

History of Magnolia Park

Interviewee: Christine Reyna

Date: July 21st, 2008

Location: 903 N. 75th St. Houston, TX

Interviewer: Ernesto Valdés

EV: Okay, Christina I explained to you what we are going to do with these things verdad?

So you know you signed the release and all that right? Okay now, can you give me your full name?

CR: Irma Christine Reyna Ybarra.

EV: Irma Christine Reyna Ybarra con y or i?

CR: Y

EV: Okay, and where were you born?

CR: Here in Houston, Texas.

EV: Alright.

CR: In Magnolia 7439 Avenue I and I'm still here.

EV: Okay, is that this house here?

CR: The second house. It's all this property.

EV: And you've been here all your life most of the time?

CR: All my life.

EV: You never did move anywhere else?

CR: But I moved when I got married I moved to, but not far from here, Mason Park addition and then as my mother started getting older and she needed help at the shop and I had two baby sons so my husband didn't want me to work no more so that's when I got involved in Reyna's

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine**Interview Date: July 21, 2008**

Florists and I've been here since then and that's about in the I would say like 1970's was when I came.

EV: What did your husband do?

CR: He was a machinist for L-K Pump and Valve, which was the company on Lawndale and then as my mother started getting older and the technology started picking up with credit cards, wiring all around the world and everything, that's when I came in and started putting credit cards in the business, belonging to different flowering services where you can wire flowers around the world and just got all this commercial accounts and started picking up the business a lot more.

EV: What did your, what work did your father do? Did your mother work or did she stay in the house?

CR: My mother was a house wife and what she done was she always worked in her garden, loved flowers and then there was Francisco Ortiz that used to have the Mejor Pan Bakery just next to our property and he was getting ready to get married and he asked my mother, "Maria, why don't you do my wedding?" and my mother says, "I've never done a wedding. I love flowers, but...", "I'll trust you. I know that you can do my wedding." So that was my mother's first wedding and I think they celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary and that was the first wedding that my mother had but she didn't know that much about arranging and all this so there were all these Anglo flower shops on Lawndale in front of Forest Park cemetery so she went and talked to the biggest flower shop there on Lawndale and told the lady that she would clean, she would mop, she would deliver, she would do anything they'd say just so they would show her a little bit on arranging and what takes on at a flower shop. So my mother was there and she started learning, learning, learning and while she was there she started opening her own flower shop. So then after she got all the basics and all that and that she stayed there about a year and a half, she

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

came back. So and then my mother would always go traveling to Mexico so then she would go to Mexico, she got all wound up that she was going to make the shop bigger and all this and she would go buy las coronas de azahar para las bodas, the bouquets and all that.

EV: Let's get it, what did you say first in Spanish? I have to tell my, the typist.

CR: Oh, the Coronas de azahar, it's a pearlized bead and the bouquets de azahar. So my mother found in Mexico where they made them, they were like in a little Indian village where there were processed and all these pearlized beads and making them bouquets. So she would go over there like every two months and bring about 200 crowns, 200 bouquets...

EV: From here she'd go down there?

CR: From there she'd go to Mexico 'cause all that, at that time, was coming in from Mexico and she was one of the first Hispanic flower shops here in Houston, so people would come from all around Houston and the business was good and from there it just went getting bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger, and we're still here. She passed away in 1987 and that's when I took over.

EV: Do you remember the year, more or less, when she set this place up?

CR: She set it up about 1839, I mean 1939, about 1939.

EV: And what was your father, what was your father doing all this time?

CR: My father was a mechanic, an automobile mechanic. He used to be on Harrisburg. There used to be a Boulevard theater and Copper Kettle cafeteria, which, the buildings are still standing and he used to have the shop right there. So he was there for many years 'till he retired.

EV: Did he, are your parents, were they American, were they from this side or are they from Mexico?

CR: No, my father was from Monterrey and my mother was from, she always called it "Black Rocks", Piedras Negras, but then they became American citizens and

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine**Interview Date: July 21, 2008**

EV: That's where my family is from, Piedras Negras.

CR: Oh really, and I've always wanted to go there, but I ...

EV: You've never been there? Oh my God.

CR: I've always wanted to go there.

EV: Hijole, when we finish this I'll tell you were to go. Este, did she, did you get to know your grandparents?

CR: I knew my mother's mother because when they came from Mexico they went to live in San Antonio and my parents, and my father was born in Bryan, Texas, and then they went to live in San Antonio. My mother was waiting to catch a bus to go downtown and my father was catching the bus and they met each other. My father was 17, my mother was 13.

EV: Thirteen.

CR: Thirteen.

EV: He'd get thrown in jail now.

CR: So a year later, a year later, they got married at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Antonio, then they moved to Houston.

EV: So they, their romance began in San Antonio.

CR: Uh-hmm and then they moved to Houston, and then when they came to Houston all the, like all this property in front of us, the swimming pool, the elementary school, this Avenue I went all the way through so they bought a little house and they lived over there, but then the school district wanted to buy that property and that so they just moved across the street and bought all this property and at that time really there were no Mexican people living here in Magnolia Park. It was all Polish, Italians, all that lived in this neighborhood. So then the port started getting bigger. That's when all the Hispanic Mexican people started coming to work at

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine**Interview Date: July 21, 2008**

the port and that's when the Italians and the Polish people jumped out and they kind of, it became a Hispanic neighborhood in no time.

EV: Did you ever go to school with the Italians, and Germans, and the Czechs and all that?

Were they in your classes?

CR: Uh-huh, but I went to Fullerton Elementary which is on Harrisburg because my father thought that if I would go to an elementary school where there were basically Anglos and other races that I could learn how to speak English better without an accent. That was his belief. So his shop was on the way so he would take me and my sister to school every morning, pick us up and bring us back home.

EV: So did you learn English without an accent?

CR: I don't know. That was his belief. (laughter)

EV: Did you learn how to communicate with Anglos, did you ever get tight with them or simply...

CR: Oh I had a lot of friends...

EV: Yeah?

CR: I would go spend the night or they would come over here.

EV: Really?

CR: Oh yeah. I never did have no problem with race issues.

EV: Okay, and do you still have family in Mexico?

CR: No.

EV: Then, where did you tell me where you went to school. You mentioned elementary school.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

CR: Okay, I went to Fullerton Elementary then from there I went to Jackson Junior High then from there graduated from Milby High.

EV: Did you uh, were you like the football queen or something at Milby or...

CR: No luck.

EV: La Reyna de...

CR: Oh, my mother when they'd bring, she was so well known, that they called her La Reyna de Las Flores.

EV: Oh really?

CR: Oh yes, that was their...

EV: La Reyna de Las Flores.

CR: Everybody would go La Reyna de Las Flores.

EV: You didn't get la Princesa de las Flores?

CR: No, no.

EV: How many did you have in your family?

CR: It was five of us. Two brothers and three sisters.

EV: And you all grew the same, same pattern of schools and all that?

CR: Everything the same.

EV: Are your brothers and sisters still living in the Houston area?

CR: Just me and my sister left. My older sister passed away with cancer, my younger brother passed away, and my older brother passed away last year.

EV: Really?

CR: So it's just me and my sister left.

EV: And do you have anyone in your family that's helping you here in the flower shop?

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

CR: Oh I got my sister, around the holidays my two sons come in. They take over the scheduling all of the deliveries, the deposits, bank deposits, everything that needs to be done and then my sister always comes in, my daughter-in-laws so I got....you say here's a man, here's a man you got to interview. Watcha doing Steve? Look it, this is Ernesto Valdez. That's the man I was telling you about, Steve Palacios...He's the one with the American Legion.

[Conversation between CR and Steve Palacios]

EV: Okay you were talking about your siblings and all your brothers, oh I just wanted to know if ya'll went to the same school.

CR: Well, my brother, my older sister graduated from Sam Houston High School. My two other brothers graduated from Milby and one was a graduate of U of H, one went through U of H, graduated from the U of H and most of us went basically to the same schools.

EV: What did your brother graduate, major in at UH?

CR: Engineering.

EV: Really?

CR: Uh-hmm. He worked for Armco Steel for so many years.

EV: The last time we were here you were, tell me about what it was like here as a kid at Magnolia Park?

CR: Oh it was beautiful. It was beautiful, I swear to God. It was just open space. There were not that many houses. There was a, the swimming pool of course was there and we always made, the coach from Austin High School was the manager of the pool and he knew my dad and everything so they would wait 'till after the swimming hours, we would go in there and swim and then I'd invite all of my friends from school, friends from the neighborhood and my dad would always buy three or four watermelons. We'd cut them out here in our yard and we'd eat

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine**Interview Date: July 21, 2008**

watermelon, we'd sing, we'd put the radio on, we'd dance, and we'd just have a good time just running around like kids, and what was so weird was that sometimes like on Saturday all the girls would go swimming and we'd come over here, have a snack or something, and we'd have a slumber parties, but at that time can you imagine there was no air conditioners, I mean some people had air conditioners as luxury. We'd just open the windows, the screens and just latch the little screen door with a latch. Can you imagine, I mean nothing would ever happen. Everything was so beautiful and clean, and safe. I would never try that nowadays, forget it, I mean. There were just and then like on Saturday nights as we used to get older we used to go to north side. They used to call it Woodland Park and that's where they would have the sock hops and have the music of our time. So everybody on Saturday nights would drive to Woodland Park.

EV: Who were the groups, the music, the Fat's Domino, or uh...?

CR: No, Sunny and the Sunliners, La Mafia, I mean all like the beginning, beginning groups, beginning groups, but the music was so great and...

EV: Little Joe and the Latineers.

CR: Little Joe and the...

EV: The Latineers, or Little Joe and La Familia, no?

CR: La Familia. All of those would come in and then, of course, there was always the Pan American where all the stars would come there and all of us would go there and then we used to have the big rock and roll shows.

EV: On TV?

CR: No, at the auditorium. When the Supremes, I mean, all the, all the groups at that time would come in and perform.

EV: When did you graduate from high school?

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

CR: I graduated in 1960.

EV: 60?

CR: 60.

EV: Do you remember a guy named Martinez, I don't know, a guy I knew in the army? I didn't even know there were Mexicanos in Houston when I met this guy. His name was Martinez, he was a red-headed guy, muy güero, kind of a [], short stumpy guy, but he, and I thought he told me he was from Magnolia and I've been looking for him for years because we spent about two years in the army together then he discharged ahead of me, se arranco, and I always thought, "are there really Mexicanos in Houston?" I didn't know there were...

CR: Oh yeah.

EV: But you know in El Paso you don't know about this stuff. Anyway I've been looking for him...

CR: We can look in our book later on.

EV: So most of the people who came here right, were early settlers from Mexico?

CR: Everybody came to work here because of the ports. There was so much work at the ports that they came and settled here.

EV: Now you mentioned the other day and I had to go look it up at the, it was called the Arenal, the sand that they dredged up and they, now is that still there, I mean, is that land still, are people building on it, is it still there?

CR: No, no, no. They made it, they widened it and made it into the port.

EV: Okay.

CR: Into the Port of Houston.

EV: But it was the place where, it did exist at one time right?

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: Was it a housing area, no mas un...?

CR: No that's what, when everything was blank and the little houses were coming around. So I guess it would be like on the other side, like off of McCarty, like Port of Houston, you know the areas right there where it started, Port of Houston, Channelview, you know that area because the port goes right through those right there on the side of Magnolia and keep on going.

EV: Did you all have your own theaters out here and everything?

CR: Oh yeah, we used to have Merryway Theater on Navigation and the Boulevard Theater on Harrisburg.

EV: I take it they don't exist anymore?

CR: No and then, well of course, they used to have Mexican theaters downtown.

EV: Which were those?

CR: I can't think of the name of the, the Ritz...

EV: The Ritz.

CR: ...and the Azteca.

EV: The Azteca, that was up on Irvington no?

CR: Off down Irvington and then the Ritz was right there like where the Wortham Theater is right now in that little area...

EV: Yeah, right.

CR: ...that's where the Ritz was.

EV: And did you all, did you ever go downtown for shopping or anything like that?

CR: Oh yes, but that was the only place because there were no malls or nothing, you know.

EV: I just, I just remember some guy when I first came to Houston telling me that, he said, "We never go downtown for anything."

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine
Interview Date: July 21, 2008
CR: But when? Now?

EV: No, back in the 60's when I first got here.

CR: Because there were let's say like in the 60s maybe Harrisburg Plaza was coming up but they had like little rinky dink stores, you know, nothing...

EV: What was that, Gulfgate?

CR: Gulfgate was there but they still had like the Weingartens. They didn't have the big clothing stores. They always had small little stores, you know. Even if you go downtown today shopping at Macy's, which was Foley's then, you get the biggest sales and everything because hardly nobody shops downtown, just the people that work downtown, but then after their office hours everything shuts down.

EV: Yeah, right when I first came here I, it was very rare that I saw any Mexicanos downtown. That's what brought up my question when I asked this guy. I said, "How come I don't see any Mexicanos downtown?"

CR: We always used to go to the movies downtown and go shopping downtown.

EV: The Majestic and...

CR: The Majestic, the Lowes...

EV: Lowes. Estaban bonitos, verdad?

CR: Right next to each other, right next to each other.

EV: Were there also around here, did you have your own like clinics and dentists and all that stuff?

CR: Well, they, it's still here, the Park B Clinic. Right down on 75th and on Harrisburg and there used to be a Cuban lady doctor right there on 76th and Canal and they used to be, long time ago there used to be Dr. Hernandez, neighborhood doctor, he used to come to the house.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: Oh really, make house calls?

CR: Oh yeah, make house calls. Dr. Hernandez and then the lady Cuban doctor she was, she retired about five years ago.

EV: Really? You know her name?

CR: No. I use to go there.

EV: Did you uh, were you born at home or were you born in the hospital?

CR: I was born at the Methodist Hospital.

EV: And I guess all your children were too?

CR: Yes.

EV: Pero si habian muchas parteras?

CR: Oh yeah, there was a lot of them, yeah.

EV: Do you, I'm sure then and you probably, do you have any herbalists and curanderas and stuff around here?

CR: Oh they're still here.

EV: Yeah?

CR: Oh yeah, they're still here.

EV: Quien es la mas famosa? the longest period of time?

CR: Well there used to be this lady right there on Avenue L.

EV: The curandera?

CR: Uh-hmm, no she would do with herbs and como aliviar de empacho and you know de susto and all that. Era la señora Sepulveda.

EV: Is she still there do you think?

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

CR: I think she's still alive. Oh yeah, she's elderly, elderly. And then there was this lady that she just passed away at about 3 months ago, Benita Coronado...Corona, ella tambien, you know she would prescribe hierbitas

EV: Did ever you use them?

CR: [knocking], thank the Lord I'm a healthy person. I told my sons if I ever get sick it's going to be I die because I've always been kind of healthy. Oh yeah, but there's people, que no que [] would massage the bone out of place or torcido, you know, or this or that.

EV: Did you, you and your family ever use those?

CR: Well for empacho my mother took my sister you know or para susto, you know beliefs, people that believed in different things, you know like that.

EV: I guess there weren't these big chains stores like maybe Weingartens right, that was about the only one...

CR: The Weingartens and then it changed to Safeway, that was about the only ones that were around here.

EV: And do you, you got to, cuando ibas al centro, did you have bus service out here back then?

CR: Oh yes.

EV: You had bus services, Metro?

CR: Oh yes.

EV: Alright. Are there, what buildings around here are I mean like really, really old and have been around here for a long time?

CR: Like really been here?

EV: Yeah, I mean, if they said we're going to tear this down what would you fight...

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

CR: Okay, well like right now through that organization that historical, we still got the city hall from eighteen something right there on the 7300 block of Avenue F and we're going to put a landmark there.

EV: Where is that again?

CR: Seventy-three o' something Avenue F. Todavia esta ahi. That's where we are going to put a landmark there to announce it was the...

EV: It was what, the first city hall?

CR: Uh-hmm.

EV: Of Texas or Harrisburg?

CR: Well you know they used to call Houston Harrisburg, Texas, because this was the capitol like right all that little area and that's why the historical thing that's where we're going to put the different landmarks.

EV: Who is doing that?

CR: Magnolia Park Historical Preservation. We just came in about, like we're just selecting officers and all that because Magnolia Park is going to be a hundred years old October 2009. So we are going to have a parade, we're going to put the landmarks and like in Bellaire where they've got those little things that they put a hundred year anniversary, Magnolia Park, we're going to do all that.

EV: So these buildings that you're talking about, the first capitol, um, I mean I've never heard, I've never heard of that before. I just knew that Harrisburg, Santa Anna came through here, knocked Harrisburg out así.

CR: I'm going to go get, turn it off, let me go get that thing so I could really...Mira, here's where we go, [reading] "Growing up in Magnolia Park [double dip ice cream] located on the

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

corner of 72nd and Harrisburg, a popular place where we would walk to. Paul's bakery, first bakery started on Avenue F in a backyard, then opened to the corner of 71st and Navigation. Immaculate Heart of Mary...first church here, and then [Pete Heredia's] drug store located on Avenue L and 75th." That's where I told you we would get those cinnamon sticks at the drug store, that was our drug store. "La Casa Verde, one of the popular grocery stores started at the corner of 75th and Avenue K, then built a new building on the corner of 75th and Avenue K, owned by the [] family." Then we had the Salon Juarez across the street from the "Y", and that's still there. Popular dance, that would be like a sock hop place too. "The first gas station on 74th and Polk, operated by a sweet old lady name Ms. Partida," that's Frank Partida's mother where most everybody put gas in their cars. "And Roque bicycle shop" is still here, but it's on Navigation, "located on 74th and Canal, for many years repairing bikes, and renting bikes to ride. Now the shop is located on Navigation" next to the fire station. "The Stanaker library was named after one of the past PTA presidents. La Roche cleaners located on 75th and Avenue F," that was the only cleaners we had. We had everything here, and then Mrs. Faith at Franklin elementary, we had may [] where booths outside...children could [] by grades 6...this is very interesting. This is very interesting. "The first city hall building for Magnolia Park, city hall was located at 7917 Harrisburg Rd. by 1915. The second city hall building was located at 7617 Harrisburg Rd. by 1917. The third city hall building was located at 7401 Harrisburg Rd. by 1919. The city of Magnolia Park Fire Department had two fire stations by 1925." All this is in Magnolia Park. "Built before 1917 the central fire station was addressed at 7301 Avenue F, meanwhile fire station number two was located at 7821 Harrisburg Rd. By the start of the 1920s city administrators of Magnolia Park had decided to move the city hall facility to a city owned, more centrally located property. The fourth Magnolia Park city hall building, which also served

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

as the central fire station located at 7301 Avenue F.” That’s where we are going to put the marker.

EV: Yeah, see, where I was getting confused I forgot that Magnolia went under the name of Magnolia Park or Harrisburg was its own city.

CR: Yeah.

EV: So you’re not, we’re not talking about Houston, we’re talking about...

CR: No, this it says, “during its brief existence as a municipal in the early 1920s the city of Magnolia Park is a city in southeast Harris County went through three temporary city halls,” and all this and all that. It’s just, it’s telling us the...what do you call it, the story of it.

EV: Was it a, do you know who the, the center of Houston...

CR: Pero mira que curioso, mira “during the 1800s the towns of Houston and Harrisburg,” this is Harrisburg, “surrounded the area of Magnolia Park and Harris County. Born in 1830, John Thomas Brady arrived in Texas in 1856 and practiced law in the Houston and Harrisburg area. Brady had a vision to promote the towns of Houston and Harrisburg through the development of a railroad industry and the deepening of the nearby bayou system to serve as the inland ship channel. For these purposes Brady acquired miles of undeveloped land in southeast Harris County between the towns of Houston and Harrisburg. Under Brady and then the guidance of other prominent figures in the region the area we know as Magnolia Park was developed into an industrial section of the county during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Railroads lines the Houston Bell, Magnolia Park railway operated in this area in the 1880s. Also during this period efforts were under way to deepen and dredge an adjacent water channel which is known as the Houston Ship Channel, the first turning basin for the Houston Ship Channel was pledged in the Magnolia Park area.” That’s where all of this is. I’m trying to

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

find about the sands. Oh it tells you, "At that time population of Magnolia Park was probably under 1,500 when a decision was made by the residents to incorporate the community as a municipality by a vote ratio of 2:1, the city of Magnolia Park was incorporated on June 1913. As a municipality, Magnolia Park had a city hall administration building, a fire department, city marshals, health department, and even a weekly newspaper called the Magnolia Park Record."

EV: Wow! Who, I wonder, who kept all that stuff.

CR: Yeah, I'll let you, I'll let you take all this.

EV: Yeah, see, this one says, [reading] "the community became an independent municipality in 1909. Though whites first inhabited the town, Mexican Americans from south Texas began arriving in 1911, first settling in the area filled by sand dredged from the turning basing known as El Arenal."

CR: Oh, there it is.

EV: Yeah.

CR: The sands.

EV: On the sands. [reading] "Most of the new settlers worked as laborers, laying railroad tracks or dredging and widening Buffalo Bayou." So it was, so El Arenal was a residential area made up of sand dredge stuff from the []. Okay, now I guess the same thing happened to them that's happened to, the Manchester was put aside for the building of their highways, no?

CR: [reading] "Magnolia Park returns to boom as Houston's heritage corridor." Dice, "A local 1910 real estate brochure advertised read resident lots for five dollars cash and five dollars per month thereafter. These two hundred parcels could be found in Magnolia Park, a new town being planted along the developing Houston Ship Channel. Magnolia Park actually began in the nineteenth century. John Thomas Brady, an early prominent of deep water transportation had

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

bought land south of Buffalo Bayou with the idea of developing a railroad connection between Houston and the channel. [] to progress and became a ripe for development. The Magnolia Park land company aggressively marketed the land by touting the beauty of the area, to homeowners and the expected growth along the ship channel to investors. A streetcar would take you downtown in twenty minutes for five cents. By May 1910 the company had claimed to have sold two thousand lots. Buyers were often those who worked in the ship channel industry [] down the location conveniently. Magnolia Park became especially attractive to the large number of immigrants who fled to Houston from Mexico following the revolution in their country in 1910. The Magnolia Park barrio became the scene each year of festivities commemorating the national holidays of Mexico. The celebration of el 16 de septiembre, and Cinco de Mayo included parades, ball games, dances, and music provided by the popular orchestra tipico de Magnolia." Interesting, don't you think?

EV: Yeah, very interesting. I'm just, what I'm thinking or what I'm hearing from all this is although there were some white settlers here before, they didn't really develop Magnolia Park, did they? I mean they were, the Mexicanos were the ones who really developed it and worked it. Alright, that's the stuff you said you were going to let me copy?

CR: Yeah, you can take this

EV: Keep it or do you want me to copy it and bring it back?

CR: I don't know where I would find all of this again.

EV: I'll bring it back to you.

CR: Oh, you know what? Were you going to go with Steve Saturday?

EV: I'll take, I can take it to Steve.

CR: I'll put it in a folder. Mira, I'll give you..

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: I can go to the university tomorrow and make copies y te lo llevo el Saturday.

CR: Let's see, I just need...

EV: Or I don't mind dropping it back by here.

CR: Oh and this man wrote the canción de Magnolia Park.

EV: That's fine. Una corrida, yeah.

CR: [reading] "En la vista de los pinos, tengo casa, tengo amor, en la corazón de Houston, el primero mi señor, el barrio de Magnolia para mí que es el mejor, porque allí llegan los barcos que recorren la nación. Este barrio de Magnolia, es purito corazón, él que tomo agua se queda porque alegra el corazón.

EV: Tambien.

CR: Let me give you a folder for all of this...

EV: I've got a folder here.

CR: You have?

EV: Yeah.

CR: We started a...

EV: Let me get back to your, to your []. So tell me, tell me about your children. What do they do?

CR: Okay, my oldest son, his name is Louis Ybarra the third. He's been in the Houston Fire Department for fourteen years. He's a captain in the fire department and he works for the Port Authority as a checker and he's been with the port for, about the same time, about thirteen years and my youngest son he's an environmental scientist and he works for the state of Texas.

EV: In Austin?

CR: No, here in Houston.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: And what does he do for the environment? Do you know what he does for the environmental?

CR: Uh-hmm, he checks, he goes and he's the head of forty workers. What they do, they go check all the refineries and their air, water, see that everything is in standard or if there is different complaints about different companies with waste and everything, they go check it out, write the report, and if they're not in agreement with the laws then they give them a fine, then they go to Austin to figure what is going to be done with the company and then...

EV: What is his name?

CR: Jason Ybarra.

EV: You said Ybarra with a "y" right?

CR: With a "y", Ybarra.

EV: And uh, okay. Where did he go to school? Do you know?

CR: He went to Sam Houston University.

EV: Are there, how many, I almost hate to ask you this question, but how many old families are still here? Can you just, let me put, are there a lot of families that have been here for a long, long time? You know desde México aquí, llegaron y se quedaron, like you?

CR: Like me?

EV: I mean, still live on their parent's home and area, or maybe still live in Magnolia?

CR: There's I would say, like that lady, the lady in the corner in Lorenzana, she's Italian. Her husband died, she's a widow, but she's still here.

EV: Italiaña?

CR: Italiaña, uh-hmm and there's, well by my age and that, most of the parents have already passed away or something, and the children because of their work or have been educated in

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

different places and moved to different places because they don't want to stay in the barrio anymore.

EV: Right.

CR: You know, they move out. But they've got to come to the barrio every weekend for the sweet bread, for the barbacoa, for all that that they're used to. We still got, we got a tortilleria that just like Mexico they make the tortillas a mano, la barbacoa, la salsa...

EV: Where is that at?

CR: Right there off of Wayside and Avenue H.

EV: Wayside and Avenue H?

CR: Uh-hmm, they just opened up about a year ago and the line man, the line is just goes around the corner. You know and they got the maquina just like in Mexico que salga la tortilla and they put it in the, like a paper wrapped inside a tortilla, or whatever, oh yeah, they....

EV: Y luego, llegando a la carne [].

CR: There used to be, the first tortilleria here was La Poblana and well the parents, la pareja Torres was the one that started it, but then they passed away and their children inherited it, but they didn't know how to keep it so it just went, it went down.

EV: This was the guy that was related to los Palacios that you were talking about? Benny, Benny Palacios?

CR: Uh huh. But this ones were, he's a very nice man. Just the rotten apples, the rotten apples are there, but you know Magnolia's got, you know, like in, let's say like in the 1930s or something, nobody could come from 2nd Ward over here. From here they couldn't go over there. This section of the guys, the teenagers or whatever couldn't go to north side, but that's, 2nd Ward supposedly weren't supposed to date the girls from Magnolia. You know how it goes. Everybody

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

had to stay in their neighborhoods, in, in their neighborhoods. But, tenia muy mala fama and it's not, you see, it's real, to me it's very peaceful like I said I've been on this corner all my life and thank the Lord to this day, nothing. I mean everything is safe and that, you know, but I don't see no, no violence or nothing like that. Back then a lot of people haven't sold their properties and they've moved to different sections like Sagemont, Pearland, 290, the Woodlands. A lot of people have gone out, but they haven't sold their properties, so they leave them as rent properties.

EV: I see.

CR: And that's when all the different people come in and moved into the neighborhood and, you know, these people are not going to keep, upkeep the houses or their yards or anything.

EV: Right.

CR: So you can tell when a house is, they've got their owners living there, or where it's a rent property. Because all they care about is just to get the rent money and that's it. Like right across the street from my second house right here, used to be the only shoe shop. It was Villagomez. Henry Villagomez and everybody would go to that shoe shop, get shoes fixed, polished, and everything. So we had everything. We didn't have to go out of Magnolia to get anything.

EV: Did you ever go down to the, it was a part of downtown apparently that was called "Little Mexico"? Did you ever go over there? Do you know what I'm talking about? Just around the, just the border of the bayou where all the courthouses are now and that's where all they had doctor's and lawyer's shops set up there and seamstresses, and zapaterias and all those. You don't?

CR: That was before my time. I don't...

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: Yeah, that's where the, Felix Fraga told me and Ester Campos también, told me, that's where they used to go down there to get, you know, if you they were going to go downtown they'd go there and then Laurel, what's the name of the state representative that we had back in the sixties and seventies? Lauro Cruz.

CR: Oh, Lauro Cruz, uh-hmm.

EV: Said that that was, his father had a shop down there and they told him, you know, it's okay you're here but by sundown we want all these Mexicans out of here.

CR: You know what was going to be great but it didn't go over either. Because you know where Our Lady of Guadalupe is on Navigation?

EV: Uh-hmm.

CR: That Guadalupe Plaza?

EV: El Mercado?

CR: [Spanish]

EV: Oh they ripped them off. They had too many, I don't think it was very well planned. They had too many import/export shops in there, you know macetas? They all had the same macetas all the same stuff...

CR: That would have been beautiful, like the Mercado in San Antonio.

EV: Yeah, yeah, but they didn't have different, different types of merchandise. These guys, you know Macario Ramirez was there, Yolanda was there, two other people I knew were down there, but they all had the same stuff and it just didn't, there was a plan the University of Houston, at one point, developed for us in the late sixties and early seventies, a beautiful mercado that we put out here in Harrisburg, I mean off of Harrisburg someplace, but we could never find the money for it. Nobody really [] all that interested back then, but then right

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

after that, that thing was built. But there was a big lawsuit involved with that. They had to sue the guy and then he was going to do this...

CR: I mean I went over there but it was almost empty.

EV: Yeah, and it was a shame because that was, you're right, it was a great idea, but...

CR: You know, they could have had music every weekend, just like if you go to a Mercado.

EV: Yeah, yeah, well didn't, isn't there some guy in Harrisburg that re-developed and painted it?

CR: Oh yeah, that man. That's, he's Colombian. He's the one, the owner of Marbella Reception hall.

EV: Marivella?

CR: M-a-r-b-e-l-l-a. It's right there on the Sixty-sixth something Harrisburg. He's got the, oh it's beautiful there. He even bought a, he even built a mission like a church, so people can get married there and then they could just walk to the reception...

EV: Was somebody, someone on a TV covered it as a show, you know one of the little glimpse about Houston. But this guy was, got in there and was an architect.

CR: Uh-hmmm, an architect.

EV: And then painted different things, fixed up the building to make it look like, is that in the same rinconcinto or is that one down?

CR: That, he's got another place. He's got that place on Lockwood and Leeland.

EV: No te recuerdas el nombre?

CR: El nombre del señor? O el mercadito ese?

EV: Del señor, el dueño.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

CR: And he's got that like a little mall, a little Hispanic mall. It's right on the corner. It's right across the street from the fire station.

EV: Okay, and did you, you were telling me something about, see this is why I didn't want to, now I can't remember, you were telling me about the...

CR: Even en el St. Cecilia, St. Cecilia day. It's so pretty because the priests serve the church.

Hace una misa para todos los músicos. And you see all the mariachis.

EV: Oh really?

CR: Going down the street.

EV: When is that? What day?

CR: I don't know what day St. Cecilia is.

EV: El dia del santo?

CR: Ah huh. Santa Cecilia, hacen la misa para los músicos and that's when all the mariachi groups, they walk like from Harrisburg all the way down Seventy-sixth to the church and then they go inside the church and the priest says the mass and blessing, todos los mariachis, different groups come. Those are pretty.

EV: Yeah that would be a neat thing, no one ever covers that. You don't see that on the news or anything.

CR: St. Cecilia and that's for the musicians and that's when they celebrate. They make them a mass and all that. But you see a long time ago like the Ninfa's restaurant but you see Ninfa's she already passed away and I think they already franchised. My neighbor was telling me that about eight months ago that they sold this one on Harrisburg. That was the number one. That was it.

EV: The one on Navigation?

CR: Uh-hmm.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: Yeah.

CR: Ya lo vendieron a somebody they gave out the name of who they had sold it to. But they already re-done all the parking. They did the parking, made an outdoor patio, you know. Because she only left a son and a daughter and I think the son went somewhere on Westheimer and opened a business, or a restaurant over there.

EV: Well, what was his name? Lorenzo?

CR: Lorenzo.

EV: Lorenzo, yeah and his sister married one of the Mendiola brothers or something, right?

And ...

CR: Do you know the Carrabba family?

EV: Johnny?

CR: That Carrabba's restaurant?

EV: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CR: They used to have their little store right here on Seventy-fourth and Canal. Rosie Carrabba and Johnny Carrabba. We all grew up, pues no que habia muchos Italianos aquí.

EV: But they didn't want to stick around or they just got...

CR: No, Rosie, she had a daughter and a son Johnny Jr. [] and the other Carrabbas were right there on Seventy-third and Navigation. So mostly the stores eran los Carrabbas. No Rosie I guess they just, their parents passed away and they got older and she got married and they just moved out.

EV: Johnny is the one that comes out in the adds, or was he, his uncle and they...

CR: That, that, that, Johnny, that's his son.

EV: Are you talking about his father?

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

CR: His father, big Johnny. He's the one that Rosie and Johnny ran the store here. Todos los Mexicanos, then they lived right there on the other side of Harrisburg. Allí vivían muchos Italianos, todo allí están todo los brick houses and everything there, but then they moved.

EV: El grande, el gordo.

CR: El tío

EV: Yeah, el tío.

CR: They all lived here. They all, they all lived here. They all lived in...

EV: Are you inviting them down for the celebration?

CR: No, you know, now that I'm thinking about it, yeah, I need to, I need to write it down so we can...

EV: I think that would be nice, no? Were there any other famous people like any stars or any that came out in here? Hollywood stars, any well known athletes? No one? Or restaurateurs or politicos we know, that was a short time ago, right?

CR: Yeah.

EV: And we didn't really start getting politicians out of any Mexican barrios 'til the sixties.

CR: And they've all screwed up.

EV: Huh?

CR: They've all screwed, you know, they all do. They've all...

EV: Yeah, I know.

CR: Like Ben Reyes, he was great. He was from Denver Harbor. The people really loved him and all that. I mean, I told him, "I need a light Ben. It's too dark in the park." Right away vino el city y pusieron una luz allí and then that house that was next to my property, it was abandoned, I said, "Ooh, there's roaches." "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of everything." 'bout two,

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

three weeks, tumbaron la casa. Él hacía mucha por la gente, right? You can talk to elderly people, he did a lot. But you tell me, what he got, well they caught him with the cookie in the pot or whatever, whatever, was that Hilton they were gonna build. He was getting little money on the side.

EV: Yeah, and I...

CR: But anyway, they still built it.

EV: Yeah, well, of course they did.

CR: Pero a los otros no los pescan.

EV: No, no, not at all. I guess what I'm trying, you know, the very first...

CR: Well I got a popular one in my family that became famous.

EV: Who's that?

CR: Sammy Peña. He...

EV: Sammy who?

CR: Peña. He was the director and producer of Hollywood pictures. He's the one that made *A Million to Juan* with Paul Rodriguez, that movie. He directed it and all that.

EV: He's your what?

CR: He's my nephew.

EV: Really?

CR: He's a graduate of UH, I mean not UH, University of Texas, but now he lives in Costa Rica.

EV: Wow.

CR: And what he does over there is investments, you know like there's a lot of people that buy the land. You don't pay taxes or income tax or nothing.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: I know. They have a wonderful system of government.

CR: And vienen muchos Franceses, people from Europe and they're buying land and they're doing resorts, they're building up that place. So that's where he's at right now. But I can't think of anybody.

EV: Lillian Mendoza, what barrio was she from? Wasn't she from the Heights or something or was she from...

CR: I don't remember. That was the lady that sang with her guitar. I don't know exactly where.

EV: Wasn't there a boxer kid from the Olympics that was over here? He was from Denver Harbor, I take it back. Este, it wasn't Camacho.

CR: No, Hector Camacho, no. It wasn't Diaz?

EV: What is his name? He won the golden gloves and, he won the golden gloves I think and he won the Olympics one or two Olympics ago. No, but I thought he was from out here. I know he is a Houston guy and I [Spanish].

CR: Was that it the one from Nothside?

EV: You know, it may have been. No me acuerdo. I really don't remember.[end of side A]

EV: There's some fancy, shmancy stuff like that, yeah. But I thought that there might have been, ay un grupo de mariachis I think around here que es una familia, who were all family.

CR: Oh, the little kids. There was one that I, what was their name? Los Gallitos. There was the father, the mother, the sister, and the brother. Ooh, that's been a long time. That's got to be...

EV: I was going to ask you about it []. There is a singer that I was going to ask you about his name was, before I came to talk to you I researched some stuff on...

CR: Girl singer or guy singer?

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: Era una familia de músicos that became famous, at least, around here anyway. Golly, what did I do with that note? And that's the way it goes. I thought I wrote it down in here. They used to be, they got to be very popular. They started here as a mariachi group. Pero lo que te iba a decir, el primer pianista, the first classical pianist in the Houston Symphony era Mexicano.

CR: Oh really?

EV: Chicano, I'm talking about, third ward used to have a Mexican barrio. Llegaron, they came from, yeah, they came from San Antonio, el papá llegó de San Antonio porque había mas chamba, more work and mas anima and, so he came for the work and then I wrote it down and I'll, I'll send it to you because it's really a neat, a neat article. But it's a, it covers how he got his first piano, how his father used to take him to downtown to play the guitar with him. Y luego they got to the, somehow he told his father, he made his father know that he really liked the piano and so el papá found him a piano from some camarada somewhere and that's another beautiful story. Dice el Judío couldn't sell the piano dijo "mira llevense el piano," a real good piano and didn't charge them. He said, "If you can take that piano," you know he was kind of faking it. So he took it and his son learned how to play the piano, and he took some lessons and he became the concert pianist.

CR: Is he still alive?

EV: No, his name was este Patricio Guerrero, I think.

CR: Guerrero?

EV: Guerrero or Gutierrez.

CR: No, I can't think of him. Well I know that Milby, at one time, and he belongs to American Legion, his name is [] de la []. They went to state, a lot of the guys here from the

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine**Interview Date: July 21, 2008**

neighborhood. That was a big thing back in those times. Everybody was driving those buses to go to Austin to play the playoffs.

EV: To play the what?

CR: To play the playoffs for the state.

EV: Oh really?

CR: In basketball.

EV: Oh, for Milby.

CR: The old neighborhood got on buses and went over there to follow them.

EV: So there is a lot of appreciate, not appreciation, but a lot of anticipation on the part of Magnolia for the celebration? So what are they planning so far?

CR: Okay, what we're going to do, right now we're electing the officers and all the, and everybody wants to, that this man is smart and I'm very outspoken but there's this other ones that como Frank Partida, he's got this other guy that works for Anheiser Busch and he promised us he was going to get the Clydesdales to come out and be in the parade and all this. That's fine. The different neighborhood dances that we're going to do, you know, the music of our time. To bring in the people, five dollars a couple and things like that just to start raising funds and barbecue and things like that. But what we're going to do, we're going to get the three landmarks for the first city halls and then first this park and we call it the parque Mexicano, the Hidalgo park. Those are the parks that have been here since we were kids. So we're going to put the landmarks there, and then the church over there on Harrisburg, Immaculate Conception in 2010 they're celebrating their hundredth anniversary. But what we're going to have, we're going to have a parade and then the, we're going to have a parade all through Magnolia. They're going to outline

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

the route and then have, you know, a lot of food and live music, and just a big old celebration for it to be the hundredth...

EV: Is it going to be like over several days or?

CR: That's how we're trying to do it. We're trying to do it, everybody could enjoy like a Saturday and then....

EV: Are you going to have a parade marshal and all that?

CR: Yeah, they're going to have to elect a parade marshal, I hope it would be like somebody here that was important here from the neighborhood that became something. Like you know Eddie Coral, the fire chief. He was, he lived right next, he was born right here on Avenue J.

EV: Why not somebody just been here a long time who's always been there? Just a nice person.

CR: Huh?

EV: How about somebody who has lived here for a long time and is just a nice person?

CR: Pues también que sí.

EV: Yeah, you know, the type that's always getting all the credit and they just do half the work.

CR: And you know back when my mother was alive they used to have a club named Magnolia's Mothers and it was all the mothers in the neighborhood that belonged to this club that had their [phone ringing] I got to get this. And they would just, all the news of the neighborhood what was going on, todas las comadres. They would have their, their meetings, they'd have their parities, you know, their little Mother's Day dance or Halloween parties and you see and that's what these younger generations are supposed to do. They want to bring everything back into the neighborhood...

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine**Interview Date: July 21, 2008**

EV: Really?

CR: Teaching the kids, getting the baseball teams, soccer teams, volleyball teams, get the kids active in the neighborhood and all that.

EV: Well was your family ever part of these self-help groups that were part of, that were in Magnolia at the time. You know they had una Sociedad. I think...

CR: They had Sociedad Benito Juarez.

EV: Cultural Recreativo Mexico Bello.

CR: Oh yes.

EV: Escuela Mexicana Hidalgo, Club Femenino Chapultepec. Was your mom involved in all that stuff? Si? Were you?

CR: Those were gone, you know there were...

EV: Or how about Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza, that was in 1978, 1971. No, no suene? [reading] "The local population increased in the early '40s by the 1960s the middle class had expanded under the program of Lyndon Johnson. [] local residents remain poor. Papel Chicano was a chicano movement newspaper with office in Magnolia Park reported on area activism in seventy, seventy-one, women of the Magnolia Park YWCA, la Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza in 1978 after 20% of the local residents lived below the poverty guidelines."

CR: That's when I decided, let me tell you something, I worked, and I worked, and I worked, and I only had two sons, so I sent them to Catholic school, Queen of Peace private. So when they got out of there, out of the eighth grade, I mean, I wanted them to be educated. That was something that couldn't be taken away from them. So then the closest Catholic high school was St. Thomas. From here, you drive all the way over there, so I checked all around and my oldest son went to Lutheran high school but that was a good high school.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: Which one was that? Which one was it?

CR: On 610, on I-45 and Woodridge. Ahi estaba, but it's not there no more. Now they moved it out toward Clear Lake, and then the little one went to Broadway Baptist, but I checked all these schools around here. When the little one was barely getting in the ninth grade, he already knew calculus. That's the one that's a scientist and he went to college for five years. But I, that's one thing I said I'm going to work to get them educated, now forget it. The other one built him a three hundred and fifty thousand dollar home pa' allá por Dixie Pond road and Clear Lake. And they're doing fine. I mean, I said, "Mom gave you the brains and the knowledge. Now y'all know what y'all can do with it. I mean that's the thing. I mean that's one thing I could give them that nobody could take away from them.

EV: Okay, is there anything else that you want to include in this thing that I haven't asked about? Anything that you want people to remember about Magnolia? If you had talked to people, fifty years from now you came back as a spirit what would you tell these young people about Magnolia?

CR: You know, but you know, you know what, you know what? I wish, all as the people started growing up in age and getting married, I wish they would stay because they're going to bigger neighborhoods, nice neighborhoods and everything. They could have rebuilt this part, like Heights. I mean it could have been beautiful. You know, instead of them moving away, you know?

EV: Yeah.

CR: They could have stayed in their, in our little section and there, but there is some people but it's la gente Mexicana. Some big old houses are coming up and things like that, but I wish they would have stayed and rebuild, start building up the neighborhood. So that's what we're

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

trying to do with this organization. It's a lot of young people that bought their grandparents' house and things that they've passed away, now they're moving back.

EV: Yeah, it's kind of, it's kind of, you know Sunny Flores, right? Sunny could live in River Oaks if he wanted to. If he came and lived, I'm not sure if he lives in Magnolia, but he lives on the east side, and he's very politically conservative. Back in the sixties and seventies he and I had a lot of, well, we were always friends, just political opposites because he's a Barry Goldwater type and, you know, I've always been Democratic, but he chose to move out here.

CR: But you know I think with this new thing that they're building like the Toyota Center, Minute Maid Park, and I could see it like my son says, "Mom, on the 58th hundred block of Navigation, Barry Holmes bought all that property, we went to check all the soil to give an OK." And they bought all the land, condos y todo, man in three or four months ya estan todo los condos right there and they all just right where you get into Magnolia. And I'm sure all of that will continue because at one time they were going to make Harrisburg going out one way and Canal one way coming in. That was going to connect League City, La Marque, Pasadena, South Houston, everybody direct to the ballparks, soccer parks and all that.

EV: Well what about the Metro rail lines?

CR: Well, the rail lines coming from downtown, but it's going to stop right there on about 70th.

EV: Really?

CR: It's just going to be right there on 70th where the transit, where all the buses meet. It's just going to come to right there. But then from right there it's going to connect Gulfgate Mall and from Gulfgate Mall, that's the plans for the future. It's going to connect to Hobby Airport. So then if anybody wants, you know, they want to catch a railway to Hobby Airport...

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: Is there, is there a Magnolia Chamber of Commerce, Magnolia Park Chamber of Commerce?

CR: There is a Mexican.

EV: For just here or todo el pueblo.

CR: For all the town. But I'm sure in the future something will be made.

EV: Where do you go to church?

CR: I go to St. Augustine because my grandkids go to school, to church there. They go to school there and I was married, baptized, and confirmed and everything right here in Immaculate Heart of Mary. But when I don't make it over here I go to []. I got my membership here. But a lot of times the kids got different functions at church, so...

EV: You don't have to stand in the back anymore, no? You know they used to do that?

CR: The same thing like in the [].

EV: I'm just...

CR: Como te digo, they won't let you drink out of the same water fountains and now fijate, ahora a black President, Obama running. One man said, these rednecks back in Arkansas, die hard Democrats all their lives. They're saying, "Well what do you think about this new candidate?" And one of them said, "Yeah, he says he wants change. That's his motto, change.

The only thing I seen a black person change is with a cups asking for change."

EV: Hijo, que gacho.

CR: That's the only change he's ever seen.

EV: So you, but you never had, you never experienced any discrimination out here yourself?

CR: No, not ['til] I went to that school or whatever. At the Boulevard Theater there were Anglos and we use to hang around with their kids, go to their house to play and, I mean, we

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

never did. But then different people told me as we were growing older that, "Oh the Reyna girls, we couldn't speak to the Reyna girls because they were high []." But it was, it wasn't that way, you know. It's just that they would see us, we went to dancing school, we went to modeling school. I mean they always had us in different, my parents had us in different, what kids in the neighborhood wouldn't do.

EV: Well that had, you know like I know Magnolia had, I mean, 2nd Ward they had parks that Mexican kids couldn't go into and you know that esplanade in the middle of Navigation there?

CR: Uh-huh.

EV: That was part of their ball park. That's where they played football, baseball, and everything. Te imaginas?

CR: But then they had the Rusk Settlement, now that's the real question.

EV: Did they have the what?

CR: The Rusk Settlement.

EV: The Rusk Settlement, but yeah, but that was...

CR: Felix was involved with that at that time.

EV: Yeah, yeah, but still it, it, one of the guys that helped promote that was the first Mexicano who was admitted at Rice University and he, and when they found out his plight he couldn't eat at any of the restaurants around Rice. So he heard about Felix's and Felix gave him a job as a busero or something there and he would eat there and that was Felix's contribution to this guy's education. Then they got him a room at Settlement House and he'd teach the kids basketball and all that stuff. He had a real funny name like Calixtro or something strange name like that. But then he really moved up. He got a good education and all that and he didn't have it easy. He didn't have it easy at all. He couldn't get in the dorm, he couldn't stay at Rice. He had to find

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

another housing somewhere. He was on a basketball scholarship, but he still couldn't get, you know room or board or anything.

CR: These people are the opposite. Why would they think they could, they could never put the rules...

EV: Who, los bolillos? They had the numbers. They had the cash, the money, they ruled everything politically.

CR: But now it's, now it's turning around.

EV: That's right.

CR: No, no más Mexicanos, Hondureños, Salvadoreños.

EV: Well I mean like we have a Chinese and an Indian on the city council. When did you ever think that was going to happen? So times are changing, but, and, and it's for the better I think. But I just remember, I remember when I came here how surprised I was that there was still so much, that kind of discrimination hanging around.

CR: Well, too los Mexicanos son muy envidiosos too because they can't see one climbing up the ladder, you know they can't see it.

EV: Right. You know there's just this old story my grandmother used to tell me que había un contest y the bolillos had their champ who was going to climb this grease pole and the Mexicanos had their champion that was going climb the grease pole. Have you heard this story?

CR: Na- uh.

EV: So the note up top was like five thousand dollars. So it started that, you know, ahi va el Mexicano y el Gringo and they were fighting for the thing and the gringos say, "Come on George. You can do it." Y la raza is over there, estaban diciendo, "Te vas a caer pendejo."

CR: Oh my God.

Interviewee: Reyna, Christine

Interview Date: July 21, 2008

EV: And that's true like I think you were talking about that crab thing.

CR: Yeah.

EV: And it still goes on.

CR: But you see, look at there, and this man se llama Caudillo and they own a lot of the Caudillo pharmacies. The Mexicanos started giving []. I think they got one or two left. This man, I went to this little store right there on the corner, they call it la Fiestita and I never go there, but I had gone to deliver a spray to a funeral home then I came back. I said, "I'm going to get me a Dr. Pepper." I love Dr. Pepper. So I walked in. He tried to pull a fast one on me on a Sunday. "What you doing Reyna, working?" And I said, "Oh yeah I had some funeral work" like yesterday I had some funeral work, Henry Martinez []. "What are you doing, working on Sunday?" And he said it real loud, so you know everybody at the store right away. "Well, didn't your mother leave you a millionaire?" I don't know if he was making fun or giving me a []. "Didn't your mom? I thought your mom left you a lot of money, she made you a millionaire." And I said, "Let me correct you. She did not leave me a millionaire. She left me a billionaire and that's a lot of difference between those two." Y se quedó.

EV: Y ahora? I still have the house my grandfather built, cuando llegaron de Mexico de la Revolución, that's still in the family. We've lost two of them, but we have put two others up. We saved one and had to sell two and one of them a, another further down de la arroyo, see we had, my grandfather built, OK, ya acabamos aquí. [End of interview].