

Interviewee: Wade, Eudelia "Cookie" Morales

Interview Date: July 14, 2008

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Eudelia "Cookie" Morales Wade
"East End Catholic Churches"

Interviewed by: Mikaela Selley
Date: July 14, 2008
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location: 1506 Des Jardines

MS: This is for the oral history project. My name is Mikaela Selley and I am interviewing a current member of Blessed Sacrament Church located in Houston's East End. What is your name and date of birth?

EW: My name is Eudelia Morales Wade. They all know me by "Cookie" _____ in the area.

MS: Your birth date?

EW: November 23, 1935.

MS: Can you tell me where your family is from?

EW: Originally we are from Austin, Texas. After I got married my husband Ronald Dale Wade and we moved to San Antonio and we were in San Antonio for about six or seven years at Saint Patrick's church was the church that we belonged to and we were active in that. Those _____ (1.4) as someone in charge of that church.

MS: What year did you arrive in Houston?

EW: We came to Houston, my husband was transferred to Houston I don't recall whether it was '60 or '61.

MS: How did you find out about Blessed Sacrament Church?

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EW: Well my brother Felix lived in the area he lived on Sidney and he was the one that located the house for us when we first moved to Houston which is about 8 or 9 blocks from Blessed Sacrament. Then he went to business school as a member under Father Moncena Davis and he was extremely nice, friendly and very helpful. He treated me like his own _____ (2.5).

MS: What other Catholic churches were nearby at the time?

EW: Well there was Our Lady of Guadalupe, Queen of Peace, Annunciation downtown on Crawford and Telephone, there's Saint Joseph downtown. We really never looked at any other church except Blessed Sacrament. Everybody there was very friendly, they accepted you like you had been there for years, and we would be in all their activities. The church had an atmosphere like the one we had left in San Antonio, Saint Patrick's.

MS: When you became a member _____?

EW: Moncena Davis.

MS: And do you remember anyone else, any other priests can you remember their names?

EW: Well there was Father _____ like two or three months later when we went to the 10:00 mass they were rotating back and forth with different schedules.

MS: Were there any nuns?

EW: Oh yes. They had a school with the nuns, very friendly people. Sister Maria, of course one day we always _____. The school was large at that time because it had predominantly Italian students

MS: Can you describe the church, how many buildings were there?

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EW: We had the main church it was a one story building but it was the old (4.9) building with the tall steeples. We have what used to be the school the two story building. They demolished it to put the new building up, the new educational building. At the time back in those days the family that lived in the back yard of the school donated the building it was Grace Hall to the church and on the other end of the yard was another home that was given to the church that was demolished. Across the street on Sherman there is... I don't know whether it is a two or three story building I've never been in it. That is where they have the meetings for the different things and the (4.9) and there is a small garage, two story building that was donated to the church which is where we keep the food pantry that we work out of. Across the street on Hunt is a two story building where the nuns used to be, used to live. I've never been in it but I understand it is beautiful, antique furniture and all that. They use it now for meetings for different clubs, different organizations which is catty corner from our church. Behind our church is the Grace Hall and then there is the garage that they keep the busses and the extra things. It is a large garage, one level behind the rectory which is the old fashion two story beautiful home behind that is the garage, the washroom and the workshop that Father Davis used to have back there because he dealt with different woods. People from all over the world would send him samples of the woods that they were from. He was asked to build the alter for the church and the church has the senior citizens retirement home. They asked him to build the alter for them and the alter was a piece of art you won't see anything like it because it was created with all the samples that were sent to him.

MS: Oh how neat.

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EW: If I'm not mistaken he built the cross I don't know if this is a fact or not but this is the story I know. He built the cross that sits on the steeple at the Annunciation Church downtown. In our parish you can see the beautiful woodwork in the back. There's a small chapel in the back and there is sometimes he has mass only so he wouldn't have to open the big old church. It's so big that it takes a lot of air conditioning to keep it cool. We've been there 42 or 43 years. My husband and I and my son sit in the one big bench all this time. It's the third column from the front of the altar which is right about the middle of the church. We have the statutes. Holy name, Saint Joseph on one side, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Blessed Mother, (9.6) in the altar, the Crucifix and the Alter of the Blessed Sacrament. We have the podium to the left and the beautiful picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe and just left of that in the same area in beautiful gold, blue, black, red and pink, one inch tile. It has a picture of the Miracle Heart of Mary holding the baby in her arms. I understand the tile gold is real gold. We have the piano and the area where the choir sings. Then we have Our Lady of San Juan and two other statues in that area. We keep going on to the back (10.9) in the back. Then you get to the back of the church and you have the one room that they sell the candles out of and they have all the at the church and on the other side there used to be where the priests kept the ropes that they used. But they have been moved to the back of the church, the beautiful cherry wood cabinets and then of course it attaches to the rectory which is the old and has been converted to the offices in the living area and the dining room and the kitchen and then the steps that go upstairs to the living quarters. We used to have when I first went there a big, big room that they called the family room. They had a round couch that would go from one end to the other it took up

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practically half of the room. When Father Davis would have company, meetings, have friends and have the home style atmosphere. All the changes made it smaller up to date offices.

MS: What were the parishioners like? Were there a lot of families? Was it a really close community?

EW: It was. You would see the father, the mother and three or four children who were with them, took up half of a bench. You don't see that. Now you see the husband and wife and one or two kids. At the 10:00 mass that we have is for especially for families and children, teenagers. The 8:00 mass is [redacted] mass for the different organizations.

The [redacted] has one room the Knights of Columbus has another room, the [redacted] has another room one Sunday each night so it doesn't conflict with the other. We have the Holy Name ushers pass the baskets for anything that pertains to the activity of the church. Those are young man and older people. We have I'd say about ten, maybe twelve of the antiques, what I call antiques that have been there the longest. Mr. Chavez is one of the first Hispanic family that was there. Mr. Inajosa who's son is a priest, the Rodriguez's, the Wilkerson's, Charlie Lopez used to take care of our yard beautifully and all of his children. Of course he is up in age now where he can't do it. But he is there just the same. Villez... I can't think of the other people that are old. Mrs. Meza, Mr. Meza all of her kids are graduated and all of them have nice jobs but both of them come to church, sometimes they bring their grandchildren with them.

MS: When you arrived at Blessed Sacrament what organizations and what ministries were offered?

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EW: Well the Alter Society, The Holy Name, The [REDACTED] (15.3), The Legion of Mary, Saint Vincent [REDACTED] and I'm sure there were others but I can't remember.

MS: What did you participate in?

EW: It would be easier to say what I did not participate in. We were very active at Saint Patrick's in San Antonio. We carried that activities, Blessed the Sacrament. I myself served as Parish Counsel President four terms, three terms I served as membership chairman. Three terms I served as a Character and Spiritual Education. I was always ready to help with the hospitality when Father Davis, Father [REDACTED], Father Jones, Father Garcia and now Father Sanchez asked me to help in whatever. I did whatever I can. We make donations to the church as a family. I'm not as healthy as I was when I was young and I feel that I'm helping them by doing that. When Father Davis, Moncena Davis and Father [REDACTED] we lived on Blanch Street. We used to have them over for supper on Friday nights. That was their way of getting a home cooked meal away from the church. When Father Garcia was there he stayed two or three years a few years ago. He's in Brownsville, Texas now. We used to have him come from dinner, take him out to dinner and when his family would come to visit during the summer time from Arizona I would fix a complete dinner for them here at home and then my husband and I would carry it to the rectory and set it up for them while he went to the airport to pick them up. When he got back to the house or the rectory no one was there and he always said, "This is a Guardian Angel" and then things did fine. It was his sister that would tell him... "ahh yes but they had never seen the [REDACTED]. And he told me that they were coming...(crying) and decorated the hall of the dining area like it was a luau and made leis for everyone out of colored tissue, colored Kleenex and at the time the Bishop who

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is now the Bishop of Galveston, I don't remember his name it's a long name, he was here... he is the one that created the new church. He was [redacted] (19.0). We had a bonfire just outside of Grace Hall for attending that we had the [redacted] papers.

MS: Was this for Davis?

EW: Moncena Davis. He worked with the community beautiful. We hated to lose him but he retired.

MS: What language is the language is the mass in?

EW: Predominantly English, one mass at 6:30 back in the old days in Spanish. Once a month I believe he used to have the mass in Latin. That was before they built a new alter that the priests now faces the church where everybody can see him when he is performing. The main alter is in the back.

MS: How did people react to that change?

EW: At first people didn't particularly care for it but they have gotten used to it now.

MS: How did you feel about it?

EW: They had taken something away from the church by not facing the main alter with the activities that the priest performs to all the mass instead. When they turned it around it was because there were instructions for him to do it. You could here the "ohs and the ahs" and "Why?" and "Don't do it" aloud at the church itself. But they have gotten used to it now. I've gotten used to it. It's a change it was a big change.

MS: [redacted] church [redacted]?

EW: Not that I'm aware of. They moved away from the area because they bought a house. Our area was... I say our area because I'm a senior citizens of the [redacted] of the unions. The new people have moved in. Mother, father, six or seven children or

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five... never a family with one or two people... always a full family. They take a whole bench. They sold their houses to these families. I remember Richard Herrera used to live across the street from the church by the railroad tracks, at the time there was railroad tracks there. He always opened his garage... he went around to different companies that would give him broken down toys or toys that were outdated and he would have... in his garage he would fix them in his time. That is why we gave him the name of "Mr. Toy man." Italian person, Richard Herrera and his wife and they moved to the north side of 59. They got involved with their church in the North. But he was the backbone. Him and Mr. O'Neal was the backbone of our church at the time

MS: Who is Mr. O'Neal?

EW: He was the bookkeeper, accountant and insurance and he had his office right across from the church of the [REDACTED] (23.2) and we used to work the bazaars together with him and then he counted the money. We counted money for the bazaars for almost twenty years. Of course he had a certain way of counting the money. We would give credit to everybody as soon as it was picked up we'd give them that chairman that moved a copy of the [REDACTED] sheet that was [REDACTED]. Then on Monday's we would come back and roll the coins. We would not deposit that at the time the banks wouldn't take loose coins. We would roll that up and then Mr. O'Neal Moncena Davis or whoever was in charge of it would go to the bank and deposit it. We would get there 7:30 or 8:00 in the morning, go open the bank and give it... what I call open the bank and get it ready to put in the [REDACTED] to come and pick up their change... put it in change at the time. Now they have the tickets. They buy their tickets out of the main booth. They are the only ones that handle or supposedly handle money. We did it for twenty years. The bank

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was at first in this old school building which is now the hall for activities, educational hall they call it. Then we moved into the rectory and when Father Jones was there he moved us up into the living quarters upstairs to keep [REDACTED]. That was really [REDACTED]. We'd leave in the evening after the bazaar day was over, everybody had gone home we were still trying to figure out the money or the total for the priest that was in charge, 11:30, 1:00 in the morning. That time was donor, nobody got paid for it. I don't know what they do now. About three years ago, four years ago we quit counting money. For four years we had a couple different couple working with us so that we would show them how it was done, how it was handled. It was funny we worked with one year but they wouldn't come back. They said, "No we want to do something else." It is a lot of work to it it's a job.

MS: I know that you are home to another church are there a lot of parishioners with them [REDACTED] (26.1) that live in the neighborhood?

EW: Yes. There is a couple that we know him by Call and Anna _____.

MS: [REDACTED] (26.3)?

EW: I'm sorry?

MS: _____?

EW: _____ there's quite a few of them but I couldn't begin to tell you. They feel like Blessed Sacrament is home. We don't get the same feeling of the parishioners and their priests as they do in their own church. We have now... right now we have Father Rudolph Sanchez, he is Hispanic. He has been a priest here for ten years, here in Houston. He was promoted to directorship. He is trying to rebuild our church with [REDACTED] (27.3). He is very active. He talks beautiful Spanish, beautiful

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English and he makes you feel like "I've been here all this time." It is a big load to be in charge of a church and you can't believe the [REDACTED]. So he, I believe, he has this gift of togetherness like Father Garcia had and like Father [REDACTED] had and like Moncena Davis had. I think he'd make a [REDACTED] in visiting our church. We are in debt with the new building because the old one was torn down. We have Knights of Columbus [REDACTED] the brick to make a garden with the families name on it to raise funds for the new building. They are trying to get the Knights of Columbus re-established because they [REDACTED] under Moncena Davis' [REDACTED].

MS: You mentioned that the parish for the predominantly Italian parish, what was that like for the church in the neighborhood, what celebrations were unique to Blessed Sacrament because of the Italian community?

EW: I remember the [REDACTED] more than anything else. Their boys, their alter boy with [REDACTED]. They got to be so tall they were all... they were taller than Father Moncena Davis, Father Jones, Father [REDACTED]. They were always involved in something in church. They used to go to [REDACTED] house at Saint Joseph. They would have a spaghetti dinner, sausage and beautiful, beautiful tables. Like a stairway of different types of bread. They [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. It was an all day affair. [REDACTED] used to be in charge of the Alter Society. When she wanted to take the table covers for the alter I [REDACTED]. We used to get together to make the little aprons that we wore over the children when they were baptized. They got to keep that. [REDACTED] used to be responsible for 25 of those aprons because the material was given by the church but we sewed them up by hand and by the sewing machine from a certain day to a certain day because [REDACTED]. I don't know if they still do that or

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not. We don't have an Alter Society in our parish. We have the [REDACTED] but I don't know what their activity is. But at Saint Joseph day luncheon gathering, fancy breads was something that everyone in the neighborhood looked forward to. They used to set up tables in the back yard on the sidewalk, not on the street. [REDACTED] and different people. It's not like it is now. When they had something at the church everybody got involved and if you didn't show up they'd let you know very politely.

MS: How have things changed from that time?

EW: We don't have it anymore. We don't have that at Saint Joseph table [REDACTED] the church does [REDACTED] and I can't tell you what going to that church [REDACTED]. Moncena built the alter. Most of those Italian people are either in that home right here or here or [REDACTED]. I know that Mr. O'Neal passed away. Richard Herrera passed away and I'm sure that [REDACTED] did too. Given Father Sanchez time and cooperation. The church [REDACTED]. Most of the houses in the area have been painted or redone but it is very different because they all have the fences and the wire and the vine 5 or 6 feet tall. It's like you don't belong here anymore. We have the rod iron fence around the church, not the church itself but by the new building. All the way to the corner, all the way to the back, all the way to where used to be the railroad tracks and all the way around to the back of the church. It dresses up the church grounds very much but there's a cold feeling between you and God because of the fence. But because the neighborhood has changed and there's so much violence going on in the area. You don't know what's safe and what's not. What little we have in our parish we want to keep. Father Sanchez has the open door policy because the priest have reserved [REDACTED] and Father Garcia used to keep the church locked at all times. But when

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Father Sanchez now the doors are always open which he has [redacted] the neighborhood. I... we had Father Sanchez over here for lunch. It was amazing how far we [redacted] he knew we didn't belong but we are always welcome. We have taken him out to lunch and we would take our money just to get away and relax. I think that Father Garcia wants to build... not Father Garcia but Father Sanchez wants to build the church... he built the church back up as far as activities are concerned and families to support the church. He is so different then anybody out there. For example one Sunday we went to church he had his guitar and he sang for us instead of preaching. He has a beautiful voice. Then he sang religious songs.

MS: Do you think the tearing down of the school... what effect do you think that had on the church? Do you think there should be a school there?

EW: Tearing down of the two story building was so old. The building itself was strong and sturdy but the floors were rotten. You didn't know whether you were going to... even the first floor was like that. So it would have been less expensive to build then it would to replace. When the people found out that the school was going to be demolished they were not happy. But the people in the neighborhood didn't realize the expense it was to operate the school and then not support it. So it is more important to the parish counsel and to the priests and to some of the key people to keep the [redacted] our church, our parish [redacted]. The majority of the students in school were kids from out of the district and that's what made it so hard financially. The building that we have now is a one story building with 8 or 10 classrooms or rooms to have meetings in and it has the large auditorium fashion, with broken down tables from the [redacted] auditorium to set up our banquet or [redacted]. We have a beautiful new kitchen, storage room,

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right after the... there is no way that the health department can come and say, "you don't meet the requirements of the kitchen." You could eat off the floor .

MS: What are the options for ?

EW: They have... there is a lady that is in charge of the CCE program and there are CI and they meet at the Annunciation in church it is a hall at the nun's house for their classes that are . On Sunday mornings you can see the family and the kids all going together. . We strived to rebuild the participation of the altar boys CI has a girls as offering assistance. But some of the people will participate in church but will not participate or get involved. He is asking for people to come as a volunteer on Mondays and Fridays to help clean the church and he has one person in charge of that and they do a beautiful job. He has one person in charge of the flowers and she does a very nice job of that and I don't know who does the altar . I don't drive very much anymore just in the neighborhood: to the store, to the bank to the church once a week. But to be going back and forth, back and forth, back and forth...my eyes won't do that.

MS: Is there anything else you'd like to add about Blessed Sacrament, any last comments?

EW: Oh gosh, there's so much to say about this I couldn't even begin to tell you. I know that Father started with us at Bless of Sacrament and he is the director of the Association. He is the pastor of the church in Manchester under the . We went to Father 's 25th anniversary as a priest at a church in Pasadena where he was at and there were so many people there it was beautiful. We had

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a going away party for Father Garcia and a lot of people went to see him go on. There's been a lot of priests...

End of Interview

