

Washington County Museum  
Oral History Interview with Maria Romero  
805 Linden, Cornelius Oregon  
January 28, 2000

Informant: Maria Romero  
Interviewer: Barbara Doyle  
Transcriber: Jenna Proctor

M= Maria  
B= Barbara

B: I am Barbara Doyle, and we are going to hear Maria's story. So could you begin with where you were born?

M: In Mexico.

B: You got a town?

M: (shakes head?? No vocal response)

B: Well that might be hard.

M: Well the state is Tamaulipas. Okay then I came to the **La Belly** when I was six or so.

B: Where's **La Belly**?

M: It's Texas, the Rio Grande Valley is how they call it. I just turn up in there, and I go to school when I'm there. And then we moved over here to Oregon in 1966, January the 26<sup>th</sup> 1966.

B: If you were born in Mexico and then basically grew up in Texas are you an American citizen?

M: Yes.

B: So you had to become a citizen then?

M: No, I became a citizen just about two years ago.

B: Oh, so you are those people who got in through that scare, when they put in those immigration rules.

M: Not really. Okay my mother was from here- from the United States. So she was getting my citizenship for me, and I have a brother, my brother's from here- from Texas. But then she got sick and she died too young- I mean compared to me that I'm 65 right now, so she was 42 years old when she died. So everything just stopped for my citizenship, for me the papers and everything. Then I turned 21 and I went and got my green card from immigration, and I had that until about 2 years ago. Then I went and applied to be a citizen. I was  and the news that if you not be a citizen you're not able to get your social security money, and I was working since I got over here in Oregon, I mean working, and working all the time. And I said, "I just want to be

able to get my money." So I called and I asked for the application, and they send it to me, and I send it back, and I started all the questions, and I went over there and I passed the test.

B: Good! And now you'll get something back for all the work you put in...

M: Yes.

B: ...which is just right. So born in Mexico and you said you're 65 now, so that means you were born in 1934, in Mexico. And then you spent some time in Texas, until you were, you said from 6...?

M: Yeah, from 6 until, I think we move over here at 31 years old. It was 1966, I think I was 31, because I had my last child over here in Portland.

B: So how many are there?

M: How many? Well I have 12 kids.

B: And 12 came here to Oregon?

M: 10, one died over there in Texas, and then the last one I have it over here, it was 1966, in November 1966.

B: So how did you come here with so many children?

M: How? We just came in a car. It was broken, I mean all the time when we were coming over here, but we made it. We just get over here and we just live with my brother- he was living over here.

B: So you had some family here to come too.

M: Mmhmm.

B: Now coming in January kinda makes it sounds like you weren't coming as part of that migrant labor crew, you weren't coming to work in the fields.

M: When I get here I get a job for a daycare. We came over here to Scholls- it's a little town close to Hillsboro, the name is Scholls- my brother was living in there. And then we moved to Canby, and when we moved to Canby, Oregon I just get a job in a daycare, and I take my kids to the daycare and work in there.

B: You were pregnant when you came here right?

M: No I was not pregnant. I had my baby- my baby was six weeks, and then after I get pregnant. So Cesar was six weeks old, so I had him in December, and we came over here in January the next year. He's from 1965, and then we came over here in 1966, and then in November of 1966, I had my last kid.

B: So you worked when you had so many children?

M: When I was pregnant I was working in the daycare.

B: How'd you manage that?

M: I don't have any idea! [both laugh] I don't remember. But I saved money, and I remember that I went to Portland, Oregon and I buy a car for \$149. It was a nice car, it was a 1957 Ford. And so it just went to work. And then one day I lend it to my son Fernando, he was 16, and then he just wrecked the car, he was learning to drive with a pal- another boy from here. And then from over there we moved back over here to Gaston.

B: Okay let my just ask a question. Did this thing with the car, happen when you lived near Canby?

M: Yes I was over there in Canby, and then we move over here to Gaston, Oregon and I start working in a cannery, in the Bird's Eye Cannery, it was the only Bird's eye Cannery in the whole state. And I work there for 11 years.

B: What did you do in a cannery?

M: It was broccoli...

B: Canned broccoli? Oh this is frozen broccoli.

M: Yes frozen...packing, I was trimming broccoli.

B: What were you doing to the broccoli?

M: Trimming, cutting little pieces, and then some other people they just packing.

B: In other words you were doing chopped broccoli?

M: They call it trimming, not chopping, trimming.

B: Okay so you're not getting little pieces.

M: No it was the whole head of the broccoli.

B: Okay, I was going to say, God that would be terrible work to just cut it up.

M: No I mean, to be there, we have to learn to make five boxes in an hour, and so I just learned. If you want to work you have to learn, and you have to do it fast, because they give you 3 days to learn to do it. So I stayed there for 11 years until they closed down the cannery.

B: Did you do anything besides broccoli?

M: No.

B: In 11 years- just broccoli??

M: Well after 6 or 7 years of working with the broccoli they hire me in the summer for just a few weeks for the strawberries. And it was just a few people, I mean not a lot of people, just the few

people they call in to work. And I was able to work for a little while, and then they let me off, and then waiting till later on when they hire for broccoli, like in the fall.

B: Okay so you didn't work year round at Bird's Eye?

M: No, it was like maybe six of seven months out of the year. So then I get unemployment, because they hire the same people every year if you like to go back to the same job, so I was there for those years. Then they changed my from trimming the broccoli to work what they call matron, to work upstairs, they have upstairs and downstairs, where the people just come when they have breaks, I was cleaning the office in there and would give the people what they need to work: the hair nets, the gloves, the aprons, and a knife. The last two years I worked doing that, and then they closed in 1975. I started working in 1967, and then they closed in 1975. And then after that I baby-sitted kids in their home, and then I work in another Cannery- the Flavorland which is in Forest Grove, working in the corn. I worked for five years in there.

B: And Flavorland, is that frozen food also?

M: Yeah, they're frozen, I mean the corn. And then I went to work for the schools, Forest Grove District 15, so I work in the kitchens, helping in the kitchen. And then I went back to the cannery that was open behind where I live now, and I work another 5 years in there, I worked the berries- all kinds of berries. Then I stayed home again, babysitting kids. And so I've been working...

B: and working...

M: ...and working yeah. And then later on I went to work for this place they call assisted living-with old people. And I worked there in the kitchen too. And then they pay more for housekeeping, so I moved to the housekeeping at the same place. It was cleaning the apartments for many of the people living there. And then I quit over there, and I went back to school in Forest Grove. And then I get sick with arthritis. And then I stopped working in... 1992...no 98, 1998.

B: Pretty recently.

M: Uh-huh, two years ago.

B: Now you came here with your husband, so what was he doing?

M: He was working in the farms, working in the fields. In those days there was a lot of people coming from Texas working over here with the strawberries, so he just getting people to work in the fields picking berries.

B: So he picked them or..?

M: No, he was the check-in, looking for people to go to work to pick berries. He worked for a lot of farmers over here, one was Sunnel? Mr Sunnel and Jesse... but I don't remember the last name. I was too busy working in the cannery, because I was working I [redacted] then take care of the kids, washing clothes, and making something to eat before I went to work...

B: It wasn't easy.

M: No it was not easy, but I was young at the time, and I just do it, I mean, whatever the...

B: ...things you had to.

M: Yeah, uh-huh.

B: So your husband worked in the fields, that's only for part of the year also, so what else did he do?

M: He don't do anything, after the end of winter while I'm getting my unemployment, so we apply for assistance and food stamps for two or three months, and then we start again working.

B: And where did you live?

M: I live in Forest Gold at the time. We buy a house in Forest Grove, an old house. Because it was difficult, because people don't want to rent to the people that have so many kids, it was really hard to find a house.

B: Yeah, sure.

M: So we just buy a house, and then we move. I just wanted to move out of the house, because in 1973 I had my son, he was 18 and he was killed in a car accident, so it was a lot of memories in the house, and I don't want to stay in the house. So we just moved from there to down in Forest Grove, and then live over there for a score and then from Forest Grove in 1977 we just move over here to Cornelius, in this house.

B: This house?

M: Yeah, and now I've lived here for 22 years in this house here in Cornelius.

B: That's pretty nice, I mean a lot of people who come from Texas or Arizona or California, or Mexico, come as migrant laborers and live in the migrant camps which I understand is not so nice. So you had a better situation.

M: Well when we get over here, and Texas is natural gas, and I don't know how to work with it, making fire, and when we move over here, I don't want to stay with my husband's relatives, we stayed a week or two and then we moved to a camp here in Cornelius. It was a camp; it was closed because it was January there was not too much work. But we move in there and we have electricity but we don't have any heaters so we have to have the fire to keep to...it was like an apartment, but I don't know how to work with it. It was really hard for me to keep making the fire, with all the kids, and I have my baby which was 6 weeks old. And then my husband started working there with Esjaunatano???, the last name of the guy [redacted]. And then my husband started working, in January I think they just, I don't know how to say or say to you that the berries, they just tied it out. It was a lot of work, I mean in those days in the fields, so he was working there. And then he was at a place called Viva, just helping people.

B: What is this place?

M: Viva. It is something like Centre Cultural, but it was called Viva, it was a lot of volunteers, a lot of young guys. It was a big house in Hillsboro, it was an organization called Viva. So my husband went over there and they find a house for us. And we moved to Forest Grove, from the camp we moved to Forest Grove. I guess the churches at the time they were just helping a lot,

so they were helping with everything. Because, I mean, when we came over here with the car we don't bring anything- just a few clothes!

B: I was going to say, I mean, with all of you in one car there really isn't space for anything else.

M: Mmhmm. Just a little bit of clothes for everybody. So they just help me. So then from that house in Forest Grove we move back to Canby again, and then we don't stay too long and we came back over here again. That's when I started working, and I buy me another car to drive to work, because it's really hard when you don't have a car over here in Oregon to go to work. And we were living out of town, and there was no buses. I've been on a bus over here in Oregon one time, one time only. So most of the time I'd be able to get something on my own transportation to go to work. Not a new, new car but something.

B: Right, what made you come to Oregon in January?

M: I don't have any idea. It was my husband, because when he was young he'd used to come and work over here. He had a lot of uncles over here in Oregon, and he used to come over here. So he know that **every...around here**, I don't know, I've never been, living in another place over there in Texas.

B: Coming in the winter had to be quite a different situation. It's colder and it's wet!

M: I was not thinking about anything. He say, "We're just going to go to Oregon" and I say, "Okay." So we packed everything and came over here.

B: And what was your reaction when you got here?

M: Nothing, I think it was the weather it was like that, it's different from than Texas- it is hot over there! But I mean I like it, I just like it over here. Since we move over here, because then my kids, they start growing up and they don't want to go back over there. And my husband wants to go back to Texas and I say, "No way! I'm not going over there." Because I didn't want to keep coming, and going, and miss the school and all that. So I said, "I'm going to stay here."

B: So you just made one trip from Texas to here and that was it.

M: Mm-hmm. Never go back over there.

B: Any regrets?

M: No.

B: So now what did your children do, being lets see, you said you were 31 when you came here and if I do some quick arithmetic Fernando was not a little child when you came here right?

M: No, Fernando was 15.

B: Right, and then there's some younger boys. Did they work in the fields in the summertime?

M: Yeah, they just all worked with my husband.

B: Okay do you know how young?

M: Fernando was 15, and Arno was 13. There's two years apart and Samdi's?? a year apart.

B: Did the girls work in the field too?

M: Ida I think, only Ida, not working I mean I think she just go to play.

B: Okay in other words they weren't picking?

M: Well when I was working in the cannery I was sleeping in the day and then I'd wake up and make dinner because we started 6 o'clock, sometimes 7. So I have to make something for the kids. They just go because I was sleeping, not because they had to go to work in the field. But my husband used to take them so I could sleep in the bedroom with no noise.

B: Do you know anything about the pay they received?

M: I'm not sure, I think it was like 60 cents a flat those days.

B: What's a flat?

M: It is one of those little, you know in the store they have those pints of strawberries? There are 12 in a flat. So I think it was 60 cents for one of those. I'm not sure, I mean I never go and pick berries; maybe once that I go in the summer, but not too often- I did not like to work in the fields. When I go over there it was not [redacted] and then I find a job in the cannery so I don't have to go to the fields to work.

B: I understand working in the fields was not too much fun.

M: I guess not, I mean I do not grow up like that working in the fields, but there were a lot of people coming those years over here to work and not too many families over here at that time. I don't really know how many but maybe 12 families? Like the Garstans, the Canaidas, the Canendinoes, I don't know everybody, but I know there were not a lot of Mexicans over here, just a few.

B: It's interesting you said Mexicans because in that interview with Daniel Garza he was asked about being "Mexican", "Hispanic", "Latino" and he kept saying "I'm an American Citizen. I'm an American Citizen."

M: I don't know- he was from Texas?

B: Yeah, he said it enough times that you have to believe he was an American Citizen because he was born in Texas.

M: Well my husband too, he's from over there, he don't say he's a Chicano he says he's from here, he's an American. And all my kids, the twelve kids that I have.

B: And they were all born here- you were in Texas or here.

M: Yeah m-hmm. My husband worked in different places, he worked in furniture, he worked in a bakery, he was working in a veteran's hospital in Portland, he was working in another place that

makes little parts for cameras. He have a lot of jobs, but not a steady job because he like to do it, and then in the summer work with people.

B: Okay so in other words he worked in the summer in the fields and then the other times of the year he worked other jobs.

M: Yeah uh-huh. He was working in a gas station too. So he have a lot of jobs but not a steady job that some people stay in 10 years, 5 years in one place. He was working for an \_\_\_\_\_, he works a lot of places.

B: So did that make you well off in comparison to some other people who came here from Texas, or California, or Mexico?

M: Well I never complained, I was satisfied with what we had. I was not thinking coming over here, get rich or anything. We just have enough, I mean to eat, a place to live, and then some of my kids finish high school, some don't they just drop out, or they stay.

B: Was living here better than Texas?

M: Yes, it was better than over there. For me, it was better than over there, I don't know for some other people. When I was over there I was working in a cannery, it was a tomato cannery, and there was another cannery that I worked which had peach. So I was working over there too.

B: And that was when you had children too?

M: Yeah, a lot of the time I was pregnant- like 4 or 5 months pregnant. But I like it more over here than there, I don't know why. The people were nice here, when we get over here. I don't have complaints about people who were racist or anything, I don't have any complaints about that. I was not, it's not because I'm not friendly, but working night and having so many kids, I don't have no time...

Break between 34:14- 35:03

B:...In '71?

M: Yeah it cost me \$3,500 brand new.

B: This is being a little pushy, did you pay cash or you buy on credit?

M: No, I bought on credit. I was paying \$79 a month.

B: So you were able to get credit, which means you had a good working record in order to get that credit.

M: Yeah, because I was working, I start working in '67 at Bird's Eye, and the car was a 1971, so I had been working for so many years. It was like a steady job because we just go back, a lot of the same people just go back.

B: And maybe you said it before, but how many months in a year say would you be working at Bird's Eye?



M: I think it was maybe 7 months out of the year?

B: Oh okay, that's quite a bit. Always, except when you were doing the dispensing of materials and that, you were working with broccoli? I mean they would have broccoli being processed over 7 months? That's amazing!

M: ...I remember we stopped working after Thanksgiving. And then we were just on call when they need us, sometimes they just take a lot of the [redacted], and do it again or they have orders, or something. But we was on call to work, and sometimes we just worked for two weeks....Maybe it was for months for the broccoli off and on. Oh they run pumpkins for Halloween too, those Halloween pumpkins? We were doing that too, not me because I was trimming broccoli, but it was some other ladies.

B: Do you remember what you got paid?

M: I [redacted] over there was getting paid a \$1.97 an hour.

B: Do you know was that the minimum wage?

M: I don't even remember. They told me they need people in there, so I went over there, they hired me, so I don't even remember how much was minimum wage. So we don't make too much because I worked for so many years when they closed and then I was making \$3.68.

B: Well then maybe it wasn't minimum wage.

M: I don't remember. But we don't even make \$4 an hour or anything like that. But in those days it was not too expensive buying clothes, I buy new clothes for my kids, I buy second-hand store clothes, so I mixed it, I stretch my money.

B: Yeah Maria said you were very good with money.

M: I put, when they were going to start school again, I put layaways so I just pay it off and I get new clothes, so they could start school with new clothes. And then after that, like in December I start going through the second-hand stores and buying clothes.

B: So they had started out right.

M: I guess so. I never remember that my kids don't have anything to wear. To go to church they had one good dress for my girls, but those were just for Sunday, nothing fancy but something new.

B: Sounds like you did a pretty good job.

M: I don't know, you have to ask my kids. I know now that I'm getting old, and these days kids complain that my dad, my mom is not home that I never see him, they never talk, and in those days it was different from now. I know that sometimes I say to my...not kids, they're grown up now, that I'm sorry I don't stay with you when you were little kids, and like my grandkids their mothers now they just [redacted] coming to go to sleep. I don't do all those things, but I have to work to eat and get them clothes.

B: Now did you have any association at all with Centra?

M: No.

B: So you went to this organization that was called Viva...

M: Not me, it was my husband, my husband and my sister-in-law. But no, I never go, He was the one going and looking for a house. I dunno, I never said that I wanted to go, and asking for anything, he was the one who was going.

B: So was your husband one of the early people at Centra to form it?

M: No, he had a lot of friends there when they start. But he was going in there just to talk to the people there, but I never had the desire to go in there to the Centro.

B: Not then and not now?

M: No. I went there long ago to help my daughter-in-law, she had to do something and don't have the time, and asked me if I could go and do something in the kitchen and I said, "Okay." But I never go in there for anything.

B: Now you said you did get some assistance. You mentioned food stamps, and you got unemployment when you were not working at the cannery. Was there any other organization you went to for help?

M: No. The church in Forest Grove used to give clothes to poor people, and basically it was one the places I used to go to get some clothes, and they gave you blankets too. They're still helping the people in Forest Grove, now when I have clothes I just take it over there, I just donate it. So now I pay them back what they've helped me before. Now they have a lot of sales my sons and my daughter-in-laws, and they have leftovers and they say, "do you want these?" and I keep some and I have \_\_\_ and the leftovers so I just take it over there and give it to the church.

B: And what church was that?

M: Heaven ??? Church.

B: Are you part of the church right now?

M: Not in there, I'm a member of the Pentecostal church in Cornelius. My kids have grown up in the Christian church too but it was spoken in English the Christian church, and when they grow up they stop going, and I start going to this Spanish Pentecostal church in 1972.

B: Oh that's a long time. But your children went to the public schools?

M: Yes, all public school. Fernando finished high school in Gaston, my second son got a GED in Forest Grove, so Martin Jr he finished high school in Forest Grove too. Ida, my daughter, she finished at Forest Grove High School. Those were to only ones, only four finished high school, the other ones didn't.

B: But then did they work in the agricultural fields after that?

M: My daughter Ida she was working at a place, an organization for the kids to work in when not in school, to work cleaning parks, and she got a job with Manpower. And Poncho- one of my sons- worked there. She was working in the summer for about 2 or 3 years there. And the other ones they were working in the fields. And another one started working in a place that sells cars washing cars, and then he went to school for a mechanic and learned for several [redacted], and he was working there for many many years. And the other one he learned to do body work, he started when he was too young, like maybe 18 or 19, and he's still doing that. I have my second sons, he's working for the Bonneville Company, for so many years he went to the navy, and then he got back from there in 1975 and start working in the [redacted] and unemployment office, then from there he went to work for the Bonneville Company- he still over there, he's an engineer.

B: So they're not interested in working in the field anymore?

M: No, the fields, a lot of the people every summer- every summer, they find something else.

B: Do you think your experience of moving here when you did and the fact that you worked not in the field, and just the way you put your whole life together here, was this typical or was this not typical? You know people of Hispanic background who came from Texas, or Arizona, or California, do you think you were different or you were the same?

M: I don't know, but I when I grow up over there in Texas it was not a lot of the field work, so I guess I was not used to come and work in the fields with my kids, I looked for something else, and I get lucky and I find that my first job was in Canby in the daycare. And then when we move from Canby back over here to Gaston I started in the cannery so I never said that I had to go to work in the fields with my kids.

B: So I gather a lot of people lived in the migrant camps, and you seem to have managed to almost completely avoid it.

M: I don't know, maybe I was lucky or something. Yeah I know a lot of people that come and live in the camps and they just work in the fields with their kids, but we just look for something else, me and my husband, we look for something else other than just the fields.

B: Do you have any pictures, photographs, from when you came here in the early years, the children growing up or anything like that?

M: Well I have some when we came over here to Oregon so I first [redacted]. A lady went to the house and she was thinking that I was not living in there, and she destroyed everything, even the birth certificates for my kids, she just burned everything. And then after my kids grow up and get married I have some, but not when first came over here. One time we went to visit my husband's uncle in Gervais Oregon, he was living over there- he's already gone, he's dead- but these people were looking for a house too like us and they went to the place Viva and they told them that we don't live there anymore, but we have everything there- whatever the church had given to me, the furniture and everything, we have everything in the house- we have the rent paid and everything. So this lady went over there and take over, living there, and throwing out everything that I bring from Texas- burned it, so I came and I was like, "I'm sorry but you have to leave or I'm going to take all my furniture because it belongs to me, they give it to me as mine" so I take everything from there.

B: So there's not too many pictures, I mean I noticed a picture there of grandchildren I guess.

M: Yes, those are from the son that was calling me, him and Marina have two, two boys. Ida has two, a boy and a girl. The older ones they have one, they don't have too many like me. Ida my daughter said, "No! I'm not going to be like you! No way! Only two kids", she has a boy and a girl. And he has a boy and a girl too and no more. My other son he has two girls. But all together I believe that I have 19 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren: two boys and a girl.

B: Wow, so you have been blessed.

M: Yes, and at Christmas they come over here, they come at Thanksgiving and at Christmas, every Christmas.

B: Do you celebrate Cinco de Mayo and the Mexican Independence Day and the Day of the Dead?

M: No I don't celebrate nothing of those things.

B: Have you tried to keep the Spanish and the Mexican culture going?

M: Well I didn't growing up in Mexico, I mean in Texas, in the old days I don't even know what they celebrated as Cinco de Mayo. They start over here to do it but I don't know what it is because I don't know their culture from Mexico, I mean I learn from a lot of the people that I ask what they're doing over there, why they celebrate because I have a lot of friends, but I'm not really... The only thing I celebrate is Christmas, they just come over here to eat, that's all they celebrate, I make them tamales, they come to eat tamales on Christmas Day, they bring presents, they open them over here in the house. Thanksgiving, we just celebrate here too, and these are the only things- nothing else. I don't celebrate Cinco de Mayo, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, other things. I just don't grow up doing those things, I mean September 16<sup>th</sup>, I never had the desire to do those things. My kids they don't know anything about what they celebrated because the difference when they grow up in the Christian church, we just go to the bible, we don't celebrate it. And my kids don't grow up with the Mexicans; I think each one of my kids has a friend that's a Mexican but only one. They never grow up going to the dance, when they had Mexican dances; they never grow up with Mexican kids just white kids. I'm different I guess, to some other families here.

B: I think you are.

M: Because the other people go to a different denomination of the church, so we don't go to the dance, celebrate the \_\_\_\_\_ 15, not my girls: I have only two, I have 10 boys and two girls. I'm not perfect with my kids either, but we're learning from the church what we celebrate, so we learn it from the bible, not everything is for us to do it over here.

B: Did your children go on to the same church?

M: No they go to different ones. I know \_\_\_\_\_ is going to the Assembly of God, the older one is going to the Foursquare church. But speaking English, I'm the one that is going to the Mexican Church because I understand my language; I think it's better for me to understand.

B: But you do will with English. There was one other question I wanted to ask you and know I've managed to forget it...

M:...I guess I'm talking too much.

B: No! Not at all! [both laugh] No you've given some very interesting stories. Oh I know what I wanted to ask you, you said Marina used to come here when she was here, so did you know Marina?

M: Okay when Fernando finished High School he moved out of the house when he was 20 years old. He moved with a friend, he left the house. And then when he was living with this other friend they went to Hawaii, and then he like it over there because of the weather, he just hate the rain and the rain and the rain. So he stay over there and then he met Marina in Hawaii, so he brings Marina over here. Well he says I find somebody that I love, Marina have a little girl: Tamara my granddaughter who was 2 years old- little tiny thing, now she's 24. So he brings Marina over here for me to meet Marina, and then they just go back over there and they just come in the summer. Fernando was living over there in Hawaii for many many years, and I went over there to Hawaii too because they sent me tickets. And then she don't like it over there in Hawaii no more because they used to come here all the time in the summer and live with me, and then one year they said no we want our own apartment, we don't want to stay here. So they went back over there and they sold the house and they came over here and built a house with the money they get from the house over there, so now they live here. But the kids are from over there, there's two.

B: They were born in Hawaii?

M: Yeah uh-huh. Fernando Jr. is 18, and the younger one is 13.

B: That's quite a number of years between those children.

M: Yeah, she don't want to have a lot of kids.

B: Well you said your children were 2 years or 1 year apart.

M: Uh-huh.

B: That makes it tough.

M: Mmm-hmm. She's not Hawaiian but she grow up there in Hawaii. And she never learned to speak Spanish- Marina.

B: Well she said she was part Puerto Rican.

M: She had blood, but it was like she said to me that I was an Indian, and I said, "No I'm not an Indian, I'm a Mexican. There's a difference." She said, "Well the Indians have a lot of blood that is Mexican." And I said "Maybe, I don't know. My mother was from the United States. And she have more blood with..." I don't remember. But I call her Mexican, I don't call her Chicano- well I think people from Mexico are Mexican, and if they're from here- the United States they're Chicano I guess, I don't know where they get their name. But my kids never said, "No I'm a Chicano", I never heard my kids say Chicano.

B: Did they have any problems when they were in school because they had a Spanish sounding name?

M: I don't think so, they learned past the language. Then they don't speak Spanish, just like I have a friend's daughter whose father is from [redacted] from Texas, but their daughter they never teach Spanish when she was growing up. So she don't speak Spanish. She'll understand me a little bit but she don't...and you look at her and she look Mexican, but she don't grow up speaking Spanish.

B: Well just think about people who are Chinese or Japanese, I mean they're never going to change the look of their eyes but a lot of them don't speak the language from the country where they came from.

M: Mm-hmm. Well I never think about that but yeah, I think you're right. These days I'm still confused with these kids [chuckles] they don't speak the language of their grandparents...

B: Would you like them to speak Spanish?

M: Not really, I mean I don't know. Everywhere that you go you have to speak English, now it is that you need to speak Spanish because a lot of people here, that some they don't speak any English. But I never had any problems when I came over here, to go see the doctor, I just go by myself, I communicate.

B: In English?

M: Yeah. I have a lot of friends that call me and ask, "Can you go with me? Can you interpret for me?" So I go with some of my friends that don't speak any, people from Mexico that don't speak English, so I just go and help them and take them to the doctor- I do that as a friend.

B: Good.

M: But thank God that I don't have that problem. I mean I learn....I was going to school through the years- if you don't practice you forget. But then I just start off again, because over her was just English, not Spanish.

B: Well this was interesting. I'm glad I met Marina and that she suggested I talk to you.

M: Yes it was really nice. She just likes to learn about a lot of things, and I say, "I'm fine Marina, I don't want to learn anything, I'm fine." And she say, "Why don't you want to learn anything??" I don't know I don't have the desire for learning, like she want me to go to the [redacted], I mean I don't want to go. I like people, I mean if people come to me and talk to me and ask me for favors or anything I'm here.

Tape cuts off at 1:09:23

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