

**Southwestern In Focus  
AT SOUTHWESTERN 45 YEARS**

By Sal Camarillo  
EPT Sundial 8/9/64

For Ramon L. Ortiz, of 1823 N. Moon St., Southwestern General Hospital is more than a place where he was employed. It is his second home.

When interviewed, Ramon was awaiting dismissal after having undergone a checkup for stomach complications at the hospital. When he began working at the Southwestern General, it was called Homan Sanitarium. He was retired this June, after completing 45 years of service.

As he began to talk, the door to his room opened and a priest entered saying, "Well, look at the baby. The baby in bed." Ramon grinned. "Did they make the list?" (A list of all Catholic patients to whom the priest administers and which Ramon has been preparing for several years.) For even if Ramon is in bed, he still worries about what is going on outside his room. The priest leaving, turned and said, "The hospital seems silent without you."

An appropriate phrase, for Ramon has been trying to bring cheer ever since he arrived. He is a small, happy-faced man, with a partially paralyzed right hand, arm and leg, but does not let that bother him. He has been visiting with patients and delivering newspapers since 1938. He started out supposedly to sell the papers for extra money, but usually winds up giving away about half of them.

Ramon grinned again and said, "They all miss me. I miss them, too. I like to deliver papers to patients. I have many thank you cards from former patients. It gives me a chance to talk to them and cheer them up.

Now take a typical patient. I ask him if he wants a paper. He replies that he doesn't have any money. I don't care about the money. I leave him the paper. The paper cheers him up. And he remembers me and sends me thank you cards. My scrapbooks are full of them, you should see them!"



**REMEMBERED**—*Ramon L. Ortiz, looks over his scrapbooks tilled with thank you cards received from former patients at Southwestern General Hospital where he has worked for the past 45 years. In addition to his regular duties, he delivered papers to the patients in his spare time. Now retired, he is undergoing a checkup at the hospital and a chance to look over his books—(Times Staff Photo)*

"I bet the nurses miss me. But since my retirement, I have no' hours, if I don't want to come in. But I still come in at the regular hours when I can for there is plenty to do."

His habit of reporting for work as early as 5 a.m. is hard to break after 45 years. He has only been absent from work when he has had to undergo operations, which have kept

him away from his job for as long as a month.

Ramon, born in Chihuahua City, Sept. 30, 1895, moved to El Paso in 1909. He started to work at the old Homan Sanitarium on July 16, 1919, the same year he married his wife, Isabel, who died in 1962.

His first job was as a dishwasher for three years, before becoming assistant cook. After that he was a bellhop. In those days the nurses didn't answer the buzzer when a patient rang. It was Ramon's job to answer each call and get whatever was wanted, if possible. He later became the sanitarium janitor and from there went into the basement to work on the boilers.

By the time the new Homan Sanitarium opened in February, 1925, he was assistant engineer and in May of that same year, he was promoted to chief engineer. During the 1930's, he also managed the kitchen. When the sanitarium became Southwestern General Hospital in 1937, Ramon had become one of the hospital's permanent fixtures.

He was injured in 1913, when he fell from a tree. He was completely paralyzed for a year. His handicap, if it can be called that, seems to bother him in no way.

In 1940, he became a naturalized. He is the father of three sons and a daughter. The youngest, Alfredo, is with the Foreign Service in Washington; Luis, is a commercial artist in Los Angeles, and Ramon Jr., is inspector of mechanics at Ft. Bliss. His daughter, Mrs. Lupe Sena, lives in El Paso.

Bill Burton, administrator of Southwestern General Hospital, commented on the 32nd year that Ramon had been with the hospital that "it would take three men to replace him . . . I think he probably knows more about

this hospital than the contractor who built it," and is still praising Ramon on the 45th year.

But Ramon thinks only of returning to his duties as soon as he can.

"Even now that I am retired, they treat me like a king. I really want to thank the hospital staff for the way they have treated me. The Board of Directors told me that I may stay here as long as I want and with salary." This place is like my home. I have left a part of me here."

Ramon's pace has slowed down. However, age makes no difference. At 69, he remains industrious and anticipates remaining as "unofficial" help in the Southwestern General Hospital.

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