Dylan A. Farinash

04/05/2021

J361: Reporting I

951791167

Professor Peter Laufer

A Walk of New Life

For Joel Alejandro Vargas, crossing the border created a shot at a better life than the one that was destined for in Ensenada, Mexico. There are struggles at the border, and you hear about those that seek sanctuary across the border, but Vargas’ journey to the States was tough. “When you’re crossing, even though it was by foot, running, everything, the adrenaline, it seemed like an adventure, but I was also scared,” said Vargas, 43. “I felt I was doing something wrong, but I was being told by my Mom, and she was running away from my dad, trying to give us a better life.” Vargas remembers a coyote (smuggler) instructing him like it was yesterday. “I remember the coyote, the smuggler telling us to close our eyes, hide in the bushes, and cover our nails, because a helicopter light can see that, and it would reflect.”

While Vargas is no longer running from immigration, he and the coyotes remember the color of the trucks whom he thought for sure were there to take him back. “They would tell us: hide, hide! Here comes la patrulla, which is immigration,” Vargas recalls. “I remember seeing those green trucks, and to the day, every time I see that color on a car or a truck, it reminds me of that time.” Vargas and the coyotes were able to evade immigration, and just one crossing of a checkpoint stood between them and freedom. “The smuggler, my mom, and four kids, including me, were in one car, and we looked like a family.” Unfortunately for them, the checkpoint was up by the time they got there. “As they were about to stop us, there was another car that they were pulling the people out of the trunk.” “The officer gave us a go, and we went through.” Shortly after passing that checkpoint, they were able to make it stateside. Some time later, they made it to Woodburn, Oregon, where Vargas’ family in the States resided. Summer soon hit, and Vargas remembered it well. “I wore a jacket that first summer, because it felt cold.” “I never knew what cold was.” “I was from a tropical area in Mexico in the coast, and it was everything new.”

Vargas became documented in 1996, the same year of his high school graduation. He is living a full life, one that is far more than the life that he seemed destined for in Mexico. He and his wife are raising their two children and he has a job he loves serving as an interpreter for the Bend/La Pine School District. He doesn’t mind sharing parts of his story with people because he realizes that those difficult days as a boy shaped him into the man he became and led him to where he is today, which is exactly where he wants to be.

*Captain’s Log, STARDATE APR 01-03, 2021*

18:02: Approached Joel about my assignment.

18:12: Joel agreed to volunteer himself to speak.

23:00: Clocked out for the day.

23:08: Started talking to Joel.

23:28: Finished talking to Joel.

*APR 02:*

10:26: Talked to Professor Laufer about an exception being made.

10:30: Hung up the phone, acquiring approval.

*Apr 03:*

11:20: Started typing the story.

15:45: Proofread the story. Assignment is ready for submission.