

Diving into the river's mountain run-off driven current was his favorite pastime. Well, that and ripping across the pitch along with his soccer buddies. Life was not very much fun for my father when he was a child, so he took great pleasure in what little he had. My grandfather had died when my dad was just a nine year-old boy; that meant the end of school for the oldest of five children.

In El Salvador, the smallest country in Central America, daily survival overtook the need for daily schooling. So, my dad took on the responsibility as the new man of the house and supplemented his mother's income by taking a job at the local market loading and unloading trucks. Markets in his town are not what we are used to here in the United States, unless one thinks of a farmer's market.



A Market in El Salvador (Image source: Wikimedia Commons, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 3.0

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My father is quick to point out that he was not the only child out there working, as alcoholism and the desire to leave behind responsibility had lured many men away. He will also tell you that he did not much like school and

—he enjoyed being outside.

His moves on the soccer field were very good, he will politely tell anyone that will listen. I would laugh except that his opinion of himself is seconded by many of his friends that remember his youthful exploits. Perhaps, as age has advanced, they have all become World Cup champions. Good for them. Had he grown up in the U.S., maybe he would have had the opportunity to obtain a college athletic scholarship, possibly making millions playing in a European soccer league. However, he was born into poverty. His road would be a much tougher one. Still, he does not sound a bitter tone...he feels others have had a fate much worse and is grateful for what he has achieved.

Now in his early sixties, after a lifetime of work, he is reaching the age of retirement. He is ready for it, he says. Eager to enjoy his time coaching soccer, traveling, or just watching TV. Some might observe his story and wonder about that success; having to work into your 60s with no early retirement, home just about paid off, two cars but neither a luxury vehicle, and wonder if that can really be called success?

To those he left behind in shanty towns, in homes made from leftover sheet metal propped up along the riverbanks, heading to work every day alongside their own children...he has done nothing but succeed.

Carlos, California