

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Porfirio Navarro
Mexican American History

Interviewed by: Ernesto Valdés
Date: July 29, 2008
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location: 10 Fairmeade, The Woodlands, Texas

EV: This is Ernesto Valdés I'm with Mr. Porfirio Navarro...

PN: Also known as "Pete."

EV: Yeah also known as Pete. First name is spelled P-O-R-F-I-R-I-O were are at 10 Fairmeade Bend Drive, The Woodlands, Texas. It is July 29, 2008. Okay ready *señor*?

PN: I am whatever you are.

EV: Let me have your full name, if you could just give your full name so we can have it in the record?

PN: Porfirio Gutierrez Navarro, also known as Pete.

EV: Okay. Where were you born?

PN: In Houston, Texas.

EV: When was that?

PN: September 15, 1920.

EV: Were you born at home or in the hospital?

PN: Born at home. As a matter of fact the house was right on the south side of that tunnel that goes through North Main.

EV: Oh the North Side?

PN: The North Side.

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EV: Really?

PN: Call me the North Side kid!

EV: North Side kid! (laughter) Is that just down from the old M & M building?

PN: Yeah you come down that road until you go into that underpass, on the other side there in a corner used to be a two-story home. I used to see it and my mother would tell me, "You were born in this house here." Eventually they tore it down because it was pretty old.

EV: You know that's of the University of Houston Downtown now, the M & M building is.

PN: Oh is that right?

EV: Yes it is the downtown branch of the University of Houston.

PN: Oh yeah I know that now. But you know my dad used to work at the Fredericks Produce Company right behind the M & M building.

EV: What was the name of the company?

PN: It was named the Fredericks Produce...

EV: Oh Fredericks Produce?

PN: Yeah.

EV: Well that's what the old *mercado* [market place] was around there wasn't it?

PN: Who?

EV: The old city market?

PN: No that cannot be any old city market that I know of.

EV: Right across the...where the old M & M building, North Main comes down right you have the Bayou there...

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PN: Yeah and then you go down underneath.

EV: Yeah.

PN: Next to the Railroad Station?

EV: Yeah.

PN: Well nothing was ever there except that empty buildings and the place where my daddy worked.

EV: Did you go to... were your parents from Houston?

PN: My mother was born in Piedras Negras and my dad was born in Michoacán but my mother was born there because her father was from Saltillo and he and his dad used to have a merchandising... I think that they brought merchandise or goods from Mexico to Texas. They ran along the river there from Piedras Negras all the way to Laredo to sell their merchandise. Along the way it happened that he and his father on this wagon, at the time they traveled in wagons, and he saw this young girl that lived there and it was in Del Rio and it happened to be my mother's father that lived there because she was from Nacogdoches, Texas, so she was a Texan. He fell in love with her, married her here in the United States and took her to Mexico. But my grandmother didn't like Mexico so she said, "I want to go back to Texas." But during that period that she was in Mexico my mother was born.

EV: Oh I see.

PN: See? My mother could have been born in Del Rio. So that is how it happened that my mother was born in Mexico and she doesn't really know anything about Mexico because she lived most of her life in Texas.

EV: Was she raised in Piedras Negras?

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PN: My mother was living in Mexico until about eight or nine. Then they came back to Texas because my mother says my grandmother didn't like living in Mexico. So they moved back to the United States and they were trying to farm I guess. Her dad was a police chief in Piedras Negras but he left his job just because she, his wife wanted to come back. He didn't really know that much about farming but he figured if he had relatives here of his wife's that knew farming then he could probably farm too. But he didn't last too long. He died, probably from... I don't know. They said it was a stomach ache but I think in those days you can get something that could be cured today but they couldn't cure it then, you know what I mean?

EV: Yeah. Did your mother go to?

PN: My mother never went to school in Piedras Negras, she only went to school here in the United States.

EV: Okay where did she go to school? Where was she raised, what city in the United States?

PN: She was raised mostly in San Antonio.

EV: Okay.

PN: She might have had some schooling in [] because after all by the age of nine I guess you have to be in school.

EV: Yeah. Did she meet your father in San Antonio?

PN: Yeah she met my daddy in San Antonio. My mother was married before and... but her husband died within a year from pneumonia and she went back to live with her folks, he worked for the railroad. But then of course being attached to the railroad my

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dad heard about this young widow who lived in San Antonio and so he went out there to meet her. That's how they got to know each other.

EV: Do you have only older brothers and sisters?

PN: Yeah, I think there's about six in the family. I think brothers, let me see... I have... I can't even count my brothers but I think I have three brothers and three sisters.

EV: Can you rattle off their names for me? I know you have one Gabriel right?

PN: Gabriel, Jr. and then Virginia they are the ones that live in the house.

EV: Right.

PN: Then there's Raúl and Rodolfo and then my sister is Evageline and Mary. Let me see I'm missing one somewhere. I have a half sister name of Asunción, called "Chola," but she was born in Mexico. Because, the reason she is a half sister is because after the Revolution, the Mexican Revolution, my dad was a captain in the Federal Calvary. After the revolution he went back home, married the girl—his girl before he left—and they had a child but she died in childbirth.

EV: Oh really?

PN: So at that point he left the family, left my half sister in charge of her granddad, her grandfather and left home.

EV: Where did you go to school?

PN: I started going to school when I was living with an uncle and an aunt in Alief, Texas.

EV: How did you come, wind up living in Alief?

PN: Well my uncle and my aunt, he was named Julio and her name was Victoria, they had five kids between them. I think it was a marriage of convenience because at that time

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my aunt Victoria had lost her husband and Julio had lost his wife and he had three girls and my aunt had two girls. So between them they had five girls.

EV: A basketball team.

PN: Yeah, and so I understand my aunt, she always wanted a boy but she never had one. So when I was born she wanted my mother to give me to her she wanted to adopt me. And I understand that she used to come to Houston on the railroad, close to... you know in Alief there is a railroad track, and she would take the train to Houston and take me back to the farm. To me living in the country was the most memorable time in my life as I can remember. It was a neat place to play and have a good time. Besides that it is always better in the country than it is in the city. I practically grew up there....my younger years. So when it came time for me to go to school, they sent me to school over there at Alief School which was an old Civil War-type building. You know, brick building, the way they built them in 1860s. Anyway it was an old building it's not there now. I think it was so old it was torn down and a new building's put up. But anyway... that's where I first went to school in Alief, Texas and the girls, of course, went to school there too. There was Carmen and Petra and Luz and Teresa and Pauline... Oh man I forget all the girls but they used to go to school, and I used to go to school with them, see? I remember even playing hookey when we were out there (laughter). Oh yeah when we moved to Houston, to Magnolia [Park] first I went to school in church we called it...

EV: Parochial school?

PN: Parochial school.

EV: Which one was that?

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PN: I forget the name of the school but I think it's called Sagrado Corazón de María or something like that. But anyway it is still there. Whenever you came, in 74 and 76... Avenue K and 76th Street.

EV: I know the one.

PN: Okay well that was a church there, it was not facing 76th Street it was facing Avenue K at the time then they build the church to face 76th. But there was a two story building there and the lower portion was the church and the top part was for the school. That is where I started going to school there. After a time well we... I guess my mother decided to put me in public schools and I started going to De Zavala.

EV: How old were you when you started at De Zavala or what grade did you start, do you remember?

PN: I was about nine years old because I remember that was the year that we moved to Magnolia I was nine years old so that would be elementary school.

EV: Did you go to junior high was it at Everson?

PN: No we... although we lived there in Magnolia for several years for some reason or another we ended up moving back to closer to downtown. I think it was because my daddy worked downtown. So we lived on Engelke, out there.

EV: Oh Engelke.

PN: That's along...

EV: Right, Second Ward just behind...

PN: Parallel with Navigation.

EV: Right.

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PN: Yeah we lived there for a long while. When we lived there of course we went to Rusk school. But I do remember that I used to go to school previous to that. That is where we used to live where they call Colonia Lexington. They called it Colonia because it was a lot of Latin people, Hispanics living there. It might have been mostly Mexicans I guess. But they used to call it Colonia. But we had a house there that they built. When we lived there I guess I must have been, well I had to be under nine years old because from there we moved to Magnolia. But we used to go from the Lexington subdivision there across the tracks and walked about... I don't know maybe two, three miles all the way to [Anson] Jones school.

EV: Oh my goodness.

PN: And Jones school as you know is almost in town. I think it faces the Minute Maid Park, out where the Astros are on this side of the freeway. We used to go to that school me and my sister Evangeline. I remember that we even took my little brother Gabriel just because he wanted to go to school too but he wasn't of age yet. So one day we took him to school with us. (laughter) He just had a lot of fun.

EV: How long did you get away with that?

PN: I don't remember but I do remember we took him with us.

EV: How did your parents... why did your parents move from South Texas to Houston was it for employment?

PN: From South Texas...oh you mean from San Antonio?

EV: Oh yeah it was San Antonio.

PN: Well I think there was a reason. After my dad and my mother got married my mother had an uncle who was the mayor of a little town in... Sacramento was the name

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of the town in Coahuila. When we were there in San Antonio and my dad was working for the railroad her uncle said, "You know I like the way your dad is educated, he's got a good handwriting." He said, "I need someone like him in my, in this town so that he can take care of secretarial work." So he made him the Secretary Treasurer of the town and my dad when to work in Sacramento, him and my mother and that's where my sister was born Evangeline. Evangeline was born in Sacramento. She was the only one that was born in Mexico. But then my dad got involved with the politicians over there, the political squabble, and he decided to leave Mexico.

EV: Good choice.

PN: They came back to the United States. I remember he was telling me, my daddy kept diaries and he was telling me that they went to Piedras Negras and they spent several days there waiting for them to okay their legal papers so they could come to the United States and he would become a citizen of this country. Because I think my dad didn't like Mexico either. He had enough of it since he was in the Revolution.

EV: Yeah those were hard times.

PN: Yeah they had him fighting against Pancho Villa up there near Presidio—across from Presidio, Texas I forgot the name of the town there but...

EV: Tolima? Was it Tolima?

PN: No.

EV: Ojinaga?

PN: Ojinaga, okay. He described the town to me. He said it was nothing but drugs there. He says in a way he owed his life to Pancho Villa although he called him a bandit. He used to say Pancho Villa was a hero in Mexico. He said, "He was a bandit as far as

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we were concerned we were looking for a bandit.” (doorbell) The little dog I know who it is. It’s my daughter, the one in the picture. Anyway...

Daughter: I’m not the baby I’m the oldest.

PN: No she’s the oldest.

EV: Oh really?

PN: The baby, Mark, he lives in Galveston. He’s the art director of their... University of Texas Medical Branch...

EV: Oh really? So the artistic genes went on?

PN: Yeah that’s right.

EV: Very good.

PN: We all take the artistic quality. So he went to the University of Houston and he graduated. He got his masters degree there.

EV: So when your father left Mexico across the border and what brought him to Houston.

PN: Alright, it’s a long story then because when he came back he started working for a... he used to call it “La Montada;” it means that it was place where the army had horses. My daddy used to be a Calvary officer so he knew about horses. So they had a place where the... the American army kept the horses. They used to call it La Montada. They put him to work there I don’t know why. But anyway that’s where he worked, for the government really. So later on he decided he needed to make more money I suppose so he got a job with the railroad. That’s the job he had when he married my mother because he got back to the railroad and they sent him to Palestine, Texas I think it was or in that area. He said in those days if you had a family... he had a family.

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EV: Excuse me...

Interruption.

EV: Okay we're back. So we were talking about...your father was in La Montada.

PN: I don't know what they call it but anyway I asked my uncle who used to work there too and he said, "That's where they used to have the horses, you know." He called them army horses. Well I don't know much about that. But anyway he decided to go and work for the railroad. He told me his job was the job of measuring the rails, you know what I mean, to be sure the rails were the right distance...

EV: Width?

PN: Yeah. But like I was telling you, they used to have a... the trains used to travel with the crews that worked the railroad. They went way out in the desert someplace... just anyplace that worked the railroad because they weren't putting in rails they were just repairing areas where the rails had probably gotten wobbly or something. But I remember he said that they used to remove the old rails and put new ones in. So they traveled distances to wherever they were going. He said that they used to stay in cars that you could live in with your family if you had a family. See so he and my mother traveled together in one car that was strictly their home and she did the cooking and things like that in it. One funny thing about it was they told me that one day his brother, he had a younger brother that came from Mexico and he was looking for a job too so he decided that your brother was living in a... on a rail car he would try to move in and live with him. He didn't last too long. My dad took him and threw him out. He said, "I don't want you to come," because he and his brother just didn't get along. So I was asking my uncle one time I said, "Is it true that daddy just threw you out of the car?" He said,

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“Yeah and I had some pair of pants that I was washing while it happened and he threw them back at me and they wrapped around my face!” My daddy was pretty rough. But anyway that’s just funny a little side stories that you get when you get in confrontation with a family or family members. But this uncle of mine eventually joined the merchant marines and became a seaman.

EV: Oh really? So how did your father get from there to Houston?

PN: Oh that’s the point that you wanted to get to! Alright here is how it happened. I think that they were having some kind of a celebration among the people that worked for the railroad at that particular point way out there in Palestine, Texas somewhere. They had all kinds of good things to eat. I think they were celebrating the 4th of July or something. I think my sister Evangeline ate the wrong thing because she started to get sick. My dad says, “Well here at the railroad is no place for you to be with a sick child so I’m going to send you to the nearest city and go and see a doctor.” So they put her in one of the passenger cars that came to Houston... then with the rail you could go anywhere you wanted to. So he says, “Go to Houston because I have a brother that lives there.”

His brother was living in Houston, his name was Pancho, Pancho Navarro. And he says, “Go to my brother Pancho’s and stay with him and in the meantime go up and see a doctor.” So that’s what my mother did. My mother gave me a good account of how she first came to Houston and she didn’t know what to do, you know, being a country girl herself. Anyway she said she got to Houston and “I didn’t know where to find Pancho.” So she says I remember that she saw a taxi and she went up and asked the guy, who was a black guy, if he knew where she could find this particular place... I forgot the name of it, but it is right there by the bridge that crosses Main Street. That side used to be a ...I

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don't know homes, I don't know what you would call it. But anyway the guy says I know where it is. So he took her down there and he said it wasn't long before they saw me come in there, because it seems like everybody is craning out to see who comes into that area, and it was her... she was Pancho's wife who saw her and recognized her. She said, "Maria come over here." Eventually my dad had called and said she was coming. So she took the baby to the doctor. They were there with her in-laws for a while. Then when my daddy had some free time, well he decided to go out and see his wife and child in Houston. He had never been to Houston before. But he came over to Houston and once he was here, he realized that his brother had worked here several years already and he said, "Why don't you just stay in town and work at the place where I work?" I think he used to work for Swift and Company.

EV: Which company?

PN: Swift...

EV: Swift... Packing? The meat packing company?

PN: Yeah. So my dad decided well, since I'm here and my mother liked it in town, he said, "We'll stay here."

EV: That's how he wound up in Houston.

PN: He got a job, I even have a picture of him sitting down by the truck in front of... on the running board of a truck because they put him in a truck driver.

EV: Well I think I have... [picking through photos PN had on the table] there is a picture in the archives of the library of I guess it's your grandfather on a horse in the Mexican Army.

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PN: No that would probably be my mother's dad who was a... recently he was in the Rurales, she says it's what the Mexican Rangers, and then he became a policeman, eventually became the chief of police.

EV: Yeah, that was your grandfather right?

PN: He would have been my grandfather.

EV: Yeah okay.

PN: The picture I have of my dad, he is sitting on the running board of a truck that says Swift and Company.

EV: Oh I get it.

PN: That's how he went to Houston. The following year I was born. Because he came here in the early part of 1919 and I was born in 1920.

EV: Did you all speak Spanish in the home, in your house?

PN: We spoke...Tex-Mex

EV: Spanglish?

PN: Because my mother and dad spoke more Spanish than English but both of them talked English. If you talked to them in English they would answer you in English but they prefer Spanish but the rest of us only learned Spanish just long enough...to talk to our parents but that's about it. We can carry a conversation for one thing.

EV: But your father wrote you in Spanish didn't he?

PN: Oh, he wrote in Spanish.

EV: And you could read Spanish?

PN: Yeah I can read Spanish, yeah.

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EV: So when you were... when did you finally finish your public education? I mean excuse me you went to junior high and then where did you go to high school?

PN: I went to Jeff Davis High School.

EV: Okay.

PN: Then I got a job...

EV: Did you finish high school?

PN: I didn't finish high school because I got interested in the work I was doing and I thought I would go back but I never did go back and I had finally go to University of Houston and got my, what do you call it...the high school...

EV: Oh, a GED?

PN: GED you know.

EV: Well what work were you doing that made you drop...when you dropped out of school.

PN: I was doing photo-engraving and advertising and I liked that job.

EV: How did you get into that work?

PN: Well I was in high school and I did an art project that was submitted to the Inter Scholastic League competition and I won first prize. So they showed a picture of me in the paper. This man, his name was Simpson, who had opened up his engraving shop and needed someone that could do that kind of work. He saw the picture and he says... and I knew his daughter from school. So when he learned there was an artist that won a competition in art and he liked the way I drew he says, "Tell me about him." And she told him that I was in school and I did well in art and maybe he could use me. He says, "Well tell him to come by and see me."

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EV: What was his name?

PN: His name was Henry Simpson and his daughter's name was Frances.

EV: She was your classmate at Jeff Davis?

PN: She was a classmate of mine at Jeff Davis. Mr. Simpson was just this girl's father, he had a business and he needed someone to learn the [] of photo engraving and commercial art. So to me it was like an education that I could get through without even going to college yet. See what I mean?

EV: Yeah and what year was that do you remember more or less?

PN: About 1938.

EV: '38? How long did you stay working for Mr. Simpson?

PN: I worked for him until 19... well I started working for him in '38 but I also went to school. See I worked for him when I went to school and then I would go and work for him at nights.

EV: I see.

PN: So it was probably 1939 or 1940 by the time I decided, "Heck I'd just better get out of school and work regular over there. I'm learning more there then I am in school."

EV: Were you still living at home?

PN: I was still living at home. I drove the family car.

EV: Oh really?

PN: I was one of the few kids that drove a car.

EV: So that means you had to do all the *mandados*, all the errands and go to the grocery store and all of that?

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PN: No I never did do any grocery buying. We were living in Magnolia then and I used to go all the way to Lawndale Street in the car otherwise I would take the bus.

There was bus that went all the way up there. There was almost no traffic.

EV: See in my family every time as each one of us got our license, our driver's license that person had to take my grandmother shopping in Ciudad Juarez.

PN: Oh really?

EV: I was born and raised in El Paso.

PN: Oh I see.

EV: My uncle... we were all kind of raised together with my uncle and when he got his driver's license he had to drive her to the store. Before then they used to go in the old street cars, the electric car, you know. Then once I, once my brother got his license it was his deal. So whoever, as each one came up that was our job.

PN: No I think the one that did the grocery shopping was my mother.

EV: She didn't have you drive or anything?

PN: Yeah but shopping I never did like shopping.

EV: I didn't like it. I still don't like it but I had to drive her there to do it. Because all the fruits and vegetables and the meats were so much cheaper in Juarez than it was on this side.

PN: I remember that if my mother needed the car I would take the bus to work. If not I'd drive to work. As a matter of fact I used to drive to school.

EV: So is that what you were doing when the war broke out?

PN: That's what I was doing when the war broke out.

EV: You were working for Mr. Simpson?

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PN: I was working for Mr. Simpson. So actually the job I was working for is what helped me to get into the job I did in the Marine Corps.

EV: Really.

PN: It wasn't that I learned in the Marine Corps a job that I was supposed to do. But the job they got me to do to use that knowledge that I put to good use in the Marines, see what I mean? Because I got in the, you know you have to qualify for positions in the army, in the military and then they decide which unit you belong to, they put you in the infantry tanks, transportation or whatever. When they saw mine they said, "You go to engineers." So I was interviewed personally by one of the captains of my unit and I was able to give him the right answers. He said, "You're the man we want." Because he says we've got to go out there and map that area that we don't know nothing about it [map making]. You know Guadalcanal and Bougainville and those places. When the U.S. Navy was ordered to form the first invasion force against the Japs they had no idea what was in those islands because there was no maps that showed details. So they said "Hey we need to make maps of those areas!"

EV: Well how did you get the elevations on the different islands and stuff?

PN: We sent planes, we took pictures and stuff.

EV: Oh you took photographs and then...

PN: Yeah, they were from 29,000 feet. They all had to be level so they be the same and then they make these mosaics—photographs, you know—and then we put those mosaics together—put the picture make the mosaic out of—and then when you put two pictures of the same time together you get the three dimensions.

EV: Yeah you have those two little scopes...

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PN: Yeah stereoscope, you see. Your stereoscope you look at that, you took pictures and you know what the height is and then here's a hill that's 300 feet altitude, we'd put 300 on it. Then we went around the shape of the hill. So you know you need an artist for that. If there's nothing but jungle here or coconut trees or whatever you've got to draw coconuts.

EV: Oh really?

PN: If you have palm trees there or trees, you know what I mean? Of course we thought it was an easy way to do this. We put this material that we used and we'd just tape it on there and put "trees."

EV: Put trees! (laughter)

PN: Sometimes you'd have to put the names of those things you'd have to write them by hand.

EV: Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

PN: I volunteered.

EV: Okay. How old were you when you volunteered?

PN: I guess I was about 19, 20.

EV: Do you remember the date that you volunteered?

PN: I think it was June 7, 1941, no 1942 because Pearl Harbor was attacked in December 1941.

EV: Then the following June?

PN: Then the following June I joined.

EV: Okay. Did you go to basic training in San Diego?

PN: San Diego yeah, boot camp.

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EV: When did you... is that all the training that you went to boot camp?

PN: Went to boot camp and then went to extended [] drill up there in Ellington Field. Then we had another field we had to go to, to learn...we went from one field to another but this one...

EV: We had the M1 by that time, no?

PN: No they didn't have M1's then.

EV: Really?

PN: The rifle that I qualified at was a Springfield 3.

EV: The bolt action?

PN: Yeah. When I made sharp shooter they said, "We've giving all the guys the M1 when they come out but you keep the Springfield because as a sharp shooter you need this one; it is more accurate." See what I mean? So for a long time I was the only one that had a 3, the rest of them had M1's but eventually I got a 3 too. It's much easier.

EV: Yeah.

PN: Anyway I do recall that I don't know why there were so many tough guys in my unit but I was the only one that qualified as a sharp shooter and only one man that qualified as an expert. This other guy was a Navajo Indian.

EV: Really?

PN: Our instructor was really mad about that. He said, "You guys you were the worst outfit that went to boot camp!" Just one man qualified for pistol and that was me!

EV: 45 pistol?

PN: 45.

EV: Oh I couldn't hit a barn with it.

PN: I was the only expert.

EV: With a 45?

PN: With a 45.

EV: And had you ever fired before?

PN: I had never fired before. But I used what you call a turkey, what do you mean?

EV: Turkey shoot?

PN: Yeah I really didn't follow the instructions I just had to feel it and I hit it every time.

EV: I tried with a 45, I tried and I could never hit. My patterns were all over the place.

PN: Sometimes it's like that. You don't know why you hit the ground when you're shooting up there.

EV: Well I understand those things were made for when the enemy comes into your fox hole you shoot and it velocity knocks them back out.

PN: Yeah.

EV: The impact was so strong. When you were in basic where did you go after basic training, boot camp I mean?

PN: Let me see, well I forgot the name of the place.

EV: Let me ask was it in Southern California still?

PN: Yeah it was Southern California.

EV: Even after boot camp you stayed in Southern California is that right?

PN: Yes.

EV: Were you in Southern California when they had those Zoot Suit Wars wars in Los Angeles?

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PN: Yes.

EV: Did you catch any flack from any of that stuff?

PN: No they wouldn't let us go into town. They said it was...

EV: Off limits?

PN: Yeah off limits. He said, "We don't want you all to get roped in and get in trouble with the..."

EV: Yeah that was pretty bad stuff. Did you hear about it?

PN: Oh yeah I heard about it.

EV: So when did you finally go off to G.I. Joe and stuff?

PN: Well, what they did, they had to send us quickly over there to the islands to start mapping the area. So it was in November—June, July, August, September, October, November—Six months later I was on a troop ship going to the war zone. The first thing they did was to send us to New Zealand. We had a group of Marines there mostly from the 6th Regiment. It had been sent there because they expected the Japanese to attack New Zealand so they left a group there and they sent us, the mapping unit, by ourselves, to find our way back to the islands. By finding our way I mean that's what we had to do we had to go out and look for a ship that was going in that direction so that we could get there. They told us to go to the island of Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides to join the First Marine Airway.

EV: First what?

PN: First Marine Airway.

EV: Oh okay.

PN: So I became a part of an Airway.

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EV: Does that mean that you had to fly and do the photography too?

PN: Well, if was necessary they would send me out in a plane. But I didn't have to do that, but I did get flight pay. My pay increase was because when I first joined you know how much I got paid?

EV: How much?

PN: \$24 a month.

EV: I beat you by \$50.

EV: Oh yeah.

EV: 20 years later and the only raise we got was \$50. Let me flip this tape around.

End of Side A, Tape 1

Start of Side B, Tape 1

PN: My son looked at some of my pictures and he said, "Did you know that you were probably the only person that has taken a picture of a helicopter in Saipan during World War II?" He said, "No body else has, they have never seen a helicopter." I said, "You can prove there was one there because you took a picture of us."

EV: There were choppers back then?

PN: That's what he said?

EV: So six months later you were on your way... you were in New Zealand.

PN: Yeah and then right away they sent us to Espiritu Santo.

EV: Okay.

PN: So we didn't spend much time in New Zealand, ...I guess we were there from December, because we left November. It took us 21 days to zig-zag from San Diego to

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New Zealand. Because in those days you didn't just go straight, you had to zig-zag. It took forever to get to where you were going.

EV: But you got there.

PN: We got there. Then by the time we got to New Zealand to Espiritu Santo it was already a new year. It was '43.

EV: Did you go in a huge armada, a big fleet, or just one or two ships?

PN: No we had to find us a cargo ship.

EV: Oh you went on a cargo ship?

PN: Yeah.

EV: Were you by yourselves or were you escorted did you have any escorts?

PN: No going to... oh, going to New Zealand we had a tremendous escort. We had not only a regular squadron of planes flying over us to protect us but also destroyers sailing around.

EV: So you had carriers, you were moving with carriers?

PN: Destroyers.

EV: Okay, but where did the airplanes come from?

PN: Evidently there were carriers among them because all I could see were the planes out in the middle of the Pacific, but they had to fly over to protect the whole convoy. Because you could look up there on the horizon and you could see nothing but ships one after the other.

EV: That's pretty impressive isn't it?

PN: Very impressive. But we knew that we were protected because we had submarines, of course they warned us. They said don't throw anything overboard and if

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somebody falls too bad we can't stop to pick you up because we have to... it's better to save the thousands of soldiers in the troop ship then to try and pick one up that is foolish enough to fall or you know. So you had to be real careful to not fall because they aren't going to pick you up. But anyway, it took us 21 days to get there and a few weeks later we were on the islands up there.

EV: Which island did you go to first?

PN: Espiritu Santo, the one we hit. Oh no... we went to another island first. We stopped at New Caledonia.

EV: That was an invasion too wasn't it? Wasn't New Caledonia a combat zone?

PN: It was a combat zone yeah.

EV: Was that your first combat area?

PN: My first combat area.

EV: Were you a little nervous?

PN: No, I never got nervous. I guess I must have felt that someone was praying for me so I'm going to be okay. So you know what I mean. I always felt that way that someone was praying for me real hard so I don't know you get kind of foolish sometimes in the middle of danger and don't realize it. But the thing is that we were in New Caledonia to find a ship going to where we were supposed to go to. We did find a ship that we got aboard. They didn't want to let us aboard but finally our committee officer said, "We have to get there, it's important!" And I guess he told him if you delay us you are delaying the war.

EV: So when the government started their island hopping across the pacific you went on each of these?

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PN: No not on each one. We were flying quite a few, quite a few islands we had to map but we didn't have to be on them. But some of the crew they did have to be there to get the right... they had to get the actual [] to get the readings. You can't do it from an airplane.

EV: So from New Caledonia then where did you go? I mean where you actually landed on the island.

PN: Espiritu Santo.

EV: And then Espiritu Santo?

PN: We went back to New Zealand again after about.... let me see from December to May about four or five months. We stopped on a few other islands on the way but we got to New Zealand. One of the islands that we stopped was [] and several others. I remember talking to... I don't remember how many islands are up there but where we met I should have gone on all the islands because we found some that weren't even named and we had to put names on them.

EV: Did you go to... You said you went to Bougainville?

PN: No, we mapped Bougainville but I wasn't there.

EV: Did you go to Guam?

PN: Yeah, Guam.

EV: Did you map it or were you on Guam?

PN: I was on Guam. I was also I flew over Tinian but I was in Saipan.

EV: Did you go to Okinawa or Iwo Jima?

PN: No I didn't go to Iwo Jima or Okinawa. I was only on Saipan. Yeah there was an incident that I can remember very well during the invasion of Okinawa because we

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packed everything because we were all leaving Saipan to attack the Japanese in Okinawa so they order us to even put, they were putting all that mapping equipment on board the ship and then when they finally left they had to have somebody to stay on the island looking after the unit and so they chose me to stay here.

EV: To stay on Saipan?

PN: Stay on Saipan while the rest went to Okinawa. Why? Because they were acting as a decoy, see what I mean?

EV: Oh I see.

PN: They had to actually... because there could be spies among you in our unit and you never know it. They see you packing away they say, "Well this unit is going to leave." But what they did was make it like they were going to attack Okinawa from this side headed for that area of the island so the Japanese send their forces up this side of the island to stop us. In the meantime the real forces landed from this side. See what I mean?

EV: Yeah.

PN: That's what they run... high command does things over there, tricky things you know.

EV: So you stayed on Saipan during the invasion of Okinawa?

PN: Yeah and while I was in Saipan, that's when the Japanese were hiding in the caves out there and started coming out at night. Throwing rocks at us and trying to steal food from the mess halls. It was kind of peculiar. Then of course I recall that the generator that lighted the camp area went out and I didn't have a mechanic to fix it because they were all on the ship headed for Okinawa and I get to go out to an army

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camp to see if they had a mechanic that could fix the generator and put the lights back in order and I did. I remember it was a black, there were a lot of blacks in that camp. It was an army camp. This guy was a real good mechanic and he came over and fixed up the generator and he says, I don't know... he had to tell me, "You know this is the first time I have ever been in a Marine camp. I'm pretty close to you but I've never been in your camp."

EV: Oh really? That was the 24th, the 27th Army?

PN: Yeah the 27th Army I think it was.

EV: You were in the 2nd Marine Division is that right?

PN: Second Division that's right. The 27th Army was...

EV: Did you ever know Guy Gabaldon? Did you know who he is?

PN: Oh yeah.

EV: Did you ever meet him?

PN: I never met him but I saw him several times and he was just another guy as far as I'm concerned you know.

EV: Yeah.

PN: But I had heard about him having arguments with the...

EV: The brass.

PN: With the brass and that they had given an order, "Don't give this guy any more promotions. Just leave him the way he is."

EV: Even after he saved all those people?

PN: That's right. If you ask me if I think he deserves the Medal of Honor? I think he does.

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EV: Well there's a... I just saw a thing on the YouTube where there is a movement to get him the Congressional [Medal of Honor] because they only gave him the Silver Star. Then they promoted... they up'ed it to Navy Cross.

PN: Yeah, Navy Cross.

EV: And now there is still a push to get him the Congressional Medal of Honor. But I guess the reason was because they didn't want him saving those people or something. I mean why would they not want to promote him?

PN: No. I think it is because he was insubordinate. You know what I mean. He didn't obey orders like a typical Marine, you know what I mean? He was like a maverick Marine... he went on his own.

EV: At Saipan is also where they had... they uses a lot of the code talkers, is that rightthe Indians?

PN: Oh yeah.

EV: Did you ever have to use any of those that type of stuff? I mean those code talkers for anything?

PN: No, but I do recall that we used to have some of those fuzzy-wuzzy type natives.

EV: What kind?

PN: You know those connectors.

EV: Connectors?

PN: Connectors they called them. We had them spy for us I...

EV: Oh the native people on the island?

PN: Yeah. I even, when I first saw them I think it was in New Zealand when we were mapping a certain area and they needed someone that knew what was in certain areas of

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that map they probably brought in a native. I was surprised to see this guy practically with bones sticking out of his nose and fuzzy-wuzzy hair but that guy spoke perfect Oxford English.

EV: Did he really? (laughter) How did that happen, do you know?

PN: What he said was he knew that island pretty well and he knew where things were so we could put them on a map and he said that the reason that he has a good education and he spoke good English was because the English realized that at some time they have a war in the Pacific and get someone in there that would give them information of what is going in there. So they took these young kids, took them to England, educated him and sent him back to the island to act like them in a loin cloth and study the situation. If they see that the Japanese are trying to start a problem out there, some trouble they are to report it.

EV: Golly.

PN: See, so even in Espiritu Santo you could see work that the Japanese had done on the island during their maneuvers. They had maneuvers there and they had built a lot of things in the jungle; like put bridges over certain rivers and thinks like that. You can see Japanese markers on trees.

EV: Oh really?

PN: So some of those natives while they were there could see that the Japanese and what they were doing and they were reporting. They would let the English Navy know that they were preparing for war. So that's how the guy... when they needed information they would bring in the natives. They would come out and talk to us, "Here is what is happening down there."

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EV: Saipan also had a horrendous amount of deaths on the Japanese soldiers and civilians jumping off the cliffs and all that. Did you ever witness that?

PN: I didn't see when that happened but I have... when we were up there on certain mapping missions we could go out by the cliff and you could still look down and see bodies down there.

EV: Really?

PN: I don't know if it was bodies or not but you could see the traces of something falling out there where people had jumped.

EV: Do recognize that? [Handed PN a map of Saipan]

PN: Oh yeah that's the island.

EV: Where were you at? Where was your post?

PN: Well you see where the arrow there is pointing?

EV: Just mark it.

PN: I would say about right here.

EV: Alright so you were, what does that say?

PN: I don't know where it was at it was just way up in the hills at the foothills near Mount Tapochau.

EV: Number 8, First Battalion 29th Marine. Alright. That's *más o menos* [more or less] right?

PN: I don't know exactly where we were at but it was just in the foothills of the Mount Tapochau. I remember that after when the island was secured and all of that. They took me out on a [] because I was the one they had put in the details on one of the mountains. Because we were getting ready to make the maps, the relief maps of the

island, we never could tell what was on top of the mountain because of the clouds and we had to have that to have the relief maps because they were getting ready to invade. He said, "We can't stop the invasion just because we can't see what's there, put something in there so we can finish it." So I... they said, "Get somebody that's got an active imagination and put them to work on it." So they got me. I started it and I figured by looking at the pictures you know of under the clouds. There was what do you call it? Flat areas or whatever. So that's what I pictured it. So after the war the central command center head of the map bank said this was exact. "Send the guy that created the picture up to the top, send him up there to look at the real thing." So they did. They put me on a plane and took up there. The pilot said, "They just told me to fly you around the island by the top of the mountain. I guess you know what you are looking for." I said, "Yeah I'm comparing the things I created in my mind with the real thing." It's all there.

EV: They said you were right?

PN: Yeah I was right.

EV: (laughter). Did you have... you said that you were, you didn't come on until after the invasion right of the island?

PN: What's that?

EV: I mean of Saipan. You didn't do it first?

PN: No we were not on the initial invasion. That's the job of the infantry.

EV: So what kind of map did they have to use if you hadn't started your maps? What where they using do you know?

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PN: Oh well I guess they just had to make their own you know what I mean? From what you see you just start making a map. That's a hill and it's that way, you know right?

EV: So then you guys started coming in and making maps, okay I got you. How long did you, did you ever go into Japan after the war?

PN: No I never went to Japan. As a matter of fact they were getting ready to bomb Hiroshima and I didn't know it, nobody knew it but we were just not too far from the bomb because the... what was the name of the plane that flew it?

EV: The Enola Gay.

PN: The Enola Gay was right there on Tinian and so we were preparing maps and for the next invasion so I knew exactly where we were going to hit. I knew exactly how we were going to go in there. But I could see the map and I could tell it would be murder to go in through that area.

EV: To the Japanese island itself?

PN: Yeah we were planning to land on Kyushu.

EV: Where?

PN: The island of Kyushu.

EV: Do you know how to spell that?

PN: K-Y-U-S-H-U.

EV: Okay.

PN: We were supposed to take photographs too by not only mapping but we also took photographs.

EV: So you flew over the Japanese, that island, the Japanese Kyushu?

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PN: No we didn't... we hadn't gotten that close to it yet. But what we were doing... we were sending submarines to go out there and near the island and take pictures and we knew that area would be hard to invade because of the high cliffs.

EV: Oh I see.

PN: So they were figured on cutting ramps across so that we could land there. After all that work, because we were more or less tied in with intelligence you know... we have to know what was going on. Just like when we invaded Tarawa [modern-day Kiribati] everybody thought we were going to Midway or Wake Island when I knew all the way we were going to Tarawa but you have to keep your mouth shut.

EV: Tarawa?

PN: Tarawa. The island was called Betio. But anyway what we were surprised was after doing all that work all of the sudden they said get your unit ready. A certain men of the units are going to be sent back to the States. Among them was me because I had been there longer, the longest time. So nobody knew why we were being shipped out so quickly when we had a lot of work to do yet. But then the reason was because they were getting ready to unload that atomic bomb and we didn't know anything about it until after we were in the middle of the ocean and we found out that they... that a bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, an atomic bomb. That was the first time we had heard about it. But we were already leaving to go back to the States.

EV: When was that four or five days later they dropped the bomb on Nagasaki right?

PN: Later on it was dropped on...

EV: Were you back in the United States by that time or where you still at sea?

PN: I think I was still at sea.

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EV: Is that where you learned that the war was over in Japan?

PN: I didn't know that the war was over; I knew they had bombed the Japanese.

EV: Where were you when you found out that the war was over?

PN: In Houston.

EV: Oh you were here in Houston?

PN: Yeah.

EV: But you were still in the service right?

PN: I was still in the service yes. I remember when I was downtown in Houston and we heard about the news all the way on Main Street and everybody started... all the cars stopped and everybody got out and started jumping around and dancing, you know. I was standing there by the Rice Hotel looking at the Main Street and everybody dancing around.

EV: Were you with a *palomilla* or were you by yourself?

PN: By myself. I remember one time I saw, I don't know I guess it was because of the [] they... I saw a couple of sailors jumping on a Marine out there in the middle of the street.

EV: A fight!

PN: Maybe they were just... I don't know what they were doing, they were jumping around but I saw two sailors picking on a Marine and that sailor in the middle of the street... This guy next to me, a civilian, he says, "Hey Marine, they got one of your buddies out there!" I remember telling him, "There's only two sailors he can take care of them!" (laughter)

EV: (laughter) If a Marine can't take care of two sailors.....

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PN: Anyway, I don't know what happened they got lost in the crowd.

EV: You still had some time left on your career didn't you? I mean you didn't get out?

PN: Oh yeah when I got back I still had time. What I did, they shipped me over to the Naval Ammunition Depot in New Orleans.

EV: Let me ask you about this stuff [referring to some photographs] These are all your children and grandchildren and stuff?

PN: These are all my children and one of my granddaughters.

EV: And they are all working, they worked in...

PN: They all worked in the...

EV: They named it after them?

PN: No they say that they had to find something to name for the Navarro's because they started making a new map of Antarctica which is nothing but ice, somebody was asking me "What are they going to name some kind of a cesspool out there for the Navarros?"

Wife: They don't know what it will be but when there are so many, he painted a picture for a chapel, they didn't have a picture in the chapel and he painted a picture of Christ for the chapel and that was in []?

PN: No that was in McMerter.

Wife: Anyway they are all of our children. The one grandson is going into...what is it? A & M.

PN: We only have one grandson all the rest of them are granddaughters. One boy took care of the name.

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EV: So let me go into some of these drawings you made when you were over there. I only made copies of a few of them some of the copies that is in there [referring to drawings I had copied from the archives at the Houston Metropolitan Library]. But first of all there is one thing in there that interested me. Do you know who Francisco Salinas was [referring to an affidavit]?

PN: Francisco Salinas? Do I know anybody by that name?

EV: He is... the genealogy of this is in your family box. I was wondering if you knew who he was. Does your mother have any Salinas names in her family?

PN: Not that I remember, that I recall or anything like that.

EV: Well the reason it interested me is because he was a native of Texan, he was a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto where he fought with Captain Juan Seguin against the forces of [Antonio] Santana, he was with the Tejanos and he was making an affidavit so that he could claim his land that was given to the Texas veterans.

PN: Okay, I know now where the Salinas comes in. Salinas is an ancestor of a buddy of mine named Jerry Gonzalez, his mother was a Salinas, she was from Galveston and Francisco Salinas I think was one of his relatives because he was telling me that his family had participated in the battle of San Antonio or something against the Spaniards... they used to have the governor there...

EV: Is he still... can you get a hold of him still?

PN: No Jerry Gonzalez died about five, six years ago.

EV: Okay.

Wife: If it was San Jacinto couldn't it also be a relative of Joe Charles?

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PN: Joe Charles Navarro? No I don't think so because I haven't seen that name in the Navarro's genealogy that what's her name...well anyway this is a different branch of Navarro's. Decedents of Antonio Navarro.

EV: I didn't know if you had that connection because that would be an interesting thing to follow just because I don't think anyone followed the relatives of Juan Seguin.

PN: I see.

EV: They all live probably between here and San Antonio. Here is the letter from your father I guess, Gabriel Navarro?

PN: Yeah Gabriel.

EV: C. Navarro?

PN: Yeah, C. C is Cuervos.

Woman: He was a dear man.

EV: Is that your *guapo* [handsome] face?

PN: Yeah my portrait.

**EV: [To the Mrs. Navarro] Is that the young man you married right there?

Wife: Yeah that's him. (laughter) Over 62 years ago.

EV: Oh well he still has his charm! So you sat around... these are the things that you sit around... I'm showing you these drawings that I've made copies of.

PN: Oh yeah these are sketches that I made when I was in Saipan. This is made on the ship... This is Bill Eagle, he used to be a buddy of mine but he was a sergeant and before I left the island of Saipan he had been made a warrant officer.

EV: Oh really?

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PN: Yeah and he gave me \$1 when I saluted him because that is the custom. When a man gets a rank of officer, the very first one who salutes him, he gets \$1 from him.

EV: Oh really?

PN: I remember seeing him come down from the headquarters and I saw him... I knew him as a sergeant but then I see he's wearing a warrant officer badge and so when I saw him I saluted him, because you have to salute officers.

EV: Oh yeah.

PN: And he said, "Wait a minute I've got to give you \$1!"

EV: Can I have that? Let me mark it what's his name?

PN: Bill Eagle.

EV: Bill Eagle, *como águila*?

PN: *Águila*, Eagle, yeah. This all, you know it's funny I don't even remember those sketches but I made them, they've got my name on them. I almost recognize the faces.

EV: Do recognize those guys?

PN: Yeah, I think this guy here's name is Schindler, Rathenbueler, and this guy here was named Burn. I should have put his name down there but I do remember their faces.

I don't know... I don't have that sketch at all. How did you end up with it?

EV: These are in the library!

PN: I'll be darned.

EV: Where are the originals of these?

PN: I couldn't tell you, but I know my son Mark has a lot of them but I don't think he has these because I've never seen them and usually he shows me the stuff he has, the originals you know.

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EV: You know that *gordito* [chubby guy] there?

PN: This is an army guy.

EV: An army guy?

PN: As a matter of fact I think that I captured this and put down "Army Guy." He was not a Marine. He was on the same ship that we were on. This guy's name was Walburg, he was a Corporal.

EV: Walburg?

PN: Walburg. But you find out that I made sketches of guy's sleeping or sitting down or doing something because that's the only way they could pose for me and I could sketch them without them moving you know. I wanted to sketch something and I had to pick somebody that was still. So usually I'd get a picture of the guy sleeping around.

EV: This looks like something that happened in the army, some guy was guarding an outhouse.

PN: Yeah it looks like an outhouse but it was actually the Post #3 or whatever it was on the edge of the road. He would watch the entrance.

EV: Still he was a little out of uniform wasn't he?

PN: Yeah, he was! (laughter) Nobody cared how they dressed. But this guy is on guard. It looks like an outhouse doesn't it?

EV: Yeah that's what I thought it was.

PN: Yeah, but it's not an outhouse it's a guard house. This is a picture I started drawing but I never did finish because it was raining too hard. It was raining.

EV: Oh yeah.

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PN: And this is the guy working on the maps trying to get the job done and it started flooding. We put a couple of guys to dig a trench so the water wouldn't go into the tent and I started sketching it and I didn't finish it. I could finish it later on from memory. I even made a painting like this.

EV: Really?

PN: Called that "Rainy Day in Santos."

EV: Espiritu Santo?

PN: Espiritu Santo we called it Santos.

EV: Is that your bunk?

PN: That's my bunk yep. That was it. This guy here was [].

EV: I'm sorry?

PN: This says []. I was just making a gag about one of the guys that everybody complained about it because he never took a bath.

EV: Oh really?

PN: He did but he was always stinky, dirty. He says, there was a time there when they put a restriction on the amount of water we used. "Use water for drinking only." Here is [] trying to take a bath! "But I've just got to have a shower." I made that a cartoon gag about him.

EV: I think everybody's got one of those guys in the military you know? We had a guy that was so bad we had to put him outside the barracks.

PN: Yeah. [] was like that!

EV: He just stunk up the whole damn place. You know *te daba asco* [it was disgusting], you could smell it. It just amazed me.

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PN: This guy's name was Royce. He was an artist too.

EV: R-O-Y-C-E?

PN: R-O-Y-C-E. One day I saw him leaning on the side of the port and I said, "Hold it right there I want to sketch you." So I made this sketch of him. Then he turned around and said, "Let me make one of you." He made a sketch of me. We were aboard the ship.

EV: What ship did you go over on?

PN: We went on a troop ship called the President Monroe.

EV: That's a Jewish name?

PN: This ship here, the name of that ship is called the Belletrix. This guy here was named Corman, he was a Jewish boy.

EV: Yeah I could see the Star of David. Corman was his name?

PN: Corman yes.

EV: Isn't it funny how you can remember the name of those guys?

PN: Huh?

EV: I said it's funny from my own experience I can remember names so much easier... of course you live with them so much.

PN: I was trying to remember what his first name was but I can't. I think his first name was Albert, Albert Corman. He was always after me to teach him Spanish.

EV: Oh really?

PN: We would be going from the camp over to the nearest village when we were in Hawaii and he would sit next to me and he would say, "What I want you to do when we pass by things tell me what they are called." And I would say, "Okay." *Una cerca, una piedra*, [a fence, a rock] and he would make note of everything. He wanted to learn

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Spanish. Just how we converse all along our way to the village and I would be talking to him in Spanish about everything.

EV: Did he catch on?

PN: Yeah he was catching on pretty good.

EV: Really?

PN: He used to tell me that I was a Jew. (laughter). How do you figure that I was a Jew? He said, "You see this book I have?" He always carried a little Jewish bible. "Well your name's in here." I said, "You mean Porfirio Navarro?" "No," he said, "Navarro." See in 1943 he was out on field training.

EV: Field training? You know there is a whole stack of these drawings down there in the library. Will you let me come back and go through them with you?

PN: Yeah, if you want okay. You mean I got more stuff then what you got here?

EV: Yeah. There's a couple of these. This is the first thing that caught my eye when I was going through these drawings, it was a letter you wrote. This is the one you wrote to Raúl.

PN: Oh yeah that was my young brother you know. I had to draw pictures for him. Instead of just writing him a letter I illustrated it. Jesus, when I came back to the States and they sent me to New Orleans as commander of the guard there and then they decided that they needed some Marines aboard the Battleship Houston. The Battleship served the contingent of Marines. So they said, "Navarro, you've been selected to get on Battleship Houston for the next cruise." They call it a cruise when they are training. I said, "Do I have to go aboard a ship again, cause I just got back? I got back from overseas and they are going to send me out again?" The guy says, "Well, Navarro you did pretty good time

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on overseas didn't you?" I said, "Yeah." "Well I'm going to give you a break then. I'll let you have a choice: either you're going to get on this ship and stick out about six months to go before you get discharged and by the time that you go through this cruise to the Caribbean, all those places out there..." he says, "By the time you come back again, you're ready for discharge." I said, "Well what other choice do I have?" "Well you can either do that or you can go to Camp Lejeune and be an instructor over there." I said, "I'll take Camp Lejeune. So you know what he did? He took money out of his pocket and said, "Here's \$20 that will give you enough feed and I'll give you a pass to get on the bus and took off on the train, get on the train to the next train to Camp Lejeune."

EV: Then you couldn't find any place to stay right? (Referring to the illustrated letter)

PN: Yeah I think I told him about all those things. I might have exaggerated a few places like, "Anybody home?"

EV: (laughter).

PN: I forgot about this.

EV: What was it—what's that date up there, Pete?

PN: October 31, 1945.

EV: Oh that's the one you did before.

PN: Oh yeah. Hmm. Yeah this was my job the place where I lowered the flag.

EV: Is that what you are doing?

PN: Yeah. Well I also had to guard the entrance because it was an ammunition depot, they didn't want the place to blow up. Yeah here you go look, "And here's \$5.00 for your meals and here is your Pullman reservation." Remember when I told you he gave me the money and I received my traveling orders and my train tickets, etc. I guess I can

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secure after this... this would be me right here. "Why where are you going?" Yeah I was boarding up the flag for the last time see? You got to get out there in the morning 8:00 or whatever. I think in the morning it's always the same time but in the evening you have to go at sundown to get the flag down. But every morning you get out there with the flag, they roll it up and then you have to holler, "Everybody get out of the barracks." Then you say, "Attention" and everybody is standing at attention and then you have the flag up. There is a certain order you have to do. You know. I'm telling you something you probably already know. Yeah this is way back to the... you know what? I like to make copies of these before you go because...

EV: Sure, I made copies of the copies that were in there.

PN: See here's letters that I sent to the family but what they did with it I don't know but here they are.

EV: Pete what I'm going to do is... I mean I made copies of the copies that were in there. So I'm going to go get the rest of them and I'll make you copies.

PN: You'll make me copies?

EV: Yeah.

PN: I'd appreciate it because I'd like to have these things. I know Mark would. Mark collects practically all the stuff that I have.

EV: There is a copy of your pass.

PN: They even have that, huh?

EV: They have a copy. I don't know where the originals are I'd love to find those for you.

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PN: Yeah how do you like that? Texas [] Company Engineer Battalion.

I was sorry to be on Liberty during regular Liberty hours. Huh, pretty good. Yeah I'd appreciate it if you would do that.

EV: Yeah absolutely. *Con mucho gusto.* Do you know who was Blas de León, do you know?

PN: Blas de León was a friend of the family that lived up there in Alief, Texas close to the farm that my Uncle Julius in Victoria used to have. You would be surprised it was nothing but flat fields out there at one time where they grew cotton and corn. Today you don't see a flat place there it is all buildings because Houston has eventually moved to that country. But that's who Blas de León was; he used to be a poet and wrote poems about the family.

EV: That's the family right there?

PN: Blas de León, yeah. That's pretty neat.

EV: Did you... so when you got back home did you continue... what was your first job when you got out of the army?

End Tape 1, Side B

Start Tape 2, Side A

PN: I worked for the Addressograph Multigraph Company.

EV: Did you take a big break between the military and going to work?

PN: No, as soon as I left the Marines I got married.

EV: Oh really? Did you meet your wife at port?

PN: No I had no freedom! (laughter) But I was in Camp Lejeune when I met my wife. I met her at a square dance.

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EV: You square dance?

PN: Oh yeah.

EV: Do you really?

PN: Well if I didn't square dance then, I learned how to square dance! I'd have been something ...

EV: You're the only Mexican I know that square dances! (laughter)

PN: (laughter). I don't even know how that to dance La Raspas.

EV: You know what I think, that's the one dance everyone knows La Raspas? I used to do La Bamba okay but you know the only dance that has ever come to me just naturally is the Paso Doble, I just picked it up down... there used to be a Mexican night club on Allen's Landing, right on the Bayou across from where you were born. They played a Paso Doble and I got up with this girl and it just came to me so naturally. It was just... the other things I had to concentrate on my feet, you know, but this was Paso Doble as we said in the [].

PN: Let me tell you something, when I was in New Zealand they sent us out for R & R to South Island, New Zealand is two islands, South Island and North Island. Well for rest and recuperation they send you to the South Island. So I stayed out there with some people that put us up but while I was in the city of Christchurch, I went to a dance out there and believe it or not I stopped the whole thing because I was jitterbugging. Because I learned how to jitterbug because when I was in Houston here with the teenagers, me and my cousins we all got together at my aunt's house there on I guess the North Side and we danced all the time. We danced so much that even the floor gave in one time because the bricks under the house came loose and the floor began to sink like that. But we danced

all the time. So when I was in Christchurch I went to a dance out there and everybody's dancing this difficult, English type dancing, you know, but when I got in there I started whirling the girls around and everybody's looking at me and the next thing I know everybody stopped dancing and was watching me dance. When I got through they wanted me to continue! (laughter). I didn't want to be in the limelight out there so I said, "Oh this is the only dance I want to do," and I left. But it is funny how in a strange country you are the object of interest.

Phone interrupting

EV: Yeah that's...

PN: My dad wrote this when I was already here in March.

EV: Yeah but he is still using that stationary.

PN: Yeah the [].

EV: Beautiful handwriting.

PN: Oh yeah my daddy had very nice handwriting.

EV: Was he very *cariñoso*? [affectionate, warm]

PN: My dad? Oh yeah.

EV: I mean he seems to.

PN: He loved people. He was forceful though.

EV: What?

PN: Very forceful. He was a sweet person but he said something you...

EV: Oh yeah very Mexican.

PN: Did you ever read the letter that he wrote to me when I was out there in the Pacific?

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EV: No I didn't.

PN: It came out in one of the books.

EV: No. Did you ever go to any of your reunions?

PN: Yeah.

EV: So you've seen these guys all over again?

PN: I saw some of the guys.

EV: Were any of your other brothers in the military?

PN: My brother Gabriel. He was in the Army.

EV: I'm going to see if this is in there.

PN: Who?

EV: This letter because your picture takes up part of the...

PN: Oh let me read another one.

EV: I want to keep a copy of this if I can.

PN: Oh, I see. Let me see if I can show you the whole letter. They printed the letter here. I'm sure they expect that you will be able to read it otherwise they wouldn't have printed it. Can you read it? If not—we're going to try it. If not, my brother has the original. I mean my son has the original.

EV: Really and I need a deal.

PN: Can you?

EV: Did you continue with your... obviously you did but your painting and art on in your house.

PN: Well I worked for the Addressograph Multigraph Company until about 1957. I was in for about... let me see... I was in for about ten years anyway. Then I went into

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business for myself and I opened up a shop here in Houston and because when I was working for Addressograph Multigraph it was not in Houston, it was in Washington D.C.

EV: What was the name of the company again?

PN: Addressograph Multigraph.

EV: Multigraph? Did you go to Washington?

PN: I went to Washington and started working over there under the G.I. Bill, they could pay to train me. But instead of training me I took a job as a supervisor and so they dropped me and started paying me.

EV: Real money!

PN: Real money! So after a while I was transferred from Washington to an agency in Youngstown, Ohio because they needed to build up the agencies and they needed someone to learn the land over there.

EV: How do you spell the name of that company?

PN: Addressograph.

EV: Addressograph - A-D-D-R-E-S-S-O-G-R-A-P-H?

PN: Multigraph M-U-L-T-I-G-R-A-P-H. So they just wanted me to build up the department over there. So that's what I did. But I decided that I just couldn't go any further money wise, so I asked for a transfer to Houston. So I did, the company transferred me to Houston because they needed to build up shop here. I knew enough about cameras and artwork and all that, that I could add something to build that department up. So whenever they needed someone to do that they would send me. So I did that, I built up the department in Houston and then after that their office manager, or the branch manager got transferred to Atlanta, Georgia and he wanted someone to build

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up that department over there. So he took me with him, so I went up to Georgia, going from place to place with the same company. But that is when I decided that, "Well if I can do this for anybody I guess I can do this for myself." I decided to quit Addressograph Multigraph and open up my own business here in Houston.

EV: Where was your shop located?

PN: It was right across from Saint Joseph's Hospital right there on La Branch and Pearce I think it is, pretty busy section.

EV: You had that name on top that Addressograph... I remember that place.

PN: You remember that place? Well but I didn't call it Addressograph Multigraph I used to work there Addressograph Multigraph.

EV: Well what name did you have there? I saw something Addresso-something in downtown Houston. What was the name of your company?

PN: Addressograph Multigraph. But I worked there with the company when it had that name on it. But I quit working for the company and opened up my own shop and I called it Superior Photo Place.

EV: And that was on La Branch?

PN: It was on La Branch and Pearce I think it is.

EV: Okay.

PN: Across from the Pearce elevated. Okay. Later on when they decided that they needed this area to add to the elevation on the street they had to tear down those buildings and I had to move. I moved to Rusk Avenue right across from Main Street and I opened up a shop there. I was there for several years and then they had to tear those places down...

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EV: Oh my! (laughter)

PN: Because they wanted to make that area where they got the Brown what they call that... Center [George R. Brown Convention Center] over there you know parkway over there. I forgot the name of the place. I don't think much of Houston since I can't even remember the place. So I had to move again. I opened up another shop in the Fourth Ward and every time I opened up a shop I bought better equipment all the time. I had a process camera that cost \$15,000.

EV: Oh my goodness.

PN: As a matter of fact I did such good work with that camera that even NASA came over and got me a job... I got some of the finer work... because they needed, I didn't know at the time but they were making the chips to put...and you have to have real fine work for that. They tested my camera and they said, "You've got the best camera in Houston. You can do the work we want done." So they sent me a lot of work. I would do a lot of their negative work for... well when they landed on the moon and all of that.

EV: Really?

PN: They used my work. I had to name all the little craters on the moon and all that.

EV: Oh really?

PN: Where they are going to land.

EV: You plotted all of that to them?

PN: No they would send me the work. They plotted it but I copied, I printed. It had to be something that was fine enough that they could put it on their instruments. But anyway that's the kind of work that I did. So it paid off pretty good. Like I told you it was my third try at business again was on Taft Street and West Gray.

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EV: What was the other street?

PN: On the 4th Ward.

EV: Gray and what?

PN: West Gray and Taft.

EV: Taft?

PN: Yeah that's where I was.

EV: Yeah I know exactly where that is.

PN: So I was working there when I saw that people were beginning to depend not much on artwork by hand but by graphic art work. See what I mean?

EV: Yeah.

PN: Even the printing had to be done by... not by the old type anymore but by graphics. So I thought, "Heck my business isn't going to be worth nothing, I'd better get me a regular job."

EV: So did you have... but did you continue your art, like painting and stuff like this?

PN: Oh I continued painting but not for work anymore but just for my own pleasure.

EV: Did you ever sell any of your paintings?

PN: Well not really because the only painting that people most saw was mechanical stuff for advertising. I guess I never developed fine work... which you call fine art work as much that would be worthwhile for anybody to pay me for it. Because what I did mostly was portraits and things like that for individuals and they would pay me for it. But as far as painting something fancy that somebody would put on their walls, no I never did.

EV: Do you still do anything?

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PN: I still do painting but my eyes, my vision is getting to me I can't see too well. Sometimes I can't distinguish colors as clearly as I should if I want to paint. All the paintings on my wall here are mine.

EV: I was looking at them.

PN: See this is a painting I did of my wife when we were living in Atlanta, Georgia.

EV: Oh yeah.

PN: This is a picture of an old house that I painted that I saw when we were in New Mexico, a bookstand.

EV: Where did you live?

PN: In White Oak.

EV: White Oak?

PN: [inaudible] That's probably the only good house [].

EV: Where is White Oak?

PN: White Oak is right across from [].

EV: Oh yeah around [] and all that.

PN: []

EV: Yeah.

PN: I do this kind of work here.

EV: That's beautiful.

PN: That one my wife over there and that is my daughter.

EV: This is much different from your other stuff though.

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PN: Yeah. Now I sold a painting like this. I made another copy of this and somebody said, "I'll give you \$300 for it." "Oh okay." That is one that I made when I was studying art.

EV: Oh I see.

PN: That is old fashioned art work. I didn't think anyone would care too much for that type of art work.

EV: I can't—I was trying to read your father's letter, but *muy triste*. [too sad]

PN: []

EV: Beautifully written letter.

PN: Yeah. It tells you how he felt, you know. Anyway, I think my son has the original and you can read it. You were able to read it okay right?

EV: What?

PN: Were you able to read it alright?

EV: Yeah I could read it alright.

PN: Strange.

EV: To fast man! [Handing Mr. Navarro a list of nostalgic places that were once in Magnolia Park]. Do you recognize any of these places in Magnolia? This is the side, the bottom part.

PN: Oh the bottom part? Magnolia? Double Dip Ice Cream. We used to stay around there and try and get Double Dips, it was something new. Paul's Bakery. Well I probably was acquainted with Paul's Bakery but I don't recall what it was. Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Yeah I already told you that that is where I used to go to school. Yeah it

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was Avenue K. Pete Arabia and Drug Store, I remember that drug store. Casa Verde yeah. *Señor* Farfán. I was in love with his daughter.

EV: Oh yeah!

PN: (laughter). But then she told me she didn't like me so... (laughter) Yeah my aunt had her own store next to his store.

EV: Which one was that?

PN: My Aunt Victoria.

EV: I mean what store?

PN: Casa Verde.

EV: Oh, Case Verde.

PN: Case Verde was in the corner. Well my Aunt Victoria had a lot she owned next to the store and when she had outs with her husband, Julio, and she decided that he could stay in the farm if she wants because she was going to leave and open up her own place. So she had a house built up next door to the store and it opened up the store of her own. I don't know why she did it to compete with the big store in the corner but she did. People would go out there and buy whatever she had, candy and stuff like that, simple things and buy from her instead of going to the store and as far as I know she was doing alright. I think she just did it to have something to do, you know? Salón Juarez, yeah. Salón Juarez was almost across the street from my parents' home out there. Let's see... no Juarez was on Navigation. Yeah I remember that Salón Juarez. But of course you know what I am talking about, right across from...

EV: Yeah I know.

PN: Salón Juarez, isn't that what it is called?

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EV: I know this Salón Juarez.

PN: Oh on Navigation. Do you know of the one that's on Avenue J?

EV: I don't think so. Was that another dance hall?

PN: I don't really know what it is I've never been in there. They open it there I guess when I was in the service or somewhere because I've never seen that building there and now that it's there I think it said Salón Juarez. Gas station located on 74th. Partida's gas station on 74th Street. It's funny but I just got a letter not long ago, maybe about a week ago from a friend of mine. His name is Dennis Crenshaw and he told me his dad used to have a store on the corner of 75th and Navigation on the north side and on the east side of 75th. He says, "Will you make me a map that will show where my dad's store was at that location?" I said, "Okay." I made him a little rough map because he has a little TV show or something on a web site or something. So I made him a map and when he got it he says "Thanks for the map" he says "but I think you put my dad's store in the wrong place." His store was on the left side of the street instead of the right. I said "Okay here's what you do: just cut it out and fix it on the other side and make a copy of it." But I keep thinking about it and I think there used to be a service station in that corner. But anyway it's funny how they mentioned this gas station because now you say Mrs. Partida had a gas station there. I recall the Partidas. As a matter of fact I saw a Partida, one of the children of this lady in New Zealand. When I was in New Zealand this guy came to see me. He introduced himself, "I'm Partida, you know?" I said, "Oh that's right you're from the neighborhood up there." But the way he looked to me, it looked to me like he looked to me like he was a little bit out of it or drained, probably from being up there in the Guadacanal. Because he didn't seem to be quite right in the head you know. He kept

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seeing things as we would walk along. We'd be walking around he'd say, "Hold on! Hold on! Hold on!" I'd say, "What's the matter?" "Isn't there a leg laying up there on the ground?"

EV: Oh my!

PN: "What do you mean a leg?" "Yeah look, cut off above the knee." I'd say, "Partida, you're seeing things. Forget about it. Straighten your mind out." I think he was a little shell shocked or something. But that's what I remember about him. I remember I told my dad, "I met Partida over there." My dad said, "Don't get too friendly with him."

EV: Is it Pancho? Francisco?

PN: I don't remember I'd have to look at our letters and see what his name was... Bicycle shop on 74th and Canal...I kind of remember a bicycle shop out there in that area but not too sure it was in that spot. Stanaker Library. I don't know. Larose Cleaners...Franklin Elementary... Franklin Elementary I think is where my brother Gabe when to, he went to that school. Yeah it was an elementary school. Children of [] Administrators Office Maple. My brother used to say that he was glad when he got out of that elementary school because he didn't fit in the chairs anymore. The chairs for kids... "I was so big I didn't fit in those chairs anymore." (laughter).

EV: Well is there anything else that I have not asked you that you would like to put into this record?

PN: I don't know. I can't think of anything.

EV: Well I want to come back with those other ones okay?

PN: What?

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EV: I want to come back with those other pictures... *te los traigo...*

PN: And have another discussion okay.

EV: If you remember something try and write it down or something.

PN: To tell you the truth I don't remember much of anything lately, unless it comes to me.

EV: That's what I'm saying if it comes to you and you can say, "I remember that thing."

PN: According to my son he bothers me about things. See the picture of the helicopter I told you about?

EV: Yeah.

PN: Well he happened to be looking at the picture and he saw that and said, "Hey the helicopter!" Then he said to me other there the computer wants to know... I know you put the descriptions of the view of the mountains in Saipan but it said, "Why didn't you say anything about the helicopter on top?" "I forgot that I even took a picture if it." He said, "You must have been there because you took a picture of it!" I said, "I don't remember it!"

EV: I'd love to get maybe some of these things... find out where the originals are.

PN: What's that?

EV: If you can find out where some of the originals are, the original drawings.

PN: Oh yeah. Well, my son Mark has most of the originals. But I see there are some in there that I don't think he has because it is the first time I remember seeing them. If he had them I would have seen them because I gave them to him. There are some there that I don't recall giving to him. I gave him practically everything that I had.

EV: He's the one in Galveston?

PN: But he lives in Galveston.

EV: Well, that's OK, I'll visit him in Galveston. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me.

Transcriber this is the end of Interview

