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Oral History Project of Colton, CA – 11/21/13

Dr. Rivera: Good morning, I'm Dr. Tom Rivera. I'm the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, Emeritus, here at Cal State San Bernardino (California State University, San Bernardino – CSUSB). Today is November the 21st, 2013, Thursday, and we're in the Pfau Library at CSUSB. Today's guests on the extreme right we have Mr. Frank Gonzalez. Frank, welcome this morning.

Mr. Gonzalez: Thank you Tom.

Dr. Rivera: Next to Frank we have Mr. Saul Duran. Saul, welcome.

Mr. Duran: Good morning.

Dr. Rivera: Then, next to Saul we have Dr. Luis Gómez. Luis, welcome to our discussion this morning.

Dr. Gómez: Good morning.

Dr. Rivera: And next to Luis we have Mr. Ernie Colunga. Ernie, welcome to our discussion this morning.

Mr. Colunga: Thank you for having me.

Dr. Rivera: Our discussion this morning will be about scouting in South Colton in the 40s, 50s, and 60s.

Frank, did I miss your year? Were you in the 60s or 70s being involved as Assistant Scoutmaster?

Mr. Gonzalez: Assistant Scoutmaster, the late 60s into early 70s.

Dr. Rivera: Okay, so we'll cover the late 60s and the early 70s with your discussion. Saul, you were the Assistant Scoutmaster back in the mid-40s, I think?

Mr. Duran: 50s

Dr. Rivera: The mid-50s?

Mr. Duran: Yes, in the mid-50s. I joined in 1945.

Dr. Rivera: Okay. Tell us about your experience as a Scout and then also as a Scoutmaster. You said you joined Troop 45 in 1945?

Mr. Duran: Um-hm. The way I heard about the Boys Scouts... was back in 1945. There was a boys club in South Colton at Wilson School [on] Monday nights where it was open to all the boys who wanted to participate in boxing, playing basketball, playing "Steal-the-bacon"... games to keep us occupied for a couple of hours. It was run by Mr. Ray Abril... [who opened] up his home for neighborhood kids to go out there in his backyard and play basketball, boxing, and watch television. Again, to keep the kids out of trouble.

I heard that Mr. Ray Abril was a schoolmaster in South Colton for a Boy Scout Troop 45. My little gang of friends heard about it, and we were invited, so [we decided to] go see what [was] happening. So we went to Wilson School in the auditorium and sat in the back and listened to what was going on about scouting. Before we went home we joined the Boy Scouts – we joined Troop 45. At the time, no one in Troop 45 had any Boy Scout apparel, you-know, the hats, the shirts, the short pants and stockings. Nobody had anything like that, but upon joining, Mr. Abril would give you a Boy Scout neckerchief—paid for out of his own pocket; you-know, with a slipknot – everybody got that upon joining. And that's the only thing we had as far as apparel for Boy Scouts.

We went on camp outs: Mr. Abril had a pickup truck, we would load up 12 to 15 boys in back of the truck and drive us anywhere. Our Assistant Scoutmaster was Ray Gonzales.

Dr. Rivera: Okay, I remember Ray, yes.

Mr. Duran: Then he joined the National Guard; and around '52, the National Guard was activated and he went to Korea. That's when I took over after Ray Gonzales, as Assistant Scoutmaster.

Dr. Rivera: So going back, you mentioned that Ray was kind of a director of recreation for kids in South Colton – where he opened his house and he had a room at the Garfield School [where] he would provide activities for kids in South Colton?

Mr. Duran: Boys club... around the neighborhood, yes.

Dr. Rivera: Do you remember some of the guys, some of your gang that went with you [during your enjoyment with] the scouts? Do you remember any of those gentlemen?

Mr. Duran: Yeah, we were all around 12 years old at the time, and it was Daniel Ayala, Albert de la Rosa, and Albert Negrete. We were about 2 years older than the Boy Scouts that were there when we joined—we were a little bit older. So our friendship was 2 years older than the other Boy Scouts; some of those names may not be familiar...

Dr. Rivera: I know all of them...

Mr. Duran: Yeah, we all knew everybody in South Colton.

Dr. Rivera: *Quien mas* besides those 3?

Mr. Duran: Felix Soto... We had 3 sections in Colton: one to the east of 5th Street where we lived – that was Las Palomas, in the barrios. To the west was La Reserva, I lived in the middle. We didn't have a nickname for our neighborhood, but those were 3 separate neighborhoods: La Reserva, Las Palomas, and the 5th Street guys. La Calle Cinco...

Mr. Colunga: *La calle el nikle...*

(Laughter)

Mr. Duran: But we all hung around together; then I started a softball team in my area. Las Palomas and La Reserva organized their own softball team, and we used to play each other. [We] never got into trouble [or] into fights with each other. We played softball against neighborhoods – it was wonderful. It was a different world.

Mr. Colunga: Was Ernie Garcia still in the scouts? I know he was a scout for a while...

Mr. Duran: Garcia? Yes, uh-huh...

Mr. Colunga: How about Gabby Gomez?

Mr. Duran: Gabe? I think it was after I was...

Mr. Colunga: Was he in there? Was he in the troop?

Mr. Duran: Yeah, sure he was... I think every young boy in South Colton was at one time because Troop 45 went from the 40s to the 60s, right? That was a long time, so a lot of young boys traveled right through that at one time or another.

Dr. Rivera: Alright gentlemen, we have a new visitor [who] just came in, Mr. Rudy Luna. Rudy, welcome to our discussion this morning... I'm glad you're here and we're delighted to see you.

Saul is talking about his early experiences when he was in Troop 45. Saul, we were talking about you taking over the Troop. What year did you take over as the Assistant Scoutmaster? You said you took over because Ray Gonzales got drafted to go to Korea, and then you took over in his place.

Mr. Duran: Yeah, Ray went to Korea around '51, '52 – that's when I took over.

We had 3 camping areas in Blue Mountain that we rotated. We used to go camping about once a month, and I'd take out the boys.

Ray would take us up in the [San Bernardino] mountains to Camp Arataba in his truck; and we used to go to Whitewater anytime we had a long distance to travel, Ray Abril would take us in his truck.

For Blue Mountain, I would take them for the weekend; we had 3 camping areas and we had a name for each one of them: one was Spring 45; the other was Bamboo Cave; and Skunk Hollow... Each campsite had a name and a story behind it that we all fabricated. But those were our 3 campsites in Blue Mountain.

Dr. Rivera: Now, Blue Mountain is not too far from Colton?

Mr. Duran: No, but if you walk it, it's quite a distance...

(Laughter)

Dr. Gómez: ... And we did...

Mr. Duran: That was all hiking. When we went camping we would all gather at Garfield School because we had a clubhouse there that the Garfield School let us use for our meetings and that's where we would meet. Then we would inspect all the scouts [and] make sure they had good clothing and [make sure they] would be properly outfitted for

the weekend; and then, we would start across Santa Ana River, then through Cooley Ranch, which there was nothing there – no shopping centers, nothing. Then we would come up to what was called Jap Hill – the mountain that goes straight up. Nowadays, you'll see the houses along the ridge in Grand Terrace, well that was Jap Hill – that's what it was called then. We called it 'Poopop' Hill because it was hard to go... straight up with your backpack and everything... [Yeah, we went up] 'Poopop' Hill one at a time until we reached the top – and there was the base of Blue Mountain. We'd keep hiking up Blue Mountain halfway – just like that mountain out there (he points out the window at one of the mountains that surrounds the back of the campus) and then we would walk along the middle of the mountain all the way around it, [until] we came to Skunk Hollow. That's where we would pitch our tents in a big circle and build our campfire in the middle. [We'd make] popcorn, tell jokes, stories, [and tell some] spooky stories to try to scare somebody. We did our own cooking; everybody cooked for themselves. Scrambled eggs in the morning with bacon and beans. [You'd] open up your little can of Rosarito beans... everybody fended for themselves.

That was part of the teachings that everybody would get out of it: how to cook for yourself; [how to change your clothes in the morning]; how to maintain and clean yourself, and all that. It was fun. We would come back the following month and do it all over again at another campsite: Bamboo Cave or Spring 45. In the wintertime, Ray would take us up in the mountains to Camp Arataba. It was a beautiful campsite with cabins all around; it reminded me of an old cavalry Army camp with snow – about 3 feet. It was an experience...

Mr. Ray Abril touched a lot of us in our lives; he provided for a lot of boys. I've often thought, when thinking back about Mr. Abril, what he did for us because those were our golden years, our formative years when we were growing up. I've often thought, what would have become of us? How would our lives have changed if Mr. Abril had not been there to guide us, to shape our lives, and help us to become good citizens through scouting? All of us, everyone – not only [for those in] scouting, [but he opened up his home for all of us in the neighborhoods.] For all of us whose lives Mr. Abril touched, we

all owe him a great debt of gratitude, and we will never be able to repay him. I've always said, thank you Mr. Abril from Troop 45, the Boy Scouts of America.

Dr. Rivera: So he laid a good foundation for all of us.

Mr. Duran: He did. Our lives would have been different.

Mr. Luna: I think so...

Mr. Duran: Very different. I don't know where we'd be today if we hadn't associated ourselves with Mr. Abril.

Mr. Luna: You-know, one thing about it, you would figure, [whether or not you're a superstitious man, that actually the man upstairs put him there.] Because we weren't troublemakers, we were just kids who wanted to have a good time. [We played] ball, basketball, [went] hiking, or whatever, but somewhere along the way I've always thought that somebody put him there. Wasn't he from Spain? He was from Spain, I think.

Mr. Duran: He had to be because Chicanos in South Colton weren't over 6 feet tall like he was.

(Laughter)

Mr. Duran: He was a big man...

Mr. Colunga: I think he was part Portuguese.

Dr. Rivera: So anyway, Saul, he really laid a good cornerstone in our foundation [and] for the kids that were growing up during that era in South Colton.

Mr. Duran: Bless him for everybody...

Dr. Gómez: Not only did he provide the scouting principles that we went by, supposedly, that were written up in the book, so-to-speak, but he provided guidance through example. That – I think had a lot to do with what we became because we followed his lead.

Dr. Rivera: You mentioned the books, Luis. You brought the old book there...

Dr. Gómez: Yeah, the Boy Scout Handbook, which I acquired probably the first year that I joined, which had to be about 1951 or 52. The other one is a field book: one that you can refer to when you're out in the campgrounds. You-know, the survival skills, cooking, setting up your camp, the camp fire, using only two matches for lighting the campfire, or using some of the old [methods like] rubbing the sticks together, or flint, you-know, that kind of thing. [All which were] very useful – the survival skills part is just amazing; and I think even in this urban society now – we still use some of those skills.

Mr. Luna: The part I used to like was when Ray Abril had those sections.

And like you just said, when we were having breakfast in the morning he was the first one up, and you could actually smell the bacon and eggs and everything around... and you should've seen some of the guys trying to sit around him. And he would always say: "Hey, all of you cook your own, I'm not gonna give you any of mine because I'm cooking my own." But I think way down deep he would look at our faces and he would share. You-know-what-I'm-trying-to-say, it's just like you said a little while ago, we were little kids... and I think [he would act like he didn't want to share his food with us], and all of a sudden – he would share. It was a little piece of bacon, or something... (Laughter) The only thing bad about it, he made one mistake – that every time we went camping the guys new that he was going to give [us] something—not much...

(Loud static in the audio)

Dr. Rivera: ...Not only his time but also his house and his food...

Mr. Duran: That was his life, scouting young kids, teenagers, all the neighborhood kids – he lived for that.

Mr. Luna: (Inaudible) we're in 2013... but I don't think there'll ever be another one like him. We've had leaders, and like Ernie here, you were one, at that time you were a leader. But my point is, from this stand point: [Ray]...was there... and like Tommy said, we used to go over his house, he would never say 'no'. He was one of those guys who was there all the time. When we played ball or basketball or any sport...

Mr. Duran: He didn't only take care of the younger generation; I remember he had the junior Mercuries team... you-know, South Colton had the Mercuries, remember? The Mercuries softball team – they were older guys that came back from the service, and... he had the junior Mercuries too. He was taking care of almost every age of...

Mr. Luna: We had our team called the Colton Colts... baseball. I remember me and Danny Gonzalez [were out playing when we thought] there was something missing. And somebody said, you need a name, put a name on your shirts. So [Ray] said, buy the shirts and I'll make you a stencil and I'll make you the name; and he put Colton Colts... He made a whole bunch of t-shirts and when we went out there... (Laughter) I'm not saying we looked good...

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Saul kind-of laid the groundwork and foundation that Ray did. We had a banquet for him, what year was that banquet, Ernie?

Mr. Colunga: 2002?

Dr. Gómez: It was 2001.

Dr. Rivera: In 2001 we had a banquet for Ray, and there's a picture of all the guys that showed up to honor Ray Abril. (The camera zooms in for a close up of the group picture...) We had over 300 people that showed up for that banquet. It was a great, great banquet in his honor.

Saul, you passed the baton to whom, after you left as Assistant Scoutmaster?

Mr. Duran: I believe the senior scout was Ernie. Ernie was the senior scout... You weren't there when I was there?

(All men respond: no...)

Mr. Colunga: I started going to Valley College, and I had too much of a work load; so I dropped out in 1957. I think Savas...

Mr. Duran: I never met Savas as far as scouting. I knew Savas through boxing but not through scouting. I didn't know...

After I took over, a couple of years later I joined the National Guard because that was the thing to do. I always had to do something else; and when I joined the National Guard, naturally, I was more interested in the Army and doing Army things. We (inaudible) they gave us rifles and we fired the M-1s, and all that. So I left the scouts in '52. And like-I-said, I remember Ernie was a senior scout at the time, and I don't know if he took over, or who did after me.

Dr. Rivera: Ernie, did you take over?

Mr. Colunga: No, I was a patrol leader. Like-I-said, Ray was still there...

Mr. Duran: Ray was always there...

Mr. Colunga: I was senior patrol leader. And like-I-said, I had to drop out because of my heavy load at Valley College, and that was in 1957. I don't know what happened after that.

Dr. Rivera: You mentioned Savas Roblero...

Mr. Colunga: Yeah, from what I understand, he took over from Ray because Ray got out of it after 40 years... From 1942...

Mr. Duran: He left there because of health reasons, right?

Dr. Gómez: Health issues.

Mr. Duran: He started going downhill after that because he couldn't even attend... when you guys took that picture. He was in bad health.

Dr. Rivera: So anyway, Ernie, you took over for a little while, and then the work at Valley College got a little too heavy for you.
Frankie, when did you take over? We're talking about the continuation of the legacy...

Mr. Gonzalez: In 1969 is when Frank D'Arcy and myself took over; and we did it for less than 3 years.

Mr. Colunga: Who quit and left the troop when you guys took it over?

Mr. Gonzalez: It was dormant, there was nobody... the troop wasn't...

Mr. Colunga: There was no scoutmaster? Savas wasn't there?

Mr. Gonzalez: No.

Mr. Colunga: Evidently he did quit without getting a predecessor, I mean somebody to follow him up...

Mr. Gonzalez: I don't really recall Savas being a Boy Scoutmaster – he was [in the] Cub Scouts. I don't really remember him being a Boy Scoutmaster.

Dr. Rivera: So you and Frank D'Arcy took over cold turkey?

Mr. Gonzalez: Well... Ray was still involved because he influenced Frank to do it, I think. Because there was a lot of kids still without any Boy Scout troop [coordinators/leaders]. So we resurrected Troop 45 there at Wilson; we used to meet in the cafeteria; and we basically started from scratch. Fortunately, for us we had the second generation Abril boys. And because of Ray and Ray, Jr., they were schooled in the scouting ways. So they were a tremendous help...

Mr. Duran: So they came in after?

Mr. Gonzalez: Right.

Mr. Duran: Because it's funny that all the time from when I joined that his 2 boys never took part in scouting. They were going to high school but they did come in towards the last.

Mr. Gonzalez: Well, these were his grandchildren. His grandkids were the ones that...

Dr. Rivera: Not his sons it was his grandkids?

Mr. Gonzalez: No, not his sons, his grandkids. Ray Abril, Jr.'s sons: Nicky, and... anyway his sons, excuse my memory. So basically, we restarted the troop and [we had a] very good response to it. There was a lot of need for it; there was hunger from the

kids in the neighborhood to have an organized activity. So we had about 20 kids, and we did quite well. We took them to Summer camp [and] we did a lot of hiking. But you know, what I was thinking about was when I was in the troop and we went to Blue Mountain. But when Frank and I had the troop, we never did take them to Blue Mountain. We went to Lytle Creek [a lot]... (inaudible)...

Mr. Colunga: Bamboo Cave, remember that little cave that had all that cold water that would come out of it...

Mr. Luna: The first time I went to Bamboo Cave... the new groups, the new guys that were coming in, you-know, the older guys, like you. Bamboo Cave was so exciting, it's a big place... they got us all riled up like we were going someplace big... It wasn't that big to some of us. But it was just the idea that the older guys would tell us little fibs... [Like:] Oh, we're going here to Bamboo Cave, (inaudible) and we knew about Jap Hill, and all that. The tradition was always... (inaudible)... There was a canal there, remember they had the canal? It was full of snakes and all that... (inaudible)... it's still there, I think.

Mr. Duran: The way the names came about: Skunk Hollow was the first campsite as you rounded Blue Mountain. It was like a crater about 50 yards around... and we'd put our tents around with our campfire in the middle. And the skunks would come in at night and that's where you learned your lesson [when you'd] leave your food out there, your bread and all – the skunks are gonna come in and eat everything. In the morning there was a stink! [And we asked,] what happened? Then Ray said, those are skunks guys; and we looked at each other [thinking it was one of us stinking...]

(Laughter)

Mr. Duran: And that's how the name came about Skunk Hollow.

Bamboo Cave was the second campsite, a little further in. [One time,] I had the boys [and] I took them over – and we were supposed to stay at Skunk Hollow but it was a day like today, raining, cold, and they said, we can't stay in here on the Hollow because we'll

drown. So I said, let's go look for someplace where there's trees or something. So we kept hiking up against the mountain [until we saw] there was a whole bunch of bamboos, not tall bamboos, but a big area. And we said, that looks like a good place to spend the night; so we went inside the bamboo area. It seemed like there was a little stream running right through the middle – it was water coming up down from the mountain. [It was] funny we didn't think about [whether there were] snakes or spiders – nothing, we just went in there, and we said, well this is good enough so let's spend the night here. Everybody opened up their packs, [we] put up the blanket, and that's where we slept. [Further] up towards the mountain there was like a cave, and nobody wanted to go into that cave [because] it was too dark; so we slept on the inside of the bamboos. So that's how we called that Bamboo Cave.

Spring 45 was further in, it was a beautiful campsite [with] a waterfall coming down, and it came into a puddle of water – like a spring. So that's why we named it Spring 45.

Mr. Colunga: (Inaudible) I remember...

Mr. Duran: It was clean, clear drinking water. It was running water coming from the side and it just collected itself in a little puddle, [a little lake]. It was clear, clear water – I guess that's where they get the bottled water, now.

(Laughter)

Mr. Colunga: It was on the east side of Blue Mountain...

(They all agreed)

Dr. Rivera: Frankie, you said that you took over the troop, and it was you and Frank D'Arcy, and you continued the scouting tradition that was started by these folks back in the 40s.

How many kids did you have?

Mr. Gonzalez: We had roughly 20 active kids...

Dr. Rivera: Were they from all over South Colton or just parts of South Colton?

Mr. Gonzalez: As far as I understood they were all spread out through all of South Colton.

Dr. Rivera: Uh-huh. Well Frankie, let me ask you a personal question. What motivated you to be an Assistant Scoutmaster?

Mr. Gonzalez: Well you-know, when I joined the [Boy Scouts] I was 11 years old. I was a Cub Scout [first up until] I became 11 years old. [At 11 years old] you can't be a Cub Scout anymore – you gotta move up to Boy Scouts. Cub Scouts was a very good experience but there were just games all the time. What impressed me when I went to the Boy Scouts, first of all, I had never been around Ernie or any of these bigger guys because it was guys who were 4 years older than I was in the troop. But the thing that impressed me was how important the goal setting was. You-know, to work yourself up through the ranks and achieve merit badges, they were all goal orientated, I mean, that was a big thing.

Dr. Rivera: Before we continue, hold that thought a moment. Ernie, would you hold your little banner up? Frankie mentioned the merit badges...

Mr. Colunga: It's a sash. (Ernie holds up the sash with assorted badges on it – and the camera zooms in closer).

Dr. Rivera: It's a sash, I'm sorry – would you hold it up?

Mr. Colunga: This goes over your shoulder and across like this – and these are the badges that were earned. And in order to get the star scout and mascot you had to earn merit badges. These are the merit badges I earned, and there are 13 here, I only needed 20 all together to become an Eagle Scout. But like-I-said, the work load at

Valley College was too heavy and I just dropped out. I should have stayed in there until I made those merit badges...

Dr. Rivera: Behind the sash there, Ernie, what are those badges?

Mr. Colunga: (He turns the sash around to show the patches) Oh, back here we were given patches [for] different camporees/jamborees that we attended and all kinds of camp-outs that we had as a district. Our troop would participate with several other troops – maybe 6, 7, or 8 other troops from the area. (He points to each patch) These were the different campground areas: Bartin Flats, Santa Ana River, the Fillmore area, and Lake Arrowhead. So at any rate, that's what these are. Ordinarily, on this you would have the same patches that you would have on your shoulder, which would say: Boy Scouts of America, Colton, Troop 45, and then your rank would be under that. As a matter of fact, I think I have a shirt with that on there.

(He pulls out a dark green shirt – and the men marvel with laughter...).

Mr. Colunga: This is an old, old shirt...

Dr. Rivera: This is over 60 years old...

Mr. Colunga: This is my explorer shirt, and this used to be my Troop 45 patch here, you can't see it [but] it reads: Colton, California, Troop 45, and this was my rank as Senior Patrol Leader. In other words, I was the leader of all 4 patrols, and this was my rank, I was up to Life Scout at the time. This green shirt states that I was an explorer; you had to be 14 years of age or older to join the Explorers Club.

Dr. Rivera: So Frank, these were the things that motivated you, the goal setting, working toward something, and accomplishing something...

Mr. Gonzalez: Right, and then, like the survivor skills, the camping, the first-aid... I mean, these are all things that were really [important] to me, at the time. [It was] exciting, motivating, it was good information, and it led to... I was amazed when I was in the Army, some of the people who were out in the bush – they were really offended or scared from some of the items that you would run into out there. But because of the Boy Scouts, it was kind of natural for me. I didn't get too excited, you-know. If the canteen was out of water I knew what to look for, for drinkable water versus non-drinkable water. And a lot of different things: the moss on trees always grows on the north; I mean, many little survival skills that I learned from Ernie and Ray Abril...

Mr. Colunga: Don't forget first-aid, man.

Mr. Gonzalez: Oh-yeah, with first-aid: when I became a firefighter first-aid came quite easy to me; and knot tying is a big thing in firefighting, we use knots a lot... and Luis talked about the knot tying contest, I'm still to this day pretty proficient with a rope.

Mr. Colunga: You never forget that stuff.

Dr. Gómez: ...During the daytime you knew what to look for on the trees, like the moss that you mentioned growing on the north. At night when the stars were out [we knew] how to find north by looking for the Big Dipper and pointing, and then finding where north was. So you always knew which way you were heading... it was amazing.

Mr. Duran: You-know, back in those days when we used to go camping, the nights were so clear, you could see all the stars. Ray would always sit there with us and tell us about the stars. He'd say, okay, see that big star, the brightest, that's the North Star. He would teach us about the Big Dipper, how to identify the Big Dipper, and how the Big Dipper pointed toward the Little Dipper. He taught us all that, all that astronomy – he knew about that and he would share it with us. Try to do that now, with the smog and all the...

(Laughter)

Mr. Duran: But the skies were blue and the stars were so bright – you could do that. We all know about the Big Dipper and the North Star because of Ray Abril.

Dr. Rivera: So [these are some of the] things that we picked up because we would not get this [type of education] at home [or in school].

Mr. Duran: That's right, yeah, that's right. No one would. Ray would...

Dr. Rivera: Frankie, back to you, you mentioned that you were a Scoutmaster for a couple of years, and your compadre, Frank D'Arcy, was also helping. Tell us a little bit about Frank, how did he get involved?

Mr. Gonzalez: Frank was always very, very grateful to Troop 45 because of the father image that Ray provided for him. Unfortunately, Frank's Father, the way I understand it, was not always there for him. So he had a yearning for male leadership and examples, and Ray fulfilled that. He was always very, very grateful; and he was a very good team player. He loved all the activities in the Boy Scouts. As a matter of fact, that's where I met him. Even though I lived in La Paloma, I did live close to the park, and they had their own little thing all the time – all the people who lived around the park, which is beautiful. But I wasn't really involved in that.

Dr. Rivera: So you lived in Las Palomas? On what street?

Mr. Gonzalez: I lived on 'N' Street, the 200 block of 'N' Street.

Dr. Rivera: And Frankie lived in the projects in South Colton, which were on Pine Street?

Mr. Gonzalez: Yeah, Pine.

Dr. Rivera: Yeah. So anyway, you met him and [there was some] chemistry...?

Mr. Gonzalez: Chemistry—right, we became very good friends and remained friends all those years. And it was him, like-I-said, when he realized the troop wasn't in existence anymore, he talked to Ray [and] he decided to take it over and he approached me to assist him. So I said sure, I'd be glad to help you and we did it for a few years. It worked out great; the boys were a little different, you-know, they were more modernized, they had more parent participation. Unfortunately or fortunately, for our outings, we didn't have the luxury of throwing them in the back of a pickup anymore. (Laughter)

Mr. Gonzalez: Because we had rule restraints, we had to find volunteers and parent volunteers to help us transport them to different areas. But we still did it, we still went hiking, camping, and...

Dr. Rivera: So you did it for 2 years then?

Mr. Gonzalez: Right.

Dr. Rivera: What happened that you couldn't do it anymore?

Mr. Gonzalez: Well, Frank was in sales, so sometimes he couldn't even make the meetings for outings—I had to take it over. Then I transferred from the Colton Fire Department to Orange County. So it was a different situation over there and I was away from home quite often. So I had to drop out; and I really don't know why he stopped.

Dr. Rivera: After both of you stopped being the Scoutmasters, then that was the end to scouting for that time?

Mr. Gonzalez: To my understanding, Troop 45 never came back from that day forward – until this group started their little activities. I forgot where we met for the very first time... over in Luque Center – it had to do with the troop, but I don't recall what it was.

Dr. Rivera: Right. After the banquet we decided to resurrect the troop, again. And Sanchez decided to spearhead the movement to resurrect Troop 45 again. But I don't think it was successful – it just didn't work out. Right Ernie?

Mr. Colunga: Right. The leaders that we had were pretty wishy-washy. They did it for as long as they felt like it – then they just dropped out. We raised a lot of funds and gave it to them for equipment, uniforms, and for awards ceremonies or courts of honor. We deposited the money with the Boy Scout Headquarters there in Redlands.

Dr. Gómez: The Arrowhead district.

Mr. Colunga: Arrowhead district. And they can go in there... and show them their Troop 45 membership card and get what they needed, you-know. But that didn't work – they just didn't have the leadership. Like Frank said, there was nobody like Ray who dedicated his whole life to youth activities, and Boy Scouts being one of them. He was a surrogate father for a lot of guys I know; I know he was for me; and to this day, I still live by what he taught me.

Dr. Rivera: Ernie, we did make an effort to resurrect the scouting slogan again, but could it be that times are different now?

Mr. Colunga: I think so. Kids have so many more activities that learning the principles that the Boy Scouts teach weren't as vital now as they were back then. Because there are a lot more electronic activities and very few organizations. I don't know if the YMCA is still in existence.

Mr. Gonzalez: Yeah, yes. I think it's still strong, just not in South Colton.

Dr. Rivera: Not in South Colton.

Mr. Gonzalez: As a matter of fact, my grandson is 14, and when he was 11 I pushed him toward the scouting in Grand Terrace Troop 40. He did join but he didn't last 6 months – it wasn't for him, I guess. I was disappointed he never even made Tenderfoot, you-know.

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: But Frankie, from your experience, in our days we didn't have any parent participation. Everybody was busy making a living...

Mr. Gonzalez: Right.

Dr. Rivera: When you were the leader of the Scout troop, did you have any parent participation?

Mr. Gonzalez: Yes. But like-I-said, whenever we were going to have an activity we needed help with transportation. And I don't know how important the dues were in your days, but when we had the troops we assessed them like \$3 dollars a month in order to raise the funds to buy the supplies that we needed. The Kiwanis Club, at the time, was very generous with us.

Dr. Rivera: Was that the Colton Kiwanis Club?

Mr. Gonzalez: Yeah, the Colton Kiwanis Club.

As a matter of fact, I don't know if this happened in your time, but when I was in the Boy Scouts – Ray would get a contract—I don't know what he'd do, [but] we'd sell first-aid kits, and also we would deliver flyers for companies. Like I remember, Ray used to

throw us all in the back of the truck and we used to go throughout Colton handing out flyers for Rexall Drugstore, at the time. Rexall would probably pay us \$20, \$40 bucks, you-know, to do it.

Mr. Colunga: I know also, we did service for the Goodwill Industries, remember?

Mr. Gonzalez: Yeah.

Mr. Colunga: We used to take bags and take them to the different houses and tell them we'd be back the following week to pick up things they [wanted to donate], things they couldn't use anymore. We got clothing, shoes, sometimes appliances, whatever, and we'd turn them over to the Goodwill Industries, and they in turn would refurbish these items and sell them. And they still do it today. I've seen scouts out in the streets with the Goodwill bags – distributing them.

Mr. Gonzalez: I remember those bags, they were quite big...

Mr. Duran: You-know Ernie, [when] you showed your Explorers shirt –

Mr. Colunga: Yeah.

Mr. Duran: When I was in the last of the Explorers... like-I-said before, when I first joined, none of the Boy Scouts had any uniforms. We'd go to the jamborees where all the districts Boy Scouts would get together – all of the other scouts would have full uniforms, and here comes Troop 45 in Levi's and white t-shirts, that's all we had. But we had our neckerchief. Then the Explorers came about, and it wasn't a hard requirement that you had to have [a uniform]... because they went from Boy Scouts uniforms to the green shirt like you have.

Mr. Colunga: Yeah.

Mr. Duran: None of us could afford to go buy a shirt – back in those days it was hard times. So, Ray got the idea to go to Rios Rancho and ask them if they could help us out with [some] apples – so we could sell apples. [They said,] well, after the season, after November, they said, you can come in and take all the apples you want—no charge. So Ray went to the troop and said, hey, how many of you guys can go this Saturday [to] pick up apples? Everybody volunteered. So we [went] over to Rios Rancho, backed up his truck, and loaded up his truck with apples. [We took] them over to South Colton [and] everybody bought a bunch of bags. We sold bags and bags of apples enough to buy shirts for all the scouts. We went to Helmans Department Store... and that's how we bought our shirts. We were knocking on doors... and all this was in South Colton, [we were] knocking on doors [and] we would tell them what we were doing. [We sold the apples] at a dollar a bag, and nobody would say no. [They would say,] sure, yeah, give me a bag...

But nowadays, to run a troop is expensive; you have to have sponsors; and the liability [is] so great. [If] you take your kids camping and if some of the kids get hurt you're gonna get sued. It's a different world and that's why it's disappearing. You have to have good sponsors, and then sponsors don't want to sponsor little leagues hardly anymore, let alone Boy Scouts.

Dr. Rivera: So Saul, you not only learned survival skills and practical skills being in the Boy Scouts, but you also learned entrepreneurial skills where you would go out and pick apples, sell the apples, and use whatever those profits [were] to buy shirts or other things that you needed for the troop.

Mr. Duran: And [we were] required to wear a white belt, right Ernie?

Mr. Colunga: Yeah.

Mr. Duran: Oh-and the green shirt with the white belt – we thought we were sharp.

Mr. Colunga: And white leggings, remember?

(They all agree and remember)

Dr. Gómez: You-know, the thing that comes to mind as we're talking about all these days is the time we went to Joshua Tree for that camporee. That was the first time that I really noticed that there was a difference. Like-you-said, we were lucky to have a shirt, a neckerchief, and that was about it. We were camping out there kind-of in a little isolated area; and they we're [having] activities for all the scouts, all the troops that were there. So we went over the rocks in Joshua Tree and got to where all the other troops were – those troops were all dressed to the nines... full uniforms, sashes, and caps, the whole thing. [I thought] jiminy-cricket! Are we supposed to be here? I kinda ducked-out because I didn't want to participate in...

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Luis, you mentioned that they were all nicely equipped. Remember our backpacks? Where did we buy our backpacks?

Dr. Gómez: Army Surplus.

Mr. Colunga: Highway 99 the (inaudible) is still there. I think it's a lawnmower shop or something like that... We used to buy all of our equipment there.

Dr. Rivera: So it was a ragtag kind-of description of Troop 45.

Mr. Colunga: But I'll tell you one thing on the upside, we always almost got first place in [many] activities that we participated in: like first-aid, making fires without matches, cooking, [and] knot-tying – we were good, we were fast.

Who was saying that we used to tie our knots and throw them on the ground when we were done, remember?

Dr. Gómez: Ulé. Ulé (Manuel Saucedo) was really good at it.

Mr. Colunga: We came out ahead that way. We didn't have full uniforms but we had (inaudible) and very good skills as Boy Scouts.

Dr. Rivera: We were taught well by you guys who were scout leaders.

Dr. Gómez: I was only an Assistant Patrol Leader, but I did attain the rank of First Class Scout. I remember all the things that you had to learn to become from Tenderfoot to Second Class to First Class.

Mr. Luna: I remember when some of the time right there at Wilson – that we would be broken into different groups; and you'd tie knots, and you'd do [other things]... Every month everything was different. Now you go from here, you go here... in other words, like Ernie said, [you would be] trained in all the skills that we had to learn.

Mr. Colunga: For that particular rank, yeah.

Mr. Luna: (Inaudible) A lot of the time the Scoutmasters would check us... because we were kids – a lot of the time we just couldn't do it, some were more active than others. But he would always say, I'm gonna show you how you do it and I'm gonna stay there until you do it right... Yeah, I remember those little groups they used to have there at Wilson.

I remember Ulé (Manuel Saucedo), Ernie, and Ray would always be there training us in different things; and every month it would be something different.

Dr. Rivera: Hands-on experiences...

Mr. Luna: There you go...

(Laughter)

Mr. Duran: It helped us not only then but later on in life. Like you said (pointing at Frank Gonzalez), in military life you were a little more advanced because of your Boy Scout training: how to plan for yourself, how to tell which water was bad and which water was good to drink. It was good for the rest of your life—all the training.

Mr. Colunga: I heard that from a lot of guys – they zipped through boot camp just like that when they went into the service. They were taking the skills that we learned as Boy Scouts, you-know. They had already been through all that so boot camp was easy.

Mr. Duran: It also taught you how to take care of the other guys, you-know, the ones who couldn't do things... you would automatically be a helpful hand to someone else.

Mr. Luna: I think that was the most important thing—I'm not kidding you. Like Frank was talking about when he was Scoutmaster with his kids. But I think, with us, because we all lived in the same barrio and the same part of Colton, we were more together—all of us because we knew each other and we knew the parents, the mothers, fathers and everybody – and there was a connection. A lot of times, sure the guys would fight with each other... but [after] the handshakes – *no más*. I think we had that bond between us that at that time, like you said, I think we were different than what the kids are today. Because back then we would always watch each other's back, we were always trying to help somebody. [There were times] when we couldn't, but half of the time we were there. When we went to scout meetings we were all together again; then when we all went our separate ways and we started growing up... but I think the most important thing of all is that we always took care of each other.

Dr. Rivera: That personal connection...

Mr. Luna: Right now, I really don't know anybody in Colton no more, I really don't. I don't know anybody who lives in South Colton from our generation.

One time I went to Tony D'Arcy's house, and he said, you know what Rudy? There will never be another generation like us [because] we had something.

I think we did have something. And for the young people that Frank was talking about—the Colton guys, we all (inaudible) to one person and that was Ray Abril because he was always there. He never said: 'no'; he always said: okay, or I'll see you guys, or I'll meet you over there, I'll get you what you need.

A lot of the time we were playing baseball with only one ball, and some of the guys would hit it over the fence or over the park... and some guy would take off with it.

(Laughter)

Mr. Luna: So, [Ray] would always get us balls and bats... I don't know where he got them, [and] we never asked, but people in merchandizing never said 'no' to him. The school district supplied some of the stuff.

Mr. Duran: That's another thing, when we were playing ball, you know who supplied everything? Ray Abril. Ray Abril had bats, the bag for the bats, catcher's mitts, catcher's masks. Ray Abril provided [these items] not only for the Boy Scouts but for all the teams in South Colton. If you needed a couple of softballs – go see Ray Abril. [He'd say:] okay, here, just be sure to bring it back.

Mr. Luna: I remember one time we went to play basketball at Casa Blanca; and when we got there we [started] warming up... the guys [from Casa Blanca] were over on one side and we were [on the other side] warming up, shooting the baskets, and all that. Ray went to talk to the manager of the other team, he came back over [to us and told us who was going to start]... So, we beat the guys... and when we were going to get in the truck Ray remembered he always had a canvas, he said, as soon as you guys get in the truck get that canvas. He said, these guys are born losers and they don't like you because you beat them; and he said, as soon as I start the truck you cover yourself [with the canvas] because you're gonna feel a lot of stuff hitting you.

(Laughter)

Mr. Luna: And you know what? It came to pass—they did chase us out of Casa Blanca. But when they were [suppose] to come over here to Colton they didn't want to come... they thought maybe we were gonna do the same thing to them.

Dr. Rivera: Well, you-know, it seems that all of us were impacted in a positive sense with our experiences in the Boy Scouts... Some of the activities that we participated in such as the overnight hikes, the instructional programs that we had, the volunteering we needed to do in the community – so it seems like all of us in one way or another were influenced...

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