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Oral History Project of Colton, CA - 04/25/14

Dr. Rivera: Good afternoon, my name is Dr. Tom Rivera, I'm a retired administrator from Cal State San Bernardino, and [this is a continuation of our] oral history project of South Colton. Today is April 25th, 2014, it's about 1 - 1:30 p.m., and we are [recording] this afternoon on the 4th floor of the Pfau Library here at Cal State University, San Bernardino.

Our guest this afternoon is Miss Gloria Castillo. Gloria, welcome to our oral history project here at Cal State San Bernardino, and thank you very much for being with us. Also joining us is Mr. Henry Vásquez, who is part of our committee; and behind the camera is Mr. Frank Acosta, who is also part of our committee.

Gloria, did I pronounce your name right? Are you Gloria Castillo, or is there another name [you go by] because I think you mentioned: Mary?

Ms. Castillo: It's Mary Gloria.

Dr. Rivera: Mary Gloria Castillo? Okay.
And you were born and raised in Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: [Your] Grandpa came to Colton in the early 1900s because your father was born in 1906 in Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Tell us about your Dad, where did your Dad work?

Ms. Castillo: Well, he worked at Jaeger Construction Company, and he worked there for quite a long time until he retired.

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Dr. Rivera: And your Mom, you said your Mom was from Arizona and then she moved to Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: How did your Mom and Dad meet?

Ms. Castillo: Well, my Mom lived on 7th Street, and my Dad lived over the railroad tracks on 'M' Street.

Dr. Rivera: So they were just about neighbors then?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Are you the oldest in the family?

Ms. Castillo: No, the oldest was my brother but he passed away.

Dr. Rivera: And your brother's name was?

Ms. Castillo: Eduardo Castillo.

Dr. Rivera: Were there just the 2 of you?

Ms. Castillo: No, my younger sister Amelia – she passed away too.

Dr. Rivera: Alright, there were 3 of you in the family?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

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Dr. Rivera: Before working for Jaeger Construction Company, did your Father work at another [place]?

Ms. Castillo: He [had] a job selling tombstones for Frank Ricker of Riverside.

Dr. Rivera: Okay. For how long did he do that?

Ms. Castillo: Oh, actually, he would go pick oranges too, and the tombstones [job] he would do if he had time. You-know, they would send [my Father] a card and Mr. Ricker would call and [tell my Father] that they have somebody who needs you to go down there to see them about a stone.

Dr. Rivera: So perfect timing because today we're going to talk about the citrus industry – the oranges in our area: the Inland Empire, specifically, Colton. Tell me, Gloria, you graduated from Colton High School, and after that you went to business school?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: After you graduated from business school, you must have been about 20, 21, or so?

Your uncle, Evanisto Castillo, was a contractor for the packing house and also the pickers. He mentioned to you that there was an opening at the association, what was the name of the association?

Ms. Castillo: Redlands-Highland Association.

Dr. Rivera: [What was the purpose for this association, or what were they in charge of?]

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Ms. Castillo: The packing house.

Dr. Rivera: What area did they cover, Gloria?

Ms. Castillo: Redlands, East Highland, I think Riverside, and I think that's it.

Dr. Rivera: So mostly the Inland Empire, *verdad*?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Redlands, Highland, maybe Rialto, Colton, and also much of the Riverside area.

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Tell me, how did you get the position, Gloria?

Ms. Castillo: My uncle told my Dad that they had an opening there. I was working at March Air Base, so my Dad called me and he told me that my uncle said I should go because they need somebody there. So the next day I went, they asked me [questions about things that I knew how to do], so they hired me – and I started working for them the next day.

Dr. Rivera: What was your position with them, Gloria?

Ms. Castillo: Payroll clerk.

Dr. Rivera: Because at business school you were an accountant?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

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Dr. Rivera: So that was kind of an easy one?

Ms. Castillo: Oh yes, it was.

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Tell me, what were your responsibilities? What were you in charge of?

Ms. Castillo: Ok well, I was in charge of making out the payroll; balancing it out; and then making the checks for each foreman who had their groups. They would bring in their slips... we had to make sure the count was the same that we had for the pickers.

Dr. Rivera: Okay, so, there were several foremen like your uncle?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: *Mas o menos* – how many foremen were there?

Ms. Castillo: There were about seven.

Dr. Rivera: Seven, and they covered the whole Inland Empire?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Basically, they would submit [slips] for the money that was owed to the pickers, and then you would make the checks for the pickers.

How many days did the pickers get paid for?

Ms. Castillo: It would be five days.

Dr. Rivera: Any Saturdays?

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Ms. Castillo: Sometimes they would work on Saturday, but mostly not that often.

Dr. Rivera: But Saturday's was when the year the harvest was ready to be picked.
Mas o menos, Gloria, how much were the pickers paid?

Ms. Castillo: They were paid by box.

Dr. Rivera: I remember when I was picking oranges, I must have been about 14, or so, years – you-know, I was a *Rata*, I couldn't climb the ladders... I would pick from the bottom of the trees [and] I would pick about 20 boxes, and I would get about a quarter (25 cents) for each box. So, the going rate must've been, for grapefruit, the going rate must've been about 15 cents, and for oranges it was about 25 cents...

You mentioned your Dad picked oranges, and you mentioned that your uncle was the one [who] got the [payroll clerk] job with the citrus company for you. I forgot the name of the citrus company?

Ms. Castillo: Redlands-Highland Association.

Dr. Rivera: How did your uncle become a contractor for the company?

Ms. Castillo: Well, my uncle would always go to Redlands or East Highland to talk to some friends that he had, and the main officer of United Packers, Mr. Bob Garcia, [would ask the workers if they knew anybody who wanted to work as a foreman to fill any vacant positions]. [My uncle's friends told him about an opening for a foreman, so my uncle went and got the job.

Dr. Rivera: As a contractor, [was he assigned one area to take the pickers to pick oranges?]

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Ms. Castillo: They had several areas of several growers. Most of them were in Redlands, some in Riverside, and in East Highland.

Dr. Rivera: So the growers belong to the Association? And they would contact the Association and make sure that their harvest was picked by somebody that represented the Association, and you had about seven foremen, and one of the foreman was your uncle, Evanisto Castillo?

Ms. Castillo: Right.

Dr. Rivera: As a contractor, what was he responsible for?

Ms. Castillo: To get the pickers to the grove on time.

Dr. Rivera: In recruiting the pickers in Colton, how did he recruit the pickers to work for him?

Ms. Castillo: The pickers knew, more or less, that he needed a crew [because] they all talked to each other. So they went to my uncle and said that they wanted to pick oranges.

Dr. Rivera: How many people were in the crew?

Ms. Castillo: Usually, it was about 10.

Dr. Rivera: 10 pickers?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

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Dr. Rivera: Besides recruiting them and hiring them, what else was he responsible for? Was he responsible for picking them up?

Ms. Castillo: No, if they lived in Colton they usually had their own transportation.

Dr. Rivera: For the most part, I remember when I picked oranges the contractor would pick us up in the different neighborhoods. Like in our place it was the Veterans Park in South Colton; and then we went around Colton and picked up different people. Did your uncle also do that?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh, he would pick up the ones that didn't have transportation early in the morning...

Dr. Rivera: How early were the pickers picked up?
(Laughter)

Ms. Castillo: They had to start working at 6:00 a.m., so you would have to pick them up around 4:30 or 5:00 a.m.

Dr. Rivera: Very early...

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: The pickers, when they got picked up, did they have their own equipment, or did the company or the association provide the fruit bags and the clippers for them?

Ms. Castillo: Yes they did; and the ladders too.

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Dr. Rivera: The bags were a good size bag, and they tell me that that bag held about 50 pounds of oranges; and if you filled one of those bags you could fill a lug of oranges or a box of oranges – and for that box of oranges you would get 25 cents.

Were there [any kinds of] contests among the workers to see who could pick more that day?

Ms. Castillo: Some of them would do that during the day... Some would pick more than others...

Dr. Rivera: In Colton, did anybody have the reputation for being the best picker?

Ms. Castillo: Not that I know of.

Dr. Rivera: For example, I interviewed Mrs. Aranda a few weeks ago and she said her husband was a *cienero*: that her husband would pick a hundred boxes a day – that's a lot of boxes.

Ms. Castillo: Yes it is.

Dr. Rivera: He must have been quite good.

Ms. Castillo: The pickers that came from Mexico would pick about 20-25 a box a day.

Dr. Rivera: But most of your pickers were from Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: The pickers from Colton that worked for your uncle, Eduardo, were they pretty reliable? Were they people that were there all the time working for him?

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Ms. Castillo: Yes, they were.

Dr. Rivera: So you would have a crew of 10 -15 pickers that would go out with your uncle every time, and would take care of the orange grove that was assigned to them?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: When they picked the oranges, did they pick them all at once, or would they go back and pick the first crop that was ripe, and go back again and pick the second crop?

Ms. Castillo: They would pick what they had to pick. They would pick a certain amount that they had to pick that day – and they wouldn't go back. [But sometimes] they would go back

Dr. Rivera: Okay. Now, you mentioned that your uncle had a good reliable [group] of pickers, [did any] of these pickers involve their sons to pick with them? Were families involved in the harvesting of oranges?

Ms. Castillo: Usually they didn't want to because they were afraid the kids would get hurt, or something, and they would be liable. So usually, like on Saturdays, if they wanted to pick, 1 or 2 would go... there would be *ratas*...

Dr. Rivera: [But] they would be protective of them from climbing those trees?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh.

Dr. Rivera: Do you remember how high the ladders were? Because I remember your uncle would tie a trailer behind his truck and then put all the ladders on there.

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Ms. Castillo: I think they were 16 [feet high].

Dr. Rivera: 16 footers made out of wood?

Ms. Castillo: Some were made out of wood and later on they had the ones made out of aluminum.

Dr. Rivera: You said they would start at 6 a.m. and work until 12n?

Ms. Castillo: [At noon] they would have their lunch.

Dr. Rivera: I remember your uncle, or somebody who worked for your uncle, would load the trucks with the boxes of oranges to take to the packing house – and that person would start the fire.

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, to have their lunch... I used to do that... I used to [start the fires] when we were picking up north in Edison because I was a contractor.

Dr. Rivera: Here in the orange groves, somebody would start the fire with orange wood, and they would let the fire reduce to ambers, and then they would heat their tacos with the ambers.

What did they put inside their tortillas?

Ms. Castillo: *Frijoles*, beans, chili con carne, chorizo...

Dr. Rivera: And a little bit of huevos, and they would put those tacos on top of the ambers, and when you took them off they were nice and hot, and crunchy and delicious, *verdad?*

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

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Dr. Rivera: They were great!

Anyway, how many years did you work for the Association?

Ms. Castillo: 35 years.

Dr. Rivera: You were there a long time. The Association headquarters was where?

Ms. Castillo: [Because the Colton location was being torn down,] they got an office in Redlands – on Redland Blvd.

Dr. Rivera: Was the name of the organization the same?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh. Redlands-Highland Association.

Dr. Rivera: Okay.

When you mentioned earlier that your Dad originally started working as an orange picker, many of our areas like East Highland, all of Redlands, [many] Mexicans settled in East Highland, and [many] Mexicans settled in almost any part of Southern California because of the citrus industry. They could get a job easily...

Did you work all year around?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, well, it would stop in October; and then they would send us up north. My uncle and aunt went up north...

Dr. Rivera: How long did you go up north? *Pero*, what months?

Ms. Castillo: We would go after every season. We would go in November and December – and I think the crops started around January – about 3 months every year.

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Dr. Rivera: Here in the Inland Empire we were picking from January until October?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: So it was almost year-around?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: So people that were orange pickers had a job for almost 10 months?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: So, they could support a family.

Besides your uncle, were there any other contractors in Colton?

Juan Colunga, who lived close to your house was also a contractor.

Ms. Castillo: (Inaudible) He could have been from another packing house.

Dr. Rivera: So there were several packing houses in the area?

Ms. Castillo: There were 12 packing houses.

Dr. Rivera: And each of them would hire their contractors to go out and harvest the crop for the different ranchers?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: It was a big industry.

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Mr. Vásquez: Did you say that there was an office in Colton for a while, and then it was shut down? Or maybe I misunderstood.

Ms. Castillo: No, the labor camp shut down and they put our office in Redlands.

Mr. Vásquez: Okay, what was the labor camp, I'm not sure what that is?

Ms. Castillo: That's where all the pickers were housed that were coming from Mexico – they housed them there: they had their doctors, their food, they had this man named Rafael, [who] used to make money orders for them to send home.

Dr. Rivera: Was this part of the *Precedo* Program?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: I guess, Henry, this started in 1942 and ended in 1964. But we had a lot of pickers from Mexico?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, um-hmm, we did.

Dr. Rivera: So they finally became the majority part of people who would pick the oranges.

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Okay. You mentioned that the Association would provide housing for them?

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm, at the labor camp.

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Dr. Rivera: They would have a camp, and at the camp they would have housing?

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: What other services did they provide for them?

Ms. Castillo: Their food, their medical...

Dr. Rivera: Did they cook for them?

Ms. Castillo: Oh-yes, they had a cook...

Dr. Rivera: In reading about the harvest industries in Southern California, many of the associations would build housing for their employees, but in this case, in this area, the only one that you know was the *Precedos*? But not for local?

Ms. Castillo: Not for locals...

Dr. Rivera: Not for local people? Yeah.

Mr. Vásquez: What sort of housing was it? Were they in actual buildings?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh.

Mr. Vásquez: Okay, not tents or anything?

Ms. Castillo: No, no, no, it wasn't tents.

Dr. Rivera: Did they have a general store at these camps, Gloria, where people could buy...?

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Ms. Castillo: Yes, they did. That's where the man, Rafael, was and he took care of [the general store].

Dr. Rivera: What kind of store did they have?

Ms. Castillo: They had shaving supplies, cigars, [and as I said earlier,] he [provided] money orders, and all that.

Dr. Rivera: What about clothing?

Ms. Castillo: Usually, they would have [clothing items]...

Dr. Rivera: How about cigarettes, candy, gum?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, all that.

Dr. Rivera: Anyway, as far as you know, the Association or the ranchers did not provide housing in the local area for our local pickers?

Ms. Castillo: No.

Dr. Rivera: Our local pickers were from Colton – residents of Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, they had their own transportation.

Dr. Rivera: And they had their own houses, and their own families here.

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm.

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Dr. Rivera: How long was the contract for the *Precedos*? Did they stay here the full 10 months – from January to October? Were they allowed to go home and come back?

Ms. Castillo: No, if they went home they wouldn't come back.

Dr. Rivera: When they stayed here and there was no work during those 2 months (November & December), what did they do?

Ms. Castillo: Well, they would just stay – they wouldn't do anything, unless they had a car because East Highland was kind of far to go to town. Sometimes ladies would come and pick them up to take them to town.

Dr. Rivera: So they had entertainment?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: They would go to the local happenings in Colton, in San Bernardino, Redlands areas?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah. Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Did any of the *Precedos* stay in the area and marry our local girls?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Really? A lot or a few of them?

Ms. Castillo: The ones I knew of were about 5 of them who stayed and married.

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Dr. Rivera: Did they live in Colton?

Ms. Castillo: In Redlands, mostly; they stayed here and got their visas

Dr. Rivera: That was a good way for them to become part of our society...
From those 12 packing houses, that you mentioned earlier, [they provided] jobs for people that were foremen and people that worked in the office of the Association.
How many of you worked in the office?

Ms. Castillo: I think there were 4 or 5 that worked in the office, and we had Mr. Garcia who was our boss.

Dr. Rivera: Boss in what respect?

Ms. Castillo: He was the boss of the office.

Dr. Rivera: Were there generally females that worked in the packing houses?

Ms. Castillo: No, it was both.

Dr. Rivera: Were they on an assembly line?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah. Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Do you have an idea of how many people were working at the packing houses? *Mas o menos?*

Ms. Castillo: I would say about 15.

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Dr. Rivera: After they crated and packed the oranges to be shipped, you had another crew of people who would ship them or take them down to the railroad?

Ms. Castillo: The trucks would come for them.

Dr. Rivera: And then they would ship them out to wherever they were going. That's a big operation – a huge operation with lots of jobs.

What about in the Association, did they have people that would sell the oranges to different places around the country? For example, a juicer? Somebody who would make juices?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Or somebody that would sell the oranges to the grocery stores?

Ms. Castillo: No, not to the stores but to a juice company, or something like that.

Dr. Rivera: I remember, who did those labels? Was it the Association?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah. Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Did they have an artist who created those labels?

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: The artist would advertise oranges from California and also the place where they would pick these wonderful delicious oranges?

So how many artists did they have, 1 or 2?

Ms. Castillo: I don't know, they worked in the packing house also.

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Dr. Rivera: *Que mas?* What else can I ask you about the orange industry?

First of all, a lot of people were employed by them. Secondly, back in the early 1900's and up to the 1960s, we were the major producers of oranges in the world. Did you ever hear that?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: *Que de decían?* What did they brag about?

Ms. Castillo: They would talk about it in the office...

Dr. Rivera: What would they say?

Ms. Castillo: They would say that the packing houses were delighted that we were doing all the work, and as long as there were oranges we would work. But if the orange crops/groves would ever [stop producing/growing] – that was it.

Dr. Rivera: When the industry started, everybody thought the oranges would last forever and ever. That's why they decided to put in a lot of investment into it, *verdad?*

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Because you also had the keepers of the orchards. People who worked year-around taking care of the orchards.

What about when it got cold, Gloria?

Ms. Castillo: We'd have to go out and light the smudge pots...

Dr. Rivera: What months: November, December?

Why did they have to keep the oranges at a certain temperature?

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Ms. Castillo: So they wouldn't go bad.

Dr. Rivera: So they wouldn't freeze and go bad?

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Did they employ a lot of people to go out there early in the morning...?

Ms. Castillo: Usually, it would be the foremen who they would call, and the foremen would take their pickers to help.

Dr. Rivera: Like your uncle – your uncle would be called [to go out to] 'X' Ranch and light up the [smudge pots].
How early would they start doing that?

Ms. Castillo: Well, they would go out around 3 o'clock in the morning.

Dr. Rivera: And they would be done around what time?

Ms. Castillo: Well they would light them up [around 3 a.m.], and then they would come home around 6:00 a.m.

Dr. Rivera: So they would take 3 or 4 hours, or half day...

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm, to light all the [smudge pots] in the groves, especially if the groves were large.

Dr. Rivera: [Because they got paid by how many boxes,] how did they get paid being part of the smudging crew?

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Ms. Castillo: They would pay them by the hour – and we would make out their checks. [The foremen] would give us a list of who went out...

Dr. Rivera: *Mas o menos*, how much would they get paid for that?

Ms. Castillo: I'm not too sure, it could be about \$60 – it depends on how many days they went out.

Dr. Rivera: Maybe for 3 days they'd get 60 bucks, which is about \$20 per session?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Well, Gloria, it seems like your uncle was one of the main foremen in the orange industry for Colton.

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: And he influenced a lot of people that lived in Colton by giving them all jobs. Almost year-around jobs, steady jobs where they [could] make a livable wage where they could pay their rent or buy a house, or purchase groceries, and take care of their families. Is that a good summation of what your uncle did?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Because your uncle was very popular.

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, he was.

Dr. Rivera: What made him popular?

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Ms. Castillo: He would be home and his pickers would go sit with him, and they would talk. I would make food for them...

Dr. Rivera: So your uncle would have his house open to everybody and anybody, eh?

Ms. Castillo: Or, if they needed some money, or something.

Dr. Rivera: Was he generous to them?

Ms. Castillo: Oh-yes.

Dr. Rivera: ...He would take care of his workers?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, he would.

Dr. Rivera: And they were very loyal to him?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Your uncle's house became a center for many of the orange pickers from South Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: He influenced many of them...
Now, he lived almost on the corner of 'L' and 7th?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm.

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Dr. Rivera: Was he in any way connected with the church because the church was just across the street?

Ms. Castillo: No, not my uncle, but my aunt went to church.

Dr. Rivera: Your aunt was very religious?

But [your uncle] took care of business and made sure that he had work.

Was he involved in any other business besides being a contractor [in the orange industry?]

Ms. Castillo: No, uh-uh.

Dr. Rivera: How many years was he a contractor?

Ms. Castillo: [I don't know]

Dr. Rivera: When was he born?

Ms. Castillo: 1906, no wait, 1905.

Dr. Rivera: And you were born [around the same time I was] maybe in 1939, or so?

Ms. Castillo: 1939.

Dr. Rivera: And he was already a contractor [by that time]?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: So he was a citrus person for very, very long time?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm, yes he was.

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Dr. Rivera: I would also like to talk about you. You grew up in what part of Colton?

Ms. Castillo: On 7th and 'L' Street.

Dr. Rivera: Many of the activities were there on 7th Street. You had the church there, the grocery stores, the restaurants, and the *panaderia*. Your aunt, Lola, she had the *tortillaria*? Tell me about how she got a *tortillaria* started there in South Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Well my aunt and her daughter decided [they wanted to start a business] because my grandma wanted to do something... [Since the women in my family] knew how to make tortillas... [My aunt decided to open a *tortillaria*]. It was good for quite a long time.

Dr. Rivera: Do you remember how old you were when they started?

Ms. Castillo: I think I was about 5 years old.

Dr. Rivera: So the early 1940s is when she started the *tortillaria*.
Who made the tortillas?

Ms. Castillo: My Mom and my three aunts...

Dr. Rivera: And besides the tortillas, what else did they make?

Ms. Castillo: They sold *menudo* and *burritos*...

Dr. Rivera: Did you help make the *menudo*?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, my grandma would tell us that we had to come [to the *tortillaria*] at a certain time to cut the *menudo*. There was about 6 of us...

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Dr. Rivera: 6 grandkids?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: When did you sell the *menudo*?

Ms. Castillo: Sundays after church.

Dr. Rivera: Why did she close down the tortilla factory?

Ms. Castillo: Well, my grandmother got sick. [My aunt] could have gone on with it but she didn't want to anymore... so they closed it.

Dr. Rivera: I remember that it was a very popular tortilla store because they had very, very good tortillas...

Ms. Castillo: ...And Mexican candy...

Mr. Vásquez: It was the best, yeah.

Ms. Castillo: We had this man who came from Highgrove – he brought the paper, the piñón... [I remember] my grandmother had to put some *menudo* aside for him because he would bring the paper on Mondays.

Dr. Rivera: She knew how to butter him up...

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Also, Gloria, you had an uncle, Pete Luque?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

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Dr. Rivera: Pete Luque was one of the first people who was involved in politics, he was one of the first representatives from South Colton who belonged to the City Council. Because before that in 1941, we had Johnny Martinez who was in City Council. Then, your uncle, Pete Luque, Sr. ran for City Councilman and won. Tell me, how are you related to Pete Luque?

Ms. Castillo: His wife is my aunt—she is my mother's sister.

Dr. Rivera: Your aunt's name is?

Ms. Castillo: Edmelinda.

Dr. Rivera: She was your mom's sister?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah...

Dr. Rivera: Because he was on the council, did the family become good supporters of him?

Ms. Castillo: Oh-yes.

Dr. Rivera: So, through him, the family became involved in Colton politics?

Ms. Castillo: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: What were some of the issues or topics or projects that Pete Luque, Sr. was interested in improving? Was he interested in improving services in South Colton? Because it was hard to get services in South Colton.

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Ms. Castillo: Yeah, uh-huh. He built the library that's in Cesar's Park, I think that's the [name of the park]... The Luque Center [there] is in my uncle's name.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, the Veterans Park in South Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Oh that's right, they named the whole center: the library and everything else there in Veterans Park after Pete Luque, Sr. It's the Pete Luque Center; and that services South Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh.

Dr. Rivera: [The center is located] on 'O' and Pine Street.

Pete Luque, Sr. had a son, Pete Luque, Jr., and Pete Luque, Jr. was born and raised in Colton. He went to high school and graduated from high school, and he was very active in high school. He went to San Bernardino Valley College, and then he went to a seminary to become a priest. After he became a priest, he was assigned to different cities, and he finally came to Colton.

[What do you recall that he did in Colton?]

Ms. Castillo: Well, he told the bishop that we needed a new church because the church that we had was too old and [it didn't hold that many people.] But the bishop said no – so my cousin talked to the people, and they all got together, they tore down the old church and built the church that is there now. The people from the town [did this]...

Dr. Rivera: So, Pete junior, your cousin, did not get permission from the bishop to build that church?

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Ms. Castillo: No, uh-uh.

Dr. Rivera: He was a rebel!

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: So he just decided that we needed a new church... Did he have a committee...?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh. He had people that did all the construction, he had people that did all the painting, and people that put up everything... The whole town helped to build that church.

Dr. Rivera: All of South Colton helped build the church?

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Do you remember who was part of the committee? Was it Manuel Padilla?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, he was one of them; and my Dad.

Dr. Rivera: And your Dad's name was?

Ms. Castillo: Albert Castillo. They called him Berto.

Dr. Rivera: Berto! I know him as Berto Castillo. Who else was on that committee?

Ms. Castillo: I can't remember who else but I know there were several of them...

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Dr. Rivera: So it was a community project that was put together by your cousin, Pete Luque, Jr., the priest?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: When did he start the project? When did the construction start?

Ms. Castillo: March 14, 1962. I was there about 2 years after he was ordained.

Dr. Rivera: Oh-so, it took about 2 years to build the church?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh.

Dr. Rivera: In the meantime, Gloria, where did they hold services?

Ms. Castillo: They would have to go to different [churches] like Immaculate Conception...

Dr. Rivera: Did they ever rent the Wilson School to have services there?

Ms. Castillo: No

Mr. Vásquez: I remember going to Mass Wilson School.

Ms. Castillo: You did?

Mr. Vásquez: Yeah, during the time that they were building the church.

Dr. Rivera: How old were you Henry?

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Mr. Vásquez: I don't know, I was probably in my 20s.

Dr. Rivera: So they did have services at Wilson Elementary School?

Mr. Vásquez: Yeah, they used the auditorium...

Dr. Rivera: Was Father Luque presiding over the services?

Mr. Vásquez: I think he was... That I don't remember.

I remember that they had the folk choir there and they sang all of those modern sort-of songs because they didn't have an organ anymore... Some of the people that still sing for San Salvador were in that group. Arturo Cayenne was one of those people – actually, I don't think he's in the group anymore, but back then he was. You-know, they sang with their guitars, and stuff like that. Later on when the church was built there was like a folk mass, and then there was like the traditional mass, you-know, with Terry Constant.

Ms. Castillo: Ah-yeah, she's still there.

Mr. Vásquez: [There was also] the Spanish mass, I think it was the early one—like around 7:30 in the morning, something like that.

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, they still have them, it's at 8 o'clock. They have the bilingual [mass]... They have 3 masses: 8 a.m., 10 a.m., and 12n.

Dr. Rivera: Gloria, when you were young growing up in Colton, has there been a change in Colton since you were young – in comparing it to today? Like you mentioned the [church] services, I don't remember them having bilingual services when I was young.

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Ms. Castillo: Well, actually, [back] then they would also have [the mass] in Latin, I remember that.

Dr. Rivera: Now, tell us about the difference in Colton when you were young and [Colton] today? Are there any differences, anything changed?

Ms. Castillo: Well, to me it's the same. I don't think there are any changes or differences from when I was growing up.

Dr. Rivera: The people are the same?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, [because] you know all the people around...

Dr. Rivera: Yeah, because you still live in the barrio of La Reserva? Is that your barrio, now?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Rivera: I don't know why they called it La Reserva, but it was close to where the cement plant is.

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: Maybe a couple of blocks from your house, *verdad?*

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: And many of the people that live in La Reserva, in that part of Colton, they worked at the cement plant?

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Ms. Castillo: They did work there but now it's closed.

Dr. Rivera: Anyway, is there anything that I've missed, Gloria, [anything else] that we should talk about?

Henry, is there any other...?

Mr. Vásquez: I noticed one question that we didn't touch on... When did the orange industry start slowing down? I was curious about [that – and] if you might mention when that started happening?

Ms. Castillo: When it started slowing down we had a trucking company... and I think it had something to do with the war...

Dr. Rivera: It was after the war when people saw how wonderful Colton was and they all wanted to move to Colton. That's when the housing boom started in the Inland Empire; and then the people and the builders needed land to build houses. So, where was the land located? The orange groves—

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, they tore down the orange groves.

Dr. Rivera: So they bought the orange groves, tore down the orange groves and built houses. When did that start? Was that in the 60s, mid 60s? Because the Precedo Program stopped in '64 – so, I would imagine that's when everything started.

Mr. Vásquez: When did they build the junior high?

Ms. Castillo: We were the last class to graduate from Wilson, and that was in '53, and by then they had already finished building [the school] in '52.

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Mr. Vásquez: Weren't they already starting to tear down the orange groves around then?

Ms. Castillo: By then, yes, um-hmm

Mr. Vásquez: But then, it just got worse and worse didn't it?

Ms. Castillo: Yes it did.

Dr. Rivera: Well for the builders it just got better and better.
(Laughter)

Mr. Acosta: Did the Redlands-Highland Association provide oranges to the Pacific Fruit Exchange?

Ms. Castillo: I couldn't tell you.

Mr. Acosta: They must have had other contractors provide the fruit...

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh. Because they had some up north that would take and bring the food down to the packing houses.

Dr. Rivera: Because most of the packing houses were next to the railroad tracks.

Ms. Castillo: Yes, um-hmm...

Dr. Rivera: So, the food came either by trucks or railroad to the packing houses; and the packing houses would sort them, pack them, and ship them out; and the railroad tracks were next to them.

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Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh.

Dr. Rivera: Was this true with most of the packing houses?

Ms. Castillo: Yes, uh-huh. (Inaudible)

Dr. Rivera: So you don't see any difference in Colton, now?

Ms. Castillo: No I don't. To me it's the same.

Mr. Acosta: I understand a lot of the pickers, or at least, a lot of the families that were involved in the picking never had a shortage of food at home?

Ms. Castillo: No.

Mr. Acosta: [They were always] able to take some of the crop home.

Ms. Castillo: Yeah, sometimes they'd come around with their boxes, you-know, now they come in with boxes selling them, but those they steal from the groves.

Dr. Rivera: Well, you-know, that's always happened – you'd bring a big sack of oranges from work and you'd sell them. But nowadays we don't hardly have any orange groves.

Now, people will go out at night and pick their oranges, [from the few orange groves around], and sell them.

Mr. Acosta: It's the packing houses, I guess, where they sorted out the blemished oranges? And those people got to take some of that fruit?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah. Um-hmm.

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Dr. Rivera: Well in our case, Frank, when I was a little kid in the '40s, those oranges would be thrown away in the dump; and our house was half a block away from the dump. First, we'd go on top of the big orange piles and we'd play war – we'd throw oranges at each other. Afterward, we'd pick the best oranges and take them home; so we never hurt for oranges.

Dr. Rivera: Well, Gloria, I asked you [about whether] you've seen any differences in the way things were when you were young, and the way things are now? You mentioned to me that your kids are off and running: one lives in Minnesota. In the old days nobody left Colton.

Ms. Castillo: I know.
(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: [You have another kid] who lives in Costa Mesa. Again, nobody would leave Colton in the old days – everybody stayed in Colton.

Ms. Castillo: My youngest daughter was working in Santa Ana and she was living [in Colton]. She finally got to the point where she said, Mom, I can't do this, I'm going to get an apartment [in Santa Ana].

Dr. Rivera: Do you still have lots of relatives in Colton?

Ms. Castillo: Ah-yeah, um-hmm.

Dr. Rivera: We found out earlier before the interview that Henry is related to you. How is Henry related to you?

Ms. Castillo: I just know my Dad told us that Margarita Gomez...

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Dr. Rivera: Henry's grandmother...

Ms. Castillo: Um-hmm, he said that they were related to us, but he didn't tell us how.

Dr. Rivera: You found a lost cousin this afternoon, Henry.

(Laughter)

Mr. Vásquez: I'll ask around and see if I can find out any information.

Ms. Castillo: When we used to gather [together] or something – he used to tell us [who are cousins were]...

Dr. Rivera: I would imagine when your grandparents came to Colton they had relatives in Colton that helped them settle in—and they came here in the early 1900s?

Ms. Castillo: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: Gloria, is there anything that I've missed? I have a list of questions here and I wanted to take advantage of [this time with you] because I know you worked in the orange industry. And your uncle, Evanisto Castillo Eduardo, [which] is what they called him, he was very instrumental in working with the packing houses, and he was very instrumental in getting jobs for people. Those were the areas we talked about and we covered them very well.

But I had no idea that your cousin, Pete Luque, Jr., was an activist, and that he built the church without permission.

Henry, can you think of any other questions that we missed?

Mr. Vásquez: No, I've looked through the questions and it seems like you've covered them.

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Dr. Rivera: Gloria, is there anything else you would like to mention to us?

Ms. Castillo: No. I guess, like you said, you covered everything.

Dr. Rivera: Well, again, thank you very much for being with us this afternoon, especially on a Friday afternoon, and you taking time out... to talk with us in helping with our oral history project.

Dr. Rivera: Henry, you've been a loyal to committee member, you always show up – so thank you, Henry. And, Frank, behind the camera is making sure that we get this information for prosperity – so thank you, Frank, and thank you everybody.

Transcribed by Pat Ricé-Daniels, Library Services Specialist-1, Special Collections