

MY CLEVELAND



JOHN KUNTZ | THE PLAIN DEALER

Jose Feliciano's office in the National City Bank building overlooks where he grew up, married and practices law.

Lawyer learned to love West Side Market



SARAH CRUMP

Jose Feliciano, Baker Hostetler lawyer and former Cleveland city prosecutor, has many stories to tell about growing up

on the near West Side. Puerto Rico-born, Feliciano, 59, of Chagrin Falls, is chairman and founder of the Hispanic Roundtable.

If he seems especially chipper, it could be because of his daily routine. Feliciano takes a totally cold shower every morning — even in winter.

Tell us about the view from your office window.

I have spent most of my life within this vista. It includes the Justice Center where I worked for eight years, the federal courthouse and downtown buildings where I practice law, the near West Side where I and most Hispanics lived, St. Patrick's parish where I went to school, and Ohio City where I lived when I was first married.

Name a restaurant you frequent.

Mallorca (1390 West Ninth St., Cleveland). I order the Shell Fish Casserole. It makes my mouth water just to think about it: baby lobster, mussels, clams, scallops and shrimp — with rice, veggies and homemade potato chips.



JOSHUA GUNTER | PLAIN DEALER FILE

The West Side Market, Jose Feliciano's favorite landmark.

What is your favorite Cleveland landmark?

The West Side Market. I can remember going there as a child with my mother and father to shop. I hated it then. When my wife, Molly, and I lived in Ohio City, I learned to love it. It is America.

What was your first impression of Cleveland?

Our family came to the United States in 1952 from Yauco, Puerto Rico. My first memory of Cleveland is living with another Puerto Rican family on West 11th Street. Then, Cleveland had nearly a million people residing within the city limits.

What was growing up in Ohio City like?

I grew up in Ohio City before it was Ohio City. It was the near West Side then. I lived directly across the street from St. Pat-

rick's parish. I became an altar boy at age 10 and served more 6:30 a.m. Masses than anyone in the history of that parish. I was there even before the priest showed up. My reward for being so reliable in showing up consistently for 6:30 a.m. Mass was . . . more assignments to 6:30 Masses.

What were some early challenges?

I did not speak English until I was 6 years old. When I attended the first grade in Cleveland public schools, they characterized me as Educably Mentally Retarded because I could not do the test. I transferred to St. Patrick's School, and the Ursuline nuns educated me and developed my character.

Talk about your late parents. My father, Santiago, came to

Cleveland for a job in a steel plant. His brother was already here. He ended up working at White Motor on East 72nd Street and Saint Clair Avenue for 30 years, rearing two boys who became attorneys and a daughter who became a teacher.

My mother, Cielo, was the backbone of our family. She was the one who really stressed education, principally because she only had a fourth-grade education and never learned to speak English. I always associate wonderful food and the sharing of meals with my mother. She never followed a recipe. The flavors burst from the food — lots of garlic and oregano.

After Cathedral Latin High School, you went to John Carroll University. Give us a memory.

I attended John Carroll in 1968 when Jose Feliciano's "Light My Fire" was the No. 1 song in America. At the beginning of one class, the teacher asked us to identify ourselves. When I did, everyone laughed. The student after me stood up and said his name was Frank Sinatra.

I met my wife in a psychology class. She sat next to me. Her father sent her to John Carroll to meet an Irish Catholic boy. She says she came home with two out of three.

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