

# The Foundation of West Tampa

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for yourself, it's just not an eight-hour gig. You have to do whatever's necessary and then you have to have a passion for it," says Castellano, who eventually became a strong business-thinker who had to adapt to changing government regulations and code enforcement within his industry. He even became president of the Air Conditioning Contractors of Florida, among other industry leadership roles.

While his industry changed, the neighborhoods he was serving drastically changed, too. Born in 1950, Castellano recalls a time in West Tampa when the Five and Dime store stood on Main Street and multicultural communities flourished together. "I saw West Tampa go from a vibrant Italian, Spanish and Cuban community and then urban development came through and trashed it," he says.

Castellano describes West Tampa (whose boundaries are: to the South, Kennedy Boulevard; to the East, the Hillsborough River; to the West, Dale Mabry Highway, and to the North, Hillsborough Avenue) as "a nice little area." Because of the positioning of this region, if you're heading downtown, it's likely you'll pass through it. Unfortunately, over the years, the area has been neglected, but Castellano thinks the area needs more recognition.

As former president of the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce and current member of its board, Castellano has a lot of faith in the area and would like to see progressive changes. His innovative approaches have helped the chamber grow. He helped come up with the West Tampa Citizen of the Year award and would like to see a small business award as part of the chamber.

"Even though we are one of the oldest communities in Tampa, we are also the baby chamber of commerce," says Castellano, who thinks the chamber can take baby steps to build itself up, such as forming reciprocal memberships with the surrounding regions' chambers to share ideas and pick each others' brains. "Take one thing, do it, then do another thing."

Castellano sees a lot of crime in West Tampa, which gives it a bad name. "You need to know what you're doing, you need to know where you should be and where you shouldn't be and what time you can do it and what time you can't do it." He would like to see crime diminish through redevelopment and community involvement. He saw his own place get broken into often in the 80s and 90s, but it seldom happens now. He attributes this to a positive relationship with his neighbors; they look out for each other. "The business people and the home owners are not going to tolerate a lot of crime and they're not going to tolerate a lot of mischief over here."

Additionally, he'd like to see programs to assist owners of the old homes built in the 20s and 30s, to assist with upgrades and maintaining ownership. "I've seen people lose their houses because they can't pay their taxes," he says. "I think that's

a shame. Their house is paid for, but they couldn't pay their taxes. They're not that educated to do what's necessary to get the loan, and they probably couldn't pay it back even if they got the loan. It's a catch-22 situation."

Ultimately, he'd like to see the future look like the past, with Main Street returning to an area where people can walk from place to place, getting their café con leche and running errands without having to hop in a car. Though change won't happen overnight, Castellano is optimistic that things are and will continue to get better.

As for his own family, he and Carol have two daughters, Nichole and Alicia, and six grandchildren. His grandson, Shadow Williams, attends Land O'Lakes High School and is the number-one linebacker in the state of Florida.

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## Pete Busto

Shoveling out the contents of a septic tank when he was a kid, Pete Busto thought plumbing was the last career path he would pursue. But 42 years later, Busto Plumbing is still making waves in the tubes of Tampa Bay with its president, Pete Busto.

While Busto was growing up, his father, Manuel, worked for the city's water

department and did plumbing jobs on the side, bringing Busto along.

"Today they'd call it child labor," says Busto, laughing. "Frankly, I hated plumbing."

But when he finished serving in the U.S. Coast Guard, visiting locations such as Bermuda, Busto needed to choose a career path.

While he initially wanted to go into banking or somewhere he could wear a tie and dress up, he figured since he was familiar with plumbing, he'd take that route. He worked with other established plumbers in the area, gaining experience and making contacts, before becoming licensed and starting Busto Plumbing in 1969.

Since then, he has done large projects such as the Am-South Building in downtown Tampa, the St. Pete Time's Forum (the Ice Palace, at the time) and the Progress Energy Florida Office Building in St. Petersburg.

"I regret that my father (Continued on page 5)

# Damas del Centro Español



The 1954 Damas del Centro Español. Identified are, seated: Mary Martinez, Mayita Limia, Gerry Ferrandes Nieto and Evelyn Alvarez. Standing are: Martha Mallo Holland, Mary Greco, Carmelina de Minicis, Rita Garcia Bazoberry, Carmen Esperante Ferraro, Louisa Diaz, Amelia Bouza Menendez, Pilar Ballota, Palmira Garcia, Glorinda Mallo, Olga Mella, Louisa Esperante Fox, Carmen Ramirez Esperante, Carmen Bouza, Blanca Mendez, Rosita Cermeno, Delia Barbas and Joyce Cermeno Fernandez.



Pete Busto in his younger years

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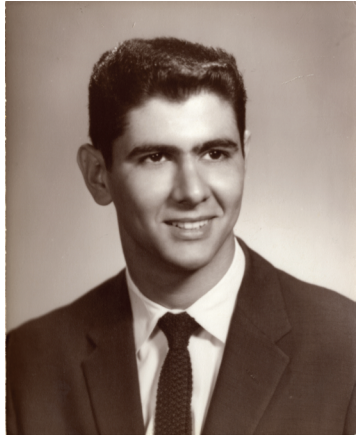
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 didn't live long enough to see that," says Busto. "It would've really blew his mind."

Busto's father, who grew up during the Great Depression, was hesitant when Busto built his own business off St. Louis Street in West Tampa, fearing his son might meet financial trouble and be in debt. But Busto would ask him, "How do you expect to get anywhere if you don't try?"



Pete Busto

What has kept Busto Plumbing flush with business for over four decades – including the recent recession – is its willingness to do service work, maintaining previously installed plumbing.

"People seem to want to do all the new, clean stuff, but service is always in demand," says Busto. "A lot of times new construction is not there, people still have to repair the



U.S. Coast Guard Pete Busto



Manuel Busto, second from the left

toilets. A lot of plumbers don't like to get dirty."

Throughout his years presiding over the business, Busto has mentored former employees who have gone on to start successful plumbing companies in the area such as Dyser Plumbing, Always Plumbing and Buccaneer Plumbing. Many of the industry leaders Busto took under his wing have since thanked him for his guidance because without Busto, they wouldn't be where they are today.

"I always tried to express the importance of quality and taking pride in what they do because today most people don't care about pride and quality of work," says Busto. "They're just in there to get in and get out and get paid as much as they can for doing as little as possible."

Busto is the exact opposite. "If I screwed up or made a mistake, I'd go back there and fix it on my own time and I'd be embarrassed for anybody to know about it. Guys today, you send them out there, they expect to get paid for their own screw-up. I've always tried to be more than fair. Sometimes it's hurt me, but you can't just give up on people in general because one person left a bad taste."

Even outside of his business life, Busto has served as a mentor. At one point, a young man used to come to Busto's house who had never seen his father; his parents were divorced.

"You could tell he was lonely for his dad," says Busto, who served as a father-figure and even called the boy's dad. "You don't know me," he said to him. "Your son is a great kid and I just want to let you know he really thinks a lot of you, and it would be nice if you could at least call him or go and see him."

The situation didn't heal

right away but years later when Busto arrived on the property of a spec home for a job, he met the landscaper. "Turns out it's this kid! The guy has done phenomenal."

As for his own family, Busto has one biological son, Jason, who is currently Busto Plumbing's COO.

"Sometimes he's too smart for his own good," says Busto with a smile.

Jason has two biological siblings, Mark and Teresa, from his mother's previous relationship. Mark's son works at the front desk. Jason's mother passed away from cancer and Busto has been married to his current wife, Kelly, since 1992. He and Kelly have one daughter, Gigi, a four-year-old German shepherd with eyes like Greta Garbo's, hence her namesake.

After undergoing a quadruple bypass, Busto, 70, says he has a new outlook on life. "The other day I was driving to work, I had a lot of stress I was under," he says. "I'm thinking 'I don't know why I let any of this worry me. Hell, I could be gone right now.'" Busto is learning to live for the present moment like Gigi does, riding in the backseat of her father's truck on the way to work every day, smiling her doggy smile as neighbors wave to her on the streets of West Tampa.



Pete Busto's family



Manuel Busto, far right, in front of Tampa water truck



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