## IN THE GROOVE

**Chicago.** If you are a fan of the late Elvis Presley and own either "Elvis Sings the Wonderful World of Christmas" or "How Great Thou Art"—two of his 1977 LPs—the chances are pretty good that you have come into some sort of contact with Vincent Sosa. No, Sosa does not sing background "ahhhs" or play second electronic fiddle. His part in the LPs is even more basic: Though they carry the RCA label, Sosa made them. He is, in fact, the owner and operator of Chicago's only record-pressing factory—the final link in preserving sound for posterity.

Sosa found his groove the easy way. Shortly after the native of Pachuca, Mexico, arrived in the Windy City in 1947, he got a job operating a phonograph record-pressing machine at Musical Products Inc. He was 21 years old and had never even seen such a machine before. But he learned quickly and had such an uncanny feel for the business that one day, in 1958, the firm's owner, Ed Widdick, half-jokingly suggested that Sosa take over as president. Sosa saw nothing funny in the idea, and they formed a partnership, with Sosa in charge of mechanical problems and Widdick doing the rest. In 1962, Sosa took over the whole show.

After 31 years in the record-pressing business, he could probably make a record blindfolded. The procedure goes as follows: After the studio recording session is taped, a blank aluminum record called a "lacquer" is imprinted with the music by a cutting lathe. Three further steps are necessary. First, the lacquer is electroplated to make a metal "master." A metal mold is then made of the master, and it is electroplated to make a hard nickel copy. And it is that nickel copy, known as a "stamper," that is attached to the record-pressing machine to make phonograph records.

"I now have enough tools to do the job without depending on anyone else," says Sosa proudly. Musical Products Inc. owns Chicago Stereo Mastering Inc., a studio that has facilities to produce 8-track recordings and overdubbings. Sosa also has his own equipment for the electroplating and pressing processes. He even has a printing press to make record covers and labels. So, except for buying supplies, Sosa's firm is happily independent.

Remembering his past, the 52-year-old Mexican American primarily hires Latinos to work in his factory. His customers—and he has about 695 of them—come from all fields and backgrounds. Some 60% of his contracts are with industrial clients. For example, Sears, Roebuck has used Sosa's firm to produce records to accompany such training films as "Selling Sears Applicators" and "Fashion Display Training Film." Music artists and educational and religious concerns make up the other 40% of Sosa's business. He makes records for some 20 Latino labels, most of these agreements coming from local Latino artists who want to cut a record fast to get exposure.

Sosa spends more than 40 hours per week at the factory, watching as its many machines churn out an average of 20,000 records every day. But he still finds some "free" time for his Puerto Rican wife, Nilda, and his daughter, Adlin (whose name is Nilda spelled backwards). If he had more time, Sosa, who fancies himself a quasi-inventor, says he would spend it tinkering with machines. He recalls how he bought the rights to an electroplating machine in 1967 and worked on it till he was satisfied that he had greatly improved it. Although he has applied for a patent, it is still pending. The machine, however, does have a name—VANS, an acronym for his, his daughter's and his wife's first names, plus "S" for Sosa. So far, the tinkerer has sold seven VANS, at an average price of $23,500 each, to record-pressing factories in Latin and North America.

All this experience has led Sosa to develop a particular business philosophy: "Yesterday is in the past," he says, "the future is more important to me." Sosa also urges Latinos to open their own firms. His advice to them: "Stay with the business, concentrate on your endeavors and realize that some things take time. The most important factor overall is dedication." If he had the time, the record maker would probably codify his advice, perhaps into something like Action, Sincerity, Optimism and Service, or ASOS, a formula for success which also happens to be SOSA spelled backwards.

*—Barbara Arnold*

*Musical Products' record-pressing machine: A Latino spin. ~ El mexicano Vincent Sosa es el dueño de la única fábrica de discos de Chicago.*


BOB MATHIAS

# WOMEN

## "I'M STRONGER"

**Ajo, Ariz.** Her father toiled as a copper miner for 35 years, but Dolores Peña never expected to follow in the same vein. To the contrary, when the 24-year-old Chicana was growing up in this small copper-mining town in southern Arizona, the young men sought work at the mine, while the women sought only marriage. But the

# SPORTS

## "MR. SOCCER"

**Granite City, Ill.** The great Pelé deservedly gets credit for popularizing soccer in this country. But some U.S. enthusiasts of the beautiful game were around long before the Brazilian superstar arrived. Here in Granite City, ten miles from St. Louis, soccer became a household word nearly two decades ago, largely through the efforts of another Latino—Rubén Mendoza. In fact, in Granite City, Mendoza is widely known as "Mr. Soccer," the local founding father of *fútbol* who helped make this heartland town a consistent state powerhouse in the sport.

*Coach Mendoza: A founding father. — En una ciudad de Illinois un ex-jugador de soccer es más conocido que Pelé. Le dicen "el Señor Soccer", ya que gracias a él, este deporte se dió a conocer allí, y bajo su dirección se constituyeron equipos juveniles.*


GRANITE CITY PRESS-RECORD

Mendoza, who played on the U.S. Olympic soccer teams of the 50s, started the first local soccer program for boys in 1961. And now, thanks to his energetic coaching (and refereeing of games and lobbying with parents and buying of supplies and negotiating for playing field space), Granite City's kids are showing the way in soccer. Last summer his 14-and-under team (which includes his youngest son, Sammy) captured the State Youth Soccer Association tournament. At the high school level, a Granite City team has been in the finals every year since 1973. Today Granite City has more than 800 boys and more than 800 girls playing soccer in dozens of teams and leagues—quite a jump from the 60 boys and four teams which existed when the hometown coach introduced the sport in 1961.

Mendoza was born in St. Louis in 1931 to José and Dolores Mendoza, but shortly after Rubén's birth, the family moved to Granite City, where his father worked for American Steel. Then when Rubén was seven, Dolores and the four children moved to Durango, Mexico, while José continued working at American Steel. With four children to raise, living in Mexico was more economical. After two years in Durango, his *amiguitos* introduced him to their Mexican *fútbol*. And a star was born.

Rubén played in the *Infantil* League that year; his team won the league championship. When he joined the *Juvenil* League, his team was champion for two years. At 16, Rubén and the rest of the family rejoined his father in Granite City, and the teenager stayed with soccer, playing for league teams in St. Louis. Except for a stint with the U.S. Army during the Korean War, Mendoza starred from 1950 to 1960 as the inside left forward—what he calls the "link" man—with the locally famous Kutis team which won six straight National Amateur titles starting in 1956. Mendoza also took time away from his bread and butter job as a barber to play on the U.S. Olympic soccer teams of 1952, '56 and '60, as well as the World Cup teams of 1953 and '57. (The U.S.—never a soccer power—did not win.)

In 1958, Mendoza was suspended from playing for one year because he punched a referee in the mouth after a game—an experience which he says he would like to forget. But his wife, Norma, says that if he had not been suspended, he probably would have had little time to meet and court her. In 1960, they were married. Meanwhile, he was having trouble with a knee injury suffered in 1959. Mendoza officially retired from playing soccer after getting the youth program underway in Granite City in 1961.

At first, few people in the area knew much about the game, so Mendoza held clinics to teach parents how to coach and referee. Soon many parents became involved. The Tri-Cities YMCA sponsored the soccer program. St. Elizabeth Parish lent enough ground for three fields. But Mendoza was always the key ingredient—the "link" man, much as he had been on the playing field.

Eventually soccer was so big in Granite City that in 1968 Mendoza opened the first local sporting goods store to supply the teams' needs (as well as to sell other athletic equipment). Business has been booming ever since. But Mendoza's greatest reward has not been his successful store or the many civic awards he has been given or even the championships that Granite City teams win. His greatest reward has been to see the growth of the sport he loves. "The skills of the players are so beautiful to watch," he says.

Does he have any advice for other Latino communities who want to start a soccer program? "You have to find somebody who's dedicated to the sport," says Mr. Soccer. "Then get all help possible from parents, get them as coaches, find people who know the game. Otherwise, you'll devote a lot of time teaching and demonstrating to the parents and the kids, teaching them the rules of the game. This all takes time. But, once you get it off the floor. . . ." He sighs. "It's a lot of hard work, but so much enjoyment. It's really quite a satisfaction." And that's from someone who knows. *—Barbara E. Arnold*