

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Hector Hinojosa
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Informants: Hector Hinojosa

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LS: Interviewer
HH: Hector Hinojosa

Luke Sprunger (LS): It is July 29th, 2013. I'm Luke Sprunger for the Washington Country Museum. I'm also a graduate student from Portland State University. Today I'm interviewing Hector Hinojosa in Hillsboro, Oregon. And Hector was involved with many organizations that provided important services for Mexican Americans in the community among other roles in his life.

So to begin I would just like to ask you about your background and childhood. Could you talk about where you were born and where you spent your early years before coming to Oregon?

Hector Hinojosa (HH): Sure. Thank you for the interview. I appreciate the time to express our settlement here in Washington County.

Yes I was born in Mexico, Matamoros, Tamaulipas, which is right across the border on the tip of Texas as soon as you cross the border. I was two years old when we migrated from Mexico into Texas. I attended the first, second grade in Texas and then we began the migrant mainstream. [We] headed west, landed in California, [I] spent my third grade there. Up here in Hillsboro right here outside of town. [I went to] Farmington View school in the fourth grade and then moved into town and settled here and decided not to go back to Texas. [I went] to Peter Boscow where I attended the rest of my grade school. J. W. Poynter Junior High and then Hill [Hillsboro] High for my high school.

LS: Do you remember why your parents originally decided to begin migration after two years in Texas?

HH: It was one of the big employers in town—Harlingen, Texas—was the air force base that shut down and just crumbled the economy there so it was really difficult to even—not just find employment, my dad had employment—but it just crushed the economy so bad that we heard that working in the fields here out in the west was lucrative business for a family our size. We were only seven of us altogether but we could all go to work. So that is what got us moving in the first place.

LS: You mentioned hearing about conditions in Oregon and then coming out.

How did the reality compare to what you had been told?

HH: Very different. We all went to work in the fields. Back then the 12 year age requirement for child labor wasn't in effect then. I happened to be 12 years old then but even though I was able to work in the fields and make a living like an adult would. So to that extent it was true but really hard labor to earn a day's wages. I think you can imagine for example, strawberries—crawling on your knees in the mud or dry conditions in the sun. Back then you didn't have any of the conditions that are required today by OSEA (Oregon Safe Employment Act) or Department of Health. They didn't have running water. They didn't have utilities. I mean you went behind a bush.

So the conditions were very primitive and hard labor, hard work, backbreaking labor. So yeah, a little bit different than the picture that was painted but nonetheless we were successful, I think.

LS: And what prompted your family to decide to stay in Oregon?

HH: Both the weather over there and right on the Gulf of Texas you hear about tornados and hurricanes coming through there all the time and evacuations. We spent many a days on our knees praying that the hurricane wouldn't take our little house. And they said here in Oregon they hadn't seen a storm for 200 years. And of course we loved the beauty and the green. So it was more the family, us kids who didn't want to go back. Mom and dad wanted to continue to migrate back and forth and we just fell in love with Oregon and basically boycotted mom and dad and said, "No, we don't want to go back. This is where we want to stay."

Unfortunately, the second winter we stayed was the October 12th storm, I think in 1963. And a tree came down and crushed our little house where we were staying in a migrant camp. So there went our reason for staying, the weather and we ended up with one of the storms that hit history in Oregon in 1963, October 12th storm.

LS: I think you said before after a few years, and obviously after that unfortunate incident, your family was able to afford to purchase a home. Is that correct?

HH: We did. After that October 12th storm that winter which for most migrant seasonal farm workers is dead time, there's unemployment. I think it stops at about the walnut season in the fall—September, October and that's it.

We were lucky enough to get a job in Beaverton at the Beaverton Speedy Car Wash where the four of us boys—dad and my other two brothers and myself worked for \$1.25 an hour. And the owner happened to own a little house here in Hillsboro, right off of Connor and offered us a contract to buy it and we did. We signed a ten-year contract for \$110 a month and we paid it off in ten years and settled here. [We] became homeowners here in town.

LS: So to move on to a slightly different topic, either in Texas or in Oregon were there any instances of discrimination that you felt really stood out to you, just you personally or in the community?

HH: Yes, both in Texas and here. In Texas though it was more as a child and not really capable of understanding what was happening because at that time I was limited English speaking. I was a Spanish speaker at home. And I remember the local merchant for example on one occasion that I can recall where he literally was telling us where we weren't allowed back there in the store where we were and was kicking us out. I remember smiling and saying, "Thank you, thank you." And my brother says, "No, he's kicking us out of the store." So the language barrier was difficult for me to realize what was even going on around me at that point.

It became more apparent as I grew up probably in my junior high age, probably 14, 15 years old here in Washington County where I saw housing discrimination was probably one of the first instances, employment discrimination. And when I say that I mean seeing a home that has a sign outside that says 'For Rent', sending the family there who just came to town of Mexican descent and being turned away saying, 'The house has been rented already.' And then watching another couple come in—European American couple come in and given an application to fill out. Obviously what we did is we then set up another couple to go in, European American and request, and were given an application. [Then we] sent a Mexican family in and they were turned away. And with the assistance of Legal Aid, Oregon Legal Aid back then was a federal program we were able to file discrimination suits against housing.

Ditto with employment. [We] ran into problems where—and those experiences, Luke, come from those of us that settled here in the '60s became advocates for the rest that followed. It wasn't unusual to have a total stranger knock at our door and say, "Gee could you help me with employment, housing, my car broke down, whatever." And so that's why I had firsthand knowledge of some of these incidents of discrimination.

LS: So do you think with the community being smaller everyone sort of knew who you were and so when someone new said, "Oh go to Hector, he can help you out."

HH: Yes.

LS: Okay. I was listening to—it's a completely different oral history interview and that individual was saying that with him having a lighter complexion discrimination was different for him than other people. Was that your experience at all or do you think it was more of a cultural, language thing?

HH: No, no it was very real. On my mother's side her ancestry was Spanish and French. And on my dad's side was the Mestizo Indian, the darker pigmentation of the skin. On mom's side some of my grandparents had light blue eyes. Well I got the light colored skin with the hazel eyes and so yeah, I was often told that I was different from my friends. So yeah I think that it helped a lot, the color of the skin without any word spoken, without any—made things easier for me, that I was able to walk into a facility without anybody even doing a second look. But as soon as Mexicans walked in, a dark color skin pigmentation, they got the looks all right.

So I think it was milder for me but once they found out that I was Mexican descent and so on then the discrimination was pretty blatant.

I remember even as an adult at 21 entering a night club and having some white kids there who makes a comment to another one says, "Why don't you go do something constructive and kill a Mexican?" because they were getting bored shooting pool or whatever. And I'm standing there and obviously they didn't know that I was Mexican descent until I stood up and told them that I was. And they decided they were just joking. It was an exaggeration of what they really meant.

But it's alive and well even today. Not as blatant as it used to be. We have a lot of laws that help protect us against that but it certainly doesn't stop the bigotry and oppression of Hispanics in the area. And we're now two hundred fold from where we were in the '60s.

LS: Do you remember at that time, maybe you remember more as you were becoming older, but was there any contact with other Mexican American communities from Woodburn for example or were things separate?

HH: We did, both culturally and events. You can imagine back then we had one radio station—KUYK back in 1965, 1966, somewhere in that neighborhood for two hours on Sundays, 6:00 a.m. to 8:00. That was it. No TV in bilingual. That was the only radio station here in Hillsboro. The other radio station was in Woodburn and so cultural events and announcements went back and forth.

The other one was religious events. My family was actively involved in the Catholic Church so we integrated with a lot of the local communities who were trying to start Hispanic outreach or Spanish masses from Portland to Forest Grove, Cornelius, Sheridan, Mount Angel, Woodburn, Salem. And so we went to the different services to support their efforts and trying to promote Spanish masses in the local church. So both religiously and culturally there was a lot of interchanging with the other communities.

LS: Do you remember when you were young maybe what sort of life you imagined for yourself? What was your attitude toward education or what you thought you were going to end up doing with your life?

HH: I ended up dropping out of high school as a sophomore and that was more due to a new attendance policy that came in that basically said that if you missed more than ten days in a quarter you automatically failed. And as a sophomore you began to earn credits towards your diploma. So by the second quarter, same thing, all my credits were taken away. Well now I had no leeway to graduate so I decided to drop out at 15 ½ years old and went to work full-time.

My parents at that point viewed me as an adult in the home. Culturally I was expected to contribute to the family and I did. I worked on the weekends or even evenings and provided—signed my check over to mom and dad. So I was an active member at an adult level of contributing economically to the family. So they were okay with me dropping out. That's not what they wanted. That's not what I wanted but the conflict was that it wasn't so much that I was skipping as it was that I was needed at home. If mom and dad needed to go to the doctor I had to go to translate. They needed to go to the bank, I had to go. They needed to go to pay taxes, I had to go. So I was needed at home a lot and so my absenteeism suffered because of it.

So when I quit I waited until I was 16 ½ to return back to education, to school and I went to Job Corps in Portland and got my GED (General Education Degree) and vocational training. There they were able to give me a scholarship to go to Portland State University and continue to work there as a counselor. And so I went into education as a young man at probably 19, 20 years old and attended Portland State full-time, working half time and went into guidance and counseling.

LS: So do you feel that your own issues with some of those attendance policies at your high school did that make you just more sensitive to the difficulties of Mexican American students and maybe some other marginalized students face with education systems in terms of—it wasn't that they didn't want to go to school but things just weren't working for them on a different level?

HH: Yeah. Today, Luke, we've grown so much in that area that today we call it culturally and linguistically appropriateness. That was missing back then. I recall even before I dropped out, even as a young man trying to bring in some of my other migrant friends who had dropped out long before they even came here for the same kind of circumstances to come back into school. And being told by instructors for example that we're not allowed to speak Spanish. When you're denied your language, your heritage, Luke, it is a feeling that unless you experience it's difficult to communicate except that it is a blow to who you are as an individual. That when it happens frequently you create an inferiority complex about life in general. And I was fortunate enough to discover that weakness could be destructive and was able to overcome it quickly in life as a teenager.

So yeah the practices, the attendance policy was not very culturally or

linguistically appropriate when a student is being required and needed back home to conduct daily business, sustainability kind of business. Like I say, everything from banking to a doctor's visit to the mechanic's shop with the car. Things that my white friends, European Americans didn't have to deal with those issues, I did at home. And it was mandated. It was required. I didn't have a choice. It isn't like mom and dad said, "Would you like to go with me to the car shop?" No. "I got to have the car there at ten o'clock and I want you to go with me." And they were instructions. You had to follow them.

And that suffered in my education and that's just the attendance. I mean there were other issues like I said from social economic issues that today I can honestly say that those were contributing factors. Culturally I was already bilingual by that time but English was not my first language. It was a second language and so I still have some issues even in high school.

Even today there're still some issues that I can spell it, I can relate to it. I can even put it in a sentence form, the word whatever but I've never experienced it. I don't know what it is. So to that extent I guess I'm still culturally disadvantaged because I haven't experienced some of those, had those life experiences that are expressions in English that in fact tell a full story. I don't know how to explain it except that the lack of—cultural and linguistic appropriate intervention was absent then. We understand it better today and we're still working real hard at making that happen.

In healthcare it is now a mandate. Limited English Proficiency, LEP I think they call it is part of the Civil Rights Act now where programs that are receiving federal funds must provide English, linguistically and culturally appropriate services. We now recognize that it is no longer appropriate to have a parent taking their child to translate personal healthcare needs. If they're receiving federal funds the clinic or the hospital must provide that service.

LS: So in addition to the problems you faced at school when you would leave to go interpret or translate, do you feel that that created any maybe any tension with your parents if you had to interpret for them about certain issues or did that affect the relationship not at all?

HH: Give me the question again. I'm not sure I understood.

LS: I was just asking about...maybe if the relationship with your parents if that was strained at all by having—for you being a child being in that kind of authority position interpreting.

HH: Not at all because the cultural norms within the family structure is different. Like I said at 12 years of age I was already working and contributing to the family. Today, labor laws says that 12 year olds are not allowed out in the field, for example. But a 13 year old and that's already contributing to economics.

They're already being asked to participate. My parents were limited English speaking so when we came here everything from reading a roadmap—if you can imagine. I'm going to guess that our home base to here is probably 3600 miles, give or take. And mom and dad can't speak English and all the road signs are in English. So we kids had to read the map and where we're going to stay that night and order food, grocery shopping and all those things we participated in that as children as part of a family structure.

So the family structure in a typical Mexican family is very different than a European American, even today. The children are expected at a much younger level to care for the siblings, to cook, clean. They have an active role in their—I guess I never heard the word of having your daily chores around the house. I mean that was like—and I certainly never received a—oh my goodness my English went away. See that happens too, miss a word—when you received your weekly allowance. I never received a weekly allowance. I only learned that from my friends and I said, "What is that all about? Hey that's pretty cool. I think I'd like to live in your family." You didn't get allowance at home. You worked and contributed to the family and you had these chores to do around the house. I drove literally. I didn't even have a driver's license and at 14, 15 years old I drove the car and I already owned my own car by that time.

So you can see how it was very different. The norms were just totally different. A different world within a world and it's always been that way.

LS: Okay so then with interpreting was just another way to help out.

HH: Yes.

LS: Okay. So you spoke about obviously medical clinics, hospitals not having the language service, but I'm wondering if you can talk more about just the struggles to access medical care and legal services on a broader level that went on in this community—just to provide those services to people here.

HH: The best example that I can give you and there're lots of them, but one that comes to mind which I'm sure you heard of and you can check out yourself is the Virginia Garcia clinic. A little girl who was a migrant seasonal farm worker—I believe they live in the North Plains in one of the migrant camps, suffered a wound to the foot. [She] stepped on a rusty nail or something and came here to Tuality Community Hospital. The parents didn't speak English and neither did the little girl for that matter. And received treatment and was released—or didn't receive treatment because of lack of insurance I believe and so on.

They then went to St. Vincent Hospital in Beaverton and was treated there and sent home with medications and instructions in English. And the parents didn't have the money for the prescriptions and didn't have the translation for the protocols for the wound care and ultimately the little girl passed away.

That's when the community and we as members of that community woke up and so did the healthcare industry wake up and realized that we had an issue with, again what we call today culturally and linguistically appropriate care. Back then we didn't even call it that. We just knew we had a language barrier and economics and insurance was a prevention and it shouldn't be. Lawsuits were filed. Today you can't be turned away. If you have an emergency, you enter an Emergency Room you can't be turned away. Back then you could.

So not only does that help us as a society in general to become a better, more humane if you would society but also the services were addressed. At that time we were in the middle of putting a program together called Centro Cultural in Cornelius. And within that old two-story house in the garage where we originally had plans to start vocational training was to put to a halt and in that garage we put in a clinic. A triage clinic, if you can imagine that with services from people from St. Vincent de Paul who volunteered to come out, medical providers, and help us with medical issues—screening, directing for services and so on to what it is today in 2013. That would have been back in 1974, somewhere in that neighborhood, to today where Virginia Garcia clinic is almost as large as Tuality Community Hospital. And we now have a strong partner in Tuality Community Hospital. Dick Stenson is one of the greatest advocates in our community for healthcare.

So all of that has turned around and is now much for the betterment of not just the Hispanic community but all of us in general.

LS: Could you name or maybe even comment on some of the individuals—with Centro, with Virginia Garcia—but also with other organizations that really helped create some of those opportunities to change things around here?

HH: Sure. I can recall early on, 1965 give or take, a program called Oregon Rural Opportunities, or Valley Migrant League actually before that. So Valley Migrant League two gentlemen, European Americans that I can recall that were focused on our community as advocates, as partners, as collaborators way back then—John Hughes and John Little both worked for Valley Migrant League. They recognized right away that they needed a Hispanic running those programs to address what I just finished describing as this culturally and linguistic the gap that was missing. So even as sensitive and loving as they were towards our community they realized that they still didn't understand all the idiosyncrasies of the cultural divide that needed to be filled in order to provide the appropriate services. So those were the first two people that I recall that helped.

A gentleman, a young probably 21 year old out of a migrant camp, Sonny Montes came in and became the executive director, after being trained of course. But they were able to bring in folks that were part of the Vista Volunteers I think is what the name of the program was. And Vista Volunteers were young, what

Portland State calls practicum—not very many universities have practicums by the way—where they would actually come out. It was like the Peace Corps. They went out and traveled like a mission and provided services. They helped us with skills on community organizing. They brought bookkeeping and accounting to the table. They brought management skills to the table. They were able to teach us these skills that we needed. Very few of us were bilingual and so we needed, those people needed to be bilingual as well.

So I recall those folks being our partners early on. Dr. Stu [correction, Greg] Mecklem [, MD] was in the Virginia Garcia group coming out of I believe St. Vincent's Hospital who came into help. One of those Vista volunteers, Jim Sylesky was the first director of Virginia Garcia for the first ten years. Those two gentlemen partnering together really helped us big time not just in community healthcare but later on in education.

Migrant Title 1M we called it back then, I think Title 1 monies are still available but for special education. Title 1M Jose Garcia who came from our hometown of Harlingen, Texas headed off that effort of penetrating the schools particularly for those migrant children who travel every two or three months, every season. And their education was suffering because the records couldn't be found the ten different schools over a school year period for example. So he was able to bring this culture of linguistically appropriateness to the table. Those were all of our partners and this infrastructure that we have today is alive because of that.

LS: When we spoke earlier you mentioned Jose Garcia also being important to you as a mentor when you were a student.

HH: Jose Garcia was my Algebra teacher as a freshman. And I fell in love with Algebra, believe it or not, and found out that I was pretty good at it when taught by somebody who you can relate to. So he was not just English and Spanish speaking, bilingual but he spoke and culturally was Tex-Mex is what we call it because he was from our area. I was able to relate to him and he was able to relate to me. And I excelled. Literally I was an A student in Algebra, surprising to me, my family and my principal [*laughs*]. But when you have those kinds of role models the results are clear.

LS: It seems like the impact he made just in terms of your educational experience would have to impact you on some level because you later worked as a counselor. First you were with Job Corps and then you were at Forest Hills then at Oregon State in similar capacities.

HH: Yes, my leadership development was already in place. I mean obviously that was there way before I even dropped out of high school because of my role in the community but not refined until much later when I was in Job Corps. Job Corps really provided me the opportunity to develop leadership skills to the point where I actually helped them develop their leadership training program.

During that time that would have been in '72, '73 somewhere in there. Let's see, 1971, '72 I was nominated by Governor Tom McCall to be a delegate to serve on President Nixon's conference on youth. And that stemmed from my leadership role in development of leadership. I would have been 18 years old, somewhere in there. And had received that kind of recognition at the governor's level and then sent on to President Nixon's conference on youth.

[I] came back and continued my education at Portland State University and then got into education. [I] decided I wanted to try to help prevent some of the high school dropout. [I] was lucky enough to land a job at Forest Grove High School as a counselor where Jose Garcia was one of the committee members there that helped not just obtain the federal funds to fund that position but to also fill it and be one of my board members. Dan Zeener who I had met in Job Corp was a counselor at Forest Grove and was able to recommend me to the school district.

I hadn't completed my college education yet and I didn't have my teaching credential so this board of directors headed by Jose Garcia and at that time was actually Neil Armstrong was still the Superintendent and Gary Lucas petitioned the Governor's office, at that time it would have been Victor Atiyeh I think, to grant me special teaching credentials so I could do this intervention of trying to stop the kids from dropping out of high school, particularly Hispanics because there just weren't that many bilingual teachers in the state. So they did. They granted me a special teaching credential that was probationary for the first three years, which I had to upgrade every year. I think it was nine credit courses I had to take every year to keep renewing until I got a regular teaching credential—five-year teaching credential.

And I think we were successful. We did some great things at Forest Grove High School in the area of prevention of high school dropouts. But most of our efforts ended up going into the classroom—actually aiding the teachers on how to create this environment that's culturally and linguistically appropriate in order for students to succeed.

We also expanded the definition that it wasn't just Hispanics that needed this help. And that's where I learned about taking race out of the picture and as educators start talking about the symptoms that create these issues. And so we started expanding the definition from preventing Hispanic kids from dropping out to social economically, the poor kids. We have lots of them and for the most part they weren't Hispanics. We had a lot of European American kids. Culturally the Hispanic kids came back in at that level mostly linguistically, language barriers. And then the third group was academically disadvantaged. Anybody that scored below a 40% on their SAT [Scholastic Assessment Test] tests for example would qualify for my services. My services consisted of home visits, meeting with the parents, how they can support their child in succeeding in school. And I did that for four years and then I went to University of Oregon in Eugene and quickly

became a Duck fan because they offered me a position as an associate director which was basically an assistant professor shift level academically.

And I'm 24 years old at this point so that was the peak of my leadership development at that time. And there we took students who had already dropped out of high school, brought them back into the system, crammed them in three months to get their GED and then bridge them right into the university and get them back into the academic system. So that's what I did in education.

LS: And I think it was right after that, after Oregon State [Correction, University of Oregon] you worked at Colegio César Chávez. Is that correct?

HH: I did. I left U of O in Eugene and went to work at Colegio César Chávez in Mount Angel where Sonny Montes is back into the picture. John Little, Jose Romero and those people were struggling and fighting to get an institution, what used to be the old abbey of part of the Catholic Church in Mount Angel. They were trying to put a university together to get it accredited as an educational institution, higher education with the name of César Chávez who was the, at that time still was alive and was the president of the United Farm Workers Union in California. So I worked there as a recruiter for a year or so.

You mentioned Oregon State. Oregon State came into the picture just here in the year 2000. The president of Oregon State in Corvallis asked me to participate in a group that they had been going on for about 17 years, to serve on his board for women and minority affairs and recruitment and placement of student, faculty and staff at Oregon State University. And I did that for four years. So I completed the circle, started at Portland State, went to U of O and finished up at Oregon State here. It would have been the year 2000, 2004.

LS: Do you think that Colegio César Chávez had an impact on some of the diversity initiatives that other universities eventually took up?

HH: I think that they did because one of the things that flourished at Colegio César Chávez was the art department. Not only did they have a great professor heading up that department but the expression of—I don't know if this is going to make any sense to you but it's called—it's probably not the proper term but I'll call it Chicano literature and arts. What that meant it was for the first time to be in a classroom where it's okay, not is it just okay for you to be who you are but encouraged to express it in literature and in art form. And I saw some poets coming out of there that were unbelievable in art that was being published, I mean literally in art centers. Quality kind of art. And it all had to do with the cultural and linguistic appropriate literature that—half of it was in English and half of it was Spanish. And it was a beautiful poem that I could understand, mom and dad could understand. And this beautiful artwork of the Mayan temples and the Olmecs and the Aztecs and to see that come to life. That's one area.

The other one had to do with education. One of the things and even today is lacking is—I'm overusing the word—is culturally and linguistically but culturally and linguistically appropriate curriculum. We at Colegio César Chávez were developing those kinds of materials, teaching aids if you would for instructors to use in the classroom. And then the other one was Fine Arts. I was married at the time so my wife was teaching Mexican folk dancing back then. Maria Magdalena was her name. So now we're expressing ourselves culturally and linguistically out in the open and performing throughout the State and displaying this artwork in the literature and so on.

So Colegio César Chávez was a great vehicle to move the Chicano agenda I want to call it that purposely for a reason because there was a—it wasn't an institution group that came from Mexico City. It was a Mexican American institution. A Chicano institution being headed up by Chicanos, Mexican Americans incorporating I guess what might be appropriate Spanglish, both half English half Spanish incorporated together and embracing that and acknowledging and recognizing and using that in a classroom for the first time. For the first time. That was beautiful.

So yeah, they played a big role. Unfortunately it defunct and doesn't exist today, but yeah they played a big role. The folks that were there and left went off to other institutions. They didn't stop. They didn't kill anything. If anything it gave birth to more fingers...like avenues that people went into other institutions including U of O, Portland State. Two of the folks just retired from Portland State that were back in Colegio César Chávez's day. They ended up Portland public school. Sonny Montes ended up there. He was president and one of the co-founders, Jose Romero just retired from migrant education. So it created leadership and it split other people off into other institutions and took hold in other locations.

LS: So it sounds like the influence far outlived the actual dates that it was open.

HH: Absolutely.

LS: So was Sonny Montes a source of personal inspiration for you?

HH: Sonny like I said was, he was 21 years old when he was brought out of actually a migrant camp to come in and start training both with John Little and John Hughes to get him to become the executive director. He had no skills for any of that but he had leadership qualities and leadership skills. And so they brought him on board, took him under their wings and developed him to in his own right a Chicano leader in our history. And I think he wrote a book two, three years ago. And I wish I could remember the name of it [*Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*] but I believe it's just Chicano power in Washington County with his name on it—Sonny Montes.

So he was instrumental in just being a Chicano leader in his own right. So he was a mentor as a young man to where he is today. He just retired from Portland public schools and is an author now. Jose Romero in education also. Jose Garcia also in education. Alfonso Lopez in bilingual ed. Señor Guzman, Dr. Guzman from Oregon State University who helped me hook up with Governor Victor Atiyeh. And I served on the governor's office for career and vocation education. So he was off in that branch of education.

All those folks were all mentors that had a big, big influence on my leadership style and development that took its own development later on. And I say that because as a migrant seasonal farm worker living in migrant camps and then going all the way to entering corporate America, working in the labor relations department for one of the largest agricultural companies in the world—Castle & Cooke which owned Dole and A & W Root Beer and Bumblebee Tuna and S & H sugar.

It was 40,000 employees in 27 different countries. And to serve at the corporate office in labor relations to learn union negotiations, union organizing but representing management, not the workers. So I am now learning the other side of the flip of the coin, going from literally walking the picketing on behalf of the United Farm Workers for worker rights and social justice to being a representative of one of those companies. [I] literally had the opportunity to sit down with César Chávez and Dolores Huerta and negotiate union contracts on behalf of the growers and farmers. [I] completed the full circle of my education and my work experience.

So my leadership style from these other mentors that I had took its own course. It went in its own direction and I never regretted it. I love it. I've learned a lot both sides of union organizing, union elections and campaigns, arbitrations, grievances, unfair labor practices, all of that. I would never have learned that at Portland State or anywhere else. It's hands-on kind of experience and I was blessed to have that opportunity.

LS: It seems like those earlier experiences that you had enabled you to negotiate with labor in ways a lot of people wouldn't understand coming from the corporate perspective.

HH: Yes. They wouldn't have. They wouldn't at all.

LS: I think I read from the previous interview that you eventually moved to Los Angeles to work for Pearmont Citrus? Is that correct?

HH: Yes, that's the company I was just describing. Castle & Cooke owned Dole and Bananal, we used to sit around and try to guess how many companies we owned. I don't think anybody could make a complete list. That's how big this company was. And I did. I was blessed to go. I started in Salem with a Dole

mushroom division where I first learned about union negotiations and labor relations and negotiated with a man that is part of Oregon history—Senator L.B. Day. I remember sitting in the same room with him negotiating. His desk was a U-shaped desk and he had at least four phones. They were all hotlines. One, he was a state senator at the Capitol.

LS: That was just for him.

HH: Just for him because when they had a vote on the floor that doggone thing would go off just like the Batman phone, the red one. It'd go off and he'd have to stop what we were talking about and he'd run down to the Capitol and cast his votes and come right back.

The next phone would ring and he was the secretary—treasury of the teamsters union. The other phone was—he was the president of dental clinic. Downstairs in his office he had a huge dental clinic that the teamsters union funded. I forgot what the fourth phone was for but I remember he had four phones on this U-shaped horseshoe-like desk and negotiating with us across his table doing a fifth thing. The man was incredible. I learned a lot from him as well.

When Castle & Cooke promoted me to corporate in San Francisco I literally went with his blessing. He offered to support me and back me up in any other teamster negotiations that I might venture into in California because he knew that I was a righteous and honorable—a man of my word kind of thing. So I was pretty honored with that offer. So when I went into San Francisco to the labor relations department, we probably had 34 different collective bargaining agreements with maybe 27 different unions. And so the same thing, I would represent the company in negotiations, grievances, arbitrations, elections, unfair labor practices, those kinds of things.

At the same time I was learning about human resource management, personnel, employee benefits, compensation and all the human side of a business at the executive level because I'm at the corporate level now where there was probably 1,500 of us of this humongous 40,000+ company. And we had a hostile takeover of a rich man who came in and bought up all the stock in a matter of a couple of days and took over the company and fired everybody at the corporate office. And his office was in L.A.

I was offered what is called an invitation to come and join him at L.A. which I didn't want to but it was employment security. Right in the midst of that they were starting a new division called citrus—fresh citrus, oranges, lemons, limes, kiwis. We had never done that before. They did Dole bananas, Dole pineapple but not the citrus industry. So they asked me to go help start that division up. I agreed and off I went into a whole other area of human resource management. And fell in love again, all over. And I did that for about four or five years and then went off on my own as a consultant until today. That would have been in 1991 I went off

and became a consultant working for myself in human resource management, business consultant and labor relations.

LS: So how long was that when—you went to Salem and then San Francisco and then Los Angeles and then eventually moved back here—so how long was that that you were away from—?

HH: I was away for about 15 years altogether but the span with Castle & Cooke was ten years. I learned so much with that company, the corporate kind of stuff that every year was just a learning experience. I just went for a couple of years to learn the labor relations part. Before I knew it, it was 15 years later. The last five years were basically on my own as a consultant when I came back to work. Dad was diagnosed with cancer and I came back to spend the last couple of years with him. And the Lord blessed me and that's exactly what took place. We spent his last two years together and he passed away in the privacy of his own home.

LS: When you were away were you able to come back much to visit your family?

HH: I did. Not as often as what I would have liked because once you're into the corporate mainstream, it's a go, go, go, 12, 14-hour days. It's a dog-eat-dog. I tell you, you put your car down and somebody's there to take your place real quick. So I was sort of a workaholic but to that extent every couple of years at least I got to come back and visit.

LS: I was wondering if maybe you noticed as you'd visit—or maybe it wasn't until you came back [permanently]—did you see any changes in the community here? Obviously it's growing quite a bit and there're different services offered. Did you perceive things changing over time?

HH: The best way to answer that is when we settled here in the '60s I recall the sign coming into Hillsboro, population 10,000 or 12,000. One of those numbers I recall. Today we're nearing 100,000. So yes I notice a big time difference. Cornelius is 50-50, I think 50% Hispanics now. It wasn't that at all. Back in the '60s there was probably 12, 14 families that were settled here. The rest were going back and forth. They were still active migrants. We were the 12 families, 14 families at most settled here all year round. That's all that was here.

Today I don't even know what the head count is but it's closer in percentages of—like I said Cornelius is 50% now I think. I forgot the latest number here in Hillsboro. Our schools even in Beaverton are bilingual. Some of those schools are 50% Hispanics and they're having to offer bilingual education. Back then we only had one high school here in Hillsboro when I was in school. Today we have four high schools. We now have bilingual teachers and counselors and principals and superintendents of school districts that are bilingual, bicultural or Mexican heritage or Latinos from Latin America.

Yeah it has changed a lot. And I've watched that evolution take place to the point that by that time one of the last changes I recall is Jose Garcia at the state level, the State Director for Migrant Education coming out of Washington County, out of Hillsboro and then retiring out of there. And then they just basically took those monies, spread it back out into the school districts and each of the school districts run their own services, their own programs.

But the same thing like I was describing with Colegio César Chávez when it broke up is that all those little fingerlings went out to the community in general and took root. Well same thing with these services. What used to be the ESD office is not what it used to be when I was there. It was an educational service district that provided supplemental services to the individual school districts. Today each of those school districts are responsible for their own services.

So yeah I've seen it evolve. Mutate is probably another good word to use because within those services birth has been given to some new services that didn't exist before or beyond culturally and linguistically appropriate. So yeah we're doing much better as a society in general not just Hispanic community but we as a society are much more civilized, much more integrated, much more inclusive than we were back then.

LS: So there are initiatives for some level of sensitivity—also bilingual education, interpretation in hospitals. But I know when we spoke before you talked about types of structural discrimination that people might not always be aware of for businesses, universities. How do you see maybe some of those structures of discrimination operating today?

HH: There's still a lot of—being a victim of discrimination I say this not lightly because the offense that one takes when you've been discriminated against is an anger I can't describe to you. But I can tell you that compassionately I first—I've come to this conclusion because I've seen it over and over—it is an ignorance that exists that folks don't even know that they're discriminating against somebody. That's their value system that they were raised with that they don't realize. Just to give you an example [of the] most benign innocent circumstances, I want to say six months ago. In our church, in a church setting of Christianity—we're Catholics—we were sitting around, we received a new priest who came from Seattle by the name of Padre which means Father José*. And we already had a Father José so he called himself by his own election Father José U, the letter U. And the other one was going to be Father José Ortega.

So we're sitting around welcoming him, having lunch and some of the other deacons and the councilmen of the board were there and during this introduction, one of the ladies said, "Do you mind if I call you Father Joe?" And he says, "No that's not my name. My name is Father José U." He was of Mexican descent. In fact he was from Mexico and was bilingual, very dark colored skin and he was identifying himself, who I am. And this lady wants to change his name, who he is.

She said, "Because it would be easier for us to remember Father Joe than it is Padre José U." They found that difficult.

And he can't believe what he's hearing. In 2013 somebody wants to change his name for their convenience and totally deny him of his identity and the person he just told us who he is. In his introduction, his "I am," he said who I am. And the first thing that comes out of somebody's mouth is, "gee we don't care who you think you are would you mind if we just—we'll give you your identity. We'll give you our own name for our convenience."

Luke, that is total ignorance. It didn't take long for the conversation to graduate to the next problem, which was now there are four, five of us at the table speaking Spanish. As you can imagine, we're all comfortable. It just so happened all of us were from Mexico. And the other six or eight people begin to feel uncomfortable with us speaking Spanish, our own foreign language and began to feel uneasy and says, "Would you guys mind speaking in English because we don't understand what you guys are talking about?" without any idea of what they just did or what they just said. So we have to switch to English to accommodate them so they can eavesdrop on what we're talking about which we didn't include them in the first place.

So this whole thing of discrimination and racism and bigotry is still alive and well today. It was worse back in the '60s and '70s and even the '80s. Today it is still there and for the most part it's complete ignorance or the lack of embracing, celebrating each other's differences. We've done a lot of cultural awareness classes and they're available everywhere.

Today we get into diversity and equity and that's what we call it and that's what we do. And we're just sort of running over people like that and saying, "You know what you're falling behind and that's your problem. We're not responsible for bringing you along." We've had to do that, otherwise we'd still be back in the era of EOC (Equal Opportunity Compliance/Commission), Affirmative Action and those kinds of programs. Diversity and equity takes all that into account and much more.

And I've been blessed to learn out of all this work experience that we've talked about to have different models for creating a level playing field for people to successfully compete for jobs, housing, education and whatever it is through being inclusive, to being culturally and linguistically appropriateness and to creating those kinds of systems even to the extent of tutoring, mentoring models to help people to succeed.

See, being limited English-speaking doesn't necessarily mean that you are mentally retarded. You can think. You can work, You can have a family, You can love, You can hate, all of those things. The difference is that when you and I still see that today. Somebody who has a thick accent for example is viewed as

somebody that's a little slow in the mind and that's not the case at all. And to have to teach somebody and tell them that they're wrong in what they're doing, I still take time out to do that if necessary, if I think it's fruitful. But if I notice it to be just out of bigotry or hatred or even like I said a couple of months ago with the church meeting where these people – they thought it was completely okay to change this priest who's just coming on board, were welcoming him and ask him to change who he is already. Makes no sense. Makes no sense and not in a Christian value, Christian meeting where we are to love one another, accept one another as we are. People are still expecting to be accommodated, and it doesn't make any sense.

So we continue to have a need for culturally and linguistically appropriate awareness type classes, training, sensitivity. We still need that as much as we did back in the '60s. It's just a little more sophisticated today that's all.

LS: Do you think that people are coming from a place of complete ignorance or do you think it's more selfishness when they want things on their cultural or linguistic terms?

HH: Both, but that's why I made the comment that I made. Is when you're a victim of that kind of bigotry and racism it is an anger that I can't describe to you. It is totally disrespectful. If I made a comment against you, your language or your ethnicity or even male, because sexism was the same way. Men who think that women have a different place, barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen attitude, that's still alive and well. I mean women are still like seventy-five cents on the dollar still. We've made huge progress but we're still behind the eight-ball.

We have a new group that came on board, well not a new group but it is now on the table, in the forefront, that's a better word, gay-lesbian movement. We have another group that's coming on board and that is in the census one of the fastest growing minorities is one that has two or three ethnicities. It's a mix. Where we used to do the census White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, well now we have "other." Well that "other" has grown to two or three more ethnicities. That numbers growing. Last time I saw it, it was 5% or 8%. Native Americans were still back at 1%. Imagine that.

So our demographics is changing. Our society is changing. People of your age group are so much more open to race, ethnicity, diversity, equity than in my time when I was your age attending Portland State University. So we're way ahead of the eight-ball compared to back then but we still have lots of folks who still don't get it, who still want to do what is called 'forced assimilation'. So what I described to you earlier that took place in the church setting was forced assimilation. They wanted to force Dr. José U to comply with them, to force his assimilating to their group. That is alive and well.

So to answer your question—I went around the long way because I wanted to

share with you how important it is for me to set aside that bigotry or discriminatory practices that...for everybody's sake it's better for me to assume that it comes from an ignorant lack of information, that it came from their parents and their great grandparents that back in the south or wherever it came from that for example used to call 'slingshots', 'nigger shooters'. Give me a break. And I'm not sure where we finally grew up but I think we as a society have grown up to realize that this little thing that kids played with has a different name. And it's a slingshot. But they didn't grow up. They had no idea that's what it was called. They referred to it as I said earlier. That translated into Spanish as well. Slingshots have a name in Spanish too but that's not what we call them as young kids either. We took the word and translated into with an accent but we translated it. That's ignorance, innocent ignorance.

I say ignorant because I don't recall even realizing that that's what I was saying until almost an adult. And I realized, "Wait a minute, that thing is called a slingshot? That's not what we called them." And I was from Texas down south. We called it something different. So that's what I mean—I have to assume innocent ignorance and then it's easier for me to swallow. Once I know it is, like I say that gentleman in the night club who says, "Let's go do something constructive and kill us a Mexican." That's a little different. Them's fighting words. So I have to assume innocent before I really get ticked off in other words. That works for me, as a victim that works for me. A neutral person may not take it that way.

I have a friend that from Oregon State University who has graduated, doctorate, did her thesis on being white and privileged. She's now 60 years old and realizes she's white, realizes that by being white there were certain privileges that not everybody gets and published her thesis on it. I'm looking forward for that thesis to be published so that other folks can read it. I had the opportunity to read it and it makes a whole lot of sense.

I can speak to you from a victim. I can speak to you as bilingual, bicultural person that I am but someone who isn't still doesn't get it, she wrote her thesis on what it is to be white and privileged. There're a lot of things that she didn't have to worry about that I did. I don't know if this comment is going to make sense to you but it would be nice to have it recorded because one of the things that I learned in life—young, teenager, somewhere in there—it is critical for me to be able to relate to you. And I say you in your ethnicity. It is mandatory, it is dependent upon my survival to be able to effectively relate to white folks, to European Americans. It is not critical to your survival to relate to me, because you live in the dominant culture. In order for me to succeed in this dominant culture it was mandated, it was required for me to relate, to be bilingual just to survive. For me to survive I had to be. It isn't for you. So you don't have to relate the other way. And that's what these folks were telling this Father José U. "No, you adjust to us. We do not have to adjust to you."

LS: Right with that feeling that there's that power dynamic so there doesn't have to be equal exchange is what they were feeling.

HH: Exactly. And they were council members and he's the new priest coming on board. That didn't matter, didn't matter at all. And as Catholics we are to subordinate ourselves to the priesthood, to the Father. We are his servants. In the Catholic Church that's how it works. Here all that went out the window and that's the ugly side of bigotry. That's the ugly side of forced assimilation. That's the ugly side where you begin to deny other people their identity for your sake.

LS: At least he didn't let them get away with that.

HH: He didn't let them get away and I was real proud of him. I think that's why we ended up speaking Spanish afterwards is because we said, "No that's good. We're glad that you did that and yes there's four of us here and we're all different, one from the other and you did the right thing." And about that time we got interrupted. "Can't you guys speak English?" to make matters worse.

So no, it's alive and well today but it's better to take it from an innocent benign perspective first before you make a big issue I guess is what I'm saying. It's safer. It's better for everybody but it's still alive and well.

LS: So to go back to what you were saying a little bit earlier just with different groups being recognized now for their rights. Do you know if there's a gay-lesbian organization just within the Mexican American community here, in the region?

HH: There isn't that I'm aware of and it may be from my own ignorance but no. And this is going to be a general statement and certainly not coming from the community but coming from me that we view that gay-lesbians are of Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian-Pacific islanders. They're within all those communities and they exist there within an enclave within an enclave of the enclave, if that makes any sense. But they're there. And yes there're gay-lesbians in the Hispanic community. But for me to be aware of any particular movement or efforts—. Your question is important because to the extent that it should be an enclave within an enclave, a group within a community dealing with the same issues of social justice, discrimination, both in employment, housing, religion, etc., I don't see that. I don't see that Hispanic outreach of gay-lesbian. I haven't seen it.

LS: So to go more to your identity, can you talk about maybe personally the importance of continuing to speak Spanish language, practice Mexican American culture?

HH: It's very interesting because I would be awfully lonely if I only had to function in English for example. As you can imagine if you had to function in only one

other language you'd quickly begin to miss your food, music, movies, socializing, fellowshiping. All of that is gone. You're being denied that so my, who I am, my identity today, even though I was born in Mexico—so technically I'm a Mexican national but I'm also influenced by my upbringing, as a Tex-Mex we call it. Of course the last time I was down they said, "No you're not Tex-Mex, you're Oregon-Mex." So I guess there's another part of me I didn't know existed. I'm an Oregon-Mex.

So being bilingual, bicultural is very important because I think I would have a tough time functioning today in Mexico all in Spanish only, with only Mexican food, with only Mexican TV and radio, music, etc. I would begin to miss my roots back home in Oregon, the English side. So bilingual, bicultural is who I am and that's who I love being. My children are quickly realizing that maybe they should have paid a little more attention to their Spanish heritage because even at home we spoke Spanish but we were able to do it—switch between English and Spanish in the middle of a sentence. So it made it easier for them to speak English.

My youngest one is 26 years old and they're bilingual. They speak both languages and the same thing. We eat Mexican cuisine as we do American cuisine equally and Italian and Chinese, whatever. We take full advantage of all of that. But yeah my offspring—the next generation is already in motion and off they're married and having children and my grandchildren are being influenced by that as well.

So yeah I see that bilingual bicultural carrying forward. And you and I talked about last time when we were together that in the Hispanic, Mexican American, Latinos it's going to be more difficult to assimilate over years because it's constantly being renewed by having Mexico as a border or as most people think without borders *[laughs]* through illegal or legal immigration. They're coming in and replenishing our cultural values.

Today I can turn on a TV set and watch Spanish TV all day long if I want; Spanish music on the radio. So it's being replenished, the source of the cultural values and norms is being replenished constantly every day. For the black—African Americans for example, they can walk into a place and everybody knows that a black woman or man just walked in the room but to the extent that it's being replenished, it isn't. For Hispanics it is. It's being replenished constantly by the immigrants coming across the borders. So Native Americans are quickly disappearing. They haven't grown any. It's still like 1% or something.

So Asian-Pacific islanders, they too are going to have a hard time assimilating because of the color of their skin and the physical features are one but they have a replenishing of refugees still coming in. To give you an example the Korean community has its own community within its own community. You and I for the most part know that every major town in the United States, a city even like

Portland and Los Angeles, Chicago have Chinatown. And in that community these different Asian-Pacific islander groups are alive and well. They're practicing their religion, their language, their education, their culture, their music. All of that is being—they're keeping that alive.

The second and third generations are starting to forget their roots and heritage but for the most part wake up and realize I am different. The person in the mirror doesn't look like my other friends, and realizes that I either need to divorce myself from it or embrace it go back and learn what my heritage was. And what I find for the most part that they go back and get their heritage. I see that within my kids. I think they're realizing maybe I should have paid a little more attention. I shouldn't have been so quick to trade my ease like these folks we were talking about in this church meeting and make the extra effort of embracing both.

LS: Let me know if I'm hearing you incorrectly, but it sounds like the continuing presence of migration from Mexico—on a cultural level that's beneficial for just having that cultural from what we can say renewal or just being reminded.

HH: Replenished, I like that word because the absence of it and I notice it for myself. When we first came here in the '60s to today I have forgotten a lot of Spanish. I struggle sometimes with some of the words to translate because I forgot. I don't use them every day. So it needs to be replenished and you have to keep practicing it. You have to keep using it. And like I say in the '60s there was only one radio station, Sundays from 6:00 in the morning if you were lucky to be awake until 8:00 o'clock. That was it for Washington County, for Hillsboro. Today I can get up and turn on the TV and have 24-hour Spanish, three or four stations, four or five radio stations in Spanish. That's replenishing. That is re-practicing. That is constantly renewing and reinforcing those norms and values, constantly, constantly, constantly.

Look at what we do at the waterfront—Cinco de Mayo celebration. Cinco de Mayo is no Mexican Independence Day like they think it is here. We'll party for any reason quite frankly but that's how it's celebrated here. And September 16th is really Mexican Independence Day. We don't do half the celebration that we do for Cinco de Mayo. But Cinco de Mayo has become such a popular celebration now that both in the European American and the other—Asian-Pacific islanders, Native Americans and Black African Americans embrace that celebration and swamp the waterfront when we put up that weekend of celebration. So it's also done some good across the border I'll say with the Native Americans, within an enclave within an enclave is now embracing, accepting and celebrating now with us.

LS: Right. And even though it's not the major national Mexican holiday the way some people would think here at least it's a way to demonstrate the visibility, the vibrancy of Mexican American and Mexican culture.

HH: Yes, the patriotism of Mexico, absolutely.

LS: I think that's just about it for my questions. Did you have anything else you'd like to discuss or talk about?

HH: Nothing other than to thank you for the opportunity to count us worthy of being part of a historical for the Hillsboro Museum to take note is that we are a part of a community and have been for many years. Even though we just talked from the '60s forward more because of my age I guess, I do recall, Luke, some folks, one, two people that I can think of off the top of my head who claim to have been here from the '40s.

We just elected our first Oregon representative here in Washington County, Joseph Gallegos who was a professor at the University of Portland. His family was here I believe since the '40s give or take. That would put it to the old Bracero days where the United States signed an agreement with Mexico that said, "We need labor." Because it was during the war that the men folks were gone off to battle and we needed labor in the United States. And so they signed an agreement to have them come over. And they did and some of them stayed and didn't go back.

LS: And brought their families.

HH: And some brought their families and settled and so that takes them to the '40s and I'm sure there were people before then as well. It isn't like—well we were 1840s I guess when the Mexican war was finally settled and we were already here. But to the extent that they were in Hillsboro Washington County I have no idea.

So for me it starts in the '60s. That's when we, the 12 families settled here and we call them '*las familias*' of Washington County. And they're the ones that settled here and it's been growing ever since. So I think we covered that and I'm glad we're a part of the history because I think we've made some major contributions to a better society right here in Washington County, in Hillsboro with our presence. I really do. I think we're a much more humane society, civilized and more inclusive than we were before. So thank you.

LS: Anything else? That's it? All right well thank you for your time today.

HH: Thank you. You're welcome.

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