during the Spanish Civil War, and then moved to White Plains, New York. Manny Zuluaga remembers that his “great-grandmother’s boardinghouse had a player piano, and Basque and Gallego boarders thoroughly enjoyed singing Basque and Spanish songs with pride. There were a lot of parties held in that house.”

In 1919, the United States Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors. Angel Zuluaga decided to take his chances, and served as a bootlegger during Prohibition. He spent thousands of dollars in beer-making equipment believing he could make a great profit distributing liquor to restaurants, boardinghouses, and speakeasies. Angel’s son Manny remembers his father, “He was a handsome man, a combination of Randolph Scott and Gary Cooper, six foot one inch and a real sharp dresser. You know-- a real ladies’ man-- and he drove a Pierce Arrow car. Just look at these pictures, he looks like a gangster!” Angel liked fancy cars and he used to wear spectator shoes (brown and white tipped) and also wore shoe covers. “He was always dressed to the nines and so was my mother.” Elderly Basques agreed that there was never a problem getting a drink at the Basque boardinghouses and cannot remember that any dinners were ever served without red wine. They relied on people such as Zuluaga to deliver spirits, and were willing to pay for it. However, the Twenty-First Amendment to the Constitution passed in 1933, reversing the prohibition on liquor and legalizing it, and the value of Angel Zuluaga’s beer-making investment crashed.

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The 1910 census recorded 1,944,357 foreign-born persons resident in New York City. Adjusting to this inundation of immediate multiculturalism would have been extremely difficult without a retreat such as one’s own small Basque neighborhood. It

is likely that personal and business relationships were fortified because Basques did have to rely on each other. Those from Spain had the advantage of being able to communicate in Spanish with the many Galicians in the area, and could reach a high level of understanding with the Italians. Basques from the French side were more dispersed throughout the city and more likely to utilize their French language skills, though they also gathered for social events at various hotels. William Douglass and Jon Bilbao wrote in their classic Basque diaspora book *Amerikanuak*, “Elderly informants estimate that by 1920 there might have been as many as eight to ten thousand Basques residing in New York City, with most concentrated in a thirty-square block area around Cherry Street” (Douglass and Bilbao 1975:341). The majority, at that time, worked in marine commerce either in the Merchant Marines, on passenger liners, or on the docks. The South Street Seaport was a stone throw away, and for the Basques from the fishing villages of the Bizkaian coast, life on the New York waterfront encompassed familiar sights, sounds, and smells.

“The South Street fish market used to cover all of South Street, but it’s actually the Fulton Fish Market,” explained Lily Fradua. The Fulton Fish Market originated in 1822 on the shore of the East River, near the future Basque neighborhood, and fish dealers eventually moved across South Street and erected a permanent building there in 1869. With the advent of refrigeration, by the late 1800s, fish was delivered from all regions of the United States, Canada, and from abroad. Basques worked loading and unloading cargo here, and were consumers of the seafood products. The market became the largest in the world and remained so until the 1990s. The South Street Seaport is currently one of the last working areas of the waterfront in Manhattan.

Basques also owned and operated small businesses in this area from the 1900s to the 1950s. “Plencia” and Sabina Bajeneta Bilbao owned and managed a grocery store in the Basque neighborhood on Roosevelt Street. No one remembers Plencia’s real name, he was born in Plencia, Bizkaia and when he immigrated to New York he thereafter was known by that name. Lily Fradua could see the grocery store from her home on Cherry Street. “It was a corner building,” she described. “The neighborhood was becoming mostly Irish and Italian by then, but the Basques went to their grocery store just for a little something they needed, and there would always be other Basques there that they could talk to, and they would hang around. They’d end up staying for a few hours! They needed to find a little gossip, you know, and there was always something to learn at the grocery store.”

Pedro and Mary Toja lived on Water Street for decades, and were also frequent customers of the Spanish Grocery at 53 Cherry Street, where they could purchase known spices and fish, and socialize with Basque friends at the same time. The *P. Astarbi y Compañía, Inc.* of Brooklyn sold *bacalao*, or codfish, imported from the Basque Country. *La Competidora de Ituarte y Company* was a Basque owned delivery service on Cherry Street. Near the C.V.A., on the corner of Cherry at 100 Roosevelt



Juana Miguez and great-grandson Manuel Miguez Zuluaga in 1937. Juana Miguez owned and operated a boardinghouse in White Plains, New York from the early 1920s. Most of her customers were Basque and Galician.

Street, Manuel Fernandez owned *La Ideal Carnicería* butcher shop where he sold bacalao and made fresh chorizos. He also sold quality olive oils, which are fundamental to Basque cuisine. Catherine Street had numerous businesses owned by Galician and Catalan immigrants.

Basques also resided in Brooklyn, Staten Island, and New Jersey. Mari Carmen Orueta Aberasturi, born in Kortezubi, Bizkaia in 1908, arrived straight to Brooklyn in 1936 with her husband and children. She recounted, “There were a lot of Basque people living on Fifth Street between Fifth Avenue and Sixth Avenue, maybe twenty families. And there were Basque boarding houses too, like the Elustondo’s.” In the coming chapter illustrating Basque employment, I will show the high numbers of Basques who struck out on their own and established small businesses such as Tomas Otaola, who owned his own automobile service, the Amity Garage, in the 1930s in Brooklyn.

Basques worshipped at the nearby churches of St. Joachim, San Giuseppe (St. Joseph’s) Church at 5 Monroe on the corner of Monroe and Catherine Streets, and at St. James Church at 23 Oliver Street established in 1827. Numerous Basque children attended the five-floor St. James School next door to the Church. Steve Aspiazu’s 1960s third grade class had sixty-four students, six of them Basque, “but we only needed one teacher in those days,” he said, “she was a nun.” In 1906, the Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Church on Fourteenth Street was founded and because it was predominantly a parish of Spanish speakers and the priest was a Basque, many Basques attended Sunday mass at this church. Others were baptized there in order to have a special baptismal mass celebrated in *Euskera*. When St. Joachim’s was torn down, the records of the Church were transferred to St. Joseph’s.

Lily Fradua reminisced, “Although the First Communion suits and dresses were very expensive, the Basque families bought them. They never rented them. No way. We are very, very proud people. Godparents often bought the dresses for their godchildren.” Lily was baptized at Nuestra Señora, and later made her First Holy Communion and her Confirmation there also. At that time in the late 1920s, the Church was managed by French priests. “First Communions were a big deal and we all went to the studios to have the photos taken. I made my Communion and Confirmation on the same day. The white bow in our hair was for Communion, and Confirmation was a red hair bow. No veils, we just switched the white and red bows and took pictures with each! Usually people had to wait for years, but we did it on the same day.” Lily Fradua represents many senior Basque women who have always liked going to Church, but not found it essential to spirituality. “Not that I’m a ‘holy roller’, I have always had my own ideas of God. I know that a lot of people just went to confession so that they could say they went. I didn’t believe in that, you know? God is in every house. No, I don’t go to mass now, I can’t walk the steps. I am afraid to go anywhere alone. Since 9/11 I am afraid to leave the house alone.”

LIVING AND DYING IN NEW YORK

For thousands of Basque immigrants, deciding to apply for United States citizenship was an emotional decision, and it had the effect of psychologically closing the door to a return to the homeland. Immigrants were demonstrating that they planned to stay in the United States. Several male interviewees admitted that the only reason they had obtained U.S. citizenship was to facilitate their travels to France and Spain, where they could no longer be conscripted, or imprisoned for dodging military service, if they demonstrated they had become “naturalized.” The U.S. citizenship saved them from any obligation to their former states. At issue was not only the military service itself, but the Basques did not want to complete military service to a state or government that they despised. In the case of Basques from Spain, men who left the Basque Country to evade serving a Primo de Rivera, or a Franco dictatorship, actually volunteered for the United States armed services, as did Esteban Aspiazu. Others chose United States citizenship as a formality. They knew they would not return to the Basque Country, and had made the United States their new official home. Alternatively, a few Basques remember the day as “one of the best days of my life,” when they added another layer of a meaningful identity to their definitions of self.

Joe Aguirre and his sister Lily Aguirre Fradua were regular visitors in various Judges’ chambers when they accompanied Basques as Basque-English translators and witnesses to the naturalization process. Each candidate was required to have two witnesses, and Lily and Joe were the usual two people. “Joe and I didn’t even know most of these people. But Mama said, ‘You’ve got to go,’ and so we did. We never thought twice about it.” Applicants approached the Judge and the immigration offices on Christopher Street after having memorized certain phrases in English and certain bits of information that would be a part of an oral exam. Lily was working at Saks Fifth Avenue department store and she would lose a day of work and pay in order to go and serve as an interpreter and stand as witness for new Basque immigrants. The Judge would also ask the witnesses questions about the applicants and their background, and Joe and Lily had to testify that they were fine and upstanding individuals, were not thieves, and had employment. Lily transmitted the tension as such, “Most of the women that I stood up for would get so frightened that I would end up answering all of the questions! They were all just so nervous, God. They were so nervous because they knew how important it was, and if they didn’t pass, they wouldn’t get the citizenship and maybe had to go back. One of these ladies, Frances Bilbao Astoreca, well -afterwards we were supposed to go uptown to celebrate and eat Chinese- but, well, she was so wound up that she fainted right there!”

Joe would school them in United States civics to prepare for the Judges questions. “Now you are not going to say that Martha Washington was the President are you? It was George Washington. Tell the Judge that George Washington was the first President of the U.S.” Lily described her brother telling the Basque applicants over and over and

having them practice pronouncing the answers. “So don’t you know that when the Judge asked the man, ‘Who was the first President of the United States?’ The Basque guy -scared to death- shouted out, ‘Martha Washington! Martha Washington!’ and the Judge was so taken aback that he laughed, ‘Well, yes, okay. I think you’re probably right. It probably was Martha Washington.’ Oh, God. Joe and I about died.” Over several decades, starting in their late teens, Joe and Lily unselfishly gave their time and talents and assisted hundreds of Basque immigrants in New York. Margie Abadia spoke on behalf of a group of Basque community members gathered one night at the *Euzko-Etxea* of New York for an informal discussion, “Lily Fradua knows everyone. She has helped almost everyone at one time or another, and if she hasn’t helped you, she probably helped your mother. And for years and years she volunteered at Basque activities, oh, we could never even begin to count the things she has done. She won’t take any credit for it, but I think she changed people’s lives. She helped hundreds of families. She’ll tell you that she just did what any Basque woman would, but this beautiful woman was a savior for many, many Basques.”



Basque families often lived near each other in groupings and young Basque children grew up as friends in school and friends from Basque social gathering such as the picnics held in the summer months. Photograph circa 1920. Courtesy of Lily Aguirre Fradua.

In 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act passed the United States Congress with the objective of protecting western public lands from overgrazing by itinerant sheepherders. It stated that animal grazing on public lands would be reserved for private landowners, and this exclusion of Basque animal owners but not landowners marked the history of Basque migration. A decade earlier, Boise boarders had discussed the National Origins Act, which established quotas for new immigration based on a country's total number of people already in the United States. The low numbers of Spanish residents or citizens in the United States resulted in low numbers allowed in for new migration. By the end of the 1930s these two acts of Congress, in addition to the effects of the Depression, combined to slow Basque immigration to the United States, which slowed business to the Basque hotels and boardinghouses in New York, and affected the ability of established Basques to bring in their relatives. Angel Viña arrived to New York at a difficult time. All of his life he had heard about the land of opportunity and how his father was waiting for him in New York when he finished school and was old enough to travel. Unfortunately there were no jobs when he arrived in June 1930, a few months after the crash on Wall Street and the beginning of the Depression, and sadly, his father died the next year. By 1955, Spain's annual quota of allowed immigrants was a very low total of two hundred and fifty persons. Under the immigration law, the first fifty percent of the quota was available for a preferred person with certain skills, and the wool industry was lobbying for this to be given to sheepherders. This of course affected the number of people selected for the remaining one hundred and twenty-five slots, and Basque immigration to New York slowed to a trickle.

WHITE PLAINS AND PLATTEKILL

There were 7.5 million people living in New York City by 1940. "Living in Manhattan is very tough that's why most of the Basques moved out into the suburbs," said Joe Arralde, a 1990s transplant to New York from Yakima, Washington. White Plains is a city of about 60,000 people situated twenty-five miles north of Manhattan, and in the 1930s it was half that size, and very attractive to recent Basque immigrants. Domingo Zarrionandia moved there in the 1930s, as did Virtudes Ibarbengoechea who later married James Latasa there. Casiano and Gloria Toticagüena (no relation to the author) raised their family in White Plains and Casiano became a construction contractor, but uses "Casi Guena" as his name, which he thinks makes it easier for people to say, spell, and remember. Toticagüena played in many soccer matches at the Basque picnics and is a talented woodsman, an *aizkolari*, but he never chopped wood competitively, nor were there ever any wood chopping exhibitions as a part of the Basque festival here. Joseph Arguinchona lived there for decades until his death in 1976. Angel Zuluaga lived there and worked in construction, at a Department of Defense plant as a tool machinist, as Head Chef at the Court Grill in White Plains, and as a greenskeeper at the local golf course. Blas Soravilla immigrated from near Mundaka, Bizkaia directly to White Plains in the 1930s, and she found a community of Basques from Ibarrangelua, Ea, Mundaka,

and Bermeo, Bizkaia. The chain migration of relatives calling for family members was also prevalent here, and the concentration of Bizkaian coastal Basques following each other to New York City, White Plains, and Plattekill is significant.

Manny and Gail Zuluaga's home in White Plains was transformed into a small Basque village every summer in the 1970s when they hosted a Basque picnic annually in their own backyard! Each year the Euzko-Etxea of New York Basque dancers performed for the Arts Festival of White Plains, and immediately following, all the dancers and their families and other Basques in the area were invited to the Zuluaga home. Manny and daughter, Vivian, laughed as they described the scene, "We had *sokatira* [or tug-of-war competitions], Basque dancing, children climbing all over the cherry trees, mus tournaments, and food everywhere such as barbecued sardines and chorizos, and always red wine. Basques came from New Jersey and Connecticut. We had like a hundred and fifty people there! And Julen Abio would go around with his *txapela* and Basque dancing sword collecting money to help pay for some of the expenses. People donated even without the sword."



Basque boys and men formed soccer teams, which competed against each other and against Galician teams in New York. They played their matches for the summer Basque festival picnics. Photograph circa 1920. Courtesy of Lily Aguirre Fradua.

Plattekill, New York is about sixty miles away from White Plains, and numerous Basque families there also participated in Basque community activities with their friends and relatives from New York City. Ygnacio Arrien, born in Arrieta, Bizkaia, in 1885, and his wife Segunda Arguinchona from Arrazua, Bizkaia, immigrated to New York, settling first in Brooklyn and then moving to Plattekill in the 1940s. Ygnacio played accordion and Segunda accompanied him with the tambourine, and they provided many nights of entertainment with Basque music at private functions in friends' homes. Steve and Liz Aspiazu listed their father and father-in-law's friends, "Well let's see, Julia Arrien married a Goicoechea. Violeta Revuelta Cendagorta and her daughter Diana were in Plattekill. Vicente and Angeles Arasate lived there. Josephine and Eugenio Arteta were from Plattekill and I know they visited the Basque Country in the 1970s. Jimmy and Helen Betanzos and family were there with their kids, and John and Angie Betanzos too. Ana Botanzos Madariaga worked at the town Post Office, and her husband Pedro Madariaga volunteered at the local fire station I think. Peter and Ana were from Pedernales [Bizkaia] and their daughter, Juanita, married Manolo Souto, a Gallego. Janet and Michael Betanzos are still there. Mary and Joe Arazosa left Brooklyn for Plattekill too, just like Mom and Dad. I really can't remember anyone's names though."

Several Basque families took their vacations at "the Villas", the Villa Rodriguez, Villa Madrid, Villa Victoria, Villa Garcia, Villa Nueva, and Villa Clara, all together near Plattekill, New York. Others went to Allaben, New York to *La Granja*, or The Farm. The trip north included a boat ride on the Hudson River Day Line at \$1.25 per person, or on the West Shore Railroad until arriving at Newburgh, then switching to a bus that would take them directly to the Villa Garcia for thirty-five cents. Villa Garcia was the main park grounds where the Basques went for vacations and picnics. Manny Zuluaga described his boyhood memories of the late 1940s and early 1950s at "the Villas", "Well, these were all working farms, you see, and we'd go up on a Friday night and check in, and Saturday morning at 7:00 o'clock they would come around ringing a big bell to wake people for a big community breakfast. Henry and Jesus Letasa used to go regularly, and Victor Bezañes too. I was in charge of raising a pig, and for one of the Basque picnics they slaughtered my pig. They made *morcillas*, chorizos, and they killed a cow also. They killed it right there on the farm. It was actually an apple orchard and there was a dairy farm too. Delfin and Margie Garcia Bilbao and their dogs "pintxo" and "potxolo" and "teddy" and their sons, Eugene, and Ralph, were all really great. Delfin's father-in-law owned the farm. I think he was Gallego or Catalan. [Jon] Oñatibia used to go to the Villas too. We could hear his *txistu* music as he was walking up the road from the bus stop -you know the music that you skip to at the beginning of the dance? Well he'd play that as he was approaching the buildings from the parking lot, and, God, every little kid and everyone would run out to greet him."

Basque visitors picked bushels of apples at the Villas in the summertime. They played *pelota*, or handball, against any wall they could find and played with real *pelotas*, a small very hard hand-wound ball, brought from the Basque Country. Iñaki

Aberasturi and Antonio Loiti were often seen throwing young teenagers into the shallow lake for fun. The Basque picnics always included soccer matches, with Valentín Aguirre usually offering a “barrel of beer” for the winning team. The games were advertised in the local newspapers and in the *Diario de Nueva York*, and *La Prensa*. Hundreds of people came to see the competitions of teams usually outfitted as Catalan, Galician, or Basque. These games were even carried live on local radio stations and elderly Basques in New York City who could not make the trip north, followed the plays from their living rooms.

In 1971, twenty-five Basque families from Plattekill advertised in the Euzko-Etxea’s Aberri Eguna Journal wishing all Basques a peaceful day, and the majority of them, as members of the Basque organization, made it to the city to celebrate the mass and feast day on Easter Sunday. Esteban and Pilar Gorostiola Aspiazu moved to Plattekill in the 1970s and found the city had a Spanish American Social Club, and a Spanish-American Democratic Club of Plattekill, Inc., and they joined both.



Irene Aguirre and Basque friends enjoyed summer day outings to the Villa Nueva and the Villa Garcia. Basques created all day affairs of picnics, swimming, dancing, and sporting games. Photograph 1940. Courtesy Anna M. Aguirre.

ENTERTAINMENT

Juan María “Zacharias” Urrutia Berhau, known as Zacharias Urrutia in the Basque colony, was a professional dance performer and instructor in early 1900s Manhattan. He taught the Tango and the Bossanova, and began dancing on the stage in his twenties as “El Vasco”. He dressed in Argentine gaucho outfits for his dancing performances at The Capital, and was known and highlighted in the New York newspapers for his family entertainment. Growing up in New York, he regularly took his son, Zachary Berhau, to the Townhall recitals, and to the many museums and art galleries. Berhau reminisced, “He took me to hear classical music. My Dad had little education but he wanted me to see and feel those things, and wanted to expose me to culture. We would go to the ice shows, we went to rodeos, and to circuses. That was the advantage of life in New York; there is always something interesting and educational going on. Now these were not expensive activities in those days and regular people could afford to go with their children.” Basque families ventured out to Coney Island, where the Cyclone Roller Coaster opened in 1927 and the ride cost twenty-five cents. Playland Amusement Park at Rye Beach, Rye, New York was another favorite for young families, and it was also common for Basques to cross over to Staten Island for Sunday excursions and picnics.



The annual summer Basque picnics during the 1940s included formal exhibitions of Basque dance followed by open dancing in the parks. Picnic attendance was usually near 500 people.

According to Lily Fradua, she with her friends Teodora Abad, Ana Madariaga, and Pilar “Pili” Gorostiola Aspiazu, and their sons, saw “every cowboy picture that came to New York.” They loved the movies and especially loved the cowboy movies. “We’d buy our rolls of candy and with the three boys, Steve, Michael, and Martin, we took off for the day to the Brooklyn Paramount, or the New York Paramount, or the Roxie Theatre.” Moviegoers could see the main movie in the music hall, hear a musical performance with the live orchestra playing, watch a short live comedy and hear the Pape News all for one price. It was an entire afternoon for seventy-five cents. “We’d go on Saturday or Sundays, or maybe go on a Wednesday night. We’d see Benny Goodman, and Frank Sinatra live in New York, and the Gay Foster Girls. We used to go every week. And when Pili and I were both pregnant, the ushers would take us right to the front row to the very best seats.” Angel Zuluaga learned English at the cowboy movies, except he always said, “Yeep” when attempting a wrangler’s “Yip”.

Basques jointly celebrated weddings, births, First Communion, and graduations. They also shared mutual grief together at the funerals. In the 1930s the Charles Bacigalupo, Inc. funeral services advertised in the Basque summer picnic programs that they could “ship cadavers to any part of the world.” Vanella’s Funeral Chapel at 39 Madison Street also arranged many Basque funerals. Basques are



John Fradua, second from left, and Richard Fernandez, end right, with Basque friends attend a Basque funeral, as did hundreds of other Basques from New York. Basque funerals were often large social occasions attended by Basques whether or not they knew the deceased person. Courtesy Lily Aguirre Fradua.



buried at Calvary Cemetery in Brooklyn, and also at St John's Cemetery in the Middle Village Section of Long Island. After the 1950s, Basques began to bury their loved ones at numerous Catholic cemeteries in the New York City surroundings, including New Jersey. Once again, Lily Fradua played a significant role in assisting Basque families in need. "We used to go to every single funeral even though we didn't know the people. If they were Basque we went. We had to go," she said. "And I would make up the car and the pallbearers. Juan Cruz Aguirre [Lily's father] was always the name for the funeral car and I organized the funerals and usually the Calvary Cemetery details. Some went to St. John's cemetery in Long Island too. We would go to the wakes at the person's home and then in later years they were held at the funeral parlors. Basque people came from all over the east coast and it was a social event, and after the place closed then maybe people went to a bar. After the funerals we all went to maybe have a drink. We all knew each other because we all saw each other at each of these functions, you see. Now, it's terrible, usually only the family goes! New Basques wouldn't even think about doing this the way we did, they don't have that tradition. It's not really that there aren't as many Basques as there were before, it's that they just don't carry on the traditions anymore so we never see each other.



The annual summer Basque picnics during the 1940s included formal exhibitions of Basque dance followed by open dancing in the parks. Picnic attendance was usually near 500 people.

Basque people went to Basque funerals even if they didn't know the person. The deceased was Basque and that meant they deserved respect. The *Centro Vasco* taught us that. It was responsible for the funerals, you see? Let me tell you about that *Centro Vasco*.... ”

Centro Vasco Sociedad de

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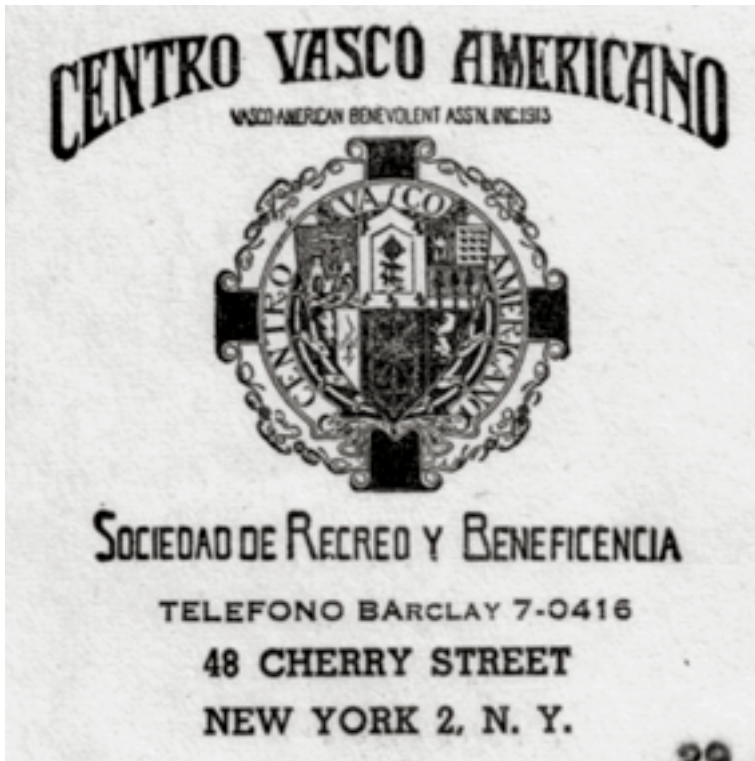
-Americano Beneficiencia y Recreo

Name the people that worked the most at the Centro Vasco? Well, let's see, the men ran the meetings, but you want the workers? Okay, Eugenia Fernandez, Eva Fernandez Fradua, Juana Aizpurua, Josefa Lezamiz Aguirre, Anna Betanzos Madariaga, Genoveva Orbe, Eufemia Urrutia, Irene Renteria Aguirre, Frances Bilbao Astoreca, Mary Altuna Toja, Eugenia Renteria Sarriugarte, Emily Doyaga, Margie Abadia, Teodora Abad, Alys Mason Viña- I can't remember when she started, "Conchi" [María Concepción Echevarria] Elordi Amesti, Juana Orbe Sarriugarte, Pilar Gorostiola Aspiazu, María Luz Echevarria Elordi Landaburu, Aurora Olaso Arana, the Aberasturis- all of them, and I guess me. Oh! I forget, I'm not good with names anymore.

Lily Aguirre Fradua

Basque associationism is a regular phenomenon around the world and found in the majority of communities that enjoyed a critical mass of Basque emigrants. Boarding houses in the United States, ethnic neighborhoods in Argentina, Basque trading networks in Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, and the Philippines are all examples of Basques preferring fellow Basques for trade, commerce, lifestyle, security, and for entertainment and socializing. The first New York Basque organization highlighted economic security for Basque workers and their families, and followed the European communitarian mentality with which they emigrated.

Historically, as European societies grew in economic and social complexity, and as isolated farms were departed for cities and villages, Europe witnessed the de-



The official logo of the Centro Vasco-Americano Sociedad de Beneficencia y Recreo. Though the legal charter is 1913, Basques in New York began their mutual assistance association in 1905.

velopment of formal organizations that sought to protect the economic security of their members. During the Middle Ages, individuals who had a common trade or business banded together into mutual aid societies, or guilds. These guilds regulated production and employment and they also provided a range of benefits to their members including financial help in times of poverty or illness and contributions to help defray the expenses when a member died. Out of the tradition of the guilds emerged the friendly societies. Organized around a common trade or business, the friendly societies would evolve into what we now call fraternal organizations and were the forerunners of modern trade unions. Among early U.S. fraternal organizations were: the Freemasons (which came to the United States in 1730); the Odd Fellows (1819); Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (1868); Loyal Order of Moose (1888); and the Fraternal Order of Eagles (1898). In the early 1900s, there were no government programs for financial security, neither were there many businesses that offered their employees any sort of safety net. In 1900, there were a total of five companies in all of the United States offering their workers company-sponsored pensions.

ESTABLISHING A BASQUE MUTUAL AID SOCIETY

In approximately 1905, several Basque men began meeting informally in the basement of one of their homes on Water Street to discuss organizing some sort of a Basque mutual aid association. Emilia Doyaga quotes from an oral history of Rufino Lopategui, born in 1892, and from conversations with Mary Altuna Toja in which they give the leaders' names as: Elías Aguirre, Juan Cruz Aguirre, Valentín Aguirre, Toribio Altuna, and Escolástico Uriona. Uriona was described as the “guide, mentor and intellectual leader of the group” (Doyaga 1983:73). They deliberated and planned the possibility to create an insurance fund for Basques who took ill, died without family to care for funeral services, or needed repatriation to *Euskal Herria* and could not afford the costs of travel. It is not exactly clear who, or how many people participated, nor what the program entailed.

In 1913, a group of thirteen Basque men decided to formalize their mutual assistance association with an official legal charter. Elias Aguirre, Juan Cruz Aguirre, Valentín Aguirre, José Altuna, Toribio Altuna, Estanislao Beobide, Gabriel Elustondo, Guillermo Garay, Florencio Iturraspe (who later changed his surname spelling to Eturraspe), Nicolás Luzuriaga, Juan Orbe, Escolástico Uriona, and Tiburcio Uruburu contacted Angelo Discepola, an Italian-American who owned and operated a drug store at 46 Cherry Street, frequented by the Basques. Discepola was a good friend of the Basques in the neighborhood and knew of their relationships and desire to help each other. He himself was a member of a similar organization for Italian Americans that had created their own legal charter and bylaws. Discepola called one of his relatives, Mr. Scutaro, who was an insurance agent, and another friend, Fiorello LaGuardia, a young attorney who later became the Mayor of New York City, to help the Basques produce the type of organization that would best suit their needs. With the expertise and assistance of their Italian immigrant friends, the *Central Vasco-Americano Sociedad de Beneficiencia y Recreo* was incorporated in New York City in 1913. The name was later corrected in Spanish from *Central* to *Centro Vasco-Americano*, and the Basque-American Benevolent and Recreation Center emerged. Angelo Discepola was given an Honorary Membership and annually invited to celebrate the anniversary dinners with his friends in the Basque community who honored his friendship and assistance. Escolástico Uriona was elected to serve as the first President of the society and he worked the first year to gain membership and to educate the existing Basque population about the benefits of the organization. In the second year's elections, Valentín Aguirre was selected and then consequently year after year re-elected as President and leader of the Basque community. In the Basque neighborhood and in the newly established *Centro Vasco-Americano* the leaders names were familiar to all: Aguirre, Altuna, Arana, Arazosa, Astoreca, Arrien, Elorriaga, Fernández, Garay, Izaguirre, Lezamiz, Lopategui, Pedernales, Rentería, Uruburu, and Zabala. They were usually the first to volunteer to work for the society's activities and the first to help members and Basque families in need.

It is interesting to note that there were two boarding house operators among the small group of founders -Valentín Aguirre and Gabriel Elustondo- and numerous other operators and boarders joined the very first year. Simultaneously in Boise, Idaho, La *Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos*, or Mutual Aid Society, was established for Basques in 1908. This Basque mutual assistance program was begun by boarding-house operators in response to clients' unpaid medicals bills and funeral costs-, which usually fell to the boardinghouse owner when the person was unable to pay his debts. There is no recorded evidence of the same reasoning leading this effort, however, it is certain that Valentín Aguirre maintained regular communications with boarding house operators in Boise after he established the Santa Lucia Hotel in 1910, and as Basques passed through New York on their return home from the American west, they may have mentioned the Boise association while staying at the Basque boarding houses of New York, and vice versa. Because the idea originated in New York in 1905, immigrants staying in New York may have carried it out west, where Boise Basques formalized their society later in 1908, and then the New York Basques incorporated their organization in 1913. Insufficient records exist to prove causation in one direction or the other, but the hypothesis that the two Basque communities influenced each other with examples and information transfer is plausible and likely.

Three hundred and sixty Basque males had participated in the Centro Vasco-Americano Benevolent Society, C.V.A., by 1924, and in that particular year, there were three hundred current and active members according to the annual register of the society. The majority of the sixty others had returned to the Basque Country, or members had passed the allowed age to participate (forty-five years of age). A few had moved out to the western States, Laureano Landa moved to Argentina, and several gave no reasons for their departure from the society. Individuals were concentrated in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and later Staten Island, but there were also those such as José and Antonio Goitia who moved to Scranton, Pennsylvania, and several others who lived in New Jersey.

The first official meeting place for the C.V.A. was actually 41 Cherry Street, complete with a hanging *ikurriña*, Basque flag, and as the membership and funds grew, under the Presidency of Juan de Zabal the organization “constructed a magnificent building” and moved to 48 Cherry Street, as reported in the 1934 Basque picnic program. Lily Aguirre Fradua remembers her parents saying that, “before the Centro Vasco was purchased in 1928, the Basques used to also gather at a house at Catherine and Hamilton Streets where Benito Uruburu lived. They played cards and had dinner parties.” Later, they met at 41 Cherry Street. Juan Cruz and Josefa Lezamiz Aguirre’s house “was the Basque Grand Central Station. Sundays, many people came by visiting all dressed up after church. Ladies always wore hat and gloves, and men always wore a jacket and tie. And the men were smoking cigars.”

THE BASQUE CHARTER AND BY-LAWS

The *Centro Vasco-Americano* of New York: Society of Benevolence and Recreation was incorporated in 1913 for Basque immigrant men and their sons. They established their General Regulations and Governing Laws that included fifty-eight separate detailed Articles. Article 1 began: “The main purpose of the Society is to spread, propagate and extend in an effective and basic manner, the ties of unity and confraternity that should exist among the Basques residing in the U.S.A., and to extend to all its members the benefits offered by the Constitution.” It was clarified as a Basque Club, and that its benefits would be social and benevolent. Article 2, section A. stipulated, “No discussion shall be permitted at the meetings of the Club on political or religious matters.” Of course, it is almost impossible to delineate what is politics and what is not, and in the decades to come, the C.V.A. did involve itself in various ways in home country, and United States politics. Demonstrating their United States patriotism Article II, section B. stated, “The American Flag shall be raised every Sunday, Holiday, and on May 12 [the anniversary of the Centro-Vasco] of every year on top of the Club building.”

To enroll in the *Centro Vasco-Americano* “an indispensable requirement is that one be a native of one of the six Basque provinces” (Nafarroa and Behe Nafarroa were considered as one when eliminating the French-Spanish border that divides them politically) and children of Basques could enroll if they could verify the birth of their *father* in one of the provinces. Angel Viña and his brother were not allowed to join the C.V.A. in 1930 when their uncle, one of the founders Gabriel Elustondo, put their names forward for membership. Their father was Galician. In the 1938, they proposed a change of the rules to allow any Basque with a father or mother of Basque ancestry, and it passed by just two votes of the membership. In 1960, the structure of the organization changed from being one society to now having two sections; a benevolent society, with health benefits for Basque members born to fathers or mothers of Basque ancestry, and separately an account for the recreational and social activities, whose members did not participate in the mutual aid society, and did not require Basque ancestry at all if married to a Basque. Viña said, “It was silly not to keep a Basque person because the father was not Basque. You know I grew up in the old country and my mother was Basque from Ea, but my name wasn’t. Actually if anything it should be the mother. The mother we know who it is, and the father sometimes we don’t.”

Because members were mostly Bizkaian, Juan María “Zacharias” Urrutia Berhau’s father suggested to his son that he join under his mother’s surname, Urrutia. Though of Basque ancestry from both mother and father, Juan María “Zacharias” was born in Montevideo to Lapurdi Basque Berhau and Navarrese Basque mother. Consequently, Juan María Berhau became known to most Basques as Zacharias Urrutia. The overwhelming majority of members in the 1910s and 1920s

were nearly all of Bizkaian origin, such as: Luzuriaga, Bilbao, Egurrola, Pedernales, Zorrozuza, Aguirre, Uruburu, Fradua, Gorostiola, Oleaga, Iribar, Careaga, Betanzos, Elorriaga, Arrien, Sarriugarte, Uriona, Goicoechea, Renteria, and Lopategui. Although, the original members were almost exclusively Bizkaian, they would have allowed a Basque from *Iparralde* to join according to the by-laws; however, it was no secret that they were exclusive in their attitudes. This may be a factor in why Basques from the northern provinces never joined this organization or their activities.

There is evidence that numerous Basque seamen frequented New York and the *Centro Vasco* because they specifically wrote into the bylaws that Basque sailors over sixteen years of age could join the club as “social” members without any right to benefits and their dues would be fifty cents a month. Dues for regular members were \$1.50 per month, which were to be paid “in advance, with regularity and without interruption.” Applicants for full membership had to be between fifteen and forty-five years old. An applicant who was older might be a financial risk because of the probability of health problems with older age. Individuals who applied for membership were required to be sponsored by two current members who would certify that he



Victoria Orbe Gorostiola, John Lezamiz Fradua, and Feliza Orbe Gorostiola were avid supporters of the Centro Vasco-Americano and its activities throughout their entire lives. Courtesy Lily Aguirre Fradua.

was an “honest, healthy, and well-behaved person.” The initial application fee was five dollars. Similar to applying for health insurance coverage today, the applicant underwent a complete examination by the doctor of the Club -which the applicant had to pay for- who then declared the person completely healthy in order to be admitted. The Society’s first official doctor was Dr. J. Cantala on West End Avenue, and his examination charge was one dollar. Dr. A. Babbin on Roosevelt Street was one of the official medical doctors of the C.V.A., and in the Basque picnic programs there were other advertisements for a Dr. J. Babbin, and Dr. L. Weinstock on Oliver Street, also listed as official doctors for the C.V.A. members.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE CLUB

The C.V.A. had a Board consisting of a President, Vice-President, a Secretary, a Controller (auditor), a Treasurer, a Collector, and four Board Members. Candidates were nominated in October, and elections were held in November and December by secret ballot and supervised by a commission. To be President a candidate had to be at least twenty-five years old, and have been a member for at least two years. New Boards of Directors took their offices the following January. The Board had the authority to select the employees who would maintain the facilities of the C.V.A. and the by-laws encouraged them to give preference to members. The C.V.A. charter included an “inspection committee” of two members that would examine the accounts and bookkeeping, and there was to be an official audit every year. Each member had the right to speak for or against the proposals made by the Board of Directors, submit complaints against other members or employees of the C.V.A. As long as there were eight members who wished to maintain the club it could not be dissolved and those eight had the right to carry on. Amendments to the Constitution could be made by approval in three General Meetings, by a majority vote. Article 35 stated, “in the event the Centro Vasco-Americano is dissolved, the funds that exist will be donated to the hospital ‘La Misericordia’ in the city of Bilbao.”

The President’s post was of considerable respect and this person was expected to “guard the prestige of the Centro Vasco-Americano. He will maintain relations with official bodies of the country and will try to maintain friendly relations with other clubs...” The *Centro Vasco-Americano* did have a special relationship with the *Casa Galicia*, and through the decades they held joint dinners and dances for youth, built strong friendships and business ties, and eventually intermarried. Manuel Zuluaga remembers, “The Basques, the Catalans and the Gallegos did tend to help each other out regularly. There were always people that didn’t like them, like I know that when Valentín Aguirre’s daughter married a Gallego, I think they stopped talking to her and people said she was not welcome in their house. But most people got along just fine, like my mom who was Gallega and dad who was Basque. In the end, it’s a person’s values that count, right?” Zachary Berhau also remembers the many collaborative

events at the *Casa Galicia*, to which Basques were always invited. “Oh yeah, we had very good relations with them. And I remember the old-timer Galician men always saying how pretty the Basque women were, and the Basque men talking about the Galician women.”

The President had the power to “demand a medical examination of any member who complains he is not well when there is a suspicion that he is not ill.” Because the society paid a sick benefit, they were attempting to prevent any member from imitating illness to receive benefits, by informing them ahead of time that the President had the right to ask for this examination to prove their illness. The Club reserved the right to expel any members for violating the laws of the *Centro Vasco*, which occurred if anyone acquired “bad habits,” or tried through “individual or collective subversive illegal means to damage the good name of the Club and its interests...” The President would name a committee to investigate the situation and present a report and the accused had the right to present their own defense through another member in good standing. The club members would then convene in a Regular or a Special General Meeting to examine all of the evidence and determine innocence or guilt by a vote of the majority. None of the existing minutes to any meetings show that this situation ever arose in the entire history of the organization.

Board members had the duties “to visit sick members at least three times a week or every day as the circumstances dictate, informing the President of the state of health, as well as medical discharges as they occur...” Of the four Board Members two had to “belong” to Brooklyn and two to New York, giving geographical representation, and these Board Members were responsible for taking the benefit payments to those in their areas who were ill. Gabriel Elustondo was intensely dedicated to the work of the C.V.A. and visiting its sick and hospitalized members. He traveled throughout Brooklyn, Staten Island, Long Island and New York City almost on a daily basis to check on and assist Basques who were ill. He shopped for groceries, cleaned homes, completed medical paperwork, attended and assisted with doctor visits, wrote letters to families in Euskadi and exemplified the objectives of the mutual aid society by caring for fellow Basques.

The language of C.V.A. business, of the minutes and meetings, was to be Spanish and not English. Though the members spoke Basque, they had been formally educated in Spanish only, and were likely not literate in Basque, though the Spanish of a few secretaries also contained many spelling and grammar errors. Basque was their native spoken language, but Spanish was the language of written communication.

The members’ dues were solicited every month by “The Collector” of the C.V.A., who was then paid a percentage of his collections. José Altuna -fondly known as “Giputz” for his home Gipuzkoa- served in this capacity for the first decades of the society. He was employed by the Transportation Department of New York City and therefore he had access to free transportation to all regions of the area. He regularly

visited Basque families, checked on sick members, and faithfully collected membership dues for the *Centro Vasco-Americano* for thirty years. Following the ledgers kept by the secretaries, it has been difficult to determine the exact percentage the collector was paid, and even to be sure of the formula. It seems to have been a combination of a certain amount for new members gained, plus a percentage for all monthly dues collected that month, which equaled approximately between fifteen and eighteen cents on the dollar deposited that month. For example, in August 1919 the Collector earned \$10.50 for collecting dues from fifty-seven members, but a few months earlier in April, he earned \$12.40 for sixty-five members' dues. The tax return of the C.V.A. for 1943 shows in treasurer Guillermo Garay's handwriting, "Collector 10%," under the section for wages, salaries and commissions. At some point, the C.V.A. borrowed one thousand dollars from Valentín Aguirre, and in July 1919 had enough money to pay him back in full.

Members of the society had duties and obligations to follow the rules and pay their dues on time. If they did not pay for six consecutive months they would be completely dropped from membership, and if they were in arrears for three months of missing dues, they would not be eligible for benefits. This was important for their insurance and it was quite a gamble to not pay dues, much as it is today in the U.S. not to have health insurance coverage.

CONSTRUCTING A BUILDING AND AN IDENTITY

The *Centro Vasco Americano: Sociedad de Recreo y Beneficencia* erected their own building at 48-48^{1/2} Cherry Street in 1928. The building construction costs were \$64,000 and by 1928 the members of the Centro Vasco had raised \$79,000 in bonds sales. They chose an available location right in their own neighborhood, and in those days it was referred to as the "Social Building". In order to raise the money necessary to purchase their own property, beginning in January 1928, the Centro Vasco-Americano sold bonds at value of \$100, \$500, \$1000 and \$2000 at an interest rate of six percent per annum. Bond certificates specifically stated that they were to provide funds "for the express purpose of purchasing a building to be used as a Club House for the Centro Vasco Americano Society, Inc." Juan Zabal, Luis Garagarza, Felipe Bilbao, Jerónimo Astoreca, and Valentín Aguirre attested to certificate signatures with their own signatures. Basques bought whatever they could afford, from Luis Mendieta's \$200 worth of bonds, to Juan Zabal's several thousands of dollars' worth.

During the 1930s, the Centro Vasco sponsored numerous activities such as picnics at Ulmer Park in Brooklyn, and dinners and dances at the Social Building. Mary Altuna Toja remembered attending monthly dances at the C.V.A. Soccer games between teams with Basque players drew thousands of spectators. They also rented boats for cruises around the New York harbor, and organized outings for the children

and families to Brooklyn's Coney Island. The ground floor storefront windows included the garment tailoring and cleaning business of Emilio Garcia, whose business card read: "Established in 1918, La Elegancia Tailor Shop- Artists' Favored Place for Distinction and Service, 48 Cherry Street, New York City." The second floor housed the club social space including a bar, restaurant, billiards tables area, and a balcony. Angel Viña remembers that there were Italian marble walls, "oh yeah, it was real fancy. This was the first Basque Center in the United States and they made it so we'd all be proud." Men who were working on the docks and in the shipyards nearby visited the C.V.A. for lunch, followed by a game of billiards or a *mus* card game. A small indoor *pelota* fronton took up the entire third floor and lunchtime also witnessed the sound of a hard ball smacking against the concrete walls. On weekends, the fronton became the dancehall with Basque accordion music playing into the late hours, and about once a year the children also put on a play for the Basque community in that same space. The fourth floor housed Joaquin Astoreca, secretary and assistant manager of the C.V.A. bar and restaurant, in a small apartment, and also another apartment for the Juan Cruz and Josefa Lezamiz Aguirre family. Constantino Orbe, the long-time C.V.A. manager, lived in the top floor of the building.

The initial Manager, Florencio Iturraspe, was paid twenty-seven dollars per week to operate, manage and maintain the C.V.A. His assistant was Elias Aguirre, who earned twenty-five dollars per week. In 1928, the name of the society was corrected from "*Central*" to *Centro Vasco-Americano*, and a booklet was printed in Spanish for members that explained the statutes of the organization. Iturraspe was responsible for purchasing all of the necessary equipment for the grand opening of the building on May 12, 1928, and the expenses included:

- Two dozen chairs \$64.00
- Two billiards tables and other articles \$170.00
- A stovetop fan for the kitchen stove \$42.00
- One desk \$16.00
- Ten pairs of curtains \$7.00
- Six towels .90
- Paint and building maintenance \$230.00
- Two space heaters \$13.10
- One case of soda drink \$1.20
- Two large barrels of beer and six bottles of hard liquor \$25.50

By February 1929, excitement was in the air as the thirty-eight members who could afford to pay, contributed five dollars each for the "Inauguration Celebration" of the *Centro Vasco-Americano*. Valentín Aguirre gave twenty-five dollars for the dinner-dance party enjoyed by the membership. The Basque business, "Astarbi", owned by Jerónimo and Frances Bilbao Astoreca, and Felipe Bilbao regularly delivered chorizos, garbonzos, and imported olive oils to the C.V.A. and its restaurant. The Governor of New York, Alfred E. Smith, attended the festivities.

At this time the typical monthly revenues for the association included the members' fees at now one dollar per month, the profits made from the sale of coffee were approximately fifty dollars per month, and the sale of beer and alcohol, and the profits from the billiards table added another fifty dollars per month. The *Centro Vasco* had a "café" or bar, and all profits were turned over to the Treasurer at the end of the week by Constantino Orbe, who served as the Bar and Restaurant Manager and building caretaker for almost twenty years. Because several new immigrants only had the address of the *Centro Vasco* to give to their families in the Basque Country before departing, Orbe also received and distributed mail and packages for numerous immigrants. It seems that managing the billiards table was of utmost importance because it was addressed in the actual bylaws of the Society. Article 28 stipulates, "If two persons are playing at the Billiard table of the "Centro Vasco Bar" and three or four persons are waiting for them to finish; if the first group do not wish to cede the table to the second group, the Manager will try to get them all to enjoy themselves but if he cannot, he has a perfect right to give the table to the larger group who wish to play for the greater benefit of the 'Centro Vasco-Americano.'"

BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE CENTRO VASCO-AMERICANO

A member who took ill or was the victim of an accident, was to contact the official Club doctor and pay his own expenses, but also send notice to the secretary of the C.V.A. If he was cured within days, he did not collect any benefit. However, if the member was ill longer than seven days, he had a right to two dollars daily for a period of sixteen weeks beginning from the day on which he notified the Club of his illness. However, no payments were to be made to any members if their "illness" or injury was the result of a fight, whether in self-defense or not. After the sixteen weeks of two dollars per day, the member was entitled to seven dollars weekly until the end of ten months from the time he had notified the club. At the end of that time if the member was still not well, "and his condition is hopeless, the Club will give him a sum of one hundred dollars or its equivalent for retirement." All benefits were to be paid to the individual, and not to the family.

A member receiving benefits was expected to be so sick as "not to go to any public places, nor undertake any employment whatsoever, nor make any trips without a medical certificate authorizing it for his health... he must remain at home and receive the weekly visits of the assigned Board Member." The focus of these sick benefits was for those who had to miss work. Of course at this time in the U.S. workforce, paid "sick days" or "personal days" did not exist. Any worker who did not work did not get paid, no matter the reason. For those "members who sail", it was expected that they would obtain a claim form from their Captain, or the doctor on board their ship.

It is common for elderly Basques to remember that the benevolent society worked well for its membership, but that most were never sick, or they were too proud to take any benefits from the C.V.A. Several interviewees for this research as well as previous publications were quite sure that just a handful of people actually ever claimed benefits throughout the decades. However, a detailed investigation of the ledger books of the C.V.A. kept by secretaries Escolástico Uriona, Pedro Toja, Santiago Lazcano, Jerónimo Astoreca, Andoni Aguirre and others, demonstrates this not to be the case. For example, by 1918, the *Centro Vasco* had a membership of fifty-one Basque men, and the monthly dues were seventy-five cents. In that year alone, the C.V.A. paid out for a total of two hundred and six sick days at one dollar per day to the workers for lost wages, and it also covered forty-nine doctor visits, at one dollar per visit if in Manhattan, and two dollars per visit if the doctor traveled to Brooklyn or Staten Island to see the patient. All of that from only fifty-one men. There was also one death in 1918, that of Felix Gorostiola. Secretary Uriona does not give the details surrounding Gorostiola's death, but from the records kept we see that he worked until eleven days before his death, receiving one dollar per day for his family for his last eleven days of life. The C.V.A. arranged for his funeral services and covered the \$154.50 costs and also provided a \$20.00 funerary flower wreath.

Official by-laws stated that in the event of a death of a member with a family in the United States and able to pay for the funeral, the C.V.A. paid the family one hundred and thirty dollars to help defray the expenses of the funeral. If the deceased had no family, the Club took charge of "his internment in his final resting place, with the understanding that the *Centro Vasco-Americano* will also have a wreath, but limiting the expenses of the funeral to no more than one hundred and fifty dollars, in any of these cases." They also took the responsibility to place and pay for obituaries in the local press. Lily Fradua explained, "Oh boy, did I ever organize the funerals. I don't know why I got stuck with it- I guess because my father always volunteered me. Oh yeah, Juan Cruz Aguirre was always helping everyone out and that meant that we all helped. I don't know how many times I called funeral parlors and hired the funeral car and it always said "*Centro Vasco-Americano*" with a sign right on the car. I ordered the wreaths and called the cemeteries. God, I remember one time when we had more than one *Centro Vasco* funeral on the same day, and I was running around making sure the cars were there, and the wreaths, and the people were at the right Churches, and oh God, the bodies had to be in the right places too! Our parents made us go to every single Basque funeral. Death was a part of life you know, and the person was Basque- so, no questions asked. Oh yeah, the funerals were always packed with people." Because Lily was born and educated in the United States, her English language skills were native and without a Basque accent and this responsibility to call the necessary Church officials, funeral parlors, and hearse hires, and to arrange for cemetery plot buying and headstone purchase, etc., fell to her. "I did it. It was no big deal. It was just something that had to be done you know. These Basque people- all alone here and no family for their death- I mean really, to die all alone and not in your own country- well, I just did it."

Many Basques were in the New York area without family, or one might have had relatives in Idaho or Nevada with whom they had no contact, and consequently Juan Cruz and Josefa Aguirre and their family assumed the responsibility to make sure the deceased Basque person received a proper Catholic mass and burial. When widower Pablo Ibarbengoechea died of tuberculosis in 1919, the C.V.A.'s Francisco Bilbao was reimbursed \$10.00 for keeping vigil with Ibarbengoechea's body, and \$14.00 for hosting a prayer vigil with cakes and drinks. The C.V.A. was responsible for the \$204.00 funeral expenses, his cemetery plot for \$35.00, and funerary wreath for \$20.00. The Aguirre family adopted Pablo's young son, Tony, so that he would not need to return to the Basque Country or live in an orphanage in the United States. Tony eventually became to be known as Tony Barben, shortening his name to facilitate the spelling and pronunciation "for the Americans", but his family was always the Aguirre family.

Pedro Toja was president of the C.V.A. in 1936 and that June, the members present at the general meeting unanimously approved a measure to not pay members the daily sick leave and lost wages allotment until after one had already missed seven days of work. Consequently a worker had to miss more than seven days' pay before receiving any benefits. This points to the likelihood that members were indeed using the benefits available at a higher rate than would be profitable for the society. According to the treasurer's ledger books, 1943 was the first year that the C.V.A. began to have higher expenses than income. Health care costs were rising, membership was not increasing, and they had not raised the dues. Members were growing older and were more likely to need medical care and utilize their benefits. Not much had changed regarding the utilization of benefits in the 1930s and 1940s, but by 1944 there were several months when a higher figure of funds were paid out than received in dues from members. Overall that year, the C.V.A. membership deposited \$3758.00 in dues, and \$2738.00 of these were paid out in sick leave and doctor visit payments. The dances, dinners, summer picnic and liquor sales kept the organization afloat. During the 1950s and 1960s, the situation remained quite similar. Each month there were three or four persons at home on sick leave and drawing from the benevolent society funds. As had been the case for decades, each sick member received visits from the C.V.A. directors wishing them well and trying to help the family. The visits also served to corroborate that the member was indeed home and sick, or unable to work due to illness or accident. The C.V.A. secretary and treasurer had to deal with the paperwork of insurance companies and doctors and hospitals regularly. They checked on members who claimed they were sick, and they asked for second opinions of additional doctors to prevent any fraud.

The March 1938, members' meeting minutes show that a Director, José Altuna, had visited a sick person twice at their home, but the person was not there. They questioned his state of illness if he was not home in bed, and they voted to send Guillermo Garay out to check a third time and ask the supposedly ill member for an explanation. The C.V.A. Board also spent time writing to doctors to ask about pa-

tients and their statuses. In many cases the doctor signed a certificate to the C.V.A. stating that the person should be able to work, and as a result that member's sick pay was ended based on the doctor's judgment. When Silvestre Elorrieta presented documentation from the Hudson Street Clinic and Main Hospital that he had been receiving therapeutic treatment for four months, he was denied benefits because he had not followed the rules of previously notifying the C.V.A., nor allowing them to choose his doctor. These situations sound amazingly similar to dealing with today's Health Maintenance Organizations, HMO.

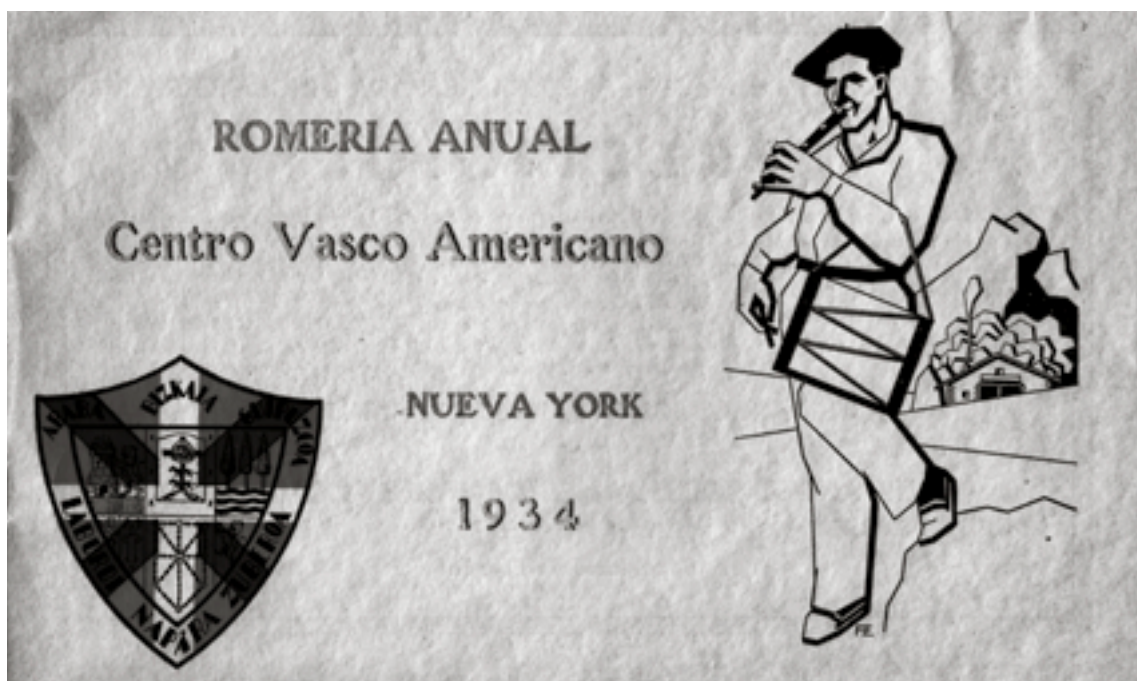
In the 1930s, the C.V.A.'s typical monthly income from membership dues was between \$325.00 and \$365.00. Expenditures for sick leaves, hospital stays, and doctor visits were typically approximately \$225 per month, though there were several months of deficit when the expenses for sick leave, \$18 per week, were higher than the total of dues paid. There was a total of one hundred and sixty-nine full members in 1940, and overall during the 1940 fiscal year, the C.V.A. lost \$110.00 and the total savings in the bank were reduced to a mere \$589.51.

The C.V.A. held regular dances, dinners, and summer picnics and these events were meant to boost the balance of the bank account. They also asked for sponsors, such as the financial supporters of the 1934 Basque festival who included, Valentín Aguirre, Juan Cruz Aguirre, Delfín Bilbao, José Altuna, José Lezamiz, Florencio Laucirica, Jerónimo Astoreca, Guillermo Garay, Juan Zabal, Vidal Mendizabal, Pedro Toja, Constantino Orbe, Antonio Zarandona, Santiago Lazcano, Silvestre Elorrieta, Isidro Madariaga, Marcelo Bilbao, Francisco Santamaría, Marcelino Garay, Pedro Madariaga, Tomás Loiti, Ciriaco Laucirica, y Jesús Echevarria. Antolin Pedernales was the main organizer for the event. The 1934 *Centro Vasco* Basque festival picnic and dance were held in August at Ulmer Park in Brooklyn. People met at the C.V.A. on Cherry Street, and buses were hired to transport them to the park, complete with accordionists to provide musical entertainment while waiting in traffic. There were soccer games and running races. They had Basque folk dance contests followed by a general dance for all to enjoy until midnight.

In October 1938, the membership at the monthly General Meeting proposed that Article 4 of the statutes of the C.V.A. be changed to allow applicants who could prove that their mother was Basque. The Founders' definition of "Basque" had been not only ancestrally and biologically exclusive, but was also sexist and gender biased. No other Basque organization in the history of the United States ever defined as "Basque" only those persons born to a Basque male. Raimundo Altunaga's motion was seconded, but did not pass unanimously as had approximately 95% of all other General Meeting motions for the previous twenty-five years. The proposal passed by 57% of those present to vote.

At the same meeting Nicolas Luzuriaga proposed that the age requirements for membership be extended from forty-five years old to fifty-five years old, which would

increase the number of people eligible to participate. Both of these measures were intended to augment membership and income to the C.V.A., and were successful in doing so. Former members, who were forced to leave the organization because they were older than forty-five, came back and signed up again. At the next month's meeting, members were given information regarding the high number of sick members from the past year. The illnesses had been of long duration, and the funds of the C.V.A. were almost completely depleted. They voted to add a temporary amendment to their own statutes, which changed and cut in half the members' sick benefits package from \$18.00 per week to \$9.00 per week. This was to be enforced from December 1938, until May 1939. In May 1939, they voted once again to extend the amendment and pay \$9.00 instead of \$18.00 per week for another three months until August 1939. Valentín Aguirre suggested that all members be asked to donate five dollars specifically to pay for the current sick members since they were receiving only half of what they normally would have, but since the August picnic was around the corner and this usually brought five hundred dollars in profit, they decided to use the picnic profits to pay for the sick members, and as of September 1939, went back to the \$18.00 per week payment. In 1939, Juan Cruz Aguirre suggested to allow younger



The Centro Vasco-Americano hosted summer festival picnics with the objective of raising money for the association and its services to members.



The 1944 Anniversary Banquet of the Centro Vasco-Americano was celebrated at the 48 Cherry Street Social Building in May.

members between ages of 16-21, who would pay half of the regular dues, or \$1.00 a month, and who if ill would be paid \$9.00 per week, or half of what older members were given, and this motion also passed the general meetings. Younger people were unlikely to get sick and draw benefits, but their dues would add to the available funds. These aims at substantive and significant changes were the first indications that there were financial difficulties in the benevolent society, as well as changes in the attitudes of its membership.

THE 1940S

An annual Valentine's Day dance was added to the schedule of events, which usually made about thirty dollars, and other dances cleared about forty dollars in profits. Several more picnics were added during the summer months and held in the Staten Island park where the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge stands today. For the May 1940 anniversary dance, the Board had to discuss if they could afford a band and decided to



The 1940 New Year's Eve banquet and dance held inside the 48 Cherry Street Centro Vasco-Americano Social Building. Built in 1928, the building housed an indoor fronton, bar and restaurant, C.V.A. offices, and two floors for resident apartments. The building and others in the area were destroyed in order to make space for the construction of the Alfred E. Smith Houses.

go ahead only if they could find one for less than a twenty-five dollar fee. Potential fundraising became a more weighty consideration of C.V.A. events, and “successful activities” such as the summer picnics, became financial necessities for the organization rather than purely social events. The San Ignacio picnic of July 31, 1940, cleared \$300 after paying for all expenses. The 1941 Basque picnic had 193 men and 170 women pay entrance (men and women were charged different prices), and volunteers sold two hundred and eleven programs -printed by Spanish-American printing-with advertisements, which also helped pay expenses. They leased the park for thirty dollars, had to pay for one policemen for security, rented a band for eighty-two dollars, and organized four soccer teams and a referee for afternoon entertainment. They even spent \$174 to buy shirts for the players, and pay for the referee’s salary. The radio and *La Prensa* advertisements and announcements helped get sports fans to the celebration and the event brought in \$462 in profit. The 1941 fiscal year closed with a positive \$1351.13, and the Board of Directors decided to remodel the bar and café area and bought new sitting couches. They also set aside \$250.00 for maintenance and paint for the salon and fronton of the C.V.A.

Dr. Frank J. Discepola was named as the official doctor of the C.V.A. in 1942, and there were two hundred and twenty male members of the C.V.A. -several of them away at military service during World War II. Each year, two Board Members acted as independent auditors of the treasurer report and Juan Zabal and Alberto Uriarte agreed with the annual financial report: Total receipts of the organization were \$3807.73 and total expenses \$3566.44, for a 1942 annual balance of \$241.29. In 1943, the New Year’s Eve Dance made twenty-seven dollars in profit and the *Aberri Eguna* \$89.70, but the summer picnic in August brought in \$667.35 for the Basque organization to fund other activities, including Rufino Pedernales’ suggested \$100.00 donation to the United Service Organization, U.S.O., which organized civilian war efforts. The next year the C.V.A. hosted picnics in June, July, August, September, and October. There was a slight problem with President Valentín Aguirre’s incorrect filing of the C.V.A. taxes that year, but after much paperwork was completed and the missing 990 Form returned, the association again continued their good relationship with government officials. The 990 Form required certain information for the Internal Revenue Service from organizations exempt from income tax, and he had failed to complete and send it.

Though budgets were tight and there was some preoccupation with paying the sick members’ benefits, the most important goals of the C.V.A. remained constant: “to spread, propagate and extend in an effective and basic manner, the ties of unity and confraternity that should exist among the Basques residing in the U.S.A., and to extend to all its members the benefits offered by the Constitution.” The C.V.A. participated in the 1939-1940 New York World’s Fair with several press interviews about Basque culture and members gave talks at small conferences to draw attention to Basque culture and history. The Basque center bar and restaurant remained open every day. Basque dinners and dances hosted an average of two hundred people; the

Centro Vasco Americano

Gran Romería Campestre

en el

ASTORIA CASINO

(Antes Steinswell Oval)

40-20 — 19th AVENUE LONG ISLAND CITY

DOMINGO 28 DE JULIO DE 1940

DESDE LAS 11 DEL DIA EN ADELANTE



★ PROGRAMA ★

The program of the annual summer Basque festival included advertisements from Basque, Catalan, and Galician businesses in the old Basque neighborhood at Water and Cherry streets. Basques patronized each other's businesses as well as those of Spanish-speaking friends and neighbors.

Basque dancers' youth troupe included about thirty consistent dancers; a Basque choir entertained three or four times each year; *mus* card playing tournaments were popular with approximately thirty teams playing; and the fronton hosted regular *pelota* matches. The future of the organization and of Basque collective activities looked secure.

Nevertheless, with the war victory passed, the City of New York turned to domestic issues and plans of urban renewal. Without regard to residents' wishes, the city purchased a significant portion of the Basque neighborhood properties, including most of Catherine, Cherry, and Water Streets. An independent auditor's report of 1946 finances shows that the C.V.A. ownership of the property at 48 Cherry Street ceased on July 31, 1946. The New York City Housing Authority then acquired the property for condemnation proceedings. The land and building were valued at \$35,710.76. It paid off remaining C.V.A. bondholders, and commenced to the demolition of the historic Basque boardinghouses, the Galician and Catalan delivery services, the small family owned grocery stores where neighbors had met to catch up on the local news, Discepola's drug store where Basques and Italians had helped each other, and 48 Cherry Street. The marble walls of the United States' first *Centro Vasco-Americano* came down, as did the Orbe, Astoreca, and Aguirre family apartments. Longtime friend and renter of the street level rooms, Emilio Garcia of the La Elegancia Tailor Shop, wrote his last check and letter of thanks to the *Centro Vasco-Americano*, and its President Juan Zabal:

New York City August 30, 1946

Sr. Juan Zabal:

My dear friend, in accordance with the instructions of the Centro Vasco, I have been directed to send my last rental check for August to the City, and those of June and July to you, and with pleasure I attach the check that resolves our financial accounting. However, never could it pay for the good relations and rapport and how well you all treated me. This is impossible to repay with any amount of money.

I remain completely and extremely thankful and grateful, and it saddens my spirit entirely that we will not be able to continue our business with each other.

Dear friend Juan, on behalf of my father please give Mr. Valentín his very best regards, and I wish you and your dear family complete happiness. Without further ado, I remain faithfully yours,

Your dear friend,
Emilio Garcia

More than a half-century of Basque community sharing, and nearly two decades of Basque cultural functions at 48-48^{1/2} Cherry Street in lower Manhattan, ceased.

THE CENTRO VASCO-AMERICANO'S OWN MIGRATION

The Basque “Social Building” on Cherry Street no longer exists, and actually most of Cherry Street no longer exists. The entire neighborhood was razed to the ground to construct public housing apartment buildings, the Governor Alfred E. Smith Houses. According to interviews between Nancy Zubiri and Irene Renteria Aguirre conducted in the early 1990s, the C.V.A. realized that there were not nearly enough funds to purchase a new building in order to continue their community gatherings and activities (Zubiri 1998:511). The September 1948 bank statement of the Real Estate account of the Centro Vasco Americano Society, Inc. from Manufacturers Trust Company showed a total balance of \$1076.28. The Board of Directors decided to relocate temporarily to a building nearby at 95 Madison Street, and then later moved to two different locations on East Broadway between Pike and St. James Place. The area was an Italian neighborhood before it became today’s Chinatown.

Upon joining the C.V.A., each member was given a consecutive number, which was maintained throughout his years of membership since 1913, and was never changed. Through this numbering system I have determined that by 1951, there had been 445 Basque male members since its incorporation in 1913. Some of these individuals represented themselves and were simply individual, single males. Others represented a family with four or five children who participated in the C.V.A. activities. Basque cultural maintenance activities continued and txistulari and dance choreographer Jon Oñatibia created an evening performance of South American music and dance, supported by the C.V.A., in May 1952. November 29, 1952 the C.V.A. hosted a dance at the Great Central Palace, though most of the dances throughout the 1950s and 1960s were held at Prospect Hall in Brooklyn.

Alberto Uriarte served as President for numerous terms during the 1950s and 1960s and attempted to maintain an energetic and growing organization. However, this coincided with the next generation of Basques’ coming into adulthood, most of them moving farther out into the suburbs in Brooklyn, Staten Island, Long Island, and small towns of Valley Cottage, Plattekill and White Plains, New York. It was more difficult for people to travel and come into the city. Most young Basques were now intermarrying with other ethnic groups, losing their Basque and Spanish speaking skills and “didn’t really need the Centro Vasco at that time in life.” Second and third generation Basques were attending universities, working, establishing families, and attempting to buy homes in the New York City suburbs. The changing demographics also affected the C.V.A. elections. In the 1940s, the C.V.A. had four directors from New York, and four more from Brooklyn. In the 1950s, two of the positions representing Brooklyn were reapportioned to represent Basques in Staten Island. In the ledgers of 1951-1952, for the first time English was introduced into the official record keeping. Interestingly, though most members spoke some Basque, and Basque was one of the languages of the social activities, Spanish was the language of the official

ledger and of the minutes kept from business meetings. Now, for the first time there were members whose Basque and Spanish abilities were almost non-existent, and as Basque speakers have the habit of doing, they adapted to the few English-only speakers, instead of helping the English-only speakers learn Basque or Spanish.

Basques held their social gatherings at 95 Madison Street until late 1952. The space was much smaller than their home at 48 Cherry Street, but had a substantial bar and open area set for card tables and card parties. Iñaki Aberasturi described it as “okay, but much too small for dances and dinners.” The organizational leadership created a special commission in 1952, whose charge it was to find a new locale. They culminated the search with a place just a few streets away from their small 95 Madison Street space to a corner building at 63 East Broadway in Manhattan. The rooms needed several repairs, maintenance, and painting, and Damaso Goitia, Ceferino Ormaechea, Marcelo Bilbao, Pedro Toja, Julian Basterrechea, Pablo Monasterio, Rufino Lopategui, Amalio Elorriaga, and Juan Larrinaga volunteered hundreds of hours of labor to improve the site. They stripped and varnished the hardwood floors, laid new ceramic tiles, fixed the plumbing, replaced electrical switches, and cleaned and painted nearly every wall. They purchased new windows, several pieces of furniture, a new heater, a new refrigerator, and repaired the existing freezer. The East Broadway location even had a small library with many books donated by Pedro and Mary Toja, and Lily and Martin Fradua Sr. In January 1953, the Basques inaugurated their new location with a celebratory buffet dinner -males paid five dollars, but there was no charge for females- and the *Centro Vasco-Americano* was back in business.

Members discussed bringing in their non-member friends for occasional drinks or a coffee to the new Basque center, and in 1953 Antonio Gorostiola proposed that bringing non-members to visit the renovated locale might interest them in being members and perhaps they would participate in C.V.A. activities. Therefore the board approved the idea and non-members were allowed into the building “if they were respectable persons.” In 1953, the C.V.A. also created a category of membership for non-Basques called “*socios protectores*”, meaning patrons or friends. They had no voting rights but could participate in the society’s activities and they were known as the Pro-C.V.A. Club. The Basques initiated additional activities that had more of an “American” twist to them, such as the first Halloween Day dinner, which was held in 1953 at the new locale at 63 East Broadway. It is not clear that there were disguises or costumes worn as they are today as the *Euzko-Etxea* Halloween festivities. The monthly membership rates were raised from two dollars to three dollars in 1953, and the corresponding sick pay was also raised from eighteen to twenty-one dollars per week.

The Basque society’s events held together friendships and ties to the Basque community that were quickly unraveling as families moved out of Manhattan to the suburbs. They also provided needed income to the organization at an average of \$250 per event. These were family events and children were always, and remain

today, a part of the Basque functions. Sodas, beer, and wine were available and children devoured cakes and sweets. Lower Manhattan rental and building maintenance costs were extremely high, and the benevolent segment of the society often only made marginal revenues. There was no summer picnic held in 1954 due to a late start and the inability to find a park large enough to hold the crowd. The C.V.A. board had been preoccupied with the move and maintenance at the new locale and had not inquired early enough to obtain a park reservation. It was a substantial blow to the treasury, and in November they began the search for the next August 1955 festival. President Alberto Uriarte's message to the directors that year was that "the picnic is as important to the morale of the C.V.A. as it is to its bank account."

The *Centro Vasco-Americano* moved again in 1955 just a few doors down to 71-73 East Broadway. Ironically, in 1951, José Betanzos, Isidro Idoyaga, Andres B. Santa-maría, and Casimiro Arana each had listed 71-73 East Broadway as their residence, and it may have been the previous site of a boardinghouse. Uriarte obtained the three hundred dollar liquor license for the new C.V.A. locale in 1955, but in the process of completing all the necessary paperwork, accountants discovered that the C.V.A. was in arrears for not paying a local tax for over twenty years. Also, funds from the benevolent society were being used to cover deficit spending for the bar, then managed by Eugenio Arteta, which was not allowed. The bar deficits were not unusual, and members began to worry about the future stability of the organization. In the past, the 48 Cherry Street bar and café had made profits which were used to cover any deficits of the mutual aid activities for sick workers, and now at the 71-73 East Broadway location insufficient numbers of people were attending regularly, and the added costs of renting other facilities to hold events cut into profits. Added to this problem was the circumstance that after C.V.A. members had made all the repairs, and cleaned and painted the space, the owner now thought it was more valuable and raised the rent to \$115 per month. In September 1955, another committee was formed to try to find a larger space with lower rent, and though often "living month to month," the Basque events continued.

The 1955 picnic held in Staten Island raffled off prizes including a toolbox, and a new piece of electronics many had never seen before- a portable radio. It was another successful event gathering numerous Basques (two hundred and three paid entrances) from around the east coast. The Basque colony participated with the Confederation of Hispanic Societies during the 1940s and 1950s, and in April 1955, they organized an impressive parade through New York City to exhibit their dancing and music, identifying themselves with *ikurriñas* and banners. The C.V.A. directors also marched and represented the Basque community. They repeated the collaboration in the Columbus Day parades each year throughout the 1950s and 1960s with adults - waving three large *ikurriñas* on eight-foot flagpoles- and children dressed in traditional Basque dance costumes, and even preparing a parade float for the youngest children to ride. Jon Oñatibia began giving Basque language and dance classes for children, and the Center's space was also utilized for an outside teacher and students

of Hispanic backgrounds to come for Spanish language classes once a week. In the spring of 1955, Santiago Lazcano and Gregorio Hormaechea began the organization of a grand ball, with so many attendees it had to be held at the salon of the *Casa Galicia de Unidad Gallega*. The December Dance, with gifts for the children brought by Santa Claus, was held at Prospect Hall in Brooklyn, and the 1956 Valentine's Dance was at the Democratic Club on Market Street. "We really needed a different place. A large portion of the profits from the events were used to pay the rentals of the dance hall facilities and we just never got ahead," said Emilia Doyaga.

The C.V.A. followed Roman Catholic traditions and no events were held during Lent, until 1957 when the economic situation of the society was so stretched that they decided they needed to organize another fundraising dance. The membership and Board of Directors voted "yes" unanimously to waive the religious ban on celebrations and to hold their dance.

The Basque summer festival picnics remained the most popular events with two hundred to four hundred people attending. The August 1957 picnic included *bacalao con pimientos*, codfish with peppers, and *tortilla*, or potato omelet, and beer for the



Between two to four hundred people attended the annual summer Basque picnics. Basques traveled from New Jersey, Connecticut, Washington D.C., and from all over New York to see relatives and friends and to enjoy their ethnic culture.

dancers, but families brought their own picnic foods and drinks. The Basque picnics usually included sporting events for adults and balloons and games for children, mus card games, and an orchestra to finish the day with an evening open-air dance. They were an important source of income for the society and normally cleared between eight hundred and one thousand dollars profit. Though hundreds of Basques participated in these special events, each of the monthly meetings had the board of directors and usually only six to twelve other members in attendance. Consequently the same people performed almost all of the work for the entire community and the decision-making was completely influenced by only a handful of people. Directors of the C.V.A. Board were often the same individuals for years, even decades. They committed their free time to visiting sick members in the hospital and at home, participating in monthly meetings, organizing activities, and implementing C.V.A. rules and regulations. This was a substantial responsibility and obligation for the person and their family. Until 1959, directors even paid for many expenses of the activities from their own personal resources. When Andoni Aguirre tried to resign from his post as president of the Fiestas Committee, he stated that besides the amount of time taken away from his wife and children, he simply could not afford to spend so much of his



Basques families gathered often to enjoy Basque ethnic cuisine and music. Elderly mixed with youth and children to pass on traditions and friendship. Here, the Renteria and Aguirre Basque families gathered for a day together in 1941. Courtesy Anna M. Aguirre.

own money to cover all of the taxi, phone, printing, mailing, and advertising costs of the C.V.A. activities. Santiago Lazcano proposed that from then forward any costs for C.V.A. activities be reimbursed. This should have helped draw more people into leadership positions that could not afford it before, however, the same people continued for almost another decade.

At the close of 1957, Juan Zabal proposed a large-scale mobilization of members and other Basques in the New York area who were not members, with the goal of increasing participation and constructing a new building for the C.V.A. They regularly announced their dances and picnics in the Spanish language daily papers *La Prensa* and *El Diario de Nueva York* that year hoping to draw additional people and consequently augment membership. He proposed “to pay three percent interest on all amounts of money deposited with the society” by way of selling bonds, and those present at the General Meeting accepted unanimously. There is no other recorded mention of this particular proposal in any of the subsequent meetings’ minutes. In 1958, the C.V.A. received a letter and personal visit from Julio Garzon, Mr. Errecalde, and Mr. Agustin from the Spanish charitable society, *La Nacional*, explaining that they were planning to erect their own building and hoped to lease the extra space to other organizations. They were extending an invitation to the Basques to rent one of the floors, or appropriate adequate space for their functions, and also to buy bonds for their project. They were extending the same invitation to the *Casa Galicia*, hoping to put the Hispanic societies, which had collaborated together for years, all under one roof.

An extraordinary meeting of the entire membership was called for April, however, only seven people attended. The discussion led by Jerónimo Astoreca, Cresenio Martitegui, and Marcelo Bilbao argued that the C.V.A. had lost many of its members and that it was “a much smaller society than before”, and that they did not “think it convenient to move the C.V.A. for the circumstances it would cause.” It is not clear why the mood changed so drastically in a matter of months. Perhaps the site of the new structure was not suitable or accommodating for travel, or perhaps the costs were prohibitive. The previous balance of the C.V.A. in April 1957 had totaled \$5250.59. It might also be the case that members did want to be subsumed under a “Hispanic” organization, or be associated too closely with the “Spanish”. It could be that the Basques simply wanted to remain friendly though completely independent from the other societies. The recorded minutes do not give any further details of the discussion, and neither could any of those people interviewed years later give any information as to why the C.V.A. did not accept this seemingly advantageous offer. It suggests, as the discussion denotes, that members were simply worried about the financial stability of the organization and an inability to pay the rent at a new site due to a reduced membership. The presence of only seven members strengthened the debate against involving themselves in any serious financial commitment. Regardless, several members remained adamant about finding a new location away from 71-73 East Broadway, and perhaps the ledger records showing the frequent purchase of “liquid for cockroaches” had something to do with it.

The need for a different location arose again in mid 1959 when the C.V.A. President, Alberto Uriarte, discussed with the visiting Basque Government-in-exile President, José Antonio de Aguirre, the possibility of finding a larger building which would enable the Basque community to have their dinners and dances in their own locale. President Aguirre thought it was a good idea to gather several businesses and offices related to Basque themes and was willing to move the Basque Delegation offices to a new C.V.A. building in order to help them economically with an additional renter. Half a century ago, the C.V.A. President and the President of the Basque Government briefly examined the same idea that today the Basque International Cultural Center has put forward.

Rent at 71-73 East Broadway was still \$115 per month and in 1959, the C.V.A. continued as the occupant with one hundred and thirty-five members. Hoping to increase revenues, the Board hired Damaso Gotilla the next year to go to the Center each day and have the place open for anyone who wanted to stop by for a coffee or drink. In April 1960, they organized a dance at Prospect Hall in Brooklyn, and the youth requested a group called “Los Bocheros” who played a little faster music; the Juanito Lopez Orchestra had entertained for the C.V.A. March dance, and both events were successful. Although by the end of the year their total annual net earnings showed only \$766.51, in 1960 the C.V.A. completed their goals of charity work. In collaboration with the *Centro Galicia* (later known as Unity Gallega of the U.S., Inc.), and the *Sociedad la Nacional de Socorros Mutuos* (later known *La Sociedad Espanola de Socorros Mutuos “Centro Español”*) associations, Basques organized a benefit dance for the victims of the 1960 Chilean earthquake and tsunami that followed it with eighty feet high waves on the Chilean coast. So many people attended that Esteban Aspiazu was put in charge of getting a policeman for security. The three groups held another successful dance together to raise funds for the Spanish Emigration Commission in 1961.

THE FIRST AND SECOND “GENERATION” GAP

The United States post-war economy was booming. Families could afford to buy their first cars, and their first homes. The suburbs were the place to be and one after another, the Basque families left Manhattan for the green parks, forests, and peace of Brooklyn, Long Island, Staten Island, Plattekill, and other areas away from the metropolis. Teenagers and young adults began pushing the limits of family expectations with greater individualism and experiments in various forms of relationships and living styles. It was “the sixties,” and the Basque community was by no means immune to the effects of social change.

The modern youth of the Basque community wanted to participate in activities, but on their own terms. In 1958, the sixteen to twenty-one year olds proposed be-

coming “friends” in the same manner that the women members had, however, with the right to keep all of their dues for their own projects and activities and not merge the benevolent account with the Juventud, or Youth, account. Wishing to increase the membership and activities of the organization, the C.V.A. agreed with the idea to create two separate bank accounts; one for the benevolent society, and one for the social recreational society that would include the group Juventud, though not exclusively serve only their functions.

The *Juventud* hosted their first members’ dinner at the club in December 1958, with the support of the C.V.A. However, a few of their subsequent activities were seen as too independent of the parent organization when they arranged activities without informing or inviting the older members. There were several misunderstandings and difficult relationships between persons in the *Juventud* and persons in the leadership of the C.V.A. and the first years of their existence were not free of problems. Questions about the youth group helping pay rent for the space of the C.V.A. and issues of responsibility for their expenses, and regarding profits from activities, caused many disagreements. At the June 1960 C.V.A. membership meeting, there was a heated debate regarding the relationship with Basque youth



Txistulari Jon Oñatibia led the group Juventud Vasca with dancing, music, and choral instruction.

and their desires to try new activities and to be members of the recreational aspect of the organization. In protest of the C.V.A. board not allowing the president of the Committee for Fiestas, Blas Echave, to organize separate activities for the youth, Echave resigned his post. Tempers were escalating and President Uriarte had to mandate the end of the discussion. At this point, dance instructor and musician, Jon Oñatibia, threatened to stop participating in the society and stop playing for the dancers group. The board minutes show that the members asked the President to contact another txistulari that was living in the New York area.

By October, the President was upset about the rumors and critiques circulating that the board of the C.V.A. was not youth-friendly and that they were not acting to try to bridge the gap. The group *Juventud* was going their own separate way with activities independent of the parent organization, and no intentions of future collaboration. The younger members wanted to join the *Cento Vasco-Americano*, not for the benevolent purposes of health and work insurance, but rather for cultural reasons and they also wanted a vote in the choice of activities and in leadership positions. The United States Social Security Administration was in place and larger employers were now beginning to allow a sick day leave or medical emergency leave. For younger Basques, the C.V.A.'s charitable and mutual aid society seemed unnecessary. Eventually leaders produced a compromise when Andoni Aguirre suggested that the members of *Juventud* should be able to join the recreational aspect of the C.V.A., and that existing members of the benevolent society of the C.V.A. also be automatic members of the recreational society- without paying any extra membership fees. However, all new members to the C.V.A. benevolent society would also have to join the recreational segment and pay an additional fee for those activities.

Andoni Aguirre and Jon Oñatibia tried to guide the board of directors into seeing that the youth were the future of the Basque community and had to be given autonomy to have their own leadership and activities. Oñatibia himself was interested in the youth and maintaining ethnic culture and recreational aspects of Basque identity, but not a work insurance policy. Andoni Aguirre, Emilio Fernandez, Luis Ostolozaga, and Jacinto Goicoechea, led a new committee created to produce joint activities. Father José María Larrañaga described what he found in New York when he arrived from Zumarraga, Gipuzkoa in 1962, "East Broadway was a kind of dirty and ugly place, no young people wanted to go there, it was going down, down. They really needed something different. In those years kids were turning to anything to find themselves and it was even more important to help them maintain being Basque. I still talk about this in my sermons today. It is important to remember who you are and where you come from. We are Basque and we have to keep that alive. In the 1960s, that was the message I had to get to these young Basques."

LOCATING AND RE-LOCATING

The summer Basque festival “Gran Romería Anual” was held at the Astoria Casino in Long Island City with sack races, egg carrying and throwing games, tug-of-war (the bachelors versus the married men), mus tournaments of Basques from New York versus Basques from Brooklyn, and music and dancing all afternoon. Jon Oñatibia played *txistu* and drum and Mr. Mendiola played the accordion. There were soccer games with trophies donated and presented by Valentín Aguirre, and the evening dance featured the orchestra of Tony Novo. The 1962 picnic and dance was another successful event for President Emilio Fernandez. Many youth attended and after paying all expenses for the orchestra, mailings, drinks, and raffle prizes, the C.V.A. still cleared over seven hundred dollars.

During these frustrating years of arguments between members, leaders, and the *Juventud*, followed by changing the organizations’ structure and by-laws, Secretary Santiago Lazcano and President Uriarte decided to clean out the bookshelves and the safe box of the C.V.A. office, and they proceeded to throw away numerous boxes of papers and receipts that they thought were unnecessary and taking up too much space. Unfortunately, many of those were also the historical records of the organization. They also decided to do a few building repairs. In 1962, Melchor Menchaca painted the interior of the rented space, and the society purchased an electric heater, its first television set, and burglary insurance for the office. The new liquor license for the bar was \$300, Delmonico’s was paid forty-five dollars for bar supplies, and nine dollars went to Coffee Bustelo’s for coffee supplies. A cold beer cost twenty-five cents and sodas fifteen cents.

Recently arrived Basques, Enrike and Aurora Arana, remember that this club space was also small and when the Vice President of the Basque Government-in-exile, Javier de Landaburu, visited New York in 1962, the C.V.A.’s banquet in his honor had to be held at the *Casa Galicia* because of insufficient space at the new locale. Outside of playing *mus* and enjoying a drink with friends, the C.V.A. salon had only been utilized for a baptismal party. In September the board of directors voted unanimously to enforce a rule that had previously been ignored. The rule of the C.V.A. was that only members could enter their club space. This meant that members could not bring friends into the bar as agreed to years earlier. Until now, a few local workers and other non-members from the neighborhood had been customers of the bar, which of course brought in extra revenue from the billiards table and from coffee and drinks. Due to a few members complaining, the C.V.A. leaders decided to enforce the “members only” rule. It proved to be a detrimental decision as members could no longer invite non-member friends, and fewer people frequented the C.V.A., which resulted in lower monthly sales.

In 1958, Andoni Aguirre had proposed that the *Centro Vasco* admit female members as “socias protectoras”, if not full members, at least as patrons or friends of the

Children have always been an important part of the Basque community's activities and are welcomed for all dances, picnics, dinners, and festivities. Photo 1955. Courtesy Anna M. Aguirre



organization. Daughter Anna M. Aguirre remembers, “They didn’t want to admit women to the *beneficencia* because they would have been required to pay for pregnancies and childbirth complications. They couldn’t agree on what services would be covered, and which would not, for women. So for the benevolent part of the society- which was really a health insurance plan- the women never were admitted as full members.” They were approved for admittance as “protectoras,” friends of the society, and nearly forty women joined immediately, but women still had no voting privileges in the C.V.A. Consequently they formed their own group in 1966: *Andrak*, the Ladies Auxiliary.

In 1969, the C.V.A. moved again, back to 63 East Broadway, but only secured a five-year lease. Membership of the C.V.A. in 1971 totaled one hundred and fifty-eight people. The annual schedule of activities still mirrored that of the past five decades: New Year’s Eve Dance, Valentine’s Dance, March dinner, *Aberri Eguna*, May Anniversary dinner and dance, a summer picnic that might be in June or September since the club basically closed for the summer months while people were away from New York traveling, Halloween dinner, and the Christmas dinner, dance and children’s party.

There were sporadic Basque language courses given, always a children's dance group, and a teenagers dance groups that practiced during the school year for the *Aberri Eguna* performance, and then vacationed for the summer. *Aberri Eguna* became the highlight event of the year, and still is the highest attended of all the Basque community's functions, as is described in the upcoming chapter on the Euzko-Etxea of New York.

The space problem was still not resolved and large events always necessitated renting another hall. Basque dances were held at the *Casa Galicia*, at Webster Hall, or at Prospect Hall in Brooklyn. The next phase in the development of the Basque community emerged when one of the members learned from a friend that an old two-story Greek Orthodox Church in a Polish neighborhood of Brooklyn was selling its building. In 1973, the *Centro Vasco-Americano* membership discussed, debated, and agreed to end twenty-five years of leasing space and to purchase their own property; a brick building in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn, across the East River.



Earning a in Employment, and Professions

(04)

Living New York: Businesses, of Immigrant Basques

I Hear America Singing

*I Hear America singing, the varied carols I hear;
Those of mechanics—each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong;
The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work;
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat—the deckhand singing on
the steamboat deck;
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench—the hatter singing as he stands;
The wood-cutter's song—the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning, or at the
noon intermission, or at sundown;
The delicious singing of the mother—or of the young wife at work—or of the girl
sewing or washing—Each singing what belongs to her, and to no one else;
The day what belongs to the day—At night, the party of young fellows, robust,
friendly,
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs.*

Walt Whitman

SEAMANSHIP

Totalling an area of more than 1,200 square miles, the New York harbor comprises more than four hundred and thirty square miles of water including the vast one hun-

dred and twenty square mile expanse of the Lower Bay, and above the Narrows, the deep and protected waters of the Upper Bay. It is easily the world's largest natural harbor with seven bays, four river mouths, and four estuaries, and the historical importance of the marine element cannot be overstated. From the north, the Hudson River links the harbor with the North American continental interior, channeling the produce and products of the upper mid-west United States to New York via the Great Lakes and the New York State Barge Canal, and to the east, Long Island Sound provides a route from the harbor to the New England coastline and on to the Atlantic Ocean.

When Basques began immigrating to the east coast in the mid 1800s, the Port of New York was technically eleven separate and distinct ports. According to Joseph F. Meany Jr., Senior Historian at the New York State Museum in Albany, it boasted a developed shoreline of over six hundred and fifty miles comprising the waterfronts of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island as well as the New Jersey shoreline from Perth Amboy to Elizabeth, Bayonne, Newark, Jersey City, Hoboken and Weehawken. By the early 1900s, Basque employment with the Port of New York included any of the 1,800 docks, piers, and wharves of every conceivable size, condition, and state of repair. Some seven hundred and fifty were classified as "active" and two hundred were able to berth four hundred and twenty-five ocean-going vessels simultaneously in addition to the six hundred able to anchor in the harbor. These docks and piers gave access to 1,100 warehouses containing some forty-one million square feet of enclosed storage space. In addition, the Port of New York had thirty-nine active shipyards, not including the huge New York Naval Shipyard on the Brooklyn side of the East River. These facilities included nine large ship repair yards, thirty-six large dry-docks, twenty-five small shipyards, thirty-three locomotive and gantry cranes of fifty ton lift capacity or greater, five floating derricks, and more than one hundred tractor cranes. Over five hundred and seventy-five tugboats worked the Port of New York. Tiburcio Vidaechea Uruburu, born in 1885 in Forua, Bizkaia, worked for decades as a fireman on one of these tugboats, and Angel Viña also worked with tugboats in the harbor, remaining at this post with the New York Transit Authority in the 1940s and 1950s.

A complex system of rail, road, and bridge network linking the five boroughs of New York City and the seven cities of the New Jersey side of the harbor completed the necessary requisites to make this area the most developed in the world. Maritime training and education was the third essential activity in the Port of New York. Four institutions produced licensed officers for the merchant service; another trained two out of three new volunteer merchant seamen, while yet another produced half of the recruits for the Coast Guard.

Because the majority of Basques in New York were familiar and experienced with the ocean from their hometown fishing villages and from the ship building centers of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, numerous Basques gained employment as seafarers on pas-

senger liners, in the Merchant Marines, and on the docks of the city. Pedro Toja's family in Bermeo had worked on the famous Sota and Aznar Shipping Lines in Bilbao. Estanislao Beobide, born in 1869 in Elantxobe, Bizkaia, initially went to sea at age eleven as a cabin boy and he eventually pursued his way up to Chief Engineer of ships for the Moore McCormack and Ward Lines in New York. Angelo Uriarte worked for the Grace Line shipping and retired in 1976, also as a Chief Engineer.

Basques created networks of information and exchange among other Basques in ports around the world and it was not uncommon for mariners from New York to get Basque Country news from fellow Basques in the Spanish Merchant Marines while both were docked in Havana, Buenos Aires, or Manila. From Valparaiso, Chile, Alfonso de Iruarrizaga wrote to Esteban Aspiazu in May 1934, asking him to please bring quality razorblades from New York on his next tour to Chile. Aspiazu was a part of the trade network, or commercial network, of Basques who moved letters, information, and goods around the world for other Basques. He had Basque friends in the Philippines, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Cuba, and on the west coast of the United States.

Martin Fradua Sr. also worked in the Merchant Marine and then was drafted into the U.S. military in 1941 and gave five years in the service. During WWII the Merchant Marine, under the control of the U.S. Military Forces, were responsible for delivering United States troops, and also ninety-five percent of the flow of supplies that were needed in Europe and in the Pacific. The United States built the largest fleet of merchant ships ever assembled and utilized them to take cargoes and passengers to every theater of war. During World War II, more than three million troops and their equipment and over sixty-three million tons of additional supplies and materials were shipped overseas through the Port of New York. The harbor was divided into six hundred individual ship anchorages able to accommodate ocean-going vessels awaiting berthing or already loaded and awaiting convoy assignment. On the peak day in March 1943, there was a total of five hundred and forty-three merchant ships at anchor in New York harbor, a figure very close to maximum capacity. After the war's end, and depending on which shipping line, Fradua's trips' lengths depended on what kind of boat he was on. Some assignments were two weeks or three weeks, but when working on the Ward Line, he had weekly trips of people going on vacation to Cuba. Gregorio Hormaechea was a seaman who was in port long enough to be the C.V.A. President of Fiestas, but he had to give up the position in 1958 because of his longer absences out of port.

Marine careers ran in Basque families and many father-son, and brother-brother combinations followed each other out to sea. Nicolas Inchaustegui was a sea captain and so was his son Nick. Alberto Aberasturi was a ship's cook, and since the time when they were young boys he and his brother, Antonio, had worked on the American ships. Antonio Aberasturi, actually died on a boat trip in 1960. On August 2, he left the house for the port, and on August 6, he died of a heart attack while at work on the



ship. Luis Amesti and his brother worked on the ships and on the docks. Dockworkers came home every night and this was a preferred job for the married man. However, in the 1930s Joe Arazosa, known as “Txamporta,” recommended to Angel Viña and brother Manolo Viña that they should try to get a job on a ship. “If you are single the ship work is perfect, you eat on board, you sleep on board and you save a lot of money,” he said. Otherwise, Basques could spend the nights in port at the boardinghouses, and Basques from other countries who docked in New York did just that. There was a continuous stream of Basque seaman from many different countries that influenced the New York community with information and comparisons of how Basques in others parts of the world lived. They visited the Basque restaurants and almost certainly stopped by Valentín Aguirre’s *Jai-Alai Restaurant* for a drink, as well as the *Centro Vasco-Americano* at 48 Cherry Street.

Besides being well recognized as superb mariners, Basques are also known for their quality cuisine, and numerous Basques combined the two talents. In addition to Alberto and Antonio Aberasturi, Andres Zabala worked as the chief cook on the Ward Line of passenger liners until his death in 1938. Pelayo Ugalde, born 1902 Al-



Esteban Aspiazu, standing at center behind the "Acadia" ship sign, served in the United States Merchant Marines as a chef during the 1930s through 1950s. Basque maritime expertise helped numerous immigrants gain employment in seamanship, and the recognized quality of Basque food preparation helped many earn work in the ship kitchens.

tamira-Busturia, Bizkaia and his wife Eulalia Erdaide, born 1902 in Urduliz, Bizkaia, came to the U.S. where he gained employment with the Circle Line Tour Ships as a chef. Angel Viña went to work on a ship as a chef, but "was treated very badly" and he quit in 1932 after two or three trips. Mario de Salegi, Esteban Aspiazu and Angel Zuluaga were also chefs in the Merchant Marines. Zuluaga began as a twelve-year-old cabin boy working with a Basque chef on a German liner, when the cook suddenly died on the ship. At twelve years old Angel became the cook.

Merchant Marine careers enabled participation in the unions, which also gave the members added security and benefits, such as Aspiazu who in 1942 was paying a two-month \$4.00 union fee to the National Maritime Union, C.I.O. Jerónimo Esquivel's decades of service to the Merchant Marines enabled his entrance to the Marine Hospital of Norfolk Virginia, when he became ill in 1942. Andoni Aguirre was a staff officer in the Merchant Marine and later as a paymaster for Prudential Steamship Lines. Andoni Achabal Aguirre was born in the Philippines in 1921 and was educated in Manila and in *Euskal Herria* at the famous school of Lecaroz in Navarre. He served in the United States Army in WWII, training with the Rangers—the

forerunners to the Green Berets- and working in counter-intelligence. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Asiatic- Pacific Service Medal, the Philippines Liberation Ribbon with one star, the Good Conduct Medal, and the WWII Victory Medal. He then worked for the Basque Delegation in New York as a commercial attaché, and met his future wife, Irene Renteria, also working for Lehendakari José Antonio de Aguirre (no relation). Because of his expertise in accountancy, the Lutheran Medical Center and the Amalgamated Insurance Fund also employed him.

Maria Benita Rementeria served in the U.S. Navy as a nurse and served a tour of duty in New Guinea during WWII. After attending Columbia University, she was commissioned by President Eisenhower as Assistant Chief of Nursing of the United States Navy. Edward Lamiquiz, long time member of the *Centro Vasco-Americano, C.V.A.*, was born in Staten Island to Salome Garamendi Lamiquiz of Larrabezua, Bizkaia. During and after WWII he served as a Merchant seaman for ten years, and later served as First Mate on the Circle Line Ship “Miss Liberty” which took tourists to the Statue of Liberty. Lamiquiz was also employed with New York City Sanitation for over twenty years. Luis Amesti has been on the docks from 1963 to today. When he arrived in New Jersey, there were many mariners and dockhands who spoke Spanish, “between the Cubans, Gallegos, Spanish, Puerto Ricans, Basques, you know so we had a lot of people around us that spoke something I could understand.” Then when he moved to a different assignment, “I did see a few guys who spoke Spanish but the bosses wanted to teach me all about the machinery and how to use the cranes for the containers. They trained me in English for the cranes to lift, and then move, and position the cargo containers on the docks. There are a lot of things that you never expect to happen that do happen. It can be very dangerous work and there are accidents. I work at about one hundred and twenty-some feet high off the ground in the crane,” he explained.

As a young adult, Zachary Berhau worked on the waterfront as a checker. “I worked with bananas at the foot of Wall Street. Bananas came off the boats on conveyor belts and into the trucks. There were many Basques and Gallegos who worked in various jobs on the docks. Lots of mingling between Basques and Gallegos and we were good friends.” Zachary Berhau’s generation- first born in the United States- was the first to go to a university. He graduated from high school at sixteen years old, and worked in insurance for thirty-five years and then sold his insurance business and enrolled as a freshman in university. Zachary earned his Bachelor’s Degree and two Master’s Degrees later as an adult. Berhau currently teaches business courses at the Queen’s College and has taught at the College of Insurance. He began on the New York docks, but now works as a professional insurance consultant, and serves as an expert insurance witness for court proceedings.

The Basque boardinghouses also employed Basques who took care of the seamen customers. Women worked as receptionists, in accounting, and preparing meals and linens, and cleaning bedrooms, parlors, and kitchens. They shopped for each day’s groceries with early morning stops at the fish and meat markets and then

cleaned, skinned, sliced, cut and prepared the food for meals. Boarders usually had three meals each day there at the boardinghouse, and generally a few extra men who worked nearby also came in for lunches. After each meal was finished, the women washed and dried all of the cutlery, drinking glasses, plates, cooking and serving pots and pans, and then they started all over again for the dinner menu. Linens had to be washed and hung out to dry, and then ironed, however, it was often more economical to send out the linen to a nearby service for cleaning and pressing. Women working in the boardinghouses who were first generation born in the United States, also tended to act, without pay, as translators and interpreters, and companions to assorted offices where they completed official and legal paperwork in English for new arrivals. There were also New York Basques who stayed in the boardinghouses originally intending to head west and work in the sheep industry, as did Juan Orbe, born 1885 in Busturia, Bizkaia. Orbe instead stayed in New York, and earned his living in building maintenance at the Chase Manhattan Bank.

SMALL BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS

Unlimited opportunities abounded in New York for those who qualified for bank loans to found their own commercial establishments and Basques started a wide array of family owned and operated businesses. Enrique Y. Irigaray owned and managed the Spanish American Laundry in the 1930s at 24 Cherry Street, which conducted much business with the boardinghouses and with the *Centro Vasco-Americano*. Sabina Bajeneta Bilbao managed a small grocery store in the old Basque neighborhood with her husband "Plencia" Bilbao. When she developed tuberculosis she returned to Mundaka in the 1920s "to die in the Basque Country." The Bilbao's son-in-law, Juan María "Zacharias" Berhau Urrutia, owned the business Chana Coffee. He sold specialty coffees, olive oils, and *yerba mate* -which is a green tea very popular in Uruguay where he was born. He also sold *churros*, a deep fried donut like pastry, from a large green cart he was able to wheel to soccer games and to the Basque picnics. Berhau Urrutia also represented the Barletta Wine Company, Incorporated at 152 Wooster Street, and he sold and distributed wines to restaurants and grocers. "La Favorita" Market, at 123 Madison Street, made their own chorizos and also sold many kinds of difficult to find seafood that are a part of the traditional Basque diet such as codfish and hake. They were still advertising to their Basque customers in the *Aberri Eguna Journal* in the 1970s. The C.V.A. purchased chorizos and other foods from them throughout the 1950s to the 1970s.

Carmen Moneo operated her own import business, *Casa Moneo*, across the street from the Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Church in Greenwich Village. She distributed and sold imported Spanish and Basque foods, and specialty items such as *alpargatas*, a traditional cloth lace-up shoe also used for folk dancing, and *txapelas*, or berets. With her son, and grandsons, the store survived for more than seventy-five years and into

the 1980s. José Mari Guerricagoitia initiated his own book distribution business in Maryland, which has survived for more than twenty years. He originally edited books in Spanish “*Amerikateko Liburuak*,” Books from the Americas,” for Latin American writers, and followed by also selling books about Basque subjects. He continues with his book business and his connections with small publishing houses from the Basque Country such as “Txalaparta,” and takes orders from all over the world.

Julian Gorordo headed the Vincent Painting Company and his wife María Bilbao also owned a small business of rental property management. Joe “Txiki” Orbe and his wife had a hairdressing salon on Lexington Avenue in the 1960s. Father José Mari Larrañaga remembers, “She was a very talented artist.” Bill Aramburu worked as a travel counselor at US Travel helping customers with their international travel arrangements in the 1990s. C. Aguirrezabal was the President of the Cristal Granite Monument Company, which carved funerary headstones. Echevarria Sons Corporation served as funeral directors and arranged many of the Basque funerals in the 1970s. Basque interviewees stated that they do try to patronize other Basques’ businesses and prefer to be a customer to a Basque if possible. However, because of the geographical enormity and complexity of New York, convenience has become a more significant factor for selecting with whom to do business.

“SO MANY CHOICES FOR WORK!”

Ana Mari Oleaga wanted to immigrate to New York from Mundaka because of the diversity of choices available for employment. “In New York, everything is possible. You can work doing just about anything you like, and if you don’t have the skills, you can go to school, or learn on the job. That’s what our parents did, and that’s what I did,” she said. Many immigrants were mobile and experienced numerous moves and different employment such as Agustin Mendezona. Born in Lekeitio in 1894, in 1911 he departed for Boise, Idaho where he worked in construction on the Arrow Rock Dam for six years. In 1917 he moved to Butte, Montana where he met and married Eustaquia (also originally from Lekeitio) and he worked in the copper mines. In 1924 they moved with their three children to Brooklyn Heights where Agustin worked in construction jobs. Mendezona later got a job working at the SuCrest Sugar Refinery, from which he retired in 1960.

Jesus Letaza was a trapeze artist with the Wringling Brothers Circus in the 1930s. A decade earlier, Angèle Amestoy, from Macaye, worked as a chamber maid for the Wringling Brothers Circus, sister Leonie worked in a hat factory, and sister Gabrielle and brother Felix worked in Milltown, New Jersey, making tires at a Michelin rubber manufacturing plant. Marianne “Marie” Amestoy and her husband Joseph Noguere also worked at Michelin until it closed after WWI. There were many people in Milltown from Brittany, France and they worked, and socialized, together with the Basques.

Cousins and lifelong intimate friends, from left Emilia Sarriugarte Doyaga, Mari Sarriugarte, Irene Renteria Aguirre, Delfina Renteria. Emilia and Mari were raised by their working mother, Eugenia, after their father Marcus Sarriugarte died very young. Photo 1929. Courtesy Anna M. Aguirre



After her contract with Michelin finished, Gabrielle Amestoy attended to the Gregory family for fifty years cooking and cleaning, and caring for children and grandchildren. She also often prepared and served Basque dinners for New York dinner parties in the 1940s and 1950s. The centenarian says the secrets to a long life and her good health include, “Eating fruits, vegetables, and fish. Don’t eat salt, it’s poison. No butter for anything. Use seasonings- it makes the food happy.” Gabrielle also drinks a small glass of red wine with dinner every night. After Valentina Aguirre married, she engaged Eugenia Renteria Sarriugarte, a trusted friend of her mother’s, as a domestic helper. María Luz Echevarria Elordi Landaburu came to U.S. in 1969, and in her first years she too worked in a family house performing domestic chores and preparing meals. She also cared for the children in that family. After María Luz obtained a legal work permit, she was hired by a French restaurant where she waited tables. “I used to speak more French than English in those years,” she laughed. “I studied French in school in Zornotza-Amorebieta [Bizkaia] before coming to America. Good thing!” Genoveva Orbe was paid \$10.00 at the end of each year for cleaning and organizing the office of the C.V.A. She worked in this capacity from 1929 until 1943, and the organization’s reimbursement was \$10.00 at the end of each year as a

thank you gift. When she retired and was replaced with Mr. Larrinaga, he was given \$20.00 each year. In the 1960s, Eufemia Urrutia voluntarily cleaned the C.V.A. every Saturday and at the end of the year the *Centro Vasco* Board would give her a gift certificate for \$50.00. Frances Bilbao Astoreca worked at Bloomingdale's and was always happy to give others Basques her employee's discocunt. Emilia Doyaga worked at B. Altman Department Store in the jewelry section. Lily Fradua worked at Saks Fifth Avenue and was responsible for the accounts of several famous people. In 1937, Pilar Gorostiola Aspiazu's full-time annual salary for office clerical help was \$1272.00, and that was before income taxes.

Several Basque men worked in construction related occupations. Marcus Sarrigarte, originally from Berriz, Bizkaia, worked on the railroads in the 1920s before his early death of a kidney infection- likely one that would have been easily treated today with antibiotics. Before Luis Amesti worked on the docks, he was employed preparing pipes in order to lay electrical lines for telephone service in New Jersey. Iñaki Aberasturi has worked in electrical contracting for more than thirty years. "Casi Guena", originally Casiano Totoricagüena from Gernika, is a general contractor in White Plains. Enrike "Henry" Arana immigrated to the U.S. in 1955, and signed on for road construction. "I started with Recalde construction. Recalde was in construction as kind of a manager or something, and he had some Basques in the company; me, Daniel Urrutia and his brothers, other Basques, and a few Gallegos. We did roadwork in Connecticut, Winchester County over here, and in Brooklyn." Arana also worked briefly in automobile repairs. "These fellas were American, I couldn't understand them, they couldn't understand me and after three weeks or something -I was making \$60 a week, tremendous money for me-, but I wasn't doing anything. I told my friend Erandio, I'm sorry but these fellas, and I love them, you got to tell them that I don't understand them and they don't understand me, so tell them [to] let me go, so good-bye, that's it." Arana left the job. Enrike was a cab driver briefly, as was Karlos Iturralde before he was employed as a teacher. Modern Transportation, in South Amboy, New Jersey had several Basques employed during the 1960s and 1970s including, Javier and Rafael Esquivel, Enrique Izaguirre, Jesus Larrinaga, Eugenio Lasuen, Avelino Llona, José Luis Omaetxebarria, Victor Orbe, and Iñaki Zabala.

GROCCERS AND FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

When Kutz Arrieta immigrated to New York in the 1990s, the initial reason she sought out other Basques was in order to find quality foods for Basque cuisine. She explained, "Food is very important to our Basque culture. We don't live on sandwiches and packaged food. You know, meals are a shared experience with other people, something to enjoy, and we demand quality. The basic is a very good Spanish olive oil, and don't say Italian is the same because it simply is not. Ask any Basque woman." Arrieta spoke for thousands of others before her when she affirmed, "The most difficult thing

to adapt to in the United States for me was the food.” Oscar Espina-Ruiz also said that other than his family, he misses food more than anything else from Bilbao. “If I could have fresh *jamón serrano* on a thick piece of good baguette, then New York would be the perfect place on Earth.” In order to fill this gap, several Basque owned and operated businesses established import operations, which almost always highlighted olive oils from Spain. Corte & Company, one of the earliest established in 1922, sold ethnic foods, olive oils, and spices used in Basque food preparation from their base in Jersey City, New Jersey. Their advertisements were in *Euskera*.

Joaquin Astoreca was a part-time manager of the *Centro Vasco* at 48 Cherry Street, but previously worked fulltime for the “Astarbi Ship Chandlers Company” in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and New York City. Astarbi’s was a food caterer for passenger ocean liners. In 1932, Joaquin returned to Natxitua, Bizkaia due to his poor health, and he died there in 1934. Joaquin’s son, Jerónimo, was an employee and manager in that same corporation until he retired in 1970. Jerónimo married Frances Bilbao of New York, in 1937, and with Felipe Bilbao, and Felipe’s son, Angel, they managed Astarbi, which also became an import and export business. Astarbi’s imported chorizos, olive oils, and garbanzos and in the 1940s the Astorecas and the Bilbaos made home deliveries and were the distributors to the *Centro Vasco*. Jerónimo Astoreca was also the volunteer Secretary and Treasurer of the *Centro Vasco* for thirty years. He arrived in New York from Natxitua, Bizkaia when he was fourteen years old and lived with his father Joaquin, and brother Frank, leaving his mother, a brother, and a sister in the Basque Country. Jerónimo “Jerry” Astoreca died in 1976.

Goya Foods Incorporated is listed as the third largest “Hispanic-owned” company in the entire United States, and *the* largest “Hispanic” food company. In 2002, annual sales reached almost \$750 million a year. However, the founders and executive officers of this “Hispanic” company are actually Basque. Prudencio and Carolina Unanue, both immigrants from the Basque Country, met and married in Puerto Rico, and they founded Goya Foods, Inc. in 1936 in New York. They worked packing and distributing foods that they imported from Spain, and gradually expanded the geographical distribution and product lines, drawing in foods from other Hispanic and Latin American cultures. The Unanues were regular customers and visitors to the *Centro Vasco-Americano* and they regularly participated in Basque cultural functions. “He used to tell the story that when he was trying to decide a name for his business, he saw a can of sardines with the label ‘Goya’. It was easy to say and spell, and that was that! His new business would be known as “‘Goya,’” laughed Emilia Doyaga.

In 1976, Joseph Unanue became President after twenty-five years with his parents’ business, and he transformed the family corporation into a multimillion-dollar enterprise. Another son, Frank Unanue, founded the Spanish Chamber of Commerce in New York City during the 1960s, and along with his brother, Joseph, and other family members has developed a strong program supporting various charities and civic efforts throughout areas where the company does business. For example, in

1998, Goya launched its first-ever corporate campaign to highlight the significant work of schoolteachers. Frank, who oversaw operations in Puerto Rico, received numerous honors for Goya's charitable efforts and support for sports, youth programs, and projects that promoted the importance of education.

“Goya” was one of the first companies to relocate to the Secaucus Meadowlands in New Jersey in the 1970s. New Jersey is now the national headquarters for the company as well as the location for its plant for the packaging of rice and beans. Plants elsewhere in the U.S. produce the one thousand products the company offers, and they now cater more to Latin American customers and others who enjoy Hispanic and South American cuisine. Caribbean grocery items include canned and dried beans, canned meats, olives and olive oil, rice, seasonings, plantain and yucca chips, and frozen entrées. Goya also produces and sells beverages such as tropical fruit nectars and juices, tropical sodas, coffee, and forty-five varieties of beans.

Prudencio and Carolina's son, Joseph Unanue, continues as President of Goya Foods, and grandson, Andy Unanue, is currently Goya's chief operating officer, and several family members contribute to the enterprise as well. Altogether, Goya has more than thirteen facilities throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Europe. Goya has had a facility near Seville, Spain since 1974 which packs and exports olives and olive oil. The company also has production facilities in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The goods are imported to the U.S, although Goya also produces canned and dry beans, flour, and rice mixes in New Jersey. The company is now contracting with stores like Wal-Mart for distribution of their foods, and it remains one of the largest family-owned businesses in the country, employing over two thousand people in its variety of plants in the United States and abroad. Lily Fradua frequently orders chorizo sausages, white asparagus, *membrillo*, a fruit paste made of quince, and *turrón*, a special sweet usually reserved only for Christmas, and saves them for special occasions.

BASQUE CUISINE AND RESTAURANTS

When Father Larrañaga arrived in New York he did not know how to cook, and the parish house cook was an Irish woman. Larrañaga disclosed, “Sometimes I was real hungry, I mean really hungry, but I just couldn't eat it. She fried the meat in butter! Oh, it was terrible and I just couldn't eat it, or most of the other things either! So I learned how to cook when I went home in the summers. I watched my sisters. But thank God for the Basque restaurants or I would have starved in New York.” Numerous Basques have pursued careers in restaurant management, as chefs, and as caterers. One of the most famous was Jean Baptiste Heguy, the head chef at the Hotel Pennsylvania from 1930-1946. Heguy was born in Heleta-Helette, Behe Navarra, and he apprenticed in Bordeaux and Donibane Lohitzun-St. Jean-de-Luz, La-

purdi. He immigrated to the United States in 1911 with his wife, Marguerite Labat, and sons Peter and Henry and began his career at the Hotel Clarendon, in Brooklyn. The Hotel Claridge in Manhattan employed him next before his going to the Hotel Pennsylvania for its grand opening in 1919. Heguy won international cuisine prizes in divisions of French and Vienna Pastry in 1937 and his creations were known throughout New York. Gabrielle Amestoy remembers many dinners at the Hotel Pennsylvania with forty to fifty Basques from the provinces in France, and Jean Baptiste producing exquisite menus for Basque feasts. “We used to sing and tell stories about the old country and remember our towns and Saint’s Days. We made our own Basque festivals there at the Hotel Pennsylvania with Jean Baptiste Heguy,” she said.

La Côte Basque has been recognized for decades as one of New York’s quality restaurants. The founding chef, Soulet, was a Basque from Biarritz, Lapurdi, who established this business after his success at the 1939-40 World’s Fair in New York. Soulet built a reputation for high quality cookery and ran an extremely successful business until his death in 1966. The restaurant struggled through difficult times, closed, and opened again in 1979 but over the years, the cuisine slowly became entirely French. New York’s most influential business and political leaders have frequented the elegant restaurant. “It was an expensive restaurant, but well worth it,” remembers Elizabeth Aspiazu. Customers used to have their own special tables that they requested, and expected, and the establishment was extremely busy. However, eventually the clientele became so demanding at wanting their particular table on a certain day and certain time that the owner no longer felt in control of his business. He was losing money by saving tables for certain clients, and could not gain new clients if the tables were always reserved. Most potential customers were not willing to pay fifty to sixty dollars per meal, and as business declined, he closed the restaurant. Chef and owner Jean Jacques Rachou relocated and re-opened *La Côte Basque* in 1995, offering his customers a performance of the Itzelak Basque Dancers from the Euzko-Etxea. It continues as a mainly French fine dining restaurant, with seating for one hundred and fifty people.

Gema Aurre, born in 1953, in Zubieta-Markina, Bizkaia owns and manages *La Casa Vasca* Bar and Restaurant in Newark, New Jersey. Aurre married in the Basque Country in 1976 and immigrated to the United States in 1977. Aurre’s husband, who was a ship cook, and Avelino Llona, opened *La Casa Vasca* in 1976. Ten years later, Llona returned to Spain, and Gema began cooking at the restaurant. Her husband suddenly took ill and passed away, leaving her with complete responsibility for the business, and today she remains the sole proprietor. “I have met many, many Basque people and we have regular customers that love the Basque food,” she said. *La Casa Vasca* Bar and Restaurant serves, Basque, Spanish, and Portuguese cuisine.

Basque expertise has touched many New York restaurants. In the 1930s, “Guerinica” was the famous chef at the Paloma Club on Seventh Avenue and 19th Street. Angéle and Pierre Despoux owned the restaurant *Chez Napoleon* on 59th Street and

regularly did business with other Basques and the C.V.A. during the 1940s. Angel Zu-luaga worked as a chef at Court Grill in White Plains. Luis Larrinaga was the head chef at the Rainbow Grill, and later in the 1970s he and his wife, Begonia, operated the Bayona Restaurant. There was a “Jai Alai Restaurant” in Great Neck, Long Island during the 1970s that was popular for wedding receptions, and another restaurant, Jai-alai, managed by Iñaki Zenikazelaia in Dover, New Jersey. Eulalia and Pelayo Ugalde, and Juan Mari and Tomasa Ugalde also of Dover were frequent customers. The Madrid Restaurant serves Basque and Spanish cuisine seven days a week for lunch and dinner in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Manolo’s restaurant also serves Basque food in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Eder Montero is a Basque chef in New York and has worked for several prestigious establishments. Pierre Amestoy came to the United States when he was eighteen years old, and gained employment managing food production. He departed for Chile, but then returned to the U.S. and New York, where he opened the Times Square Brewery in the 1980s. The business was successful, however, it was torn down in order to construct a new subway station. Amestoy is currently in the process of opening up another restaurant, but is finding it difficult to comply with numerous city rules and regulations. There are non-Basques operating “Basque” restaurants, and Basques managing non-Basque eateries. The *Euskadi* restaurant, in lower Manhattan, is owned by an Eastern European couple who used to live in Donostia-San Sebastián and simply fell in love with the Basque Country, however, the menu includes only a few Basque style choices. Pedro Riano, of Urduliz, Bizkaia and wife Susan, owned and managed a pizza parlor in Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey in 1970s.

In 1993, the Government of the Basque Autonomous Community invited officials of the Culinary Institute of America in New York to visit *Euskal Herria* and sample the ethnic dishes. Founded in 1946, and with an average of 3,000 students per year, this center for culinary education is one of the most prestigious in the world. When the New York professionals and specialists witnessed the quality of the cuisine, especially the intricately detailed *pintxos*, or appetizers, six Basque chefs were invited to teach at the institute, and they also established a student exchange program for American culinary students to learn in the Basque provinces. The Hotel Trade School Association of Euskadi selected the six finalists from all of the applicants and those Basque chefs were solicited to New York to teach other professors and students. Joseba Encabo is one of the Basque chefs and instructors at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York who remains in this post in the U.S.

The restaurant of the Roger Smith Hotel in midtown Manhattan has featured Basque Country chefs for one week each spring since the late 1980s. The owners showcase the best of Basque cuisine and the following week they highlight the best of the Catalan chefs. This food festival is celebrated completely independent of the Basque community and most members that participate in the Euzko-Etxea Basque club were not aware of the Basque week at this hotel. Basque chef Iñaki Lete was one of those chosen for this Roger Smith Hotel week who consequently stayed in

New York. Lete finished his chef training in Paris, and in New York he owns his own catering business with Basque and continental cuisine. He creates exclusive dinners, banquets, and parties and has worked in all five boroughs since 1992. He is the chef for the *Aberri Eguna* feast celebration that is held at the *Euzko-Etxea* each Easter Sunday, and hundreds of Basques who do not otherwise participate in Basque center functions attend the celebration just to experience the Lete production.

Teresa Barrenechea of Bilbao, and her husband, Raynold von Samson, established the Basque restaurant Marichu's, named in honor of Teresa's mother. Barrenechea's first restaurant was located north of New York City in Bronxville. Later in 1994, they opened another Marichu's in lower Manhattan on the east side and very near the United Nations building. "We have very discerning customers that want quality food, served elegantly but with no pretense, and who want to have private conversations. We have many United Nations diplomats and civil servants come here. Madeline Albright is a good loyal customer of ours," Barrenechea said. The



Javier Ortega, owner of Pintxos: A Basque Restaurant, established in 1998, prepares Basque cuisine in his restaurant kitchen in Greenwich Village. Photo 2002.

restaurant imports goods directly from the Basque Country for quality control and authenticity in food preparation. Barrenechea has built a reputation as one of the foremost experts on Basque cuisine. “I learned everything I know from my mother and her cooking for us at home. Basque cooking has always been based on using the very best and freshest ingredients. It is a very healthful diet, and I maintain that in my restaurant, and in my cookbook,” she writes in her cookbook, *The Basque Table*, which was published in 1998 by the Harvard Common Press. She obtained book reviews by Julio Iglesias, and Michael Lomonaco, chef at the former Windows on the World restaurant, which was located at the top of the World Trade Center. Lomonaco is a world re-known chef and television personality who, in his review, praised Barrenechea’s restaurant as “the American center” of Basque cooking.

Javier Ortega, his Texas born wife Debra, and their young daughter, first migrated to New York in 1991. With Debra’s brother, they opened a Tex-Mex restaurant on 14th Street, but the Ortegas sold their half one year later and migrated to Guatemala City, Guatemala. He said, “When we went to Guatemala we had a lot of very good friends, and very beautiful, high quality of life. We opened a fish store and named it the “Pescadería Donosti” and it still exists there.” In 1998 they left Guatemala for New York City and a new business venture: *Pintxos: A Basque Restaurant*. Ortega said, “All of the rents were absolutely crazy to us. We chose the Greenwich location because it was affordable, and it was very, very difficult at the start... Then, we got a great review in the *New York Times*, and for three months the place was packed every day.” The *Pintxos* menu lists numerous appetizers of green olives, *croquetas* of ham or codfish, chorizo, white asparagus, stuffed mussels, octopus with olive oil, and various cheeses from the Basque Country. He also presents various types of *tortilla*, or omelet, sandwiches, fish soups, hake, salmon, filet mignon, lamb, and paella. There is a wide selection of Basque wines imported from Navarra and cheeses from several provinces.

The consequences of September 11, 2001 significantly affected the Ortegas’ business, and completely ruined their apartment residence one block from the World Trade Center Twin Towers. Debra conveyed the following day’s events, “Javi went to *Pintxos* the next day, 9/12, just to see what had happened to it, and immediately there were people at the door; trauma nurses and psychologists who had worked twenty-four hours straight who needed coffee; policeman who needed a telephone; another worker that needed a bathroom, and so on. Javier stayed throughout the day and worked and cooked all the food we had in the refrigerator and freezer and it became a place for free food and services for an entire week.” The Euzko-Etxea gathered \$1000 in members’ donations to contribute to the Ortega family, and the financial hardship and emotional and psychological strain are continuing factors. Javier Ortega affirmed, “We’ll continue with *Pintxos*, but we want a larger place, more in Midtown or in the village. We are kind of isolated here, but we have a good clientele.”

PROFESSIONALS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

The first generation of Basques born in the United States significantly surpassed their parents' level of education. The majority were high school graduates, and many were also likely to go on for university studies. "Remember now, college was affordable in those years, so it wasn't necessarily money that was a barrier," reminded university professor Miriam de Salegi. "It was English language proficiency, scheduling classes around a day or night job, and having *ganas* [desire] that made a difference." Second and third generation Basques are also likely to have post-secondary school training and many have embarked on professional careers.

Dr. Emilia Doyaga's educational trajectory exemplifies all levels instruction, scholarship, and administration. When Emilia began primary school she spoke *Euskera* fluently, and English was a second language she had learned at nursery school. Because she did not communicate "properly" she was placed in a class for children with learning disabilities. However, her teacher soon found her writing the alphabet and spelling words on paper -skills that many second graders had not yet developed- and she was returned to a general classroom. Doyaga graduated from high school at age sixteen and earned a Bachelor of Arts from Hunter Teacher College at nineteen. "I didn't have time to waste," she said, "because I needed to get a paying job to help my widowed mother, and my sister, Mary, who was next for college. I immediately took a high school teaching job. I taught high school teenagers, and also a class of returning military veterans right there at the same school. I was only a teenager myself! Oh boy, was that ever an experience!" Doyaga continued on and earned her Master of Arts at Columbia University, her *Diploma de Estudios Hispánicos* from the Universidad de Oviedo in Spain, and her Doctor of Philosophy at New York University. She specialized in the literary works of Miguel de Unamuno, and she also translated Unamuno's *Solitaria*.

Doyaga taught Humanities at Brooklyn College, York College of CUNY, and St. John's University. In 1971, she was one of nine women among eighty college and university administrators to participate in the Institute of Educational Management at Harvard University. She was selected as Dean for the Humanities of the York College of City University of New York (CUNY). In 1975, she was named as Vice President of Academic Affairs at the College of Old Westbury, a four-year institution of the State University of New York (SUNY). Dr. Doyaga was the first woman ever to hold the position of Vice President in any of the sixty-two campuses of the SUNY educational system. She led the college's academic program development, funding and resource management, as well as budget allocation. Emilia Doyaga was honored with the award for Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus, in Comparative Humanities. She is a consultant to colleges and universities and advises regarding higher education fundraising and international education issues, and she also conducts evaluations for accreditation of universities and colleges in the United States and abroad, and in 2001, was selected as an Advisory Board Member for the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Education is generally revered in Basque families and there are many Basques who have chosen education as their vocation. Marilu Echave Navas and Joe Arralde are public school teachers, as was Karlos Iturralde. “I was in the Bronx first, and I stayed there for about three years. Then they changed me to another place, a junior high school. So from there I came to Queens, and I stayed in Queens all those twenty-five years that I taught public school. Public schools in New York is a whole different story. It is not the same as suburbia, and connecting with these kids is an art”, said Iturralde. At LaGuardia Community College (CUNY), Theresa Uruburu is an Employment Counselor in the Division of Cooperative Education. Paula Uruburu is Chair of the English Department and a lecturer at Hofstra University in Long Island. Zachary Berhau teaches at the College of Insurance, and at Queens College, and Anna M. Aguirre also lectures part-time at the university level.

Basques have also chosen legal fields for their careers. Anthony “Tony” Loiti Madariaga was born on the lower East Side in 1931. He served in the U.S. Army in Germany in the 1950s and returned to earn a Bachelor’s Degree at New York University. He gained employment in the judicial branch of government and worked in the courts as a clerk and as a Spanish-English translator, and later attended university night school in order to complete his law degree. He was selected to serve as a personal clerk to two different Judges. Loiti campaigned for the New York State Senate as a Republican, though he was not elected in his heavily Democratic district. With the help of his companion and fiancée, Flavia, he opened his own law office and worked in criminal and civil law from 1974 to 1991. In these years Tony Loiti completed much work for his community and used his law degree to help New Yorkers in financial need. When he died in 1991, his funeral mass was given at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral by the Archbishop of New York, His Eminence John Cardinal O’Connor, with concelebrants Archbishop of New York Francisco Garmendia, and Fathers José Mari Larrañaga and Jesus Iriondo. The tenor soloists were Basques, Valentín Aguirre and Enrique Villanueva.

Additional Basques chose law for their professions such as José Elorza, who was one of the first Basque lawyers in New York, and Peter Aguirre who specialized in immigration law. Emilio Nuñez was born in Bilbao in 1905 and came to Bridgeport, Connecticut when he was eleven years old. He eventually moved to New York and earned admission to law school. In 1929, he was admitted to the New York Bar, and in 1950 he was appointed as a magistrate and was the first Basque judge in New York City. He was especially helpful to Basques with questions regarding naturalization, or citizenship, contractual law for businesses, divorce proceedings, and a few criminal and civil rights inquiries. Nuñez later went to Civil Court, and retired in 1977 from the New York Appellate Court after twenty-seven years of service in the justice system. Nuñez hired Angel Viña as a Court Officer in the Court of Special Sessions, and in the City Court, where Viña was especially needed for his Spanish language skills in interpreting and translating. Viña retained his Court Officer position until his retirement in 1975.

Julen Abio completed university in New York City, and gained employment in television production. “I have worked at only three places since then. I worked at a Spanish television station, then a station in Puerto Rico, and for ABC in New York for the last twenty years.” Abio was hired as a consultant with *Euskal Irrati Telebista*, EITB, Basque Television and Radio, when they first initiated programming in the Basque Country. He was offered a permanent position with EITB but he declined the proposition. EITB then hired Olatz Arrieta, and she moved from Donostia-San Sebastián to New York and works from home, or from the Foreign Press Center. “I am the correspondent for *Euskal Telebista* (ETB) and *Euskadi Irratia* in the United States and also at the United Nations. I was also the correspondent of *Radio Euskadi* until October 2001.” Arrieta began her career in journalism working as a correspondent for *Euskadi Irratia* and *Radio Euskadi* in the fall of 1996, and then for EITB in 2000. Basque Television has had correspondents reporting for them from the United States since their inception, and at the end of 2000 they decided to have a permanent contributor stationed in New York in order to boost international news. The objective of the reporter is to cover the Basque community in New York and the United States, as well as the daily political, social, cultural and economic issues of the United States for the Basque Country audience. Arrieta also broadcasts information regarding the activities of the United Nations.

Other Basque media specialists include Lauriana Zuluaga, who works in film editing and production, and Luis “Koitz” Foncillas Etxeberria who is a media producer and the *Radio Euskadi* correspondent for the United States. Luis “Koitz” Foncillas Etxeberria immigrated to New York from Pamplona, Navarre in 1994, with a network of friends also originally from the Pamplona area. Unlike early immigrants, he already had a job waiting as a movie production assistant and he worked with Latin American Music Television, MTV. Koitz is now a post-production producer. He also created the New York Euzko-Etxea website after receiving a grant from the Basque Government, and this site has been utilized by hundreds of people, such as Joe Aralde, to find the Basque organization and learn of its activities.

Basques in New York are engineers, architects, business consultants, accountants, artists, musicians, office managers, nurses, doctors, and bankers. They have earned their livings in the private and in the public sectors. For example, Anna M. Aguirre is the Assistant Vice President of Deutsche Bank of New York and Felix Oleaga, a one time President of the Euzko-Etxea, worked at the New York State Department of Commerce. Others have more obscure professions such as Teresa Madariaga, who came to the U.S. in 1998 with a Master Degree in Economics, which she earned in Belgium. She represents the contemporary migration to New York of young, very well educated professionals that move to New York for “an American experience”. She is employed in Manhattan as an actuary, a statistician who calculates insurance risks and premiums. “That is what I studied in Bilbao in the University of the Basque Country. I moved to Belgium to get a Masters in economics. What I decided to do when I came here is to hold on to the actuarial studies so I started taking

the Casualty Actuarial Society exams, so now I am about to become a Fellow of that society and I am working as an actuary of casualty,” Madariaga explained. “It was an easy transition because there aren’t many actuaries. I think for some reason in this country the level of math of the people is very low, so as soon as you prove you can do some math you can find a job.”

Ambrosio Goikoetxea is an engineer who has balanced higher education with private industry employment in several aerospace companies. He has earned two Masters Degrees and a Ph.D. in engineering. “I became a University professor at Oklahoma State University, I was there for three years. Then I took Washington University here in Washington, D.C. for five years; then another university in Virginia for seven years,” Goikoetxea chronicled. “I have been an engineer working with other people to build what we call Large Scale Data Centric Information Systems. It is a good life, and I have done all those things. My plans now are to continue working and take care of some property that I have. In about three or four years I am going back to Euskadi to start another life. I am hoping to help rebuild Euskadi.”

Juan Cruz Aguirre, born in 1879 in Arrieta, Bizkaia immigrated to New York when he was twenty-three, from Liverpool, England. He kept the same job during his career in New York working as a machinist with the Interboro Rapid Transit. His grandson, Michael Aguirre Fradua, was one the transportation specialists responsible for taking United States Senators on tours of the Twin Towers disaster site after September 11, 2001. Fradua is an engineer and he has specialized in reacting to emergencies and keeping traffic flowing. If a building collapses, if there is special inspection work, or for new construction in the city, Fradua is responsible for determining the impact on traffic flow, above and below ground. In the 1992 bombing of the World Trade Center, as people were leaving the building, Fradua was rushing in. In 2001, when he received the call that there was another emergency at the Twin Towers, he immediately began moving downtown into lower Manhattan, intending to enter the buildings and begin safety inspections for the bustling subway station below. Thankfully, the traffic was so bad that he did not reach the area until after the buildings had imploded. Fradua gave many professional opinions to Mayor Rudy Giuliani in regards to the disaster recovery efforts. Michael’s brother Martin Fradua, a principal at a consulting firm of engineers, was also at the site. “The wind was blowing from north to south and I was standing on Chambers Street and the air was fresh. That’s where we were waiting to go into the site, and all of the plume of the World Trade Center debris moved just like it was in a box, a tunnel, it went with the wind toward Brooklyn.”

Many Basque individuals have gained employment in public service positions. Toribio Altuna, born in 1890 in Gamiz, Bizkaia, left the Basque Country as a teenager and after working in several New York jobs attended night school and passed the Civil Service Exam to become a fireman protecting Bellevue Hospital. In the 1970s Gregorio and Tessie Bilbao Garaizar’s son Phillip was hired as a New York City Fireman



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The advertisement of the Valentin Aguirre Travel Agency shows its services including travel information and all necessary arrangements and documentation. The business operated from 1910 until 1955, when Valentine's son, Peter Aguirre, died.

working in Brooklyn. Nicolas Bilbao De Luca was a Fire Lieutenant on the 17th Battalion in the Bronx. Plattekill, New York had three Basque policeman in the 1970s; James Betanzos, Tory Goicoechea, and Vincent Arasate. Mike Soravilla was a New York City policeman, and later worked at General Motors. Steve Aspiazu retired from the Police Department and currently works as a Security Guard in a jewelry manufacturing businesses in Manhattan. Ana Betanzos Madariaga worked at the United States Post Office in Plattekill, and her husband Pedro Madariaga was a volunteer for the Fire Department. Irene Renteria Aguirre worked in ‘public service’, not to the United States, but to the Basque Government-in-exile Delegation in the United States. She was hired as the office manager and during the 1940s was the personal secretary to the President of the Basque Government, the *Lehendakari*, José Antonio de Aguirre. She conducted political and commercial research, translated documents and letters, interpreted between Basque, Spanish, and English conversations, and completed all of the clerical and organizational needs of a foreign government office.

Basques have been well represented in missions of the New York Catholic Churches as well. St. Patrick’s Cathedral was dedicated in 1879, with the financial and personal backing of José Navarro, and on June 29, 1977 the language of the celebrated mass was *Euskera*. Father Francisco Garmendia, born in Lazkao, Gipuzkoa, was ordained a Bishop by Cardinal Cooke, and when he was allowed to address the faithful 3,500 in attendance, he said, “I wish to say what is in my heart in my native Basque language.” He gave his speech in Basque, and also gave appreciation in English and Spanish. His father, brother, and two sisters came for the ordination from Gipuzkoa, and several members of the *Centro Vasco-Americano* received special and coveted invitations to celebrate the ordination of the Basque Bishop. Julen and Maria Luisa Vidasolo, Carmen Aberasturi, Johnny and Margie Abadia, Peter and Mary Toja and Father José Mari Larrañaga participated in the historic event. Father Larrañaga had returned to New York from Zumarraga the day before to attend and to spend the summer in a New York parish. Previously, Bishop Garmendia had become Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Bronx, New York in October 1976. The C.V.A. also hosted a reception for them on June 26th, 1977 with cake and champagne, and John Abadia performed five *bertsos*, which he improvised for the Garmendia family denoting his pride for his fellow Basque. Bishop Garmendia visited the Basque Country that summer with a tour of celebration masses.

Maria Rosa Lopategui, originally from Gernika, has spent decades in New York at her current post at the Our Lady of Good Counsel in Brooklyn. Fathers Arana, José Mari Larrañaga, Gorka Garatea, Joxe Mallea, and Luis Mallea all served New York Catholics as priests. Karlos Iturralde was also a priest for fifteen years in the Basque Country, Venezuela and the United States. Santos Recalde also ministered in New York for a few years in the late 1960s, after he had been in Boise, Idaho for many years.

José Mari Larrañaga, born in Zumarraga, Gipuzkoa, lived in New York between 1962-1968. He was ordained in 1958, at twenty-four years old, and his first assignment was in a small town in Gipuzkoa with the mission to build the first road connecting the town, Aguiñete, to Zumarraga. There was no road to the nearest town, only a footpath, and people had to walk, carrying everything to and from the town. He had to organize the entire town, engineers, municipalities etc. to complete the project. They completed the road in 1962, and celebrated with a bicycling festival. One of his former professors came to him and suggested that he try to go abroad because they always needed replacement priests who were on vacation for the summer. Larrañaga wrote a letter to the chancery offices in New York to ask to come for the summer to help with extra weddings and duties etc., and they said yes. He first visited New York for one month. “But then, the Monseignor asked me to extend for two years, then two more, then two more! My Bishop in Donostia gave me permission for the six years,” said Larrañaga. He migrated from living in a town that had just completed its first paved road ever, to life in New York City. Fathers Galdos, Madina, Oleaga, Mendizabal, Joxe Mallea, and Joxe’s uncle Luis Mallea, used to meet every Monday to play *pelota*, or handball, at a small fronton in the Bronx, and then have a nice dinner at Crotona Park in the south Bronx. They enjoyed the ability to speak in *Euskera* together and to share their sport as well. In 2000, Josu Iriondo replaced the retiring Francisco Garmendia as the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New York upon his ordination December 12, at St. Patrick’s Cathedral. The Vatican named Iriondo, originally from Legazpia, Gipuzkoa, after his decades of work in various Latino, and poor parishes of the Bronx, New York. He assists the Hispanic communities -mainly immigrant- in their desires to become a part of the Catholic community.

MANUFACTURING AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

Basques have also earned their livelihoods in manufacturing and goods production and have utilized networks -of other Basques already employed with certain businesses- to gain advantage and employment whenever possible. The SuCrest Corporation Sugar Refinery employed thirty Basque men working in the 1970s. Brothers Basilio, Iñaki, and José Antonio Lezamiz worked there, as did Angelo, Richard, and Danny Arazosa. Lorenzo Aldalur worked for the SuCrest a quarter of a century. Joe Pedernales, Iñaki Cendagorta, and Johnny Abadia worked at SuCrest for years, and Abadia hired many Basques to different jobs with the company. Joe Gainsa helped get employment for his brother-in-law, Augustín Mendezona, who after numerous years retired in 1960. According to Alys Viña, many Basques worked in the sugar plant and were “in great demand by the bosses.”

Manuel Arbesu Garcia, born in 1884 in El Berron Sierro to a Basque father and Asturian mother, was the Manager of the National Brick Corporation on Vernon Blvd in Long Island City. He began his career there in 1928. During the Depression, Arbesu

kept many Basques on the job, such as Felix Elustondo. Often times he employed people just for one or two days, however, the income could buy food for several days. Angel Viña also “worked the bricks” with many other Basques in the 1930s. “The police used to come and beat us up when we were forming a union and picketing at the brick factory,” he said. When the plant was purchased in 1960 by the United States Plywood Corporation, Manuel Arbesu retired from his position of more than three decades.

New York and its environs supplied a tremendous variety of employment options. Tiburicio Uruburu worked in a rope manufacturing plant. “Laucirica” was employed by the United States Cabinet Company, and he helped Angel Viña get a job making furniture springs for couches. Viña sold ice cream cones for eleven cents from an ice cream truck during the summer of 1947. Mari Carmen Aberasturi worked together with Eugenia Renteria Sarriguarte in a little shop making paintbrushes. After Eugenia learned English, she worked at Schrafts restaurant. Pilar Echaniz Cendagorta and a few other Basque women worked at Barton’s Candy, a chocolate manufacturer. Cendagorta boxed and packaged candies for distribution from different locations in Brooklyn, and then resigned when Barton’s relocated to New Jersey. She returned to her sewing skills learned in the Basque Country. Born in Arteaga, Bizkaia in 1940, Pilar practiced embroidery, tailoring, and sewing at school and then she attended another three years of special sessions with nuns. When she was seventeen, she earned a sewing diploma, which included tailoring, designing, and dressmaking. Echaniz Cendagorta sewed at home making clothes for her family and embroidering tablecloths, and then she got a job with her friend, Rosario Iturregi, sewing life-vests for a national company. They worked there for twenty-one years before that outfit also moved to New Jersey.

Ana Mari Oleaga arrived to the U.S. in 1966 and applied her tailoring skills to land a job in the famous Robert Hall clothes factory in Brooklyn. She transferred to other clothing factories and further perfected her sewing skills learned in the Basque Country. While working days, Oleaga enrolled in night school courses to study English and to learn how to type with keyboard exercises and drills. The Otis Elevator Company hired Oleaga for eleven years and she worked with engineers and draftsmen in their offices, until United Technology bought Otis. Gema Aurre also worked for several different clothing manufacturers as a seamstress, until she began cooking with her husband at *La Casa Vasca* restaurant.

Demonstrated here are a wide variety of employment options and career choices that exemplify the Basque workforce in the New York area. The diversity of available jobs impacted the Basques in that their careers were not related to their ethnicity as in several other ethnic communities in New York. Basques were, and are, dispersed throughout many industries, professions, and occupations, and have not dominated any particular industry, as they prevailed in sheepherding in the western states. Also unlike the western Basque communities, Basque women in New York had many ac-

cessible alternatives for earning an outside salary. Several interviewees noted that their emigrant mothers had pointed out to them that their lives would have been very different had they stayed in the Basque Country. Working outside the home was often simultaneously a financial necessity, and psychological luxury. Contributing to the family as wife and mother *and* salary earner afforded some women added self-esteem and decision-making power regarding family expenses. However, it is important to also note that Basque culture in the homeland does not follow the typical Hispanic model of machismo, and women *are* often the financial decision makers for the family unit. The heterogeneity of the city's population also allowed Basques to make contact with a multiplicity of ethnic groups in their workplace and has affected the contemporary manner in which they define their Basqueness.

Musicians, Artists

(05)

Dancers, and Athletes

Being Basque is emotional, it's not really rational. When you are on stage performing the Basque dances, you feel something different. You become a different person.

Vivian Zuluaga-Papp

SYMBOLIC AND SUBSTANTIAL IMPORTANCE OF DANCE IN ETHNIC IDENTITY MAINTENANCE

Ethnic folk dancing traditions in the New York Basque community have been consistently maintained for nearly a century. The instructors, musicians, and dancers have perpetuated the notes and steps almost identically to the homeland. Though certain aspects to Basque traditional folk dance have been altered according to anthropologists' research, in fact, the majority of the dances performed today in the Basque Country are almost synonymous to the performances of the 1800s, and the dances of the New York Basques today are extremely similar to those of the Basque Country, and to those they performed one hundred years ago. In the case of New York, it is interesting to note that there has been constant renovation of dance instructors, musicians, and even dance groups changing their names and ages of participants. New York again differs from the west coast Basques in that those communities have a tendency to have established one dance group, and that same dance

group has continued on with the same musicians and instructors, and repertoires for decades. The mobility of Basques in New York has resulted in the reinvention and reconstruction of dance troupes approximately every ten years. Difficulties seem to arise when the dancers complete sixteen to nineteen years old, and the pull of Basque dancing and ethnic identity maintenance is drowned out by high school activities, Church youth groups, teenage employment, and general lack of time and interest. The transportation issues in New York necessitate genuine commitment from the participants and their parents since it is generally almost an hour door-to-door commute to the *Euzko-Etxea*, and the same to return home for most people.

In earlier days, many families spent Sundays at the Basque club after attending morning mass. Dancing lessons usually began in the early afternoon while parents talked and played cards, and this was followed by dinner. It was an all-day affair. Mateo Otsa was one of the first dance instructors and at that time, the dancers were usually adults; from late teenagers to those in their thirties. There were ten to fifteen



The 1931 Ezpata Dantzaris of the Centro Vasco-Americano. The dancers performed for Basque community and general public activities, and were also featured in a Bilbao newspaper, La Tarde, article in 1936.

The President of the Basque Government, José Antonio de Aguirre y Lecube, was welcomed to New York in a grand banquet and dance celebration. The women of the Ezpata Dantzaris group are shown here with the Lehendakari in 1941.



consistent dancers and in addition to the Basque picnic and *Centro Vasco-Americano* related activities, they performed infrequently for the general public. Mary Altuna Toja remembered dance practice at the Cherry Street C.V.A., and important performances at Carnegie Hall and Town Hall Theater in 1928 and 1930. Mateo Otsa taught the men how to dance, and they also sang Basque songs as a regular part of their performances. Lily Fradua recalls that, “Pedro Toja always twirled the flag for *Ikurriña*.” Joe Fradua participated in the dancing group in the 1930s, and whistled all kinds of Basque music and other musical sounds, even mimicking birds. He was very artistic and created sketches and paintings as well. Lily also was a dancer at the *Centro Vasco-Americano*, however, “My mother used to lend out my costume parts to so many people that finally we never got it back. My headscarf was at one house, the apron at someone else’s house, and my skirt had probably been loaned out again by the very person that borrowed it! As long as a dancer had all the pieces, in the end we didn’t know what was whose.” Old banquet pictures from 48 Cherry Street show that there were both male and female dancers, though more males, and more all-male dances were performed as part of the exhibitions.

Emiliana Zubeldia taught dance and also played the piano for the dancers' accompaniment during the 1930s and early 1940s. In a special international story, the newspaper of Bilbao, Bizkaia, La Tarde, reported about the Basques of New York. The La Tarde journalist reported in the May 7, 1936 edition, just two months before the start of the Spanish Civil War, and included general information and two large photographs of the male dancers with the Basque *ikurriña*. The reporter wrote that the majority of Basques in the New York colony were from Bizkaia, and then in order, from Gipuzkoa, Nafarroa, or Navarre, and Araba. He estimated that there were 2,500 Basques living in New York and New Jersey at that time, and that the dance group had performed at the "A.W.A. Auditorium" in New York. Perico Bilbao directed the Basque musicians, and Jerónimo Astoreca organized the dancers. The article was clipped and mailed to Mary Altuna Toja, and she saved it with other newspapers entries about the Basques.

Angel Viña remembers Sundays playing handball in the fronton of the C.V.A. and dancing practice with the "*Ezpata Dantzaris*", literally sword dancers, in the 1930s under the direction of Zubeldia. "We knew *Txankarreku*, *Auresku*, *Banako*, and *Binako*, and we were good," he said. "We spent all day there on Sundays. Lots of kids



The New York Basques participated in city parades with floats and traditional folk dancing exhibitions. Second from left, is txistulari Jon Oñatibia, and to the right, Basque Government-in-exile Delegate, Jesús de Galíndez.

and their parents. Children running everywhere,” he laughed. The Basque group also participated in events for the 1939-1940 New York World’s Fair, such as parades, dance demonstrations, and exhibitions. Viña participated in the C.V.A.’s many activities even though he was not allowed to become a member as a result of his father not being Basque. He did not care about being a member of the benevolent society, as he was content to participate in the cultural activities. He also played a Basque flute-like instrument, *txistu*, for the dance group and in later years was the sole musician.

“Dancing, in general, was a more popular pastime in those years,” said Rosa Aberasturi, “and besides Basque dancing, we knew lots of other dances too that were American things.” They danced the “Tiger Egg” and the “Charleston” among others. Juan María “Zacharias” Berhau Urrutia taught the “Tango” and the “Bossanova” and even danced on stage himself as “El Vasco”, “The Basque”. Zachary Berhau said, “Dad was a great dancer and was also an instructor, and he had several famous instructors himself. One was “Constantine” who was actually Rita (Constantine) Hayward’s uncle. He danced on the stage in his twenties, and, -get this- he dressed in Argentine gaucho outfits for the dancing performances! Yeah, “El Vasco” dressed as “El Gaucho”, but you see he was originally from Uruguay and Argentina, so he knew a lot about Latin dance and music. He played at The Capital.”

When the 48 Cherry Street Basque Social Building was torn down at the end of the 1940s, the perfect dance practice venues of open spaces in the fronton and the makeshift stage were eliminated. The separated areas for dance instruction apart from talking parents and playing children were now also absent. Dancer and *txistulari* José Yriarte gave Basque dance and music lessons to the children of the community at the new Basque center at 63 East Broadway weekly in 1953. Yet, some of those practices were nearly impossible exercises in moving and crowding furniture all to one side of a large room, and then keeping parents quiet while they gathered at the bar, or played *mus* at nearby tables. The physical location changed the dynamics of practices and made it more difficult to require attention from the dancers. Still, parents brought their children every Sunday, and the ritual of the “new kids” learning from the older more experienced dancers persevered. The musicians and dancers participated in many parades in New York City during the 1950s, walking with *ikurrinas*, dancing, and riding on floats. The New York City Columbus Day parades were an annual performance, and the Basque dancers accepted other invitations for participation in autocades and exhibitions each year. They even won a prize for a parade in 1958, which was framed and displayed at the C.V.A. hall.

The many instructors over the years maintained consistency in teaching the symbolism and seriousness of the Basque dance performances. One in particular embodied the “perfect teacher” and combined ingenuity, knowledge, military style discipline, and high expectations, with skillful choreography, artistic design, and a love for the youth of the Basque community.

JON OÑATIBIA AND THE “EUKADI” TOUR

Juan “Jon” Oñatibia joined the *Centro Vasco-Americano* on July 1, 1948, marking the commencement of a period of high activity for Basque dance, music, and choral instruction. Born in Oiarzun, Gipuzkoa, following the Spanish Civil War he was exiled to Caracas, Venezuela where he was instrumental to dance and music activities with the Venezuelan-Basque cultural group named “Ekin,” in addition to the creation of articles for the journal publication “Euzkadi.” From Caracas, he migrated to New York with the help of the Basque Government-in-exile Delegation located in Manhattan. “Oñatibia was always living on a shoestring. I mean, how in the world can a Basque virtuoso -who speaks no English- make it in a tough city like New York? He spent all his time singing and playing *txistu* and trying to make a few dollars wherever he could,” said Margie Abadia.

Oñatibia acquired a job as the organist at a Christian church, and he also sang and played organ at a Jewish Synagogue on 14th Street. In the United States, the reform synagogues made extensive use of hymns, mixed choirs and soloists, and organ compositions. Lacking musicians and singers, a Jewish entrepreneur paid him a salary to perform at the Synagogue. Oñatibia was a genius musician and linguist and he quickly learned the Hebrew religious hymns. He spent weekends at Valentín Aguirre’s Jai-Alai Restaurant and at the C.V.A. playing *txistu*, piano, and teaching Basque dancing, and moved between religious establishments singing and playing for both, his Christian and Jewish audiences.

This Jewish impresario presented the idea of the touring group; a traveling show of Basque music, song, and dance, and Oñatibia -who generally responded ‘yes’ to any opportunities to promote Basque culture- enthusiastically agreed to produce and direct such a venture. He wanted two males and two females for the dancing and brought his brother, Manuel, from the Basque Country, and the two Olaeta dancers of the Olaeta Ballet Company in Bizkaia. Emilia Sarriugarte Doyaga was selected as the other female dancer (and unofficial translator). The Jewish entrepreneur -and good friend of Oñatibia’s- planned the tour and he financially supported most of the travel expenses with an agreement to make a percentage of the ticket sales at each performance. Oñatibia wrote music for several instruments, and planned the show of traditional historic dances as well as new pieces he choreographed himself. He selected and trained a small choir of American singers to perform Basque choral music *a cappella*, and other arrangements were set to *txistu* or accordion. During 1951 and 1952, the company “*Euzkadi*” toured Canada, the United States, the Caribbean, and Cuba with Jon and Manu Oñatibia singing, dancing, and playing several musical instruments; Lourdes Olaeta, Bittor (Victor) Olaeta, and Emilia Doyaga performing the Basque dances; and the group of singers presenting the majority of the audiences with their first introduction to *Euskera*.

In 1955, Jon Oñatibia began instructing children in Basque dance, music, and song and they demonstrated what they had learned for the Basque community at the annual summer picnic in 1955.



The “*Euzkadi*” tour was on the road for almost five months of performances in church halls, school gymnasiums, city auditoriums, theaters, and -in South America- *pelota* and *jai alai* frontons. Audiences ranged from a few hundred to several thousand spectators. It was the first time Doyaga, a young adult in her twenties, had ever been outside of New York City. “I remember when we first got the show on the road and we had just started, I think we were in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Dutch auditorium was completely filled and it was a big crowd. When they applied our theater make-up, they always started by covering our faces with white cream first. Well, Oñatibia had to leave to attend to something urgent on the stage and he was so busy before the curtain opening that he forgot to go back for the remainder of his make-up, and he just went straight on to the stage and his face was completely white! Everyone thought he was deathly sick. God, he looked terrible!”

In the next phase of the circuit, when the tour bus was approaching the Canadian border, Oñatibia suddenly realized he had allowed his United States entrance visa to expire, and he was not granted entrance to Canada. Emilia remembers the panic the *Euzkadi* members felt when they understood that they would have to continue

throughout Canada without him until his papers were put in order. Oñatibia waited on the U.S. side of the border in a motel room and the group went on to their performances. “We had to find a local recording business to allow him to play the *txistu* and drum and actually make a recording. He recorded an entire album of the dance and choir music right there and we used that record for the performances. God almighty! So we finally get to the performance, and a woman puts on the big LP record and what do you suppose happens? It started skipping, and repeating and repeating and repeating, and we kept dancing the same steps over and over again. The woman, of course, had no idea what the music was supposed to sound like so she had no idea it was skipping, and finally she held the phonograph needle down. The audience must have wondered *what* kind of group we were. They had to think we were crazy!”

No matter the weather, the bus driver had to gain a certain distance to the next performance each day, and they drove through snowstorms and all kinds of weather across Canada and back through the United States to arrive, perform, and educate their audiences about Basque culture. In Cuba, *Euzkadi* performed in huge auditoriums with thousands of people cheering. Cuba’s significant Basque population turned out in droves and many shouted their encouragement and admiration in *Euskera*. The troupe was entertained at private homes, the jai alai frontons, and at restaurants. Doyaga estimates that overall, tens of thousands of spectators witnessed the very successful tour. Like hundreds of other young Basques across the United States and through the decades, she had never left her “hometown” until she traveled with the Basque dancing group. She had never been outside of New York City until she toured with “*Euzkadi*”. She was seeing the world inside of the Basque framework. This was a rite of passage for many youth in the Basque dance groups. One’s first overnight trip without parents was often a weekend with the Basque community’s dance troupe. The success of *Euzkadi* encouraged Oñatibia to pursue teaching.

Jon Oñatibia continued promoting Basque themes and then in 1955, proposed to the C.V.A. directors that he could begin giving Basque language, song, and dance classes to the children. He also served on the Board of Directors of the *Centro Vasco* in 1955 as secretary of the section for activities and fiestas. The *Juventud Vasca*, Basque Youth, of the *Centro Vasco* created a dance group and Oñatibia was their teacher and director from 1955 to 1963. They performed in city events such as exhibitions at Webster Hall and Town Hall and in public parades down Fifth Avenue. He was a perfectionist. “By the time Oñatibia got through with you, you could do the dances in your sleep,” said Anna M. Aguirre who was a dance student of “Tío Juanito” when she was four to twelve years old. “He would give a few beginning notes and we knew exactly what we were supposed to do. He taught young children, intermediate, and then older teenagers, so had three separate groups in those years.” Anna and her brother, Martin “Marty” Aguirre, and Maritxu Bilbao and her brother Eugene, were the core four dancers, and as new members joined, they had to teach the same dances all over again. The overall repertoire was not extensive, but the dances they

learned, they knew with exactitude. “Marilu Navas was a beautiful dancer and watching her was like watching a ballet performer,” said Anna M. Aguirre. Manny Zuluaga remembered Trini Reyes dancing on the wine glass and Oñatibia playing the *txistu* for her in the 1950s. María Luisa Lamiquiz and Julen Vidasolo were friends and dancers with the *Juventud Vasca*, and later married each other.

The emigrant generation that had personally learned or seen the dances in the Basque Country was now parents and grandparents. The only example of Basque dance that the current children and teenagers recognized and understood were the exhibitions they had seen in New York, and now Oñatibia was the model. He posted a letter to Bittor Olaeta to ask for 16 mm film from the Olaeta Ballet and he used them as examples for the children to see how the dances were performed. The *Euzko-Etxea*'s current dance instructor Anna M. Aguirre explained, “Everything was so obvious to the emigrant generation that they never had to write down what this dance meant and how it should be performed. It was assumed that there would always be



The Juventud Vasca performed the traditional dance of the fishing village of Lekeitio, Bizkaia, Kaxarranka, for the 1955 Basque picnic. Under the instruction of Jon Oñatibia, dancers learned and perfected numerous new selections for their total repertoire of Basque dances.

someone around that knew how to perform it, and what it meant, what the history of the dance was. Now we realize that this is not the case and that we have to work extra hard to safeguard and recuperate that which we have already lost, the information that was not taught or carried down.” Oñatibia preferred that they perfect each step to one dance before moving on and teaching a new dance. He would not permit Manny Zuluaga to join because he would not pay attention or take it seriously enough. At the C.V.A. salon where practices were held on Sundays, parents sat –quietly- and watched from one side of the room and did not interfere. Those dancers of *Juventud Vasca* who stayed were transformed from awkward and uncoordinated children and teenagers to graceful performers. “Standing tall, shoulders back, and eyes up. Ready? And, one-two-three, one-two-three -Remember, you are Basque!- left-two-three, right-two three. . . ,” as he frequently repeated.

THE SECOND HALF OF A CENTURY OF BASQUE DANCING

Jon Oñatibia departed New York and returned to the Basque Country from political exile in 1963. Fortunately, and some would say providentially, the year prior, Father José Mari Larrañaga, from Zumarraga, Gipuzkoa was assigned to New York; specifically to St. James Church in the old Basque neighborhood a few blocks away from the East Broadway *Centro Vasco*.

When Father Larrañaga arrived to Manhattan and parishioner Victoria Gorostiola connected him with the C.V.A. in 1963, there was no longer a *txistulari* or an instructor for the youth. The group had attempted to continue on with Oñatibia’s famous LP and other records with Basque music brought from the Basque Country, and several disillusioned people quit, others began college, others had moved north to White Plains. Larrañaga recalls, “A few teenagers used to practice dancing every week. They practiced with records. Jaime Castillo and Marilu Navas helped teach the steps and the correct form. Somehow I met a *txistulari* that came from Cuba to live in New York, but he didn’t have a *txistu*, so on my next trip home, I bought several *txistus* in Gipuzkoa and brought them back.” Father Larrañaga brought *txistus* for Angel Viña, Johnny Abadía, and Luis Amesti, who practiced and taught themselves. Luis Amesti played for the Oinkari Basque Dancers from Boise, Idaho when they traveled to New York for the New York World’s Fair in 1964.

Larrañaga aspired to recreate and reformulate a youth group based on Basque music, dance, and song, and he had to gain the trust and admiration of 1960s New York City teenagers. He did it. Larrañaga learned the Ezpata Dantza of Zumarraga during his summer trip home in order to go back to New York and teach it to the dance group (in 2003 he still knows the steps and can dance it well.) He also brought swords for the dances. He arranged to have twelve swords made for the male dancers, and when the Basque Country craftsmen found out who and what the

Angel Viña, txistulari to the left, and Alys Mason Viña, with tambourine standing to the right, accompanied the Euzkotarrak dancers with live music at practices and performances. This 1970 photograph shows their ikurriña, Basque flag banner with the C.V.A. initials that was displayed for all performances.



swords were for, they were so proud that later generation Basques were preserving Basque culture that the swords were given as a gift to the Basques of New York.

The group, now named “*Euzkotarrak Dancers*” met on Sunday nights, at St. James Church Hall, or at the C.V.A on East Broadway. The Basque women were excellent seamstresses and they sewed all of the costumes, and the *txapelas* and *alpargatas* dance shoes were imported by Carmen Moneo’s business. Iñaki Aberasturi also brought dance shoes for the kids from his summer trips home to Arteaga, Bizkaia. In 1965, there were about twenty young dancers that performed for the *Aberri Eguna* festival under the tutelage of Larrañaga. Emili, Elvira, Joe and Benita Pedernales, Maritxu and Eugene Bilbao, Manny Belaustegui, Luis and Elisa Vidasolo, Enrique and Albert Arana, all performed for the Basque crowd. “These were difficult years for many families and individuals,” said José Mari Larrañaga, “because the sixties movement was all against tradition and history and doing what their parents said. And in New York, well you can imagine, everything is magnified. So getting teenagers to like coming to the Basque functions meant we had to give them power inside the club, and make them feel like it was theirs. The *Centro Vasco* was much too conservative and they didn’t un-

derstand teenagers at all! Well, we had some difficult times, and tension, you know. But in the end it was okay, but you know I had to call lots of people and try to get them to understand that the teenagers were the future, and if they didn't come to the dancing, they wouldn't come in the future either.”

In 1967, the *Euzkotarrak* performed at Cornell University in addition to a few smaller performances for non-Basque audiences. Otherwise, they danced for Aberri Eguna, the Basque picnics, San Ignacio feast day on July 31, and the C.V.A. Anniversary Dance. The Olaeta Ballet returned for performances in New York in September 1967, and rejuvenated the repertoire of dances and brought excitement to Father Larrañaga, the New York Basque musicians, and the dancers. In 1968, Father José Mari Larrañaga was re-assigned to the Basque Country and departed the New York community. Once again, those who were interested searched for a teacher and mentor.

In the 1970s, Dennis Inchausti could touch his nose with his knee when he straight leg high-kicked for *Txankarreku*. Idoia Idoyaga attended extra ballet classes to help with her Basque dancing form. Michelle Calvo performed the “Agurra” welcoming dance and approximately twenty people came in and out of the *Euzkotarrak*. Julian Elordi danced with the troupe until his family moved back to Zornotza-Amorebieta, Bizkaia. Albert Arana and Irztxi Orbe also stayed with the group. The general public seemed to love traditional Basque folk dance and the Olaeta Ballet returned to New York again for performances in 1970 with the txistulari Bonifacio Fernandez Ortiz. Dennis Inchausti, who had learned to dance with Oñatibia, prepared the dancers for a special evening performance, “New York’s May Nationality Evening” of 1973, exhibiting eleven different dances for the crowds. Carnegie Hall hosted the Ballet Basque de Biarritz on October 25, 1974, and the performance was sold out.

The C.V.A. purchased the Eckford Street building in 1973, and moved in 1974, and finally the dancers had a large dancehall and stage for rehearsals and performances. Teacher Anna M. Aguirre and txistulari John Betanzos stepped forward to volunteer their expertise and time with the Basque youth, as did Dennis Inchausti, and Angel and Alys Mason Viña on *txistu* and tambourine. When musicians were not available, Peter Torrontegui played records. However, Aguirre encouraged the dancers to take leadership and ownership of their group, instead of one single person being in control of practices and performances, she pushed for the dancers themselves to lead the rehearsals. Michele Calvo was a dance instructor in 1975, and spent four weeks in Bermeo, Bizkaia learning and practicing with groups there. Elisa Vidasolo danced with *Euzkotarrak* and while visiting relatives in Ibarangelua learned and practiced new dances with Father Domingo Zuluaga. Julen Goti did the same thing during the summer of 1977. *Eusko-tarrak* danced for colleges, such as St. Francis College in Brooklyn, various community centers, universities, Basque activities, and even personal parties as they did for Benita and José Pedernales’ 25th wedding anniversary in 1975. They performed at the Masonic Temple in Elizabeth, New Jersey in 1976 for a benefit for the St. Patrick’s Church and School with Ronnie Inchausti performing the *Aurresku*.

During the 1970s, Manny and Gail Getz Zuluaga drove from White Plains to Brooklyn for Sunday dancing lessons, and their seven children boosted the energy level of the practices. Once, Gail Zuluaga was looking around the house trying to find a broom and a mop to clean her home kitchen floors, and each one had the stick missing from it. The children had cut them off to make themselves dancing sticks with which to practice. Manny had all the music recorded, and he frequently played accordion. Gail made the uniforms for her seven children and Manny made the shoes. During the late 1970s, the *Euzkotarrak* dancers and *txistularis* were invited to perform for the annual White Plains Outdoor Arts Festival on the mall in White Plains. The group dressed, rehearsed, and walked from the Zuluaga's house, and after the performances walked back for outdoor barbecues. "Their hospitality was overwhelming," said Alys Mason Viña. Julen Goti, Idoya Goti, and Manuel Belaustegui had to pull younger kids out of the Zuluaga cherry trees when it was time to board the small bus and drive back to New York City. No one wanted to leave.



In 1982, Louie Larrinaga (standing third from left) instructed the Euzkotarrak Dancers with musicians Angel and Alys Mason Viña.



The Itzelak Dancers were led by Anna M. Aguirre, Michelle Calvo, and Louie Larrinaga during the 1990s. Dancers here are shown on the stage of the Euzko-Etxea of New York Basque center building on Eckford Street in Brooklyn. Photo 1990.

The July 1976 nationwide Independence Day Bicentennial celebration included the Smithsonian Institute of Washington D.C. cultural festival on the Mall in the United States' capital city. The Smithsonian contacted the New York Euzko-Etxea to invite and highlight Basque musicians and dancers to participate in a celebration of culture in the United States, and they enthusiastically answered 'yes'. Angel Viña played *txistu*, Alys Mason Viña played tambourine and Elisa and Luis Vidasolo demonstrated eight different dances. María Luisa Vidasolo prepared Basque cuisine such as *lapikoko* (a Basque bean dish), *Pimentos rellenos* (stuffed peppers), *Patatas en salsa verde* (potatoes in green sauce, with eggs) for attendees to sample and enjoy. The Smithsonian filmed the cooking demonstrations, performances, and exhibitions for a television special, which aired under the title, "In the footsteps of Columbus."

Simultaneously there was a group of young adults *Eusko Gazteak*, Basque Youth, who gathered socially and for Basque dance. Julen Abio remembers, "We had our own dances to get funds, and we invited everybody and there were hundreds of people upstairs. It was some good stuff. We had an *aurreku* group, we danced at

Anna Aguirre, left, and Itziar Albisu Kobayashi, second from left, give instruction in Basque dance and song for children on Sunday afternoons at the Euzko-Etxea in Brooklyn.



universities, and we were going all over the place. And there was group of about six to eight boys and four to six girls and we were all in our early twenties, I guess eighteen to twenty-five or so. You know, we were a responsible bunch of people that could get together and we could drive ourselves to the performances and then go have a party. We were old enough to drink so it wasn't like it is now. Now people at that age think they are too old to dance. In those days it was the perfect age for everyone involved. There was guy called "Bermeo", and another one "Mundaka," but they got married and went their own ways."

The younger *Euzkotarrak* continued and in October 1981, Albert Arana, Manuel Belaustegui, Izaskun Omaechevarria, and Vivian Zuluaga performed in front of several thousand spectators at the Milford Jai Alai for the intermission entertainment. "Argia," a Basque dance and musical ensemble from Donostia-San Sebastián performed at the newly named "Euzko-Etxea of New York" on their way west to the Jaialdi International Basque Festival of Boise, Idaho, in 1990. Vivian Zuluaga-Papp said, "It was a really a treat to witness that spectacular performance, and it encouraged several of the past dancers to come back and rejoin their efforts." In addition,

twenty-two Basques from New York traveled to Boise to participate in the Jaialdi 1990. Many who had never attended a western Basque festival were shocked after they experienced a four-day event of twenty thousand attendees; including exhibitions from fifteen Basque dance groups from the United States. The New Yorkers returned home with their batteries charged for Basque activities.

In 1992, the “*Itzelak Dancers*” was established with Michelle Fernandez, Manny Belaustegui, and Louie Larrinaga working to instruct the members. The group practiced September through June and had three or four performances a year. They conducted numerous fundraisers for several years, and in 1995, they proudly marched in Boise, Idaho for the inauguration of the third Jai Aldi International Basque Festival. They bowed to great cheers and applause for their quality exhibition, intricate costumes, and dedication for having traveled so far in order to participate. It was another meaningful success for the history of ethnic dance in the New York Basque community. In 1996, dancers engaged in a cultural exchange of ethnic dancing with the Greenwich Morris Dancers, and the Half Moon Sword Dancers, comparing English, Scottish, and Basque ethnic dance. However, when Louie Larrinaga retired as one of the dance instructors in 1999, many parents stopped taking their children on Sundays. Vivian Zuluaga-Papp admitted, “He was fantastic and my kids loved him. He made it worth the drive to take the whole day out to come in to Brooklyn. But after Louie, there were Sundays when there was no teacher, and with five children, well, I just don’t have time anymore.” Anna M. Aguirre again volunteered to spend Sunday afternoons teaching the children and, with Itziar Albisu, has since taught dance and singing to the children for the annual *Aberri Eguna* performances of the *Itzelak Dancers*. In 2003, there are six or seven children and teenagers that participate each Sunday, and nearly fifteen that join in for the *Aberri Eguna* performance.

Today’s Basque families are not so keen to dedicate an entire day to one activity, nor are the parents mutually good friends, and in reality, they often do not even know each other. The situation creates a spiral, which at present results in only a handful of consistent dancers. Because the parents did not grow up together in the Basque neighborhood, nor see each other every Sunday at the East Broadway *Centro Vasco-Americano* or the Eckford Street *Euzko-Etxea*, they do not have close friends at the Basque events. Because they do not have close friends there, they will less likely try to interest their children in the dancing, and not go themselves either since it might be less enjoyable or less personable. Those children grow up without having the Basque friends from the dancing classes and when they become parents, are not likely to attend *Euzko-Etxea* functions, nor try to interest their children in participating in something in which they never took part. Certainly, there are examples of what I call ‘born again Basques,’ and there are Basques who do return to ethnicity later in life, but these numbers are few, and again the geography of the megalopolis of New York City sets out many hurdles to regular participation. Regardless, leaders at the New York *Euzko-Etxea* continue

offering dance instruction and classes for singing; ready to welcome anyone who might show an interest.

Many of the ethnic dances represent liturgical celebrations, historical traditions, and political ideas. For example, it is important and significant for the children to see the adults participating and the seriousness they give to the *ikurriña*, Basque flag, dance. The pride that Iñaki Aberasturi gives by demonstrating to the children the importance of maintaining these traditions is obvious when he twirls the flag above the heads of the kneeling children dancers as if in symbolism of protecting them with the Basque culture. They might not see it as such yet, but in the same way that Iñaki danced as a child, and Pedro Toja held the Basque flag for him in the 1950s, Iñaki held it for Louie Larrinaga in the 1970s, and Louie Larrinaga for Aritz Albisu Kobayashi in the 1990s. The obvious question is, will there still be Basque dancers for whom Aritz will whirl the *ikurriña*?



New York Basque musicians entertained for Basque functions such as dances, weddings, picnics, and banquets. Photograph 1939.

MUSICIANS

The performances of *Ezpata Dantzaris*, *Juventud Vasca*, *Eusko Gasteak*, *Euzko-tarrak*, and the *Itzelak* Dancers, along with Basque picnics, banquets, parades, and dances, have been greatly enhanced by live music from accordions, txistus, guitars, piano, *danborrak*, or Basque drums, and tambourines. Toribio Altuna played the piano accordion from the 1920s through the 1940s and John Betanzos was one of the original *txistularis* for the *Centro Vasco-Americano* since its inception in 1913. In 1936, Perico Bilbao directed the Basque musicians for the *Ezpata Dantzaris*. In addition to playing for the Basque dancers in the 1930s and 1940s, Emiliana Zubeldia, was a renowned pianist in New York, and was in charge of organizing concerts and recitals of Basque music at the C.V.A. She worked tirelessly to expose Americans to Basque music and Basque composers. Plattekill, New York, enjoyed the music of Ignacio (also spelled Ygnacio) Arrien playing accordion and his wife, Segunda Arguinchona Arrien, playing tambourine, from the 1920s through the 1950s. Tony Barben (Ibarbengoechea) played txistu regularly and during his visits to the Basque Country, he practiced with his grandfather, who was a *txistulari* in Bermeo. José Yriarte gave Basque dance and *txistu* lessons to the children of the community at the East Broadway location Basque center on Sundays in 1953.

Primi Fernandez was a musician in the 1970s. Johnny Abadia also played txistu “a little” and would meet with Angel Viña and Luis Amesti for practices. Born 1936 in Ibarangelua, Bizkaia, Luis Amesti came to the U.S. in 1958. He visited the East Broadway *Centro Vasco* in 1963, at the time Oñatibia was leaving, and John Abadia came to tell him that they needed him to please play txistu for practices down at St. James Church. He traveled from New Jersey to Manhattan on Saturdays to St. James Church, but, “one Saturday one kid came, another Saturday two, then another Saturday no one. So I said ‘to hell with this’ and I quit.” Amesti learned to play while in a dance group in Ibarangelua. Amesti said, “There was a priest from Ibarangelua that wanted a few of the kids to learn *txistu* to play for the *ezpata dantzaris* of our town, so he asked me if I wanted to learn *txistu*, and I said ‘yes’. So, he started practicing with me, and then he sent me to Durango [Bizkaia] to a private *txistularia* [person that plays the txistu] and I had private lessons there.” Amesti returned and played for the dance groups in the 1980s and 1990s, and was often the only available live music for performances. His dedication has provided audiences with examples of Basque musical instrument demonstrations.

Angel Viña was born in Brooklyn in 1914, and moved with his mother, Tomasa Elustondo to Ea, Bizkaia as an infant. He was educated in Ea, Bilbao, and at the Jesuit Pontifical Seminary in Comillas, Santander. In 1930, he returned to the United States and lived with his uncle Gabriel and aunt Segunda Gainsa Elustondo in their Brooklyn boardinghouse. Angel explained, “I began to play *txistu* from listening to records!” He borrowed the *txistu* and *danborra*, or drum, that were hanging in the window at Valentín

Angel Viña learned to play the txistu with John Betanzos as his instructor, and he practiced by listening to Basque recorded music and playing along. Alys Mason married Angel Viña in 1965, and they became the team of musicians for the Basque dance groups, accompanying them at performances, and entertaining for dinners at the Centro Vasco and the Euzko-Etxea into the 1990s.



Aguirre's Jai Alai Restaurant when Elias Aguirre, Valentín's brother, was tending bar and noticed Angel admiring the musical instruments. He knew they were much more valuable in the hands of a musician than hanging in a window as decorations. John Betanzos was one of the original *txistularis* for the *Centro Vasco-Americano*, and he also served as Angel Viña's instructor. "You need to have cassettes of Basque music to learn the rhythms and to practice," suggested Angel. John Ehlis, a musician from San Francisco, took instruction from Viña until Angel's death May 12, 2003. Angel married Alys Mason in 1965 and she encouraged him to return to his musical talents. He practiced in the garage of their home and became the dance group *txistulari* in 1969. Alys learned to play the tambourine and the two entertained many crowds until her death in 1993. The C.V.A. hosted a dinner and dance in May 1978 in honor of Angel Viña and his years of dedication to the organization and to the children of the Basque community. He gave *txistu* and dance lessons, he played for performances and practices, and he performed Basque music for special dinners and events.

Lourdes Aresti came to New York in the 1970s from Las Arenas, Bizkaia in order to study English and stay with her uncle Ramón Aresti. During that time she taught *txistu* fingering to the children with the help of Gloria Aberasturi, who instructed the



Musician and dance choreographer Jon Oñatibia. Oñatibia significantly influenced the quality of the Basque dance group in New York during the 1950s, and extended their knowledge of Basque language and song as well, until his return to the Basque Country in 1963.

students in how to read music. Though she was a part of the community for less than two years, Lourdes Aresti made a significant impact with her students, especially thirteen-year-old Mari Nieves Andujar. Her going away party with Angie and Andres Espizua in 1977 included a group of nearly forty Basques attending from New York, Long Island, and New Jersey.

CLASSICAL MUSICIANS

Juan Crisóstomo Antonio de Arriaga y Balzola, “the Spanish Mozart,” was born in Bilbao on the fiftieth anniversary of Mozart’s birth, and virtually taught himself as a child. He studied at the Paris Conservatory, and died in Paris in 1826 just before his twentieth birthday. His popularity in New York has lasted all of these years, and his name is associated with the best the world has offered. “It’s so refreshing to find people that connect Basques to classical musicians and artists and not to political turmoil,” said Miriam de Salegi. The Julliard School in New York presented a dance department demonstration by artists Antony Tudor set to the music of Arriaga in 1953. The Arriaga quartets, recorded to LP by the Guilet Quartet for Concert Hall, sold notably well in New York in the 1950s and even became a Concert Hall collector’s item. His music played regularly on the radio and according to a New York Times article there was an Arriaga Quartet who played at Townhall Theater in Manhattan in the 1970s (New York Times, Oct. 22,1974).

Decades later, Father Francisco de Madina, born in Oñati, Gipuzkoa in 1907, became an internationally recognized composer for works he created in Argentina, the Basque Country, and the United States. He studied music and composition in Oñati and later also in Burgos, Spain. He was ordained a priest in 1929 and was sent to Argentina, where in addition to composing several famous Christmas songs and an interpretation of the *Our Father*, he also organized and conducted the Lagun Onak Basque choir of Buenos Aires. After leaving Argentina in 1958 he migrated to Albany, New York with a grant to work in music where he completed an oratorio titled *Arantzazu*, and in the following years created *Oñati*, *Concierto Vasco*, and *Concierto Andalus*, for guitar and orchestra. Father Madina served as the commentator for the New York radio broadcast, *Voice of America*, which delved into the arts and music and also brought recognition to Basque culture. “Those broadcasts are important to educate the audience about Basque composers and artists, and he also would have distinguished the Basques, as Basques and not as Spanish or French. The better educated the commentator is, the more the audience will learn, and when it comes to classical music, there is a lot to know,” said Bilbao clarinetist and immigrant to New York, Oscar Espina Ruiz.

Oscar Espina Ruiz, born in Bilbao in 1971, lived in Leioa until he was nineteen years old and immigrated to New York. He was introduced to music through his study of



Lourdes Aresti instructed children in txistu during the 1970s during her brief stay in New York. Unfortunately none of these students have continued on to play for the current Itzelak Dancers.

txistu for six years at his Basque *ikastola*. He attended classes at the music conservatory in Bilbao and he began studying clarinet here. His father regularly played Glen Miller and Pedro Iturralde music at home, and consequently Espina Ruiz wanted to play a saxophone. Because the conservatory did not have a saxophone, “They tricked me by saying it was the same as a clarinet, so, I could play the clarinet, and then transfer to the sax later. But of course, I got hooked on the clarinet,” he said. His Romanian teacher at the conservatory, Florian Popa, encouraged him to continue and convinced Oscar that he had incredible potential and that he could be the best in the world.

When Oscar was fifteen he was already playing with the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, where he focused more on classical music, and away from Basque folk music. Visiting conductors challenged him to go abroad and challenge himself with the very best clarinetists, such as Richard Stoltzman. He completed scholarship applications from the Diputación de Bizkaia and won \$10,000 in 1991 to study in the United States. He has studied at Mannes College of Music, Purchase Conservatory and SUNY at Stony Brook, where he has been the Teaching Assistant of Charles Neidich and he is now a Doctoral Candidate. Soon after arriving in New York, he met

Noriko Nagasawa, a pianist, whom he soon married, and his career took an impressive trajectory. Oscar studied with Ayako Oshima and Charles Neidich. He was chosen for the top clarinetist award winner at the 1999 Olga Koussevitzky Competition for Woodwinds, and won the Artists International 1999 Annual New York Debut Award. He has been invited for solo performances in China, Japan, Spain, and the United States, and has offered clarinet master-classes in Spain and at nine of the most important conservatories in China, including Shanghai and the Central Conservatory in Beijing. In 2000, he performed his highly acclaimed New York Debut at Carnegie Hall and Tokyo Debut at Luther Ichigaya Concert Hall. Espina Ruiz is the founder and director of the Ernach Summer Music Festival in Spain, and has released a CD “Basque Heart”, available from Prion and Kobaltone.

This Basque musician is conducting extensive work on recovering great pieces of music for the clarinet. His research on Julián Menéndez, the clarinet master born in Bilbao 1895, is recognized throughout the world. In 2003, New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art’s instrument collection acquired a clarinet that belonged to Menéndez, the Basque composer and soloist. The clarinet, donated by Vicente Peñarocha, is being displayed beside that of Benny Goodman, both being considered two of the greatest clarinetists of the Twentieth Century. Espina Ruiz is bringing fame to Basque composers by performing them in concerts throughout the world, recording their pieces, and publishing them, so that the works are available to the public. In 2002, he joined the clarinet faculty at the Bloomingdale School of Music, and his recent research, recordings, and concerts on Basque composers have been supported by the Basque Government.

ABESLARIAK: SINGERS

Centenarian Gabrielle Amestoy says, “Basque songs are very special because they tell a story and are very sentimental. Work, pray, and sing; that’s what we were taught, and I like to sing when I work, and sing when I pray too.” Amestoy recounts decades of Basque dinners with her friends. “We would gather three or four times a year for Basque style food, music and hours of singing. Mostly Basques from the north side, you know, and we spoke in Basque, or sometimes in French, but we always sang in Basque the songs of our towns.” Basques from *Iparalde* regularly gathered at the Hotel Pennsylvania for dinners and singing with the chef Jean Baptiste Heguy in the 1940s. At the *Centro Vasco*, there are not any frequent mentions of choirs or *bertsolariak*, improvisational poetic singing, in any meeting minutes or programs of festivals, nor do the elderly remember any such performances, but for a few from the dancing groups. There is one official announcement from the 1965 *Aberri Eguna* festival that *bertsolariak* would be performing for the audience, and the admission was five dollars. Nevertheless, there have been, and are, several influential Basque singers that have impacted New York audiences.



During the 1950s, the New York Basque community recreated the Basque Country tradition of celebrating the feast of Santa Agueda by traveling to the homes of friends and singing Basque songs. Singers would then be treated with food.

Iñaki Astondoia, born in Pamplona in 1936, was a singer in the Church choir from when he was five years old. After completing the mandatory military service to Spain, a music group he formed began a tour of Spain in 1959 as “*Los Iruñako*”, those from Iruña-Pamplona. In 1960-61, the *Iruñako* won the First Place Prize of the Spanish Festival of Music, and initiated their plunge into show business in Europe and Central America. The group arrived in New York in 1962 and played in the city’s nightclubs and performed on the Ed Sullivan Show. “I stayed in New York with my new wife and the group stayed until 1965 and then we broke up. But my wife and I decided we’d stay in New York and not go to the Basque Country like my music partners did,” said Astondoia. “When I left the Basque Country I thought it would be for a short while. That was forty-one years ago.” Like thousands of other Basque immigrants, life in the host country continued on for him, and when marriage and children are involved, one begins to grow roots in the new home city. Astondoia has been a professional singer and guitar player for more than four decades, playing all around the state of New York in its nightclubs five days a week until 2002, when he switched to weekends only. He wanted to attend *Centro Vasco* functions, and was friends with Oñatibia, but because he worked every weekend, he was unable to participate.

Iñaki Astondoa (second from right) performed with the musical group, Los Iruñako, from Iruña-Pamplona, Navarre. Astondoa toured with Los Iruñako during the early 1960s and decided to stay in New York, while they returned to Pamplona. He has continued entertaining in New York nightclubs to the present day.



Astondoa would have appreciated the Basques of New York celebration of the feast day of Santa Agueda, February 4, 1996. In the Basque Country the tradition is to go from home to home singing and asking for donations for the village church and for food for the singers. In New York, it became too difficult to travel from home to home within the metropolitan area and instead, led by Iñaki Aberasturi, they decided to celebrate at the Euzko-Etxea. Members dressed in traditional *baserritarrak*, farmstead, costumes and enjoyed singing and a buffet supper.

Ainhoa Arteta, of Tolosa, Gipuzkoa, also has a difficult schedule for attempting to participate in Basque community functions. She is an Honorary Board Member of the Basque International Cultural Center, but does not usually attend any *Euzko-Etxea* activities. She brings fame to all Basques with her significant soprano roles and status in international opera. In 1993, Arteta won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions of New York, and the same year sang and recorded a CD with Plácido Domingo. She has won the *Concours International des Voix d'Opéra de Paris*. Arteta performed the role of Violeta Valéry Valery in Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*, at the Metropolitan Opera in 1995. She has played leading roles and was selected by President Clinton to

sing at the White House with her pianist Alejandro Zabala, from Getxo, Bizkaia. In 1999, the Hispanic Society of America in New York granted her a special award for her Contribution to the Arts. Arteta performs year-round in the most prestigious opera houses in the world, and for Basques in New York, she is another example of excellence in Basque culture.

ARTISTS

Art does not necessarily fill a desire in the listener or viewer, rather, it creates it. The ingenuity of expression by Basques in New York extends on through dance, musical instruments, and vocalists, to representative artistry of sketching, painting, sculpting, engraving, directing cinema, and writing literature. From 1946-48, an all-Basque language cultural review of literature, art, and music, named *Argia*, or Light was published in New York. It educated and informed the city's Basques regarding the latest trends in *Euskal Herria* as well as in other countries, and is one of the few examples of early media in *Euskera* published in the United States. Basque immigrants, regardless of their host community, tend to decorate their homes with ethnic representations, such as Iñaki Astondo's "Pamplona room" where he exhibits a painting of his hometown, Lily Fradua's living room painting of Bakio, or Gabrielle Amestoy's painting of her family farmstead. It is common to find carved wooden busts representing a traditional Basque *Amuma*, or grandmother, and *Aitxitxe*, or grandfather in places of honor in family living rooms. Sketches of a Basque countryside, and photography of traditional symbols such the Tree of Gernika, are common in Basque households. Basques in the diaspora tend to try to surround themselves, or at least display a few objects, that remind themselves of "home". Though traditional representational art is more common with Basques in New York for home and office display, the art being produced by the Basques in this cultural capital is anything but traditional.

The Basque community has always valued art, beginning with the Basque painter Félix de Echevarria's exhibited paintings in Manhattan museums and his oil paintings and murals on the walls of the Valentín Aguirre Jai-Alai Restaurant. María de Landaburu, owned and operated a bookstore at 11 Cruz Street where she also exhibited Basque artwork, and her son, Juan Kunzler Landaburu, collected Basque art and held private showings at his residence. C. Alonso Irigoyen and his wife, Inga Lindgren, were high society aristocrats and worked on many benefits and charitable projects in the art world in the 1950s and 1960s. They auctioned off several pieces of privately owned artwork valuing more than \$200,000 in 1960.

José-María Cundin, born in Getxo, Bizkaia in 1938, is known and esteemed as an outstanding advocate of the historical 'Avant-Garde' of the Basque Country. His first immigration was to Bogotá, Colombia, where he lived during the 1950s and created

wide-ranging projects. Cundin established his residence in the United States in 1958 in New York. He created political vignettes and illustrations in New York for publications such as *Bohemia Libre*, *Sociedades Hispanas Confederadas*, and the *Editorial Sudamericana*. In 1958, he established the New York Itinerant Puppet Theatre. In 1964, he moved to New Orleans where he is regarded with renown and his works are part of several gallery permanent collections there. Presently he resides in Annapolis, Maryland where he is an Artist in Residence at the Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts. Cundin's paintings and sculptures are in numerous private collections in Europe and the Americas and his works are displayed in the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao; the Museo de Bellas Artes de Vitoria-Gasteiz; the Museo de Zea, in Medellin, Colombia; and the New Orleans Museum of Art at Johnson & Wales University. Cundin has created an engraving of "The Unanimous Declaration," the Declaration of Independence of the British colonies in North America. This is the first engraving by hand created, produced, and released during the last one hundred and fifty years. The Millennium Edition of the Declaration of Independence was carved by hand on a brass plate by Pedro María Azpiazu, a Basque artisan, who is considered to be among the finest metal engravers in the world today. The paper used for this production was especially formulated and hand made by Villabona, a papermaker in *Euskal Herria*. The printer is Arturo Garcia, director of the renowned *Taller Mayor* of Madrid.

Artist Francisco Cabezón Castillo, of Bilbao, was invited to New York to produce a one-man show of his paintings in 1976. His style is called "Rhythmic Expressionistic", and he exhibited at Georgetown University in Washington D.C., Alfred University in Rochester, New York, and at Montgomery College, and the Cleveland Galleries in Maryland. Ana Mendieta, a Basque from Cuba, earned a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1980 and her art, which came from earthworks suggesting human forms, was represented in a number of exhibitions, including the Kouros Gallery on Madison Avenue.

More recently, Amaya Gúrpide-Rubio, born in 1974 in Pamplona migrated to New York in 1999. She began her studies in the Art School of Pamplona in 1990, and by chance one day, she met one of her former art teachers, Mikel Esparza, who had been in New York for thirteen years. "And I decided I could do it too," she said. "My teacher was the biggest influence for me to come to New York in 1999." Gúrpide began to study and work in the National Academy of Science, and continues there in 2003. She won the Allied Artists Award for her piece, "The Harvey Dinnerstein Class Concert," and she continues her expression in sculpture, drawing and engraving. The inaugural reception of the Basque International Cultural Center at the Seamen's Church Institute, featured twelve paintings of Nisa Goiburu. Several works, such as "*Hitz Entzuten*", *Listening to the Word*, were also exhibited in 1999 at the Caelum Gallery in New York.

Anita Glesta has always felt a special and unexplainable connection to the Basque people. She is not ancestrally Basque, she says she is, "intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually Basque." Glesta lived in the Basque Country for one

year as a teenager, and that time transformed her life. She has worked tirelessly in the New York art community in the area of public art, and has suggested to the City of New York that the Twin Towers Memorial include a seedling of the Tree of Gernika as a symbol of the hostile targeting of innocent civilians. She has presented a proposal for public art in the Basque Country that includes a walking path through Bizkaia and monument commemorations of Basque victimization in various wars and during the Franco dictatorship. Until our interview in 2002, she did not know that the very apartment where she had lived for so many years when forming her artistic talents and nourishing her understanding of Basque history and culture was in the heart of the historic Basque neighborhood. “No wonder all of those years on Water Street still retain such intense meaning for me. I was meant to live there for a reason and maybe the energy that came to me emanated from the walls that had previously protected a family of Basque immigrants. Now it all makes sense to me,” she said.

Guillermo Zubiaga makes his own personalized Christmas cards each year for friends and family, using guash, an opaque watercolor. He has a great interest in Basque mythology, and because of the repression of the oral culture in the Basque Country and the scant transmission of mythology, his interest intensified. He said, “There are very few Basque myths that are written and published in the Basque Country, and because of the renaissance more books are being published. I think we have to tell our stories because they belong to us as Basques. I think there is a market for that, and even if not, it is part of my identity and I want to do it symbolically.” Born in Baracaldo, Bizkaia in 1972, Zubiaga migrated to New York in 1993, at twenty-one years old, lived with his brother briefly until his brother returned to the Basque Country, and “was left by myself, and I didn’t know a single person in this huge city,” he said. He studied in Syracuse and gained employment in 1994 drawing animations. Later he worked in a Manhattan café that was also an art gallery, and in 1997 met a person with connections in the comic book and animations industry. Zubiaga draws illustrations for comic books, and teaches two art history courses. “I love commercial art, but it’s very competitive, just like everything else in New York,” he said.

Iñaki Lazcoz is another artist born in Pamplona in 1973, who then studied Fine Arts at the *Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*, University of the Basque Country, in Leioa, Bizkaia. He graduated in 1996 and moved for four years to live, and to paint, in Vienna. Lazcoz explained his professional development, “I applied for an international contest organized by Art Link from Israel, it was international young art in collaboration with Sotheby’s. I saw a pamphlet that had the information, and I just applied for fun; I never thought I could be chosen.” His winning work was auctioned in Israel and in New York, and when he came to the New York auction, he met up with Amaya Gúrpidi, his old friend from school in Pamplona. The Basque art information network worked well enough to have him stay in New York, creating portraits of persons, objects, and animals into large, out of context backgrounds. “My work makes people

think and reflect, you can look at it for a long time, you need time to look at it. It is deep. I have a unique style, and I was an island in my class because most other people were painting expressionism and other known things, but I was not,” said Lazcoz.

This general smattering of information regarding Basque artists in New York exemplifies the contemporary immigration by those who have transplanted themselves to the international center of culture. Generally, they have arrived with university level training and often professional qualifications, some knowledge of English, and have migrated for personal fulfillment issues, and not necessarily out of economic hardship or political exile. When the New York Film Festival of 2001 and the “Spanish Cinema Now” festival at the Walter Reade Theater collaborated with the Instituto Cervantes of New York to feature Basque directors such as the Navarrese Montxo Armendariz, Basques in New York were not surprised. When the Basque International Cultural Center newsletters mention a need to exhibit artwork of Basques, they mean it as a permanent function. This is another difference between the Basques of New York and those of the west coast. New York Basques are surrounded by globalized culture, and with the cultures of the entire globe. Basque identity, and definitions of “Basqueness” are much more varied than the traditional txistus and Spanish Civil War Republican hymns. In addition to –and definitely not in place of– traditional Basque culture of the 1900s to 1940s, the Basque community in New York also has access to contemporary manifestations of Basque culture, including Basque punk rock, Basque poetry readings, Basque cinematography, Basque literature, etc.

When delegates to the 2002 North American Basque Organizations summer convention were individually asked if their Basque club had ever hosted an art exhibition by any Basque artist, the results generally included a request to repeat the question, as if they could not possibly have heard correctly. “A what?” and, “What Basque artists? Are there Basque artists? You mean like painters?” tended to be their next questions. The answers were ‘no’. Only one of the thirty-four had ever heard of Ainhoa Arteta, though she is recognized as one of the world’s leading sopranos. When Oscar Espina-Ruiz presented a free clarinet concert sponsored by the Center for Basque Studies on the campus of the University of Nevada, Reno and featuring all Basque composers, five people from the Reno Zazpiak Bat Basque Club attended. The audience was almost entirely academics, students, and musicians. In the 1990s, the Boise, Idaho Euzkaldunak Incorporated hosted the showing of a contemporary Basque film, and when one scene showed a woman’s bare breast, several of the women left the theater and complained. Certainly, there are Basques in the west who would enjoy New York Basque Suzanne Noguere’s published poetry, as well as that of poet Frank Bidart, nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 2003, and those who thrive on contemporary culture. However, they are the minority, and in New York, they are the norm.

ATHLETES

The New York Racquet and Tennis Club enjoyed the skills of the Basque professional tennis player, Pierre Etchebaster, from 1930 to 1955. His adept athleticism no doubt resulted from his years as a *pelota*, or handball, player at the frontons of his native St. Jean-de-Luz, Donibane Lohitzun, in the northern province of Lapurdi. From his championships of *pala*, *chistera*, and *main nues* in the Basque Country, to the world championship of tennis in London in 1928, Etchebaster demonstrated his abilities to adapt to new games and challenges. The same year that he retired from the New York club, he was awarded the Legion of Honor by the Consul General of France in the United States.

The *Centro Vasco-Americano* building property included an indoor fronton utilized frequently for fun and for competition. In the 1930s, when South American heavy weight boxing champion Victorio Campolo visited the center for a special dinner in his honor, the C.V.A. organized several *pelota* games. *El Diario de Nueva York*, a Spanish language daily newspaper, reported the following day in their sports section: “Nick Arguinchona and José Altuna beat Tribis and Ruíz 50-43; T. Larrez [might have been a mistaken spelling for Larrea] and F. Garay beat Delfín Bilbao and José Laucirica 50-42; and Charrón [Esteban Aspiazú] and Pedro Toja beat Orbe and Fotes 50-47”.

The first professional fronton, or court, built in the United States was engineered by Ricardo Galbis Ajuria, a Basque from Cuba, in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904. Though jai alai, which translates as “merry festival,” did not catch on seriously in Missouri, it did expand from Cuba to Florida -where jai alai betting was legalized in 1935- and then to the northeastern United States. Its fast pace and excitement made it popular in sports betting, and the gambling income resulted in profits for fronton owners. *The New York Times* sports writer Hubert Saal compared the relationship between the player’s *cesta* or basket, and the *pelota*, or ball, to “a rifle and a bullet.”

The inauguration of jai alai in New York took place at the old Hippodrome on Sixth Avenue on September 8, 1938 with much pomp and ceremony to a crowd of 4,000 enthusiasts. Players with names such as Guisasola, Renteria, Eguibar, Echarrai, Ulacia, Guernica, and Iturriño played four games for the spectators. Matches included competition from the International League, and the U.S. team competed against those from “Mexico, Spain, Cuba, South Americans, and Basques.” Former New York Governor and Presidential candidate Al Smith was a spectator, as were Jack Dempsey and Babe Ruth. When New York State officials refused to allow betting on the game in New York, the promoters cut their losses and folded the businesses. Players had to go elsewhere or return to the Basque Country.

In the 1970s, the Connecticut State legislature approved pari-mutuel betting on professional jai alai games as a way to raise state revenues, and within a few years,

three full-size courts were constructed in Hartford – which had seating 4,500 with room for another 2000 standing- in Milford, and in Bridgeport. In May 1976, World Jai-Alai, Incorporated from Miami, Florida established operations in Hartford, Connecticut, and ten days later another fronton opened independently in Bridgeport- the only northeastern fronton totally independent of Florida connections. In 1968, all of the jai alai players of Florida, except West Palm Beach, went on strike against what they deemed to be unfair management practices. The management refused to bargain and the players were all fired, most of them returning to the Basque Country. About a year later, many were rehired, but the sixty-four best players were banned from Florida jai alai forever, with the intention to teach a lesson. However, it only resulted in many of those being hired in Bridgeport, Connecticut instead, and Florida lost the world's best players in the game at that time.

The jai alai star player from the Gernika, Bizkaia Jai Alai Fronton, José Antonio Egrubide, a native of Mutriku, Gipuzkoa, played at the June 1, 1976 opening of the sixteen million dollar Bridgeport Fronton. He was the nephew of Emilia Echave of Brooklyn, and there was a near sell-out crowd of 5,100 people. At the “Gernika World Jai-alai” school and training facility, English was a required segment of the curriculum as it was very possible that its best players could move on to the United States for professional play.

The Bridgeport fronton seated 5,500 and had standing room capacity for another 5,500 spectators. Fronton operators needed approximately \$200,00 per night to break even, and in September 1976 the fans were wagering \$400,000 each night, of which the state took five percent, the city took one-quarter percent and the fronton itself got twelve percent (Saal 1976:43). William Zinsser noted that in 1977 although jai alai betting had existed for less than a year, the total betting in Connecticut had exceeded the world record for wagering on the sport (Zinsser 1977:50). The top salaries for players in the mid 1970s was approximately \$3,500 per month, but with incentives and bonuses from betting, a handful of the best players such as “Churruca”, “Chimela”, and “Egurbi” earned \$80,000 to \$100,000 annually. The fronton also made the profits from ticket, program, food and liquor sales. Newport, Rhode Island also opened another jai alai court June 10, 1976. The fourth fronton, a four level structure in Milford, Connecticut was completed in 1977 at a cost of twelve million dollars.

The American Amateur Jai Alai facility consisted of three courts and this organization promoted the Basque sport to youngsters with free lessons. However, eventually players were expected to buy their own equipment, which was too expensive for most of them and consequently they quit playing. A few of the Basque boys from the *Euskal-Etxea* practiced jai alai and *pelota*, but never seriously enough to play competitively.

New York Basques “went crazy” for the players and many traveled on the weekends to see them play in Bridgeport. “Txarron [Esteban Aspiazu] loved those days when I’d drive him out there. It was about an hour and a half trip, and we’d talk the entire time about the Basque Country and things that he remembered,” said his daughter-in-law Liz Aspiazu. “He’d tell me all about the gardens in Gernika and the special peppers and tomatoes that his neighbors had. He’d talk about the best players from his hometown and other small towns nearby. He always cheered for the ones from Bizkaia, and if they were from Gernika, well he went nuts! Those days spent at the *jai alai* frontons recharged his batteries, you know?”

The “new” sport was incredibly popular with people in New England and in 1976 alone, the frontons of Bridgeport and Hartford registered 2,700,000 paying customers (Hines Herrington 1977:86). Mothers took their children for the early games, Basques and Latinos who knew the game wagered money, and newcomers learned how to keep points. Basques from the entire region traveled to participate in the betting and to cheer for their favorite players, and they also often enjoyed meeting other Basques in the crowd. “Oh, you can always tell a Basque. I can just pick them out. I don’t know what it is, but I think we have ESP for each other. They wouldn’t even have to say anything and I’d be able to tell,” laughed Manny Zuluaga.

Bridgeport, second largest city in Connecticut, is seventy miles from New York City. Leonard Bloom, of the University of Bridgeport, wrote that as of the building of the three frontons in Connecticut and Rhode Island in the spring of 1976, approximately two hundred and fifty pelotaris were living in these two States. (Voice of the Basques Jan 1977 p.5) Bridgeport had the world’s largest fronton and was considered the most expensive facility at \$16 million in 1976. There were forty-four players and only three were non-Basque. The *jai alai* phenomenon had a major effect on the community and its cultural education about Basque culture and the Basque Country. Some players had been in Florida previously and were reassigned to new positions in the new Fronton, so they could speak English, and others had English classes. “The impact, financial as well as cultural, of ‘jai-alai’ on New England life was extraordinary. Owners of the frontons were elated over the large amounts of revenue that have been wagered at their facilities. For example, the Bridgeport fronton, from the period of June 1 through November 1, 1976 reported its receipts as that of \$84.5 million. Local establishments have also enjoyed greater sales, and state officials at Hartford and Providence are likewise delighted with additional funds being added to their fiscal coffers” (Bloom 1977:5).

The entire New Jersey, New York and Connecticut areas were filled with advertisements for *jai alai*. *Jai alai* players were often covered in the press attending mass, participating in community events, at the local school teaching children the rules and finesse of the game, at hospitals to cheer up patients and at department stores partaking in fashion shows. One of the referees, “Barrena” even gave an opera recital, which received good critical reviews. New York Television station WOR Channel 9

presented a forty-five minute televised report on jai alai, emphasizing the basic rules of the game and showing-off the players' skills. They also aired an entire game played at the Bridgeport Fronton. Athletes played nine programs a week, with only Tuesdays off, for five straight months.

The influx of new immigrants- though short term- significantly impacted the Basque community of the New York area with youthful and "eligible" Basque males. "Oh! The girls went mad! You should have seen all these beautiful Basque men, and all of them single. All of the sudden a few of the younger women became very interested when the *Euzko-Etxea* organized day outings to watch the jai alai," laughed Emilia Doyaga. Unfortunately, the players were not allowed to sit or even mingle with the spectators before the matches, and afterwards, they were hungry and tired and most went straight to dinner and then home. There were not many matchmaking opportunities for the elderly Basque ladies. Players did attend the *Aberri Eguna* celebrations in large numbers, and a few often drove to New York for dinners when the new building was obtained in Brooklyn in 1974. However, there were not sufficient consistent interactions to build strong relationships, or for the existing Basques in New York to note a significant impact in their activities, *Euskera* maintenance, or information about the homeland. Because the *jai alai* season was nine or ten months, many players and coaches returned to the Basque Country during their off season, and when the frontons were closed permanently, they returned permanently. The Milford Fronton in Connecticut supported games all year around at the end of the 1990s, but was closed in 2001. The Bridgeport facility was closed in 1994. Former fans and players believe competition for entertainment and gambling from Native American casino development in Ledyard, Connecticut, and that of Atlantic City in New Jersey, directly affected the closing of the frontons.

BOXING

The Basques' most famous boxer began his career as Ezcudun Paolino, and then changed his publicity to Paolino Uzcudun. He was a lumberjack in the southern Basque Country and known as "Wild man of the woods." One sports article headline warned "Newly found boxer trains with an axe" (*The New York Times* 1924). He initiated his boxing career in 1923, and went on to become the Heavy Weight Champion of France, then of Germany, and then won a fight in Barcelona making him the Heavy Weight Champion of all Europe, winning \$8,500. There was a planned fight between Jack Dempsey and Paolino Uzcudun in the bullring at Baiona, Lapurdi in France in 1924. In the U.S. he fought Jack Delaney at Yankee Stadium and had several fights in Madison Square Garden. Valentín Aguirre was one of his strongest supporters. When Uzcudun came to New York, Angel Zuluaga went to see him fight, but according to Manny Zuluaga, "before the fight many of the Basque men had all gone out drinking and then they couldn't even remember all of his moves!" Angel Zuluaga told

his son Manny that when Uzcudun lost one of his bouts, he did not take of the compensation money. He had lost the fight and thought he did not deserve any of it. Uzcudun also fought Joe Lewis.

However, his U.S. career also included legal problems as summarized by John Kieran in *The New York Times* (Jan. 29, 1928, p.146): He was suspended in Massachusetts for “ducking out” of a bout with Ed Keely; he was sued for breach of contract for fighting under another banner; the New York State Athletic Commission suspended him when he failed to show up for a fight with Phil Scott; and Tex Richard chased him out of New York and out of the famous heavy weight elimination for the third or fourth time. Uzcudun left for Mexico in 1928.

OTHER SPORTING INTERESTS

Horse racing is not usually considered a sport of Basques in New York, but winning horse names such as “Larrañaga” appeared as early as 1935. “El Basco” won the Withers Stakes at Belmont Park in 1985. “El Basco” was a son of “La Basque” and half-brother to “Bounding Basque” winner of the Brooklyn Handicap, all bred by Jacques Wimpfheimer and trained by Woody Sedlacek. There is also a famous Basque Fisherman. In 1989, Phil Uruburu, Sr. became the first person to win back-to-back Classic titles and he also captured his record fourth consecutive “Angler of the Year” title from the Long Island Bassmasters.

Basques in New York are mainly of Bizkaian decent and tend to follow the Athletic of Bilbao soccer team, though a few are supporters of the blue and white from the Real of Donostia-San Sebastián. In the Basque Country it would be quite unusual to walk into a bar and find banners and scarves of the Real and Athletic hanging side by side as they do in the *Euzko-Etxea- futbol*, or soccer, loyalty is taken quite seriously there. It would be similar to a bar promoting both the Giants and the Jets simultaneously. *La Prensa* was a Spanish language daily newspaper which regularly reported the results of the *Athletic Bilbao* soccer team and Basques in New York went wild when they read that the *Athlético de Bilbao* shot a record twelve goals, eight by one player Gaiza, in May 1947 to beat *Celta Vigo*. Philip and Pilar Salcedo even traveled to Madrid in 1977 to cheer for the Bilbao Athletic.

Once in the late 1960s, Athletic Bilbao travelled to Chicago to play against the Red Star of Belgrade for an exhibition game. They stopped over at Kennedy Airport and the Basque community crowded to greet them while the team de-planed and waited for their flight to Chicago. José Mari Larrañaga remembered, “We made a big scene, they were very surprised. Remember, in those days anyone could go into the airport and right to the gate. So we were all there with our signs and *ikurriñas* so proud of our Basque team, and waiting with them for their flight to Chicago”. José Mari Larrañaga, Angel and Alys Viña, and Pedro and Mary Toja also flew to Chicago to

Fans of Basque soccer teams from Bilbao and Donostia-San Sebastian show their support while watching the match broadcast on Basque Television at the Euzko-Etxea in Brooklyn.



watch the *Athlético de Bilbao* match. Larrañaga remembers the exciting afternoon clearly. “Athletic were losing 2-0, and there we were, just a handful of Basques with *ikurrinas* and a big sign, ‘Athletic of Bilbao, the Lions’ and what could we do? Well, Viña took out his *txistu* and started playing and what do you think? They made a goal, then another goal, and another goal! Athletic came from behind to win the game and the players had heard us! They heard us! After the game we were invited to the field and they took our sign back to Bilbao with them. It was fantastic! I’ll never forget that magic *txistu* music.” he exclaimed.

Political and activism

(06)

interest of New York Basques

On March 13th, 2003 there will be massive demonstrations all over the Basque Country condemning the recent raid and closing of EUSKALDUNON EGUNKARIA by the Spanish authorities, and the incarceration and brutal torture inflicted on the director and staff on the same night and subsequent days. EGUNKARIA is the only daily paper published in Euskera. I am sure all of you are aware of the current turmoil in Euskal Herria, regardless of party or political affiliations in reaction to these events. This has been a most brutal all-out-assault on the soul of the Basque country, its millenarian language, Euskera, and our culture.

On THURSDAY March 13, a group of Basques and non-Basque sympathizers will gather to condemn these regrettable acts and to request the reopening of EGUNKARIA. At the same time we want to support Martxelo Otamendi's (director of Egunkaria) campaign in "building a wall against torture." We will gather independently, as Basques or non-Basque individuals, who share basic ideals of freedom of expression- without coercion, censorship or torture. We will not represent or be there under the umbrella of any organization. You are invited to attend this moment of solidarity and to invite friends, family and associates. Again, the rally will convene at 4pm and break at 5pm, on March 13th Thursday, at Ralph Bunche Park, 43rd Street and 1st Ave, facing the U.N.

Email sent from an independent group of New York Basques.

The majority of New York Basques have tended to prefer Basque cultural rather than political activities, and similar to other Basque Centers in the United States, the or-

ganizational statutes declare in writing that each is an apolitical institution. For example, if the *Euzko-Etxea* President sent a political message to members, he or she would surely send it as a personal message, and not as one coming from the institution itself. Still, the Basques in New York are the most politicized of any of the other communities of the United States. This additional layer in Basque identity results from several factors: the initial leaders of the first community tended to be Basque nationalists and this has self-perpetuated; the consistent Basque immigration to the city has brought current news regarding political developments; constant movement and travel of New York Basques to the homeland has allowed later generations to see first hand examples of dictatorship and stories to later generations continued; the history of the Basque Government-in-exile headquartered in New York facilitated exchange of ideas and personalized politics; the regular access to an abundance of information and media reports in New York regarding current events in *Euskal Herria*; and the dynamics of New York itself and New Yorkers surrounded with examples of diaspora politics influencing homeland politics, most obviously with the powerful Jewish community, and also with the impact of the location of the United Nations and access to politicians.

DABBLING IN POLITICS

Over the decades most of Basque immigration to New York has been Bizkaian, perpetuated by chain migration. The majority of these Bizkaians' families fought with the republicans and were Basque nationalists. Those immigrants brought their political ideologies with them when they transplanted to New York and therefore reinforced the existing political opinions. Children heard the Franco stories from their parents, then from their parents' friends, then from another new immigrant ten years later, etc., and this reinforced the perception of Basques as victims of Castilian oppression, even for later generation Basques who had never visited or attempted to obtain unbiased information. They were surrounded with information from their parents and hundreds of other Basques who had lived there and shared personal testimonies. Any Basques who did migrate to New York without these tendencies might have eliminated themselves from participating in the *Centro Vasco-Americano* activities, which focused on a nationalist definition of Basqueness, and conflicting opinions were therefore non-existent.

It is interesting that the Basque association professed to be non-political yet they organized dinners to celebrate the father of Basque nationalist political ideology, Sabino de Arana y Goiri. Valentín Aguirre, who had demanded in strong language that the C.V.A. not allow any presentation of political matters, later proposed that the C.V.A. and its Board formally receive the President of the Basque Government and his wife upon their arrival in New York, and Aguirre also gave personal information of members recorded in the C.V.A. ledgers to the Basque Government Delegates. Various Presidents represented the C.V.A. at meetings and activities of the Confedera-

tion of Hispanic Societies, not to plan dances, but to discuss an anti-Franco strategy between Basque, Galician, and Catalan groups in New York. President Aguirre was not only referred to as the Basque Country President in the C.V.A. announcements or minutes, but as “our President” in the recorded minutes, in speeches, and in printed bulletins. Basque politicians have been received officially inside the properties of the C.V.A. and *Euzko-Etxea* and I have never found one example of a politician from the Basque Country being denied access to the membership.

Surprisingly, the censorship has been directed internally. Members wishing to utilize the organization’s news bulletin to announce protest marches or mobilization of letter-writing or contacting politicians regarding an issue have been denied. Mario de Salegi was asked to leave an *Euzko-Etxea* members meeting because he wanted to discuss current politics in 1980s Spain, and Karlos Iturralde was told that a members meeting was not the place to discuss the 2003 Spanish government closing of the Basque language newspaper *Egunkaria*, nor the following denunciations of torture from the arrested journalists. In much the same way that partisan politics in the Basque Country has divided families and friends, some in New York believe these discussions would do the same to their community. Karlos Iturralde disagrees, “By not discussing these very important matters, by pretending that nothing is happening, that is what will divide us. Who’s afraid of information and discussion? If you don’t want to participate, okay. See you next Sunday. But for those who do, and those who want to listen to the information, this is our *Euzko-Etxea* too, and we have just as much right to discuss the *Athletic* [the Bilbao soccer team], or Bernardo Atxaga [the leading Basque writer], or the *ikastolas* [Basque language schools].”

Perhaps the *Euzko-Etxea* could organize a politics discussion group, just as it has composed a dance group, or *mus* players group, or Basque language class, which would gather in order to learn about topics of interest and compare information. Still remaining is the question of institutional involvement. It is possible that when the founders wrote that there would be no demonstration of political matters, they meant of U.S. politics and of political parties in the U.S. This is not clear; however it is certain that there is no record of any United States political party, political party activity, elected official, or campaigning politician having been allowed to participate in a political capacity at any C.V.A., *Andrak* or *Euzko-Etxea* function. Zachary Berhau stated, “In U.S. politics, our parents were all Democrats, pro-union, Democrats all the way. The Democrats helped the immigrants and the Basques never forgot that. The Democrats took care of us and took care of workers and families that needed help. But now, at the *Euzko-Etxea* today, it’s probably half and half.” It is virtually impossible to determine what is ‘political’ and what is not to the satisfaction of more than two Basques. Yet it is clear that both the C.V.A. and the *Euzko-Etxea* have participated institutionally, financially, and also acted as agents of international foreign policy through their relationships with the Basque Government programs and grants.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF EARLY NEW YORK BASQUES

In 1920, several Basque individuals collected funds for the Basque Nationalist Party in the homeland, but the majority of members of the Centro Vasco-Americano did not get involved actively in homeland politics and/or were barely making sufficient funds to care for their own families and did not have extra money to donate for a political party. The 1923 beginning of the nearly ten-year Spanish dictatorship of Primo de Rivera caused many Basques to flee in exile to the Americas. One of those was Elías de Gollastegui who fled to Mexico where he organized a Basque nationalist youth group and a group of the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, PNV, Basque Nationalist Party supporters. Gollastegui communicated to the C.V.A. that he wanted to do the same in New York. When this was rejected by the C.V.A. a group of supporters broke away from the C.V.A. and in 1926 formed a separate organization, *Aberría*, or The Homeland with a pro-Basque nationalist agenda, with their own newspaper *Aberri*. *Aberri* editor, Antón Osa, organized a Gollastegui visit to New York in order to gain attention and support for the PNV. Curiously, though the C.V.A. did not want to participate in any Gollastegui ventures, in 1935 it organized its own banquet commemorating Basque nationalism and its contemporary founder, Sabino Arana y Goiri. In 1937, *Aberría* joined forces with the Hispanic Confederated Societies until the end of 1938, when the organization disbanded and many returned to join the C.V.A.

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Political interest and activism of New York Basques

In the homeland, the Spanish monarchy fell in April 1931. The newly elected Republican government promised to grant autonomy to those peoples who voted with a clear majority in favor of autonomy. On July 14, 1931 in Estella-Lizarrá, Navarre, the Basque people –through representative delegates– voted 90% to proclaim their Statutes of Autonomy. The Republic required additional procedures of a majority of all municipalities voting yes, and all four of the provinces agreeing, and in addition a popular plebiscite of the four Basque provinces in order to obtain Basque Home Rule. Even after these conditions had been fulfilled, the Spanish Parliament still reserved the right to accept or reject the proposal. In the Basque plebiscite held November 5, 1933, 88% voted in favor of the Home Rule. The Spanish Republican Parliament delayed their deliberations and Basque autonomy was finally approved on October 1, 1936, after the Spanish Civil War had already begun. President Aguirre took his oath of office under the Tree of Gernika, on the site of the historical Basque parliament, however, after the Spanish military victories in the Basque provinces, the Basque Government went into exile.

The New York based Pro-Euzkadi Committee asked the C.V.A. for permission to utilize its office at Cherry Street for their clerical work, and were granted permission. The Basques in New York helped to establish the Committee Pro-Euzkadi in 1937, which had the duties to create and disseminate information about the current war situation in the Basque Country and to search for humanitarian aid for the refugees. The C.V.A. also decided to mail information to all of its members, encouraging them

Basques and non-Basques of New York established the Pro-Euzkadi Committee in 1937. They collected and sent contributions to the Basque Government-in-exile for distribution and aid to war victims and refugees from the Spanish Civil War.



to join the cause. The minutes of the February 1937 general meeting of the C.V.A. show that members stated “the Pro-Euzkadi Committee is conducting very important work for the needy of Euzkadi.” They immediately donated the profits from a December dance totaling \$166.65, to the Pro-Euzkadi Committee. The same month the C.V.A. received letters from the Argentine Basque organization Zazpiak-Bat of Rosario in the province of Santa Fe, from the Department of Justice of the Basque Government, and from the *Euzkadi Buru Batzara*, or National Council of Euzkadi, which governed the PNV, and it is evident that the New York organization was participating in non-state international affairs with questions regarding the Spanish Civil War, refugee safety and placement, funding for a government-in-exile, and an international network of information from other Basque communities.

Article 55 of the *Centro Vasco-Americano* legal charter read, “The President will not permit demonstrations on political or religious matters, nor improper language in bad taste, nor statements that could hurt other people’s feelings.” However, in December 1936, a general meeting of the membership unanimously approved the attendance and participation of the institution at a Madison Square Garden meeting of

the Confederation of Hispanic Societies, set for January 5, 1937, to discuss the Spanish Civil War. They decided to send a delegation of twelve representatives, complete with a banner from the C.V.A., to participate in the meeting. The organization annually subscribed to the publication *EUZKADI*, a Basque nationalist newspaper, and it was available at the Social Building bar for members to read. In January 1937, the C.V.A. sent a congratulatory cable to the newly elected President of the autonomous Basque Country, José Antonio de Aguirre.

DIASPORA UNDERSTANDING OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The Basques living in New York during the 1930s would more than likely have had a collective political mentality that resulted from their parents and grandparents fighting in the Carlist Wars to protect the Basque *fueros* and traditional customs. They, or their parents, would have emigrated to escape the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Now, their homeland was once again the target in a Spanish civil war and, what in today's terms would be called, an "ethnic cleansing" by the Franco dictatorship. New York Basques had access to abundant print and radio reports on international affairs and were updated daily on events of the war. While Basques in the west relied on weeks-old letters and short sporadic newspaper articles covering far-off places of little interest to editors, the *New York Times* had its own correspondents writing daily from Spain and France.

Dorothy Thompson published her regular column, "On the Record," in the *New York Herald Tribune*, and on April 30, 1937, she wrote about the horror of civil war in Spain:

For what is happening there is the ruthless, cold-blooded, vicious extermination of one of the rare peoples of the earth- the Basques. It is an extermination, which beg-

CARNET DE IDENTIDAD		CERTIFICADO DE CUOTA MENSUAL	
Nº. <u>CC</u>	New York, <u>30 DE ENERO, 1937</u>	1937	
<u>MARIA DE TOJA</u>		Julio	
Es componente de este Comité, organizado con el fin de recaudar fondos para la ayuda de Euzkadi.		Agosto	
<u>Mendiakobal</u> CONSEJERO		Septiembre	
	<u>Antojos</u>	Octubre	
		Noviembre	
		Diciembre	
		Enero	<u>[Signature]</u>
		Febrero	<u>[Signature]</u>
		Marzo	<u>[Signature]</u>
		Abril	
		Mayo	
		Junio	

The 1937 Pro-Euzkadi Committee members carried a special card, which unfolded and recorded their monthly pledges and donations for the victims of the Spanish Civil War. This card belonged to Mary Altuna Toja.

gars every description of war, which violates every convention which has been set by man as an inhibition against his own ruthlessness for one hundred years or more. To sit by and not protest with all the breath in one's body reads one out of the ranks of civilized and Christian society.

She presented her readers with this description of the bombing of Gernika:

The day is Monday. That is the marketing day in Guernica, when it is certain that the women with their children around them will be in the streets, in the market center of the town. First small parties of airplanes threw heavy bombs and hand grenade all over the town, choosing area after area in the most orderly fashion. The bombs tore holes twenty-five feet deep and brought down buildings over the heads of their inhabitants.

As the population scattered in panic the planes swooped low and opened machine gun fire on the running people, whether they were men women or children. [...] As the people dove into cellars and under shelter the planes again flew high and dropped incendiary bombs, and the village flared with fire. And in the midst of this carnage men aloft saw priests kneeling by the dead and dying, administering extreme unction. Those fleeing were machine-gunned along the roads- women and children.

There is an oak in Guernica, which is called the tree of God. It has stood for 600 years, and from its stump new sprouts are shooting. The bombardment which racked away women and children and youths and old men never touched this tree. Under it the kings of Spain took oath to respect the democratic rights of Vizcaya and were answered with the oath of the Basques, pledging allegiance to the Señor, the Lord, but not the King of this province. For the Basques gave obedience to an equal, knowing that men must acknowledge leadership, but they gave subservience to no man. Were the spirit alive in that symbol still alive throughout the world, nations would not sit by meekly, but there would arise from all civilized countries, through their governments, a protest which even the Fascist dictatorship could not ignore. For, believe it or not, there are such things in the world as morality, as law, as conscience, as a noble concept of humanity, which, once awake, are stronger than all ideologies.

Press coverage of events in Spain included headlines of *The Herald Tribune*, "Women Slain in Street as German-Made Planes of Rebels Strafe Bilbao", the *New York Post*, "Bilbao get a Message from the Fascists", *The New York Times* "Ship Takes Aboard 4,000 Bilbao Girls", and from the *New York Evening Journal*, "Basque Children to Come Here." A large number of Basques in New York were from Bizkaia, and the news of Franco ordered bombings of civilians in their home towns and places they knew such as Durango, Gernika, and Bilbao, was overwhelming. In April 1937, communications between the various societies and organizations related to Spain in some way organized a joint dance to raise money for the hospitals of the elected Spanish Republican Government in Spain, and its fight against the Falangist forces of

Franco. Lily Aguirre Fradua said, “We had dances and masses to raise money to give for the war refugees. We kids used to give our quarters.”

The C.V.A. and its President, Florencio Laucirica, agreed to support a June 1937 petition from the American Board of Guardians for Basque Refugee Children, asking for its moral support and collaboration in their plans to rescue five hundred Basque children from war in Bizkaia, and to bring them to the United States. An “Extraordinary General Meeting” was called for the entire membership of the society, and a commission of twenty-seven members headed the organization and collaboration plans. They also asked for the specific rules and regulations for Basque families who might wish to adopt any of these children. Pedro and Mary Altuna Toja kept one of the flyers, which included information with newspapers articles titled, “500 little Basque refugees coming to the U.S.A.,” “Food and Peace for little War Victims”, “Liner being Chartered to Bring Basque Children”, and “Washington May Admit 500 Basque Children on Visitors’ Visas Granting Six-Month Stays.” The *New York Evening Journal* reported on May 21, 1937 that the American Board of Guardians for Basque Refugee Children, headquartered in New York, had chartered the French liner *Sinaia* to hasten the evacuation of Bilbao and the transport of 500 Basque children to the United States. Board members included Dr. Frank Bohn, Dean Virginia Gildersleeve of Barnard College, Professor James T. Shotwell of Columbia University, Mary E. Woolley, president emeritus of Mount Holyoke College, and Representative Carolyn O’Day of New York; Dorothy Thompson and Albert Einstein also were leaders, and Eleanor Roosevelt accepted the position of Honorary President. The original plan was to have the children disembark at Donibane Lohitzun-St. Jean-de-Luz, in the northern Basque Country, then take them by train north to Paris, and to board the *President Harding* at Le Havre, with the expected arrival in New York on June 19, 1937. Older children were to be placed in homes, and the younger children were to stay together under the tutelage of the Basque priests and teachers that would accompany them to a large nursery home to be established in New York City. Another group, the Committee for German-American Relief for Spain, was established at the same time in New York, “To redeem the honor of Germany and the humanitarian tradition of the German people, decimated by Hitler’s aviators in their massacre of the Catholic civilians of Guernica,” stated Dr. Jacob Auslander, Chairman of the committee.

When 2700 families immediately responded offering their homes and families and the necessary money to care for and possibly adopt the Basque children, the American Board asked permission to bring 2000 children instead of the 500 previously sought. However, the leadership of the Catholic Church, and specifically Cardinal O’Connell of Boston, expressed their opposition to allowing the children into the United States. Soon after, Eleanor Roosevelt stated in a press conference that perhaps it was not such a good idea to bring the children to the United States, so far away from their homeland, and by June 25, 1937 the U.S. State Department systematically denied all visa requests for the Basque refugees and orphans (San Sebastián 1991:25).

The C.V.A. maintained communications with the Basque Government while it was headquartered in Valencia in the summer of 1937. The “Collector” of the C.V.A. dues, José Altuna was directed at a membership meeting to share the books, letters, and documents sent by the Basque Government with all of the Basque families and persons he visited when collecting fees. In October 1937, the organization decided to buy and display both an *ikurriña* and a United States flag at the Social Building, and the *ikurriña* arrived from Bilbao a few months later. Assorted individuals, such as Pedro and Mary Toja, also privately received information bulletins from the Basque Government General Delegation, headquartered in Barcelona after the fall of Bilbao in 1937.

Information from the homeland Basques to family members in New York also came in personal written communications and in verbal messages sent with other immigrants from their own village. Esteban Aspiazu received a letter from his sister, Martina, in June 1937 after the bombing of their hometown, Gernika. Her news described the situation that their brother, Gregorio, was now a political refugee and was in hiding with no home. She and her husband had taken in several people whose homes had been destroyed in the bombings, and she was asking for any help Esteban could send them. Esteban’s son, Steve Aspiazu, remembers his father talking about the political and financial hardship in the Basque Country. “I know that my Tío Gregorio was caught, imprisoned and executed for his pro-Basque and anti-Franco activity, and that dad thought about him all the time. He was telling my wife, Liz, and me that story again years later. Liz was pregnant with our second child, and you know, we decided right then that if the baby was a boy, we would name him Gregorio, Gregory in English. And we did, today we have a son who honors his great uncle who fought for the Basque Country- our son is Gregory Aspiazu.” One can only imagine Esteban’s feelings at the honor bestowed him and his brother with this act of adoration.

The Sociedad Española Nacional de Socorros Mutuos, Spanish National Benevolent Society, also known as *La Nacional*, The National, was founded in New York in 1868, and during the Spanish Civil War had relations with the Spanish Republican Government. In 1938, the Spanish Benevolent Society invited the *Centro Vasco-Americano* to attend meetings regarding the unification of their societies, but the C.V.A. declined the offer. They continued collaborating together for activities, and also cooperated with the *Unidad Galicia*, Unity Gallega of the U.S., Incorporated, but had no intention of combining organizations with either. The Basques preferred their organization remain separate from other ethnic groups from Spain, and to choose to conduct their own communications with other Basque communities around the world.

In 1938, Vidal Mendizabal wrote a letter on behalf of the C.V.A. to the Basque Delegation in Mexico City, asking for information about their activities in support of needy Basques exiled from the Basque Country. While several members were ready

to begin a collection for those exiles, others intervened and suggested that the club not get involved in any collection of funds that would not be specifically for the C.V.A. The meeting minutes do not name who was opposed the collections, but it is odd that all of a sudden the organization would move to such an extreme, from promoting the evacuation and care of 2000 children in New York and hosting dances and masses to raise money for war victims, to agreeing to only organize collections that specifically helped their own organization. It could be that the political leanings of members and leaders were changing; the elected leaders had not changed, but perhaps the type of members attending the meetings and voting had changed; or perhaps they had received word that the Basque Government would soon have its own Delegation in Manhattan, and thought it best to have them directly collect the funds.

THE BASQUE DELEGATION IN NEW YORK

In July of 1937, the President of the Basque Government went into exile after the bombings of Durango, Gernika, and the fall of Bilbao, just one year into the Spanish Civil War. José Antonio de Aguirre escaped to Paris and from there his officers organized the exile of over 150,000 Basques, including approximately 30,000 orphans and children traveling without their parents. None were ever admitted into the United States. Members of the Government-in-exile were appointed by the President of the Basque Country, Dr. José Antonio de Aguirre, who was elected by delegates of the Basque population on October 7, 1936, in accordance with the law for Basque Home Rule, passed by the Spanish Parliament. The Basque Government Cabinet consisted of five members from the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*; two of the Basque Republican Party; two from the Basque Socialist Party; and one from the Communist Party- who actually was expelled from the Communist Party for following the Basque nationalist policy. There were others who were forced to surrender to Franco and were later executed, and one who died while escaping the German invaders. They created Delegations of the Basque Government-in-exile in several different countries in Europe, South America, and the United States, in New York City. Once this Basque Government-in-exile Basque Delegation in New York was established in 1938, the New York community had their own direct link to homeland political institutions.

It is not surprising that many Americans were confused with the politics of post-civil-war Spain. There were three elected governments representing the people: the Government of the Spanish Republic representing all of Spain but not the Basque and Catalan provinces; the Government of Euzkadi representing the now autonomous Basque provinces; and the Government of Catalonia (whose President Lluís Companys was executed) representing the now autonomous provinces of Catalonia, and each went into exile by the end of the war in 1939. The Falangist military regime of General Francisco Franco overthrew the elected Spanish Republican government, and took control of the political, economic and military administration of

Spain. Besides the Government of Euzkadi, the Spanish Republican Government and the Government of Catalonia also had representatives in New York that maintained relations with the Basque community. The Basque Delegation tried to distance themselves from the Government of the Spanish Republic in order to create their own identity among United States politicians and elite in New York, as well as among the existing New York Basque population. The Basque Government-in-exile utilized its base in New York as its central office for its relations with the United States government, and later with the United Nations.

The Basque Government-in-exile established the Basque Delegation in New York in 1938 and opened its offices in the New Weston Hotel and later in the Hotel Elyseé, both in Manhattan. The initial Delegates were Antón de Irala e Irala, Manuel de la Sota y Aburto, Ramón de la Sota Mac Mahon, José Urresti, Juan Aramburu and Eustacio Arrítola, later came Jesús de Galíndez, Jon Bilbao, and Jon Oñatibia, and Cipriano Larrañaga. With the help of the existing C.V.A. and especially Valentín Aguirre, they created a list of names and addresses of people that would likely be interested and able to help in their cause. By February they had two hundred and seventy-one Basques in New York that had donated money and “subscribed” to pledge a contribution each month. Seventy-one of these donors were women. Amounts ranged from Magdalena Goyarrola’s twenty-five cents monthly, to Paulino Urriaga’s three dollars per month. They also had created a list of nineteen donors from Reno, Nevada and twenty-four from Elko, Nevada. Manuel María de Ynchausti, a recent wealthy immigrant to White Plains, also funded a few thousand dollars to the Basque Delegation.

In the early years, their main efforts were focused on the Catholic community of intellectuals and clergy with the hopes of influencing their policies and attitudes toward the Franco dictatorship and the propaganda branding Basques as anti-Catholic and as communists. The United States Catholic Church had been the intervening factor in not allowing the Basque refugee children into the United States. “You know, nothing could be further from the truth. All of my parents’ friends, and everyone I knew at the Basque community, were Catholics themselves or at least respectful of everyone else’s beliefs. I grew up at the *Centro Vasco*, my whole life has been the *Centro Vasco*, and I never met a single Basque that came from Euskadi that was against the Catholic Church. That was all Franco propaganda and the U.S. bought it,” said Lily Aguirre Fradua.

After Manuel de la Sota and Antón de Irala toured the western United States meeting Basques, they decided to send Jon Bilbao to Boise, Idaho to open a sub-delegation in March 1940. He had recently finished a Master’s degree at Columbia University and was enthusiastic about the Boise possibilities. However, because of the lack of interest in homeland politics from the Idaho Basque community, the Boise office closed after only a few months, and Jon Bilbao went on to Berkeley, California to begin his studies toward a Ph.D. and New York remained the only office of the Basque Delegation in the United States.

Lehendakari Aguirre left Paris for Belgium and a family visit in May of 1940, and was consequently trapped when Hitler's troops invaded the Low Countries. Aguirre obtained a false passport from the Panamanian consulate in Antwerp, Belgium and disguised himself as "Dr. Álvarez Lastra". He determined that his best hiding place from the Germans would be right in Berlin where they would never suspect him living and he hid there from January to April 1941. He managed to travel from Berlin to Göteborg, Sweden and to get himself, his wife and two children aboard a cargo ship headed for Rio de Janeiro, where they arrived in August 1941. They continued on to Uruguay where he was able to safely reveal his true identity. The U.S. State Department received and approved a petition asking for a special visa to President Aguirre y Lecube in 1941, and from South America the Aguirre family traveled to New York, where they were given permanent resident visas and arrangements had been made for a special lecturer's position at Columbia University in Manhattan.

When the C.V.A. President, Antonio Elorriaga, announced at the October 1941 meeting that the Basque President José Antonio Aguirre would be arriving in New York, Valentín Aguirre (no relation) proposed a "magnificent reception" in his honor. The C.V.A. membership voted to send the Basque President (as he crossed the ocean on a ship) a cablegram of welcome to New York on behalf of all the Basques of the community, and they began organizing a welcoming banquet for November. A small committee of honored members greeted the Aguirres upon their arrival to White Plains, and the Manuel María de Ynchausti family residence including; Valentín Aguirre, Antonio Elorriaga, Juan Zabal, Alberto Uriarte, Florencio Laucirica, Marcelo Bilbao, Juan Betanzos, Julian Basterrechea, Santi Lazcano, and Marcelino Larrazabal. They presented his wife, María Zabala, a bouquet of flowers and they named José Antonio Aguirre as an Honorary Member of the *Centro Vasco*.

Irene Renteria Aguirre was hired as the personal secretary to the President. She worked for eight years in the Basque Delegation, and also as the secretary to the *Lehendakari*. Her knowledge of Basque, Spanish, and English, business management, coupled with her understanding and experience of New York and United States politics and protocol made her indispensable and a much-desired expert for the Basque Government. While she worked days at the Delegation, she put herself through university at nights. Aguirre was one of the first women admitted to the all-male Baruch College, and she earned a degree in Foreign Commerce. Her daughter Anna M. Aguirre added, "And if she had two free minutes at the end of the week, she would have spent that with the *Juventud of Centro Vasco*." Irene met her future husband, Andoni, at this same job. Andoni Aguirre arrived in New York in 1945. He was raised in the Philippines and educated in the Basque Country. His parents were in the mahogany exporting business, as were the Ynchaustis now in White Plains. When WWII began, Andoni's father, Martín, made arrangements to evacuate his family just immediately before the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. Martín Aguirre also was responsible for the safe evacuation of the President of the Philippines and U.S. General Douglas MacArthur. Andoni's sea captain father and mother, Julia Achabal, had

immigrated to California in the early 1900s and married in Sacramento, where they had two children. Next they migrated to the Philippines and Andoni was born there in 1921. Because both parents had United States citizenship, Andoni was automatically a citizen, and the family next came together to New York. He was hired by the Basque Government as a commercial attaché.

The offices in New York dealt with many diverse issues. They created lists of supporters in the United States with the intention to obtain financial aid for the war victims. In 1940, the Ciudad Trujillo (later renamed to Santo Domingo) in the Dominican Republic wrote a letter to the C.V.A. asking for economic help, and the directors passed it on to the Basque Delegation. Depending who was on the board and which members attended the monthly meetings, involvement in political issues varied. In 1940 when the C.V.A. received two letters asking for help for two political exiles, President Antonio Elorriaga responded that those persons should direct their letters to the Basque Government delegation because according to the society's by-laws they did not get involved in politics. Therefore, many of the requests that were originally sent to the *Centro Vasco*, were eventually passed on to the Delegation. Manuel de la



The arrival to New York of the President of the Basque Country, the Lehendakari, José Antonio Aguirre y Lecube initiated many special events in his honor. He frequently attended the events of the Centro Vasco-Americano and its dinners. This C.V.A. dinner was celebrated in 1944 at Valentín Aguirre's Jai-Alai Restaurant.

Sota, one of Delegates, agreed to offer himself to the C.V.A. for four consecutive Saturday conferences of presentations regarding the history of the Basque Country. During September 1942, Antón de Irala was also invited to give conferences to the community at 48 Cherry Street. Basques from various regions of the world asked for Basque Government assistance in obtaining special visas to enter the United States.

The Basque Delegation published a bulletin for the public: *Basques. Bulletin of the Basque Delegation in the USA*. The first issue was published in March 1943, and ran six issues until August 1944. The bulletin tried to inform its readers about the misinterpretation and omissions by the American press regarding current events in Spain and its military and political institutions. Every issue was published in perfect English and began with an editorial by Manuel de la Sota. Bulletins varied in length from eight to twenty-three pages and were distributed to the New York Basque community, Catholic elite and influential lay and clergy, and to academics and journalists. Most articles concerned foreign policy issues, the history of the Basque Country, and educating the readers about the Basque point of view regarding the Franco dictatorship. Attempting to influence the Catholic clergy, the November 1943, Issue #5 was devoted to religion and Basque people. The articles gave the names and information surrounding the executions of Basque priests in Spain, the relationship of Basques to the Catholic Church, and explained how the Basque *fueros* had already established a separation of Church and state by the XIV century. Issue #6 was devoted to law, the *fueros*, and the future of Basque democracy.

PROFESSOR JOSÉ ANTONIO DE AGUIRRE

Aguirre was officially invited to serve as a lecturer by Columbia Professors Carlton J. H. Hayes and Joseph P. Chamberlain. Hayes was a personal friend of President Roosevelt, and later an Ambassador to Spain. Manuel María de Ynchausti had worked with Hayes in 1939 in an attempt to have the renowned Basque anthropologist José Miguel de Barandiarán granted exile and given a position at Columbia, but it was not successful. Ynchausti and his family had come to New York on their way to the Philippines, where their family fortune had been made, planning a short stay just long enough to establish a committee and an office of the International League of Friends of the Basques. However, WWII intervened and they stayed for eight years in White Plains, from 1939 to 1947. His friendship with Hayes likely influenced the invitation for Aguirre, as did his willingness to make donations to the university. In a letter sent September 23, 1941, Ynchausti pledged to pay Aguirre's salary for one year.

Ynchausti paid anonymous donations to Columbia University, with the understanding that the funds were to be utilized specifically for Dr. Aguirre's salary for lecturing and giving courses on the prestigious university campus. He paid \$1125 quar-

terly to the University, communicating and sending his donations -payable to the university- directly to the President, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler. Because Aguirre's lectureship was so well received, he continued these contributions from 1941 until June 1946 when Aguirre returned to the Basque Government offices in Paris. In an Ynchausti letter to Columbia Provost Frank D. Fackenthal December 29, 1942 he states, "Because Dr. Aguirre does not know that I provide for the payment of his salary at Columbia University, I have not talked with him about the matter..." In a letter dated March 7, 1944 Ynchausti wrote to the Clerk of Trustees, "What is true is that President Aguirre believes that his salary is paid by Columbia University, and I want him to remain in this belief, as I have not the intention to disclose that I am the one who is paying his salary, since the first day he was appointed Lecturer in the History Department." Ynchausti even helped President Aguirre translate his lectures into English, and did everything possible to facilitate the work of the Basque Delegation and its representatives. Columbia University repeated their annual invitation to Aguirre to remain as a lecturer and the institution's president exclaimed in several letters to Aguirre how pleased they were with his work at the university. In a 1943 letter from Provost Fackenthal to Ynchausti, he asked if Aguirre could possibly stay to continue



The Lehendakari Aguirre with family and friends relaxing at the home of Manuel Maria de Ynchausti in White Plains, New York. Photograph 1943.



Dr. Jose Antonio de Aguirre y Lecube instructed graduate course students at New York's Columbia University. Aguirre was invited by the History Department for a lectureship that was renewed each year until he returned to the Basque Government-in-exile offices in Paris.

his teachings, “he has been a great addition to our group and we hope very much that he can continue with us.” Aguirre taught *Advanced Research in the Modern History of Western Continental Europe*, and *Advanced Research in Latin American History*.

However, Basques’ anti-Franco rhetoric and republican ties to socialists and communists during the Spanish Civil War made them the target of interest to U.S. intelligence. Beginning in 1942, there were FBI investigations of Basque Government-in-exile officials, Basque immigrants in the New York area, and those in the western States of California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah as well as of the centers and the political activities carried out in each community (Ordaz Romay, 1996:230). Obtaining United States governmental endorsement for the Basque cause was imperative and the priority objective for President Aguirre, and there could be no perceived connections to communism or revolutionaries. Eventually, Basques were hired as FBI agents who helped investigate the possibility of a proposal by Government-in-exile Delegates José María Lasarte Arana, Telesforo Monzón Ortiz de Uruela, and Antón de Irala that Basques in the South American countries could be organized into counter-espionage units to aid the United States with its World War II effort. In an FBI intercepted letter from *Lehendakari* Aguirre to another Basque in Havana, the Basque president illustrated his fears about a possible agreement between Franco and the democracies, and he suggested that Basques everywhere must present an image of political unity with other republicans, even at the cost of sacrificing the Basque nationalist goals (Hoover, FBI Bureau File 10-14311-3, 1942).

Initial FBI investigations into the Basque Government delegates focused on the possible services, which the Organization of Basque Intelligence, with its ample networks in South America and Europe utilized for Basque exiles, could use to aid United States intelligence gathering. From the United States legal attaché in Buenos Aires, a communication to Director J. Edgar Hoover depicts the level of entanglement between the FBI and the Organization of Basque Intelligence. It looks as though the FBI was spying on its own spies from the Organization of Basque Intelligence. The letter lists the categories of information that could be obtained regarding Argentine Basques’ nationalist and/or communist activities, political ideologies as well as religious affiliations (Ordaz Romay 1996:235).

Aguirre took a leave of absence in 1942 and wrote in his August 15 letter to the university, “Beside the cultural character of my journey, I shall also fulfill a confidential mission that an agency of the U.S. Government has entrusted to me.” The C.V.A. hosted another banquet for President Aguirre in October 1942 upon his return from this tour of the Latin American countries and Basque communities. In March 1945 he again asked for a leave of absence, “on an urgent mission related to France and other countries with the knowledge and special approval of the American authorities.”

Aguirre's official resignation from his lectureship at Columbia University went into effect in June 1946. His letter of resignation stated "My duty lies with my Basque people's cause of freedom and with the cause of Iberian freedom... Only those of us who come to these lands of freedom exiled by tyranny can appreciate the deep human understanding to be found in America and the hope it symbolizes for all... Someday, perhaps soon, we Basque shall return again to our freed country and once again open the Basque University which General Franco closed in his systematic persecution of our culture." He asked for help then from Columbia for pedagogical direction, books, and cultural assistance. Aguirre taught in the History Department from 1941 to 1946 in addition to his myriad of responsibilities as President of the Basque Government. The Aguirres' third child, Iñaki, was also born during this time in Manhattan. *The New York Times Book Review* of November 19, 1944 reviewed José Antonio de Aguirre's book *Escape Via Berlin*, published by Macmillan and sold for \$3. He attended C.V.A. functions and met personally with many New York Basques such as Mario de Salegi, who visited with *Lehendakari* Aguirre several times to discuss



Lehendakari José Antonio de Aguirre y Lecube was invited to speak at the 1944 Nobel Prize dinner held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Manhattan. His address included his views of dictatorship and democracy in Spain, and the Franco regime in power at that time.

policy for the Basque Government-in-exile. The *Lehendakari* returned to Paris in 1946 where he continued the struggle of the Basque Government-in-exile until his death in 1960. His body was taken to Donibane Lohitzun-St. Jean-de-Luz in Lapurdi and buried there.

JESÚS DE GALÍNDEZ AND THE UNITED NATIONS

Jesús de Galíndez was a Spanish Civil War exile who was caught and imprisoned in a French concentration camp, which he later escaped. He lived in the Dominican Republic as a Delegate of the Basque Government-in-exile during the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. His experiences in the Dominican Republic with the Trujillo government led to his interest in the Dominican government and his Ph.D. dissertation investigated the corruption of that regime. He was asked by the *Lehendakari* Aguirre to move to New York and serve in the Basque Delegation in New York City, and when he arrived in 1949 he was appointed as the Basque observer to the United Nations. During this time period he also taught courses at Columbia University, where he was simultaneously a Ph.D. student.

The name "United Nations", coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was first used in the "Declaration by United Nations" of January 1, 1942, during the Second World War, when representatives of twenty-six nations pledged their Governments to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers. In 1945, representatives of fifty countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter. It was signed on June 26, 1945, and the United Nations officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, when the Charter was ratified by a majority of the participants. New York was selected as the physical headquarters location and Basque Roberto Irigoyen was one of the selected architects for the United Nations building complex on the banks of the East River in midtown Manhattan.

The Basque Government lobbied and was successful in assuring the United Nations' refusal of Spain as a member. However, in November 1950, the United Nations lifted the diplomatic embargo adopted in 1946 against Spain as a punishment for the Franco regime and its Fascist leanings during WWII, and in 1951 Ambassador José Felix de Lequerica y Erquiza, originally of Bilbao and now working for the Spanish Government, presented his credentials to President Truman. Jesús de Galíndez and *Lehendakari* Aguirre presented a case to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1952, protesting Franco's request for admission to the UN. They noted: the closure of the Basque University created by the Basque Government in 1936 under the terms of the Statute of Autonomy of 1936; *Guardia Civil* military police occupation of libraries and social and cultural associations; the mass burnings of books published in *Euskera*; elimination of all use of *Euskera* in all school whether

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public or private and even the rural areas where most families did not speak any but *Euskera*; prohibition of the use of *Euskera* in all public gatherings and in all publications, on the radio; suppression of Basque cultural societies, including the Society for Basque Studies-*Eusko Ikaskuntza*, and of the Academy for the Basque Language; prohibition of the use of *Euskera* in all religious publications and in the celebration of all masses and any other religious ceremonies; a Decree requiring the translation into Spanish of all Basque names in civil registries and of all other official documents; the prohibition of the use of all Basque proper names in baptismal and other official documents; a directive ordering the removal of all inscriptions in *Euskera* from tombstones and all funerary markers (Clark 1979:137).

It was the beginning of the Cold War, and the United States was no longer listening to the Basques. Spain had more to offer in the way of the fight against communism, and the Basque lobby was losing effectiveness against the world wide Catholic Church and the advisors in the U.S. State Department, who favored staunch and sure anti-communism regardless of it being a dictatorship. The negotiations of a military and economic agreement between Spain and the United States began in 1952 and was signed and adopted in 1953 under the Eisenhower administration.

Jesús de Galíndez invited the C.V.A to collaborate and jointly host the *Aberri Eguna* festival in an attempt to draw media attention, and it was observed by hundreds of Basques from around the east coast. The commemoration of *Aberri Eguna*, celebrated annually on Easter Sunday, was held April 13, 1952. However, according to the minutes of the organization membership meeting the night before, it seems that Galíndez was pushing for a collection of funds for the Basque Government and that several Directors from the organization's leadership were not happy with the tone of his letters to them, nor his pejorative attitude toward their institution. They did agree to put out a collection box that would be visible to all who might be interested in giving money to the Basque Government-in-exile, but their intention was not to identify the day with any partisan politics.

Galíndez was a Ph.D. student preparing to submit and defend his dissertation at Columbia University in 1956. Several Basques remember that he often mentioned that he received death threat notes because of his involvement and study of the repressive Trujillo government of the Dominican Republic. In March 1956, after finishing his university lecture for a night course he taught, he descended down the street entrance to the New York subway and was never seen again, alive or dead. C.V.A. President Alberto Uriarte served on a special committee in 1956 to investigate the disappearance of Galíndez, and on the one-year anniversary Uriarte presided over a ceremony held in conjunction with the *Sociedad la Nacional*, but there was no answer as to what happened to Galíndez. Over the decades, several conspiracy assumptions have been argued by various groups asserting that he knew too much about the Trujillo government and before he could publish his dissertation, mercenaries of the Dominican Republic kidnapped and murdered him. Others believe Galíndez knew too much about

the United States government's involvement and aid to Trujillo, as well as U.S. espionage details he had learned from the Organization of Basque Intelligence, and that the United States government had him kidnapped and killed. Others even speculate that Galíndez was a United States government spy, working to gather information on the Basques. Enrike Arana Sr. said, "You had to be careful, they were afraid of the espionage on the Franco side. Over here they had spies too, over there yes, but over here [United States] too." To this day, the case has not been solved. Perhaps the disappearance of Galíndez frightened people enough to reinforce the no politics rules of the C.V.A., and perhaps the Basque Delegation activities caused division among Basques and their opinions of what the policies should or should not be. It is evident that after Galíndez vanished, the institutional involvement of the *Centro Vasco* diminished drastically. There are many other intervening variables, however, such as the death of activist Valentín Aguirre in 1953, the Catholic Church's support for the Franco government, the United States government support for Franco, the Basque Delegation's move back to Paris, and a later generation of leadership in the *Centro Vasco*.

Spain was admitted to the United Nations in 1955 and Lequerica was appointed as Madrid's permanent representative. The Basque nationalist leaders had hoped to work alongside the Western democracies to overthrow Franco's regime and return the autonomous Basque Government-in-exile to its homeland. The Basque Government-in-exile wanted to aid the Allies in any way possible in order to win their favor and help with evicting Franco and reinstalling a democratic representative form of government. To appease the United States, they even expelled representatives of the Communist party from the coalition Basque Government-in-exile. Zirakzadeh (1991:147-148) points out that after 1947, the Basque Government generally even avoided supporting labor union mobilizations. Self-restraint by the Basques in Paris, London, Buenos Aires, Mexico and New York ended not in their vindication or convincing the Western powers that Franco had to be overthrown. Instead, the United States eventually saw the Franco regime as a reliable ally in the fight against communism, and even worse- the United States formally recognized Spain and began giving it economic aid. Nevertheless, Historians Javier Tusell and Alicia Alted argue the significance of the exilic governments and that "the post-1977 negotiations for the Statutes of Autonomy for Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia reflected the historical legitimacy these statutes had acquired during the Republican period—a legitimacy that was preserved throughout the Franco period by the exiled officials of these regions" (Tusell and Alted 1991:160).

INDIVIDUALIZED POLITICAL INTEREST AND EXPRESSION

Numerous New York Basques have maintained their homeland political interest and activism, attempting to favorably influence policy for the Basque Country; its culture, language, and political autonomy and right to self-determination. Before the

advent of the Internet, information exchange still depended on mostly personal contact, the postal service, and expensive telephone calls. Basques dedicated to educating the general public and the elite decision-makers have accepted the financial and emotional expense, and some have even risked their professional careers.

In 1956 the PNV and the Basque Government-in-exile sponsored the First World Basque Congress, bringing together scholars, political and economic specialists and activists from all over the world, in order to discuss ways of preserving Basque culture. They formed the Confederation of Basque Entities in America, which was to link all of the Basque Centers in the Western Hemisphere, and Caracas was chosen for the headquarters. The C.V.A. received periodic information from these offices as did Peter and Mary Toja personally. The Tojas then disseminated the bulletins they received and tried to inform others interested in political events. Basques in the community knew that the Tojas received abundant information and kept themselves educated about the political aspects of the Government-in-exile, and, after 1978, the Statutes of Autonomy and the governments of Navarre and Euskadi. Though they were not likely to organize manifestations or specific projects, they were predictable participants.

Centro Vasco member, Pedro Beitia was born in 1911 in Villafranca in Ordizia, and was a journalist reporting from the Carlton Hotel in Bilbao during the Spanish Civil War. He later worked as the information officer for the Basque Government-in-exile in Baiona, but was captured during the German takeover of France and interned with other Basques at the concentration camp at Gurs in 1940. He was released due to severe illness. In 1952, he immigrated to the United States and worked as a translator with the World Health Organization, and later with the World Bank where he had the ear of many influential policymakers to whom he frequently gave Basque Country information and analysis. He retired in 1977. Beitia participated in C.V.A. activities and worked diligently in Washington D.C. to further the understanding of the United States politicians and the State Department in regards to the Basque conflict. He and Mario de Salegi organized and participated in letter-writing campaigns and protests in New York alerting attention to the abuses of civil and human rights in the Basque Country.

Mario de Salegi has “worked for the Basque my entire life and until the day I die, I continue.” Mario and his wife, Miriam, believe that there needs to be an international congress of Basques to work for the right to self-determination. They have many contacts all over the Americas and believe that Basques and non-Basques in the Americas have to get involved and do whatever possible to call attention to the Basque situation. Salegi joined the Basque Communist Party when he was sixteen years old and left it a few years later in 1935. He formed a part of *Aberri*, a nationalist pro-independency party, and later the *Acción Nacionalista Vasca*, Basque Nationalist Action, which unlike the *Partido Nacionalista Vasca*, was not related to the Catholic Church. He volunteered in Basque battalions and fought in Donostia during the

Spanish Civil War. He even helped organize another battalion named “*Indaía*”, or “Strength”, and when captured went to prison in Santoña. “The Spanish threw me in one of their concentration camps and I worked in a forced labor camp digging trenches. People have forgotten that there were hundreds of thousands of people - not thousands- *hundreds of thousands* of people put into Spanish war camps during and after the Civil War. That’s what Franco did to everyone. People should read their history and remember the truth. We can’t forget these things.”

Salégi’s life in the Spanish concentration camps and the atrocities of war that he experienced will never diminish in significance or meaning for him. The details of his escape from Spain, and his participation in international events have been the subject of two books, countless published articles, and media interviews. However, he says his favorite publication, is the extensive file the FBI kept on him for thirty-five years. Mario de Salégi’s life is on file with the FBI beginning with his entrance to the U.S. in 1941, when they initiated surveillance of “an obsessive anti-Francoist”. He is proud of the McCarthy era label. Each time Salégi was hired for employment, he was fired within a few weeks or months, without any explanation. “I had not done anything wrong, I was competent and a good worker. And I kept getting fired at whatever job I had, until the Wisconsin university bookstore.” Salégi met and married his wife, Miriam, in New York in 1952. When Miriam left to continue graduate university research in Wisconsin, he followed her there. While they were living in Wisconsin in 1954, the FBI even approached him and held a meeting with him intending to make a deal: if he would testify against certain people and declare that they were communists or anarchists, they would leave him alone and clear his record- and they would tell him exactly what to say. Salégi refused. “They wanted me to lie and say that these people, some of them I didn’t even know, were something that they were not. It wasn’t the truth, and just the idea of their threats and power to control me made me sick.” After Miriam finished her studies, they left the United States and emigrated to Mexico.

Mario has always been very well informed, beginning with contacts in the Office of Strategic Services, OSS, which was the United States’ first explicit intelligence service established in 1942. He maintained contact with many Basque and non-Basque activists, many European and American intellectuals in New York and in other cities around the world. The Salegis returned to New York in 1960 and helped form the Committee for a Democratic Spain, which collected contributions and aided groups that were anti-Franco, and also were very involved in political mobilization for political change in Spain. He managed a large New York bookstore in the 1960s and intellectuals and regular customers came from all over the city to discuss politics in Spain; it was a place for *tertulias*, discussions. Basques and non-Basques gathered to learn about current events, literature, film, culture and politics and he saw there was always an interest in the Basque case. All of his free time was spent on trying to gain international attention to the Basque cause.

The Salegis established the Basque Freedom Committee in 1973, and this evolved into CAMBIAS, the Committee of Americans for Basque Independence and Survival. CAMBIAS which petitioned the United Nations and protested at the Spanish Embassy in Washington D.C. numerous times in the 1970s in regards to what participants defined as the “fascist government of Spain”. They argued that the Spanish government intentionally escalated their “campaign of terror” against the Basque population in a “deliberately calculated” attempt to “provoke retaliation.” The movement had many small donations, and strong support came from the Jewish community in New York. Mario was given an address and a name and was told, “If things got really bad and we needed money, to go to this man and ask for it. Many times I went to ask for \$2000, or \$3000. He had it.” The Salegis took the lead in copying and distributing leaflets to individuals and Basque organizations around the United States, and obtaining signatures for petitions. Mario de Salegi was asked to leave the *Centro Vasco* building in Brooklyn when at a members’ meeting he addressed the issue of political activism. He wanted to discuss the court martial of Basques in the Burgos Trials. He was also censored at another membership meeting when he informed people that he had organized a manifestation in front of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in order to protest the execution of five Basque men convicted of carrying out *Euskadi ‘ta Askatasuna*, Basque Homeland and Liberty, ETA, activities. However, members eventually agreed to involve themselves by having a Catholic mass held at their Basque Center. “In the United States people don’t even know what Basques are, and don’t know what the political situation is. We have to work all the time to educate people, and in this case we also have to educate our own Basques,” he said.

Manny Zuluaga participated in the protest march at St. Patrick’s Cathedral. “Yes, we did get involved in politics a little. I remember a few hundred people on the sidewalks across from the Cathedral, and Henry Arana, the Tojas, Iñaki Aberasturi, Toni Loiti, Andoni Aguirre and family, yeah, there were a lot of very upset Basques there that day,” he said. At this time, Zuluaga had left the *Centro Vasco* activities and was not active in the Basque community. He was working as an electrician. Zuluaga said, “One day I saw -big as life- letters handwritten on a temporary sheetrock wall at a job site, ‘Euskadi eta Askatasuna’ [Basque Homeland and Liberty]. I couldn’t believe it! I knew what that said and I knew what it meant. I must have been there frozen. And this guy came up and asked me what I was staring at, and I told him I knew what it meant. This Basque guy on my construction site then invited me to go back to the *Centro Vasco* again, and that’s when I got involved.” Alys Mason Viña reported the activities in the *Voice of the Basques*: “A demonstration to protest the Spanish Government execution of five men in the Basque Country was held on Sunday afternoon, October 5, 1975 on the Westside of Fifth Avenue across from St. Patrick’s Cathedral. It was an orderly demonstration attended by hundreds of persons. In the evening at 6:30 pm a Basque mass was celebrated at our *Euzko-Etxea* for the repose of the souls of the five men who were executed. It was a solemn affair and was well attended. Rest in peace, dear boys.”



Mario and Miriam de Salegi have worked as political activists and intellectuals in the New York Basque community since the 1950s. Here, they are shown in their wedding photograph of 1952.

CAMBIAS prepared a news bulletin, written in Spanish and English, that Mario handed out on the streets of Manhattan and at demonstrations at the United Nations. Father José Mari Larrañaga returned to New York often during the 1970s and 1980s, and participated with the group at these protests, also aiding Pedro Beitia in Washington D.C. The participants protested regularly in front of the offices of the Spanish airlines Iberia, giving information about civil and human rights abuses in Spain. “We tried to influence the U.S. and New York Senators to listen,” said Mario de Salegi. “CAMBIAS went to Basques all around the U.S. and we received donations from several individuals. We sent it sent to Henry Kissinger, to Venezuela, to NABO, France, and Argentina. Young Basque people from the U.S. were very interested in learning about the politics and history of the Basque Country,” said Mario. During 1974 and 1975, CAMBIAS called for demonstrations at the U.N., and had 2000 flyers copied and distributed. They prepared and mailed fact sheets to all of the United Nations members, and to interested people around the world. They also worked with Pete T. Cenarrusa, Basque political activist in Idaho, and with Pedro Beitia, and U.S. Senators Frank Church (Idaho) and Paul Laxalt (Nevada).

Kutz Arrieta was another ally with the Salegis. “In 1997, the Germans did not want to recognize that they had destroyed Gernika, so we had a demonstration in New York,” Arrieta explained. “We signed petitions and sent letters to the German Government to protest. You see, the German government wanted to write in an official document that ‘the Nazis’ destroyed Gernika, not the Germans. And we said ‘no, the Germans destroyed Gernika. The Nazis were Germans. They needed to accept responsibility.’” Arrieta has returned to live in the Basque Country, and Mario and Miriam de Salegi have continued laboring to educate and alert the public regarding Basque Country cultural and political issues. “We want to have peace in the Basque Country and an end to violence from all sides,” said Miriam. “It’s a political conflict and it requires a political solution.”

Though the C.V.A.’s involvement had dissipated, there are still examples of institutional political activity and awareness. The East Broadway C.V.A. received the second *Lehendakari*, Jesus María de Leizaola, from the Paris office of the Basque Government-in-exile, in the 1960s. In April 1978, the C.V.A. Board of Directors voted to send an official letter to United States Senator Frank Church thanking him for his years of support for the Basque “cause” and for his trip that year to the Basque Country. Senator Church, a Democrat from Idaho, was the Chairman of the United States Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee and had traveled to the Basque Country with his wife, Bethine, on a fact-finding mission to obtain information regarding the Basque conflict.

Advertisements allowed in the *Aberrri Eguna* Journal discussed hopes for independence for the Basque Country and the shame of the Spanish Government actions in 1978. There have been advertisements claiming, “Gora Euzkadi Askatuta”, which are a promotion for the complete political independence for the Basque Country.

There are poems with strong political significance such as this by Michele Fernandez Etxebarria:

“Fruit and Flesh”

An Orange:

Peel the skin to tear apart the inner organs or squeeze the juice out of it to comfort your affliction.

A Grape:

Crush the living daylight out of it to get the bittersweet refreshment to soothe your mind and throat or maybe lay it in the sun to dry and shrivel up into insignificance.

An Apple:

Eat it all the way down to its seeds, and throw them in the garbage as if it were the most common thing.

A Peach:

Take the hair off the scalp so it doesn't itch the tongue.

A Melon: Cut it down the middle to rip out the insides that gives it life.

The Fruit. The Flesh. The Torture. It has to stop.

A different poem by Fernandez Etxebarria ends with the slogans “*Presoak Kalera*,” literally translated as “prisoners to the streets,” which is used in the Basque Country when referring to releasing political prisoners back to the freedom of the their hometowns; and “*Amnistia Osoa*”, or general amnesty, which again refers to political prisoners. Other *Aberri Eguna Journal* advertisements included poems written by “a Basque prisoner in a Spanish jail,” and call for an end to Spanish state controlled violence toward the Basque population and culture.

The organization's acceptance of ‘politics’ varies. In 1998, Iñaki Bakedano proposed that the *Euzko-Etxea* add their support to the homeland's Elkarri movement for a peaceful solution to the Basque conflict in the Basque Country. Because most of the political parties also supported this movement, as well as the interest groups of the Basque society, he argued that this was not political involvement favoring one ideology or another- everyone should be in favor of an end to conflict and violence. An official letter was signed and sent from the *Euzko-Etxea* to support the movement toward peace. In the 1990s, Kutz Arrieta wanted to discuss Spanish Government corruption and the anti-Basque death squads, the GAL, secretly organized during the Felipe Gonzalez Socialist government in Madrid. Members present at the meeting would not hear of it. “Oh, several of them protested saying that ‘We don't talk politics here!’ But what in the world is NOT politics?” she asked. “That's what I'd like to know. How can we *not* talk politics- especially being Basque? Everything we do is politicized whether we want it to be, or not. And if we are really Basque, we have to defend against what's happening with *Euskera* in *Euskal Herria* and all the discrimination against Basque culture. You know in Nafarroa they are voting to criminalize flying the *ikurriña*! You know this is 2003, not Franco times, but it is the same thing. It's impossible to not talk politics unless you are an ostrich,” she said.

The *irakaslea* of the *Euzko-Etxea*, Basque language instructor Karlos Iturralde, agrees with Kutz Arrieta's arguments. "We can't pretend like everything is fine in our country. We have the obligation to notify the U.S. media and get attention for civil rights abuses in the Basque provinces. Look, the Spanish are trying to outlaw basic freedom of speech and freedom of press, and if the U.S. thinks they have a democratic ally with the Partido Popular in Spain, they are mistaken." Xanti Mendieta agrees, "The truth about the Basques has to be told. I think we have to discuss politics at our meetings so we can inform ourselves and have open discussion, or else, we are just like Franco ourselves!"

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL VIEWS

In the 1990s, the explosion in globalized telecommunications has greatly facilitated the Salegis and others' access to information gathering and disseminating. Many New York Basques see Basque Radio and Television, EITB, programming everyday on their home television sets or on a computer, and are well informed. Julen Abio talks about changes in the Basque Country. "Everybody is too damned involved in the politics, which I hate. You know it's not anymore just the Basque Country, it's this party and that party. I am not interested in that. What happened to the old Basque Country? We are all Basques. You know we had a common enemy- Madrid. Now it seems that our enemies are each other and that's bad, that's a problem." Luis Amesti also gets daily news from the Basque Country and stated, "I see lots of changes, and most changes are against us. ETA is creating too many problems against us and all of the Basque Country. The Basques should have some representation in a united nations of Europe. In my opinion Ibarretxe is doing a hell of a job. The Basque Government are all doing a great job, and I don't care what party they are."

Ambrosio Goikoetxea is a probable emigrant from the U.S. to the Basque Country and he plans for political activism. He said, "I am very grateful to this great country but this is a very special opportunity. The Basque people are coming to terms with tragedy, personal and community tragedy in their lives. Interesting things are happening in Europe. It is now very timely for many of us to go back to Euskadi and help with a few things. I am venturing a little bit into what I call the politics of economics. I have a book that I am writing that is called *Euskadi: A Nation in the 21st Century*. I believe that we are going to achieve economic and political independence in this century."

Immigrant Patxi Olabe was involved in politics in his hometown of Elizondo, Navarre. In the 1980s, he volunteered in campaigns for municipal elections with *Euskadi'ko Ezkerra*, the Basque Left, but the party eventually disappeared. He agrees that "ETA political violence has absolutely jeopardized the Basque Country, and so has the Spanish right." Iñaki Astondoa, of Pamplona, visits the Basque Country every year "There were seven provinces, *zazpkiak bat*, the seven are one. But now with the polit-

New York Basques, Sabino Olabariaga and Rosa Aberasturi, show their pleasure at the symbolism of this banner displayed at the Boise, Idaho Jaialdi International Basque Festival in 1990. “4” represents the four Basque provinces in the Spanish state, “3” represent the three Basque provinces in the French state, “1” represents the unity of the seven provinces as one united Basque people, language, culture, and identity.



ical autonomy every region is different. So Navarra is completely apart from Euskadi and from the other Basques in the north and, now there are problems,” he said. Amaya Gúrpile, also from Pamplona, believes that the Basque Country is changing for the better economically and culturally, however, she does not like politics. She explained, “I feel that I am Basque no matter if the Basque Country is run in one way or another, or this party or that party.” She believes that Navarre is part of the Basque Country and wishes the four provinces could be more unified. Jorge Aguirre, born in 1946 in Deba, Gipuzkoa, says he was not conscious of his Basqueness until he became a teenager. Basque political publications were forbidden at that time. Aguirre said, “I began to understand what it was all about when in university in Deusto. I met many ‘real’ Basque students. Then it began, the movement *Euskadi 'ta Askatasuna*, much different from the one today. Somehow I supported it because it was about culture and language and politics, not violence against other Basques. It was more romantic than anything else. The songs, *ikurrinas*, trips to *Iparralde*, graffiti on the wall.”

Iñaki Lazcoz, born in Pamplona in 1973, summarized what many recent young immigrants think and feel. “I don’t have an answer for politics in the Basque Country.

When you are faraway from your country for such a long time, your perspective is different and you think, Why all these things? For what? You think, that's not a problem; you have problems when you don't have a place to sleep or food on your plate. Now I am getting a little distant. When these horrible things happen I feel like I don't want to be one of them. It's horrible. The terrorists, I don't know why they are so closed minded. They have no experience of real life and don't know about different people in the world. Your priorities in life change. With the European Union, it makes no sense to make more barriers. I feel Basque, and I would fight for my identity as a Basque. I want to have a European passport, because I am not only Basque, I am also European, and other things. I prefer to be more things than fewer things.”



Euzko-Etxea

(07)

of New York: Basque-American Cultural & Benevolent Society, Inc.

I think we come here to get nutrition for our Basque souls.

Margie Martinez Abadia

The Gala Grand Opening of the new *Centro Vasco-Americano* location was celebrated on June 14, 1975, with approximately one hundred and twenty people dressed in formal attire. Margie and Loretta Lezamiz, Gloria, Rosa, and Iñaki Aberasturi, Julen Vidasolo, Joe Gainsa and Julen Abio produced a Journal to commemorate the special event. Participants enjoyed a cocktail hour, buffet supper, dessert table and an open bar throughout the evening. The Ecos Band played until 2:00 am and then Angel and Alys Mason Viña contributed the live *txistu* and tambourine performance for singing and dancing until 4:00 am! Almost all of the living past Presidents and influential members such as Alberto Uriarte, Felix and Rose Oleaga, Pedro and Mary Altuna Toja, Jerónimo and Frances Bilbao Astoreca, Andres and Angie Espizua, and Raymond Aresti also participated in the ceremonies. Basques drove from Washington D.C., New Jersey, Connecticut and Maryland to congratulate the New York Basques. John Abadia entertained as Master of Ceremonies, introducing President Julen Vidasolo who read official letters from U.S. Senator Frank Church of Idaho, and U.S. Senator Paul Laxalt of Nevada, congratulating the Basque community on their grand opening. Mr. Emilio Flores of the *Casa Galicia* also sent congratulations. Dancers Marilu Echave Navas, Elisa Fradua, Elvira and Emili Pedernales and Michele Calvo performed

the traditional Basque folk dances for the crowd, and later Sara Calvo won a new television set from the raffle ticket she had purchased.

The C.V.A. left behind a quarter century of history on East Broadway in Manhattan, and bought their own building in what was, and is, a Polish neighborhood in the Brooklyn section of Greenpoint. Greenpoint is a working-class community of approximately 67,000 people in the north of Brooklyn. Families, such as the neighbors across the street and the woman next door who collects the club's mail, have lived in the same houses for two and three generations. Many of the surrounding businesses advertise in Polish. The locale was formerly a two-story church property and the Basques renovated it to include a small kitchen and extensive bar, a dining room, a small meeting room or classroom for language instruction and meetings, a small library, and the upstairs was converted to a grand reception hall for special events that could seat more than two hundred persons. A stage and piano complete the second floor reception hall. Members purchased the building in 1973 with the funds of the issuance of bonds of \$500 and \$1000, sold at an interest rate of 5%. Attorney Albert Cohen guided the non-profit organization through the legal decisions and details for the purchase of the Eckford Street structure. Andoni Aguirre commented once that there were many documents that had been stored in the safe of the old location that seemed to have been lost in the move to the Eckford Street center in Brooklyn, but no one seemed too bothered by those missing folders. Unfortunately, most of that documented history has never materialized.

John Landaburu, a past president with eight years of experience, worked consistently on building maintenance for the new property, and Jimmy "Xanti" Mendieta volunteered hundreds of hours fixing plumbing, lighting, heating, and numerous problems in the restrooms and kitchen. President Julen Vidasolo required a multitude of persons and volunteer hours to wash and paint the interior walls, and to sand and wax floors, and in March 1975, the organization purchased used tables and two hundred chairs, that also needed scouring. The bonds were paid back within a few years and the organization has no mortgage expenses, however, the taxes, insurance, maintenance and repair costs to the building are high because of its being in New York. "Presidents have to be problem solvers. There are always things that will come up in an older building, and you have to be ready to fix it," said former President Zachary Berhau.

The June 1975 picnic at Sunken Meadows, on the Long Island sound, had about thirty members attend. The *Andrak* organized a celebratory outing in September to the Villa Nueva in Plattekill. Margie Abadia and Rosa Aberasturi organized the trip for the community and the bus ride included singing and *txistu* music all the way. They played soccer, *pelota*, tennis, rowing, but it was a little too cold for swimming in the pool. They enjoyed a full dinner and then Basque dancing with Angel Viña, and John Betanzos, now living in Plattekill. They made the newspapers the next day in Plattekill. "Chata", Severiano and Amor Garcia, the proprietors in 1975, were extremely

pleased to host the Basque group, much in the same way the Villas had in the 1940s and 1950s. Members held their first dinner at the new location on Eckford Street in October, and Ricardo and José Luis Ydoyaga were proud to show the place to their father, Felipe, who was visiting from Gernika.

In the mid 1970s, Julen Abio was “interested in anything that had to do with Euskadi, [...] and once we moved to Brooklyn I started a youth Basque Club.” Abio, President of *Eusko Gazteak*, Basque Youth, planned a meeting for young people of the Basque community in order to plan several activities. The *Eusko Gazteak* held their first annual outing on July 20, 1975 and spent the day at Anthony Wayne Recreation Park in upstate New York. A group of twenty gathered to swim, eat, dance, and socialize in general. Elisa Fradua prepared a paella and Michele Calvo made *tortilla de patata*, and beans with bacon and chorizos. The next weekend the same group got together and made a picnic at Sunken Meadows, Long Island. Nicolas and María



In 1973, the Centro Vasco-Americano purchased this two-story former Greek church in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn. It was cleaned and renovated for the Gala Grand Opening on June 14, 1975.

Luisa Belaustegui brought a case of frozen imported sardines and, with Julen and María Luisa Vidasolo, roasted them over an open fire. *Euzko Gazteak* sponsored a disco dance in March 1976, and later held their annual picnic at Anthony Wayne Park. Members swam, played soccer, learned and played *mus* and *briska*, and others caught up on all the latest gossip. This time the roasted imported sardines from Bizkaia and grilled chorizos were accompanied by hamburgers, watermelon, and abundant beer and wine. *Txistu* music from the Viñas and Luis Varon playing his guitar encouraged hours of singing. The youth group was successful, and those who participated maintained Basque friendships outside of the C.V.A. functions.

José Altuna, one of the thirteen original founders of the C.V.A., died at home in Brooklyn on May 4, 1976. Altuna and his wife, Teresa Urquidi from Markina, Bizkaia, arrived in New York in 1910. He worked for the I.R.T Subway System for fifty years until his retirement, and was the dues collector of the Basque organization for many years. José and Teresa produced ten children, nine of them still living at the time of his death: Mary Altuna Toja, Juanita Altuna Alvarez, Nicolas, Lauriano, John, and Joseph Altuna, Teresa Altuna Leone, Lucy Altuna Di Luca, and Mercedes Altuna Galindo. He was also fortunate enough to have his brother, Toribio Altuna, of Brooklyn, sisters María Altuna Luzurriaga of Manhattan, and Justina Altuna Goicoechea of the Bronx, plus eighteen grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. The *Voice of the Basques* reported that his funeral was one of the largest in the history in Brooklyn and was attended by hundreds of Basques from around the region. His family and the C.V.A. members were especially happy that he had lived long enough to see the Basque community find its next home for Basque culture, and were hopeful for its future because the very day that José Altuna passed away, his great-grandson, Christopher Lawrence, was born.

The C.V.A. bought a piano in 1977, and Manny Zuluaga, Iñaki Aberasturi, Valentín Irusta, and Ramón Aresti hauled it from the business to Eckford Street, and up the flight of stairs to the dance hall and stage. Jai alai players from the Hartford, Connecticut fronton, “Jan” Deun Arrien, Iñaki Arriaga, Pedro Irungaray, Felipe Acin, and Jesus Murua, came by to say good-bye since their contracts had expired and several would be moving to the fronton in Fort Pierce, Florida, and others returning to the Basque provinces. The New Year’s Eve party brought approximately seventy guests, and eight student *txistularis* performed, taught by Gloria Aberasturi, and Lourdes Aresti of Brooklyn. The members celebrated the incoming year with Basque folk dancing, *bacalao* made by Mari Paz Goti, and the traditional *berrakatz sopa*, garlic soup, after midnight. The C.V.A. activities continued with *Euzko Gazteak* sponsoring well-attended youth dances, and more general formal dinners and dances were organized with bands such as “The Continentals” playing Latin American music. The building rules were written such that only members could rent out the ballroom, and although the club treasury could make a profit leasing the spacious facility to the various people in the neighborhood for weddings, dinners, and baptisms etc., the rules remain that only members can utilize this option. For example a memorial Basque



The newly painted and decorated entrance to the Euzko-Etxea of New York recreates a Basque baserri, or farmstead, with faux stone around archways and the bottoms of walls. The colors of the Basque flag, red, white and green, are seen throughout the building. Photo 2002.

mass for Severiana Berrizbeitia was held in 1975, and Angela Lezamiz' graduation party was held upstairs in 1977. However, because of the location in Brooklyn and the lack of available street parking in this residential neighborhood, rental income was not, and is not now, a major revenue source.

The *Centro Vasco-Americano Sociedad de Beneficiencia y Recreo* members amended their legal charter and decided that their official name should be one in *Euskera*. In 1980, members voted and approved the change of the organization's name to "Euzko-Etxea of New York, Basque American Cultural Benevolent Society, Inc." The aging membership made great efforts to partake in the club's pursuits, but the location hampered some. Civilian neighborhood patrols, organized by the neighborhood block associations in the 1980s, kept the area safe for people leaving the Euzko-Etxea at night and walking to the subway entrance a few blocks away. But the close-by high crime neighborhoods of Bushwick and Williamsburg frightened a few of the older members from coming regularly, and participation from this generation began to decrease.

The center began to close for the summer months because of the high numbers of Basques traveling away from New York, and the subsequent lack of attendance. There were sporadic Basque language class meetings, but in general the building was locked for the three months straight. The majority of visiting Basques, who vacationed in New York during these same months, found the front doors chained or listened to a telephone answering machine that had not been responded to for many weeks. The frequent profitable summer picnics of past decades, which reunited families and friends and provided an opportunity for Basques to meet other Basques, and importantly to keep in touch with each other and the community activities, were no longer assembled. Enrike "Henry" Arana Sr. believes it was a mistake to move to the Brooklyn location. "It is a wonderful place, but the location- the location is wrong. The location is completely wrong. People don't go, not because they aren't interested, but because the location is bad and difficult." Several of the younger and physically fit members also agreed with Arana.

By the early 1980s there were three segments to the *Euzko-Etxea* of New York Basque-American Cultural and Benevolent Society; seventy-six male members of the benevolent society, sixty-six women in the ladies auxiliary *Andrak*, and the approximately twenty youth of *Euzko Gasteak*. The 1984 activities calendar highlight was the *Aberri Eguna* festival; there was not a single summer Basque picnic, but there were monthly meetings and dinners for the more or less twenty people that attended, a Halloween party, the children's Christmas party and the New Year's Eve dinner-dance. Members continued paying their dues, and according to Steve Aspiazu, "Even if I didn't go to anything I still wanted to receive the newsletters and hear about other people." Only a solid core of close to thirty individuals volunteered and participated regularly in the society's Basque cultural maintenance projects. The *Aberri Eguna* is the exception and one annual event that draws a few hundred people.

ABERRI EGUNA: DAY OF THE HOMELAND

The Easter Sunday *Aberri Eguna* celebration is the highlight of the Basque community. The announcing newsletter goes out to the tri-state area and people travel from all over the east coast in order to attend. “It’s a tremendous crowd. People begin arriving around noon and enjoy the gourmet *pintxos*, or appetizers, created by that Basque chef, Iñaki Lete. Just the *pintxos* and drinks, which are supposed to be an appetizer, are enough to fill you with Basque food for the entire day!” exclaimed Steve and Liz Aspiazu. The second floor reception area features the children’s performances of Basque traditional dances by the *Itzelak* Dancers, then the actual meal is celebrated on the second floor as well. The typical “lunch” has included numerous courses with lobster, shrimp, lamb, filet mignon, vegetables, desserts, and drinks.

The history of *Aberri Eguna* is connected to both religion and politics. At the end of the 1800s, Sabino de Arana y Goiri, known as the founder of modern Basque nationalism, led a movement to promote the renaissance of *Euskara*, the Basque culture and traditions, and the *fueros*, or customary laws, which ruled the democracy of the Basque provinces. He created the new word *Euzkadi*, now spelled Euskadi, which denoted an ethnic Basque nation-state tied to Roman Catholicism and the old laws and *fueros*. Arana y Goiri designed the *ikurriña*, or Basque flag, and helped form the Basque Nationalist Party, the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, PNV. His promotion of independence for the Basque provinces earned him years of imprisonment from Spanish authorities, and Sabino Arana y Goiri died in 1903 at the young age of thirty-eight. Basque nationalists later decided to celebrate the Day of the Homeland to coincide with Easter Sunday because of the connections to the concept of the Resurrection. Celebrations of *Aberri Eguna* in the Basque Country usually include political speeches and banners in addition to the festival aspect of celebrating language, customs, and legal and economic aspects of the provinces. *Aberri Eguna* in Argentine, Uruguayan, Chilean, Venezuelan, Mexican, and Belgian Basque communities tend to maintain the original intention with political information or pro-autonomy or independence connotations. In the United States, the few Basque communities that do continue to commemorate the day have slowly sifted out most of the political aspects and have tended to produce a gastronomical feast with dancing and sporting exhibitions. A few of the many people interviewed for this book thought that “*Aberri Eguna*” was the Basque language translation for “Easter Sunday.” The meaning of the day specific to Basques had not been taught or explained to them, and they were simply attending a fantastic celebration of Basque culture with their friends at the *Euzko-Etxea*.

There is no definitive record of the very first New York *Aberri Eguna*, but the earliest mention of it in existing C.V.A. minutes and financial records goes back to a brief entry in 1943. In 1952, Jesús de Galíndez, a Delegate of the Basque Government-in-exile offices in New York, collaborated with the C.V.A. for an *Aberri Eguna*, and then

starting after 1962, the event became the most significant annual celebration of the Basque community. Father José Mari Larrañaga explained, “In 1962, the first year I arrived to New York, it was a very small group, but we had a mass in Basque and sang in Basque and celebrated with a lunch at a restaurant, maybe the Jai Alai, but I don’t remember. Then every year after that it got bigger and bigger, and thanks to Cal and Gloria Martitegui Bilbao, Tony Loiti, Carmen Moneo, and John and Margie Abadia, I had great assistants for whatever we needed.”

One of the first articles that Larrañaga wrote in the *Aberri Eguna Journal* was to criticize the C.V.A. for their lack of activities for younger Basques. “I wrote, ‘If we do not do something soon to include and interest the young people this place will be just like a cemetery’, and Alberto got real mad with me,” said Larrañaga referring to the President Alberto Uriarte. “The women worked all morning to make the lunch. One year a few young people from New Jersey came and perhaps drank a little too much. And one said one thing, and another one answered, and well, when a real fight was just about to break out, Martin Fradua suddenly collapsed to the floor as though he were having a heart attack! This shocked all the people and it broke up the fight immediately and those people left. Then Martin picked himself up off the floor and they all laughed! Oh, that Fradua, he was very, very smart,” said Larrañaga.

Five priests, Father Oleaga, Father Corta, Father Joxe Mallea, Father Gorka Garate and Father José Galdos, celebrated the 1974 mass in Basque. The Basques organized a choir and sang in *Euskera* for the mass. The attendance was approximately two hundred people, and individuals, such as José Mari Guerricagoitia, came from as far away as Washington D.C. The “Euzkotarrak Dancers” performed and later the Ecos Band played for the crowd to dance. The Andrak Club and several men cooked and served the lunch with head cooks Emilio Uriarte, Andres Santamaría, and Nick Belaustegui. John and Margie Abadia served as Social Directors and organized all of the publicity and mailings. Mass for the 1977 *Aberri Eguna* was held at St. Alphonsus Church in Brooklyn, and chaired by Andrés and Angie Espizua. The “Bar Txomin” downstairs at the *Euzko-Etxea* opened for the *amaiketako*, literally eleven o’clock appetizers, with tortillas, cheeses, olives, breads and white wine. Young txistularis, Manuel Belaustegui, Mari Nieves Andujar, Louie Larrinaga Jr., Elisa Vidasolo, and teacher Lourdes Aresti, and the *Euzkotarrak* Dancers entertained the downstairs crowd. Then Angel and Alys played for impromptu dancing by the adults and children alike. Louie Larrinaga Sr., former owner of the Bayona Restaurant prepared the meal for the one hundred and seventy-five persons who attended, including roast chicken, roast beef, salads, vegetables, and home made apple pie. After the dinner, the musical group “The Continentals” performed and the dancing continued for hours. Gloria and Rosa Aberasturi, Margie Abadia, Loretta and Margie Lezamiz donated numerous hours to produce the *Aberri Eguna Journal* full of advertisements from businesses and remembrances of *Euzko-Etxea’s* deceased members.

The 1980s celebrations were similarly significant successes due to the dedication and volunteer work of the same small core of leaders. Several of the Basque priests moved away, but the new Bishop of New York, Josu Garmendia, celebrated Basque masses right at the clubhouse. The 1995 mass was not said at the *Euzko-Etxea* because a few members had complained about the promotion of religion by the club. If politics were not allowed for discussion and promotion then religion should also be removed. Instead members were told that there were general Catholic masses at St. Anthony's Church -two blocks away from the center- that they could attend if they chose, but none would be a Basque mass. The day started with drinks at the *Euzko-Etxea* "Bar Txomin," followed by a performance by the Itzelak Dancers, a sit-down complete luncheon buffet, and more music and dancing into the evening. Basques and non-Basques gladly paid the \$40.00, or \$50.00 for non-members, in order to feast on the Basque cuisine and enjoy a day with old friends and acquaintances. The Chino, California *Gauden Bat Euskal Dantzariak* Basque dancers traveled to New York and gave a spectacular exhibition with the Itzelak Dancers for the 1997 *Aberri Eguna* entertainment.



Honored in 1998 at the 85th Anniversary of the founding of the Centro Vasco-Americano were (in front with flower corsages) Eva Fernandez Fradua, Lily Aguirre Fradua, and Tony Barben (Ibarbengoechea) for their decades of volunteerism in New York's Basque community. Lily's children and grandchildren are also present in the photograph. Photo courtesy of Lily Aguirre Fradua.

Another meaningful result of this annual celebration is the publication of the *Aberri Eguna* Journal, which serves as an historical record of the past year's events with photographs and short descriptions of activities. There are advertisements from individuals in memoriam of deceased family members and friends; political opinions and promotion of political ideas for Basque Country independence and peace movements; and commercial advertisements from the United States and the Basque Country, such as that of Brunnschweiler, S.A. paper manufacturing from Mungia, Bizkaia. The first Journal was printed in 1965, and in 1997 the Basque Government awarded a partial grant to *Euzko-Etxea* to extend the Journal and include information regarding other Basque clubs of the western United States. This was an important attempt to reach out and educate the east coast Basques about those in California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Utah and Colorado, and to maintain positive ties between the Basques in the United States. The first year, editors Gloria Aberasturi and Dolores Badiola included information about fifteen different Basque communities, and the readers were thrilled. "Oh it's always so good to get news about other Basques, and you never know- sometimes you find you are related to them!" exclaimed Lily Aguirre Fradua. Xanti Mendieta mentioned, "Oh we keep track of you people out there in the west. We get all sorts of news in the Journal, and it's good for us to know what Basques in Idaho and California do to maintain the language, and culture in general." This Basque celebration, held on Easter Sunday with an unchanged format, remains the largest event of the year for the Basque community.

ANDRAK: WOMEN

The Ladies Auxiliary continued their own separate program of events, such as Pura Recalde arranging for several *Andrak* ladies to attend a theater and dinner performance of "Shenendoah" at the Alvin Theatre, and the 1977 May outing to attend the musical play "Chicago". At their meeting of September 1975, the women starting planning a "barn dance" to be held on October 25, and a card-playing party for November. New members included; Teodula Eguren, Rhoda Santamaría, Anne Doyaga, Jean Aguirre. The Barn Dance was a success with a professional square dance "caller" and Basques learning American folk dances. They decorated the upstairs *Euzko Etxea* dance floor with corn stalks and pumpkins, and Margie Lezamiz, María and José Antonio Omaechevarria and committee prepared *berrakatz sopa*. María Luisa Belaustegui, Eva and Lily Fradua, Petra Pedernales, Carmen and Gloria Aberasturi, Gloria Bilbao, and Lily Montori organized and hosted *Andrak's* 9th Annual Card Party in November 1975. They also prepared a January 1976 cake sale and auction, and a March Tupperware party. For May 1976, *Andrak's* officers organized a bus trip to Philadelphia to celebrate the Bicentennial year of the American Revolution with their Basque friends.

The Tenth Anniversary party of *Andrak* on October 9th, 1976 was celebrated with one hundred and eighty-two persons. All past officers were thanked and recognized

for their many hours and years of volunteering their time to promote Basque culture. The Frank Anthony Orchestra “The Metros” and singer Anna Fantasia, entertained the crowd. Alys Mason Viña was honored at the 1976 *Aberri Eguna* for her countless hours of volunteer work as correspondent for the *Voice of the Basques*, for *Andrak*, for *Eusko Gazteak* youth group, and the *Centro Vasco-Americano* in general. She was born Italian and called herself an “adopted Basque”. Mason Viña was a volunteer and leader in *Andrak*, and helped form the *Eusko Gazteak*. She and her husband taught Basque dancing and txistu to the children for years. Alys Mason married Angel Viña in 1965, opening her eligibility to become a participant of the various Basque organizations. She dove in with membership and leadership roles in each of them. She also volunteered as the correspondent for the New York Basque community to the *Voice of the Basques*, a monthly newspaper, which published information about Basques in all of the communities in the United States from 1973 to 1975 from Boise, Idaho. Her enthusiasm and encouragement was instrumental in making the New York community the one with the highest percentage of subscribers of all the United States.

At the ten year anniversary, the sixty-six female members of *Andrak* were listed as: M. Abadia, C. Aberasturi, G. Aberasturi, R. Abertasturi, V. Aberasturi, M.T. Abio, A. Aguirre, J. Aguirre, M. Aguirre, Y. Aramendi, A. Arana, L.Aresti, F. Astoreca, M.L. Belaustegui, G. Bilbao, S. Calvo, A.M. Carrazo, P. Cendagorta, A. Colleran, C. Donegan, A. Doyaga, E. Echave, R. Egues, T. Eguren, A. Espizua, E. Espizua, E. Fradua, E. Fradua, L. Fradua, M. Gainza, M. Garay, M. Garcia, C. Goicoechea, M.P. Goti, M.L. Irusta, B. Larrinaga, J. Lezamiz, L. Lezamia, M. Lezamiz, L. Montori, I. Muruaga, M. Navas, R. Oleaga, M. Omaechevarria, I. Orbe, A. Pedernales, B. Pedernales, J. Pedernales, L. Pedernales, P. Pedernales, M. Porfedio, P. Recalde, D. Sagat, R. SantaMaría, F. Surinaga, L. Surinaga, A. Test, M. Toja, L. Torrontegui, E. Urrutia, D. Urteaga, M.L. Vidasolo, A. Viña, T. Zarate, F. Zorroza, and G. Zuluaga. The elected leadership included President Margie Abadia, Vice-President Margie Lezamiz, Secretary Josephine Pedernales, and Treasurer Loretta Lezamiz.

The women’s membership meetings were held once a month with a simple 6:00 p.m. snack following the meetings. *Andrak* began to suffer from a lack of funds in 1984. The annual dues of the fifty-woman membership were not sufficient to cover their expenses for the year and they had to borrow from savings in order to pay off their debts. Previously donating seventy-five dollars per month to *Euzko-Etxea*, they voted to reduce this amount to fifty dollars per month, notifying President Henry Arana that this change would take effect immediately. However, their charity works continued.

Flooding throughout the Basque Country on August 26, 1983 was recorded as the worst devastation remembered by any living person in the region. This natural disaster mobilized the *Andrak* to host a benefit luncheon in March 1984, and to organize an April benefit raffle, which included a First Prize Trip to the Basque Country, Second

Prize Basket of Cheer with various liquors, and Third Prize tickets to *Euzko-Etxea* monthly dinners. *Andrak* members led by Gloria Aberasturi, Alys Mason Viña, Petra Pedernales, and Conchi Fernandez, raised over five thousand dollars after the *Aberri Eguna* day raffle and immediately wired it to the Basque provinces for humanitarian aid. In total, the *Andrak* raised \$7,100 for the Euzkadi Flood Relief Fund. They donated one thousand dollars through Father José Galdos to the Caritas Diocesana de Bilbao, and \$6150 to the Basque Government humanitarian aid efforts. Alys Mason Viña received a personal letter of thanks from the *Lehendakari* of the Basque President, Carlos Garaikoetxea.

Andrak was also in charge of organizing card parties, the anniversary dinner-dances, the annual Halloween Party, the Christmas Party for children and adults with Olentzero and Santa Claus, and various fund-raising cake sales and raffles. In the 1980s they organized the annual June picnic, which had been moved from August because so many members were out of New York City on vacation. The C.V.A. President, Antonio Loiti, wrote in 1977, “A large part of the success of our organization to date can be measured from the date ANDRAK came into being.”

With the re-writing of the C.V.A. bylaws in 1990, women were afforded the same benefits and full rights as male members. *Euzko-Etxea* President John Landaburu wrote in the 1992 *Aberri Eguna* program, “After twenty-five years of actively supporting the goals of *Euzko-Etxea*, it was voted upon by the *Andrak* at their December meeting to dissolve the ladies auxiliary effective the end of 1991.” In 1992, the majority of the forty-four women then joined the *Euzko-Etxea* as full members.

EXPANDING THE ACTIVITIES

Second and third generation Basques, and recent Basque immigrants to New York began asking for changes to the 1990s activities calendars. For the first time since the beginning years of the Basque society, in 1992 the membership fell below one hundred, and there were only ninety-two members. After the *Andrak* permanently dissolved their separate organization in 1991 and members joined the *Euzko-Etxeak* during 1992, the total membership of the united *Euzko-Etxeak* of New York reached one hundred and twelve individuals. “You know some people there just wanted to do the same thing over and over and over, and it gets pretty boring. The Basque Country is not still living in the 1940s, why is it that the leaders at the *Euzko-Etxea* still only perpetuate those things?” asked emigrant Teresa Madariaga. Others decided to act on the situation. Margie Abadia, with help from Gloria Aberasturi, volunteered many weekends to clean, organize and prepare library materials for checkout and research purposes. Anton Iraola worked in carpentry and he hand built the shelving before retiring home to Bermeo. The Jon Oñatibia Library was officially inaugurated and opened in 1981 with more than two hundred books, numerous audio

and video tapes, periodicals, and photocopied articles. Margie Abadia also gathered donated items from members and integrated them into the collection. In 1991, the library was expanded and reorganized and cleaned by Margie Abadia with the help of Itziar Albisu and Liset Belaustegui.

The *Euzko-Etxea* of New York finally joined the North American Basque Organizations, NABO, federation in 1993, after years of debating the necessity and desirability. Conferences are held three times per year, but always at a west coast city, and a few vocal members did not think any benefits would be worth the travel costs. Irene and Andoni Aguirre attended NABO meetings at their own expense for years previous, because of their firm belief that New York Basques were isolated and needed to collaborate with the western Basques. They also soon found out how ignorant the western Basques were of the New York community and its historical significance. The Aguirres continued as the first official delegates of the *Euzko-Etxea* to NABO, and they tirelessly promoted New York, and educated other delegates about the history and activities on the east coast. Then NABO President, Steve Mendive remembers, “Oh yeah, during the pelota exhibitions we all wanted to sit next to Andoni



New York Basques traveled to Boise, Idaho to enjoy the Jaialdi International Basque Festival of 1990. Many were able to visit with relatives living in the American west, and participants extended friendship ties with Basques communities in western States.

and listen to his stories. God! He'd lived all around the world and done so many different things. He was so different from the older Basque men we knew, that had basically worked in agriculture all their lives and lived in the same towns. It was a terrible loss when he passed away in 1997." Irene was regularly late to the NABO lunches because she was out in the hallways teaching younger delegates the dances she had performed in New York, or giving information about her years as the personal secretary to the Basque President José Antonio de Aguirre. The NABO summer music camp, *Udaleku*, is the best opportunity for New York teenagers to participate with other Basques their own age and to make Basque friends for the future. However, again, the physical distances and costs of travel create barriers to participation and to date in 2003, no New York Basques have participated in a NABO summer camp. Going to the Basque Country itself is a shorter and less expensive trip.

Iñaki Bakedano thought that the club should do more to promote Basque music, and in 1996 he created a special menu for a fundraising dinner to benefit the center's collection of Basque music recordings. The proceeds from the dinner were used to buy new compact discs and cassette tapes of various genres of music of Basque artists with the intention of members being able to enjoy them for personal use utilizing a library checkout system. The next week, the club highlighted a cultural exchange of ethnic dancing with the Greenwich Morris Dancers, the Half Moon Sword Dancers, and its own Itzelak Basque Dancers, demonstrating the similarities and differences between Basque, English, and Scottish traditional dance. Spectators and dancers alike enjoyed the presentations, which were followed with a buffet dinner. The next year, the English dancers invited the Basque dancers to stage an exhibition with them at the Picnic House at Prospect Park in Brooklyn and these young performers entertained a sizeable standing room only audience. Earlier on this same morning Basques gathered to hold a *korrika*, or walk-a-thon, to celebrate the preservation and expansion of the Basque language. In the Basque Country, each province selects a special day to host a walk-a-thon promoting *Euskara*, with all of the proceeds from events directed to the *ikastolak*, or Basque language schools. The New York Basques' walk demonstrated their commitment to *Euskara*, and was meaningful to the thirty people who participated. "We could be a million miles away from the Basque Country, but we don't forget our language," remembered Kutz Arrieta.

The goal of President Zachary Bilbao Berhau was to construct outreach programs to educate non-Basques about the Basques, and to increase membership to the *Euzko-Etxea* by trying innovative activities. For example, Berhau was able to obtain discounted tickets for a New York Mets baseball game at Shea Stadium, and he organized a Basque group outing to the ballpark, which became an annual outing. In 1998, the Mets even had an electronic announcement on the scoreboard "welcoming the Basques of the Euzko-Etxea of New York." "For an activity to 'be Basque' it doesn't need to be a traditional thing that they did on the farms two hundred years ago. It can 'be Basque' because the people doing it are Basque, and they are enjoying themselves together as Basques. Soccer is not 'Basque', but don't dare tell

the Athletic de Bilbao or their fans that they are not enjoying a Basque activity when they go to a game! You'd never get out alive!" laughed Koitz Foncillas Etxeberria. Karmelo Barrenetxea taught guitar lessons following the Basque language classes in 1996. Iñaki Bakedano attempted to form a music group in 1998. Louie Larrinaga and Bakedano also organized a youth group movie and dinner night at the club, with the profits going to raise money for transportation to the Boise, Idaho Jaialdi International Basque Festival celebration in 2000. They showed contemporary Basque movies such as "Airbag" by Berridi, with dialogue in Spanish and subtitles in English.

The year before, Xanti Egaña organized an afternoon of Basque readings, music and sounds, and film. Artists Harkaitz Cano, Bruce McClure, and Alex Mendizabal combined readings of texts in *Euskara*, Basque musical instruments such *txistu*, *silbote*, and *danbolina*, with visual projections of 16 mm handcrafted films. This less traditional artistic representation of Basque culture was more popular with the younger members; however, the overwhelming majority agreed that it was very interesting and unique.

The King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center at New York University presented a conference "The Basque Country Today" with professors Jon Juaristi, Philip Silver and Begoña Aretxaga in November 1997, however, few *Euzko-Etxea* members attended. For many members, the efforts to expand the choices of organized activities were extremely important and they credited Berhau with trying to interest a wider audience even if every new activity was not well attended. "I think people are more interested in the more emotional and fun cultural activities, and not necessarily in the intellectual academic things. It's not that no one is interested, it's just that people are different and have individual likes, you know?" explained Vivian Zuluaga-Papp. "So the people that are interested in the politics go to the political things when the Basque Government officials come, and those that are interested in art go to the gallery exhibits of Basque artists like Oteiza. The older people that like to play *mus*, play *mus*. People that like to dance, dance. There are just too many things to do in New York and you have to have family time too. It's just good to have a choice. You can't expect today's Basques to only do the things our grandparents did. Americans don't go around singing songs from the forties and dancing the Charleston, you know? So why do we think that Basques would do that?" she asked.

In the late 1990s, members were reminded that their annual dues of \$85 for voting members, \$42.50 for senior citizen voting members, and \$30 for non-voting associate members were the major source of income used to cover operating expenses. Although the summer picnics returned, for example the 1997 picnic was held at Midland Beach in Staten Island, is it no longer the profit-making event of the past, when several hundred Basques gathered for an all-day affair of organized games, exhibitions, and performances. Only the *Aberri Eguna* lunch gains more than a few hundred dollars. In 1996, the center had one hundred and eight members, and leaders discussed the possibility of forming a Basque cooperative in New York, but after several months did not continue to research the idea. Typical annual activities in the late 1990s included mem-



The 85th Anniversary of the founding of the Centro Vasco-Americano was celebrated at the Euzko-Etxea with txistulari Angel Viña (standing to the left) playing for the Itzelak Dancers in 1998.

bership meetings and dinners often prepared by María Luz Echevarria Elordi Landaburu; weekly language and dance classes; *Aberri Eguna*; the Mets' baseball game outing; the June members picnic; *mus*, *briska* and *tute* card tournaments; a remembrance dinner for deceased members; Halloween Costume Party; Andrak's Christmas party for members and children with Olentzero and Santa Claus; and a New Year's Party. Sunday afternoons were busy for children and adults with Basque language, Basque music, and Basque dance classes, one right after the other. The Halloween Party was another success in 1998 with many partiers disguised in their costumes, and pumpkin carving led by Iñaki Bakedano, Louie Larrinaga, and Itziar Albisu. Queens College hosted two special lectures about the Basque Country and Basque dancing, cuisine, art and language in April 1999, and the next year the program was repeated at the Great Neck Public School. Mus tournaments with the *txapelketa*, or championship, are played and presented annually at the *Aberri Eguna* festivities.

President Berhau organized a bus for members to enjoy a March, 2000 day outing to Milford Connecticut to see the jai-alai games. The 2000 September picnic was held at South Beach on Staten Island, and the society's news bulletin reminded members to distinguish themselves as Basques on the 2000 United States Census. Basque Government officials visited the *Euzko-Etxea* in November 2000 and were entertained by the Itzelak Dancers, instructed by Anna M. Aguirre. She also gave adult *jota* dance lessons that year. Unlike western Basques that have a summer calendar filled with Basque festivals in different towns, the New York Basques do not have many occasions to practice their *jota* and *porrusalda* steps. West coast communities have several Basque bands and individual musicians, from the United States and from the Basque Country, that they hire for dances, festivals, and weddings, and adults learn and practice many different Basque ethnic dances in order to be able to join in the fun. In New York, these opportunities are infrequent and fewer people are interested in learning a skill that they cannot practice or enjoy.

In another attempt to reach out to the community, Itziar Albisu Kobayashi proposed hosting an open house to invite the neighbors on the block to the club. "But others said 'no way' and didn't want to open the house to strangers, not even for them to see the inside or to have one drink. One of our neighbors has collected our daily mail, and she delivers it to a mail slot in the side door, for years. And we need to have friends in the neighborhood to watch the place. But some people are just so closed-minded," said Albisu. One woman has lived across the street for forty-three years, since before the Basques bought the building. In her interview, as she was shoveling the snow from the sidewalk, she said, "No, they have never invited me to anything. I don't know what goes on in there. Oh, they have been good neighbors for sure, no problems except for parking. When they have those big events it wipes out the parking in the entire neighborhood. We all live in these houses you know, and you can see there are no driveways anywhere here, so we all have to park on both sides of this narrow one-way street. Well, when they have events there are always traffic jams and no parking. I don't particularly like that."

President Berhau went to the *Casa Galicia* to introduce himself and suggested at an *Euzko-Etxea* members meeting that it might be a good idea to invite the *Casa Galicia* members for a joint dinner, especially since they shared decades of common history with each other. A few purist members were opposed to having them even enter the building. Exclusivity, not opening membership or welcoming new people are likely factors in the organization's decline. As members intermarry and those spouses do not feel welcomed by older members, then eventually the couple stops attending events. Itziar Albisu mentioned that when she joined with her Japanese husband and three Basque-Japanese children, they were not exactly warmly received by all. In 1997, Michelle Fernandez proposed that non-Basque spouses of Basque members should be eligible as full members, with the right to vote and give payment of full membership; the motion passed and the by-laws were amended.

The club is only open on Sundays for Basque language classes and sporadic dance classes, and always closed during the week unless for a special event. Very few Basques live near the Eckford Street neighborhood, and for most, a trip to Greenpoint takes almost one hour on public transportation, and with a car, depending on



Members of the Euzko-Etxea enjoy pre-dinner drinks at the club bar prior to monthly dinners and meetings. Photograph 2002.

traffic and finding a parking space, it could be just as long. Basques are scattered throughout New York's five boroughs, the upstate communities, and New Jersey. Ana Mari Oleaga does not visit the Center as much anymore, "because my Basque friends don't come either. They are retired or have moved away or don't come anymore because of the location. I don't feel like coming to the Basque Center alone, it is hard to get here and there are not many activities for my age group. I come for the Euskera classes, but what else am I going to do here?" she asked.

Iñaki Aberasturi said, "People write or call to *Euzko-Etxea* thinking this is a large Basque Center. They want help with their accommodations for their upcoming business trip to the city, or they are students and they think we can give them international educational requirement information! You know, we are just a group of Basque friends that meet once a month for a meeting and dinner, and occasionally have a special event. We don't have anything more."

ACCEPTING OR REJECTING CHANGE AND PROGRESS

The 2003 President of the *Euzko-Etxea*, Koitz Foncillas Etxeberria, has a dire task to fill. His objective is to increase membership and encourage young Basques to participate in the society's functions- without alienating the older traditional minded members. Former Presidents have had similar goals, and some have met them though with limited success. The Basque Government selected Foncillas Etxeberria as a delegate to the international conference *Gaztemundu*, World of Youth, and the 2003 focus is on the management of Basque Centers and the promotion of activities for youth. "It's like they knew exactly what we need in New York," he said. The truth is that of the nearly two hundred Basque organizations around the world, almost half of them are reporting difficulties with maintaining the participation of younger Basques. Organizations may find that they are not willing to make the necessary changes to attract new members. In 1996, Kutz Arrieta and Mario de Salegi proposed to conduct a simple two-page study of the society's membership, asking about their interests and hoping to expand the membership and activities of the organization. The Board of Directors rejected their proposal and the study was never carried out.

Unlike the western Basque colonies, there is constant Basque immigration to New York of all ages and professions, and from all seven provinces. Artists, engineers, business professionals, graduate students and others migrate to New York City with precise objectives, university goals, and established job opportunities. Most migrate with excellent English language skills, and they do not usually need a Basque Center for financial stability, to network, or to find a translator. Neither are they necessarily interested in spending their time in the United States at a Basque Center. A young couple visiting New York in 2002 from Oñati, Gipuzkoa stated, "When you go to the Basque Country do you look for other Americans? Basques don't come here to go to the Basque Center in

traffic and finding a parking space, it could be just as long. Basques are scattered throughout New York's five boroughs, the upstate communities, and New Jersey. Ana Mari Oleaga does not visit the Center as much anymore, "because my Basque friends don't come either. They are retired or have moved away or don't come anymore because of the location. I don't feel like coming to the Basque Center alone, it is hard to get here and there are not many activities for my age group. I come for the Euskera classes, but what else am I going to do here?" she asked.

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The entry hall to the Euzko-Etxea decorates with traditional ethnic themes such as this corner with photographs of the Basque Country soccer teams and genuine Basque sport for the harrijatsoaile, or stone lifter.

Brooklyn. If I only have two weeks and I have a choice to see Ellis Island or the *Euzko-Etxea*, it is an easy choice. If I am stationed here for only two years for my job, I still would not go to a Basque center. It would take two *hundred* years to see everything there is to see in New York. I don't know, maybe I would go if there was a restaurant because I would crave Basque food. But I wouldn't come more than once after seeing a small group of people singing songs of my grandparents and doing nothing. There is no *ambiente* [ambiance] here." Iñigo Aragues Orue agreed, "There used to be a lot of young people that came here at the beginning of the nineties. I don't know what happened." Focillas hopes he can change this attitude, or at least offer something for them that is worth attending.

The spring monthly dinners in 2001 were so poorly attended that a few were cancelled at the last minute. President Zachary Berhau asked all members for their input regarding a monthly activity in which they could all share and enjoy. Today there is no finance committee for the organization, no long-range plan with objectives, no business manager, and no non-profit organization tax status with the I.R.S., known as 501 (c) (3). José Mari Guerricagoitia believes that *Euzko-Etxea* is too conservative. He remembers people singing "*Eusko Gudariak*", a Spanish Civil War song celebrating Basque soldiers, and describes a few in the center's leadership as "out of touch with today's Basque Country and what it means to be Basque." Jorge Aguirre has traveled much with his shipping business, and whenever he visits other countries such as Venezuela or Mexico, he meets the Basques in their *euskal etxeak*, Basque Centers. He is disappointed with the *Euzko-Etxea* in New York. He finds it "out of date, with not much funding, and there are only one hundred members, but only about thirty people that go regularly. Thirty people! No real expression either, and no discussion of current events. Are we supposed to pretend like nothing is happening in the Basque Country, when the Spanish government is trying to wipe out our Basque language and identity? We should be discussing these things." Perhaps instead of avoiding issues of change, the New York *Euzko-Etxea* members might embrace it; beginning by intensifying relations with homeland institutions and with the Basque Government, and benefiting from a diverse set of programs.

RELATIONS WITH THE BASQUE GOVERNMENT AND HOMELAND INSTITUTIONS

In order to comprehend the relationship of the New York Basques with the Basque individuals and Basque institutions in the homeland, it is helpful to review a few of its historical phases. Until the early 1980s and the re-establishment of relative political and economic autonomy in the four provinces in Spain, remittances were common with economic aid traveling in the direction from diaspora families toward the homeland. The Basque Centers around the world sent economic aid for the Basque Government-in-exile, and also raised funds for Basque refugees who had fled the Franco dictator-

ship to the northern provinces across the French border in *Iparralde*. Diaspora communities sent economic assistance from institution to institution, and from family to family. Yet this is an area of research lacking reliable statistics. There is almost no way to compute the amount of money and value of goods sent from the diaspora Basques to their families and friends in the homeland. There is no documentation of the exact source of money that was deposited into personal bank accounts, and none of the people interviewed kept a total record of what goods they sent, though the majority does remember that they, or their parents, used to send money -actual paper currency-and/or boxes of clothes and household items to the Basque Country.

In the Basque Country, this created a misconception that those who moved to the United States had extra wealth and items to discard. Immigrants sent home photographs of themselves in suits and dresses, but it was *likely* the only suit or elegant dress that one had. They sent photos of themselves in front of the latest model automobiles, though not usually their own. Letters tended to include only good news to avoid worrying one's mother and other family members, and in some cases to prevent the village from thinking that one had "failed" in America by not becoming rich. The truth was more likely a situation of lower middle class struggle to make sure the monthly bills were paid, doctor visits covered, and shoes for the children were purchased. For example, while Esteban Aspiazu lived frugally and saved pennies to pay for his own family's expenses, he continued sending his Gernika family contributions for five decades. His personal papers include a receipt from the Banco de Vizcaya in 1978 for a transfer of four hundred dollars.

What is certain is that these images and stories are recorded in the memories of the New York Basques, and then propagated to the next generation. Basques who have never been to the homeland, or have not returned for decades, have images of poor rural *baserriak*, or farmsteads, where there may or may not be running water and electricity. Vivian Zuluaga-Papp's family *baserri* had no indoor plumbing in 1976. Most expect that a Basque town's festival would highlight accordions and *txistus* and tambourines and many traditional folk dancers exhibiting Basque culture. They expect dirt and poorly paved windy roads between small towns. They are expecting this actual description of the Basque Country of the 1940s and 1950s because it is what they left, or what they listened to from their parents and grandparents while growing up in New York. Basques in the homeland are quick to describe today's diaspora Basques as "folkloric" and "living in the past", but usually do not take the time to understand why they are that way. Recent Basque immigrants to New York also comment on the outdated view that some of the New York Basques have regarding today's *Euskal Herria*, but they also forget that Vivian's summer baths and hair shampooing were done in the ocean for lack of plumbing, and 1976 was not so very long ago.

Basques in New York were exposed to thousands of other Basques leaving the homeland and trying to make a living in the United States. The typical Basque traveling through New York was heading west, to work in ranching, agriculture, a board-

inghouse or restaurant, or to join family. Very, very few Basques left the seven provinces with riches and came to the United States to invest, or enlarge their own businesses. “My dad always talked about how good this country was to him, and how hard the life in the Basque Country was. I didn’t pay too much attention when I was younger, but there were constant comments about sending money home, and so and so sent this or that to their family. I always thought everyone there was poor. I never wanted to go to the Basque Country- until recently,” remarked Steve Aspiazu. The overwhelming majority of immigrants were from fishing towns and rural farmsteads, and were lower economic class, otherwise they would not have departed. One after another told a similar story of poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunity, and political oppression. Usually, people who have experienced financial profitability and who are happy and safe in the homeland do not leave it. The existing New York Basque community generally heard about the positive changes from people that had visited and seen the development of the 1980s forward, however, previous to this, the overwhelming majority of information was negative.

Following the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975, in the 1980s and 1990s, and with relative regional political autonomy, the economic situation in the Basque provinces began to improve with unemployment rates dropping and the quality of life advancing. Araba, Bizkaia, and Gipuzkoa provinces approved their Statutes of Autonomy in 1979, and elected their regional parliament in March 1980, with creation of the Basque Government (executive branch) following shortly thereafter. *Nafarroa* achieved a separate autonomy in direct governmental negotiations with Madrid with the 1982 Act affirming the region’s historic rights.

Since this time, in recognition of the financial, political and cultural contributions that supported the Basque Government-in-exile for forty years, the Basque Autonomous Government of *Euskadi* has collaborated with the diaspora communities via a policy of subsidies and grants, giving aid for Basque Center internal operating costs, and educational and cultural activities. Basque organizations abroad have been presented with computer communications equipment, audio visual materials with themes of the homeland such as sport, history, anthropology, tourism, cooking, etc. and audio tapes and printed materials for studying *Euskera*. The Basque Government is interested in utilizing the centers for promotion, development, and diffusion of the contemporary reality of the Basque Country. Particularly today, in an environment of continuous globalization and internationalization of modern societies, Basque communities can play the part of “stimulator for social, cultural, economic and political relations” (Declaration of Motives, Law 8/1994).

The Basque diaspora-homeland transnational networks began a period of stabilization with the establishment of homeland government. In the early years of the newly autonomous Basque Government, policy makers included returnees from political exile. The Service for Relations with the Basque Centers was established in the Ministry of Culture in 1984, and diaspora visits by Basque Government officials, in-

cluding the *Lehendakari* visiting New York in 1988, were received with great pride. What had previously existed were chains of transnational personal networks between individuals in New York and relatives in their hometowns. Now, there was an opportunity to create institutional ties between the *Euzko-Etxea* and the Basque Government.

The “Law of Relations with Basque Communities Outside the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country”, *Ley 8/1994*, was passed by the Basque Parliament in Vitoria-Gasteiz in May 1994. It signaled a new stage in the history of relations between the Autonomous Basque Government and Basque institutions abroad, and was described as being a means of repaying “our historic debt to Basques overseas and to the countries that welcomed them (Sainz de la Maza 1994:14).” This Law was presented as a “commitment that begins with recognition and gratitude towards the Basque Communities for their efforts and labors in the interest of the Basque cause” (President José Antonio Ardanza Garro introduction to Parliamentary debate on *Ley 8* as cited in Law of Relations with Basque Communities and Centers Outside the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, 1994:8). President Ardanza described the law as a starting point, which would mark a new direction in relations between the Basque Country and Basques and their Centers around the world (*ibid*: 9).

The Law provides for a Registry of Basque Centers, for which each center is required to record the names, birthplaces, ancestral homeland town names, languages spoken, and citizenships held by its members. Originally in the 1994 law, this was to be made a matter of public record, but following complaints regarding privacy and security from several countries, but especially the United States, this is now a private database of the Basque Government as per Decree 106/1996. Kutz Arrieta worked to obtain the personal information from *Euzko-Etxea* members in order to get the institution recognized and eligible to participate in Basque Government programs.

Article 1 of the Law stipulates a desire to preserve and reinforce links and to support and intensify relations between the Basque Government and homeland institutions, with the Basque communities and centers in the diaspora. The Law creates a legal framework and infrastructure for the grants and subsidies already provided to the diaspora since 1987. It encourages networks between Basques abroad with those in the Basque government and with various academic, cultural, economic, and religious institutions in *Euskal Herria*.

BENEFITS TO BASQUE ORGANIZATIONS

The possible benefits specifically given to centers include:

- A) Access to information of a public nature, with a social, cultural or economic content, prepared by the public administration of the Autonomous Community

of the Basque Country. Any Basque center that requests it will also receive the *Official Bulletin of the Basque Country* free of charge.

- B) The right to participation in different forms of expression of Basque homeland social, cultural and economic life, which contribute to the external diaspora projection of such.
- C) Identical treatment to that of the associations situated in the territory of the Basque Autonomous Community in regards to access to its cultural heritage, artifacts, and special collections.
- D) The right to ask the Basque Autonomous Community to participate in activities organized by a diaspora center to promote Basque culture.
- E) Basque center participation in programs, missions and delegations organized by Basque homeland institutions in the centers' territorial area.
- F) The right to request and receive advice on social, economic or labor matters in the Basque Country.
- G) The right to a supply of published and audiovisual material designed to facilitate the transmission of knowledge of Basque history, culture, language and social reality, for display and distribution among members of Basque communities.
- H) Collaboration in activities to spread the word of the situation of Basque communities through means of communication centered in the Autonomous Community, such as Basque Radio and Television, and the *Euskal Etxeak* journal.
- I) The right to be heard via the Advisory Council and to attend the Congress of Basque Communities. (Emilia Doyaga was selected to represent the United States in 1999.)
- J) The organization of courses to learn the Basque language (Article 8 section 1 of Ley 8/1994).

The *Euzko-Etxea* also qualifies to receive financial and other types of assistance that the homeland public administration might establish. It specifically mentions support to temporarily cover the operating costs of centers and maintaining and improving the infrastructure of the actual buildings, the promotion of activities and programs related to the homeland, and economic assistance for especially needy members (Article 8 section 3). The New York Eckford Street property has been enhanced with these monies, which were used to repair the front sidewalk, the roof, and renovate the kitchen appliances.

The “members of Basque communities” to whom the benefits and rights apply are defined as those resident abroad and their dependents. Those “who specifically request it shall enjoy the same political rights as those living in the Basque Country, if their last legal residence in Spain was in *Euskadi*, and provided they retain their Spanish nationality”. Only a few of the interviewees in the New York area had any intention to return permanently to the Basque Country. Ana Mari Oleaga explained, “I have some family and most of my friends are here now. I’ve been gone a long time and now I don’t think I could live there, especially in a small town. I am used to life in America, I love New York, and will stay here now.” Others, like Mari Carmen Aberasturi, agreed that they had built most of their adult lives in the United States and although they love the Basque Country and want to visit it often while they have good health, they would most likely stay in the U.S. They still retain the right to participate in politics, and even if staying in New York, are eligible to vote in Basque Country elections.

The rights of *Euzko-Etxea* registered members include access to Basque cultural heritage and libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural property and institu-



Dance instructor, Anna M. Aguirre, and Euskera irakaslea, Karlos Iturralde, have volunteered their skills to maintain Basque dance and language among the community in New York. Photograph 2002.

tions for the dissemination of culture. Language curricula are provided to Basque centers gratis so that members may study *Euskera* free of charge, and procedures have been established to obtain certificates of Basque language knowledge awarded by the Basque Government to those who qualify. The Basque Government promotes educational, cultural, and economic exchanges, such as the Gaztemundu program in the Basque Country. The University of the Basque Country, with three campuses in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Donostia-San Sebastián, and Leioa-Lejona recognizes those qualifications and transcripts awarded by other universities that are of a similar nature to the qualifications established by the University of the Basque Country. A Basque with a university degree from a SUNY college could apply to the University of the Basque Country for graduate work and would be accepted equally to homeland residents, and not as a foreigner.

The aging of the emigrant collectivities relates to the Basque Government's conscious attempt to utilize institutional relations in order to recreate a postmodern Basque diaspora identity. It has an interest in promoting the reality of today's Basque Country to its own diaspora so that it can also go forth and spread the word about tourism, culture, economic development and political autonomy. It is trying to promote a non-traditional profile that "one can be Basque in this way, or "one can be Basque in that way" (Garmendia 1997) rather than the stale definitions of older generations. It is attempting to create bonds that will update the exclusive historical definition to the homeland's current inclusive contemporary definition of "Basqueness".

While New York needs tangible materials in the form of books, tapes, videos, and teachers, the homeland needs a voice. According to Iñaki Aguirre, Secretary of Foreign Action, it wants the center's members to act as goodwill ambassadors for the Basque Country. It "wants the personal testimonies of diaspora Basques to spread the good news about *Euskal Herria* and its reality today" (I. Aguirre interview 2000). The Basque Government hopes to facilitate and participate in the creation of an Internet network of worldwide Basque interests, including medical, business, industrial, educational, and political interests. The idea is to establish a databank, and an exchange of information and exchange of opportunities for Basques, by Basques.

Since 1995, when the Basque Government financed the 'wiring' of the diaspora organizations, one can witness the profound developments in intercommunications. New York receives many requests for information from other NABO clubs and from Centers around the world. Information, invitations, Basque language lessons, and Basque website addresses are shared. Besides virtual communications, increased physical exchanges remain significant and the President of the Basque Autonomous Community, *Lehendakari* Juan José Ibarretxe, visited the New York *Euzko-Etxea* in April 2003, during his travels in the United States to speak at Harvard University, and to inaugurate a Basque trade office in Chicago.



GRANTS

In 2000, the financial resources of the *Euzko-Etxea* showed a beginning bank balance of \$12,135, and total income was \$15,193 (not counting the Basque Government grant) but expenses were \$22,688. The market value of the building was estimated at \$225,000. Basque Government grants have partially subsidized the purchase of a new kitchen stove and oven for the *Euzko-Etxea*. Thanks to additional grants, the society was able to purchase a badly needed new roof for the entire building; teachers purchased pedagogical materials for the Basque language classes; dance instructors Anna M. Aguirre and Itziar Albisu acquired new dance equipment and costumes for the boys; and Margie Abadia and the Jon Oñatibia Library committee installed new shelves for their collection. The 1997 grants supported a new heating system, the expansion of the *Aberri Eguna Journal*, and the enhancement of the club's Internet website. The Basque Government awarded a grant of \$14,300 for the 2001 projects and expenses of the New York Basque community, including Basque language classes given by Zuriñe Etxebarria, and Karlos Iturralde began giving classes in the fall of 2001

In the early 1990s, the Basque Government funded the purchase of computers with Internet hook-up for each of the Basque Centers around the world who had



Delegates to the 1999 Second World Congress of Basque Collectivities included representatives from twenty-one countries. Emilia Doyaga was selected as one of the six delegates to represent the United States. Here, the Congress is visiting the Diputación de Gipuzkoa in Donostia-San Sebastián.

registered with the Government of the Basque Autonomous Community. By 1996, the New York community had met the requirements and received their new computer. The September dinner, hosted by Dolores Badiola and John Landaburu, celebrated the new phase in relations with the Basque communities around the world.

The *Euzko-Etxea* decided to add another position to the Board of Directors, that of Contact Person with the Basque Government. Kutz Arrieta accepted the responsibility to apply for Basque Government grant monies for Basque Center special projects. In May 1997, before moving to Seattle, Arrieta, with Louie Larrinaga and Patxi Olabe created a website for the organization. This website has proven fundamental for those people surfing the Internet who coincidentally find the Basques in New York. In 2002, Joe Arralde remembers, “I couldn’t believe it when I did a search a Google for “Basque” and one of the choices was an “*Euzko-Etxea* of New York”. I was living here the whole time and didn’t know it even existed. I got up from my computer and called them right then to ask how to join.” Others have also mentioned that they found the organization by chance with an Internet search. The organization now will need to work on keeping these new members interested and providing them with activities that are fulfilling and worth attending.

CONCLUSION

The challenge for the community is one it has faced before; when they decided to build the 48 Cherry Street Social Building; when they recovered from its demolition and continued on at East Broadway; when they took the plunge to buy their own building and move to Brooklyn; and now again they have arrived at a crossroads. “I think we need something really drastic to save this from sinking,” said Focillas Etxebarria. “We are just here, not moving, you know, not swimming forward or backward, just staying above water.” Various Presidents, *Andrak*, and *Eusko Gazteak* tried to expand activities and increase membership, but the decline in participation has steadily continued. Making a decision to sell the Eckford Street property and invest



The Itzelak Dancers of the Euzko-Etxea of New York model their new costumes in front of the Basque Center on Eckford Street.

in the Basque International Cultural Center concept has immense economic hurdles and could potentially leave the organization with no meeting place, and, financially bankrupt. Even for the BICC leaders, this is not an option and they do not expect the *Euzko-Etxea* society to risk anything as an institution. The important question revolves around participation. Which is more essential and therefore needed first: an enthusiastic membership which collaborates actively and participates to produce an effective and self-perpetuating organization, or, a convenient and desirable locale which draws in more people, who then become enthusiastic and participatory and produce a self-perpetuating organization? Can the existing *Euzko-Etxea*, with its several traditional and conservative leaders, and numerous recent modern Basque immigrants, create different structures, feelings, and services for members that will encourage them to participate and keep the society purposeful?

The Society Studies in Educating

(08)

of Basque America: our Future

I remember Emilia Doyaga because we always walked past her mother's house on the way to church. She really saw the hunger I had for being Basque; I was missing that so much. And she took me to the library on 42nd street and showed me the number of books they had on Basque things. It was like I had found a treasure.

Julen Abio

Marcus Lee Hansen's 1938 "third-generation return hypothesis", proposed that the first generation to the host society, the emigrants themselves, established ethnic organizations, churches, perhaps schools, networks, etc., and promoted some sense of homeland cultural continuity. These institutions would be the repositories of their homeland cultures, symbols, and languages. Their children's generation then tended to revolt against their emigrant parents' traditional lifestyles, and wanting to evade ridicule and fit in and be like their peers in the society, would purposefully cast off their parents' beliefs and customs, including ethnic and religious affiliations. The grandchild, having no reason to feel inferior and already fitting in to the society, had a need to belong to something and ethnic uniqueness would be especially appealing. This third generation person then would seek his or her ethnic identity, which fulfilled the natural human need to belong and be recognized as a part of a group. However, what would happen if the 'repositories' and ethnic knowledge no longer exist, or, if the institutions become museums of culture rather than a place of living knowledge

and experienced culture? The Society of Basque Studies in America has worked for a quarter century to prevent this very scenario.

Professors Gloria Castresana Waid, Juan Mendizabal, and Emilia Doyaga collaborated in 1979 to form the first national organization to promote Basque studies, the Society of Basque Studies in America. Today, membership is open to all who are interested, and includes Basques and non-Basques, and academics and non-academics from around the world but mostly the United States. The Society of Basque Studies in America is a non-profit organization, founded in San Francisco, and is dedicated to the study and dissemination of Basque culture, tradition, customs and folklore.

By the mid 1980s, disagreements within the group's leadership regarding future objectives caused a split, with a separate group, the Basque-American Foundation, staying in California. The Society has continued and grown in membership and in significance of projects under the leadership of Emilia Doyaga, José Ramón Cengotitabengoa, Irene Aguirre, Andoni Aguirre, and Anna M. Aguirre. They initiated the international Basque Hall of Fame Awards in 1981, an exhibition of Basque sculptors to the Chicago Art Exhibit of 1984, the creation and production of the Basque National Sheepherder Monument in Reno, Nevada in 1989, and the *Trainera* Project of 1998. The Society of Basque Studies in America is also an active member of the North American Basque Organizations and maintains communications with thirty-three Basque institutions in the United States. Delegates attend NABO's three annual meetings and its annual summer convention. Doyaga and Cengotitabengoa were invited to seats on the University of Nevada, Reno, Center for Basque Studies Advisory Board, and they have worked to combine the Society's and the Center's similar goals and objectives of promoting Basque studies.

The Society publishes its own annual review, *Journal of the Society of Basque Studies in America*, and editors have included Leonard Bloom, Jeronima Echeverria, and John Ysursa. The *Journal* generally includes articles submitted by specialists from the United States, the Basque Country, and South American countries where there are large Basque immigrant populations, and there are occasional contributions from Basque studies specialists at institutions in other countries. The *Journal* is sent to the society's membership and to prestigious academic centers. It is a collection of articles covering various areas of Basque scholarship, including history, literature, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, art and other areas of related interest. As the official organ of the Society, it is the intention of the Board of Directors to publish the *Journal* on an annual basis, though it does not necessarily come out at the same time each year. The institution aims to gather and disseminate current knowledge and scholarship regarding Basques worldwide so that others may learn of the distinctive heritage, ancient language, customs and traditions. While many other homeland publications pursuing the same endeavor are to be found in Basque, French, and Spanish, this effort concentrates on disseminating information to an English-speaking audience.

THE SOCIETY'S LEADERSHIP

As has been demonstrated, the Basque institutions have often been led by a handful of faithful people devoted to promoting a general public understanding of the Basque Country and Basque issues. The Society of Basque Studies in America has experienced the same initiative and direction under the tutelage and administration of several people whose names are by now quite familiar. Emilia Doyaga's home doubles as the base of operations and her dining room table as the 'war room' for assorted Basque projects. Because her private residence is listed as the address of the Society, she also answers the front door on any given day at any given time, to find slightly confused new Basque immigrants looking for a 'Society'. Without exception, they have been invited into her home and welcomed, while she re-directs them to the *Euzko-Etxea* in Brooklyn or attempts to resolve their inquiries. Doyaga's lifetime commitment to education, as previously depicted, combined with her unselfish desire to promote Basque issues culminates in the works of the Society. She personally invites academics to submit articles to the *Journal* and she maintains contact with the leading intellectuals in the Basque Country. Vivian Zuluaga-Papp does not forget Doyaga's advocacy and inspiration and she remarked, "Emily always encourages people to do great things, you know? Here I am, forty years old with five children and she is always telling me that I can be a writer if I want to; that I can go back to college if I want to. She is a very important and influential person in the university world, I know, yet she always has time to help the little guy and goes out of her way for helping Basque people."

Irene Aguirre and Emilia Doyaga were intimate friends and first cousins through the Renteria family of Bakio, Bizkaia, and both were first generation born in the United States. They grew up together and shared many experiences; Irene even typed Emilia's Ph.D. dissertation for her. When the Society needed a permanent administrator, Aguirre was selected as the executive secretary, and served—unpaid—for nearly twenty years. She maintained the membership and mailing lists and attended to thousands of correspondence requests over the years. She volunteered countless hours to promote education regarding the Basque Country and Basque studies themes. Irene's husband, Andoni Achabal Aguirre, born in Manila to Martin and Julia Achabal Aguirre, served as the accountant, bookkeeper, and general financial consultant for the Society for seventeen years. This team dedicated their adult lives and the majority of their family life to Basque causes with the *Centro Vasco-Americano*, *Juventud Vasca*, the Basque Government-in-exile, *Andrak*, *Euzko-Etxea* of New York, the North American Basque Organizations, and the Society of Basque Studies in America. They promoted the Society's goals of educating Basques and non-Basques "with anyone who had more than ten seconds to listen," remembers former North American Basque Organizations President Pierre Etcharren. Angel Zuluaga met Andoni Aguirre in 1946 when Andoni tripped and fell on a New York sidewalk and started shouting in Basque. When Angel helped him and answered him in Euskera, Andoni abandoned his hurt knee and immediately started talking about the Basque Country



Irene Renteria and Andoni Aguirre met when both were employed in the 1940s at the Basque Delegation offices of the Basque Government-in-exile. They married in 1949 with Irene's sister Delfina, and Andoni's friend, Peter Aguirre (son of Valentín Aguirre) as their witnesses. Irene and Andoni Aguirre volunteered for the Society of Basque Studies in America from its founding, until their deaths, and both were inducted into the Basque Hall of Fame.

and invited Zuluaga to join the 48 Cherry Street *Centro Vasco*. He took every opportunity to create friendships between Basques.

Irene and Andoni raised their daughter, Anna, with the same values they had learned from their own parents. “Most of my very first memories are from the East Broadway *Centro Vasco*, and our home was a ‘Grand Central Station’ for Basques coming and going. I never knew anything else,” she said. Anna M. Aguirre’s parents have both passed away, and she has not missed a step in continuing their work for the Society. She produces the organization’s bulletin and manages the membership details. She also attends NABO meetings as a Delegate for the Society, or for the *Euzko-Etxea*, and has participated in NABO educational conference activities such as *Ikasi*, or Study. She has educated large numbers of youth at the *Euzko-Etxea* with years as the dance instructor for the *Itzelak* Dancers. Anna serves on the Board of Directors of the Basque International Cultural Center and is also responsible for that organization’s communications. None of these are paid employment, and like her parents and the others, she does not accept financial remuneration for all of this work. She answers numerous email, postal, and telephone inquiries to the Society about the Basques and energetically searches for answers to each of them.

José Ramón and Gema Cengotitabengoa, both immigrants from Bizkaia, lived in New York for three years before moving to Chicago, where they have lived since 1979, when the Society was founded. There is no Basque club in Chicago, but there are a few Basques who do maintain contact and organize infrequent dinners. “I have to keep in touch with other Basques in order to keep my batteries charged,” said José Ramón. Besides traveling often to the Basque Country on business, and maintaining daily contact through Internet news websites and emails to family and friends, they work tirelessly to promote Basque art and literature in the United States. José Ramón is not afraid of challenge and his educational and business life have taken him from the Basque Country to live in Belgium, England, Germany, and the United States. His idea of a ‘project’ tends to involve a massive international venture, and his skill in proposal management has resulted in two permanent monuments to Basques.

PROJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

The Society’s leaders have many things in common, including the desire to teach people about the Basques- especially the Basques themselves. In 1984, Andoni and Irene Aguirre, Emilia Doyaga, Gema and José Ramón Cengotitabengoa sponsored a tour of Basque tenor Valentín Aguirre (not related to the Valentín Aguirre of the Santa Lucia Hotel and Travel Agency), and pianist, José Gallastegui throughout the United States. They wanted to demonstrate another aspect of Basque culture that was not usually a part of Basque festival barbecue, dancing and sporting events. The classical voice and piano recitals were scheduled for Basque Centers on the west coast

and for many in the audiences, this was the first opportunity they had ever had to enjoy live Basque classical music. The Boise, Idaho Euzkaldunak Inc. hosted the performance at their Center and over two hundred people attended. Three Basque artists, Basterrechea, Mendiburu, and Larrea accompanied the tour.

In May 1984, the Society sponsored the exhibition of three Basque sculptors at the annual exhibit and symposium of the Art Institute of Chicago. “Nestor Basterrechea, Vicente Larrea, and Remigio Mendiburu were the first Basques to achieve this level of international recognition through this fantastic exhibit,” said Society President José Ramón Cengotitabengoa. Cengotitabengoa’s enthusiasm for their sculpture, together with the sculptors’ love for the Basque populations around the world, produced a synergism for a new project: a competition to create a work of public art for the Basques in the United States. Basterrechea’s family had lived in exile in Argentina for many years and he had a clear idea of what life away from Euskadi was like. Basterrechea eventually won the competition, and with the Society, envisioned the possibility of creating a national monument to the Basque people, and as the idea developed, they determined that Reno, Nevada would be the best place because of its geographic centrality to the Basque populations of the American west.

The Society is especially proud of its sponsorship of the National Monument to the Basque Shepherd in Reno, Nevada – a long overdue tribute to Basque pioneers as well as a symbol that reflects Basque character. The monument was dedicated in August 1989, after four years of planning, fundraising, design and production, and the artist’s foundry in Mexico completing the piece for transportation to Reno. Over 1500 Basques and non-Basques traveled from around the United States to attend the inauguration and celebration of the monument’s opening day, including New York’s Gabrielle Amestoy who had her brother’s name engraved on the memory wall.

José Ramón Cengotitabengoa directed this endeavor from Chicago with help from Carmelo Urza at the University of Nevada, Reno Basque Studies Program. The Society of Basque Studies in America sent informational bulletins and requests for donations to Basque Country institutions and Basque Centers of the United States. Hundreds responded, wishing to memorialize their family member’s years of working in the sheep industry. The central governments of France and Spain contributed nearly half of the funds necessary to complete the project, titled *Bakardade*, Solitude. The sculpture represents a shepherd carrying a young lamb by night and guided by the illumination of the moon. Below but near the monument is a memorial wall which names the donors for the project and all of the names of shepherders put forward by families who contributed funding. The post-modern symbol was controversial for traditional Basques, who did not see an immediate representation of a simplistic three-dimensional person, lamb and moon. However, today it is revered as one of the great projects of the Society of Basque Studies in America, and various generations of Basques go to see it during their visits to Reno.

AMERIKETATIK TRAINERA: THE FISHING BOAT FROM AMERICA

For the first time in Basque maritime history, and with the support of the Society, an eighteenth century traditional Basque fishing boat, *trainera*, was built in Maine, inaugurated in New York, and returned to the Basque Country as a gift of gratitude to the land of Basque heritage. The *trainera* was applauded and celebrated in the twenty-nine ports along the Basque coastline between Zierbana, Bizkaia and Baiona-Bayonne, Lapurdi. “Our world is changing at such a rapid pace, it is difficult to find time to renew or even to look back at some of our cherished traditions. And yet, in the year 1998, we witnessed the improbable. We saw the rebirth of an ancient Basque fishing vessel. First, as it was being constructed in Rockland, Maine, U.S.A., and then as it returned to the Basque Country, starting an adventure that resurrected the glory of a maritime tradition. The gift from the Basques of the Diaspora has been a gesture of gratitude, for having inherited the rewards sown by their Basque ancestors,” wrote Emilia Doyaga (Doyaga 1998:1).

President José Ramón Cengotitabengoa, and Xabier Agote, a researcher who works on the preservation and reconstruction of Basque vessels, collaborated on a unique project to reconstruct a boat -originally made at the shipyards of Mutiozabal de Orio- and then present it to the people and cultural institutions of the Basque Country. Cengotitabengoa had to educate the public, begin an international advertising campaign, and immediately raise \$75,000 in donations. “But you see that would *not* be an obstacle for José Ramón. He’s a visionary and one of those kinds of people that don’t see the hurdles they see the goal. And they work and work and work until they achieve it. When José Ramón gets an idea, everyone should just say “yes”, because one way or another he’s going to convince you in the end,” remarked friend Pete T. Cenarrusa. Cengotitabengoa and Emilia Doyaga traveled across the American west to the communities of Basques in Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and California. They flew to Buenos Aires to present and explain the project to the American Congress of Basque Centers and immediately the delegates from Santiago, Chile raised their hands and pledged one thousand dollars. The other funds were not so easily gathered but slowly, individuals, Basque Centers, Basque-owned businesses, and even two small islands, St. Pierre and Miquelon, where 2,500 people and descendants of Basque whalers are living in the north of Canada, gave generous contributions.

The Atlantic Challenge Foundation at Rockland, Maine constructed a replica of a traditional Basque fishing vessel of the 1750s – 1900s, which was then gifted from the Basques of the diaspora to the Basques of the seven provinces of the homeland. A traditional *trainera* was propelled by two sails and fourteen oars measuring thirty-six feet in length, six feet in width and three feet in depth. The *Ameriketatik Trainera* was on view at the South Street Seaport on May 31, 1998 and several volunteers from the Basque community, including Manny Zuluaga and Louie Larrinaga, manned the boat and gave a demonstration for the crowd. The *Itzelak* Dancers also performed to



The Society of Basque Studies in America initiated the Ameriketatik Trainera Project to build a traditional Basque style fishing boat and gift it to the Basque Country from Basques in the American communities. Here, Euzko-Etxea President Zachary Berhau on the right, and Manny Zuluaga, left, prepare the United States and Basque flags for the official Trainera inauguration and ceremony at the South Street Seaport in 1998.

honor this maritime aspect of Basque culture, and participants and the curious crowd enjoyed the Basque food and ethnic atmosphere on the pier.

The Society also participates in national and international conferences. In 1995, President José Ramón Cengotitabengoa was invited by the President of the Basque Autonomous Government to represent the Society at the First World Congress of Basque Collectivities, held in Vitoria-Gasteiz. In 1997, Emilia Doyaga and José Ramón Cengotitabengoa represented the Society at the American Basque Congress in Buenos Aires. Delegates from Basque communities in all of the Americas participated in both conferences to construct new networks of information and communications.

The Society's charter has no prohibition of political discussion or involvement. The members firmly believe in open discussion of all issues and do not believe it possible to separate politics from the Basque existence. The leaders argue, "It's not political to defend our reputation, we are just correcting the record," said Anna M. Aguirre. Doyaga frequently writes letters to *The New York Times* suggesting where they can obtain more accurate information and asking for more complete coverage

of Basque Country events. She said, "They never get the whole story. ETA is not 'the Basques', and 'the Basques' do not equate to ETA. There are so many impressive things happening in Basque society that I think we all need to demand that the media stop with the exclusive coverage of only violence." The Society's members see this as one of its meaningful objectives; to educate and demonstrate a better image of the reality of Basque society.

THE SOCIETY OF BASQUE STUDIES IN AMERICA BASQUE HALL OF FAME

Since the early 1980s, the Society has advocated the need and desire to recognize those people living and deceased who have worked diligently to promote Basque culture and identity, welfare, and/or history of the Basques in America. Following are the awardees and information as published by the Journal of the *Society for Basque Studies in America*:

**FIRST ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 11, 1981 MILFORD, CONNECTICUT**

José Antonio de Aguirre Lecube Lehendakari, Statesman and Author, 1904-1960

José Antonio de Aguirre Lecube, born in Bilbao, studied Law at the Universities of Deusto and Valladolid. In his youth he was known as a sportsman, a fine "pelota" player and an outstanding soccer player. After the creation of the Republic, he became the most outstanding leader of the Basque Parliamentary Group in the Republic Parliament, and, finally, President of the Autonomous Government of the Basque Country. Aguirre was living in exile in Paris at the outbreak of World War II. He told in his book *Escape via Berlin (De Guernica a Nueva York pasando por Berlin)*, the dramatic episodes of his Odyssey, fleeing from the Gestapo, which took him to Germany, to Sweden and to the United States where President Roosevelt granted him diplomatic refuge. While in the United States, he was a professor at Columbia University. At the invitation of the U.S. Department of State he attended the inaugural meeting of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945, as President of the Basque Government-in-exile. Aguirre sought to unify Basques and to preserve Basque heritage. So strong was his faith in his people and his understanding of freedom of choice, that he insisted, "The Government over which I preside serves Democracy. Let every one of you make use of his personal liberty to decide." His work on his book



"History of the Basques," commissioned by Columbia University, was interrupted by his untimely death. Such was the man we are honoring today.

Yon “Jon” Oñatibia Audela Musician, Professor and Author, 1911-1979

Educated in Zaragoza, Spain, as a lawyer, Yon Oñatibia left his native Oiarzun (Gipuzkoa) at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War to travel to New York (by way of Venezuela). Under his direction a presentation of Basque music and dances called EU-ZKADI was seen by large audiences throughout the United States, Canada, and Latin America. In 1954 he recorded "Folkways and Songs," a record of regional Basque songs and "txistu" music. From 1951 to 1963 he served as Delegate of the Basque Government-in-exile in New York. Beginning in 1963, until the time of his tragic death in an automobile accident, Yon Oñatibia was instrumental in teaching "Euskera," not only to Basques, but to foreign students as well. He gave classes on radio, and T.V., in newspapers, and in various academies in Spain, as well as at the University of Boise and the



The Basques of New York demonstrated their rowing skills with the 1998 inauguration of the Ameriketatik Trainera on the East River at the South Street Seaport.

University of Reno. He published famous, *Euskera irrati bidez*, a textbook which to date has had ten editions printed, and is currently used in Euzkadi and in the United States. Yon Oñatibia, indefatigable worker, composed numerous pieces for txistu, piano, organ and orchestra. This galvanic man of letters, music and songs of his Basque people will be remembered by Americans from Canada to Latin America for his exemplary contributions to the Basque culture and civilization.

Pedro Mir Pelotari and Father of Jai-Alai in America

Pedro Mir, born in Havana, Cuba, on June 29, 1910, played his first professional game at the age of 13 at the Cienfuegos Fronton in Cuba. He was playing at the Hialeah Fronton in Florida at the age of 14 and continued playing at the prominent Frontons in North and South America. By the age of 23 he was player-manager, matchmaker, chief judge, translator and the only Jai-Alai player-manager in the United States. In 1975, after 42 years of faithful and continuous service, he retired

from his position as player-manager and matchmaker. Pedro Mir is recognized as an outstanding *pelotari*, sportsman, and promoter of Jai-Alai in America. He has developed the game as well as the players. He is commended for making Jai-Alai known on this continent as a game of speed, grace and agility. His accolades come from fellow pelotaris both young and old, from Frontons such as Guernica, Marquina, and Mexico, and from organizations such as the U.S. Amateur Jai-Alai Association, the City of Coral Gables, and the Jai-Alai Association of America. "My aim," says Mr. Mir, "is to keep Jai-Alai honest, authentic and beautiful." Pedro Mir, known as Mr. Jai-Alai, is loved and respected by fans, pelotaris and managers. Jai-Alai in America has been touched by the hand of Pedro Mir.

SECOND ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 10, 1982 MILFORD, CONNECTICUT

Valentín Aguirre Founding Father of the New York Basque Center, 1871-1953

Valentín Aguirre, born on Monte Sollube near Busturia, Biscay, left his home at the age of 10, when his father died. As a child he started to work on Spanish ships making trips to Cuba, South America and New York ports. He settled in New York in 1895 working as a stoker on tugboats and on the Staten Island Ferry. He even took a Civil Service exam in 1897, in English, passed it and qualified to work on the New York City boats. He was sent by a friend to ask for Benita Orbe's hand in marriage, but when he saw the eighteen year old beauty, he decided to marry her himself. They were married in 1901. They had eight children: Lucy, Antonia, Thomas, John, Valentina, Anita, Peter and Mary.

About 1905, Valentín, with five other Basque men would meet in the basement of a house on Water Street in the downtown area of New York and, from the oral history of our Basque elders, we learn that they initiated the Basque Center which was formalized by a charter of thirteen Basques in 1913. The meeting place was changed to Cherry Street. The charter was drafted by Fiorello La Guardia, a young attorney who later became Mayor of New York. Valentín and Benita (who was an exceptionally good cook) operated a boarding house on Cherry Street. Soon Valentín was helping Basque immigrants with travel arrangements. His reputation became known in the American West, Latin America, and in the Basque Country. It wasn't long before he moved to 82 Bank Street where he combined the Santa Lucia Hotel with the Valentín Aguirre Travel Agency and the renowned Jai Alai Restaurant. He made contacts with shipping and travel agents in all parts of the world where Basques traveled. He knew about job opportunities and made arrangements for Basques who were looking for

work. Virtually every Old World Basque who was traveling to the West Coast ate a good meal and spent comfortable nights at Valentín's. To this day the people in the West remember how he made travel arrangements for them by pinning instructions on the txapela or lapel. Valentín Aguirre was the guide and support of the center, which is today Euzko Etxea of New York. Basques in all of the Americas owe a debt of gratitude to Valentín for extending his hand when they needed help in an alien world.

José Mari Iparraguirre **Poet, Musician and Composer of Gernika'ko Arbola**

José Mari Iparraguirre, often called "the last of the Basque bards," was born in 1820 in the small village of Villareal de Urrechua, (Gipuzkoa), where his parents owned a pastry shop. At an early age he studied Latin, perhaps with an intent to become a priest. Later he studied in Vitoria and Madrid, but in 1833 he took up arms to support the Carlists at the outbreak of the first Civil War. Inspired by the sound of a guitar, Iparraguirre soon began to learn to play the instrument and compose notes and songs for it. After the war, he traveled abroad to France, Italy, and England. In 1851, he returned to Spain to devote his full attention to music as an expression of the patriotic spirit of his countrymen. Two years later at the Café San Luis he made public for the first time, the "Gernikako Arbola" which won immediate acceptance and popularity by all Basques as their national hymn of independence and freedom. Because of widespread political turmoil in Spain during the second Carlists War, Iparraguirre emigrated to Uruguay in 1859, where he married María Angeles Querejeta of Gipuzkoa. They had eight children. In South America, he continued to write songs and verses for his music, all of which paid homage to Euskal Herria as well as to Spain. His themes convey the ideas of universality, of fraternity, and of human co-existence. Sixty-one years after his birth, Iparraguirre died in 1881 in Itxaso, near his native town. In 1890 a large statue was erected in his memory at Villareal, and his guitar is protected under glass at the "Casa de Juntas" in Guernica.

Juan Estanislau Maiztegui (Piston) **Sportsman and Pelotari**

Juan Estanislau Maiztegui (Piston) was born on December 17, 1912 in Motrico, Gipuzkoa. He made his first professional appearance in Madrid at the age of 9. Since then his outstanding performance as a pelotari is documented in the frontons of Cienfuegos, Barcelona, Madrid, Mexico, New Orleans, New York, Havana and Miami. His record is exceptional; he was a professional pelotari for 40 years; a star Pelotari for 30 years; and a "Primer Delantero" of the World for 20 years. For 18 consecutive years he starred in the Jai Alai Fronton of Havana. where he was honored on the day he played his 1000th game. Piston retired in 1955, having play 1225 consecutive games in the

same Fronton, a record without precedent! Jai Alai games at that time were partidos as played in Euzkadi. They required much greater endurance and skill. He has received many honors but the greatest was in August 1966, in a homage offered by his hometown; he was declared "Favorite Son of Motrico" by the Town Council. At the present time he is attending the World Championship Competition of Pelota Vasca in Mexico as a Representative of the International Federation of Pelota and President of the Amateur Association of Jai Alai in the U.S. Pist6n is one of the greatest pelotarís of the World.

THIRD ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 29, 1983 QUEENS, NEW YORK
70TH ANNIVERSARY OF EUZKO-ETXEA OF NEW YORK

José Altuna (Guiputz) **Officer and Member of the Original Basque Center of New York, 1892-1974**

One of the unsung heroes of the New York Basque Center is José Altuna, affectionately called "Guiputz" because he had come from Guipuzkoa. For several decades he filled the post of Collector of dues for Centro Vasco Americano of New York, visiting each member personally, making each visit a social occasion while collecting dues, giving news of the Basque community, keeping accurate accounts, and filling the coffers of the Basque Center. It was a thankless task, and not until he retired was he recognized as the key to Centro Vasco's financial success. Guiputz was an intense, lean and wiry man whose concern for the Basque Community took him to visits with the sick in their homes and in hospitals in all the boroughs of New York, Long Island and surrounding areas. Born in Mondragon, Guipuzkoa on September 29, 1892 (one of ten children) he started working as a young lad in a "charcuteria" (a pork sausage store) in Bilbao. Before he was 18, he met and fell in love with Teresa Urquidi of Marquina, who was working at the Carmelite Convent, also in Bilbao.

In 1910, José decided to come to America, promising Teresa that he would work hard, save his money and send for her so that they could get married in the promised land. In spite of her mother's insistence that an aunt accompany Teresa, José, who was a man of his word, made good his promise. They were married in New York at the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe on 14th Street, soon after she arrived. They had ten children, nine still living: María, Juanita, Nicolas, Laureano, Juan, Joseph, Teresa, Lucy and Mercedes. Besides being an assiduous dues-collector, José's claim to fame is that he was one of the original thirteen founding fathers of the original Basque Center of New York. A special note of recognition and gratitude is due Teresa Urquidi, an extraordinarily energetic woman she raised her nine children with such

competence that her husband was able to hold a job with the New York transportation system for over fifty years and to devote his time to Centro Vasco. It was a daily routine for Guiputz to visit a member of the Center after work each day. His children remember that on Saturday morning he would treat them to the local movie theater where the admission was only a nickel. On Sundays, it was not unusual to see him with Teresa and the children visiting members and collecting dues. José Altuna is awarded a special place on the Basque Honor Roll: he performed an unrewarding labor of love, daily and persistently. He made it possible for the Basques to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Euzko-Etxea of New York in the year 1983.

Pete T. Cenarrusa **Statesman, Public Servant, and Secretary of State of Idaho,** **1917**

Born in Carey, Idaho on December 16, 1917 to Basque parents from Bizkaia. His father, Joe Cenarruzabeitia, came from Muditibar and his mother, Ramona Gardoqui, came from Guernica. Pete T. Cenarrusa, one of five children, learned the Basque language at home. Pete speaks Basque fluently today. His father, first a sheepherder, became a sheep ranch owner. Pete, today, runs that same ranch which his father started 70 years ago. Cenarrusa graduated from the University of Idaho. An outstanding athlete, he was a member of the first University of Idaho National Collegiate championship boxing team in 1940 and a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity. He taught at the local high schools before enlisting as a Marine fighter pilot in World War II. He flew Corsairs and later Cougars. He retired with the rank of Major after the War. In 1974, he married Freda Coates; they have one son, Joe Cenarrusa, a flyer and successful businessman.

Peter Cenarrusa was elected to the Idaho Legislature in 1950 as State Representative and served nine consecutive biennial terms, three of them as Speaker of the House of Representatives. On May 1, 1967, he was appointed as Secretary of State. He served out that four-year term and has been elected to four additional four-year terms. He has served as Secretary of State longer than any other same office holder in Idaho's history. During the past two State-wide elections for Secretary of State in 1978 and 1982, he received more votes than any other candidate for State-wide election. During his public life he has built a reputation for fairness and sincerity; Cenarrusa has become a household name in Idaho. Cenarrusa is a member of the Boise Euzkaldunak Basque organization. During the turbulent Franco time, he traveled extensively in Europe and South America to gain support for the Basque people. He wrote a strongly worded Resolution to Congress and engineered its unanimous passage by the Idaho Legislature in 1970 during Franco's suppression of the Basques in Spain. This resolution pressed for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of Man and for a total general Amnesty to be extended to all Basques and Spaniards imprisoned by Franco for their political and social activities.

Mr. Cenarrusa has been a member of the Human Rights Commission of Idaho since 1970, a member of the Board of Directors of Sacred Heart Catholic School Foundation, Board Member of the American Cancer Society and the Elks. In addition to his amazing record as a Public Servant, Peter has been awarded some unusual honors: Idaho Athletic Hall of Fame, Idaho Republican Administrator Hall of Fame, Idaho Division of Aeronautics award for flying over a quarter of a century and more than two million miles without any accident. Pete has filled many roles, each with integrity and sincerity. He is honored for providing a model for Basques and non-Basques to emulate.

Father Francisco de Madina Internationally Celebrated Musician and Composer, 1907-1972

Father Francisco de Madina was born Oñate on January 29, 1907 and died on June 30, 1972. From childhood he studied music and composition in Oñate, and later in Burgos, where he also studied philosophy and theology in a seminary. He was ordained a priest in 1929, and in 1931 was sent to Buenos Aires, Argentina. There he continued his musical studies and organized the celebrated chorus known as "Lagun Onak". Father Madina remained in Argentina until 1958 during which time he composed many compositions for orchestra and voice, which were recorded by outstanding soloists, including the eminent harpist, Nicanor Zableta. He was awarded special recognition for several Christmas songs. His last years in Argentina were spent as Rector of the "Colegio Begrano del Salta" in the northern part of the country. After leaving Argentina, he came to Albany, New York, on a musical grant. During his residence there, he wrote an oratory called ARANTZAZU, taking for its libretto parts of a work written by Father Salvador Mitxelena. The oratory was first performed at the University of Oñate, and then in San Sebastian and Bilbao. During a three-year sojourn in Oñate, Father Madina completed another work called ONATI, which was an encomium to his native city. Following the success of his writings in Euzkadi, Father Madina decided to return again to the United States. In New York he completed two important compositions for guitar and orchestra called Concierto Vasco and CONCIERTO ANDALUZ. The former was premiered in 1970 in San Francisco by the orchestra of that city, which was led by Arthur Fiedler, and was presented afterwards by other prominent orchestras throughout the country. The latter composition was premiered in Hawaii, and later at "Wolf Trap" in Washington, D.C. by the noted Andre Kostelanetz and the National Symphony Orchestra. In addition to hearing both of these "concert" in the locations mentioned, "Town Hall", "Lincoln Center," and "Hunter College" have also been centers for the presentation of several of Father Madina's compositions. In addition, Father Madina wrote studies on Basque music, recorded works for Phillips and other studios in Spain. On a social level, he became very active in Basque functions in New York and elsewhere. One of his closest friends was the Lehendakari Aguirre. Besides his musical achievements, Father Madina served as a commentator on "Voice of America" broadcasts in Art and Music. We celebrate Father Madina's contributions to

Basque culture through his incontrovertible success as a composer of international reputation.

FOURTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 13, 1984 ELKO, NEVADA

Pedro Altube **Father of Basques in the American West**

Pedro Altube was born in the small village of Oñate in the Spanish Basque Province of Gipuzkoa. At the age of 18, he sailed from Bilbao to Buenos Aires to join his brothers. Five years after, Pedro left to join in the California Gold Rush. Soon after, with his brother Bernardo, he ran a dairy in San Mateo and it was here that Pedro was nicknamed "Palo Alto" probably in deference to his 6'8" stature. Five years later, Pedro established "Altube & Co." in Santa Barbara County and ran cattle on the Rancho La Laguna. After suffering tremendous losses from the severe floods and drought that destroyed the livestock industry, Pedro joined Bernardo and purchased 3,000 head of cattle in Mexico and drove them north. In the Spring of 1871, they arrived in Independence Valley where they found their "Spanish Ranch." The Altube brothers established their empire when they were in their forties. They built a thriving cattle kingdom, but on the disastrous winter of 1889-1890 they were wiped out. By then, they were in their sixties. Pedro, with characteristic determination, convinced Bernardo to start again. "God took away from us, but God will give it back to us. We will do better the second time and in a few years we will be worth a million pesos." They did just that. Pedro and his wife, Marie, had seven daughters -- four of whom lived to maturity. In August 1905 Pedro Altube died. He always managed to keep ties with his family in Euzkadi, Buenos Aires and in the United States. His descendants take great pride in their inheritance; Carol Hovey (Pedro's descendent) has just published a book tracing the Altubes as they journeyed from the Pyrenees to the Pampas to the Pacific Coast; George Alvisio-Altube (Bernardo's descendent) is presently researching the Altube family in Buenos Aires.

Domingo Ansotegui **Self-Taught Musician of Oinkari Basque Dancers,** **1913-1984**

Domingo Ansotegui was born on a ranch at McDermitt, Nevada on June 23, 1913. His parents, Santiago "Txarrdio" Ansotegui and Gregoria Gabica had come from the Basque country for a better life. Domingo's father got his nickname as a young man

because he was an outstanding woodchopper and weight lifter. Domingo, on the other hand, was a sickly child. An operation in infancy caused him great discomfort all his life, but he never allowed his handicap to deter him from leading an active and productive life. After grade school, he was offered a choice: high school or sheepherding. He chose sheepherding! He was only fourteen at the time, but he continued as a shepherd for nine years. It was a lonely life and to entertain himself he played the button accordion. This self-taught musician was soon composing jotas and *porru saldas*. Only later in life did he take a few accordion and drum lessons. Sometime around 1948 the Basque community realized the importance of preserving Basque traditions and started teaching Basque songs and dances to children and young adults. Out of this effort the Boise performance of the "Song of Basque" was created. Domingo was one of the musicians for this event. Domingo, in spite of his handicap, served in the U.S. Air Force, receiving an honorable discharge and a medal of honor. In 1950 he married Dorothy Inchausti. They produced five children: Bonnie, Christi, Gina, Dan and Toni. Domingo, his children and grandchildren became loyal members of the Oinkari Basque Dancers. Although he received many honors, he remained a modest man, always going "that extra mile" for family and friends. His name is synonymous with the Oinkari Basque Dancers.

Dominique Laxalt **Pioneer Spirit of Basque Shepherders in America,** **1887-1971**

"These were then men of leather and bronze who had been rich as barons one day and broke and working for wages next, who had ridden big and powerful horses, and who had met in the lonely desert and talked a while, hunkering over a sagebrush fire and a blackened coffeepot, and, even though they had battled with life, they had learned to accept it, because they had learned first to bow their heads to the winter blizzards and the desert sun. And my father was one of them." Sweet Promised Land by Robert Laxalt, Harper and Row, 1957. Dominique Laxalt in his lifetime became the legendary prototype of the Basque immigrant who came to the American West in the great migration of the early 1900s. Born in the Basque province of Zuberoa (Soule) France, Dominique was the youngest of nine children. As a youth of 18, he joined two brothers in the United States. He worked first as a ranch hand, then a wild horse breaker in remote deserts of northwestern Nevada. During this period of his life, a western historian wrote, 'Dominique Laxalt was a dark, arrow straight young man ... a superb horseman ... who was loved by everyone.' Dominique became a shepherd. Working for sheep, instead of wages, he built his own band of sheep. He and his partners formed the massive Allied Land and Livestock Co., which owned hundreds of miles of grazing land in Nevada and California. In 1921, Dominique met and married Therese Alpetche who was born in Basse-Navarre, France. Soon after their marriage, disaster struck. The Allied operation went broke in the livestock depression of the

1920s. Dominique and Therese bought a small Basque hotel in Carson City. When the hotel prospered, Dominique went back into the sheep business. Therese bore the responsibility of raising six children -- all to become distinguished! The eldest son, Paul, an attorney, served first as Lt. Governor and the Governor of Nevada. He is now a powerful United States Senator. The second son, Robert, is a distinguished author whose works have been published in a number of countries. Two other sons, John and Peter, are attorneys. The eldest daughter, Suzanne, is a retired nun who is active in Las Vegas community affairs and one of the organizers of the Las Vegas Basque Festival. Marie, is a schoolteacher in California. Dominique Laxalt, the tall, quiet man who however wanted to be a legend is now placed in the Basque Hall of Fame. His wife, Therese, shares the honors with him.

FIFTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 13, 1985 BOISE, IDAHO

Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea **Mentor and Teacher of the Boise Basque Dancers, 1908-1998**

The first woman to be enrolled in the Basque Hall of Fame is Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea, a native of Boise. The contributions of Basque women in the development of this continent have yet to be recognized. Juanita, therefore, serves as a first step in making up for the oversight. Juanita first learned to dance at the Basque boarding houses at the age of twelve. The experience made an indelible impression, for it was here that she conceived the idea of starting "jota classes." After graduation from St. Teresa's Academy she worked in Basque boarding houses and local department stores until she studied beauty culture. Besides working as a beautician for 46 years, she managed many roles: wife to Rufino, mother to Joanne, housekeeper, cook and bottle washer. At the same time Juanita was teaching both children and adults the dances of the Basques. The "jota classes" developed into a genuine passion, and from that small beginning she became Chair of two great productions: "Song of the Basques" and, "Basque Festival."

At the Oinkari Basque Dancers' 25th Reunion, young and old recognized her as mentor and role model. She was honored for her "love and devotion." As a charter member of Euzkaldunak of Boise, she was instrumental in the founding and development of the organization. Also, she was a delegate to N.A.B.O. This little woman, with her extraordinary bright personality, enthusiasm and energy has created an exciting internal life in the Basque community of Boise--she leaves a rich legacy to the coming generations.

John Bastida

Founding Father of the Boise Basque Center, 1920

A bad beginning often makes for a good ending. When Ramón and Petra sent their Boise born five-year-old son, John, to the first grade, he spoke fluent Basque, but not a word of English. He failed the first grade! After two years in the first grade and a series of fights defending himself with a much dented lard "lunch" pail labeled "Red Rose," he learned English and steeled himself for the oncoming hard years.

John's father had bought a farm and an interest in a sheep company where John learned very early about life in the mountains with camp tenders and herders. Unfortunately, his mother died when John was six years old. When his father sold his farm and his share of the sheep business in order to return to the Basque country, the local Basque mothers persuaded him to leave John and his younger sister in Boise to be cared for by friends and relatives. After his father returned from the Basque country and after John graduated from high school, he continued working for his father. During World War II he joined the Corp of Engineers and served in Australia and New Guinea building airports, docks and roads. In 1945, after marrying Betty and getting a discharge as Captain, he returned to Boise and started a dirt-moving construction business in which he was engaged for 17 years. He served in a variety of public offices: Ada County Commissioner, Ada County Clerk of Courts, N.A.B.O. delegate, numerous Governor's Task Forces, etc. It was in the year 1948 that a group of friends met to find "Gurea-Echea," a place of our own in Boise. After many heated discussions, a lot was purchased from the Uberuaga family on 6th and Grover Street--the present location of the Boise Basque Center. John was involved in every arduous phase, from raising money to actual physical work in excavation and even donating the use of his own equipment. Today, "Gurea-Echea," is the Euzkaldunak, Inc., of Boise. John was elected President of Euzkaldunak four times--a recognition by the Boise Basques of John's contribution!

John B. Archabal

Outstanding Sheepman of the American West, 1873-1945

One of the stories they tell of John Archabal reveals the nature of the man. It seems that after he made his fortune as a sheep man, he would drive to his barber in a beautiful Buick touring car. "Do you realize how many haircuts I would have to give for the rest of my life and I still couldn't afford that car?" said the barber. "Take the car and in return give me a lifetime of your services," answered Archabal. The stunned barber agreed. He became the new owner of the car and John enjoyed a lifetime of free haircuts given with special care and attention.

John Archabal was adolescent when he came to America from the Basque Country. He was a poor youth coming to Boise for better opportunities. Unfortunately the steamer on which he was making the trip across the Atlantic met with disaster; 25 people drowned, but he was saved. The vessel that picked him up kept him at sea for 36 months before he got off at Galveston, Texas. With no clothes, except those on his back, and broke, he headed for Boise. But by mistake he ended up in San Francisco, California, where he stayed until he contacted someone in Boise who sent him money for the trip to Boise. He was then 20 years old and he worked as a ranch hand and shepherd until he could buy interest in a sheep business. By his early forties he had purchased the entire ranch and in good years could count 30,000 sheep on his ranch. He married Benita Aldecoa and had 6 children: Hazel, John, Matilda, Fidel, Juanita, and Daniel.

In 1929, he originated the Shepherders Ball, which was held every year till 1950. It was an extraordinary fund raising event that made possible generous donations to the Red Cross, Children's Home, hospitals and other organizations. Five years after John's death in 1945, John's son-in-law, Zenon Izaguirre, announced that the Ball would be discontinued as it has "served its purpose." A great tradition had come to an end. John Archabal, humanitarian and outstanding sheepman, serves as a monument for Basque Shepherders who were so important to the well-being of this nation.

SIXTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 12, 1986 BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

Father Jean-Pierre Cachenaut Spiritual Mentor to Basques in America

Jean-Pierre Cachenaut was born in Oyhenartea, Iholdy, France on August 3, 1939. His father served as mayor of Iholdy from 1957 to 1966. Young Jean-Pierre was educated in Hasparren, Dax and at the "Grand Seminère." In December 1965 he was ordained a priest at St. Palais. Before coming to the United States in 1977, he served for many years as village priest at St. Etienne de Baigorry and Anglet (near Baiona). The U.S. Catholic Conference, under the leadership of Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua of Pittsburgh, sponsors Basque priests who will serve in this country. Father Cachenaut was one of these selected priests. Immediately upon his arrival, he became a true spiritual mentor to the Basques in the United States. His ability to uplift, to give hope and to ease suffering has been recognized and celebrated. Many times he traveled grueling distances from state to state meeting impossible deadlines and crises. Besides his daily chores and responsibilities, he always found time- to visit the sick and

needy in rest homes and hospitals where ever he went. Basque Centers in all parts of the country insisted on his presence at their major events. Father Cachenaut must now return to the country insisted on his presence at their major events. Father Cachenaut must now return to France. The Kern County Basque is trying to adjust to the idea that he will not be with them at Easter May Festival, the Anniversary of the Handball Court in November, Christmas Eve, and other important events. His has been a genuine commitment and he will be missed in America. He holds a unique place in the Basque Hall of Fame.

Joe Garat

Southern California Basque Rancher, 1890-1951

Joe Garat was born on September 2, 1890 in Ramona, San Diego County, California. He attended school in San Francisco and Business College near Riverside. During World War 1, he was involved in the construction of March Air Force Base at Riverside. Like many Basques in the western part of the United States, he went into sheep business. Especially during the two World Wars, when it was difficult to find competent sheepmen, Joe Garat found ingenious ways of bringing in desperately needed farm hands and shepherders from the Basque Country. He is honored for having taught the sheep business to so many and for encouraging the people he employed to buy land and animals. He was instrumental in helping to develop a vast agricultural area, now know as the "Inland Empire." As a man of vision, he was creative in his ability to incorporate modem techniques in the old business of sheep raising. In addition, he served as judge at local affairs and was one of the first members of the important "California Wool Growers Association" which has headquarters in San Francisco. Joe died on November 23, 1951. His wife, Juanita who still lives in Riverside, will accept his award, which he earned as a pioneer sheepman of Riverside County, California.

Thomas Iribarren

Pioneer Sheepman of the San Joaquin Valley, 1902

Thomas Iribarren was born on July 31, 1902 in Arizcun, Navarra, Spain. He was the fourth of nine children. As a youth he would rather milk sheep than cows. When he was eighteen years old, he came to the United States on the ship "Camarima." Because the ship was in such a state of disrepair, the journey lasted two months. Consequently, he missed the lambing season for which he had been hired. He was out of a job, but fortunately, he was then hired by the only person he ever worked for, Francisco Aramberry. Because Tom was assiduous, responsible and honest, Aramberry set him up in business by giving him one-third of a half business. Thomas Iribarren was grateful to his mentor and learned everything about the sheep business

from him. When Aramberry died, Thomas developed his own business--successfully! He sold his business just before marrying Marie Jeanne Eyherabide. He took his bride to Spain to meet his family and to live there. But again, events changed the course of his life. The Spanish Civil War broke out within a month. Tom returned to the United States and for the next thirty years dedicated his life to being a sheepman. There were many dry years, which were so disastrous that less persistent sheepmen gave up. Because the development of the sheep business was of major economic importance to the United States and because Thomas Iribarren was a pioneer sheep grower of San Joaquin Valley, he is recognized and honored.

Frank Maitia, Sr. Founding of Kern County Basque Club, 1913

Frank Maitia was born in 1913 in St. Jean de Port, came to America from France as a teenager. As was the custom among the Basque immigrants at that time, he became a shepherd. Later, during World War H, he worked as an industrial mechanic. He fate changed when he married Louise Amestoy, a hotel-restaurant owner's daughter. In a short time, this hard-working young man was managing his father-in-law's Amestoy Hotel and Restaurant. Three years later he opened the Basque Cafe across the street. He only child, Frank Maitia, Jr. would work as "host and cashier and cleared tables and played the accordion and danced for customers." After several ventures, some profitable and some not, the Maitia's built their present restaurant in 1980. Frank Maitia, Sr. is honored not only because here presents the talent and skills of Basque restaurateurs, but also because he is one of the founding fathers of the Kern County Basque Club. Besides knowing how to give excellent service and supporting the Basque Center, this energetic, proud and alert member of the Basque community has contributed to Basque identity. We are fortunate to have our 1986 Basque Hall of Fame at his beautiful restaurant.

SEVENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
NOVEMBER 27, 1987 MIAMI, FLORIDA

Juan Vizcaíno Lacoza First Cartographer of Americas, 1457-1510

Juan "Vizcaíno" Lacoza, sometimes known as Lakotza or LaCosa, played a key role in the discovery and exploration of the Americas during the years 1492-1510. This remarkable cartographer, cosmographer, mariner and author of the first map of

America, was the owner of the caravel "Santa María." He was Columbus' pilot on the first two cross-Atlantic voyages. Most historians believe he was born in Santofia, which was then part of the Basque region. Lacoza was about 35 when he sailed with Columbus in 1492. He was tall and strong, a man of few words, a keen observer, and an assiduous note taker. He crew, for the first trip, was mostly Basque. Lacoza was known as the best pilot of western seas and Queen Isabel preferred him "because I believe that he probably knows more."

Unfortunately, after landing in the New World, the "Santa María" ran aground and had to be abandoned. Forty Basque seamen were left to form the first European colony in America. The episode ended sadly, for when Columbus and Lacoza returned, all 40 were dead, apparently killed by Indians. On subsequent voyages, Lacoza was the first to explore large areas of the American continent. Because he was the first to set foot on the mainland, he is considered by some historians to be the true discoverer of the American mainland. His seventh voyage, which was to Cartagena, was a disaster. In an effort to save a fellow mariner, he was killed by Indians. In that period of 18 years, he explored a great part of the continent than all the other explorers combined. His famous *Mapa Mundi* is the first known American map. Lacoza is honored for his extraordinary contributions and exploration of the New World.

Jesús "Chucho" Larranga Model Pelotari, 1928

Chucho, exemplary pelotari, is a model for the Basque Community. His family originates from the province of Gipuzkoa and probably he would be living there today, if he hadn't shown a talent for "pelota." At the age of sixteen, he was playing professionally in the fronton of the Canary Islands. It was there that he experienced such an unusual success, that the trajectory of his career was set. He remembers that there were three categories and he was placed in second. He won the second, moved to the first and won again without losing a single match. It was an extraordinary feat for such a young player. He had already made his debut in the Fronton Novedades of Barcelona and by the age of 19 he had played in the best frontons of Europe. He moved on to Mexico, Miami, Havana, back to Spain and to France. During thirty years of playing, he won a record number of championships. Among his trophies is the coveted "Martel" Cup of France. His athletic record is impressive, and so is his record as a human being. Although he has been honored by ex-president of Mexico, Miguel Alemán and he has received the Gold Sports Medal of the Spanish Federation and the Spanish government, he remains a generous, unassuming humanitarian who takes part in charitable causes for the needy and disadvantaged all over the world. His retirement from *Jai-alai* prompted a series of memorable farewell ceremonies in Durango, Marquina, Azpeitia and Urumea. He is honored for his model comportment as an athlete and humanitarian.

Sol Rosenkranz

Physical Therapist of Basque Athletes, 1919

Among Basque pelotaris, the world of human healing and tenderness has one champion--Sol Rosenkranz. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Sol aspired to become a doctor, but instead, the Depression forced him to learn linotyping and the printing trade, as did his brother before him. However, his interests were in helping and healing the sick. Leaving New York, Sol traveled to Miami with a friend who later became a naturopath and chiropractor. While assisting his friend, Sol learned the art of restoring health to his "victims" or sufferers as he jocularly calls those in pain, his credo is "Gently where best and firmly where needed." Jai-alai players tell many stories about Sol's art of healing. The legendary Churruca, claims that he had been told that he would never be able to play again, after suffering a serious injury to his right arm. He took a plane out of Spain to Miami and "Sol fixed me right up," says Churruca who continued to play his beloved sport. Sol, a soft-spoken eloquent man, has a solid knowledge of anatomy and physiology but in addition, he has developed his own methods to remedy ailments. In response to reporter's query, Sol remarked, "Not only do their injuries hurt, but I try out things to heal them that were never tried out before Only these powerful, stoic Basques could tolerate this kind of nonsense .. or torture! We honor this wise and learned "Solomon" for his moral strength, honesty and dedication to rehabilitate the infirm, to help the helpless, and to cure the incurable.

Juan Saizarbitoria

Spirit of Basque Restauranters, 1909

Juanito, as he is known to all, was born in Mutriku, Gipuzkoa, and might have loved peacefully as a cooper and mason if he had not been caught up in the Spanish Civil War. Having fought on the losing side, he had to abandon his pregnant wife and escape to France where he managed to survive, selling pine trees. When World War 11 broke out, Juanito decided to desert. With his small savings, he bought a bicycle, raced 200 kilometers to Bordeaux and begged Cuban Consul to send him to Cuba where his brother-in-law was playing jai-alai. An arrangement was made and Juanito sailed to Cuba as a pelotari extraordinaire. Needless to say, Juanito never played at the Havana fronton, but he did get a job as a busboy at the Centro Vasco Sports Club. It was here that he started making stews like his mother used to make and soon his culinary "inventions" became well-known. After several unsuccessful attempts, he was able to bring his wife, Carmen, and his yet unseen son, Juanitocho, to Cuba. Juanito's Centro Vasco Restaurant on Prado and Malecón Streets was a booming business, but Juanito wanted a more rural setting. Against all advice, he built and opened his famous Centro Vasco Restaurant in the Vedado section of Havana. Even today, this restaurant is a legend in Havana, although it

lacks the exquisite cuisine, the attention to details and most of a, the personality of the New Havana section of Miami. Juanito, with his humor and boundless energy still works from dawn to midnight -- and then some! He and Carmen are proud of their son Juanitocho, who manages the restaurant, their second son, Iñaki a lawyer who has degrees in three different fields, and all their grandchildren. You can't keep good people down!

EIGHTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
NOVEMBER 13, 1988 EUZKO-ETXEA, NEW YORK

EUZKO-ETXEA OF NEW YORK
FIRST INCORPORATED BASQUE BENEVOLENT CENTRE
IN THE UNITED STATES

It was in 1913 that a group of thirteen Basques, who had been meeting on Cherry Street in New York, formalized their organization with a charter. How did this happen? On Cherry Street, a pharmacist named Angelo Discepolo, suggested a charter similar to one drawn up for Italian Americans. He called in a friend a young energetic attorney, Fiorello LaGuardia. LaGuardia, known as the Little Flower, later became one of the most popular and effective mayors of New York City. The "Central Vasco-Americano Sociedad de Beneficiencia y Recreo" was chartered in 1913. The Society thrived and in 1928 the Basques bought a building on 48 Cherry Street for \$79,000. The name Central Vasco- American was corrected to "Centro Vasco-Americano" and a booklet outlining the statutes was printed. Only Basque men born in the Basque provinces or sons of Basques were eligible for membership. Dues were 50 cents a month. Benefits were paid for illness up to sixteen weeks at \$2.00 per day. In the 1930s and 1940s the Centro-Vasco was the Social Club of New York Basques. When the buildings on Cherry Street were razed, Centro-Vasco moved to 95 Madison Street. Two subsequent moves to Chinatown proved unsatisfactory. It was during these difficult years of transition that Alberto Uriarte served as President and managed to keep the Basque center from collapsing. Finally in 1973 a new Center was established on Eckford Street in Brooklyn where members themselves renovated the two-story building. In 1980 the name was changed to Euzko Etxea and the Center has been thriving ever since.

Alberto Uriarte **Long Term President of Euzko Etxea, 1906-1994**

Alberto Uriarte was born in Durango, Bizkaia, where he grew up and dreamed of coming to America. At age 14, he sailed for Havana, Cuba, and two years later reached New York. Through the help of friends who were working for the Pennsylvania Railroad, he obtained a job at the railroad's power plant in Long Island City. He attended the American Mitchell School of Design and upon graduation opened a sportswear factory making ladies' apparel, which was sold at J.C. Penny's, Montgomery Ward, Macy's, and Gimbels under the Uriarte label. He joined Centro Vasco Americano, as Euzko Etxea was then called, when he arrived and soon was selected to act as "vocal." This led to helping Basque refugees by finding sponsors when they lacked funds to come to the U.S. and to obtain visas (in collaboration with the Basque Government-in-exile) for others to friendly countries to avoid deportation. When the City took over the Cherry Street clubhouse, and the stockholders were repaid, the club languished for several years. Alberto was elected President in 1950 and the Club relocated at 71 East Broadway, where Oñatibia, began to hold his weekly dance classes. Alberto encouraged the women to become non-benefit members and they did so in 1959. In 1966 he backed the women when they formed their own auxiliary organization and thus ANDRAK was born. He always put the needs of the club above his own and dedicated eighteen years of his life to the Presidency, accepting all responsibility for the club. He retired from the Presidency and in 1971 was named Honorary President of the organization in recognition of his long-standing devotion to the club and his fellow Basques.

Juan Sebastián de Elcano **First Person to Circumnavigate the World,** **1476-1526**

Juan Sebastián de Elcano was born in Getaria, Gipuzkoa in 1476, and died at sea in 1526. He was a distinguished maritime captain who commanded the first ship to circumnavigate the globe, a mission that began in 1519 and concluded in 1522. On the initial voyage, he sailed as master of the "Concepcion," one of five vessels in Magellan's fleet, which left from Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Spain, bound for the Moluccas or Spice Islands in the Pacific. When they reached winter quarters in Patagonia on March 21, 1520, some Spanish captains mutinied, and Elcano was punished as a ring-leader. Three ships continued on to the Marianas and the Philippines, where Magellan and most of his officers were murdered by Filipinos in April 1521. Taking over after his chief was killed, he completed the round-the-world voyage the next year, returning to Sanlúcar the victim of scurvy, starvation and fatigue aboard the "Victoria" with 17 Europeans and 4 Indians and a cargo of spices. At that time, he received a pension from Emperor Charles V and was hailed as the first circumnavigator of the world and was made

a nobleman by his sovereign. Imbued with a spirit for future adventure, Elcano in 1525, together with Garcia Jofre de Loaisa, was appointed to the command of a fleet of seven ships and sent to claim the Moluccas for Charles V of Spain. However, he died while crossing the Pacific and his body was laid to rest in the ocean. A statue of Guetaria's plaza honors the great achievements of its native son, Elcano. He is also recognized as an early cartographer who drew maps of such important rivers as the Parana in Brazil and the Rio de la Plata in Argentina.

Jon Bilbao Bibliographer and Scholar, 1914-1995

Jon Bilbao was born of Basque parents in Cayey, Puerto Rico on October 31, 1914. His family subsequently returned to Euzkadi and he attended the University of Madrid. During the Spanish War he was an officer in the Basque Army and when the war ended he went into exile. In 1939 he received his M.A. from Columbia University and in 1945, he received his Ph.D. from that same institution. In 1958 he published *Los Vascos en Cuba, 1492-1511* about the Basque role in the discovery, exploration and colonization of the Antilles. In 1968 he joined the staff of the Basque Studies Program of the University of Nevada-Reno. He co-authored the book *Amerikanuak: Basque in the New World*; taught a Basque history class and founded a studies abroad program in the Basque Country for American students. The Basque Studies collection of the University of Nevada Library is today one of the best Basque-related databases in the world. The central reference work for all Basque scholarship, Jon's *Eusko-Bibliographia*, lists over 300,000 sources of information of the Basques. In 1980, Jon retired from the University of Nevada, Reno and returned to the Basque Country where he founded the Institute of *Basque Bibliography*. He also served as a president of Harriluze, an archive and museum in Getxo, devoted to the study of Basque emigration. His scholarly accomplishments speak for themselves and reflect a lifetime of devotion to Basque studies.

**NINTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
AUGUST 27, 1989 RENO, NEVADA**

**BASQUE STUDIES PROGRAM
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO**

The Basque Studies Program was launched in 1967 by the University of Nevada System. Over the past twenty-two years, it has shaped Basque Studies in America.

Its library, which now consists of more than 20,000 books and several hundred journals, is among the top two or three Basque collections in existence and services scholars throughout the world. Its book series, published by the University of Nevada Press, has attracted national attention. Its study abroad programs at University campuses in and near the Basque Country have provided hundreds of young Americans with the opportunity to learn about Basque culture first-hand. An important tribute to the accomplishments of the Basque Studies Program was paid in 1988, when a delegation of officials from the Basque government visited Reno. While there, they signed an agreement with the Chancellor of the University of Nevada System providing the Basque Studies Program with financial support for a student exchange and visiting professorship.

Basque President, José Antonio Ardanza, publicly thanked the University of Nevada for keeping alive the torch of Basque culture through the Franco years when it was extremely difficult for the Basques to do so in their own homeland. The Reno Basque Studies Program is honored, not only because it is unique in the western hemisphere, but also because it has maintained a standard of excellence in scholarship.

Gorka Aulestia **Lexicographer and Teacher, 1932**

Gorka Aulestia, born in 1932 in Ondarroa, Bizkaia, served as a parish priest in the Basque Country and as a missionary in Africa. Refusing to tolerate Franco's repression of the Basques, he came to the United States in the early 1970s. He left the priesthood and came to the University of Nevada, Reno. Although he possessed a degree in the Social Sciences from the University of Deusto, he quickly earned masters' degrees in both French and Spanish. In 1979, he began work on a Basque-English dictionary, a massive work that would take years to complete! Meanwhile, he taught Basque language and literature classes and wrote numerous articles in scholarly publications, thereby establishing his reputation as the most knowledgeable writer in English on the subject of Basque literature. Gorka Aulestia was the first to be granted a Ph.D. at the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1987. His dissertation on the Basque *bertsolari* will be published in both the United States and in Europe. In March 1989, Gorka completed his Basque-English dictionary and returned to the University of Deusto where he will be teaching Basque literature. Clearly, Gorka is honored for one of the most significant and lasting contributions to Basque Studies made in the twentieth century: his dictionary, a labor of love, not only for his native language, but also for his native culture.

William Anthony Douglass **Anthropologist, Author, Coordinator of the Basque Studies** **Program, University of Nevada, Reno 1939**

William Anthony Douglass was born in Reno, Nevada, in 1939. He attended the University of Nevada-Reno, majoring in Spanish literature. He participated in New York University Studies Abroad program at the University of Madrid and later pursued graduate studies in social anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Chicago. He also completed three years of fieldwork in the villages in Murélağa, Bizkaia and Echalar, Navarra. In 1967, after receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, he returned to Reno to the newly conceived Basque Studies Program. For the last twenty years he has served as the editor of the Basque Book Series of the University of Nevada Press. William Douglass has written, co-authored, and edited several books on Basque topics which include *Death in Murélağa*, *Echalar and Murélağa*, *Amerikanuak*, *Beltran*, and *Basque Nationalism*. More than fifty of his published articles have appeared in scholarly journals throughout the United States. In 1984, he was given an honorary doctorate by the University of the Basque Country. William Douglass, in his quiet, measured way, has been the pillar of strength and guiding hand of the Basque Studies Program. He is honored for maintaining the excellent quality of its scholarship--a reputation that is internationally recognized.

Robert Laxalt **Author and Founder of University of Nevada Free Press,** **1923- 2001**

Robert Laxalt was born in Alturas, California, in 1923. He studied at the University of Santa Clara and received his degree from the University of Nevada, Reno in 1947. He served with the American Foreign Service in the Belgian Congo and then became a United Press Staff Correspondent. In 1957, his first book, *Sweet Promised Land*, told the story of his father's life as a Basque sheepman in the American West. His book had a special impact for Basque-Americans, for it introduced a little known Basque element of the American West to the wider American public. In 1961, Robert Laxalt became the founder and the first director of the University of Nevada Press. He has written eleven different articles for the "National Geographic" magazine. His Basque related books include *In a Hundred Graves*, and the novella *A cup of Tea in Pamplona*. His newest book, a trilogy, entitled *A Basque Hotel*, will be released soon by the University of Nevada Press. In 1978, Robert Laxalt was named recipient of the Decade Award given by the Nevada State Council on the Arts. In 1986, he was presented with the prestigious Tambor de Oro award by the city of San Sebastian in recognition for his contributions to Basque culture. Today we honor him for his lifetime of dedication

to his heritage and particularly for his role as the literary spokesman of the Basque-American experience.

TENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
NOVEMBER 11, 1990 TAMPA, FLORIDA

EUZKALTXOKO, TAMPA, FLORIDA

José Angulo Ibarretxe **Founder of Euskal Txoko of Tampa, 1942**

Son of Venancio Angulo and María Teresa Ibarretxe, José Luis was born in the small town of Aranguiz, Araba, five kilometers outside of Gasteiz (Vitoria). He started his Jai-Alai career in 1959 at Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, and from there went on to play in Durango, Markina, Zaragoza, Barcelona and Milan, Italy. From Italy he came to the United States to play Jai Alai in Tampa from 1965 to 1968. His Jai Alai career ended in 1968 due to the players' strike in the state of Florida. That same year he married Catherine Caniglio and their two daughters, Amaya and Lorea, were born in Tampa. He obtained employment at the Tampa International Airport and in 1979 attended the National Aviation Academy and became an aircraft mechanic. Eventually he moved to the San Francisco Bay area and is currently employed by United Airlines as an Aircraft Inspector. While still an active pelotari and living in Tampa, José Luis recognized the need for a Basque club as more and more Jai Alai players made their permanent residence in the Tampa Bay area, and continued to reside there after retirement. Finally, his persistence paid off. Several people met at Blanco a Restaurant in 1983 to discuss the establishment of a Basque Club. Those present with Ibarretxe were: José Mari Guerenabarrena, Juan Churruca, José Ramón Garmendia, José Miguel Arregui, José Insausti, Carlos Lizarralde, José Luis Larrinaga, José M. Altuna, Eusebio Echevarria, José Pablo Lopez, Javier Maortua, Javier Rufino Torrealdai, Patxi Beitia, Javier Echevarria, Enrique Garate, José Luis Arambarri, José M. Arrieta, Enrique Guericabeitia, Juan J. Garmendia, Pedro Laca and Javier Onaindia were among the twenty-three members. They started collecting \$20.00 per person for the club. Early in 1984, Euzkal Txoko was opened and each member deposited \$450.00. The location at 40009 N. Howard Avenue needed extensive renovation. With the help of all the members, the doors of the Txoko opened officially in September 1984. Euzkal Txoko became the center of the Basque community in the Tampa Bay area, as well as the first Basque center even in the state of Florida. Although Ibarretxe now lives in California, his efforts, as well as the efforts of all the others, were instrumental in creating Euzkal Txoko, pride and joy of the Basque people of the Tampa Bay area.

I.J.A.P.A. International Jai Alai Players Association, 1988

Jai Alai, played with chistera and hard pelota, first appeared in Euzkadi in the 1800s. Its spectacular speed and grace soon attracted international attention. It spread to Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, the Philippines, Uruguay, Indonesia, China, North Africa, Italy, Belgium, Peru, and the United States. Jai Alai pelotaris performed at the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, at the turn of the century, and also, in the 30s at the Old Hippodrome Theater in New York City. No betting was permitted in the United States. The name Jai Alai means "Happy Holiday," but the art of Jai Alai was converted into Big Business when betting was permitted. The players were underpaid and they saw no improvement in their status; working hours were increased without compensation, etc. From 1968 to 1980, salaries remained almost at the same level. Because athletic careers are brief, 70% of the players had no funds upon retirement, and yet betting made the game very profitable for management. Attempts to correct working conditions and salaries in 1968 resulted in a strike and wholesale firing without notice. In 1975, when players tried to unionize in order to change the untenable conditions, management made a small improvement in the players' overall benefit with the purpose of stopping the unionization of the pelotaris. Management succeeded. The limits benefit did not improve for the next thirteen years. Finally, in February 1988, Pedro Olarreta spearheaded a drive to form a Union -- I.J.A.P.A. -- INTERNATIONAL JAI ALAI PLAYERS ASSOCIATION. As a result of numerous unfair labor practices, management's apathy helped to unite 90% of the 525 pelotaris who went on strike as I.J.A.P.A. members on April 14, 1988. The Basque Government was asked to back the pelotaris in their endeavor and it responded favorably by approving drives in Euzkadi to collect funds to help the pelotaris and their families during the strike. In June 1988, I.J.A.P.A. joined the UAW (United Auto Workers) which supplied funds to pay attorneys, medical insurance, etc. As of today, the NLRB has ruled favorably for I.J.A.P.A. in all the court hearings held in Connecticut. The court hearings in Florida are not taking place and with Ricky Lasa as President of I.J.A.P.A., negotiations are already in progress and as of this writing, several Frontons have settled the strike by recognizing the union and many I.J.A.P.A. players are back in the cancha. The Society of Basque Studies supports the pelotaris in their efforts to be treated with the respect they deserve from management for their zeal, honesty, and skill. The mission and goals of I.J.A.P.A. reflect the intensity of the game of Jai Alai and the integrity of the players. The Society endeavors to elevate Jai Alai to the status of a major sport in the United States.

Dorothy Legarreta Author and Activist, 1926-1988

Dorothy Legarreta was born in Cotati, California, and raised on her father's chicken hatchery, "La Lomita." Her father was a Basque immigrant who was born and raised near Gernika, and the stories he told of the battles that took place in the

Basque County during the Spanish Civil War served as her introduction to her own Basque identity. Dorothy was trained in Child Development, and with that background she could not help but wonder about the children of Gernika, the sacred city of the Basques, savagely bombed during the Spanish Civil War. Her research in that area involved much travel and countless interviews with colleagues, acquaintances, family friends, and the Gernika children themselves, now grown up and scattered throughout the world. The result of her dedication and research was the book of *The Guernica Generation*, a factual but moving account of what happened to those children who were shipped out of the Basque Country to protect them from the ravages of war. Dorothy wrote other things as well, an article for the TESOL Quarterly entitled "Language Choice in Bilingual Classrooms" and other articles on aspects of child development. She was active in many community organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Citizen for Farm Labor group, and the Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Board for Women and Minors in Agriculture. One of her greatest accomplishments was that she founded the National Association of Radiation Survivors of the United States. The impact of Dorothy's activities has grown in geometric proportions and as a result, President Bush has just signed a bill appropriating \$100,000.00 to radiation victims. Linda White, one of Dorothy's colleagues, reports that she was a teacher, a mother of ten children, and a writer, but she was also much more than that. She was one of those rare human beings whose very presence lends energy and excitement to their surroundings. Wherever she was, the air fairly hummed with her vitality. Unfortunately her life was cut short by an automobile accident in Sonoma, California in 1988. Dorothy Legarreta was a woman who loved life, and who was loved by everyone who knew her. Our memories of her have not yet dimmed, and by honoring her today we ensure that they will only grow brighter.

ELEVENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 13, 1991 SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Louis Elu **Restaurateur Internationally Known for Basque Cuisine,** **1914- 2002**

Louis Elu was born in Baker, Oregon to Eladia Bastida of Lekeitio, Bizkaia and Eulogio Elu of Ondarroa, Bizkaia. Louis' mother died during the flu epidemic of 1918 and Louis and his sister were sent to Ondarroa to live with relatives. He returned to the U.S. in 1934 at the age of nineteen. He herded sheep in the Cascade region of Idaho for Andrew Little Sheep Co. He came to California in 1940. He was drafted into the Army Air Corps where he served for four years in Greenland. After his tour overseas, he was sent to Hamilton Air Force Base near San Francisco. He met his future

bride, Marie Esenarro, at the Sunday dances at the Hotel de España. They were married in October 1945 and had four children: Felix, Lucia, Luis, and David. Louis worked as chef at the Palace Hotel before buying the Hotel de España which had been built in 1907 by the Lujea Brothers to house and help the Basque people who would come to San Francisco and also for those people who wanted to get away from the heat of the valley. In 1978 he was awarded "LA ORDEN DEL MERITO CIVIL EN EL GRADO DE CABALLERO" for having helped many shepherds who came to San Francisco for legal or medical help. During the 25 years they operated Elu's Restaurant, Louis and Marie were well-known for their traditional authentic and family style Basque cuisine. Since their retirement, Louis and Marie continue to be involved in various Basque projects such as his support of the Basque Cultural Center of South San Francisco.

Lyda Esain **Pioneer Hotelera in the San Joaquin Valley, 1911**

In a way, that Lyda became a hotelera is not accidental, for her aunts and uncles were also hotel keepers. Her mother, Marie Amestoy travelled to southern California and met her future husband at Jean Martinto's hotel in Tehachapi. Jean's brother Dominic fell in love with Marie, they married and moved to San Pedro where Lyda's brother Victor and sister Grace were born. The family moved to a ranch south of Fresno where Lyda and her younger sister Jeanette were born. Lyda met her husband Felix in 1929, married in 1932, and bought the Basque Hotel at 1102 F Street in 1935. There they lived and worked for the next sixteen years. During their time there, they raised a son (Victor Esain -- now one of the Fresno Basque Club's NABO representatives), expanded the building, and added an adjacent cancha. Lyda and Felix became cornerstones of the Basque community, helping many a newcomer find their way in a new land. In 1951, the Esains decided to sell "The Basque" and traveled to Euzkadi, visiting their parents' villages. Upon their return to Fresno, they purchased a restaurant and, for the next sixteen years (1956-1972), ran one of the most popular and successful restaurants in town. Today, at 81, Lyda is still active in Fresno Basque Club activities, and remains as kind, as concerned, as involved as she was when she and Felix danced the jota around the hotel's juke box in the 1940s.

Ricardo Galbis **Architect of First Jai Alai Fronton in the United States,** **1843-1914**

Ricardo Galbis was born in the city of Leon, in northern Spain, while his father was chief executive administrator of that province. Trained as a civil engineer at the

"Escuela de Caminos, Canales y Puertos" of the University of Madrid, he graduated at the head of his class and won the "Beca de Ultramar." He arrived in Puerto Rico, when he undertook an urgent project neglected for centuries: the dredging and canalization of San Juan Harbor. Also he completed the construction of bridges and roads to allow transportation of supplies between the capital and the countryside. His successes led to a higher position in Cuba. In Havana, he met and married Dona Carmen Solar, with whom he had three sons. Unfortunately she died when the children were small. He dedicated all his energy to his profession. He designed the "Cementerio de C. Colon" -- considered one of the finest in the world -- and was involved in the construction of the first railroad system in the island. He eventually became President of the "Banco Español de la Isla de Cuba," a position held until 1896, when he went into political exile because of his disagreement with the brutal policies of General Valeriano Weyler, the Spanish Military Governor of Cuba. In the 1880s he built the first professional Fronton in Havana, a building still in existence although converted to other uses by the Castro Regime. He had by this time remarried, to Dona Ana de Ajuria, daughter of a Biscayan shiphandler's family. They had 13 children. While in exile in New Orleans, he conceived the idea of building a professional Jai-Alai fronton in the U.S. Using the same techniques and even improving them with a steel-fabricated nave, the building was inaugurated in 1904 in the city of St. Louis Missouri. When Galbis returned to Havana in 1904 he was renamed President of the "Banco Español" which continued operating on the island until 1917. Ricardo Galbis was a man of great energy and integrity. He passed away in 1914 in Havana, where he had lived most of his life.

TWELFTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 11, 1992 CHINO, CALIFORNIA

John Garamendi

Basque Public Figure in California Politics January 24, 1945

John Garamendi, the second of 7 children, was raised in Mokelumme Hill, CA, on a cattle ranch which his family started in 1864. He was graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1965 with a degree in business. An outstanding athlete, he was a Pacific Coast wrestling champion and All Pacific Coast Conference football player. He began his career in public service shortly after college, serving with his wife Patti as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia. John and Patti were married in 1966 and have six children. Upon his return to the United States, he attended Harvard University and graduated with a master's degree in business administration. He worked in international finance and then started his own business. He was elected to the State Assembly in 1974, and then to the Senate in 1976. During his legislative career, Garamendi

chaired the Joint Committee on Science and Technology, the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee and served as Majority Leader. He played a key role in legislation to protect Lake Tahoe, to reform health care financing, to establish a humane, work-oriented welfare program, to revise the state's tax code, and to provide for transportation improvements, including roads and mass transit. Assuming office as California's first elected insurance commissioner, John vowed to improve the Department of Insurance. Last April he took over the bankrupt Executive Life Insurance Company and crafted a rehabilitation plan to protect the investments of the policy holders. He has established new programs to eliminate auto, health and workers' compensation insurance fraud. And in February, he proposed an innovative and far-reaching plan to provide every Californian with access to health care which the New York Times called "a model for every state" and the Sacramento Bee said was "the smartest and most practical vision of how to get affordable, universal care." As the Insurance Commissioner of California and as a Basque, Mr. Garamendi has risen to national visibility and the Society applauds him for his contribution to the welfare not only of Basques, but also to the welfare of the entire country.

Henry Bachoc A Founder of Chino Basque Club July 15, 1919

Henry was born in Irissary, France. He was the 6th of 9 children born to Gracieuse and Martin Bachoc. On September 17, 1947, he married Noelie Harron, also from Irissary. They decided to come to America with the intention of going back in 5 years. It never happened! After settling in Chino, California, Henry worked as a milker, and Noelie as a housewife and mother. This was in April of 1948. Five years had passed, and Noelie was looking forward to going back home to France, but Henry had other ideas. He had started a dairy business with his cousin, Jean Bachoc, and they were doing well! He convinced Noelie that they should stay in Chino for a few more years. Three years later, Jean sold his part of this business to Henry. Noelie then knew that California was their permanent home. She was pleased, because she too had grown to love Chino and the Basque community there. They became American citizens in 1953. After raising a family of 4 children (Isabelle, Pierre, Ramón and Gracie), and creating a successful dairy business, Henry and Noelie retired in 1974. Henry has devoted his time to the Chino Basque Club as a delegate and as a member of the Board of Directors. He is recognized because, in 1967, he and his friend Remy Labruche, with 50 other Basques, pushed for the creation of the Chino Basque Club. They elected Martin Arachea as their first president. The Society honors Henry for working quietly in the background. He offers his services wherever they are needed: fund-raising, making tripotas (blood sausages) or lukainas, cleaning up after club house or fundraising events -- whatever. As Unamuno, the Basque philosopher, has said in his writings; "...great civilizations are shouldered by those who, in their quiet daily lives, carry out the work of humanity. Those souls are the true heroes of mankind."

Marianna Etcheverria **Teacher of Chino Basque Dance Groups, 1945**

Marianna was born in Long Beach, California, to Anne Marie Uhalde (of Artesia) and Michael Bordato of Lasse, France. After graduating from high school, she worked for Security Bank in Artesia and joined the Chino Basque Dance Group where she met Arnold Etcheverria and married him four years later. Arnold, a truck driver, was injured two weeks after their wedding and passed away eight years later, leaving Marianna with their four year old daughter, Anna Marie. Marianna continued working for Security Bank part-time, and in 1975 attended California Polytechnic State University, Pomona, graduating in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics. She is now working on her MBA at the University of La Verne. From 1913 to 1978 Marianna was active in the Chino Basque Dance Groups teaching several groups of children: "Dantzari Onestak" (Honest Dancers); "Pimpiriñak" (Butterflies); and later "Euskualdun Izarrak" (Basque Stars). Two new groups performed "Etche Sartzia," a skit depicting the joys of a bride and groom. In 1979 the adult group, "Gauden Bat," asked Marianna and her assistant, Kathie Bachoc, to direct their group. That year the first North American Basque Organization convention was held in San Francisco and "Gauden Bat" was invited to perform. In 1983 she presented a play called "Bizi Bat" (One Life) with a repertoire of dances and a choral group. In addition, Marianna attended the Basque Studies program in France and Spain through the University of Nevada, Reno -- Basque Studies Program in 1978. Then in 1979 she started research on Basques living in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and San Diego countries prior to 1900. It was a request of Dr. William Douglass of the Basque Studies Library in Reno for a follow-up on his book *Amerikanuak*. This project took two years and the result of her endeavors is now part of the permanent collection on Basque history in Reno. In her spare time she helped Pedro Juan Etchamendy with the translation of his book *Basque songs and stories into English*. At the present time she is a financial specialist for General Dynamics in Pomona, California. She is honored for her extraordinary ability to inspire, create and pass on Basque culture in spite of the obstacles in her personal life.

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
NOVEMBER 13, 1993 RENO, NEVADA

John A. Elorriaga **Outstanding Figure in Banking and Philanthropy , 1912**

John Elorriaga, born in southeastern Oregon town of Jordan Valley, is the son of Ambrosio Elorriaga, who came from Sondika, Bizkaia, in 1912 and worked in the

mines of Idaho. After Ambrosio settled in Jordan Valley, he built a replica of the house where his wife had been born in Chorierra, Bizkaia. He brought his wife, María Goicoechea, and two daughters seventeen guests could be accommodated. It was there that John was born and learned to speak Basque fluently. He also learned the Basque ethic of hard work. John attended grammar and high school in Jordan Valley. At the age of twelve he was milking eleven cows daily and while in high school he worked on a ranch for \$20 per month. He studied sheet metalling and worked at Boeing before joining the U.S. Air Force. He served in the Air Force during the early 1940s, spending seventeen months in France and Germany and receiving two battle stars. Upon his return, he continued his studies at Boise State University, at the University of Oregon, the University of Pittsburg, and the Pacific Coast School of Banking. He married Lois Newman on June 14, 1952. They became the proud parents of three girls (Sharon, and twins Linda and Lisa) and three boys (Dana, Mike, and Steven). John's belief in family values carried over from his home life to his work, where he emphasized "helping one another and working together was better than competing with one another." John's hard work and dedication helped him become President of U.S. Bancorp and Board Chairman and Chief Executive of U.S. National Bank. His benevolent activities and humanitarian endeavors have been recognized with many awards. He insists, modestly, that any success that he may have had comes from following the rules he learned from his Basque family and friends.

The Unanue Family Philanthropists and Founders of Goya Foods

The history of the Unanue Family and the success of Goya Foods Company can be traced to an enterprising Basque named Prudencio Unanue, who was born in Villanueva de Menas, Viscaya, in 1886. As a young man of eighteen, Prudencio sailed to Puerto Rico to work at his uncle's dry goods store. He began as a menial worker but, by the age of twenty-two, he had formed a partnership with a gentlemen from San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, and the two had opened their own dry good store. After four years, Prudencio returned to Spain in ill health. When he returned to Puerto Rico he found that his business --which had been left to another's care -- no longer existed! Next he decided to come to the United States to learn English and to study at the Albany School of Business, where he would later graduate with a degree in Accounting. The United States became his home, but he returned to Puerto Rico to marry Catalina, whom he had met when he was eighteen. Catalina's mother was born in Puerto Rico and her father in Spain. The couple had four sons: Urciano, Joseph, Anthony, and Frank. Living in New York, Prudencio soon opened his own Customs brokerage. His business prospered until 1936 when the Spanish Civil War broke out, completely wiping out all of his trade with Spain overnight. It was at this time, at the age of fifty, that Prudencio renamed the company GOYA. Ironically, the name GOYA, a Basque name, first appeared on sardine cans imported from Morocco! By 1938, Pru-

dencio expanded his import business to the caribbean and bought a small packing house in New York near the center of ship chandlers such as Ituarte, Astarbi, and Abat of General Foods.

After Joseph, the second son, was released from the Army and had graduated from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., he accepted his father's invitation to join Goya foods. The move to 12th Street and Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, a mile from Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, was significant. An enormous sign reading GOYA could be seen for miles on the highway, helping make Goya a household name in New York. Once Prudencio's sons and grandchildren began working in the Company, it was time to expand again. The next move was to Seacaucus, New Jersey, where the Company is still operating today. Prudencio died in 1976 at the age of ninety; Catalina survived him for eight years and died at ninety-four. Today the Company is still a close family operation. Most of its markets are on the Eastern coast and the Caribbean with smaller operations in Houston, Texas, and Chicago, Illinois (headed by Joseph's daughter Mary Ann). Frank, Joseph's younger brother, still runs the business in Puerto Rico. Goya Foods is still expanding today. The Unanue family is honored, not only for its entrepreneurial success, but also for its philanthropic activities, which cover scholarships and grants to needy students.

NABO - North American Basque Organization

Incorporated in 1974, NABO was created mainly to promote and preserve the cultural, civic, and social interests and activities of the Basque people, to cultivate understanding and friendship, to educate and enlighten the public in matters relating to Basque people, and to promote and advance open communications among Basques. After its brief twenty years in existence, NABO activities open to all members on annual basis include: Summer basque Music Camps where youngsters are given an opportunity to learn traditional Basque music and dances from qualified instructors; Instruction and competition for children in Inter-Club Handball Tournaments as well as International Handball Championships; Inter-Club Mus (Basque card game) Tournaments and participation in the International Championship Mus levels; Publication of club activities of all NABO members in a periodic newsletter; and Convention festivals are held at different Basque clubs on a rotating basis, including Bakersfield, Chino, La Puente, Los Banos, Los Angeles, Menlo Park, and San Francisco in California; Elko, Ely, Reno, and Winnemucca in Nevada; Boise, and Caldwell in Idaho; Ontario in Oregon; Grand Junction in Colorado; Salt Lake City and Sandy in Utah; and Buffalo in Wyoming. The members clubs send delegates to the NABO meetings and elections are held with all member clubs participating. To date, the elected Presidents have been:

- Al Erquiaga, Boise, Idaho
- Jim Ithurralde, Eureka, Nevada

- Jacques Unhassobiscay, San Francisco, California
- Frank Maitia, Sr., Bakersfield, California
- Janet Inda, Reno, Nevada
- Frank Pedeflous, Fresno, California
- Dave Eiguren, Boise, Idaho
- Jean Leon Iribarren, San Francisco, California
- Steve Mendive, Boise, Idaho
- Robert Echeverria, Elko, Nevada
- Pierre Etcharren (2003)

With the recent admission of the Euzko Extea of New York into its membership, NABO continues to expand its horizons throughout the North American continent.

Linda White **Teacher, Translator, and Lexicographer of the Basque** **Language , 1949**

In 1981, Linda White began working as a library assistant in the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno. At that time, she had just completed her master's degree in Spanish and, before that, her bachelor's in Spanish and French. Little did she know that she was about to embark upon a journey that most Basques consider impossible. Under the tutelage of Gorka Aulestia, and with a good measure of her own perseverance, Linda became one of those rare non-Basques to master the Basque language. In addition to learning to speak, write, and translate in Basque, Linda had become the preeminent teacher of Basque to non-Basque learners in the United States. Since 1989, Linda has taught first and second year Basque for the Basque Studies Program in Reno. Her creativity as a language teacher and her innovative approach to learning the language explains the popularity and success of the Basque language program at UNR. In 1989 and 1990, Linda co-authored the English-Basque and Basque-English Dictionaries with Gorka Aulestia. The culmination of ten years of fulltime labor, the Dictionary project is an enormous contribution to Basque scholarship. Last year, a smaller, one-volume paperback Dictionary was published. In addition, over the past eight years, Linda has translated five important Basque books for the University of Nevada Basque Book Series and dozens of scholarly articles from Basque to English. In that same time frame, she authored eleven articles of her own on various Basque topics. In 1989, Linda became the Assistant Coordinator of the Basque Studies Program. And this year, she entered the tutorial Ph.D. program at the University of Nevada, Reno with plans to write a dissertation on twentieth-century Basque women writers. With appreciation for all that she has contributed to Basque Studies recent years, we can only look forward to reading her next work.

Robert Erburu

Civic Leader and Chair of Times-Mirror, 1930

Robert Erburu, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Times-Mirror Company, is descended from a southern California sheep ranching family. Robert's grandfather, Mariano Erburu, came to the U.S. from Navarre in 1874. He first herded sheep in Ventura County where he eventually acquired his own sheep range. He and Robert's father, Michael Erburu, were in the livestock business together until the 1930s when they sold the family ranch. Robert Erburu also has an extraordinary record of public service. He has served as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and American Newspaper Publishers Association, as well as director of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Mr. Erburu is a member of the boards of seven charitable foundations. He has been particularly active in the art world, serving as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens. And he has just been appointed to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Robert Erburu is clearly one of the nation's most distinguished business and civic leaders.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 4, 1994 BOISE, IDAHO

Frank Church

United States Senator from Idaho, 1956-1980 and Sponsor of Basque Human Rights Resolution July 25, 1924-April 7, 1984

Frank Church was born in Boise, Idaho and attended local Boise schools until college. He received his B.A. and law degree from Stanford University, graduating with membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He interrupted his education at age 18 to enlist in the U.S. Army during World War 11. He received the Bronze Star and commendations for his service. In 1958 he was inducted into the Infantry Hall of Fame. In 1947 he married Bethine Clark, daughter of former Governor Chase Clark. They had two sons, Forrest and Chase. At the age of 32, Frank was elected to the United States Senate and served brilliantly during 24 years. He is recognized for his support of the elderly, preservation of landmark areas, civil rights and a host of accomplishments that reflects a courageous nature willing to take political risks in order to improve human condition. Biographer LeRoy Ashby says, "It would be difficult to find a more intelligent, principled, or moral person than Idaho's four-term Senator." He is honored today for his support of the Basque Human Rights Resolution. At a time when Basques were oppressed under the dictatorship of Franco in Spain, Frank Church's voice rang loud and clear. he and his wife Bethine went to the Basque Country, met

the people and learned about Basque culture. Basques remember him for raising the conscience of the American people to the plight of the Basques in Euzkadi. Frank Church distinguished himself nationally and internationally for decency and moral courage.

Joseph V. Eiguren **Author, Educator and Scholar, 1915-1996**

Joseph Eiguren was born in Jordan Valley, Oregon to Domingo and María Eiguren. When he was a year old, his parents returned to Euzkadi with Joe and his older siblings, Pilar, Luis and Domingo. After the death of his father during the 1918 Spanish Influenza epidemic, and the death of his brother, Luis and his sister, Pilar, Joe grew up with his brother, Domingo, and his mother and grandmother in Lekeitio, Bizkaia. When he was 13, he quit school and labored in the shipyards of Lekeitio. At age 19, Joe returned to the U.S. to reclaim his U.S. citizenship. For six years Joe tended sheep. In 1942 he was drafted into the Army. His experience during the invasion of Normandy are described in his autobiography, KASHPAR. In 1942 Joe married Aurora Acordagoitia. They had two sons, Albert and Roy. Unfortunately, Aurora died in 1971 and soon after, his son Al died in an automobile accident. In 1977 Joe married Jean Marts. Joe wrote one of the first Basque language teaching texts in America. In addition, he published the History of the Basques and many other books and articles on Basque culture. At present, he is active at several important cultural centers and serves on the Board of Directors of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center of Boise. Scott Logan, in a portrait he wrote of Joe, says that his is "more than a tale of a shepherd turned scholar or a story of a shipbuilder and soldier." Ms is a tale of an extraordinary human being who reaches high and overcomes the hardships of life.

James Jausoro **Outstanding Contributor to Basque Music and Culture, 1920**

Jim was born in Nampa, Idaho and grew up in a Basque world: his parents owned a Basque boarding house known as the Spanish Hotel where Jim heard Basque music. At age 9 he began playing the piano accordion and played for the public. At age 15, he won an accordion contest! World War 11 took him and his accordion into the Navy where, playing popular tunes, he entertained his fellow sailors. After the war, Jim returned to Basque music, which led to his love: as the only male member of the Basque Girls' Club and because he was their musician, Jim met Isabel Larrondo. They were wed in 1953. They have two daughters, Marie and Anita. In 1957, Jim Jausoro and his orchestra gave their first performance, and now, nearly 40 years later, they are still playing. With Jim on the accordion and Domingo Ansotegui on the tam-

bourine, several generations of Idaho Basques grew up with Basque music. They provided the music for the "Oinkari Basque Dancers" since 1960. Jim continues playing music for the group, as well as for the younger dancers in Boise and Caldwell, Idaho. Jim has won many prestigious awards, including the National Endowment of the Arts award. Indeed, Jim Jausoro is one of the extraordinary contributors to Basque culture in our country.

Euzkaldunak, INC., 1949

Before the Basque Center was built in Boise, people met at various bars in the downtown area. Jay Hormaechea taught jota lessons to all who wanted to learn dancing and Jim Jausoro played the accordion for these lessons. Classes were held at various locations in downtown Boise. Starting in 1949, the need for a Basque Center was apparent, and public interest pushed to incorporate all activities in one location. Pete Leguineche was the first legal counsel for Euzkaldunak. He and John Bastida researched by-laws of fraternal organizations, etc. Their efforts resulted in a program to provide insurance for the elderly Basques, a building plan and a fund raising campaign, which resulted in a sale of \$200,000 in bonds. The bar and card room were built, Luis Madarieta was elected the first President and today the center includes a kitchen, dance hall, and basement. The current president is Kevin Arrien. Euzkaldunak is one of the prominent Basque centers in the U.S. and is more active than ever. The success of the center is due to the efforts of many people who never expected recognition. Today we recognize all the past and present members.

**FIFTEENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 7, 1995 BOISE, IDAHO**

John J. Ascuaga Entrepreneur, Rancher, Owner of John Ascuaga's Nugget, 1925

John Ascuaga's two elephants, Bertha and Angel, are famous entertainers at Basque festivals. And every year, 19 high school graduates of northern Nevada, who may or may not know about his elephants, receive scholarships from John to Universities of their choice. The story of this Basque is remarkable. John was born in Caldwell, Idaho and attended school in Notus, a small town nearby. His immigrant parents, José and Marina, having come from Euzkadi in the early 1900's, had four children: Frank, Carmen, John and his twin sister Rosie. John attributes the success

of all the children to the strong work ethic and belief in education that his parents instilled in them. He attended the University of Idaho in Moscow where he obtained his Bachelors degree in Accounting and, immediately after, attended Washington State University at Pullman, where he studied Hotel and Restaurant Management. During summer vacations he learned, by experience, working as a bellman at a resort on Payette Lake. In 1958 he married Rose Ardans whose family had come from the French Basque Country. They had four children: John L., Camille, Michonne and Stephen.

In Idaho, John knew Dick Graves and his Basque wife, Flora Aguirre, whose family was close to the Ascuaga family. Together they opened the Nugget, a coffee shop near the present site in Sparks, Nevada. Five years later, John bought the Nugget from Graves. Over the past 35 years, John has applied the values he learned from his parents. The Nugget has grown to its present 1,000 room enterprise, with 8 restaurants, enormous convention and gaming areas, and an outstanding staff of 2,600 employees who cover the needs of the Nugget's 24-hour operations. A tower of 802 rooms will be added this fall. Besides running this impressive operation, John enjoys spending time at his 3 cattle operations. As a reminder of his roots, he maintains a flock of over 100 sheep. John Ascuaga is a recognized leader in gaming and tourism. He has won many prestigious awards - too many to list here - but he is especially honored today because he symbolizes the enterprising traits that Basques value.

Adelia Garro Simplot Founder and Chair of Basque Museum and Cultural Center, 1935

Adelia's father, Eustaquio "Ed" Garro, left the town of Munitibar, Bizkaia, at the age of 16 to try shepherding in the Boise area of Idaho. Soon he learned to be a barber and became known as the "Barbero." After 14 years as a bachelor in Boise, he married Grace Ragsdale. They had five children: Adelia, Frances, Laurie, Ramona and Susan. Adelia grew up in Boise's Basque community, attending local Schools, learning Basque dances from Jay Hormaechea and playing at Frank Aguirre's boarding house where her father had boarded before his marriage. It was a prophetic beginning for someone who later would contribute so much to the Basque community. In 1953, Adelia married Richard Simplot and soon after gave birth to 4 children: Ted, Laurie, Will and Anne. Unfortunately, after 40 years of marriage, Richard died in 1993. In 1987, Adelia purchased the deteriorating Uberuaga boarding house in the heart of Boise's Basque District and later donated it to the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, which she and others had started. Today, with the added buildings, the site houses a Basque bookstore, a library, an exhibit hall, a speakers' forum and the only covered Basque handball court of Idaho,

which preserves the Basque game of "pala." In addition, Adelia helped to establish Gernika, Bizkaia as the sister city of Boise, Idaho. She hosted a delegation from Gernika, and later, the Basque President, José Antonio Ardanza Garro, planted a seedling of the famous tree of Gernika at the Museum. Besides her contributions to the Basque community, Adelia has an impressive history of serving on a host of philanthropic projects: Boise State University Foundation, City Chamber of Commerce, St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Cancer Society, Diabetes Association, United Way, Philharmonic Guild, etc. Her extraordinary record of public service, as well as her efforts to preserve Boise as a thriving center of Basque activities, place her in a special category. We celebrate Adelia Garro Simplot for her accomplishments and her beautiful gifts to all people.

Antony Yturri

Lawyer and Oregon State Senator, 1914

Anthony Yturri's father, Domingo, an immigrant from Rigoitia, Bizkaia, came to the United States and found work in the mills and mines of Silver City. When the mines of Delarnar, Idaho closed, he moved to Jordan Valley, Oregon. It was here that his wife María gave birth to 4 children: Louis J., Juanita, Dolores and Anthony. While running a large general store, María and Domingo probably never envisioned that their son Anthony, one day would become an honorable Senator of the State of Oregon. The Yturri's spoke Basque at home. Anthony, or Tony as he is known, either because he was bilingual, or in spite of it, developed a keen sense of language. After María died, Domingo remarried and Anthony's stepsister, Irene, was born. The young Tony Yturri attended grammar and high school in Jordan Valley. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Oregon in 1935 and a Doctor of Jurisprudence at the same University in 1937. He was an honor student and a member of Phi Delta Phi. Immediately after he received his degree, he started his law practice. He has always been grateful to Judge Allen Biggs for his strong support during the early years of his career. In 1942, he married Reme Jayo, whose parents had come from Bizkaia. Reme also speaks Basque. Yturri's career as a lawyer was interrupted by World War II. He served as Captain in the Military Counter Intelligence, in Judge Advocate General's Department and overseas in Africa, South America and the Philippines. After the war, he returned to his law practice and in 1956 he was being urged by the local people to run for the State Senate. He was elected and served for 4 consecutive terms until 1973. He continued practicing law and serving on important commissions for the State of Oregon. To this very day, his advice is sought by Senators who bug his wisdom and admire his for his integrity and good judgment. Always, he has acknowledged and made public his Basque heritage. Today we honor Anthony Yturri for his high level of achievement and, at the same time, for enhancing Basque identity.

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
NOVEMBER 8, 1996 MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Fray Juan de Zumárraga, 1467-1548

Fray Juan de Zumarraga was born in Durango, Bizkaia, and raised in a strongly traditional Basque environment. He maintained his Basque roots throughout his life, speaking more comfortably in Basque than in Spanish, even while living in Mexico. He joined the Franciscan order as a young man and was noted for his honesty, humanity and nobility. King Carlos V recognized and esteemed his character and abilities. In 1528, when Fray Zumarraga was already in his sixties, he arrived in the New World as the first Bishop of Mexico. For the next twenty years of his life he died in 1548- he dedicated his life to being a true missionary. Historians and chroniclers of Zumarraga's life have marveled at his memory and grasp of the cultural and historic events of the times. He studied native languages and cultures and, realizing that they were in danger of disappearing, he fought to preserve them. He was involved in trying to settle conflicts between cultures. As Mexico was developing through the intermingling of different peoples, Zumarraga witnessed violent confrontations between Hispanic and Nahuatl civilizations, for example. He recognized a need to reform the Church and was instrumental in rebuilding and refining it to meet the needs of all its peoples. Fray Zumarraga was a shepherd of men, a humanitarian, and a reformed Franciscan monk. He founded a University and schools; constructed hospitals; introduced new crops, draft animals, tools, trades, and the printing press to Mexico. He is honored for his Basque identity and for his humanitarian work in the New World colony of Mexico.

Colegio de las Vizcaínas, 1732

Founded in 1732, the Colegio de las Vizcaínas is the oldest school in Mexico which has been operating without interruption for over 250 years. Founded originally as a *Cofradía* (Confraternity) of our Lady of Aranzazu, in 1696, it united young men from the provinces of Gipuzkoa, Alava, the Señorío of Bizkaia and the Kingdom of Navarre with the purpose of offering them spiritual as well as material support. In 1732, when three Basque members- Don Francisco Echeveste, Don Manuel de Aldaco and Don Ambrosio de Meave- founded the Colegio, they opened it with the altruistic goal of protecting and educating women, widows and destitute young girls. Built with donations from the Basque-Mexican community, the Colegio had abundant resources and could have purchased one-fifth of Mexico City at that time. The building, one of the largest of Mexico, was planned by Pedro Bueno Bezauri and constructed by Maestro Miguel José de Rivera. Always a secular establishment, the

Colegio enjoyed complete freedom from the Crown as well as the Church. This freedom was reaffirmed and maintained after political struggles in 1767. Some of the strongest supporters of the Colegio have been women, such as Dona Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez (18 10) and Sara Garcia in more contemporary times. Famous names in Mexican history such as Iturbide, Juarez, Porfirio Diaz and Carranza. have been intimately involved in the history of the Colegio. Today, the Colegio educates more than 1200 beginning and preparatory level students. It is honored for preserving its integrity, its high level of academic excellence and its historic and cultural patrimony. It serves as a model of Basque identity, welfare, and culture over three centuries.

Martín García Urtiaga, 1905

Martin Garcia Urtiaga, who celebrated his ninetieth birthday last year, was born in Getxo, Bizkaia. In his youth, he studied and worked in Bilbao, France and Wales. Besides his native language, he developed fluency in French and English. When he was 18, he began working for Shell Oil Company. Six years later, he became Director of the factory known as Campsa Petroleum. All went well until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, when the factory was bombed and burned by sea attack. In December of 1936, Don Martin was commissioned by the Basque Government to go to France and England to negotiate for shipments in international deliveries. When the war ended, Campsa's operations were closed and Garcia Urtiaga moved to London where he was offered the directorship of a petroleum exporting company in Mexico. The day after he arrived with his family in Mexico, he met with Lazaro Cardenas, then President of Mexico, to propose an export petroleum company. Unfortunately, the war in Europe had begun and his project was rejected. Never one to be easily defeated, he engaged the help of two other entrepreneurs and founded the Cia Mexicana de Comercio Exterior, S.A. - known as Comex - and served as president until the company was dissolved in 1991. During his years at Comex, the company expanded into a macroseries of thriving activities and societies. During those busy years Martin Garcia Urtiaga found time to serve as president of Centro Basco, A. C. and Colegio de las Vizcainas. Yet most impressive in his forty-year patronage of the Colegio. His is a long history of courage, resourcefulness and optimism. He is recognized for his involvement in entrepreneurial, cultural and philanthropic programs and his identity as a Basque.

Centro Vasco, A. C. 1907

Centro Vasco Cultural Association (A.C.) was founded on June 17, 1907 as a cooperative with limited responsibilities and was located on Madero Street in the center of Mexico City. This cooperative was a successor to the Basque Association of San

Ignacio de Loyola. On September 13, 1935 this Center was reorganized with statutes formulated to ensure stronger governance and a clearer understanding of the scope of the organization. In 1972, Centro Vasco moved from Madero Street to 239 Aristoteles Street in the Polanco section of Mexico City, where it operates today. In May 1974, new by-laws were approved which outlined the main goals and objectives of the new Centro Vasco, A. C. They are as follows:

- To maintain a decent place for members to meet
- To unify Basques and to encourage the love of the Basque Country, its Language and History
- To organize Conferences and Library Programs
- To hold diverse Musical, Sports and Artistic Functions
- To entertain the members with games within the law
- To celebrate the Feasts of San Ignacio de Loyola and other Basque traditions
- To follow the customs established by this organization since its foundation

Centro Vasco, A. C. is a beautiful second home for Basques of Mexico. It enjoys national as well as international visibility. It is honored today for contributing to Basque identity, welfare and culture.

**SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
MARCH 8, 1997 BUFFALO, WYOMING**

Jeanette Esponda Maxwell Buffalo's Basque Radio Entrepreneur 1923-

Jeanette Esponda Maxwell was born in Buffalo, March 15, 1923. Her father, John Esponda, known as "King of the Basques" around Buffalo, was from St. Etienne de Baigorri and her mother, Dominica Etchemendy, was from Arnegi, Basse Navarre. In 1956, Jeanette made a smart move. She purchased Radio KBBS and, shortly after, started broadcasting in Basque, by Basques and for Basques. The program has been broadcast every Sunday since its inception with the only exception being an accommodation to the World Series. The famous announcement heard every Sunday for the last 40 years on Station KBBS has been: "One hour of music, news, messages and views sponsored by and for the Basque people of this area." Basques and non-Basques from all parts of the world are impressed with this unique North American endeavor and hope it will continue. We commend Jeanette for her determination, vision and support of Basques and their traditions. By the way, she also raised 12 children!

RADIO KBBS' BASQUE COMMENTATORS

PIERRE AMESTOY 1926

Pierre Amestoy was born in Armendaritz, Basse Navarre on February 16, 1926. Coming from *Euzkal Herria*, he first settled in Miles City, Montana. Almost three decades later, he and his wife Grayce moved to Buffalo where he raised sheep until his retirement last year. He is well remembered for commentating from 1984 to 1989.

MARTÍN CAMINO October 29, 1913- 1997

Martin Camino was born in Arnegi, Basse Navarre on October 29, 1913. At the age of 25 he came to Buffalo to work for his uncle John Camino. He served in the United States Army during World War II and, after he was released, he married Florence Urizaga. They raised seven children and ran a sheep ranch. For 30 years, beginning in 1957 to the year of his death in 1987, he was an assiduous broadcaster for KBBS.

JUAN CINQUAMBRE October 19, 1921

Juan Cinquambre was born in Arrazu, Navarre, on October 19, 1921, but did not come to Buffalo until 1960 at the age of 39. He is semi-retired but still works on a ranch today. He has a long history of commentating for almost three decades, starting from 1968. A combination of ranching and broadcasting seems to be a formula for longevity.

BERNARD ETCHEMENDY February 11, 1906-1991

Bernard Etchemendy was born in St. Michel, Basse Navarre on February 11, 1906. He came to Buffalo twenty years later, to work for Anton Silva. When he was 24 years old, he ventured into the sheep business with his brothers, Jean and Mike. He was a hard working sheepman for almost three decades. Although he sold his business in 1968, he continued to live in Buffalo with his wife Dominica. He died six years ago, but he is fondly remembered for his Sunday messages.

JEANNE MARIE ETCHEMENDY November 15, 1908

Jeanne Marie Etchemendy was born on November 15, 1908 in St. Etienne de Baigorri, Basse Navarre. In her late twenties, she came to visit her brother Albert Anxo.

The visit lasted a lifetime because she met and married Pete Etchemendy within a year of her arrival. They bought a ranch and worked at it for 34 years. When the ranch was sold in 1972, the couple moved into town and Jeanne Marie began her career as a commentator on KBBS. Again, one marvels at the longevity of rancher commentators. Jean Marie has been a regular commentator for the last 25 years. A great record!

ROSALIA MAYA DE IBARA August 22, 1931

Rosalia Maya de Ibarra was born in Sumbilla, Navarre on August 22, 1931 and married Juan Ibarra, also from Sumbilla. She came to Buffalo when she was 27 years old. Seven seems to be her lucky number because seven years later, the couple moved to California and again, seven years later, they moved to Montana and again, almost seven years later, they made a complete circle and returned to Wyoming. They dedicated a few years to raising sheep and, in 1995, Rosalia retired. She makes her home in Buffalo where she has been a steady commentator since 1995. Rosalia has an interesting history of peregrinations throughout the American West and is urged to continue broadcasting in Basque.

DOMINGO MARTIRENA April 8, 1924

Domingo Martirena was born in St. Etienne de Baigorri, Basse Navarre on April 8, 1924. At the age of 23 he came to Buffalo to work for his aunt, Mrs. C. Marton. He worked diligently for the next 10 years and saved enough to buy a ranch in Kaycee. Soon after, he married Cecile, they began raising three children, and are still living on the sheep ranch. Although Domingo has now retired after working as a brand inspector for the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, he has not retired from broadcasting. He has the unique distinction of commentating steadily for 40 years since the beginning of the Basque program. Domingo, we salute you!

GRAYCE ESPONDA MILLER January 20, 1920-1996

Grayce Esponda Miller, sister of Jeanette Esponda Maxwell, was born on January 20, 1920 in Buffalo. She was raised in Johnson County where she attended elementary school and high school. She attended Clark College in Dubuque, Iowa and St. Mary's College in Omaha, Nebraska. As a loyal daughter of her hometown, she married Russ Miller of Buffalo when she was twenty. They raised three children and ran a sheep ranch. Later she began commentating on the Basque radio program and did so until the time of her death last year. We regret that she is not present to receive her award, but know that you are remembered, Grayce.

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL BASQUE HALL OF FAME
NOVEMBER 7, 1998 BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

Jean and Rose Erassarret Founders and Teachers of Basque Dancing at Kern County Basque Club 1909-1982, 1915-1986

Jean Erassarret was born in Baigorry, France, on August 30, 1909. At age 18, he came to America as a shepherd. Rose, born in 1915, in El Paso, Texas, was of Italian background. They met, fell in love and married when Jean was 26 and Rose 20. Theirs was a very enterprising and productive union. First they were involved in the sheep business and then turned to fanning. In 1952 they bought Files & Files Rug Company in Bakersfield, California, where they ran the business until they retired. In addition they produced six children. Jean was skilled at playing pelota and dancing. Rose was an excellent dancer and musician. They made certain that their six children would learn music and Basque dances. Two of their daughters became accomplished accordion players. In the early 1950's, they gathered their six children and all the people interested in Basque dancing and formed the first Basque dance group of Bakersfield. Thus, Basque dancing was introduced to Kern County. A word must be said about Rose, who was not of Basque origin. She had the extraordinary ability to master Basque music and dance and to pass on her knowledge to others. She was, indeed, an esteemed ambassadress of Basque culture. Although Jean and Rose are no longer with us, Jean died at age 73 and Rose at age 71, they have left us a tradition of Basque dancing in Kern County that continues to flourish today. Currently, the Kern County Basque club has four dance groups with dancers ranging from ages six to thirty. What a great legacy Jean and Rose have given us!

Mayie Maitia Mother of Basque Immigrants of Bakersfield, 1929

Mayie Etchebarne Maitia was born May 8, 1929 in St. Etienne de Baigorry, France. She is the seventh of nine children of a close knit family. When Mayie was very young, her mother passed away and, as was the usual Basque custom, her grandmother took over the responsibility of raising the family. It was in this environment that Mayie's character developed. Her religion taught her the importance of caring for others, how to give and how to share. In 1947, when she was 18 years old, Mayie, with some of her brothers and sisters, immigrated to the United States. She worked for Frank and Mary Amestoy, Noriega Hotel and Pyrenees Cafe. Her ex-

perience prepared her well for the future. Mayie met J.B. Maitia, a bartender, and married him in 1947. They had two children, Jenny and Daniel. In 1954, when Mayie was only 25 years old, she and J.B. opened their own restaurant, the Wool Growers Cafe on Summer Street. After more than four decades, Mayie, along with her children, Jenny and Daniel, is still running the restaurant. Although Mayie worked long hours at the restaurant and cared for two children, she always found time to help Basque immigrants. She had learned the new language and the new ways of dealing with bureaucracy. She helped the new arrivals to face intimidating situations by actually taking them to such places as: the consulate for legal papers, the Department of Motor Vehicles for licensing, travel arrangements, doctors and dentists and all the challenging experiences that newly arrived Basques had to meet. In addition, she employed many Basques at her restaurant. Thus, Mayie became known at the mother or big sister to so many. Mayie has been an inspiration and role model. She has contributed generously to the well-being of the Basque community.

Grace Laporte Elizalde Restaurateur Benefactor of the Basque Community, 1894-1974

Grace Laporte Elizalde was born in Anhau, France on September 11, 1894. At the age of 20 she immigrated to the United State under the sponsorship of Jacques Iriart. For four years she worked, as a maid, for Jack and Grace Iriart in their hotel in Tehachapi. It was in the kitchen of the hotel that she learned the art of great cooking and later when she had her own business, she taught many young people her art. At the age of 24, Grace married John Elizalde, a sheepman. They lived in a sheep camp where their two daughters and two sons were born. In 1927 after disastrous years in the sheep business, John and Grace decided to open hotel Noriega in East Bakersfield. They helped many recent Basque arrivals by employing them in their business. Unfortunately, John died in 1933 leaving Grace to raise alone her four children. Grace was deeply concerned with the plight of Basque immigrants. She helped them to get employment, get passports, pay taxes, make funeral arrangements and notify the families back home of the death of a person. She knew of cases where the families in the Basque Country lost a loved one who had been left in an unmarked grave. She became the benefactor of the destitute who died with no means for a burial ground. Consequently, she bought ten plots at the Union Cemetery for the needy. She was proud to be Basque and so proud to be an American citizen that she voted in every election. She passed away on Easter Sunday, April 14, 1974. The Basque Community is grateful to her for setting an example of giving generously and understanding the needs of those who were separated from their families.

Carmelo Urza

Ph.D. Coordinator: University Studies Abroad Consortium, 1948

Carmelo Urza was born on July 17, 1948 in Bilbao, Bizkaia. After spending his first five years in Bilbao, Carmelo and his mother joined his father in Boise, Idaho, where he grew up and attended Boise State University. After graduation, Carmelo moved to Reno and entered the Master's degree program in Spanish at the University of Nevada. From Reno, he moved to Iowa where he completed his doctorate in Spanish literature at the University of Iowa. During his undergraduate years, Carmelo enrolled in two overseas studies programs which no doubt influenced him greatly in later years. In 1969-70 he studied at the University of Madrid and, in summer of 1972, Carmelo enrolled in a Basque Summer Studies Abroad Program organized by the University of Nevada, Reno. Little did Carmelo know that in 1982, after completing his graduate work, he would be hired to develop, design, administer, and lead an overseas studies program for college students throughout the United States. In 1982, Carmelo became the first (and to this date the only) Director of the University Studies Abroad Consortium, housed at the University Nevada, Reno. In its first years, USAC opened a campus in San Sebastian, Spain, and in St. Jean de Luz, France - right in the heart of Euzkadi. Early enrollments in the program came especially from those who wanted to return to Euzkadi and study their Basque ancestry. In the seventeen years of USAC's existence, campuses have been added in Bilbao and in non-Basque locations. To the point where this year, for example, nearly 900 students are preparing to study in campuses in Euzkadi, Costa Rica, Chile, Germany, Italy, China, Thailand, Australia, Great Britain, and other locations across the globe. As if creating one of the most successful study abroad consortiums in the United States is not enough, Carmelo has made numerous contributions to Basques in the New and Old World. Several of you, for example, have read his book, *Solitude: Symbolism in the National Basque Monument*. You also know that Carmelo's work on the Monument Committee helped make the project a reality. His list of publications in scholarly journals and books is also impressive, including nearly forty articles on Basque-related topics. In addition, Carmelo has organized several special events including hosting Basque dignitaries in the American West, sponsoring academic conferences at the University, and participating in the academic activities of the Basque Studies Program in Reno. This long list of achievements is not the only reason Carmelo Urza is being honored, however. Thousands of second, third, and fourth generation Basques who have returned to Euzkadi to study-cannot underestimate the significance of Carmelo's contribution to their lives. And those of us who have worked with Carmelo know the contribution he is to his friends, family, and co-workers. He is truly deserving of this honor.

THE NINETEENTH BASQUE HALL OF FAME
OCTOBER 10, 1999 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Irene Rentería Aguirre (1923-1999) **Dedicated Contributor to the Basque Delegation, Euzko-Etxea** **and the Society of Basque Studies in America**

Irene Aguirre was the executive secretary for the Society of Basque Studies in America for over 19 years. Her talent for keeping the membership and mailing lists up to date, her attention to detail, her ability to attend to the daily tasks and respond to all the correspondence have assured the success of our non-profit organization. She volunteered her time, effort and services and, in all her years of service, never asked for, nor accepted any compensation. Her work was an important contribution to the welfare of the Society and to the Basque community as well. Irene was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Melchor Renteria from Bakio, Bizkaia, and María Vidasolo from Kanala, Bizkaia. Her early education was in Brooklyn and later in Manhattan. After graduating high school, she worked for an insurance company for a brief period of time and for the next eight years she worked in the Basque delegation as Lehendakari José Antonio Aguirre's personal secretary. While working full time at the Delegation, she attended college at night and earned a B.B.A. in Foreign Commerce from Baruch College. She was one of the first women admitted to the former all male college. Also during those years, she was an active member of the Juventud of Centro Vasco. She met her husband Andoni at the Delegation in 1945 when he came to New York to visit his mother. When he visited the Lehendakari, he was offered a job with the Delegation as commercial attaché, which he accepted. Irene and Andoni worked together at the Delegation and later, when they married, they continued to work together for Centro Vasco (later named to Euzko-Etxea), the Society of Basque Studies in America and as delegates for NABO. Both were deeply involved in promoting Basque identity, welfare and culture. After raising her two children, Anna and Marty, Irene returned to the workforce. First at Kingsborough Community College and then at Social Security, where she was in a position of helping people who needed support and advice. Irene was proud of her heritage and enjoyed informing others of Basque culture and traditions. Her lifelong dream was to compile a census of all the Basques in the United States. She felt we needed closer communication with each other. Perhaps someday her dream will come to fruition.

Andoni Aguirre (1921-1997)

Dedicated Contributor to the Basque Delegation, Euzko-Etxea and the Society of Basque Studies in America

Andoni Aguirre was the keeper of the books on financial matters for the Society of Basque Studies in America for over 17 years. His talent for scrutinizing every item has assured the success of the Society as a not-for-profit organization. He collected monies, paid bills, and kept the books balanced and never in the red. He volunteered his services and never accepted any remuneration for his services. Andoni was born in Manila, Philippines to Martin Aguirre and Julia Achabal. He was educated both in the Philippines and Euskadi. During World War II he served in the United States Army and was stationed in the Pacific. His service included training with the Rangers (the forerunners of the Green Berets) and working in counter-intelligence. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Asiatic-Pacific Service medal, the Philippines Liberation Ribbon with one Star, the Good Conduct Medal and the World War II Victory Medal. After an honorable discharge from the Army, he worked for the Delegation of the Basque Government in Exile to the United Nations as a commercial attaché. He became a member of the Centro Vasco Americano (Euzko-Etxea of New York) and for many years he served as Vice President and Secretary. In later years, he served as delegate from Euzko-Etxea to N.A.B.O. In 1949 he married Irene Renteria. He is survived by two children, Anna and Marty and two grandchildren, Ryan and Elyse. Andoni held several positions throughout his life: staff officer in the Merchant Marine during the early 1950's, paymaster for Prudential Steamship Lines, accountant for Lutheran Medical Center, and auditor for Amalgamated Insurance Fund. Andoni took pride in wearing his txapela (beret) and lapel pin of Basque-American flags. The Society of Basque Studies is grateful to Andoni for years of dedicated service.

Alys Vina (1914-1993)

Promoter of Basque Culture in the New York Community

Alys Mason Vina, Angel's wife, was born in 1914 in Campo Basso, Italy and came to the U.S.A. in 1915. (Did her ship cross with Angel's in the night in the mid-Atlantic?) Alys first met Angel, at her wedding to her first husband, Cirilio Alonso; a friend of Angel's with whom he had worked in the 1930's. They met a second time in 1963, when Angel attended Cirilio's funeral in Cranford, New Jersey. Alys and Angel were married in 1965 and together they joined Euzko-Etxea. The rest is history. Alys took to Basque culture like a duck takes to water. She loved everything – the language, the music, the dancing and the singing. She encouraged Angel to practice the txistu and tanbor in the garage and in 1969 Angel became our official txistulari. Alys was always at his side accompanying him, serving as "Mistress of Ceremonies" introducing dances and making certain that the dancers were properly attired. We still remember

Alys in her red and green outfits, helping to dress the dancers with their costumes. Alys became an active member and officer of “Andrak”, the Ladies Auxiliary of Euzko-Etxea, served as Secretary of the “Gasteak” Club, and was our reporter to the “Voice of the Basques” published in Boise, Idaho. Alys was extra special to all of us who had the privilege of knowing and interacting with her. Although she was not born a Basque, she was very Basque! She helped us to realize our unique qualities. She will always be remembered and respected as a very, very special person who touched so many lives within our community.

Angel Vina (1914) Promoter of Basque Culture in the New York Community

Angel Vina was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1914. His mother, Tomasa Elustondo, returned to Ea, Bizkaia, when Angel was one year old. In Ea he attended school until the age of nine, at which time, his mother sent him to Bilbao to live with his cousins, the Elustondos, to continue his education. In 1926, his mother sent him to the Jesuit Pontifical Seminary in Comillas in the province of Santander as a helper to the wealthy students and to continue his education. Angel fondly remembers his three and a half years with the Jesuits. At the age of sixteen, he returned to New York where he lived for two years with his Uncle Gabriel Elustondo and Aunt Segunda Gainza. They ran a boardinghouse and for Angel, his uncle’s house was a “Horn of Plenty.” Uncle Gabriel, one of the founding members of Centro Vasco in 1913, introduced Angel to Centro Vasco in 1930. Angel became one of the group of “Ezpatadantzaris” with professor Emiliana de Zubeldia, a renowned pianist who gave many recitals in New York City. Although very active in the club, Angel could not become a member since his father was not a Basque. (Subsequent by-law changes in the 1960’s afforded him the benefits and responsibilities of full membership.) Angel remembers Elias Aguirre, Valentín’s brother, with kindness. One day, Angel was looking for a txistu and tanbor to play at a picnic at Ulmer Park. He saw a pair of the musical instruments in the window of the Jai-Alai restaurant. Elias Aguirre, Valentín Aguirre’s brother, was serving at the bar and offered them to Angel. When Angel returned them and raved about their quality, Elias responded with, “You really appreciate them, take them, they are yours.” In 1942, Angel joined the U.S. Navy and served in the North Atlantic on a destroyer until his discharge in 1945. He then secured a position in the N.Y.C. Court System and worked with the Honorable Emilio Nunez, the first Spanish-speaking judge in NYC. Judge Nunez was born in Deusto, Bizkaia and came to the U.S.A. at the age of twelve. In 1976, Angel retired as a Senior Court Officer. Alys and Angel are recognized as exceptionally talented promoters of Basque culture in the New York Metropolitan Area.

THE TWENTIETH BASQUE HALL OF FAME 2000
THIRTEEN FOUNDERS OF THE FIRST INCORPORATED BASQUE
CENTER OF THE UNITED STATES – 1913
LOCATED IN NEW YORK CITY

We owe a debt of gratitude to our ancestors for their ability to persevere under the most trying circumstances. If they had not planned ahead, cared for their families, helped each other, adjusted to a life in the new world in spite of language, culture, limited resources and little formal education, we probably would not be here today. Today we honor these 13 brave individuals.

Juan Cruz Aguirre was born in 1879 in Arrieta, Bizkaia and died in New York in 1959 at the age of 80. He was 23 when he came to New York. Five years later he married Josefa Lezamiz. They had four children: Joe, Elias, John and Lillian (now Fradua). He had learned the trade of machinist in Liverpool, England, and in New York he was hired by the Interboro Rapid Transit system where he worked until he retired. Juan Cruz was one to the most generous and caring of the early Basques in New York, Tony Barben, who is now 94 years old, tells us that when his parents died of tuberculosis, he was scheduled to go to an orphanage. Upon hearing the news, Juan Cruz responded, “I have four children, I can take another.” He adopted Tony and raised him as a member of his own family. This story tells us much about the character of Juan Cruz Aguirre.

Valentín Aguirre was born in Monte Sollube near Busturia, Bizkaia, in 1871. He died in 1953. At the age of 10 when his father died, he started to work as a cabin boy on ships sailing to the Caribbean and the United States. Valentín married Benita Orbe and settled in New York in 1895. They had eight children: Lucy, Thomas, Antonia, Valentina, John, Peter, Anita and Mary. They ran a boarding house on Cherry Street and then Valentín opened this famous restaurant JaiAlai on 82 Bank Street. He was famous for helping Basques find employment and for making travel arrangements for Basques to get to the West Coast. He was the second president of the Centro Vasco Americano and held that post for many years. Valentín was an enterprising and dynamic person who became the leader of the Basques for many years. His name and his reputation are known across the United States, in Latin America and in the Basque Country.

Elías Aguirre is a Basque name as common as John Smith in the United States. Whether he was Valentín Aguirre’s brother or another Elias Aguirre has not yet been established. We know Valentín’s brother arrived in the United States in 1881 and that he worked in the mines of the West Coast. He married Cerefinia Orube in 1917, but we do not know if he was in New York in 1913, the year of the signing of the Incorporation papers which were prepared by a young lawyer who later became a famous Mayor of

New York, Fiorello LaGuardia. We have contacted several Aguirre families in New York, New Jersey and the Basque Country and even asked the Basque Government for help in finding the Elias Aguirre who was in New York in 1913. The true identity of the Founder remains a mystery. If anyone has any information regarding the Founder, Elias Aguirre, we would appreciate hearing about it.

José Altuna (1892-1974) affectionately known as “Guiputz” was one of the best known members of the Basque Community. He was the collector of dues for the Centro Vasco Americano of New York for decades. He was born in Mondragon, Guipuzkoa, one of 10 children and came to the United States at the age of 18. He had promised Teresa Urquidi of Marquina that he would work hard in the new country, save his money, bring her over and marry her. José kept his word. They had 10 children just as his parents. José worked for the New York Transportation system for over 50 years and during those years he devoted his time to the Basque Center. Because his transportation was free, José could travel all over New York to visit every member, which he did every day. The Center enjoyed his services and he did not ask for compensation. He also communicated Basque news to the members. José Altuna was indeed an unsung hero. His was a labor of love, which he performed daily and consistently. Financially, the Basque Center was healthy and thriving during all those years.

Toribio Altuna was born in 1890 in Mondragon, Guipuzkoa Gamiz, near Mungia, and died in New York in 1981 at the age of 91. When his was 19, he came to New York accompanied by Sylvestre Goicoechea, the brother of the girl he had promised to marry back home. Apparently Sylvestre thought he would make a good husband for his sister, because soon after Angela Goicoechea from Gamiz, near Mungia, Bizkaia came to New York, Toribio and Angela were married. They had 4 children: Justa, Juan, Angel and Baby Altuna (who died at birth) and 5 grandchildren: Angela, Robert, Larry, Paul, Carol and 10 great grandchildren. After several jobs, Toribio decided to go to night school. He passed a Civil Service test and he became a stationary fireman. He worked at Bellvue Hospital until the day of retirement. He was proud of his job and took pride in his work. His wife died when he was 54 and for the next 37 years he lived with his daughter Justa, his son-in-law, Angel Bilbao, and their children. He played the piano-accordion and obviously inspired his daughter Justa to play the violin. Justa tells us he was a loving father, husband, grandfather and a hard working Basque.

Estanislao Beobide (1869-1936) was born in Elanchove, Bizkaia. His father was a sea captain and, following his father’s footsteps, he also went to sea. At age 11 he became a cabin boy. He learned quickly and worked his way up to chief engineer on ships of the Moore McCormack and Ward Lines. He married Vicenta Bermeosolo when he was 36 years old. They had 5 children: Lino, Josephine, Elias (died very early) Elisa and Elias. When Estanislao left seafaring, he continued working at Hotel Belleclair. He studied assiduously and got his license as a stationary engineer. In 1927, he was hired by Mrs. Andrew Carnegie to manage the heating system of the enormous mansion at 2 East 91 Street, New York. He loved working at the beautiful

mansion, which had elegant gardens and modern heating equipment. Estanislao Beobide was a man of integrity and loyalty. He personified a highly regarded Basque characteristic: You give your word, you keep your word!

Gabriel Elustondo (1886-1952) was born in Ea, Bizkaia and first came to Philadelphia looking for better opportunities and a better life. Later, in New York, he became a maintenance engineer at the Temple Bar Building at Court and Joralemon Streets in Brooklyn. He married Segunda Gainsa from Gernika and they had three children: Felix, Carmen and Emil. Gabriel was one to the most active and most popular members of Centro Vasco Americano in New York. He was known for his dedication to visit the sick and needy Basques whether at home, at a hospital, in any part of New York City, Ellis Island or Long Island. He was a favorite and everyone knew Gabriel. He was, without question, one of the great contributors to the welfare of Basques in New York.

Guillermo Garay was born in 1885 in Arrieta, Bizkaia and died in New York in 1952 at the age of 67. He came to New York when he was 31 years old and lived at the Marury boarding house at 56 Cherry Street. The running joke was that he was “the visitor who stayed forever.” Guillermo was a reserved and quiet person who usually spoke in Basque and Spanish. His son Peter remembers that when he was 14 or 15, his father arranged to have him play the violin at a gathering at Centro Vasco. Whatever arrangement was made, he recalls that Valentín Aguirre gave him a 5 dollar bill, an impressive amount of money at that time for a young boy. At the age of 48, he must have learned English, for he decided to become a citizen of the United States. The Marury family remembers that he was very good to them.

Florencio Iturraspe has been one of the most difficult Founders to research. It is generally believed that he married but had no children. Several Iturraspes have been located in Florida and in Bizkaia, but not one is related to the Florencio who signed the Incorporation papers in 1913. The Society welcomes any information that would help to find his relatives. ADDENDUM: After nearly two years of research with the help of one of the best genealogists of the Basque Country, Alberto Diez de Tabillexa of Gernika, we finally resolved the mystery of the enigmatic Florencio. Elvira Yturbe Preston of Brooklyn, New York, informed us that she had attended school with the granddaughter of Florencio, Marie Eturraspe, not Iturraspe. Further research revealed that Florencio had "Americanized" his name, believing that it would be easier to pronounce. Florencio Iturraspe Etxeandia was born in Elantxobe, Bizkaia on February 23, 1873.

He came to the United States, and in New York married Genoveva of Mundaka, Bizkaia. They had five children: Dionisio, Laurence, Joseph, Martina and Alexander.

Florencio was forty years old when he signed the papers of the first Incorporated Basque Center in the United States. He died in Brooklyn at the age of 81 surrounded by his large family of children and grandchildren.

Nicolás Luzuriaga (1887-1967) was born in Los Arcos, Navarre to Zenona and Felipe Luzuriaga. He was a young man in his twenties when he came to New York looking for a better life. He worked on a ship as a fireman and later over a period of 20 years he managed and maintained four buildings. He married María Altuna and had five children: Philip, Lauriano, Joaquin, Nicolas and Mary (now McGrath). His nostalgia for his homeland was so intense, he would visit the Basque Club every day, even for a few minutes to chat with other Basques. At one time, when Pedro Toja was visiting the Basque Country, he asked him to bring back a bag of soil from his beloved Los Arcos. The Mayor of Los Arcos verified, in writing, that the soil was genuine. The bag was buried with Nicolas when he died.

Juan Orbe was born in Busturia in 1885 and died in New York in 1931. He came to the United States with the intention of working as a shepherd, but instead he stayed in New York and became a maintenance worker in the boiler room of the Chase Manhattan Bank in Manhattan. He married Juana Aizpuru, also from Busturia. They had five children: Andrew, Louis, Joseph, Mari Carmen (now Mazza) and Frank. Unfortunately, at age 42, at the time of the tuberculosis epidemic, Juan became a victim of the disease and was sent to an upstate sanatorium. He died within 3 years at the age of 46. His daughter Carmen remembers him as a handsome, gentle and loving father and husband and a dedicated member of the Basque Club. Her mother often said that in the 15 years that they were married, he provided her with enough love for the rest of her life.

Escolástico Uriona has been another one of our elusive Founders. For a long time, the only information we could gather from the Basques in New York was that he was the oldest of the 13 Founders, was very well educated, that he was the first president of Centro Vasco and that soon after 1913 he returned to his home town. It was only by chance that someone remembered María Luisa Belaustegui mentioning someone by the name of Escolástico in her hometown of Busturia. We communicated with María Luisa and later visited her and Escolástico's home near Busturia. We found out that indeed, Escolástico had returned to San Bartolome near Busturia, quite wealthy after having worked and saved his money in America. He built a magnificent home in Canene, a section of Busturia near the "Ermita." He did not marry and neither did his sister, but his nieces and nephews and their offspring now live in the mansion with the beautiful gardens. Escolástico lived to a ripe old age. He was the guide, mentor and intellectual leader of the men who would meet in the basement of a house on Water Street in the downtown area of Manhattan, sometime around 1905, to discuss the creation of a Basque Center. Those 5 men besides Escolástico were: Valentín Aguirre, Elias Aguirre, Juan Cruz Aguirre and Toribio Altuna.

Tiburcio Uruburu was born in 1885 in Forua, Bizkaia to Martin Uruburu and Paula Vidaechea. He was a robust young man when he came to New York and worked as a fireman on a tugboat. Later he worked in a factory that manufactured heavy rope and during a span of 17 years, he moved up to an engineering position in the

boiler room. In 1941 he died at the age of 56, leaving two daughters, Soledad, known as Sally Newton, and Julia, now Arcara.

General Mariano Necochea Hero of the Independence of Argentina who gave his name to the City of Necochea September 7, 1792 - April 5, 1849

Mariano Necochea was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina into a family of comfortable means. His father, Casimiro Francisco Necochea, a shipbuilder, originally came from Urzainqui, Navarre. He died when Mariano was still a child and his mother, María Mercedes Saraza, sent him to be schooled in Seville, Spain. In 1810, at the age of 18, the youth returned to Argentina and found himself in the midst of the revolutionary movement for independence from Spain. In 1812 he enlisted and, under the command of San Martin, he was one of 125 grenadiers who fought in the Battle of San Lorenzo. Later, he joined the army of Alta Peru where he became famous for his extraordinary feats. He fought in the battle of Venta y Media, but he was wounded in the battle of Sipe, Sipe. He recovered and was selected by San Martin to command the outpost of the Argentine Cavalry at the crossroads of the Andes on Chilean soil where he defeated the royalist troops. San Martin later wrote, "With a saber in his hand, he routed the enemy before him, thereby opening the entire province for the army." Again San Martin selected him to command the Corps of Chasseurs on horseback, created in June 23, 1817. When San Martin retired, Necochea fought under Bolivar who named him Governor of Lima in 1824. In the Battle of Junin, he commanded the Cavalry and fell with 14 serious wounds. When he recovered he was named by Bolivar as director of the Government of Peru. In 1826, he was detained and accused of conspiracy against Bolivar, but was released because of lack of valid charges. He then returned to Buenos Aires, bringing his wounds with him, but not his liberating campaign. Years later he was named Chief Marshal of Military Reserve of Peru and with the passage of time, and after many battles, his health began to fail. At the age of 56, he died in Miraflores of Lima, Peru. The Society of Basque Studies in America commends General Mariano Necochea for his bravery and for his contribution to the welfare and identity of Basques in Latin America.

Euskal Etxea Asociación de Beneficiencia y Cultural, 1900

One hundred years ago, in April 1900, we first hear of the founding of Euskal Etxea, a Basque confraternity in the Republic of Argentina. It was an auspicious event that wiped out the distinction between Basques to the north and Basques to the south of the Pyrenees and united the three Basque institutions that existed at that time in Argentina: Centro Vasco Frances, Centro Navarro and Sociedad Vasco-Espanola Laurak Bat of Buenos Aires. The Statute that was completed on April 14, 1904

covered Cultural and Welfare concerns. The purpose of the Cultural section was to create schools and to educate Basque youth, and the purpose of the Welfare section was to give care and shelter to indigent, aged Basques and to orphans and the needy. In June of 1904, the Women's Committee undertook the administration of schools and shelters for girls. In the following years, elementary schools were opened and classes in French, Basque and Sewing were offered. At the Hills of Zamora in the Province of Buenos Aires, a cornerstone was laid for the future school of Ninas de los Institutos de Llavallol, under the tutelage of the R. Hermanas Siervas de María de Anglet. In 1907 the Orden de los R. Padres Capuchinos de Navarra y Cantabria was contracted to undertake the teaching of boys. Gradually, during the next few decades, schools were merged and many changes took place. In 1986, under the patronage of Dona Catalina Urruspuru de Dufau, President of the Women's Committee and Vice President of the Fundación Vasco Argentina Juan de Garay, the new building of Jardin de Infantes was inaugurated. Five years after, the Seccion Primaria de Varones del Colegio de la Capital appeared followed by the Residencia San Benito, which addressed the needs of the Community. In 1999, the instruction of two foreign languages was strengthened: English (Departamento de Inglés) and French (Departamento de Frances). In summary, Euskal Etxea Asociación de Beneficencia y Cultural has succeeded in its mission. A special note of recognition goes to the Committees of Women who have worked so diligently to respond to the needs of the Basques. The Society of Basque Studies honors Euskal Etxea Asociación de Beneficencia y Cultural for contributing to the culture and welfare of the Basques in America.

Comité Pro-Inmigración Vasca, 1940

At the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1940 and the beginning of World War II, Basque patriots were living in precarious conditions. The Basque Delegation of Buenos Aires received a plea for help from the Basque Government in exile, asking for refuge for the Basques living in such a bleak situation. It was a moment of anguish. With the aid of engineer José Urbano de Aguirre, President of the Basque Delegation and the parish priest of the Basilica del Santísimo Sacramento, the first interview was held with the President of the Argentine Government, Dr. Roberto Ortiz. They were received with a warm embrace and it was decided that it was necessary to find a rapid solution to the crisis. It was most helpful that generations of compatriots had come to Argentina and had contributed to the enhancement and prosperity of the new Country. With the help of members of the Delegation, a memorandum was written and on the following day presented to Dr. Ortiz. The legal formula was developed in the text of the document and ended with these words: "Entrance to the Country is authorized for Basques from both sides of the Pyrenees with or without documentation, preliminary authorization of the Comité for that purpose will be created." That was a solemn recognition, from the highest authorized figure of the Country, regarding the conduct of the Basque Community that had been forged under the shade of the Pyrenees and had sent its people as pioneers of liberty and

grandeur. The Society of Basque Studies in America recognizes the Comité Pro-Inmigración for having facilitated legal entry to the exiled undocumented Basques who had no possibility of finding refuge in any other place in the world and for having contributed to the identity and welfare of the Basques in America.

THE TWENTY FIRST ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
DECEMBER 9, 2001 NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Mark Kurlansky
December 7, 1948

Internationally known author Mark Kurlansky was born in Hartford, Connecticut on December 7, 1948, the grandson of Jewish immigrants from Central Europe. He received a BA in theater in 1970 and began a career in New York as a playwright. Although he had a number of productions his interests turned away from theater and toward journalism. During the 1970's he worked as a correspondent in Western

Europe for the Miami Herald, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and eventually the International Herald Tribune. He covered a number of pivotal events in Spanish history including the end of the Franco years and the transition years. It was during those years that he got to know and admire the Basques. In 1982 he left Europe and moved to Mexico City where he reported on Mexico, the wars in Central America, and South America. In 1984 he began covering the Caribbean for the Chicago Tribune—reporting regularly on Haiti, Cuba, and Jamaica but also on the smaller islands. In 1992, his first book *A Continent of Islands: In Search of the Caribbean Destiny* was published by Addison Wesley. He then returned to Paris to work on his next book *A Chosen Few: The Resurrection of European Jewry* which was published in 1995 by Addison Wesley. Although during these years he spent most of his time researching Jewish communities in Western and Central Europe, he also took time to regularly reacquaint himself with the Basque Country. In 1997 Walker and Company published his third book *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*, an international best seller translated into more than 15 languages. In that book he wrote a great deal about Basque maritime history and found that often these were among the passages readers and reviewers found most interesting. In 1999 Walker published *The Basque History of the World*, which was an American and Canadian Best Seller and was translated into several European languages. In 2000 his first book of fiction, a collection of short stories about the Caribbean, *The White Man in the Tree* was published by Washington Square Press. The New York Times wrote "As rich, complex, and delicious as the islands themselves, boiling with humanity." In 2001, *The Cod's Tale*, a children's version of his cod book was published by Putnam. Currently Walker is publishing an-

other history book in which the Basques play an important part, *Salt: A World History*. He is currently working on a novel set in New York City and a history of the year 1968 around the world both to be published by Ballantine. "I regard the work I have done on the Basques to be among my best accomplishments. To make people aware of something little known and completely misunderstood, to be able to set the record straight on a maligned people, is as good a reason for writing as I can think of," says Mark Kurlansky. He is honored for his extraordinary contribution to Basque identity and culture.

**TWENTY SECOND ANNUAL HALL OF FAME
DECEMBER 7, 2002 CHINO, CALIFORNIA**

This year we have decided to heed the words of Unamuno, the Basque philosopher, who reminds us that the real heroes and heroines of the world are the people who do their daily jobs, day-in and day-out, without any expectation of celebrity. These are the people who make the world go round. Today we celebrate these people.

**Josephine Mainvil Arriet
Steady, Working Member of Basque Organizations
November 19, 1916**

Josephine Mainvil Arriet was born in San Bernardino, California. Her father, Jean Mainvil, came from Hasparren, Labourd and her mother, Frances Osés, from Errazu, Navarre. They had two children: Josephine and John. Josephine attended Chaffey College in Ontario, California and, even though times were bad during the depression years, her abilities were recognized, and the Chaffey schools employed her in the Attendance and Business Offices for 14 _ years until she married John Arriet, a farmer, who raised cotton and alfalfa. The couple moved to Fresno, California where their daughter, Kathy, was born. Kathy had three sons and Josephine is proud of the grandsons: Brett, Phillip and Jonathan. Josephine's interest in Basque culture started very early when her parents took her to visit Basque friends and to attend Basque festivals. Her daughter learned Basque dances at Los Banos Basque Club and, when Fresno Basque Club opened, Josephine became a dedicated working member. Victor Esain, who was president of the club, appointed her as a delegate to her first NABO meeting in 1982 where, ever since, her steadfast presence has been noted. She has been an active member of the California and Local Woolgrowers Auxiliaries since 1960 and has been in charge of raising money for the promotion of lamb and wool for 15 years. The Society of Basque Studies in America honors Josephine Mainvil Arriet for her years of steady devotion to supporting the culture and identity of Basques in America.

Bert Aphesssetche

Chino Basque Club Builder & Ongoing Worker

Bert was born in 1936 in the town of Uharte-Cize in the Basque Country. Twenty years later he made the long journey here to America and he has been in the Chino area ever since. In 1965 he met his wife Danielle, and together they raised three children: Sophie, Mike and Chris. Then ten years later he became an active member of the Chino Basque Club. There are over thirty Basque clubs/organizations in the US, and only seven of the clubs have their own facility. With a membership under 100, fifteen years ago, the Chino Basque Club took on the daunting task of building a clubhouse. Bert was one of the key instigators of this project and thanks in large part to his persistence, the Chino area Basques have a house to call their own. He oversaw fundraising as well as construction, and when necessary, he also helped to purchase the land and held it while the club worked to get all the other details together. While paying off the building, for many years, after the monthly fundraisers, Bert cleaned pots and pans outside with a garden hose before the club added a kitchen. He has served as president and is currently the vice-president of the club. Speaking to his ongoing service, he is there at every club event working at the BBQ. He keeps at it because he wants to see the Basque heritage preserved. He is bright, generous and gregarious, a credit to our larger Basque community.

Isidore Camou

Chino Basque Club Builder & Ongoing Worker

Isidore was born in 1939 in the town of Isturiz in the Basque Country. In 1961 he came to America following his brother to southern California. Six years later he wed his sweetheart from across the river in the Basque Country, Marie Claire. Together they raised five children: Francois, Alain, Patrick, Dominique and Louise. Living in Riverside, in 1976, they went to work in the motel business. That same year he became an active member of the Chino Basque Club and went to work at the annual club picnic barbecue—he has been cooking for the club ever since! He works every month at club fundraisers preparing meals, which is praiseworthy, but his contribution extends beyond. When the Chino club planned renovating its building a decade ago, the obstacle was the necessary funding to start the project. Isidore's family helped to secure the financing and then he worked to pay back the loan. Some people work for the club and others contribute financially. He did both, clearly demonstrating his genuine conviction to see the Basque club prosper. He remains committed to the club and Basque community. Repeatedly nominated as president, Isidore politely refuses because he doesn't want the limelight. A man of few words, who puts his work and money where his heart is: the promotion of our Basque heritage. Isidore is a man worthy of emulation and recognition.

Aita Martxel Tillous Chaplain of the Basque-American Community, Dedicated Contributor and Promoter of Basque Heritage

Aita Martxel Tillous was born in 1934 in the Basque town of Eskuila in Zuberoa. Following his calling, he entered the priesthood and began work as a missionary for 26 years in Africa. Returning to Europe he served four years as the Basque chaplain for the Basque community of Paris. He came to the United States to serve as chaplain of Basque-Americans in 1994. Aita Martxel is continuing in the footsteps of earlier Basque chaplains, and he continues to fulfill an important role in our Basque-American community. His ministry as chaplain to the Basques of the United States has him criss-crossing the country averaging 60,000 miles a year! He spends 200 nights a year sleeping in his van—with the license plate “Pottoka”—as he travels from his base in San Francisco, California to the scattered Basque communities of eleven states of the American West. His purpose is to serve the spiritual needs of Basque-Americans: celebrating mass in the Basque language, baptizing, marrying Basque couples and consoling the bereaved at funerals. Our chaplain from Zuberoa is being recognized for both his spiritual and cultural contributions. An avid *txistulari*, Aita Martxel is often seen and heard playing this ancient Basque flute, or its variation the *xirula*. For the last several years he has served as the txistu instructor at NABOs annual Udaleku (Basque Cultural Summer Camp) for youth. After a Basque picnic meal, he is always ready to join in a Basque sing-along. He also produces a newsletter, “Lokarria”, that goes out to thousands of Basque-American families thereby bringing our community closer together.

Chino Basque Club Provider of a Home for the Promotion of Basque Culture

The Chino Basque Club was founded in 1968 and today counts over 130 men and women members. Now in its fourth decade, the Chino Basque Club continues its efforts to preserve and promote Basque heritage. Events include periodic music tournaments, monthly club meals at the clubhouse which are punctuated with Basque entertainment that includes handball games, music, song & dance. The clubhouse is also the home of the Gauden Bat & Dantzari Onestak Basque Dancers, the Euskal Giroa Women's Folk Ensemble, the Chino Basque Klika and the new Xori Ttipiak, little children's group. The club's largest event remains the annual picnic on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend at the Chino Fairgrounds. Some years ago the club celebrated its 30th anniversary and presented the "Besta Berri" celebration. The club intends to celebrate Besta Berri again this year.



Conclusion: living at the of tradition

(09)

Basques intersection and modernity

Euskeraz Mesedez: IN BASQUE PLEASE

The emigrant generation of Basques who formed the original New York ethnic community spoke Basque. They spoke Basque at home, and they spoke Basque at their social functions. The children who were the first generation born in the United States likely understood the language from listening to their parents, and though their parents spoke to them in Basque, after they began their formal education, they were more likely to answer their parents in English. A few parents spoke to their children in Spanish or French, thinking this would give them a more portable and significant career skill than would *Euskara*, and a few parents even spoke to their own children in the little English that they knew. “When my father left the Basque Country he knew he would stay to live in the United States and was not going back. And when he married my mother here, and I was born here, it reaffirmed that this too was now his country. It didn’t mean that he ever forgot Euskadi; it meant that he had two countries and two languages. He knew to live here successfully we had to speak English, so he spoke Basque with his friends and English at home with me,” said Steve Aspiazu of his father Esteban “Txarron” Aspiazu, of Gernika. In the early 1900s, Gabrielle Amestoy was forced to speak in French at school in Lapurdi, but spoke only Basque at home. Her father learned Spanish from his twenty years in Uruguay, but always spoke in Basque and could not read or write in any language. Jean Amestoy signed his name with an X.

By the time those first generation born in New York Basques were old enough to be parents, most of them had forgotten the Basque language that they had used at home because their *Euskera* was almost always passive. They received the language by listening to their parents and to the elderly at the Basque functions, but they had not actively practiced answering a question or thinking of a sentence structure in order to say anything in the Basque language. Now as parents in their own homes and without their mothers or fathers, most found it very difficult to speak Basque to their own children—the second generation born in the U.S. Consequently in the New York area, until the 1940s there were actually a few thousand *Euskara* speakers, and by the 1970s there were most likely several hundreds of passive bilinguals who could understand Basque, but did not use it. At the new millennium, the second and third generation’s exposure is mainly from a few phrases with their grandparents; “*Zorionak*” for Happy Birthday, “*Urte berri on*” for Happy New Year, and “*agur*” for good-bye.

Minority language maintenance studies demonstrate that if there is not a meaningful social or economic function or necessity to a language, the success rate for preservation is extremely low. In the case of *Euskara* in the New York Basque commu-



New York Basques gathered often during the 1940s and 1950s for dances and other social gatherings. The language of older Basques was still Euskera, while younger Basques had now switched to English.

nity, the emigrant generation maintained Basque in their social structures of neighborhood life, at the C.V.A., and at communal activities. They also utilized Basque in gaining and keeping employment with other Basques, and for conversing and obtaining information from the newly arrived emigrants. Mari Carmen Orueta Aberasturi went to school in Kortezubi and also in Gernika and though they were taught in Spanish she spoke only in Basque at home, and her town was an *Euskera* speaking town, therefore, in general she did not hear Spanish on the streets or ever speak to anyone in Spanish but her teacher. In New York, she spoke to other Basques in *Euskera* and to her children in *Euskera*. There was a constant influx of Basque speakers until approximately the 1950s, when Basque immigration through New York to the American West almost ceased. For nearly seven decades Basques had immigrated to New York specifically, and thousands of others had stopped temporarily on one's way west, re-charging the language and ethnic batteries of the older generation in the community. A visit to Aguirre's Jai-Alai Restaurant, or to the C.V.A., surely included meeting another *Euskera* speaker. Almost none of these immigrants had seriously studied, or could speak, any English upon their arrival.

The effects of the Franco dictatorship and its policies, which prohibited the use of *Euskara*, were evident in the numbers of 1960s Basque immigrants that did not speak Basque well, or at all. They had been educated in Spanish only, and only Spanish was allowed as the language of newspapers, television, radio, and for official communications. María Luz Echevarria Elordi Landaburu was born in 1948 in Zornotza-Amorebieta. She spoke only *Euskera* at home, but was only allowed to speak Spanish at school. Therefore, she and her generational cohorts were not allowed to learn to read and write in Basque. Nevertheless, today she says, "My real second language is English, because in America I only speak Basque or English." There were no formal Basque language classes in the community when José Mari Larrañaga arrived to Manhattan in 1962. "We spoke about how we needed it, but never actually got them organized," he said.

By the 1970s, the Basques immigrating to New York were from an entirely different category than their predecessors. These newcomers, such as Jorge Aguirre born in Deba in 1946, were skilled specialists with university degrees and professional training. Many were musical and visual artists, engineers, culinary artists, economists, business owners, or academics, but were not likely fluent and literate in *Euskera*. "It was the Franco years and none of us learned Basque. It was outlawed," he said. They only knew *Euskara* if their parents had spoken it at home, and if they did participate in the *Euzko-Etxea* activities, many preferred to do so in English, wishing to practice their new language skills. In March 1977, Father Luis Mallea, a retired priest, began organizing interested students for *Euskera* classes at the Eckford Street *Euzko-Etxea*. Father Arana assisted and every Sunday the *Euzko-Etxea* offered *txistu* lessons, dance rehearsals, and *Euskera* classes at 5 p.m. from Father Mallea.

The 1990s ‘modern Basque’ arrived in New York eager to enjoy a cosmopolitan metropolis experience and according to Luis “Koitz” Foncillas Etxeberria and Kutz Arrieta, at first these Basques “had no desire whatsoever to spend their time at a Basque cultural center, or at Basque cultural activities.” Foncillas Etxeberria remembers his first years in New York as a time of discovery, of breaking out of the home country mold. “People don’t come to New York City to keep doing the same things they can do at home. I didn’t need the Basque Center when I first arrived, I was already Basque and didn’t have to prove it or share it with anyone. It was only after I was here for a while that I began to really miss my home in Navarra, and then I started to go to the *Eusko Etxea*.” Like so many immigrants before him, Foncillas Etxeberria believed his move to New York would be temporary, but has stayed for nearly a decade. Kutz Arrieta conducted her Ph.D. fieldwork interviewing New York Basques about their language abilities and then having them read to her and speak to her in Basque. This work, not yet published, studied how the participants mixed usage of Basque with Spanish and English, their pronunciation, and the transmission of language between generations.

Many of the recent immigrants, such as Iñaki Lazcoz from Pamplona, have had the opposite experience of their parents. Their parents spoke Spanish at home, but the children were sent to *ikastolas* in order to learn Basque. Guillermo Zubiaga was born in Baracaldo, Bizkaia in 1972. He remembers that as a young boy, not all *ikastolas* were legal. The school he attended had a “disguise”. Zubiaga described his *ikastola*, “In the eyes of the public it was a coffee shop, everyone thought it was a coffee shop, but it was an underground *ikastola*. I remember how the parents would meet with the kids and go together. The bar had a trap door and where the back wall was, there was another trap door in the floor behind the bar. They would open it for us and we’d go down quickly to the classes that were held in the basement, under the ground. It was quite an experience! I didn’t understand the reason why we had to do that. When Franco died, I remember briefly the celebrations in the streets, and I wasn’t old enough to understand, but then looking back I do understand the sacrifice my parents went through. *Euskera* was not spoken in my house, my brother and I had to learn it in *ikastola*.” He learned Latin, Spanish, and English in Basque, and his English teacher was a Basque from Idaho. “At that time I was not aware of the extent of the diaspora, but she was an American born Basque, with perfect *Euskera*, who taught us English.” Zubiaga emigrated with a globalized mentality because of his experiences and education at the *Ikastola Lauro*.

In the 1990s, several members of the *Euzko-Etxea* wanted to learn Basque, and those who already knew a little wanted to practice their language skills. However, creating classes out of the many different levels was extremely difficult. Students also had to decide if they wanted to learn a Bizkaian form of *Euskera*, or if they wanted to learn the new *Euskera Batua*, or unified Basque, created by the *Euskaltzaindia*, Basque Language Academy, and used in Basque Country media and taught in schools. Karmelo Barrenetxea, the *Euzko-Etxea*’s *Euskera* teacher, was the perfect instructor. Born in

Mañaria, Bizkaia, he knew the Bizkaian form of Basque, but in addition, he had studied Batua in school and was a certified instructor by the *Euskaltzaindia* Basque Language Academy. Barrenetxea was living in New York City with his family and teaching in the New York public school system. He volunteered to teach Basque language on Sunday afternoons in 1994 with beginning and intermediate sessions separated.

The advanced students began by reading an “irradi novella” or radio soap opera, written by Arantxa Iturbe in 1993 for Basque Radio, “Maite, maite, maitea”. Each student had their role whether a few words or complete paragraphs of dialogue. After reading and practicing the fifteen acts and abbreviating them to produce a two-hour play, the production exemplified the fun of attaining another language and that indeed, learning Basque was not impossible. Itziar Albisu Kobayashi initiated *Euskera* for children, ages three to twelve, with storytelling and singing. She speaks to her own children in Basque, and to her husband of Japanese ancestry in English. “I try to teach *Euskara*, and sing in *Euskara* with the children so that they can grasp the notion of pronunciation and vocabulary,” she said.



Euskera students held their 1995 classes in the Jon Oñatibia Library at the Euzko-Etxea.

When Barrenetxea returned to *Euskal Herria* with his family, Koldo Almandoz of Donostia-San Sebastián accepted the voluntary post of *irakaslea*, or teacher, for the language classes. The courses utilized a text titled, *Learning Basque*, by Xabier Gereno and M. Dean Johnson, published by Jeffrey Norton, Inc. of Guilford, Connecticut. Almandoz was a specialist in audio-visual communication from the Public University of Navarre and was studying film and earning a higher degree at New York University. When he completed his studies and returned to the Basque Country, the students were again left without a teacher. Ion Rey Bakaikua came to the rescue in 1998. Bakaikua was on a sabbatical leave from his instructor's position in Pamplona where he taught Basque to other schoolteachers, and was in New York volunteering at the Brooklyn Interfaith Action helping immigrants and computerizing data for them. "He was another lucky find," said student Xanti Mendieta. "Ion kept us on track and because he had already been teaching Basque for years, he was really great at adjusting to our mixed bag of ability levels. But at the end of the year he had to go back to the Basque Country;" said Mendieta. Jasone Gezuraga and Olatz Hormaetxe came to New York from Larrabezua, Bizkaia, and volunteered to continue the instruction for the beginning and intermediate language classes. In 2001, Karlos Itur-



The Euzko-Etxea members celebrated their own "Korrika" to promote the study of Euskera in New York.

ralde volunteered to teach *Euskera*, and is the current *irakaslea*. There are usually ten students who appear on Sunday afternoons, and there have been students who are not ancestrally Basque such as Junichi Takahashi and Chad Rice. They have a desire to learn the language usually because they have lived in the Basque Country or are married or partnered with a Basque. For those who cannot attend on Sundays, New York is planning to participate in the Basque Government *Hezinet* online Internet language courses. Students can utilize this individualized instruction at the club computer, or from their own homes if they are connected to a powerful server.

On the 2002 International Day of Euskera, December 3, Emilia Doyaga participated in a live satellite transmission and videoconference with other Basques around the world to discuss the present situation of the Basque language with the *Lehendakari* Ibarretxe. Homeland Basques watched the live feed on their television sets, and Basques around the world that had access to EITB also followed the show. The commentators examined the urgent importance of maintaining and promoting *Euskera*, and other feeds came from Basques in Barcelona, London, Paris, Buenos Aires, and Salt Lake City. Doyaga exclaimed, “It was fantastic! There we were, Basques from all over the world speaking in our Bizkaian, *Batua*, *Xiberotarra*, accents but all speaking in *Euskera*. I must say I was very, very proud to see it.”

CONCLUSION ON TODAY’S BASQUE IDENTITY IN NEW YORK

Vivian Zuluaga-Papp is usually one of the last people to leave the movie theater. She stays and watches the film credits for Basque names. She admits, “Yeah, I also look in the phone book for Basque names.” Itziar Albisu Kobayashi did the same thing and that was how she found a connection to the *Euzko-Etxea*. Both women want their children to experience the Basque Country and know the ethnic traditions, and to meet other young Basques. “I want them to know it’s cool to be Basque,” said Zuluaga-Papp. On the east coast, there is no determined social status to being Basque because so few people know what it is, and even then, it is one more ethnic group among hundreds. Being “different” is actually “normal” in New York. This eliminates the factor of status—generally so significant to teenagers—for preserving and promoting the maintenance of Basque culture and identity. There is no assigned positive, or negative, aspect to one’s ethnicity; it is simply a neutral variable.

“I don’t remember any discrimination because people don’t even know what ‘Basque’ is, and there are so many ethnic groups here anyway. If you go to one place and they discriminate against you, just go to another place and they’ll discriminate for you,” said Margie Abadia. A few Basques responded that they thought being Basque had actually *helped* them when applying for a job, in scholarship applications, when asking to rent an apartment or home, and when joining an organization or club, because of the good reputation that Basques have as being honest and hard

working. Steve Aspiazu remarked, “No one knows who we are because we never cause any problems. We have never asked for any special treatment or expected anything from society. We have always kept to ourselves and just done what we were supposed to do- work hard and take care of our families.” Aspiazu pointed out that a few Basques benefited in certain parts of New York because they were assumed to be Italian or Galician and those ethnic networks helped them. The immigrant’s processes of settling includes new language acquisition, employment, changing gender roles, and constructing new social spaces for ethnicity maintenance, and the examples I have given show that Basques accomplished all of these quite successfully.

Early immigrants traveled to New York from rural Basque society. Today’s Basques are arriving from all seven provinces with university educations, jobs, scholarships, or grants from foundations. There are an estimated two thousand Basques in New York who have entered within the last ten years, many of them are teachers, engineers and artists, media production specialists, and architects, and some would say the Basque Country is experiencing its own version of a “brain drain”. “Yes, but I am glad that the Basque Country is doing so well that these new immigrants are so well educated and are not leaving starving like our grandparents did,” noted Anna M. Aguirre. Julen Abio also noted changes but from a cultural perspective, “I have found that the Basque clubs that we have in the U.S. have more of Euskadi in them than what you see over there. It’s the new modern Euskadi, the new people who think they have to reject history to live in the present. But they have moved into the future too fast. ‘More modern’ to them -and to a lot of people in Europe- is to be more like the American, which is not my idea of being a better person. Young Basques in the Basque Country don’t even know their own history or culture.” “More Basque than”, and “less Basque than” categories are used to describe other Basques by several in the New York Basque community. Father José Mari Larrañaga feels, “Basque with a touch of American. A person can be both, and more too. We don’t have to be only one thing. First I am Basque, but I can add other identities too.” Larrañaga has an inclusive definition of Basqueness. He says, “The important thing is that you are Basque in your heart, that you love Basque culture, language, history and all of these things.” Iñigo Aragues Orue, born in 1967 in Bilbao, gives his own category; “I am Basque by design, with an American attitude.”

Each successive wave of new Basque migrants has entered into an existing ethnic institutional structure and has had to adjust not only to United States culture and New York, but also to a modified Basque diaspora culture community. The diaspora reality has promulgated a different kind of Basque identity than that which was contemporary, known, and expected by the new arrival. The “authenticity” of their Basqueness is questioned by the newcomer, and likewise the newcomers’ authenticity is questioned by the existing community, as implied by Abio above, and by many others in their interviews. Equally important to the question of inter-communal relations between Basques and other New Yorkers, is the *intra*-communal under-

standing between existing Basque ethnics and recent Basque immigrants. This also appeared to be a factor in why recent Basque immigrants to New York do not participate in the *Euzko-Etxea* functions. In this community the generation gap has nothing to do with age, it is a gap between generations of immigrants.

“Things have changed,” said Pilar Echaniz Cendagorta, who was twenty years old and recently married in Bizkaia when she arrived in 1960. “There were more than twenty Basque families on my street when I came to the U.S. Today? Only Joe Lezamiz from Busturia. Uribes kept their house and Zabalas too. Frank Aberasturi, Delfina’s sister, and Eguskiñe’s brother were here too. Vitori and Esperanza Mirandona also lived right there,” she said, pointing down the street. They were all friends and knew each other from the *Centro Vasco* activities because they participated as families, and children also became friends. Today, “things have changed.” Polonia Orbe Gorostiola and Josefa Lezamiz Aguirre were intimate friends in the old Basque neighborhood at the beginning of the 1900s. Their daughters, Pilar Gorostiola Aspiazu and Lily Aguirre Fradua, were best friends. Pilar’s and Lily’s sons, Steve Aspiazu and Michael and Martin Fradua attended school together and were great friends. And today, their young adult children do not even remember if they have ever met each other. Much like the New York Basque community, four generations of human relationships and ethnic activities are at a crossroads. The Basque people still exist, but not the interrelationships, which places the idea of “community” into question. They will need to be reconnected, because, in the end, ethnic identity and “Basqueness” are social constructions and are meant to be exercised with other people. New York is a ‘glocal’ city -simultaneously global and local- and the physical distances between Basques living in the New York area do create complications. However, there are no blockades.

Kutz Arrieta deduced from her research that the later generation Basques have not found a way to transmit ‘Basqueness’ to their children, because their own Basqueness is in question and unclear. Most third- and some second- generation Basques born in New York do not speak *Euskera*. They do not know the traditional folk dances. They cannot prepare Basque style cuisine. They do not practice or know the rules of Basque sports. They do not play *mus* or *briska* or *tute*. They do not know the words or tunes to Basque songs. Many are monolingual English speakers and cannot read or understand the media coverage of events in the Basque Country. They do not remember ever attending a Basque picnic.

What makes them Basque? Does one necessarily have to be an “active” Basque, or can one be a “passive” Basque? Is my American identity called into question if I do not know how to square dance or make a tuna casserole? For many interviewees, Basqueness includes ancestry, feeling, emotional commitment, psychological connection to other Basques, and intellectual interest in Basque topics, among other determinants. Gabrielle Amestoy said, “My country is my best friend, it is in my heart. The Basque Country is in my heart.” It is very difficult to transmit these elements,

which are often connected to something that does not exist in a later generation person's reality or experience. The parents of today will have to systematically recreate for their children, similar experiences to what their own parents provided for them. Emilia Doyaga argues that the Basque community could keep traditional things, but add contemporary activities too. "In a city like New York, that's what you have to do in the twenty-first century. Keep the diaspora, but reinvent it," she said. Whether traditional or contemporary, sociology teaches us that the content is secondary to the actual social interaction. Doyaga is convinced Basques will participate if a wide array of activities is offered in a convenient place where people can get together- for social interaction.

Cast iron coffee pots, paintings of Bakio, and carved wooden busts of *Amuma* and *Aitxitxe* will need to share the display space with post-modern sculpture and laptops showing Basque websites and chatrooms. The Basque Americans want to be Basque, the transient migrant Basques want to be American, or at least get their fill of United States culture and especially of New York. How can these two realities coincide, or, how can they be combined? Transients are already Basque, they do not need any of the services or activities that the *Euzko-Etxea* currently provides. The Basque Americans could give to the new migrants the 'American' activities, and the new migrants could give the New York Basques the homeland connection to identity. This is actually just a replay of what the Basque organization has always done, except now activities would not focus on economic need, or mutual assistance for workers, but on social interaction and friendship, and on spiritual (though not only religious), emotional and psychological need.

Recent immigrants often said they did not need the club. However, I would argue that they do need the people. New immigrants to a different country almost always need to network in order to make friends, find doctors and dentists, find accommodation and find companionship, etc. fear, loneliness, and sadness are common in the immigration experience and could be alleviated by services provided from the club and its members. Perhaps added to the long list of functions for the possible future Basque International Cultural Center could be one of accommodations, or an updated version of the Basque boardinghouses that historically stood on that property. The majority of members of today's *Euzko-Etxea* is eager and enthusiastic to help and get involved with facilitating information for recently arrived Basques. Those immigrants could do the same and help with exchanges of information for the New York Basques wanting to visit *Euskal Herria*. Somehow they have to connect. New York's transnational Basques have assorted communities for cultural reference, such as other Basques in New York, NABO, various Internet news websites, personal interaction with the homeland, EITB, recent Basque immigrants, and Basques from other countries in the world traveling to New York. New York Basques have lived a cosmopolitan experience, influenced by the Basque traffic surrounding their community, and dependent on personal relationships. In order to perpetuate the existing community the relationships have to be maintained and reproduced continuously.

It is important to remember that the ‘community’ factor was also significant for the Basques from *Iparralde* who were not members of the Basque institutions. The skyscrapers of New York have served as a barrier similar to the peaks of the Pyrenees Mountains, separating “Spanish” and “French” Basque immigrants and their descendants. It is evident that the Basques from Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa, and Zuberoa socialized together; and separately, the Basques from Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Nafarroa met jointly. Equally significant is that many Basques living in New York have simply not been aware that there was, and is, an active Basque cultural organization. Gabrielle Amestoy came to the United States in 1918, and it was not until her 100th birthday in 2002 that she found out from a relative in Biarritz, that an *Euzko-Etxea* of New York ever existed! Visibility and media exposure have been virtually non-existent for New York Basques, but with the Internet, Basque institutions no longer need to rely on being advertised by others, and can self-promote and invite membership.

Steve Aspiazu’s daughter, Elizabeth, has the recognizable glow of a latter generation Basque who has experienced her first trip to the land of ancestors and in addition to answering many questions, has discovered a thousand more. Often these “born again Basques” become engaged in a lifelong journey of self-discovery through ethnicity. She says she always knew she was Basque, but after her trip to Euskadi now she “feels Basque.” “I just feel something different in my heart now,” she said. Perhaps like Gabrielle, she too has the Basque Country in her heart. Elizabeth will need to share that experience with others, and perhaps encourage others to make the trip to the Basque Country as she has. She might even call Michelle and Marielle Fradua to meet, and show them her photographs. They could talk about their fathers, and how they went to St. James School together, and then laugh about the sixty-four students and one nun. They could share stories about their grandmothers, and the elegance they presented in hat and gloves going to the movies together and enjoying Benny Goodman. Perhaps they could meet at the South Street Seaport for a coffee and walk past the old Fulton Fish Market, on the same streets where their great-grandmothers walked daily, under the Brooklyn Bridge and past the Alfred Smith Houses covering the old *Centro Vasco-Americano*, to Water and Catherine Streets in order to see the old Basque neighborhood. It is a ten minute walk that could take them back into their one hundred year common past. On their return, they could stop and consider which corner of the South Street Seaport area would be the best one for a future Basque International Cultural Center- and then make a commitment to get together again with their families at the next *Aberri Eguna*.

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