

## Local

## Author draws upon life growing up in Tracy

**Danny Ruiz, a teacher at St. Mary's High School, Delta College and Pacific, is the author of "The Blue Mexican."**

CLIFFORD OTTO/  
The Record



**By Jennie Rodriguez**

*Record Staff Writer*

STOCKTON — Danny Thomas Ruiz has had time to reflect.

It's been more than a year since his book, "The Blue Mexican," was published.

In many ways, the book reflects his ongoing personal journal of self discovery.

The 64-year-old English teacher, who lives in Stockton, grew up in Tracy and served on that city's police force, is still

sorting out his childhood, adulthood and the past 40 years of life in San Joaquin County.

He is still exploring — and, in some cases, exploding — myths.

Tracy, a small (population: 18,000) rail town in the 1960s, wasn't as peaceful or idyllic as it seemed. The south side of town, the Mexican side, was a center of trouble.

"There were the cowboys, the preps, and then there were the Mexicans," Ruiz said. For him, the mix made for interesting interactions, but mostly, the vari-

ous groups stayed segregated geographically and socially.

During his 20 years as a police officer, Ruiz developed a different view than many of his colleagues.

There were times the people he arrested were the same people he knew growing up. And there were times he felt compassion for farm workers, whom he believed were often intentionally targeted for arrest and for robbery.

"Being a minority, you had  
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## AUTHOR: Unaware of heritage as child

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layers to go through to earn respect," he said. "You witness bigotry and men who hide behind their badges. When I saw how they would make me arrest farm workers, like they had no rights, ... no phone calls, ... I thought to myself, 'God this is cowardice.' ... I felt terrible."

One of the farm workers was found murdered after being released from custody.

"But because he was not a citizen, his murder didn't matter," Ruiz said.

Ruiz details such accounts of brutality and racism in the book published in 2010 by Indiana-based Trafford Publishing.

There also were personal issues to deal with.

In a recent interview, he looked back on his life — and its recent changes.

Ruiz grew up believing his step-father was his biological father. He also writes of abuse at the hands of a teacher and the stepfather.

"To me, there's nothing worse in this world than to take the innocence of a child," Ruiz said. "It's a hard thing to overcome, but it can be done."

Ruiz, a husband and father of four grown daughters, looked into his identity three years ago.

Raised believing his last name was Dunne, he found his baptism record, which showed his birth name as Ruiz, his mother's maiden name.

Things made sense — why

his skin was darker than that of his siblings and why his stepfather treated him differently.

Education was the key to change. Ruiz earned a bachelor's degree, then a master's degree from University of the Pacific. Today, he teaches at St. Mary's High School, San Joaquin Delta College and Pacific.

It was the discovery of his true heritage that inspired him to write "The Blue Mexican," a fictional account drawn from his life experiences.

"I'm proud of who I am," Ruiz said.

The book is available at Trafford.com.

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