

## Perseverance

*by Suzy Hopkins*

The first time I saw him at the Red Carpet Hand Wash carwash, two years ago, I noticed his long skinny black braid going down his back. He was a small man with bright dark brown eyes. I brought my red Pontiac to have the paint from my garage door frame polished off the side of my car. He worked with the large power buffer, bending at the waist from side to side. It took a long time. Pippo (this name means *lover of horses*) would stop for a moment to rest his back but he always smiled at me since I was watching carefully everything he did. I mentioned how hard it was and he just smiled. I noticed he was wearing shiny dress shoes, probably from the thrift store. When he was finally finished I asked him if he lived in Denver. He pointed to the shed behind the carwash. I laughed but you could see by the expression on his face he was serious and embarrassed. As I was getting in my car to leave I gave him the granola bar I had in my purse. He said nothing, just smiled.

A month later he had moved out of the shed and was living with some co-workers.

Over the years he has washed my car with care and enthusiasm always saying, “Bonita” about my pretty red car. Most of my questions he didn’t understand but would try. I go there about every two weeks depending on the weather. I learned he was from Guatemala and was a consistent and cheerful hard worker. I noticed he had cut his hair and was sporting the modern men’s haircut that is pointy along the top of his head and Nike sneakers.

For several visits he was not there. I asked the handsome Caucasian owner of the carwash where Pippo was. He said, “He had been very sick with appendicitis and was in the hospital. I visited him last night.”

Weeks later I saw Pippo at the carwash doing a detail job on a big black truck. I waved and he motioned me to come over. He pointed to a non-descript four door silver American car parked at the edge of the carwash. He said, “Mine.” I said, “Good for you.” He just smiled.

It just proves that a person can still come to this country and without knowing any English, through hard work and a cheerful demeanor can make an American life.