

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT**

**Marvin Weinberg
Houston History Farmer's Market**

Interviewed by: Ernesto Valdés
Date: July 21, 2008
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location: 2520 Airline Drive, Houston, Texas

EV: Okay now I've explained to you what we are going to do with this stuff. You understand that this is to be deposited into the archives of the University of Houston? If you wish I'll give you a copy of it for your great grandchildren, grandchildren all of that.

MW: Okay.

EV: So can you let me know what your full name is?

MW: Marvin Earl Weinberg but my signature I omit Earl.

EV: Earl?

MW: Yes.

EV: And Weinberg do we have it spelled right W-I-N-E?

MW: W-e-i-n...

EV: W-e-i-n-b-e-r-g?

MW: Yes sir.

EV: Okay. Where were you born Mr. Weinberg?

MW: Where?

EV: Yes sir.

MW: In Houston.

EV: Can you give us a date?

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MW: 9/12/28.

EV: Okay and did you go to school here in Houston?

MW: No, no. I went to school in the Tomball area. Parochial school, Salem Lutheran and I went to high school at Cy Fair, when they only had one high school.

EV: Really? Were you honorable society or a jock or were you a big football player?

MW: Well I guess both. I was an athlete and I could have been valedictorian but I was awfully shy and I didn't want to give a speech at the graduation deal so I kind of sloughed off a little bit and came in third in my class.

EV: (laughter) Just so you wouldn't have to give a speech?

MW: So I wouldn't have to give a speech. I hated it. I hated oral book reports just in front of the class.

EV: Any regrets about that?

MW: Well no, no not really.

EV: If you had a chance to do it again you'd do the same thing?

MW: I probably would, but I can speak now which I couldn't then.

EV: What sports did you play?

MW: I played all of them. I played football, I played basketball and track.

EV: Did you letter in all of those?

MW: Yes, all but track. I didn't have... I didn't score enough points. I only used the shot put and at that point it was a county meet. The city was not included but all the schools in the county met at Pasadena and I came in 5th place over there in the shot. So that was the best that I could do.

EV: What about the... what other events did you run in track?

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MW: I didn't.

EV: Okay.

MW: I did run the 440 but I was never any good at running.

EV: What about, you played football you said right?

MW: Yes sir.

EV: What position did you play?

MW: I played right end.

EV: Did you really?

MW: That's when we had a one platoon system. You didn't have the defense or offense you played the whole ball game.

EV: 60 minutes yeah, defense and offense.

MW: Right.

EV: Yeah I got in on the tail end of that myself. You didn't have the mask either right?

MW: No sir.

EV: You still carry and scars from getting?

MW: Yeah I got one right in my eye.

EV: Yeah.

MW: I don't know if it can be seen but it laid it open pretty good.

EV: Did you catch any touchdown passes or...?

MW: No I didn't. We didn't do a lot of passing then. That was mostly a ground game in those days.

EV: And in basketball what did you play?

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MW: I played forward.

EV: Forward?

MW: Yes.

EV: Okay. Now did you... where were your parents from, were they from Houston?

MW: My mother was from the Tomball area where we moved to and my dad he was from Houston.

EV: Your grand folks were they from?

MW: Well I don't know much about my grandparents on my dad's side because my parents divorced when I was three. But my grandparents over here, that's where we lived with my grandparents, my mother's parents that is.

EV: Were they all born here in the United States, they weren't...?

MW: Yes sir.

EV: Do you know where your original family came from?

MW: Germany.

EV: Germany? Now after you got through with school did you go to the military?

MW: No I went to farming. They gave me, they called it farm...

EV: Exemption?

MW: Exemption, yes sir. Because they felt we needed food.

EV: Where were you farming in Tomball?

MW: Out in the Tomball area, yes sir.

EV: Was it your own farm?

MW: Yeah I acquired my grandfather's farm after they passed away.

EV: How big a farm is that?

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MW: It was 47 acres.

EV: And you grew mainly what?

MW: Vegetables and some corn, had a few cows and I grew corn to feed the cows. I did... I was in the hog business for a while but that proved unprofitable so I got out of it.

EV: Were you ever married?

MW: Oh yes. I have been married, next month it will be 56 years.

EV: Oh my God, same woman?

MW: Same woman.

EV: How many children did you have?

MW: Four, one girl and three boys.

EV: Was she... was your wife from this area also?

MW: Yeah. She is from the Klein community; originally that is where she was born.

EV: Did you know here in high school, how did you meet her?

MW: I met her through her brother and her brother and I palled around a little bit and we go to his house and I met her there and things progressed from there.

EV: Was it love at first sight?

MW: Well I guess so. I don't know.

EV: Your children are they all here in Houston?

MW: No I have three out there where I'm at and one in Victoria.

EV: Are they in the same kind of business, farming produce?

MW: No, the one in Victoria is farming. My oldest he is farming some on the home place but he is also, well I guess you could say he is moonlighting as a farmer. The daughter is not involved in farming and neither is my youngest son.

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EV: How many grandchildren do you have?

MW: Seven, five girls and two boys.

EV: You never get their names mixed up at all?

MW: Well yeah I do. I've got, three, four of them all start with a "K".

EV: (laughter). That's confusing.

MW: Kaylee and Katie and Kenneth and Keil it's tough but they understand.

EV: Yeah. So was your first job right after high school you just started farming.

MW: Yeah.

EV: Did you stay with the farming all the time?

MW: Until 1969 and my back was killing me so I was gathering vegetables on my knees and I said, "There's got to be something better than this." Not that I didn't like to do it, I still like to grow vegetables but I can't any more. But I quit in '69 and I went to work at a pipe, a concrete pipe plant here on Helmers and I was I guess you could say a foreman or a supervisor there for six or seven years. I got tired of that and I quit. Then at Hooks Airport they opened a little wood truss plant for roofs and I went to work over there and it didn't take long with the... I guess with the education I had in building a little bit, I soon became Quality Management over there. So they were having a lot of trouble on the job with the work that was turned out. So they put me in charge of that to cut that down and I think it did.

EV: When did you come associated with the farmers market?

MW: Well that's where I hauled all my merchandise, my vegetables here. I started farming in '46 and I became a member of the co-op in '48 so I've been affiliated here for a long time. I was elected to the board of directors in '57 and each year I was re-elected

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until 1980 when they asked me to become manager so I was no longer director. I was manager here until '02 and I had a triple bypass, heart bypass and two staph infections and I was out for a long time and Kevin, he was my protégé so to speak and he took over and I felt like he should stay with it and I dropped out. I'm just helping out now.

EV: When you, is this the only place you sold your produce, the old farmers market?

MW: Yes.

EV: That was your market?

MW: Yeah right here.

EV: Okay. Was it here or was it downtown?

MW: Here. The market downtown I didn't go down there but it closed in '57 and we opened here in '42. It was tough for 15 years because, to get the buyers out here, because this was out of town.

EV: So you all... there were two farmers markets at the time right? Where was the one downtown?

MW: Where was it?

EV: Yeah.

MW: Preston and gosh I guess it was just, one entrance way was from Washington Avenue and the east entry was from Preston and it was right over the Bayou.

EV: Right around Spaghetti Warehouse over there?

MW: Yeah right in that area.

EV: Okay, did it cross over to Main Street over in Allen's Landing or anything?

MW: No it was west of Allen's Landing and Main Street too.

EV: Was it open every day or just weekends?

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MW: Yeah, I think so as much as I remember. I was just a little kid then so I don't really know. I think it was open on Sunday but I'm not sure.

EV: But you never had anything to do with that one?

MW: No I sure didn't.

EV: So you started right here with this one?

MW: Right here yes.

EV: This was way out in the boonies?

MW: Yeah.

EV: Was there like nothing around here or was there some home in the heights?

MW: Very little. We had a little mom and pop grocery store when the market first opened here. This was somebody's farm land right in here where the farmers...

EV: Really?

MW: I was told that when they had a maintainer or grader in here leveling things out that they knocked the top off of a five gallon jug of whisky that was buried in the ground.

EV: Oh really? (laughter)

MW: Truth I don't know. That's what I was told.

EV: You started your relationship with them in...

MW: In '46.

EV: '46 and I guess it's grown like crazy since you've came here?

MW: Well no not until '57 when that market downtown closed and a lot of the venders came over here and the other half I guess went to the produce row on the... over there on what do you call it?

EV: Oh yeah south of U of H down there?

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MW: Yeah I'm trying to think of the name of the street and I can't think of it. A lot of them came over here and when they did things picked up here and it rocked along, I mean there was... when I was asked to become manager I kind of turned things around because I could see what was wrong...

EV: What was wrong?

MW: Well the vendors they collected from them twice a day and the guy that went out to collect in the morning he didn't get back until 2:00 and the guy that was supposed to collect in the afternoon had to stay and wait for him before he could go out and a lot of vendors were already closed and went home so they didn't collect no money from them. So when I got here I put them on a weekly basis, the both morning and afternoon sessions included. So if they claimed the space they are going to pay for it. And it made a big difference it started.

EV: Was it always the way it is... I mean you have the front part kind of open to the public, that is the public is that right?

MW: Yeah.

EV: What's the difference, inside you have cupboards, you have shelves and then in the back folks just have their own little boxes?

MW: It's completely different. Now, the front portion, well where Canino's is now, that's still the original but the center here next to it burnt here a couple of years ago. Those two sheds right in there, that is all that was there in the originally, I have a picture here somewhere I'll show you. But the forward was retail and this one over here on this side was wholesale and that's where the farmers would bring their merchandise for wholesale and then... my grandparents were retail people. They went over in the other

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shed. Then as things progressed, well we built the other shed, the concrete top sheds, we built those and I think those were all build somewhere around '57 to accommodate those other vendors from the other market. We had a row of produce houses here, wood houses, and in fact we had three big houses here, they are gone now. That's where I sold my merchandise, right there.

EV: Well then Canino where does he get his produce at? Does he have his own farm or did he buy from the guys around him?

MW: No he bought and still buys a little bit, I mean there is very little farming going on and most of that comes from California, Florida, wherever.

EV: I see. That's the front part of the store. Now the guys in the back that have the boxes and oranges and...

MW: Those are all little independent...

EV: Those are independent farmers?

MW: They are not farmers.

EV: They are just dealers?

MW: Just dealers.

EV: So instead of parking out there on highway somewhere they come here is that it?

MW: That's right.

EV: Alright. I suspect they all have to pay for their little stalls?

MW: Yeah.

EV: Is that on a... everybody pays the same thing or is it a percentage of what they make?

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MW: No it's everybody pays the same thing according to the area. Some areas that are more profitable are charged more then the areas that are not. But there is not much variance.

EV: What would somebody pay in a regular old stall what would they pay?

MW: You got... I think it's \$17 bucks a day but we are behind Caninos, that's \$17 bucks a day. I don't worry about that now so I don't even know.

EV: Right. Do you know about how many folks you have, about how many stalls you have going... I'm sure it goes up and down?

MW: Oh boy I don't know. I figure we've got probably 50, 60 dealers here counting everything, produce houses and all.

EV: And this produce comes from all over the country?

MW: Yeah.

EV: Really?

MW: Sure does.

EV: Is there, I had heard at one point it was mainly folks from the valley brought their stuff up here...?

MW: A lot of it but the valley has kind of gone into... just like the Houston area, the land has been bought up and it's not farmed anymore. That's what's happening down there. I'd say the bulk is coming out of Mexico.

EV: Really?

MW: Yeah.

EV: At the time that you were commissioner, tell me a little bit about this time when, why those folks moved from downtown back up here, you were telling me earlier.

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MW: Oh the city closed the market that was a city owned market and they closed it and they had to get out. So those who chose to come here came here and those who chose to go the other way went to produce row.

EV: Now you just... what do you do, you kind of control who comes in and out of the place?

MW: Control what?

EV: Do you control what goes from your office over here in front, do you control who goes in and out of there, the trucks?

MW: We charge a gate fee we call it for deliveries and that is the only thing we really do now of course the semi's, the big semi's we charge them \$20 and the smaller bobtail trucks \$12 and a pick up \$5. It's just a simple deal of stopping and paying you know.

EV: There's some, I've seen owners and chefs of some of the big restaurants from downtown they all come in here to buy their stuff.

MW: Yeah.

EV: Do you know about how much pounds or tonnage or whatever passes through here?

MW: I have no idea whatsoever I know it's a lot.

EV: Yeah because I say I see a lot of restaurant owners and some of the chef's out here once in a while buying.

MW: Yeah and a lot of it is delivered, you never see those people.

EV: Oh you send delivery to the restaurants?

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MW: Oh yes. All these houses here deliver to restaurants and little stores, well there aren't any little stores left I don't guess but there's an awful lot of restaurants they cater to.

EV: Do the Canino folks still own this, do they still run it?

MW: They run it, yeah.

EV: They run it.

MW: Yeah.

EV: I remember coming out here years ago and I saw a lot of poultry out here. I think you had ducks and chickens...

MW: I know I'm the culprit that put a stop to it.

EV: (laughter). Not that I mind, the smell was sometimes overpowering but...

MW: I felt we just didn't need it anymore and that was it. I can't remember why now it was so long ago.

EV: Yeah because I thought... it kind of reminded me of some of the markets back home when I was a kid. We had chickens and stuff on one side and fruit and vegetables over here. In fact, we would go (I was from El Paso originally) so a lot of our stuff went across the border to buy. But it didn't make any difference. Anyway in El Paso you always had those little markets like that buying chickens and hens and all that stuff. But sometimes if the wind was blowing in the wrong direction it was...

MW: I think we wanted to put some buildings in there... offices, Canino's offices and some coolers and stuff and they just had to go.

EV: There was a separate egg place that I think sold eggs there and then you had...

MW: It's still there.

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EV: There was a guy making keys out there they had some guy making keys.

MW: Yeah.

EV: Is he still there?

MW: Yeah. Different party but he passed away. So the egg man too is a different party running it now.

EV: And do they all answer to the association and Canino just like everybody else right in terms of?

MW: Pays his rent.

EV: Pays his rent.

MW: Yep.

EV: Who comprises the association?

MW: You mean the farmers, there's still a few farmers.

EV: Okay.

MW: They own the whole premises and I happen to be one of them.

EV: How much of this room out here is y'all's I mean do you still have the fence across the street are they part of your thing?

MW: No we don't have anything across the street. It's this whole block all the way through to... well we bought part of a street part here from the city to close it. That street is closed and the next street is open. I think it's Angeline. We own all the way up to there.

EV: Across the street where El Bolillo Bakery used to be...

MW: No that's not...

EV: That's not y'all.

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MW: No.

EV: Do you know who owns those properties?

MW: No sir I sure don't.

EV: Okay. Now, how were the people elected to the board are they among yourselves or do these people have any voice in who is elected or?

MW: No members only.

EV: Okay. And they may or may not... do they, most of them supply produce in here?

MW: See a lot of those members still own voting stock as long as they are not in agriculture anymore. So they still have a vote and they vote in the board of directors.

EV: Now if you've got, now you also have I guess you have folks who produce nuts and honey and all of that, are they also from different places or are they local Texas companies?

MW: Most of the nuts we get in like pecans Caninos does not buy local pecans because the quality is poor. Most of their pecans come out of New Mexico or El Paso area. They are top grade stuff.

EV: I guess the name of that company out there, I used to know... I went to high school.

MW: Heinz is one of them.

EV: Which one?

MW: Heinz I think, no?

EV: Does one start with an "A" Alcozar or something like that wasn't it?

MW: That name doesn't ring a bell. I couldn't tell you I just don't know.

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EV: Yeah I know where they are because they are just up, they start in El Paso and they go right across the boarder, across the river into New Mexico and they've got a huge plant.

MW: Beautiful trees.

EV: It's not Alcazar but darn, something like, started with an "A" as I recall. I didn't know they were that famous I saw there were some plantings were pecan trees outside of Vanhorn do you know anything about those?

MW: No. That must be not too long ago. I haven't been out there in years.

EV: Well it is fairly recently. But I noticed I saw those little saplings when they put them out there. Now of course they are getting bigger but hell a pecan tree takes a long time to start producing nuts.

MW: I know around Bastrop there is a pecan grower there and they planted a bunch of trees just west of Bastrop on the south side of Interstate 71 and you know I think the land became so valuable that they sold the land and the trees were just getting ready to produce by now.

EV: Oh my goodness really?

MW: I think nobody takes care of them they sold the land. The little office they got they sell chocolate covered pecans and stuff at their place and it's towards Austin I can't remember the name of the place. It used to come through here all the time. They sold a lot of pecans but Caninos did not buy those pecans.

EV: Excuse me I meant to ask you this, the front part of Caninos where they sell the tomato plants and all that stuff and... is that Caninos also?

MW: Yes.

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EV: So whether you buy his peanuts outside or inside it's the same thing?

MW: Yeah, right on.

EV: Okay. Now these folks who sell these, they used to... do you still have the place that used to sell house plants, is that one that burned down?

MW: Yeah. See that's Canino's Area Two, they are the ones that had the plants. They still have plants.

EV: Do you all sell to anybody else outside Texas I guess I'm trying to say other...

MW: There's a truck comes in once or twice a week from Henderson and I don't know what he is doing. It's a semi that comes in to pick up stuff here. It's called McNews. M-C-N-E-W-S. And I have no idea what to do with it. Now we've got...dealer in College Station, what's the other little deal that's connected I can't think of the town... Bryan.

EV: Bryan.

MW: Okay he's from Bryan and he comes in here a couple of times a week and picks stuff up and he sells it to various grocers or restaurants up there.

EV: I see.

MW: But that's about the only. We have one out of Amster that comes in here and buys **Diorio (24.1)** and takes it back and people think it is grown over there when it's not. That's their business. I don't care, as long as it's moved out of here that's all we worry about.

EV: (laughter). Have you ever had any crazy dramatic stories out here or crazy folks or interesting experiences why you were out here?

MW: I can't think of anything extraordinary.

EV: No drunken drivers coming up in their trucks and knocking over sheds?

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MW: Well we've got moochers in here all the time we've got to chase out because that's not a good idea to have around a customer. And we've barred a number of people from the market that go in and steel or something, they are barred out and watched pretty close but they are known but they try and get in and they just turn the other way and get out.

EV: Do they donate any of the food, I mean the food that's been on the shelf for a while they've got bruised a little bit or something?

MW: Yeah a food bank comes in at least once a week and picks up merchandise that is "under stress" I call it. They pick that up from the larger wholesale places.

EV: What do you think... where is the future of farming going to go? I mean we have less and less farm land, more and more people.

MW: It's got to move out or away. Actually that's nothing starting in the Houston area outside of where Houston proper is now. Because there is the acreage I've got, in a number of years it will probably be sold too. I don't think my kids will hold onto it. It will become too valuable to farm. That's what's happened. I mean it's some good farm land covered up by concrete.

EV: Yeah. Well I have heard that some of the stuff that goes out in Katy, good farm land out in Katy and all kinds of development going on out there.

MW: Yeah. Rice farming is almost nil. I mean it's just not there.

EV: Eagle Pass use to be... I went to college with a couple of guys from Eagle Pass that had a lot of farmland out there. I don't know what they are doing with it now but I'm just wondering: where are we going in this country where you have...

MW: You're right I don't know.

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EV: Certainly the farmers are fighting to keep farming.

MW: No.

EV: Except the big corporate farms.

MW: I think that's what it is going to wind up being eventually.

EV: All corporate farming?

MW: Yeah I think so.

EV: What about the hydroponics?

MW: Hydroponics?

EV: Hydroponics. Of course it tastes like crap.

MW: I've never in the business. I never was interested in it because I couldn't see how you could get any flavor.

EV: They don't. They don't have any flavor. It's got to come from the dirt. But I'm just wondering if there is any kind of things that you might talk about with some of the other folks about what the future of farming might be? I mean if you haven't that's fine I just wondering if the people sit around and scratch their heads and wonder what the hell is going on?

MW: I feel like there's still going to be you know like the little mom and pop grocers but not grocers, but it's going to be little mom and pop farms. I mean just a couple of acres and they will have a little fruit stand and it will be in demand because it's home grown. Because that's what happens at the house my son grows tomatoes and never had to move a tomato anywhere else but at the house and I don't know his tonnage is terrific. I don't know he had about 2,000 plants I guess and a good arrival in California and the tonnage. It is a variety, not a big tomato but there's a lot of tomatoes. And people pick

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them up. When that salmonella deal was going on and people said, "Well home grown tomatoes weren't affected," well here they came and some radio commentator or whatever you call it, he said I get my vegetables at Weinberg Farms and here they came.

EV: Oh really? (laughter) Can they make tomato plants grow through the winter? I mean do they stay alive during the winter?

MW: No.

EV: You have to plant them new every year.

MW: Yeah you have to plant them every year. Now last year we didn't have a killing freeze and my daughter had a little cherry tomato and she said... I don't know she hit it with a hoe or something and cut it off and she said here this rain here came. It never froze so consequently that stump came on back; they had all the cherry tomatoes they wanted for a while.

EV: I had a... I thought I'd turn into a gentleman's farmer myself and I put out some cucumbers and cantaloupes and stuff. They took over the damn back yard man.

MW: Those vines will go.

EV: Yeah and I said I must have been doing something wrong (laughter). I think I tried to yank them all out I think the second year a bunch of them still came out. But it's a lot of fun but we've been talking about doing that but you know I forgot from the time I was a little kid when I was playing in the field. I didn't realize how hard my grandfather was working. It's not an easy job. Even for your own private garden.

MW: Well if you have a private garden the cucumbers and cantaloupes and watermelons, the vines take up so much room you don't have room for anything else so

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you have to go into something like tomatoes and bell pepper, egg plant and something like that that doesn't take up a lot of room. That's the way to go.

EV: But you've got to farm it, you have to take care of it all the time and that's a lot... sometimes you don't think about how much work that takes.

MW: And it's all those insects you've got to fight too.

EV: And now of course you want to fight them without using chemicals and somebody said some type of flowers you've got to put out so I got a bunch of those.

MW: Marigolds I believe.

EV: Marigolds.

MW: I don't think that's a complete answer will help.

EV: I don't either. I bought a bunch of ladybugs...

MW: Ladybugs don't hurt anything. They are beneficial but then there's a... we called it, it's not a stink bug so to speak but it's a but it gets about an inch long and he's got long legs and he's got a stinger and he'll suck the juice out of a tomato.

EV: Ah that's what I got those!

MW: If you get rid of them you can throw the tomato away it just a hard spot there and it's no good.

EV: Where do they come from Mr. Weinberg?

MW: I don't know.

EV: You can have a back yard, you never see those suckers, never see them but you plant one tomato plant and that son of a bitch...

MW: There they are!

EV: There will be one of those big old black bugs sucking on that thing.

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MW: Now you know I didn't see those until not too many years back. I never saw them. Apparently we have killed some beneficial insect that feeds on the eggs or whatever. That's all I can figure. Somewhere along the line we've killed a beneficial insect and what it is I don't know.

EV: Well my birds help me. I try and keep a lot of feeders around for the birds, but all they do is pick up my blackberries.

MW: Yeah they love them, I've got some of those too.

EV: I can't grow enough of them to where I get any. They take whatever I get. They do the same to my peaches. I have a little peach tree out there but I think I need to have another peach tree so I can have some pollination or something because I haven't gotten anything out of them for some time.

MW: We've got a few fig trees. I've been, the last week or so I've been picking figs. My son in law has been helping me. My daughter has been helping me and I've been picking figs and I've been brining in most of them here to sell. I have a few people who want to can them so I sell them by the gallon. Otherwise here I just bring them in pint containers and just like strawberries.

EV: Yeah you have a stall or do you just sell it to them and let them sell it.

MW: Yeah I take to Caninos and I've got another dealer, one of those little individuals in the back that sell them for me.

EV: You know I used to buy a case of oranges out here, those Valencia oranges because I like the sweet taste of that juice but... and I made this decision and bought me this little juicer...well I didn't realize how many oranges it takes to get a glass of orange juice.

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MW: You'd better believe it, that's right!

EV: Until I started doing those. I had to do 8 or 9 of those things before I got a nice little glass of orange juice!

MW: Well have you tried the Texas Juice oranges?

EV: No.

MW: I believe the name is Hamblin something like that.

EV: It is the name of the?

MW: Of the orange. I'm not sure there are several varieties probably but of course they are out of season now. But they will start in November sometime and they are darn good and they've got a lot of juice. That's mainly what they are for is juice oranges.

EV: No I've just tried one of those Valencia. I'll try those Hamblin. It's somewhere back here I take it?

MW: Right at the very back shed, the front corner is Rivera Produce and they have more than anybody.

EV: Really? Do they come up... are they grown in the valley the citrus do you know?

MW: Yeah I think so.

EV: Boy that's a... I've got a friend of mine that has a trailer park down there and she's got the developers, McAllen is a fast growing part in Texas.

MW: Sure.

EV: Developers are pushing her to sell that place but doesn't want to but she's got about 16 slots for house trailers. I think she has 6 places for folks to put their trailers in and then 10 trailers that she owns with the land that she rents. Then she had some citrus

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with the rest of the acreage but it is just a pain in the neck. Was there any other kind of vendors you all had out here, did you all ever hold like a...

MW: Any other type of business?

EV: Yeah.

MW: No we've kept it as fruit and vegetables only all through the years.

EV: I see. Alright and you are open every day?

MW: Every day.

EV: Christmas and everything?

MW: No Christmas and New Years we are closed.

EV: Okay.

MW: But Caninos is closed Christmas day and the next day and then they are open New Years day.

EV: Oh really?

MW: It's always been that way. But I feel like the produce houses, they need a day off.

EV: Oh yeah.

MW: Otherwise they would probably be open. But I instituted those two days off to close and it's worked.

EV: Let me go back to your family just a little bit. You said you did not know your grandparents?

MW: Yeah my father's grandparents.

EV: Okay.

MW: I didn't know.

EV: But you knew your mothers?

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MW: Yeah.

EV: Where they American were they born here as far as you know?

MW: Yeah.

EV: Okay.

MW: My grandfather's parents came here in 1880 and he was born in '84.

EV: Wow.

MW: Now his older brother was born in Germany. I don't know the name... I mean the date. But there was a sister in between she was in the oven on the way over. She was born over here. But mama became pregnant in Germany.

EV: Oh my. Do you know what part of Germany they were from?

MW: It was what they called East German here a few years ago I don't know the name of the town, area.

EV: Did anybody... did your parents speak German or anything? Did they lost it by that time?

MW: I speak German too?

EV: Do you really?

MW: Yeah.

EV: I went out here to I used to be a parole officer when I was going to graduate school and I went out to New Ulm, that was my assigned county, Colorado county, up in New Ulm and they had little villages up there where you didn't speak English. It was all... that was back in the late, in the '60's. I remember they had this old guy, I was checking to see if this boy was coming out of parole and he threw his father down a well. But anyway I was just kind of interesting to me that we had these little pockets where

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some folks Czechs and Poles. So I went out there about a year or so ago looking for some land. I just wanted about 5 or 10 acres and I asked some guy... I got hungry out there and I forgot I think I was in Fayette or one of the German towns out there and I said, "Is there a good German restaurant out here?" And the guy said, "No but we've got some great Mexican restaurants."

MW: (laughter).

EV: I can get that at home! (laughter). I did find some place way out... down one of the country roads out there called the Old Heidelberg or something. Naturally that's the name of any German restaurant. But it is kind of off the highway a little bit so I just picked up sandwiches. She said, "Well we have a little umpa-pa-pa band come in on Saturday night if you want to come by."

MW: Fredericksburg does have some German restaurants. But I'm sure New Ulm does not.

EV: But they don't have... in Fredericksburg they only have about one or two.

MW: Three.

EV: Yeah they don't have that many. I thought the town would be full of them.

MW: It used to be but not anymore. I remember when I got married in '52 my wife and I we went to Fredericksburg and we was trying to save money, not spend money but we are on our honeymoon, stopped in Fredericksburg and went to the grocery store. The guy asked me in German what I wanted.

EV: Oh really?

MW: I think I floored him when I...

EV: When you answered in German!

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MW: (laughter) yeah! But anyway I wanted bread and some ham to make a sandwich and that was it.

EV: Did you speak German at home?

MW: No.

EV: How did you learn German?

MW: Through my parents, my mother and grandparents.

EV: But did you speak to them in German or just...?

MW: I would, I could but I spoke English to them. But I knew everything they were saying in German. But when I went to parochial school they were teaching German.

EV: Oh that's right.

MW: And I learned to read it and I even learned German script which I have forgotten most of it since I don't write it but I still read it no problem.

EV: They have... some friends of mine have a place up around Belleville and the lumber company there heard one Czech arguing with a German and they were each speaking half and half in English in the middle. It's interesting to listen to how languages take hold.

MW: Well my mother was that way when she spoke to her sister on the telephone. I'd just get... it was hilarious it was about half German half English.

EV: Oh really. I was driving in Albuquerque I heard a guy speaking in Navajo on the radio same thing. Blab la bla Don Nelson's Chevrolet bla blaaa... air conditioning. (laughter).

MW: Well I get tickled at some of these Hispanics. There's a lot of English words which are not words in Spanish so they have to speak English, those words in English

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and I get tickled just thinking about it. Now I'm sure that there are some words that I never learned in German either that directly translate. Because the German I learned growing up speaking to people was not real pure German. Because the word "trouble" for instance they called it "trouble" which is just bringing it over the bridge a little bit. Well the real word is problem. That's the real problem. Not trouble it's not a word in the German language but everybody used the word and a lot of other words too which I can't think of at the moment.

EV: Well we have a lot... Spanish of course we do that all the time, especially on the boarder. We had a... we used the word for brakes it's "brekas."

MW: "Brekas" yeah like brakes in a car.

EV: Yeah but the real word is "frenos" but it goes on. On the other hand if you get into baseball terms, there are positions in baseball, the shortstop "the shortstop" but the fielder is not the fielder it is "jardinero", which really means the "yard man." It's just... a literal translation. I don't know.

MW: Let's see when I in German they called it brakes too. Which I knew wasn't right but I didn't know the word but I found out it's "bremsa."

EV: Is there anything you want on your own to add to this that you would like to talk about that you would like somebody to remember about the farmers' market?

MW: I wouldn't know anything that I can think of right now.

EV: Are there any other folks that are still around that you knew that... are there any folks that you know that were with the farmers market downtown?

MW: Are still alive you mean?

EV: Yeah.

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MW: No I don't think so.

EV: That would be a stretch I know.

MW: No they are all gone.

EV: I've been trying to get a couple of veterans from the... on the U.S.S. Texas the ones that are alive are not from here... they are not from anywhere around here.

End of Interview

