Felipe Alou: From the Valleys to the Mountains

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A NOTE TO THE READER

This novel is a true biographical account of one of Major League Baseball’s greatest players and managers, Felipe Alou. His story is based on personal testimony that Felipe himself shared during an exclusive personal interview. The story of his life and career has been artfully narrated using a minimal number of high-frequency words in English.

New vocabulary is embedded within numerous (Spanish) cognates (words that are similar in two languages), making it an ideal first read for beginning language students. A comprehensive glossary lists all vocabulary used in the story. Keep in mind that many words are listed in the glossary more than once, as most appear throughout the book in various forms and tenses. (Ex.: I go, he goes, he went, etc.) Vocabulary words and phrases that would be considered beyond a beginning level are footnoted within the text, and their meanings given at the bottom of the page where each occurs.

The opinions and events in this story do not reflect or represent the opinions or beliefs of TPRS Publishing, Inc. We hope you enjoy reading it!
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Chapter 1
The Dominican Republic

In the Caribbean Sea, there is a tropical island. The island is called Hispaniola. The island of Hispaniola has two (2) parts: One (1) part is the nation of Haiti and the other part is the nation of the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic is famous. It is famous for baseball! Baseball is very popular in the Dominican Republic. There are many professional baseball players from the Dominican. Many of them are famous. They are famous in the Dominican Republic and in Latin America, and they are also famous in the United
States. Dominican baseball definitely receives international attention!

The Dominican Republic also receives international attention for its beaches\(^1\). Its tropical beaches are very famous. There are many elegant hotels on the beaches, and many international tourists visit every year\(^2\). A popular vacation destination, the Dominican Republic is considered a tropical paradise!

For many years, the Dominican Republic was not a paradise! It was not a vacation destination, and it

\(^1\)beaches - playas [sandy areas of a coast, sandy areas of a coastline]
\(^2\)every year - cada año [each year, every 12 months, every 365 days]
was not famous for baseball either. Between 1930 and 1961, a dictator controlled the nation. The dictator was General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina. General Trujillo was a rigid, oppressive and violent dictator! He controlled the nation with political oppression and terrorist tactics.

In the year 1937, the dictator organized a horrible massacre, called ‘El Corte’ (The Cutting). The massacre was organized to eliminate Haitians. There were many Haitians who lived in the Dominican Republic. The cruel dictator did not want Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. He wanted to eliminate them from his nation! He said, “I don’t want Haitians living in my nation. Kill\(^3\) them! But do not kill Dominicans; only kill Haitians!”

Haitians are black, and many Dominicans are also black. To distinguish the Haitians from the Dominicans, the military used a tactic called a ‘Shibboleth’\(^4\). A Shibboleth is a military tactic that uses a spoken

\(^3\) *maten, asesinen [murder, execute, end one’s life]*

\(^4\) *‘santo y seña’: una palabra o frase que se utiliza para distinguir a un grupo o clase de personas que otro [A word or pronunciation that distinguishes people of one group or class from those of another.]*
word\textsuperscript{5} (or words) to distinguish people from different nations. The Haitians did not speak Spanish; they spoke Creole (criollo). The pronunciation of Creole is different from the pronunciation of Spanish. The Haitians could not pronounce many words in Spanish. In particular, they could not pronounce the word ‘perejil’ (parsley). When a Haitian pronounced ‘perejil’ (parsley) in Spanish, it was obvious that he did not speak Spanish and that he was not a Dominican. It was obvious that he was a Haitian! If a person could not pronounce the word ‘perejil’ (parsley) perfectly, the military would kill him!

\textsuperscript{5}word(s) - palabra(s) [units of meaning in language]
Trujillo ordered the killing of all the Haitians who were living in the Dominican Republic. He ordered the military: “Eliminate the Haitians! I want all Haitians killed! But do not use military arms\(^6\) to kill them; I do not want any military evidence! Kill them with machetes!”

A machete from the Dominican Republic

During the six (6) days of the massacre, the military (armed with machetes) killed more than 17,000 Haitians who were living in the Dominican. The irony of the massacre is that the dictator was part Haitian.

During his dictatorship, General Trujillo was responsible for many violent and cruel acts, but he was also responsible for positive acts: He was responsible for the construction of schools, houses, hospitals and clinics. He was also responsible for positive economic

\(^6\)arms - armas [weapons, armaments of war]
progress, but the economic progress did not benefit the people! It benefited the dictator and his officials. The corrupt political officials lived like kings\textsuperscript{7}, while Dominicans continued to live in poverty\textsuperscript{8}.

\textsuperscript{7} kings - reyes [rulers, sovereign powers]
\textsuperscript{8} poverty - la pobreza [living with little or no money]
Chapter 2
The Rojas Family

During the dictatorship of General Trujillo, many, many Dominicans lived in poverty. The dictator and his officials lived in excellent conditions while the Dominican people lived in poor conditions. The people did not have much money. They lived in poverty, and many lived in hunger. They also lived with a lot of political oppression. But in 1935, there was a child who had no idea that there was political oppression or poverty. His name was Felipe Rojas Alou. He was the
Felipe Alou

son of José Rojas and Virginia Alou.

José and Virginia had a big family. They had six children (in order): Felipe, María, Mateo, Jesús, Juan and Virginia.

To José and Virginia, family was very important. They were very dedicated parents! The Rojas family did not have much money, but the children did not notice. They were innocent and happy; they did not notice the oppressive political situation or the poverty in which they lived.

The Rojas family lived in Haina, Kilometer 12 in the National District. It was called Kilometer 12 because
it was 12 kilometers from Trujillo City\textsuperscript{1}, the capital of the Dominican Republic. The family lived with very little money, but they had a house to live in. Felipe’s father was a talented carpenter, and he was responsible for the construction of the family’s house. His father was a carpenter and a blacksmith\textsuperscript{2}, and his mother was a homemaker\textsuperscript{3}. His father was black, and his mother was white. To the Rojas children, living in a house with white and black people was \textit{normal}. Race\textsuperscript{4} was not important; to the children, there was no difference between black people and white people.

The Rojas Family was very well respected by the Haina Community. José and Virginia had a stable family and insisted that their children have good character.

\textsuperscript{1}Trujillo City - Ciudad Trujillo

[Trujillo City was the name of the capital of the Dominican Republic. General Trujillo changed the capital city’s original name, Santo Domingo, to Trujillo City in 1930. After his assassination in 1961, the capital city’s original name was restored.]

(En 1930, el General Trujillo cambió el nombre original de Santo Domingo a Ciudad Trujillo. Después de su asesinato en 1961, el nombre original fue restaurado.)

\textsuperscript{2}blacksmith - herrero [a person who works with iron]

\textsuperscript{3}homemaker- ama de casa [a mother who does not work outside the home, a stay-at-home mom]

\textsuperscript{4}race - raza [the color of a person’s skin]
Santo Domingo: The Fort of Conception in the Colonial Zone. Between 1930 and 1961, Santo Domingo was called Trujillo City.

They insisted that they live with integrity and honor. They also insisted that the children receive an excellent education. Education was very important to them!

Felipe and his brothers and sisters went to elementary school in Haina, Kilometer 12 and they went to high school\(^5\) in Santo Domingo. Felipe was

\(^{5}\text{high school (secondary school) - escuela secundaria [grades 9 – 12]}\)
very intelligent and athletic. He was an excellent student and was very dedicated to his studies. Felipe was a very talented person! He had a lot of confidence and he lived with an idea... He had a vision for the future and felt like he was going to do something important with his life. In the 11th grade, the Dominican Republic’s Commission of the National Track Team\(^6\) selected Felipe to be on the team, a tremendous honor. Felipe was a javelin thrower\(^7\), and his participation on the National Track Team was the first indication that he was going to do something important with his life.

\(^6\)National Track Team - Equipo Nacional de Atletismo [Track includes many events, including running, throwing and jumping.]

\(^7\)javelin thrower - lanzador de jabalina [A javelin is a long object with a point, like a lance or spear.]