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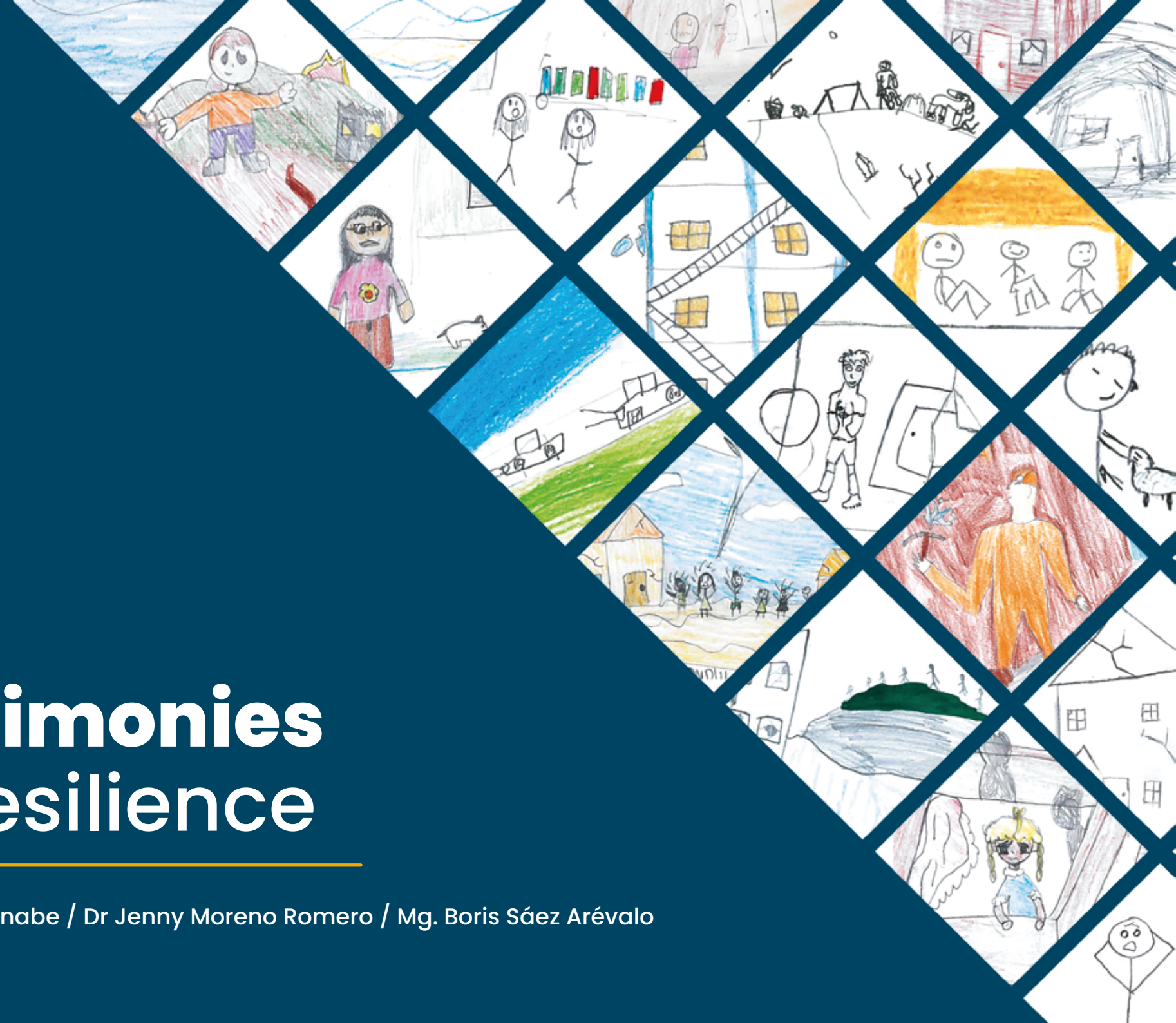

# Testimonies of Resilience

Dr Chika Watanabe / Dr Jenny Moreno Romero / Mg. Boris Sáez Arévalo

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# **Testimonies** of Resilience

Dr Chika Watanabe · Dr Jenny Moreno Romero · Mg. Boris Sáez Arévalo

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The University of Manchester

Talcahuano Somos Todos

Universidad de Concepción

DEPARTAMENTO DE GESTIÓN INTEGRAL DEL RIESGO DE DESASTRES

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# Preface

*Dr Chika Watanabe*
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When an earthquake or tsunami strikes a community, national and international help arrive right away to help victims. These victims become community actors, whose stories of survival inspire others and teach us how to be better prepared for future disasters.

These actors are “local experts,” their knowledge and skills of resilience becoming the centre of the community’s strength. Their stories cannot be forgotten, as they are part of the local community’s memories.

Talcahuano is a community that has faced a lot of disasters and challenges. And it is through these adversities that local experts have appeared, who can teach us about the resilience born of this land.

Our project, Voices of Resilience, collected oral histories of 12 older people who survived the earthquakes of 1960 and 2010. Their stories show us that we all have scars, from disasters as well as from the challenges of life itself, which they have overcome with strength and wisdom.

These stories teach us that there are tools of resilience proper to the community of Talcahuano, based on local experiences and knowledge treasured in the memories of older people. The development of methods and strategies of disaster risk reduction rooted in resilience with local identity ensures that they are used by the citizens of Talcahuano and that they last for years to come. For this reason, the Department of Disaster Risk Management of the municipality of Talcahuano, the University of Manchester, and the University of Concepción developed playful and participatory activities in order to share the oral histories of resilience with students in Year 6 and Year 7 of primary school. These students talked to, bonded with, and listened to the stories of older people, later drawing what left the strongest impression on them from the memories of Talcahuano that they heard.

The teachings of older people transcended generations, and their stories came to life again as the students learned from these experiences of disaster and childhoods of times past, happy memories but also tinted with difficulties and problems. But the most important lesson that they taught us was that even as we are all vulnerable, we also all have the strength to keep moving forward.

To overcome adversities does not mean that one needs to fight alone, as we have a resilient community that encourages and supports us. We hope that this book will foster an intergenerational solidarity and local pride for Talcahuano's heritage of resilience.

# **Eduardo** Becerra Zapata

Arenal

Born on 4 of December 1952

*“Sports teaches us values such as loyalty, sociality, respect, and camaraderie.”*

I was born and raised in Talcahuano, son of Luis Becerra and Lidia Zapata. We are 5 siblings. I have beautiful memories of my childhood, very happy ones. We played ball, hopscotch, spinning top, and other games that have been lost. Since I was a boy I did sports. People organized sports competitions in my neighbourhood, in the  sector of El Morro. We had the ocean on one side and the railway on the other. I dated my wife for 5 years and then we got married. We have 3 children, Cecilia, Paola, and Julio who has lived in Germany for 6 years, and 2 grandchildren, Lucas and Mariano. I’m a happy man, with a strong family and a wonderful wife.

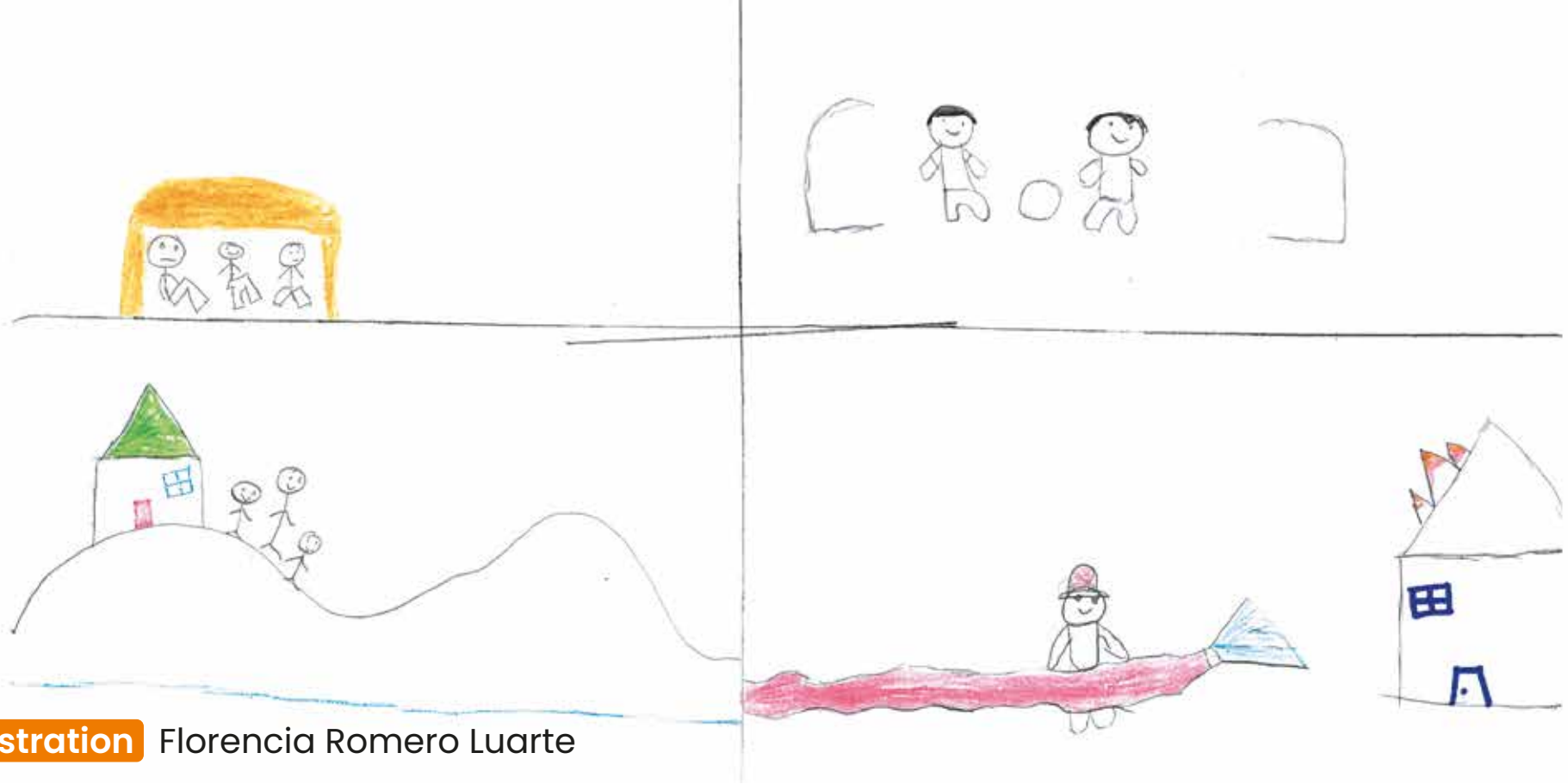


**Illustration** Florencia Romero Luarte

# Earthquake 1960: Dad protected us

I was 8 years old. I remember a few things. My dad protected us. It was very dark and he put us under the wooden table. We stayed there until the movement stopped. On 22 May, at midday, the ocean came out, and at that point we went to the David Fuentes hills. The older children, we went down to see what happened to the house, although the damages were nothing compared to 2010.

# Earthquake 2010: We united as neighbours

When the movement started, it got bigger and bigger, and I could not go from one room to the other. The feeling of desperation was immense, but in those moments I remembered my father and what he taught us. I said to my wife, "Let's go! Let's go to the hills! Come on daughter, let's go! Wrap up the baby and go." I took the car and we went to the hills because I had that experience from before. It was almost impossible to pass through the streets.

We had to go against the traffic on Aníbal Pinto street, without knowing that later this sector would be flooded with water and mud. We arrived at Yungay hills and my brother's house was destroyed to the ground. After a while, we went to smoke a cigarette with him, and we heard a horrible sound. We thought it

was Huachipato, with the oil refinery. When the sun came up, we realized that it was the ship containers, the ships that were now in the plaza. The most impressive scene was to see Blanco street, in el Morro, because water entered like 5 blocks with great force.

My mother was an invalid and we always took turns taking care of her in my family. That day, two nieces were with her. They were able to take two “puff” type chairs, put my mother there, and the three of them climbed to the roof of the kitchen. They stayed there, holding onto the stove barrel. At dawn, we went down to see my mother and they were all covered in mud. We had to take down a door to enter the house.

My mother had been declared to be beyond recovery in 2010 and she died in 2019. She was conscious of everything and asked about her children and grandchildren. She said the destruction had been worse than in 1960. The good thing was that the house was from 1939. It was solid and nothing happened to it, but inside the house everything was turned upside down, covered in mud. It was horrible to see that and it made us all sad. We all cried.

Despite it all, we united even more as neighbours. At 6am we got up to look for water at a spring nearby. Since it was during curfew, we formed groups and we would put white handkerchiefs on our arms. As the days passed, people asked us neighbours if we were able to build a well, and that's how we managed to get water in those days, on land owned by Essbio (water utility services company).

My best friends from childhood are from the Caleta El Morro. When the earthquake struck, I went to see my friends there and my wife made homemade bread. We took this bread to all of our friends who were living in tents on the hills. They still remember that with a lot of affection. We all have to collaborate and value solidarity in life.

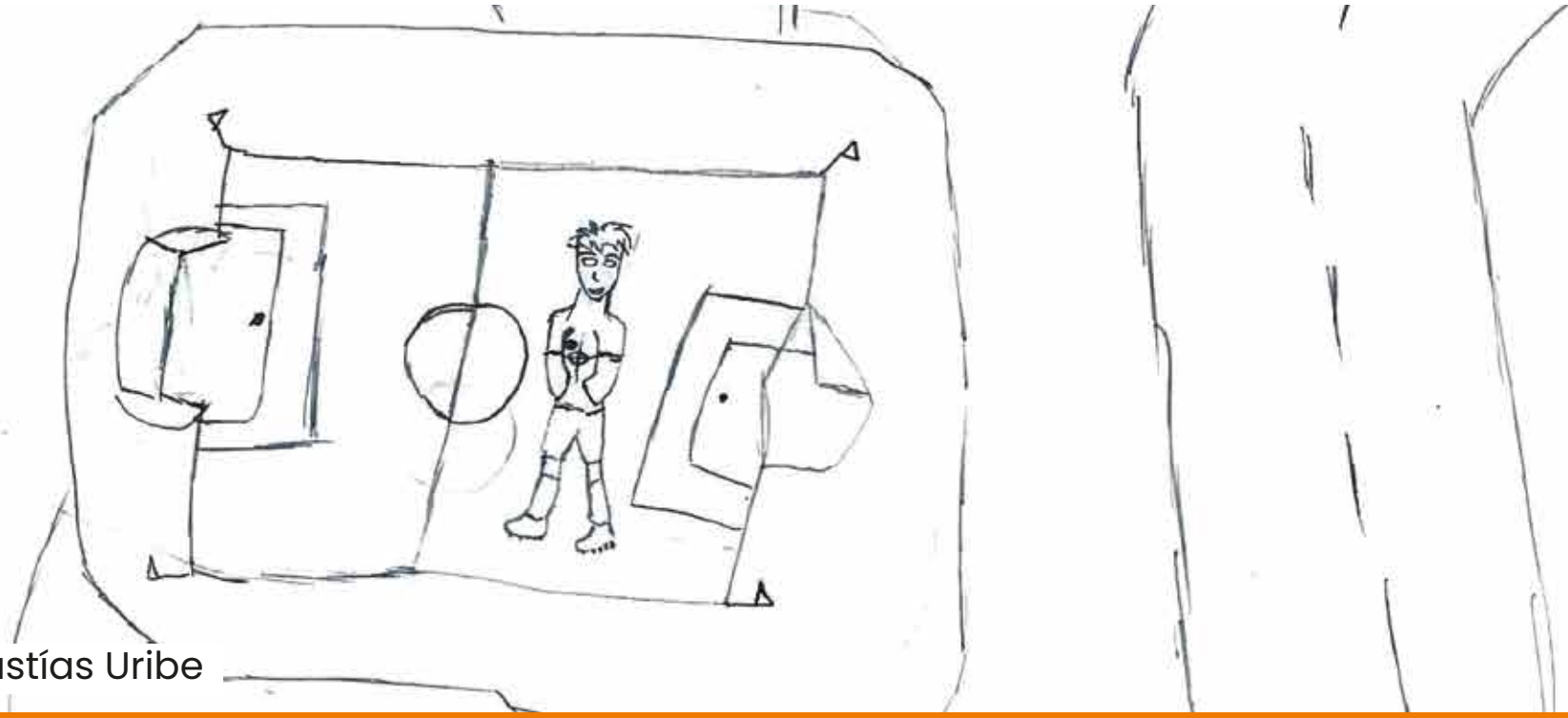


**Illustration**
Leonardo Bastías Uribe

# Sports teaches us values

I've always been involved in sports. I started to play basketball when I was 18 years old. At 20 years of age, I realized that I could not continue, and my father who was a referee in that field encouraged me to follow his footsteps. It was in that long trajectory as a referee that I judged tournaments from the local level to regional, national, and international levels. I refereed global, pre-Olympic, South American League, and other events. Between 1976 and 1981, I went to work in Lebu, where they did not have a Physical Education teacher. The good thing is that they had a lot of sporting equipement. It

was just that no one was using it. I started to work there and we organized a journal of physical education, and it was a total success. I remember being very proud. I have always been a teacher, until 2015. There is no doubt that, among all the teachers, the physical education teacher has the closest relationship with students. Sports teaches you values like loyalty, sociality, respect, and camaraderie.

# **Flor** Quilodrán Gaete

Higueras

Born on 27 of May 1950

*"If it rains today, tomorrow there will be sun."*

I was born in Talcahuano and my first years I lived in Salinas. Then we came to live here in Higueras. We lived with my parents, 2 brothers, and me. My father was from the Marines and my mother was a housewife. It was a different life, more about family than anything else very close. Since my father travelled, we were almost always with my mother and my paternal grandfather.

**Ilustración** Vicente García González

# Earthquake 1960: Dad taught us to be calm

During the 1960 earthquake, I was 10 years old. We were the 3 siblings alone in the house because our father in the Navy was on duty and our mother was hospitalized. We lived in a big house, and the brick wall next door fell into our garden. It didn't fall into the house but into the garden. Our nanny ran away and left us alone. Since we were children, we didn't

know what was happening. The neighbours picked us up and brought us into our house, taking care of everything until our dad arrived. When everything had passed, my dad came and I just remember him keeping us calm. My mum was in the hospital and my dad told us that they had to take the injured from the Naval Hospital, since at the time the hospital was on low ground and made of wood, and they had to close it. They couldn't move my mother so they had to put her on a stretcher when they said there was going to be a tsunami. The next day there was another one, and that's when the water hit our house and we went out to the street. From there we saw how everything moved, like the electric cables.

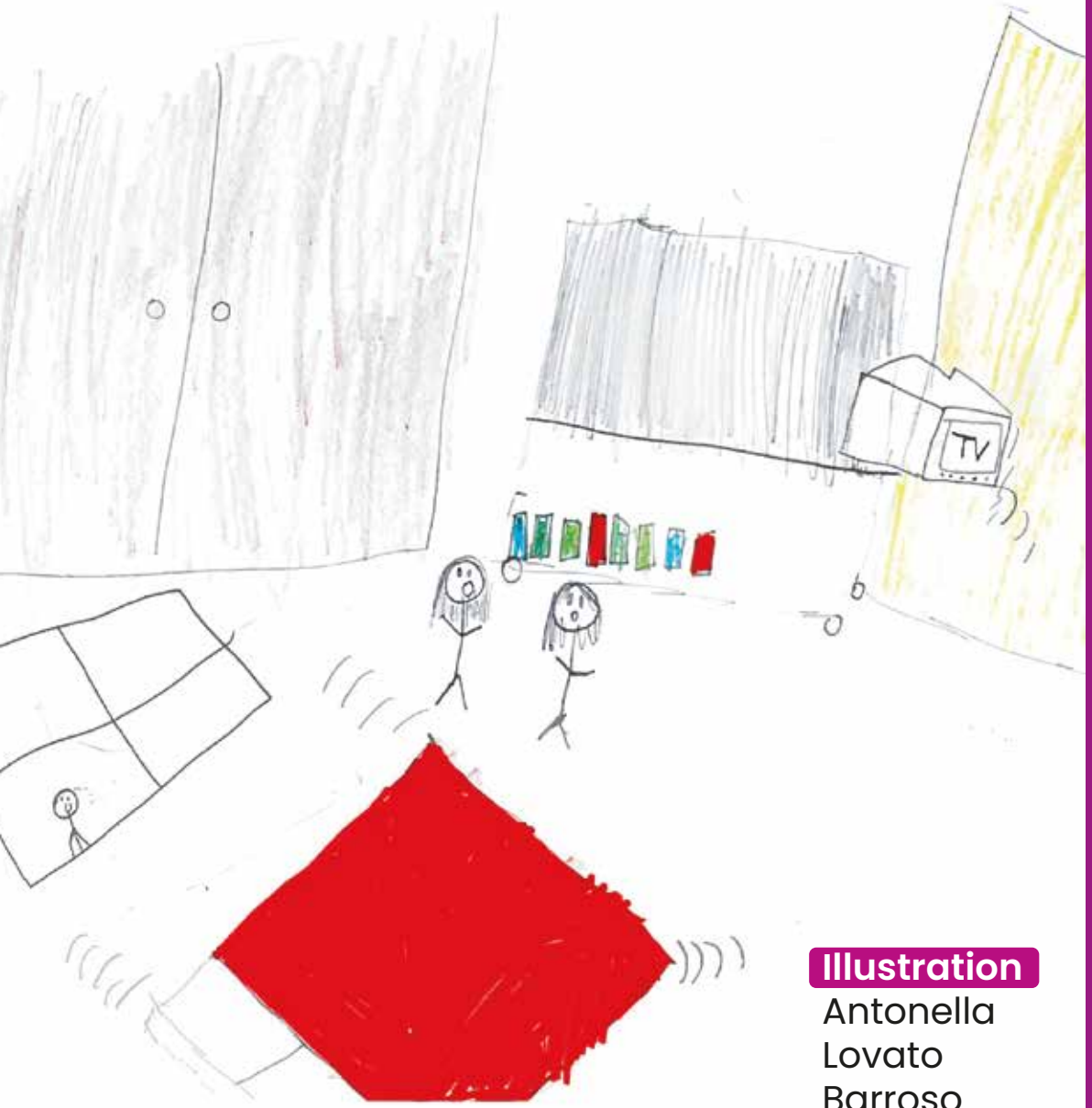



**Illustration**
Antonella Lovato Barroso

# Earthquake 2010: I continued to support mothers in the hospital

I was with my daughter who was sleeping with me, and the TV fell and blocked the door. People were yelling at us to come out, “Flor! Paty!” They said. “Paty, Flor, come out, come out, there’s going to be a tsunami!” I said to my daughter, “What tsunami! It’s not going to happen.” They came to get us and we went to Denavi Sur. We were there for 3 months. On Monday I went to work at the hospital, and during the week they came to get me. I had to walk all the way to the hospital. I went back to

doing 24 hour shifts. I remember there was no way to make food and so for lunch I had soup using chicken stock cubes and 3 slices of a tomato. The good thing is that in those circumstances the team supported each other well. We had an emergency plan, and we all knew how we had to act. We could not fall into a panic because we had to stay calm and support the mothers who were hospitalized. During that time period, people were very united and we all had to move in solidarity.

I have a nephew who works in SERNAPESCA (National Fisheries and Aquaculture Service) and he told us how everything was, that it was all chaos. I cried when I saw the damage myself.

# The suffering of my loved ones strengthened me

*I've always been positive, "it all happens for a reason".*

I was the only woman in my family. My mother died when I was 12 years old from cervical cancer. My father died at 52 years old from a cerebrovascular accident. Both of my brothers died tragically. And so life has not been easy on me.

I matured quickly from being a girl to being a woman because I had to play the role of mother and sister, take care of my brothers, be a housewife with all that signifies. So I skipped the stages of childhood and adolescence. I studied, worked, and took charge of everything. And then my father

died, my grandfather, and my brother died.
I was happy until I was 10 years old. When my mother got sick from cancer, she would have a crisis in the middle of the night, and I had to go out to look for someone to give her an injection. That is when I promised myself to study and always be available to help others. I earned a certificate as a nurse technician, and that is how I came to work for 47 years in the Hospital Las Higueras, in the maternity wards. To see the suffering of my mother, of my brothers, that taught me to overcome difficulties and strengthened me.

# My strength is my daughter

I always knew that I would never marry. I never married out of choice. I have a daughter and I became a mum at 39 years old. Despite all of that, I don't regret anything. On the contrary, I am very happy. In that time period, it was almost an act of rebellion. Many people criticized me but it was my decision.

I have a very good daughter who is excellent, educated, and attentive to all sorts of details. We talk everyday and we call each other on the phone. If I lack something, she is always there for me. I sowed a good seed on this earth and that is good. Today, my strength is my daughter and my granddaughter. That love strengthens me.

# **Humberto** Ayala Manríquez

Arenal

Born on 15 of January 1947

*"In life, all can be learned."*

I was born and raised in Talcahuano. I was married for 42 years and I have 3 children. I am very social and a good conversationalist. I can spend hours talking on the phone. I love my port.

# Earthquake 1960: I realized the strength of nature

I was 13 years old and it happened when we lived in a smaller adobe house, and a wall fell from the earthquake. In those moments you really realize how strong nature is. Back then, people didn't talk much about tremors or such natural events, and we acted on instinct. Since it was dark, when we opened the front door, we didn't know if there was something broken on the ground. The only thing to do was imagine what you could do when it gets light out. Imagine, waiting until sunrise to be able to go outside. An uncle who lived in front of us went out to see what was happening, in the dark, and he put his foot in some cement blocks that fell and he broke his leg. And then in the afternoon there was a bigger quake, and we thought, if this continues maybe we should go to the hills because there might be a tsunami. This is why in 2010 there was more knowledge, because each era leaves a particular mark.

**Illustration**
Ignacia González Arriagada

# Earthquake 2010: Don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today

That Friday we were in bed, my wife Maritere and I, watching the Festival of Viña. We had been watching for some hours and my wife said that we should go to bed and turn off the TV. It was then that the movement started, first softly and then really intensely. I got up quickly and I stood under the lintel of the door and Maritere under the door in the front, praying that it would pass. I felt 3 types of movements: to the side, circular, and up and down. It didn't stop.

When it finally stopped, we went immediately out to the street to see how the neighbours were, the few ones who were still on our block. Almost no one had gas but we did because we used cylinder gas, not from the pipeline.
That Friday we were going to go to the supermarket with Maritere, but in the end we decided not to go, so we had little groceries left, just one kilogram of flour. That's why I say, don't leave to tomorrow what you can do today. Maritere made a quick bread of 5 minutes with that flour. My son in law came from Santiago with instructions from my daughter, "don't come back to Santiago without my parents." And that's how I went with my wife to Santiago for 3 months.

But before that, I went to see my workplace and the destruction left a strong impression on me. The pharmacies and local shops looted, people robbing things, the ships in the streets. Before leaving, I went 4 days in my pyjamas. I didn't want to go out or to get up.

In Santiago the doctors gave me medical leave for a month, and then they extended it for 2 more months. I finally returned to the area, but to live with one of my other daughters in San Pedro de la Paz. In that time I reached retirement age and so I retired, after 42 years working for FONASA (National Health Fund).

# I lost my wife of 40 years but I kept going

I was like a kept man; I didn't do anything around the house. My wife did everything, from paying the bills, taking care of the house, managing payday, shopping, everything.
Maritere was a very strong woman but sadly she fell ill. Not knowing what her fate would be, she started to leave me little notes, like step by step instructions, from how to open the windows in the morning, how the washing machine worked, how to pay the bills, everything. The most difficult thing of all was to overcome her parting and absence, after 40 years of a shared life. I liked to give her my hand, and she would take it without saying anything. I would move my hand and she knew what I wanted to say. One learns so much from that and in the end you get used to it. All my friends said I wouldn't last long without my wife because I'm useless, but I kept going. It was hard, but I did. As I was

telling you, I didn't know how to do anything, much less cook. I always went out to eat. But with this pandemic, the restaurants closed and I didn't have a place to go eat, and so I was forced to I earn. My daughters and cousin gave me instructions over the phone: put on the stove, boil the water, that everyting has a different cooking time like potatoes, rice. And so I learned. In life, all can be learned.

After all this time when I had to learn to live alone, I would now like to have Maritere here so I can take care of her myself. But sadly that's not possible. I've now been 10 years without her. But we have to keep moving forward.

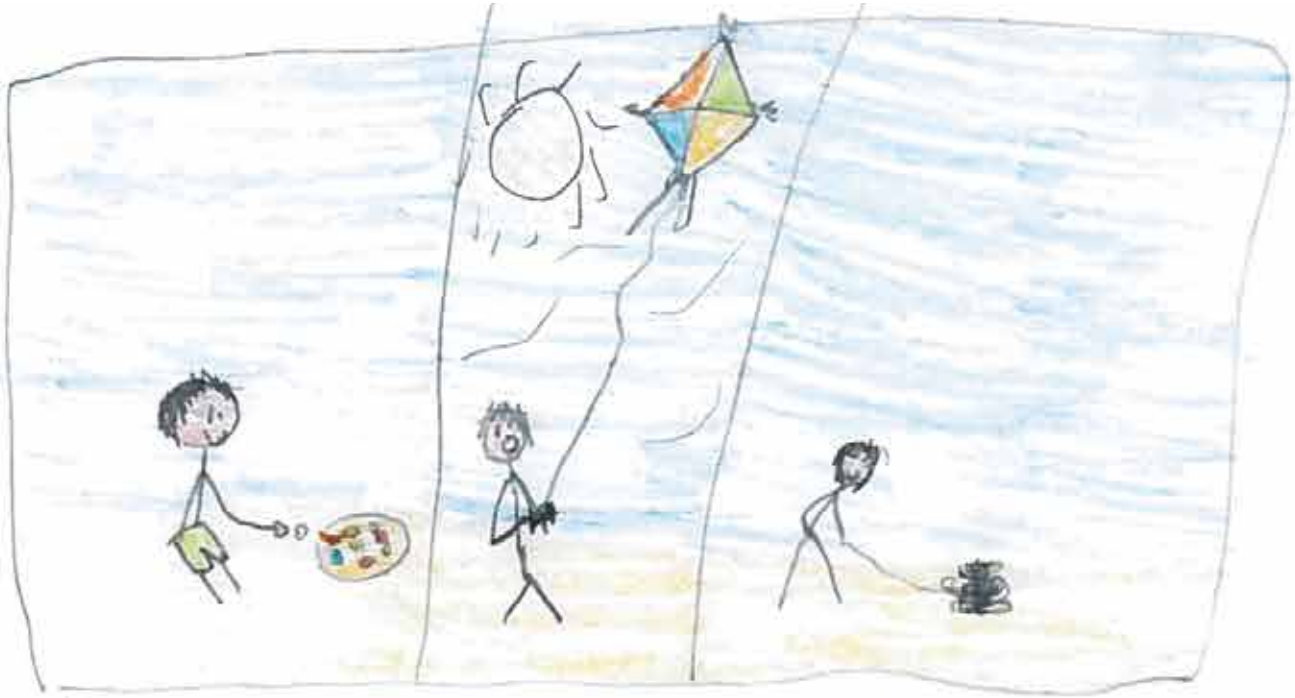


**Illustration**
Ignacia González Arriagada

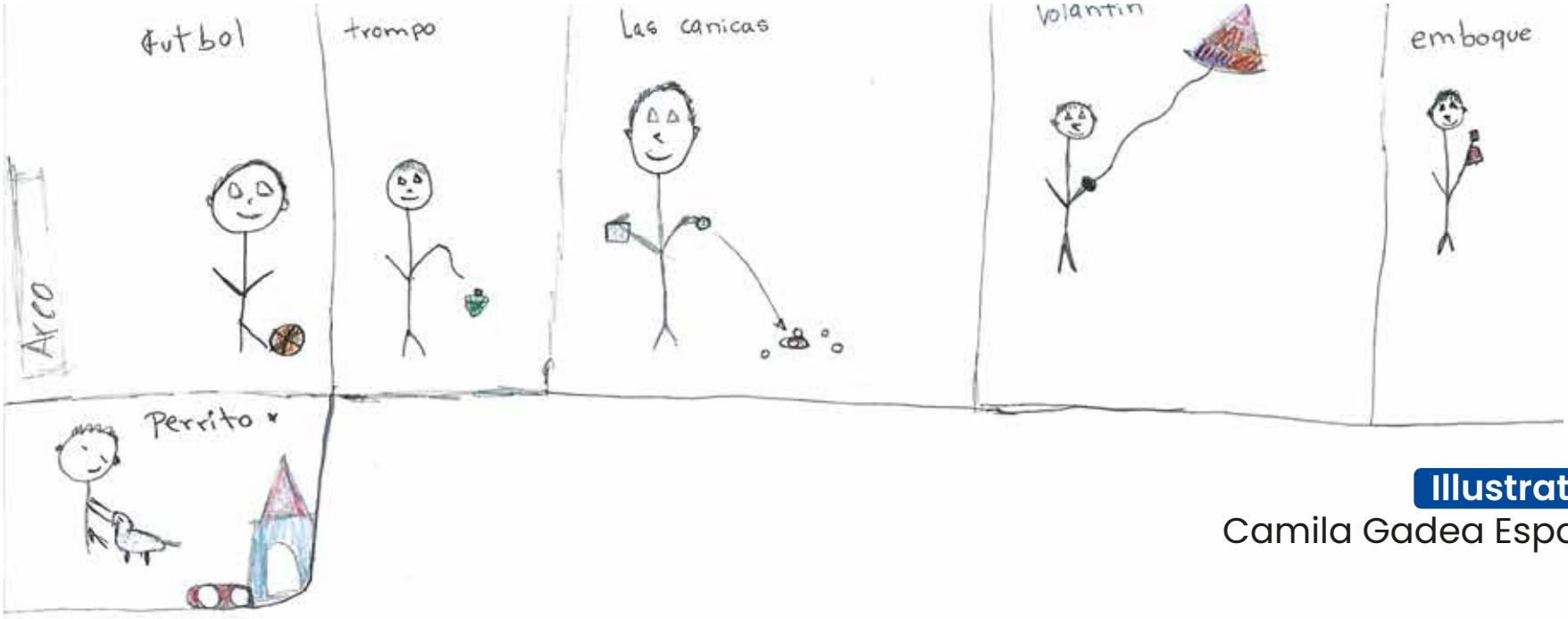



**Illustration**
Camila Gadea España

# **Petronila** Cartes Riffo

San Vicente

Born on 14 of December 1932

*"I never get frightened because I say that nothing will happen"*

From 1939 to 1944 I lived in Lota, and since 1950 I've lived in this same house in San Vicente. I was a housewife. I got married at 17 years old and had 8 children. I made many sacrifices in life. I also lived through the 1939 earthquake.

**Illustration**
Claudio Concha Rojas

# Earthquake 1960: I had to be strong for my children

I remember I was pregnant at the time with my seventh child. It was a very strong quake. Everything was falling down and the ocean came out as well. But it didn't reach us here. I was with my little children whose ages reom 2 years old to 9 years old.

The earthquake came when we were in our pyjamas and we didn't manage to get dressed. After the initial scare, we went out of the house and went to the sector Las Canchas, up in the hills. We arrived only with what we had on us, but I don't think we lacked anything. My husband stayed in the house with my brother, to protect the house. I passed one day in the hills and I returned the next day. There was no looting back then. People were more honest in those times.

I had to be strong because I had my children and it was shaking a lot. I had to transmit calmness to them.

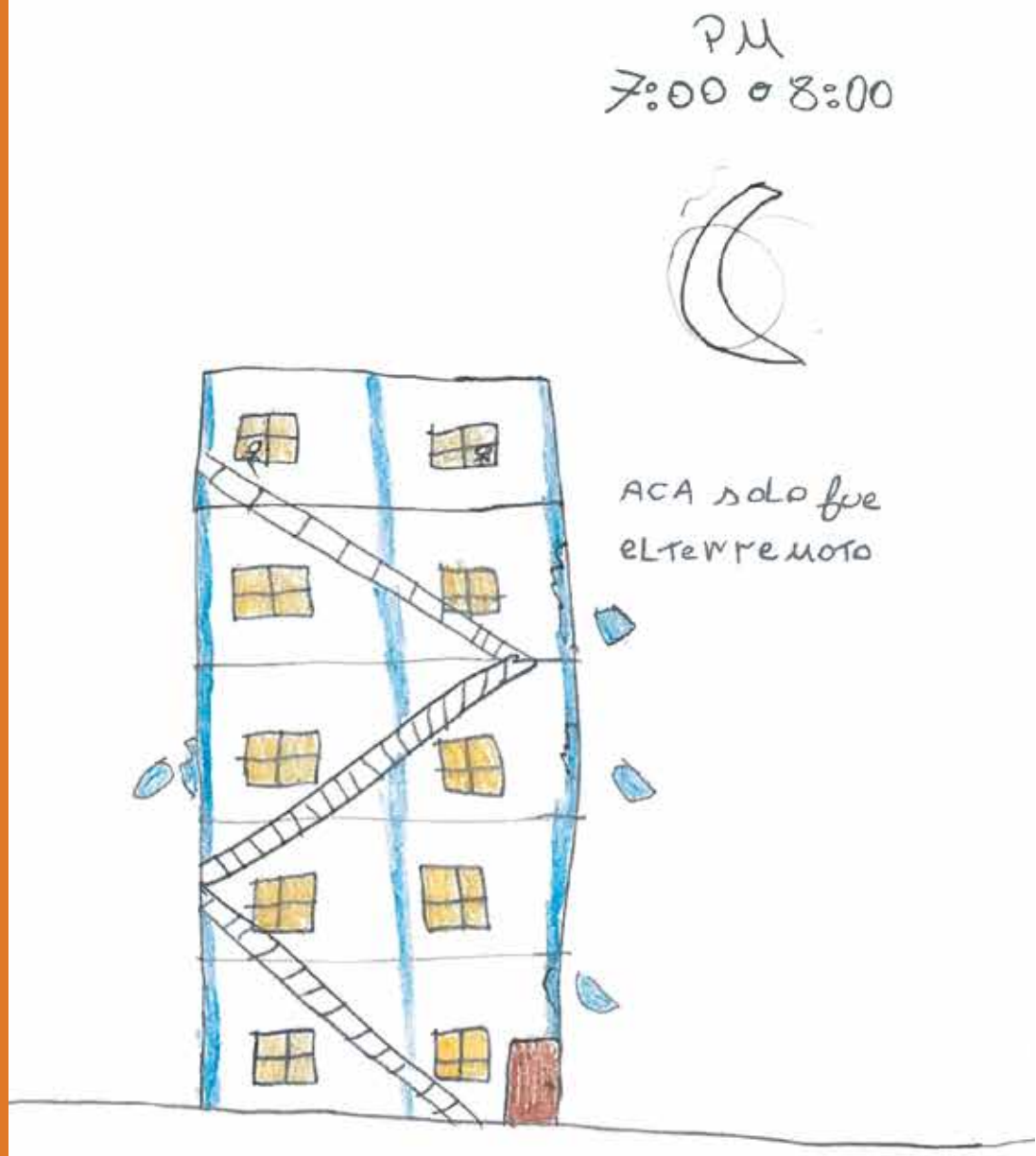



**Illustration**
Constanza González

**Illustration**
Constanza González

# Earthquake 2010: I thank God that I was in Concepción in my daughter's house

On 26 February of 2010, I went to the house of one of my daughters in Concepción. I experienced the earthquake there. There were loud sounds coming from underneath the ground and it lasted a long time. And that sound was tremendous, so tremendous...

I thank God because later I learned that one of my grandsons who lives near the island Rocuant was miraculously saved. The sea dragged his house and once it got to Colón they were able to get out of the house.

**Illustration**
Agustín Burgos Ortega

One of my sons encountered the same fate. The sea came in with force and it took everything in its path: furniture, the kitchen, dining table, everything. I learned about this because my son came to me crying, covered in mud, to Concepción. With these stories, I insisted that I wanted to go back to Talcahuano to see my children, but they didn't let me. From 2010, I remember the wickedness of people, all the looting and delinquency. We had light and we got water from the spring, which you can find by all the houses on the banks of this hill. And that's how we went to get water.

# My advice is that you have a good marriage full of love and tenderness

In the 1950s when I came to live in San Vicente, it was a "golden age." There was never lack of food. There was an abundance of fish and seafood. I even remember fish washed up on the beach. It was so abundant that my mother and I used to prepare 200 to 300 pieces of dried fish. It's an abundance that only remains in our memories. The large ships devoured the seeds, razing everything.

I was a mother and housewife. In those times, my husband didn't support me much, as he would work, leave the money and go back out. I didn't have time to get bored between taking care of the house, my children's homework and meetings at their schools. Back then we washed clothes by hand, and we cooked on charcoal grills and with wood. It was a time period of a lot of sacrifices. But all

the sacrifices were worth it. My children thank me for everything that I have done for them. My advice to them is that they strive to have a good marriage, full of love and tenderness, and to talk about everything with each other.

Now, with the calm that comes with age, I don't fear death. I even tell my children that if there is another earthquake, they should run and leave me at home. I never get frightened. I tell myself, "nothing is going to happen."

**Illustration**
Constanza González

I have a restless spirit and I can't bear a day without activities. I always look for something to do, whether it's embroidering or knitting. I love to cook. But here they take great care of me, they say now is my time to rest.

# **María** Mendoza Villablanca

Salinas

Born on 10 of May 1950

*“Yes, we can!”*

I was born in Talcahuano and I had a quiet childhood. We were 6 siblings. My mother always worked for the home. If she went out, she always returned before we got back from school. My dad died when he was 64 years old and I was 10. He was a very progressive dad for that time period, against violence toward women and children. We didn’t have money but we had a surplus of love.

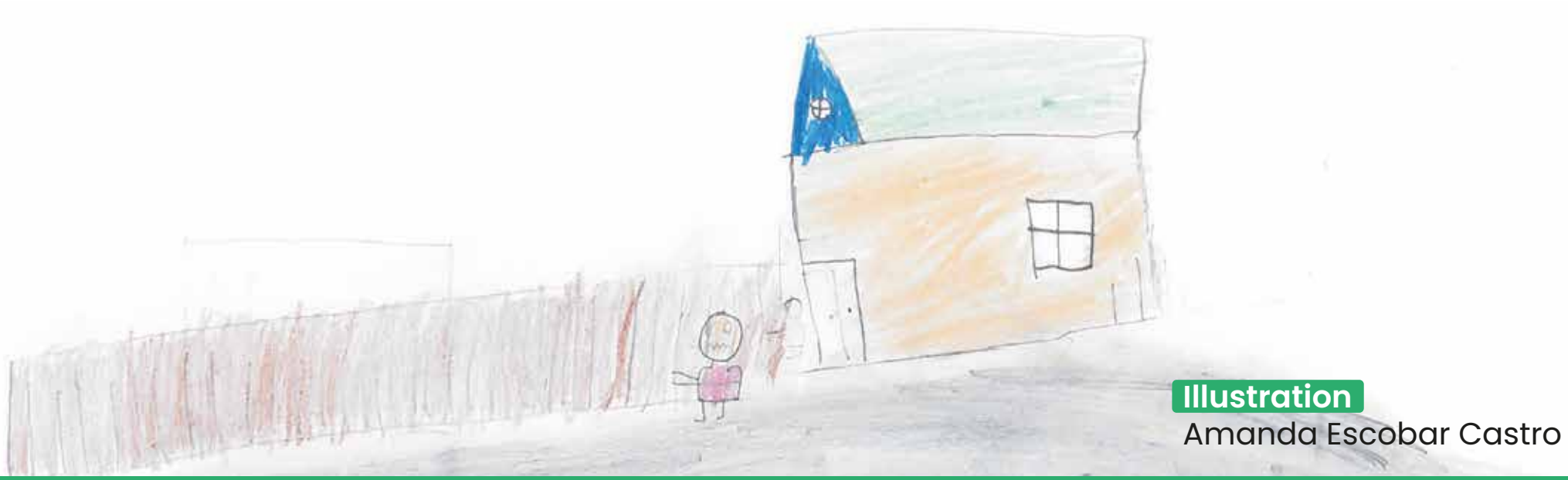


**Illustration**
Amanda Escobar Castro

# Earthquake 1960: When you can't stay standing up, you have to run to the hills

Compared to what we experienced later, it wasn't that strong, but it was still strong. We were the only family who stayed put, in sector Arenal. Everyone ran to the hills. My dad calmed us. My sisters wanted to run outside but he calmed them down. He explained to us that the earthquake would have to be much stronger for there to be a tsunami. I remember that. He said, "there will be a tsunami when you can't stay standing up." He said to my sister, "You were able to stay standing up, right? When one can't stay standing up, then yes, the water will come." And so we stayed at home. Of course we were all scared, like any child. But all of us huddled together, I remember we all slept in the bed with my dad and mum.

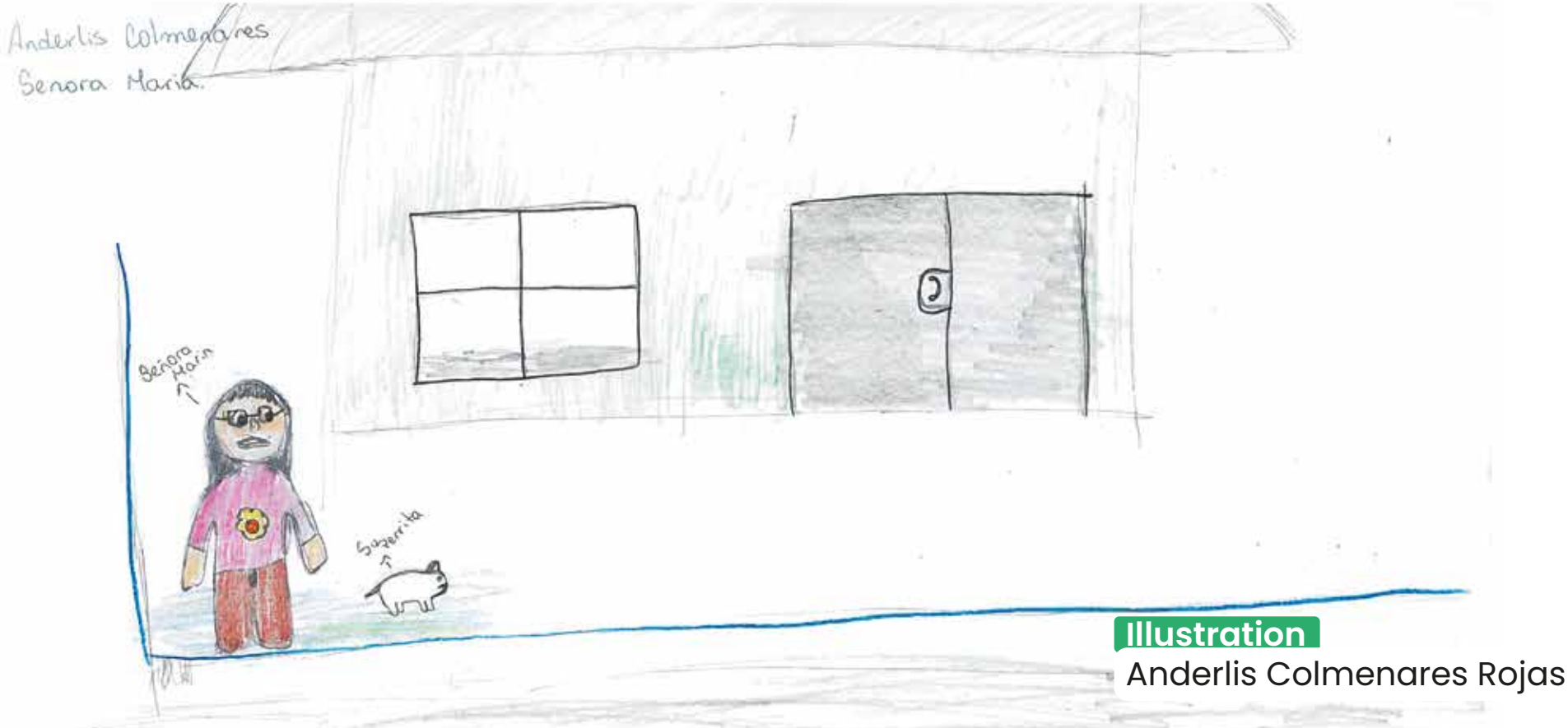



**Illustration**
Anderlis Colmenares Rojas

# Earthquake 2010: We made and shared bread with our neighbours

We woke up with the sound and movement. I got down from bed and I could not stay standing up. Then I remembered what my dad told us, that there would be a tsunami. I got dressed with what I could. My mother in law who was 97 years old was in her bed,

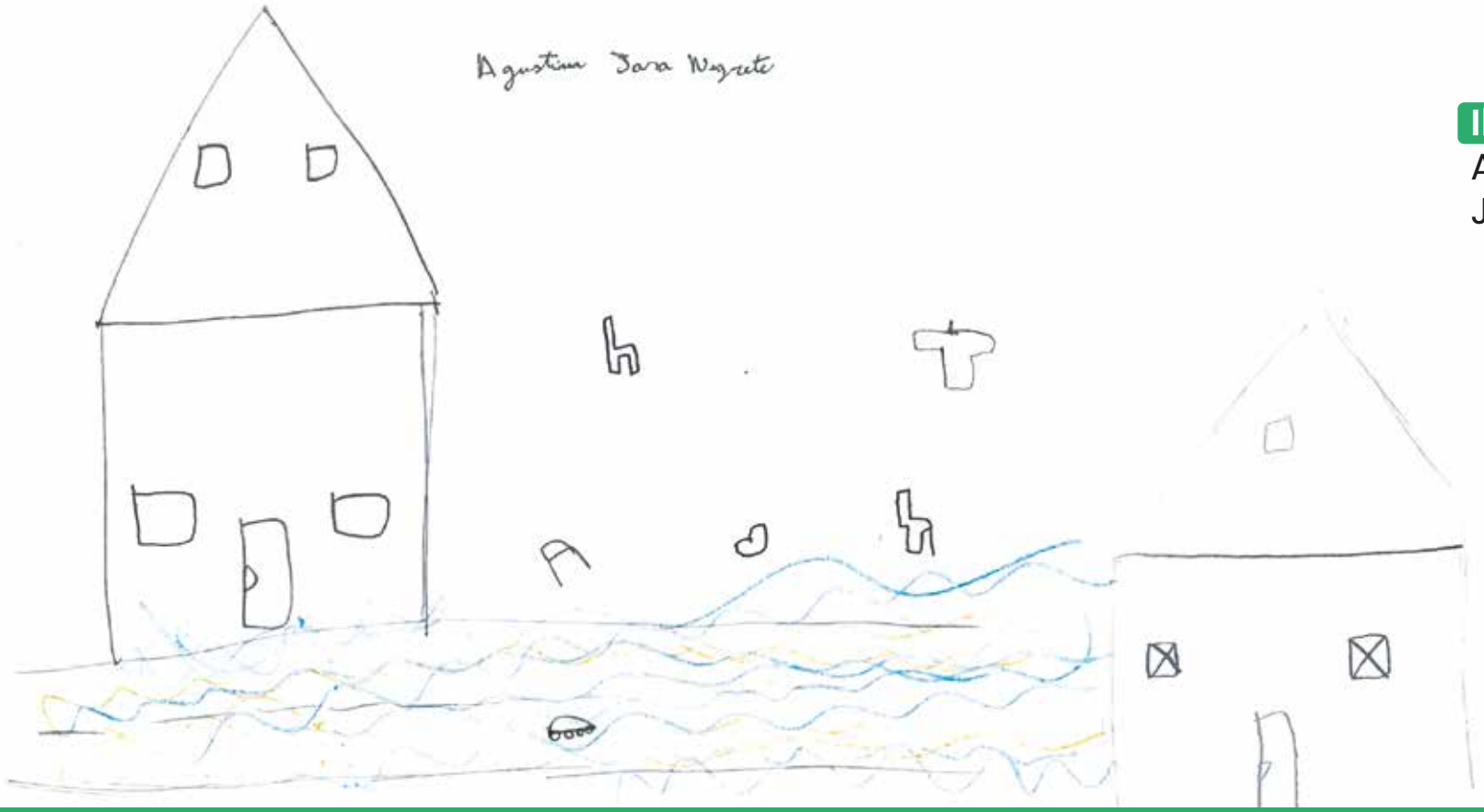



**Illustration**
Agustina
Jara Negrete

praying to God that things would calm down. With my husband we stayed alert for all the information from the authorities. And here they were saying that there was no danger and that we should go back to our houses.

At about 4am in the morning, one of my daughters came and saw that we were alright. We were without light and after a while my feet started to get wet. One of my neighbours was yelling at us to come out because the water was coming. I rushed outside and the water came to my waist. It

became very dark. I couldn't even see my hands and there was a sound like a monster. I clung to the fence. Our neighbour already had his ground floor full of water. The water was carrying mattresses, beds, everything. We waited until 7am and the house had half a metre of water. Everything was lost to mud that covered our beds, couches, and curtains.

My husband and neighbour took out my mother in law in the middle of the water. They took her to the upper floor of the house next door, which on top of it all had a spiral staircase. They wrapped her in a blanket since her clothes were wet. Later, I made my way back into the house and got her clothes.

When sunrise came, we realized the disaster of our house. I sat on a chair and looked at it all, wondering how we would reconstruct everything, after the years of work that had gone into building the house. But then my daughter said that the house was insured. I didn't know it but she had taken out insurance when I once started a fire in a pan making fried potatoes. That was a great relief.

I had an industrial oven and just before the earthquake I had bought 50 kilograms of flour and had put it above the oven. My neighbour had yeast and butter. I began kneading dough and my husband brought gas, and we shared bread with the neighbours. When we went out to distribute the bread, everyone was so grateful to have warm bread. Our solidarity continues to today.

# I have the strength of my mother

My life was not easy. 4 children, my husband a truck driver, but I never gave up. My north was to help my children become professionals. Today thanks to God and to our efforts, my 4 children are professionals. They are my pride. I studied until I was 16 years old and got married at 18 years old. I promised myself to finish my studies but life told me otherwise. I worked at home. I learned to cook as my mum gave me recipes, and I made bread, sweets, and desserts. Later, when I was more than 50 years old, I went back to study and finished my degree. Four years studying and I loved it. I would wake up early to take my granddaughter to school and I prepared everything in the house before going to study. I graduated second in my class.

I was a kid of 18 years who got married, who didn't have a clue about anything, but I had the strength of my mother. I always say, "Yes, we can!" I think I've passed on this strength to my children.

# **Marianela** León Torres

Santa Clara

Born on 4 of February 1956

*"I fight for my sector"*

I was born and raised in Talcahuano. We are 8 siblings and I got married in Talcahuano. I have 4 children, 10 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren. My dad was in the Navy. We happily played in the patio and streets.

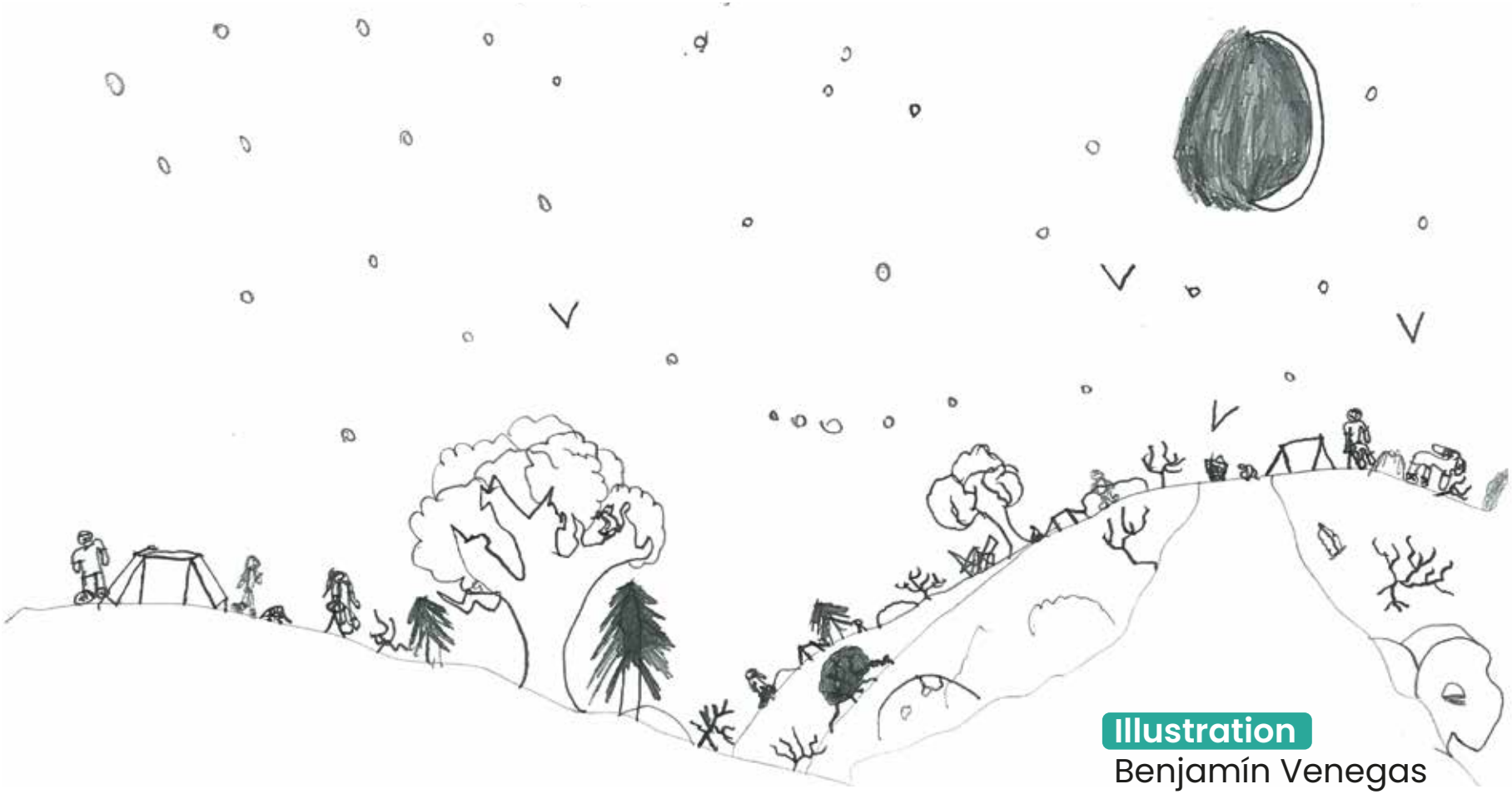


**Illustration**
Benjamín Venegas

# Earthquake 1960: I remember my uncle came to tell us the sea came out

I remember the 1960 earthquake. I remember my mum was cooking sopaipillas. It started to move and things started to fall. My mum said, "It's shaking!" I then heard that it had been an earthquake. We went outside to the street. We lived on a street corner and I noticed that

there was a lake. We had an uncle who lived in El Morro and he came to our house at night. I heard him speak with my mother and he was telling her that the sea came out. He threw out all the “faluchos,” a type of boat that they used to have.

# Earthquake 2010

I had gone to bed after watching the festival of Viña as I don’t really like the singer Arjona, and in 20 minutes everything started to shake. We thought it was just a small quake, and then the cups began to fall and the windows started to make a sound. I had broken a leg when I fell during a recent vacation, and I had a provisional boot. I didn’t even have a proper plaster.

My son in law came to look for me, and we went to the hills, at Huachipato. We were there for almost a month, living in tents, while here everything was under layers of mud. The water covered everything. One of my sons who lives way back there, the water came to his ceiling. When the water went down, there was this kind of slush, a type of black mud that we took out in wheelbarrows. But it was like cleaning and taking things out without end. There was no water for cleaning. My granddaughter who was very little back then, we would turn over her underwear one side and then the other side because there was no water to wash things nor clean clothes.

After coming down from the hills, every time that there was a quake, we left for the hills for fear of another tsunami. We were like that for

3 months. I never questioned the order to evacuate. When they said we could return, that's when we came down from the hills.
If it had just been the shaking, it wouldn't have been so bad. With the water came the mud, and that was the worst. The sea brought with it ovens, buoys, and those things broke everything into pieces. Before, I never thought that we would have a tsunami. We saw the water come but we thought a pipe had broken. I did notice that it had become dark and the neighbours said the sea had come out. My son in law came and noticed it because there were waves and fish in the house. I never imagined that my house would be so affected. I washed the armchairs but when they dried, they had these dark patches and a rotten smell. I had to throw them out.

I never thought about material things. My house was declared uninhabitable. Even when the machines came to demolish what was left, it didn't hurt me. But what did make my tears fall was seeing the photographs of my children gone, or under the mud.

Despite everything, the truth is that we never went hungry. We just had to restrict ourselves a bit. Our neighbours who were better off helped those who had less. But this solidarity only lasted for 3 or 4 months. Another event can happen and it will be each to their own.

# Attachment to my district

At first they said they were going to take us out of here, that they weren't going to rebuild here in Santa Clara. We said it's illogical. Where would they take us? So we said "no" because they have to give us what we already have. This is ours, it's not the government's. We bought these houses ourselves. And from there they created the laws for reconstruction in original sites.

The government came and said we could build in our own places, and I joined the leadership to fight for what's mine and my neighbours'. We began to design houses thinking that if one day, tomorrow or in 10 years, the same things happen, that the houses can hold up. These houses are built to withstand disasters; we saw them being constructed. We helped the neighbours find

paperwork or do things like go to Bienes Nacionales, go to the municipality, everything so that they could have the necessary documents and build thier houses.

These neigbhours, we've known each other all our lives. Our parents knew each other and we've hung out since children. I have an attachment to this sector. I know it well.

# **Orlando** Cortés Santiago

Centro

Born on 9 of October 1936

*“My duty was to help my family.”*

I was born in Illapel, but I spent a large part of my life in Talcahuano. Although I was only 3 years old, I remember the 1939 earthquake. I’m the fifth of 10 siblings. We didn’t have many resources as a family.

**Ilustración**
Tomás Valenzuela Saxton

# Earthquake 1960: We ran through the streets to warn people if there was a tsunami

During the 1960 earthquake, I worked in a local restaurant owned by an aunt. We worked all day for the operators of the steel mills at Huachipato, who came to eat in groups around midnight. We made roast meat, soup, and half a litre of coffee. That day we were just finishing and I heard a very loud

noise. I woke up my sister who came out with a blanket. I didn't go out and thought, "If we die, we die together." Everything was dark. I turned off the gas.

The quake stopped and we started to walk towards Colón via Riquelme street. We had to put aside the walls that were falling down. We went to see my mother who was on an upper floor, and the façade of the house had fallen down. On a later day, at 3pm, there was another earthquake. That one did shock me and I ran to be under the door. I always go stand underneath a doorframe because the door is the most stable place. Later on the radio we learned what happened in Valdivia. That's when the sea came out. Because the water came up to Colón street.

My aunt took some people to my sister's house who lived near the David Fuentes hills, saying "in case the sea comes out." But some of us from the restaurant walked around until dawn, watching the streets at night in case there was a tsunami so we could run and warn people. But nothing. The water was rising but it didn't come to the streets.

In 1960, the firefighters didn't walk around distributing water. I remember we had to go look for water on Orella street. I had a friend who had a well and we could get really delicious water from there. So that's where we went to get water to take to my aunt's restaurant in Huachipato so she could cook.

# Earthquake 2010: It was like the end of the world

In 2010, I was in bed when the shaking came. Everyone was running and I said to people, “you should run too.” I felt something heavy on my legs. I looked at the ceiling but there was nothing there. It was actually a big TV that had fallen on the bed. My family helped me and we went by car to the David Fuentes hills. I left with my dog.

I spent one or two days sleeping in the car, but I decided to go back to my apartment.
On the road, I could size up the disaster. I saw the containers and the ships. I didn’t have gas or any other way to cook. We made do with tins of mackerel, my dog and me. No one had ever taught me what to do in an earthquake. I wasn’t afraid. Everyone ran and I just looked

at them. I don't fear earthquakes. It's more dangerous to run. Something can fall on you and that can be worse. The most important thing is to keep calm.

I have respect for the ocean and also for the river because I never learned how to swim. And so I fear the sea but not earthquakes. I'm not afraid of quakes. Later, I went to see the streets. The containers were in the way and the fishing boats were all over Caleta del Morro. It was like the end of the world.

# My duty was to help my family

We were poor, a family of 10 siblings. We made fire with logs to warm up and we went to the hills to look for that wood. My mum was a seamstress and she would sew up our clothes from the oldest child to the little one so that she wouldn't have to buy new clothes. We never bought bread. We made it at home. My mum worked from dawn to dusk, and my duty was to help her. I was 10 years old when I started to earn my keep. A lady paid me 6 pesos to take bread to her, and at the end of the month I would give it to my mum.

Later I started to work alongside a brother who worked at a bakery delivering bread. He went out with a cart that was especially made. I walked with him at 5am. Then I would go to school and in the afternoon at 5pm when I left school I would pick up the pay. That's how I earned money but as soon as they gave it to me, I handed it to my mum because that's life.

When I was 16 years old, I began to work in the mines. I took on responsibilities from a young age.

My dad would give me 5 cents, which at the time was a fortune. I would buy honey dumplings and walnuts, and they were so tasty.

# **Rosa** Rodríguez Palma

Las Salinas (Villa Las Dalias)

Born on 17 July 1931

*"I'm a social worker without title"*

I was born in Talcahuano. I was raised by my aunts because my parents died rather young, when I was 4 years old. My brother was 6 months old when our mum died. Our aunts who raised us gave us a lot of love and education. When I was 6 years old I had an accident in the eye and they had to operate on me. That also marked my life.

# Earthquake 1960: I tried to protect my nephew

In those days we were in San Vicente. At first, we stayed inside the house. Later, we had to leave the house but we didn't lack water because we had some bottled water and also there was spring water nearby. I was afraid because it shook all night, and we were afraid due to the alerts about a tsunami, but the

water didn't reach our house. I was with a nephew and I tried to protect him, scared that the ceiling might fall on him. Also, a door closed on me and I couldn't go outside.
We had the basics like flour, sugar, tea, and coffee. But then my uncle had a business at the big warehouse in Talcahuano, and we got our supplies there. There was no light but we had candles, and thanks to God nothing happened. With the neighbours we helped each other. We went to the hills and there we could feel the quake more than on lower ground. My brother and my uncle went to look at the water, which reached the ponds in the sector of San Vicente. I remember that before they didn't call it "tsunami"; they called it "maremoto." But I wasn't very conscious of things since back then we didn't know much.

# Earthquake 2010: There wasn’t much information

I was alone and I had just sat on my bed when I heard the sound and felt the movement. I couldn’t stay standing up and I had to go back to the bed. I tried to open the closet to put on a dressing gown but I couldn’t.

Later I went to a neighbour’s house. There wasn’t much information. We just heard that Talcahuano had disappeared.

One loses track of things. I couldn't communicate with anyone but the family came to look for me by motorcycle. I wanted to go to the city centre to pay for water and electricity because they were functional in the plaza. I got to Colón and some police officers told me that I couldn't pass. It was impressive.

Worse than the earthquake was the looting. People were taking things that were not necessary. I remember that they took whole boxes of goods.

# I’ve always liked helping people

After I finished school, I studied shorthand and business writing. My big dream was to become a social worker. I’m a social worker without title. I’ve always liked helping people. Before the pandemic, we used to prepare food and we gave it to the neediest people.
helpe

My aunts knew how to store things so we never had problems at home. I remember one of my aunts would say that one should always have at least flour, oil, sugar, and milk. Because with the flour you can make bread. We had a small piece of land and we had some vegetables there to eat. We had parsley, cilantro, also potatoes, almost everything. Before, we didn't have supermarkets. We had small shops in the neighbourhood and nothing more.

Relationships with the neighbours were good. We helped each other. For example, since my aunt knew about pharmacy, if a neighbour came at whatever hour, she would get up and go give someone an injection or give them something to cure them. We had a neighbour

who worked in Huachipato and had little children. They had a nanny but my aunt was asked to always go check in on the kids. And so they cared for each other like this, among the neighbours.

I like to garden and keep my garden pretty. In my vegetable garden I have herbs. Since things have gone up in price, I planted cilantro, parsley, and celery. I pick just want I need. It's all fresh. It's a distraction and it relaxes me. Eating healthy is the recipe for reaching the old age of 90.

# **Pedro** Rozas Garrido

Los Cóndores

Born on 1 of September 1945

*"I'm happy because I'm well thanks to God and my beautiful family"*

I was born in Pemuco, region of Ñuble. I was about 7 years old when we arrived with my father to Las Canchas in Talcahuano. I was president of the Rodeo Club of Talcahuano and Director of the Lion's Club of Talcahuano.

# Earthquake 2010: I know the ocean

I think the houses in this sector are the best houses that have been built in Chile, without exaggerating. With everything that happened in 2010, there was not even a crack in the house. Just the crockery broke and the door jammed.

Here the neighbours all went outside running toward the hills – I'm not a marine but I know the ocean. I started to think, "It will reach the island of Quiriquina... and then it will pass over there and reach the port, the fisheries and all that... When it gets there, it will die down".

I had a rented field behind the sector of Huertos Familiares. The water reached there and it left a thick layer of mud, sludge. But it served as fertilizer. I had enough food. They left me 2 drums of 200 litres of water each. All my crockery broke and it was like a full sack that we couldn't move. The light was out and that's why now I have a generator.

# Life was simple and the fields were so beautiful

When I was a boy I ran errands for money, and later I went to a night high school in Talcahuano, then to the navy. For errands, when I was 8 years old I used to buy bread for a retired navy official and his wife. I had to get everything ready for breakfast and then I helped with the cleaning.

From high school I went to the navy to work in the welfare department. I worked in the garage for buses that run through the naval base. From welfare I went to the sub-department of torpedoes. There they had the school for artisans and I did a course. I was there for 2 years learning.

Life was simple. We played running in circles, we took water out of waterwheels, there was no pavement and it was a very pretty neighbourhood. They did competitions of all

sorts of sports. The 4 sectors nearby would get together, and Las Canchas would split up into the zones of the North, Central, Fiscal, and South.

We've lost a lot of these games. Unfortunately, we've become absorbed in technology and that's all that children these days play.

The fields were very pretty. An aunt had animals and I used to get milk from one of the little cows. It was like life in the countryside. There was a gentleman called Hormazábal who used to gather supplies of food for the barracks of Borgoño. He had a cart and to carry it up the hill, he used three oxes on yokes. The carts were full of things.

# My relationship with neighbours is good

My neighbour in front has keys to my house becuase sometimes I go to the countryside. He turns on the lights in the afternoon and takes care of my dogs, the pets I have. During the 2010 earthquake, we all got together and guarded the neighbourhood against looting. We closed off the street. With all the neighbours we created a large gate.

I remember I made bread but it turned out badly. A neighbour who lives on the other side of the street came and she asked me if we had bread. I said no, although later I told her I had made bread. I asked her, “Shall we try it?” She said, “It’s tasty” and took it all. In hunger, there’s no such thing as bad bread.

# I’m happy because I have a beautiful family

The School of Artisans in the Navy was like a university. We passed through all the workshops of the navy’s shipbuilding company ASMAR in the 2 years that I was there. We did military service and studied for 2 years and then we graduated. I stayed at ASMAR for 8 years but I left because I was earning very little. Outside another wind carried me, as they say, and life has gone well for me. I have a beautiful family: I have a daughter who’s a doctor, my son who is a medical sales respresentative, another son

who is a physical education teacher, and my youngest daughter who likes cameras and works in Santiago. She's an audiovisual communicator.

My wife died on 25 December 2021, on Christmas day. And so I became alone and I keep up this house. It's problematic, complicated... Our memories are everywhere, in all corners of the house. That's life. But I'm happy because I'm well and have a good time. I have my beautiful family. We're like a clan.

# **Rosa** Riquelme Villanueva

Talcahuano Centro

Born on 19 of December 1947

*"Wanting is power"*

I arrived with my parents from Valparaíso to Concepción. It was an era of many material shortages, but we didn't lack love and concern from my parents. I have 7 children, 19 grandchildren, and 24 grandchildren. One of my sons passed away.

**Illustration**
Sebastián
Godoy Arévalo

# Earthquake 1960: I was scared, crying

I was 13 years old. I remember I was sleeping on a bunk bed and they took me out like that. I woke up, totally scared in the middle of the street! The earth just went “pa!” We couldn’t say standing up. It was terrible. For 15 days we lived in a provisional camp, in front of our

house. i remember there were a lot of rumours, for example that the candles were going to turn into fires and needed to be blessed. I didn't know what an earthquake was and I could only follow my dad's orders. I was scared, crying. I was just a girl. I was just crying and asking God to calm the earth. Everything got dark and full of clouds. People were saying that we needed to take candles with us, that we weren't going to have electricity. With all that you get panicked, no? We didn't lack food. My mum was in charge of cooking and she made meals like potatoes with wheat (papas con mote) or with polenta (chuchoca). She made sure we didn't lack anything.

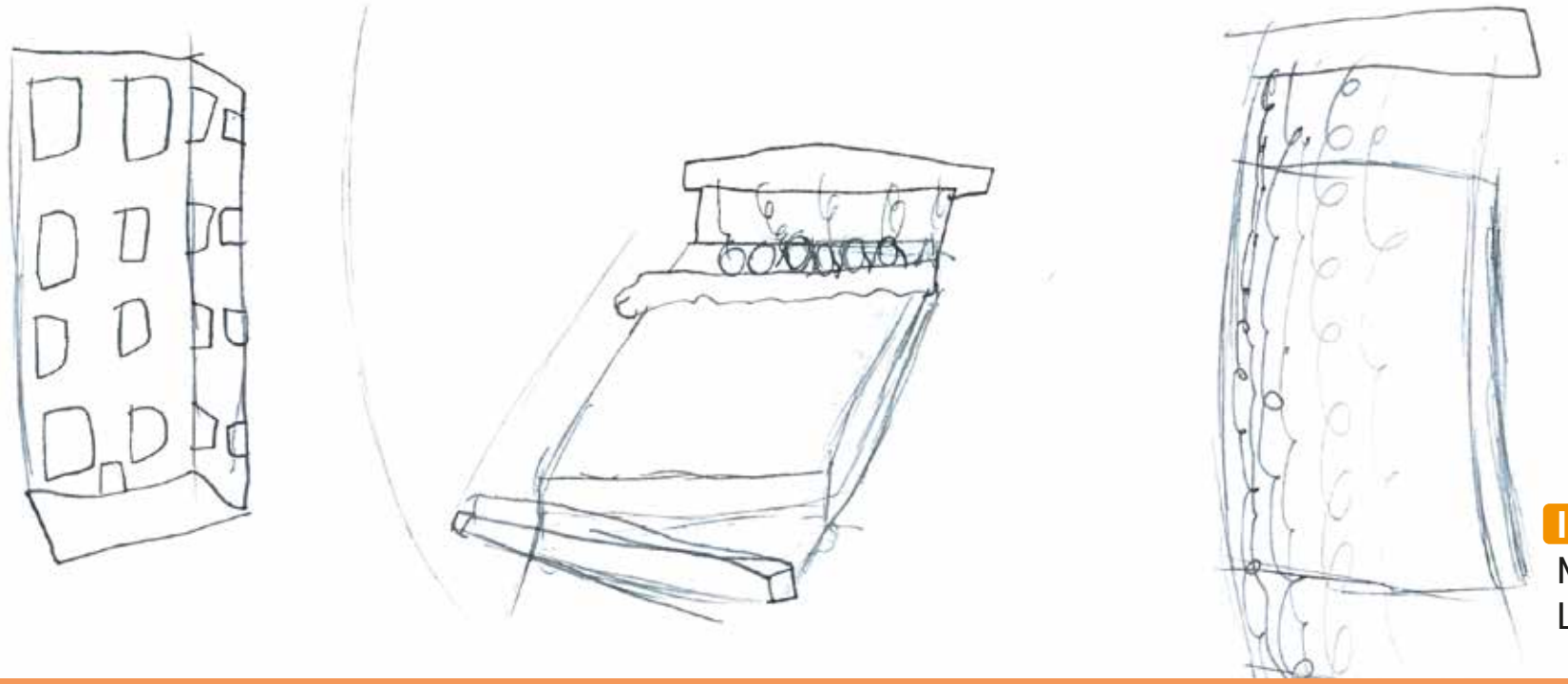


**Illustration**
Maycol
Leiva Cibilis

# Earthquake 2010: The looting was another earthquake

I don't remember that day very well becuase I took some sleeping pills. My grandchildren Susana and Enrique were here. They took me out of the house, without shoes and in summer pyjamas. I began to react to the event once the shaking had stopped and we were outside the house. We didn't know where to look because everything in the house was broken. The kids took out buckets and buckets of crockeries and vegetables.

Later my daughters came to organize things because the house was upside down. So I was outside the house for quite a while, in a tent. It was horrible seeing the looting and all those things we encountered. The looting was another earthquake. Then one of my daughters took me to her house.

# I am an empowered woman

In 1964 I married a navy official, with whom I had 7 children, out of which 6 have survived. At only 22 years old, I had my first 5 children. In 1967 we went to live in Santiago. It was one of the hardest stages of my life. My husband mistreated me. One day, a friend told me about contraceptives and without asking my husband, I took them. And I was like that for 6 years without having more children.

In December 1973 my husband was transferred to Talcahuano because he received a death threat. We came at dawn in a sealed truck. In that time period I had 2 more children. I kept going for my children, withstanding things I never thought I would, because my family was very Catholic. I had an uncle who was a priest and an aunt who was a nun. To separate was unthinkable in my

family. A separated woman was seen badly. My neighbours advised me that I couldn't continue like that. One day it became too much and I got my children together, and told them we were leaving, that I was going to find us a house and would return for them. I was afraid but in 1980 I closed the door. I didn't have any resources but with the strong conviction that I would not yield even a centimetre. That's how the marriage ended, leaving behind decades of suffering. I came back after 6 months for my children, when I found a new house. I studied and became a teaching assistant. I liked to work with special needs children. I enjoyed working with them. Sometimes I get depressed and cry so much I get hiccups. I ask God for help, "Lord, take my hand, don't let me fall." God lifts me up.

You know? My whole life I dreamed of having a bicycle. I saved money and it was the first thing I bought. It was the best gift I gave myself. I don't like to be without activities. I'm restless and I like to help others, but I don't ask for anything in return. I'm an empowered woman. I'm the owner of my time, my space, and my money.

# **Ulises**
# Neira Canales

Medio Camino

Born on 9 of December 1940

*"I love my family, my people"*

I lived on Latorre street with my 3 siblings. I started to work for the municipality and I was also the president of 3 institutions. I love my family, my people.

# Earthquake 1960: I helped people

I didn't really take it seriously and went to see my girlfriend at around 3pm. But it was strong and the poles on the street were moving. I then went back to my house and started to help people as municipal staff.

We were put in charge of clearing out the debris. We went from house to house, with 1 driver and 4 workers. I'll tell you an anecdote: A lady who lived on Castellón street called us. She lived in a house that had two floors and asked us to help her bring down a piece of furniture, a really pretty object. Among the 4

of us, we tied it up and I did a sailor's knot. We secured it well and tried to bring it out, but it slipped and it fell in one bang. It broke into pieces. What a big embarrassment. The lady looked at us and we didn't know what to say. She almost hit us but we explained what happened and she calmed down.

# Earthquake 2010: I remember the mud and it was horrible to see all of that

My grandson “Piri” came to see me and he was yelling, “Grandpa! Grandpa!” I was stuck under the cot and I couldn’t get out. I cried out, “I’m coming!” After a while, I was able to get out. My kids ran to the hills. I stayed behind with my grandson and my son in law. I didn’t leave because I wanted to stay at home. I never thought there would be a tsunami.

I remember all the mud. It was terrible to see all of that but we had to pull ourselves together. We went to look for groceries and we would gather in this house. We helped each other among neighbours. Then we heard that bad types were coming and we stood out there with bonfires and sticks. But nothing happened.

After time passed, people went back to their own houses. Later, we didn't even say hello to each other. But I say hello, even on buses I greet people.

**Illustration**
Alexander Bustamante Mendoza

# I hug my grandchildren to give them the love I didn’t have as a child

My life has been sad. I could write a book. My mother abandoned us when I was 6 years old. We then went to live with our grandparents. Later, I went to live with an aunt and my father went to Valparaíso.

I grew up against the world. I learned it all, the good and the bad. I had a childhood marked by abandonment. I didn’t get to study much. Back then, they didn’t motivate us much to go to school.

I forged myself alone. I started to play football in the Naval Youth team when I was 17 years old, but I also wanted to work. That’s how I came to work for the municipality of Talcahuano on 7 of March 1960, where my first job was as a painter. It was a beautiful time period. We did all the jobs.

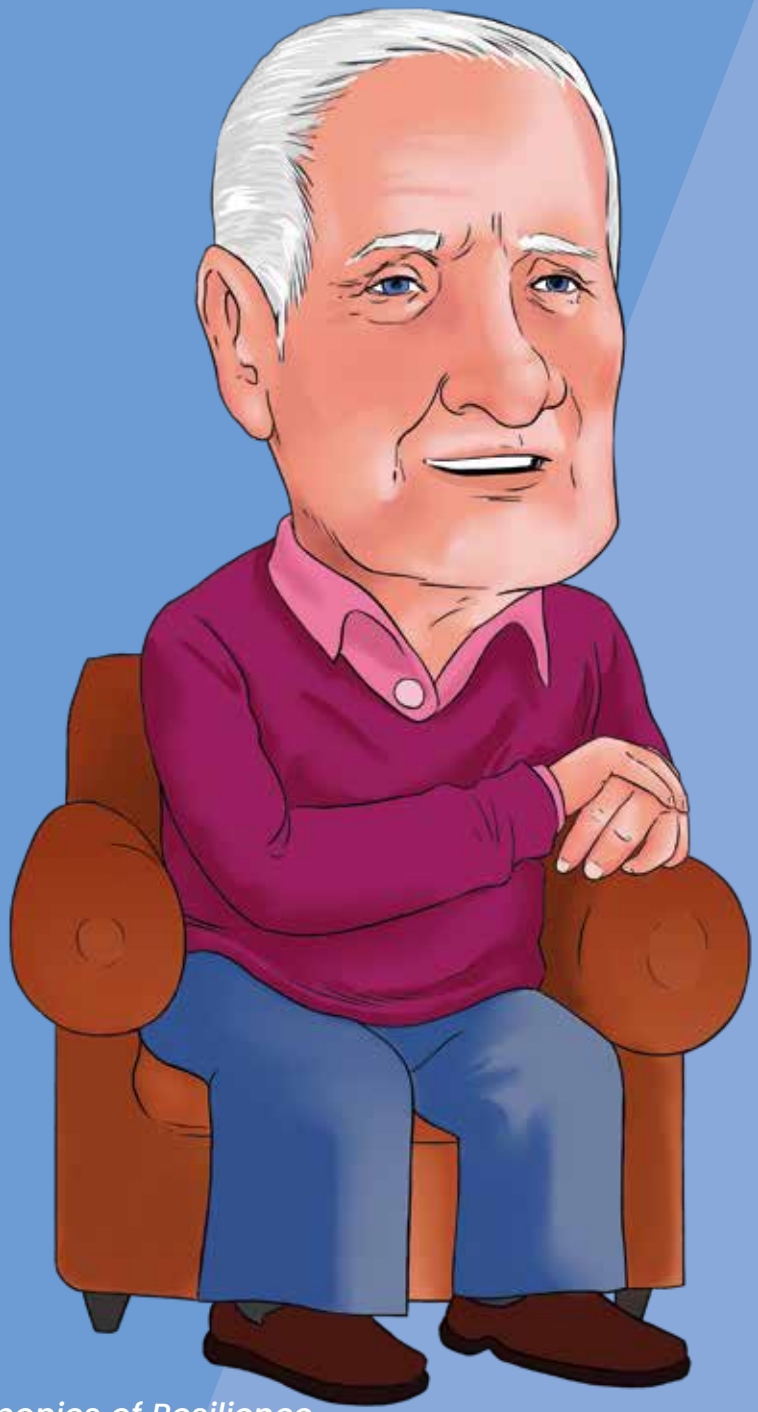
Beside the job at the municipality, my passion is sports. I played for the municipal team and I'm still there after 60 years. It moves me that one of my grandsons went to play football professionally in China.

In 2017, I organized a football championship for people older than 60 years of age in Talcahuano. Actually, it's called the "Historic Group of Football for People Older than 60 Years Old." They gave me a certificate for having organized this championship.

Once retired, I was bored in the afternoons and I started to learn artisanal crafts. I bought tools and that's how I entertain myself in the house. I met my Carmencita Domínguez, and

we used to give each other signs across the patio. That's how people dated back then, with just signs. We dated for 4 years. She was 25 years old and I was 29, and we made a family. We rented a place in Gómez Carreño. My wife was pregnant there but we lost the baby. Then, God gave us three children, Patricia, Claudia, and Yasna. We worked very hard.

Today, I give all the love I didn't get to my children and grandchildren. I feel a profound love for my chidren because when I was a child I didn't know love, and I never got hugs or gifts. I hug my grandchildren, my children, my Charlie's Angels. I love my people.



# **Winston** Hermosilla Soazo

Arenal

Born on 27 of June 1942

*“My mother was always my example”*

I was born in Concepción, but I’ve lived all my life in Talcahuano. I was a teacher in different educational institutions.

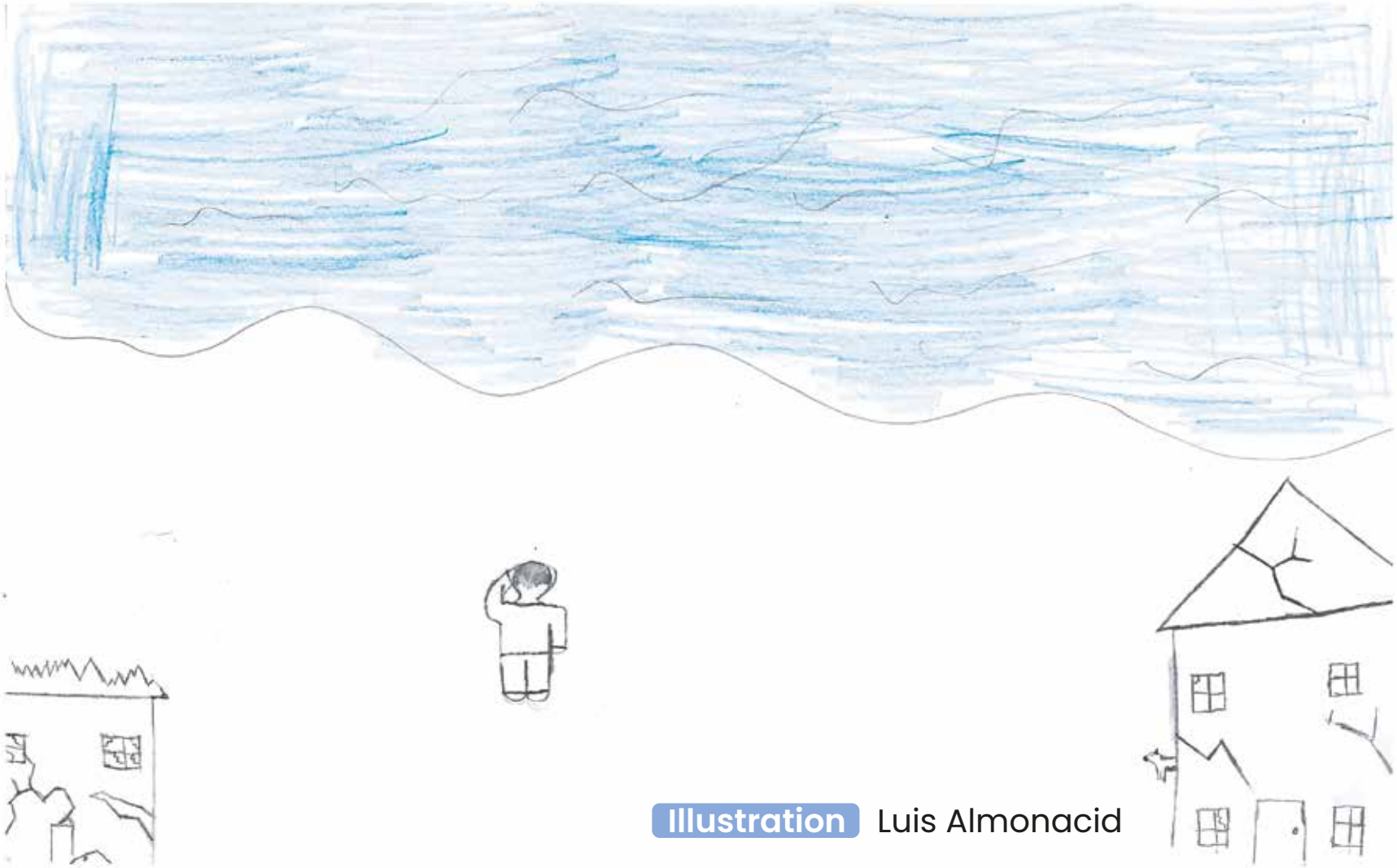


**Illustration** Luis Almonacid

# Earthquake 1960: I ran for shelter in the arms of my mother

In those days, the threats between the United States and the Soviet Union were smouldering. There was the topic of the atomic bombs. I was in my bedroom. My

father was in Santiago and my mother was in the other bedroom. The only thing I could think of was that they had exploded an atomic bomb. Everything was new. It was my first earthquake. It was a rude awakening. Everything shakes and one doesn't know what is going to happen. I ran for shelter in the arms of my mum, although I was already 16

years old. The most distressing thing was not having electricity. When the shaking stopped, we went ouside and many of the houses were on the ground. The neighbours were in shock. My mum didn't hesitate to offer help. My house was filled with beds. One family was in the living room and another in the dining room. We were upstairs. I remember we had to act quickly because the rains were coming.

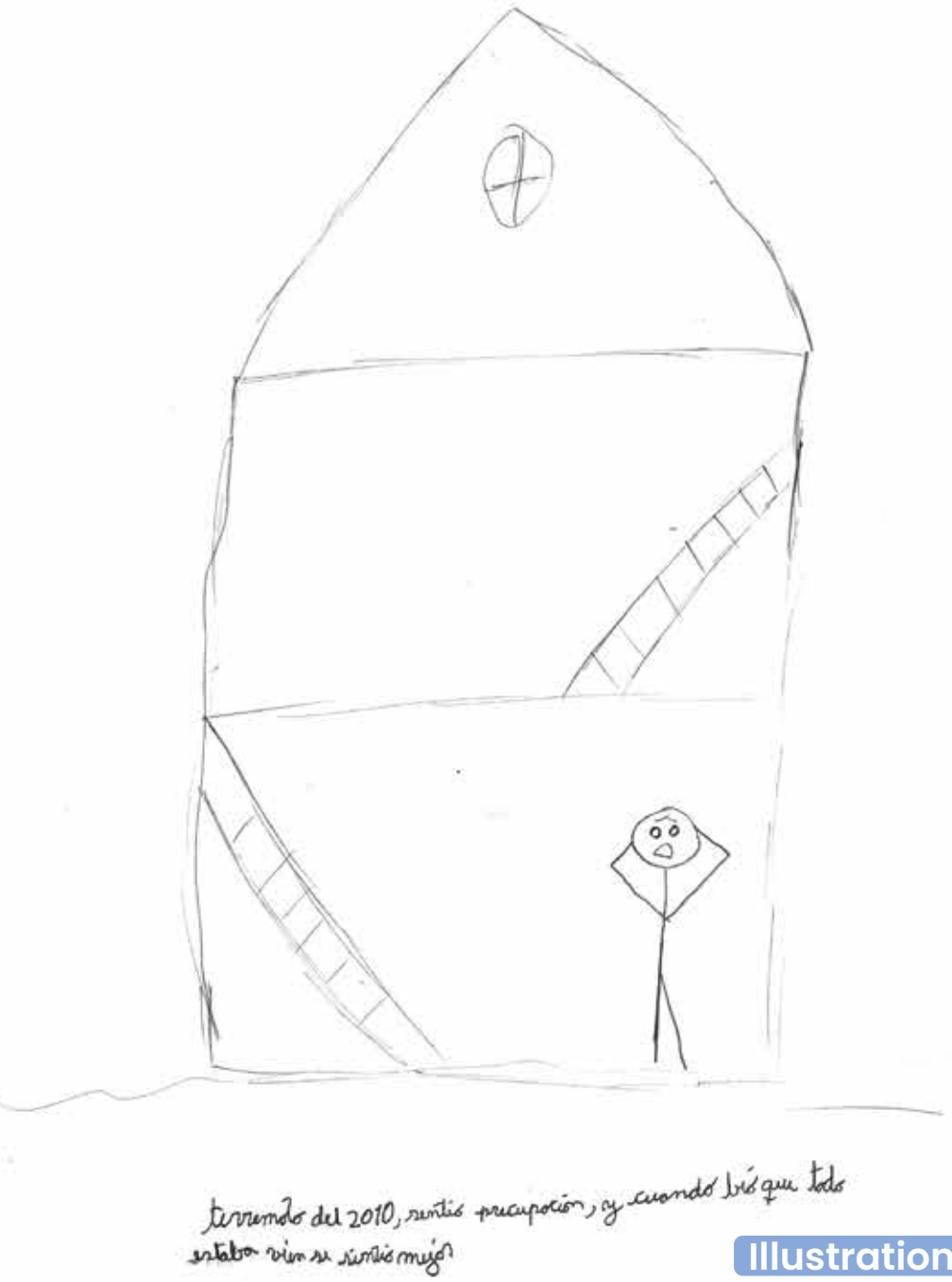



**Illustration**
Anays Vega Suazo

# Earthquake 2010: You have to keep calm to transmit that to those you are in charge of caring

I remember that on that day, having lived through 1960, I felt somewhat more prepared. Luckily I had the fortune of having gone to university and so in bed I kept telling myself, “I know this is the Nazca Plate, I know this is the Nazca Plate. But cut it out, Lord!” I said, “This is enough, Lord.”

I recognize that my attitude in the face of the earthquake was between the sacred and the profane. Despite my prior knowledge I wasn't ready. I didn't have torches nor things to meet my basic needs. My house was in chaos, the crockery broken, everything on the floor. For me, the worst was being without light. It was hard to get dressed since the wardrobe had fallen. I didn't know where my clothes were.

I remember the chaos I saw in the centre of Talcahuano, the ocean, the boats on the street, the nauseating smell, and how the days went by. It was a slow process of reconstruction, with everything from delinquency to inequality. But there was also solidarity.

A common element between the earthquakes of 1960 and 2010 was the role of the radio. This mode of communication kept a large part of the country informed about what was happening. It also allowed many families to know the situation of their family members. We had enough food, as those days were characterized by the solidarity among neighbours. Maybe the most interesting thing from those times was that many homes had a small vegetable garden from which to get vegetables for the family.

Those memories are very alive in my mind. But that event, despite the traumatic nature of it, made it so that I've lost the fear of similar events.
Today, having lived through two earthquakes of great magnitude, I know I have the temper to pass on instructions to those who have not had similar experiences. I now always stress the importance of adults keeping calm and transmitting that to those they are in charge of caring.

# My example was my mother

During the 1960 earthquake, my mother was upstairs in her bedroom and I was also on the upper floor. I think it was like 6 in the morning. I was so shocked that I ran to my mother, even though I was already 16 years old. I remember that we then went to my grandmother's house to make room for the neighbours who sought refuge in our house. We listened to the radio and there was news from Santiago. But in 2010 we didn't have electricity so we couldn't listen to the news. We didn't have much information.

When my mother died, two people visited me. They told me that a few years back, they were in debt and came to see my mother. My mother took money from her savings so that they could pay back their debts. My example was always my mother, since I was a little boy. She used to invite this homeless man from the street to our house and we shared meals with him.

That's why she also opened our home to neighbours when the earthquake of 1960 happened, and we had families evacuating in our house.

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“Voices of Resilience”

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