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Final Commencement: Graduation Ends 25 Years of Tuition for Metro Family

By PERRY WILLIAMS

(June 23, 2005) As "Pomp and Circumstance" played at the University of LaVerne, Metro Bus Operator Bacilio Cortez and his wife, Olga, stood proud for more than their youngest daughter's commencement.

The graduation marked the end of more than 25 years of tuition payments for their four children.

After the ceremony, the two breathed a sigh of relief they'd been holding in for a very long time.

"I thought about buying my wife and me a robe, too!" said Cortez, who is assigned to San Gabriel Valley Division 9. "I'm proud for them and me."

Starting from the oldest child's first day at grammar school to the youngest receiving her B.S. in Accounting, the Cortezes can finally rest after sacrificing for more than a quarter of a century.

The children were not eligible to receive financial aid, leaving Cortez to work many hours to put them through school. "It was definitely a struggle, but I look at it like the money was going somewhere, so it might as well be for their education."

'Depended on Daddy'

Cortez even faced the challenge of having three in college at the same time. "I never called in sick because my children depended on Daddy to come through."

Asked his secret to all four of his children graduating from college, Cortez simply replied, "We started talking to them about college before they were even able to spell *school*."

Olga and Bacilio Cortez are very proud of their children. Carlos Cortez earned a B.A. in Political Science and most recently received a Master's in Public Administration. His brother, Eduardo Cortez, holds a B.S. in Optical Engineering.

Daughter Patricia Cortez-Garcia has a B.A. in Political Science, while the newest graduate, Maria Cortez, earned a B.S. in Accounting.

"I feel more relieved now that I don't have the pressure," said Bacilio Cortez. "Most people accomplish something and go to Disneyland, I'm going to relax with my wife."