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Recommended Citation

CSUSB, "Joaquin Granado and Tony Vilches" (2014). *South Colton Oral History Project Collection*. 23.
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Oral History Project of Colton, CA - 05/30/14

Dr. Rivera: Good afternoon, my name is Dr. Tom Rivera, and I'm retired from Cal State San Bernardino. We are at the Pfau Library here at Cal State San Bernardino on the 5th floor. Today is May 30th, and it's approximately 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We are continuing our oral history project of South Colton, and our guests this afternoon is Mr. Joaquin Granado. Joaquin, welcome and thank you very much for being with us this afternoon. And with us, also, is Mr. Tony Vilches, who retired from Cal State San Bernardino after 39 years of working here at Cal State. And both are residents of South Colton, and they both were raised in South Colton in the '40s, '50s, and the '60s. And also, part of our project is behind the camera is Mr. Frank Acosta, who has been doing our camera work now for several presentations. And at the far end of the table, next to Tony, is Mr. Henry Vasquez, and Henry is also part of our committee. Welcome Henry and welcome Frank, and thank you for continuing with our project.

First of all, let me get started; I have a set of questions here and, Joaquin, let me start with you. Tell me about when your Dad came to Colton? And why did he come to Colton? You mentioned to me a story the other day that your family went to Michigan, and then, tell me from there – what? You were 5 years old, or so?

Joaquin: ...Well first of all, my father was originally born in Texas. He moved to Mexico with my Grandfather, which was his parents. And then, I was 5 years old when they decided to come to the United States – and we crossed through El Paso. Well, it wasn't just our family, it was other families but they were related. So I guess they were talked into going to Michigan because there was work in Michigan.

Dr. Rivera: What kind of work?

Joaquin: It was lettuce, cabbage... And so... they decided to go to Michigan, and we were there maybe half a year, not very long. My brother, John, who is the 3rd from me, he was born there in Michigan when we were there. Soon after that, I guess the family that we traveled with decided to come to Colton – so that's how we wound up in Colton.

And we got to Colton, I believe it was in 1944-45, about '45. And we lived in a house with not just our family but with 2 or 3 other families; so we were pretty crowded in there.

Dr. Rivera: How many people resided in the house, can you remember? About 10-12, 13?

Joaquin: I'd say maybe about 15 of them.

Dr. Rivera: And you all came from Michigan to Colton?

Joaquin: Some of them were already here. That's how we got to that house that's in South Colton. It was pretty much on the corner of Pine and 'O' Street. Pretty close to where you live.

Dr. Rivera: Oh-very good, okay. My barrio – Las Palomas.

Joaquin: Las Palomas, yeah. And then from there we moved around and we wound up over there on 7th Street and 'L' Street.

Dr. Rivera: 7th and 'L' Street?

Joaquin: 7th and 'L'. We moved there, we lived there behind another house there; and then, we wound up on 'M' Street. We rented out the Lucero family house, and we lived in the front house. My Grandfather lived in the back with his family, and we lived there for a while. At that time, my father got a job at the PFC, the old ice plant.

Dr. Rivera: The Pacific Food Express Company. And many of our folks [who] lived in South Colton worked for the PFE... yeah, the Pacific Food Express. And Tony, your Mom and Dad, when did they come to Colton?

Tony: My father came to Colton from Mexico...

Dr. Rivera: What part of Mexico, Tony?

Tony: From... he came from Guanajuato... So he came to Colton in 1926, he was 22 years old at the time. And my understanding, he followed his older brother who was in Colton already. And why his brother was there, I don't know but I know my father told me he came here following his brother here. So, my Mother, on the other side, she was born in New Mexico, in Carrizozo, Nuevo Mexico. And her parents came from Mexico, and there were 4 of them born in New Mexico. Then, because of the railroad, on my Mother's side, my Grandfather brought those children to Colton.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, so your family, from your Mom's side, came to Colton because your Grandpa worked for the railroad?

Tony: Yeah, he was involved with the railroad. And the rest of my Mother's brothers and sisters were all born in Colton. Because there was 11 of them all together. But the first 4 were born in New Mexico and the rest were all born in Colton.

Dr. Rivera: Where did your Dad work? Was he also a railroad worker?

Tony: No, my Dad never did work... When I can recall, my father always worked in construction. He worked out in the streets doing the paving, doing the black-top and everything – that I remember. I remember him taking me to work with him when I was little, when I was 7 or 8 years old. He used to take me with him, and I can remember all those times.

Dr. Rivera: Now, when they came to Colton, did they always live on 5th Street?

Tony: My Mother did. Ever since I can remember, my Grandfather, where I live now—well, he owned that whole corner. My Grandfather...

Dr. Rivera: The corner of 5th and...?

Tony: Well, he owned the corner on 5th and he owned between Birch and Maple; he owned that whole corner. And I [get these stories] from my uncles, my Mother's brothers, that across the street my Grandfather would keep the horses—that's where he kept the horses. And he would get the old lumber [from] some of those cars from the PFE, and then he'd bring it home. And then, I remember putting us grandchildren together to take out all the nails, and he would sell those. My Grandfather was an entrepreneur.

Dr. Rivera: Tell me again: your Grandfather...

Tony: On my Mother's side

Dr. Rivera: ...On your Mom's side, started the business of taking the lumber that was when they took the boxcars apart from the PFE. Your Grandfather would collect that lumber and take it home and clean it up and put you to work to clean that up and then what happened? He sold it?

Tony: He would sell it. And even today, if you take some of the old houses in South Colton, [if you took them apart] you will see the boards would say PFE on it – there are still some houses that have that.

Dr. Rivera: So your Grandfather was instrumental in providing building materials for many of the people that built their houses in South Colton?

Tony: Yeah, and also, my uncle... one of his sons, Michael, used to tell me he used to sell wood. In those days they didn't have gas stoves, they had the old wooden stoves. So, my uncle said that he would send him around... he would take the wood, maybe whatever they needed once or twice a month, whatever; and then, once a month my

uncle said he'd go out collecting money. So, I can recall my Grandfather did very well for himself.

Dr. Rivera: Did he have a name? Did people recognize him as a name or a company? What was his name?

Tony: Elalfonso Duran.

Dr. Rivera: Elalfonso Duran... and he'll get your number. So he had that reputation?

Tony: Yes, yes, right. I can recall growing up way back in the late, late '40s, early '50s – I barely remember this – he used to have these big cars, big DeSoto's. He loved to have big cars. I can remember they would open like this (he motions with his hands) sideways.

Dr. Rivera: So he had money?

Tony: Oh, he had money. I remember one story that my uncle told me. He said one time, he says he called him over, and he said, I wanna go buy a new car. And there was a Dodge dealer in Colton at that time. And he got the bag and brought it over, and they went to see the Dodge dealer. And finally decided what he wanted, and the salesman said, that's gonna cost you like 5 thousand dollars, which was a lot of money in those days. [The salesman said:] How do you plan to pay it? [And my uncle or Grandfather] pulled out that bag and dumped 5 thousand right on the table.

Dr. Rivera: That was an expensive car.

Tony: Yes!

Dr. Rivera: So Tony, you still live on the same property that your Grandfather bought in the early years; and he owned pretty much a large piece of that part of Colton on 5th

Street. Like you said, he had his business, his lumber business, and he had his horses there?

Tony: Yes

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Dr. Rivera: And then, he had his whole family there?

Tony: Yes, he did. He had his whole family there.

Dr. Rivera: And you still live there?

Tony: And live there on one corner of it on 5th and Maple. Yes, I still live there.

Dr. Rivera: So you never left the barrio?

Tony: I never left—I'm still there

Dr. Rivera: And what barrio is this, Tony?

Tony: La calle cinco.

Dr. Rivera: La calle cinco... that's where Henry lives too. (They look in his direction – Henry is off camera)

Tony: Henry is my neighbor.

Dr. Rivera: And Joaquin, your Dad, when he came here from Michigan, was it Michigan?

Joaquin: Well, he was born in Texas, he moved to Mexico where I was born and my other brother Frank was born, and then from there we traveled to Michigan.

Dr. Rivera: And then, to Colton.

Joaquin: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: Now, where did your father work?

Joaquin: The Pacific Food Express.

Dr. Rivera: At the PFE?

Joaquin: At the PFE. Yeah, he worked there until he died at the age of 33.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, he was a young man?

Joaquin: Yeah, I was 15-16.

Dr. Rivera: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Joaquin: When he died it was 8 of us. And then, my Mother remarried, and then, 3 more. So we're a total of 11...

Dr. Rivera: 11 all together?

Joaquin: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: How did you Mother do it?

Joaquin: Well, because my Dad paid into Social Security, at the time I guess this was fairly new, she was collecting \$200 dollars a month from Social Security. And then, during the Summer we, as kids, we used to go out and work. And whatever we earned we would bring home.

Dr. Rivera: And you mentioned, Joaquin, in our earlier conversation – when I asked: How did your Mom do it? You mentioned, well, Social Security was one way but also you mentioned the city would announce when they would provide food commodities... Tell me about that.

Joaquin: There was truck that came around—like once a month, and the time that I remember, they always stationed themselves at Veterans Park...

Dr. Rivera: Veterans Park would be at the corner of Pine and 'O' Street?

Joaquin: Um-hm. And so as soon as we got word, we would go and stand in line – like a lot of people. And that's where we got some of our commodities.

Dr. Rivera: What kind of commodities did they provide?

Joaquin: Small bags of flour, small bags of beans, sugar, and butter. Just a handful of food commodities, and that would help us carry through... until the following month. But it was hard, it was hard on my Mom but we managed somehow, somehow we managed...

Dr. Rivera: You were the oldest?

Joaquin: I was the oldest, yeah. And we lived in this house where there was a living room, the kitchen, and the kitchen was kind of large, and a small living room, like a 10 x 12. And then, the bedroom was pretty much the same size...

Dr. Rivera: Were there all boys, or...?

Joaquin: Well there was 5 boys, and we all slept in one bed; and the girls – they slept with my Mom, which my Dad turned into an old garage and moved it closer to the house – he made a bedroom out of that – that's where my Mom and the girls used to sleep.

Dr. Rivera: Now, I asked you, Joaquin, your Mom must have been quite a person to be able to support, take care of all the 11 children that she had. She must have been quite a person. But food, Joaquin, 11 kids go through a dozen of eggs every morning.

Joaquin: Well, my Mother was uneducated. She didn't speak English at all. So it was very difficult. So after a while, she got in the, what is now the welfare program, and they would help her out with some food. And so that's how we managed... So when I was old enough to go out and work, [I was] in high school; [but] before that we used to go out and work in the field with my Grandfather – that's how we earned some money. But during school, I would take off maybe 2 days – out of school to go work. My friend, Henry Matus, his father worked at the slaughter house over there in Highgrove. And they were pretty much in the same situation that we were...

Dr. Rivera: Well, a lot of people... were in the same situation.

Joaquin: Yeah. So he asked us if we wanted to work twice a week, 2 days out of the week, you-know, a dollar fifty an hour. And what we did, we used to load cowhides onto the railroad cars – and that's how we made some money.

Dr. Rivera: What days were those that you worked, Joaquin?

Joaquin: That was Wednesdays and Thursdays. Sometimes only Wednesdays because there wasn't enough work. But Wednesday and Thursday were days that we worked.

Dr. Rivera: What year were you in high school?

Joaquin: That was '58 and '59. And in '59 Mr. Quinones was one of my teachers. He talked to me and told me, you-know, if you keep missing this much school, you're getting behind in your work, you're not gonna graduate. So I said, well, I told him what the situation was. So he went and talked to my Mom... and told her what the situation

was. So my Mom said, you better keep going... until you graduate. So I quit going to work until I graduated from high school – and that was pretty much it. I didn't continue my education because all I wanted to do was just finish school and get a job.

Dr. Rivera: Get a job and help your Mom... and provide for yourself.

Tony, your Grandfather, you mentioned that he sold lumber to many of the residents in Colton. I remember you mentioned that we would build with those boxcar materials; we would build houses. And the houses that we built were kind of like a: one room at a time, *verdad?*

Tony: Right.

Dr. Rivera: You build one room and then you wait for another batch of lumber, then you build another room and then it would kind of a straight line of almost boxes of rooms that people would build, *verdad?*

Tony: Correct.

Dr. Rivera: And you're right if people would take down some of those houses they would see PFE on the side of those boards.

Tell me about your situation, Tony. You said you were born and raised on 5th Street, and you mentioned, also, that growing up on 5th Street there was a sequia, a kind of a water canal that was passing through your area; and you guys took that over as a playground.

Tony: Yes we did – that was our swimming pool. It's still there – [but] they covered over it. But it used to be right in back of our house – cause right in back of our house there's the tracks that used to go to the cement plant. [Back in the days] when the cement plant was doing good, there's some tracks that go right back there and they used to go to the cement plant—they used to load the cement on the train and then haul it out.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, that's what the tracks are for. I always wondered what the tracks were for.

Tony: That's what they hauled the cement out on.

Dr. Rivera: Because you lived almost or maybe a block away from the cement plant?

Tony: Yeah, yeah. It's that big field, which is Rancho now, and all those buildings there... but at that time it was just a big empty field. And the sequia was a lot closer to us... We would dam it up, put some boards on the side, water would go up, and that's where we'd go swimming; that was our pool.

Some of my cousins that lived there and some of my friends there – that's what we used for swimming.

Dr. Rivera: That was your whole playground...

Tony: That was part of our playground, yes it was.

One thing I remember that our house originally was wood – and it burned down. And I can tell you the exact date it burned because it happened on the 16th of September. We were over there at the fiesta, over there in 'N' Street... and it was in 1950.

Dr. Rivera: That was the Fiestas Patrias?

Tony: The Fiestas Patrias...

Dr. Rivera: September 16th – a liberation [of Mexico from Spain].

Tony: Exactly, yeah. So we were over there and then somebody yelled, there's a house burning down on la calle cinco. So we got there [and] it was our house. And so it burned, it burned to the ground. And so then we had to go live with my aunt, my

Mother's sister who lived around the corner on Walnut. And we lived there for a while until my father rebuilt the house; but this time he built it with bricks. What my father did, he worked... construction, and that kind of work—you don't always work. There was periods where he got laid off, and he learned how to be a plumber. So, when he wasn't working he would do plumbing jobs, and he would take me with him; I hated that.

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Why?

Tony: ...I just didn't like that. I mean, I learned how to do it but I just didn't like that. And he thought I would follow in that but, I didn't like that. And so, that's why those periods when he wasn't working, well, he could make money to keep the family going by doing that.

Dr. Rivera: You mentioned that your house was built out of cinder blocks...?

Tony: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Who was the person that was the mason that built your house?

Tony: Oh, Jose Castro.

Dr. Rivera: Tell me about Jose Castro? The Jose Castro I know was my neighbor, and he was a great mason.

Tony: ...There were different kinds of people there in South Colton who had different trades. Like my father was the plumber, Castro was a mason, we had Chayo, Chayo was a carpenter...

Dr. Rivera: Who was Chayo?

Tony: I forgot what his real name was, but he was another person that was in South Colton and he was a carpenter by trade. So if one family needed something they would all go there and help them out. And [they] never charged them anything, you-know; only that person would provide the materials. And then, next time, if somebody else needed something they would go over there...

Dr. Rivera: I remember my Dad used to be part of that group because he did the curb and gutter, and sidewalks and patios... yeah. You know, you are absolutely right, there were a lot of people that were specialists in different trades.

Tony: Like I said, Jose Castro was a 'maestro' – we used to call him that: 'maestro'...

Dr. Rivera: Maestro, yeah...

Tony: We called him 'maestro' – the correct word is 'maestro'... but everybody [called him] 'maestro' – that's the way we phrased it. But he was a great mason, and... as you come into South Colton there by in front of Aboytes Store – that big monument that's there?

Dr. Rivera: Oh, the "Welcome to Colton" monument.

Tony: Yeah, he built that one.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, he built that?

Tony: He built that one...

Dr. Rivera: That's on 'O' Street and La Cadena.

Tony: ...La Cadena, he built that. And then, in 1964, when I got married, and [I was] having a house built... he came over and he looked and he goes: *diles que no haga*

nada con esa pared – don't do anything with that wall. [Tony asks:] Why? [Castro said,] I'm gonna build you a fireplace. [Tony says:] What? [Castro said,] I'm gonna build you a fireplace. [Tony continues:] He did. He built me a fireplace—it's still standing, it's still standing today. It looks like it was built, maybe, 10 years ago – [and] all the brick work that's outside of my house, he did all of that.

Dr. Rivera: Tony, did you have any brothers and sisters?

Tony: No.

Dr. Rivera: You didn't?

Tony: Nope, I'm an only child. Yep, I'm an only child...

(Laughter)

Tony: Everybody talks around here about, you-know, they came from families. Maybe a small family was 4 or 5 kids, but most of them were 8 or 9 or 10. Well, that didn't happen with me. My Mother married later in life because my Mother was second to the oldest, and her Mother died young. In fact, my Grandmother died in 1929 of a ruptured appendix, and that left my Mother and her older sister to take care of their 2 younger brothers that were left. Her 2 younger brothers were like: 4 and 6. My Mother didn't marry [until] she was like 28, and I wasn't born until she was 34, which was very rare.

Dr. Rivera: Very...

Tony: ...Very rare in those days; by the time you were 15 you were married. Between 15 and 18 – after 18 a girl was considered an old maid. But my Mother had to stay home to take care of her brothers and sister because they were 4 and 6 when my Grandmother died.

Dr. Rivera: So you were spoiled?

Tony: Very much so. Everybody tells me I was... Yes, I always say my father provided for my Mother and me. Everything we needed and a lot of things we wanted because he only had to provide for me and my Mother.

Dr. Rivera: And your Grandfather had a thriving business?

Tony: ...A thriving business, so, you-know... I was the only one. Some of my Mother's brothers and sisters... they had like, 7 kids, 9 kids, 5 kids; except for 1 uncle, he never had any children, one of my Mother's brothers never had any children at all.

Dr. Rivera: Well, tell us about you growing up in la calle cinco, the barrio, la calle cinco? Who were your friends there?

Tony: My friends were basically a lot of my cousins [who] lived around there and I have a lot of cousins that were my age. In fact, right there... where my Grandfather's property was on the other corner on Birch, my uncle lived there, my other Grandfather's son, and he had 9 children. So I had 9 cousins there and I had quite a few more that were my age. That's who I hung around with – with them when I was growing up.

Dr. Rivera: Were you familiar with the... what was the name of the dairy at the end of 5th Street?

Tony: Oh, Long's Dairy, George Long, George Long, Long's Dairy – yes, uh-huh. We used to go down there and get their milk from them. That's past right there where Caldera had his swimming pool...

Dr. Rivera: Oh, Caldera's swimming pool, tell me about that...

Tony: Well, I don't remember when it was going because I guess what I remember it, it was already abandoned. Now of course, it's all gone, but they tell me that back down there on Fog and 5th, they had the pool there because it was hard to get into the Colton

plunge... it was hard to go on the other side... So we got our own swimming pool and I understand they had a bullring over there and they used to have dances, *tardeadas* and everything. This was before my time, I don't remember any of this...

Dr. Rivera: They also said they had a baseball field...

Tony: A baseball field too, yeah, that's what they tell me.

Dr. Rivera: But you just didn't experience it because you were too young.

Tony: This must've happened probably in, I would say, in the '30s and maybe into the '40s. Yeah, I was born in '42 so I wouldn't remember all of this.

Dr. Rivera: Joaquin, your friends, tell us about... you had a club that you belonged to – tell us about the club? When did it start? Who were the members of your club? Well, how did it start?

Joaquin: Well, I used to hang around close friends. We kind of grew up together: Frank Bustos' family, Jimmy Ibarra, and Trini Hernandez – we used to hang around quite a bit together, just go all over Colton. And my brother Frank...

Dr. Rivera: Did you drive?

Joaquin: No, not yet. I could drive but I didn't have a car to drive, yet. I didn't drive until after my father passed away. What I mean [is] 'really' drive. When we had our 8th grade graduation remember we had ours separate from the other kids from the junior high. The Saldañas had the dance...

Dr. Rivera: Oh, tell me about that... I've heard about the Saldaña family that lived on Maple Street, and that they were very, very generous with their house. That they would provide, like you said, graduation [festivities]. And when you graduated from Colton Jr.

High School you participated in the graduation in Colton Jr. High School, and then you came and did your own Chicano-Mexican graduation at the Saldaña house. Tell me about that?

Joaquin: That was the first time I drove my car, which I had just started to learn; and I invited this girl Christine Chavez, you might have known her?

Dr. Rivera: Yes

Joaquin: ...She was surprised that I showed up in the car by myself because in junior high, at that time, who drives around, you-know... So that was the first time I drove, I drove from there to the Saldañas.

Anyway, by that time I already knew Frankie, and Jimmy, and Trini—we use to call him Tati. My brother, Frank, used to hang around with these other kids that were organizing a club known as the Condors. So, one day my brother, Frank, told me: the guys want to know if you wanna join with us, and I said, I don't know...but we'll go. The 4 of us went over there to see—just to talk and see what... [to] join the club. During that time they were trying to find a name, which they came up the Condors. But when we joined, they wanted a different change... Well, I remember when Ernie Colunga, you used to hang out with Ernie and those guys; and at that time I had just started hanging around with you guys. And I remember the drawing that Ernie came up with, the Conquistador, head-but showing, the lance...

Dr. Rivera: So Ernie did the logo?

Joaquin: Yes, Ernie did the logo. So I suggested [to the] guys – there's an emblem that I've seen and I want you to look at it and see what you think. So we asked Ernie if we could see it, and he showed it to us then we wound up asking can we use your logo: sure. So we wound up naming our club Conquistadores.

Dr. Rivera: So that's when the Conquistadores were organized, born...?

Do you know who the members of your club was during that initial period?

Joaquin: Yes, it was Richard Rivas, Henry Matus, Johnny Hernandez... Manuel Colunga, Danny Luna – those are big families. There was about maybe 10-15 kids, and then us.

Dr. Rivera: So it was kind-of-a friends getting together and then other friends bringing other friends to the club. And it was kind-of-a social getting together activity.

Joaquin: Yeah, because we used to play a lot of baseball in the street.

Dr. Rivera: Okay, sports was part of it too.

Joaquin: Yeah. We got together and played a lot of baseball down the street. And then afterwards we started going over to the... I don't know if you've ever gotten involved in baseball on the lot right next to the railroad tracks, across the street from the laundry on 7th and 'K' – there's a laundry there across from an empty field, where Father Luque, at the time was still in high school. Mario Arroyo and Freddie Chavez, Nika, they [would get] us together to play ball over there.

Dr. Rivera: They were the older guys...

Joaquin: They were the older guys.

Dr. Rivera: And they were kind-of just directing...

Joaquin: Yeah, yeah. So that's were knew each other... Anyway, we just said, let's get together and play sports with other towns. So that's how we got started, and that's what we started doing; playing sports against other cities. But you-know, you start wearing a jacket with an emblem—the colors, then people start coming at you. We were then considered a gang—not a club anymore. So we had to contend, not only from other

cities, [but from] within our own town because there was maybe 5 or 6 other groups that were gangs... clubs. So that's how you...

Dr. Rivera: What year was that when you started, Joaquin?

Joaquin: This is 1958 when we finally were a club.

Dr. Rivera: So late 50s?

Joaquin: Late 50s, and then, through time once I graduated I kind-of started thinking about other things. In fact, I met my wife right in the middle... almost at the end of '58. So when she was a freshman in high school I was already a senior. So when I graduated I started thinking about other things: what am I gonna do in the future? So the guys that were in the club we were all graduating one right after another.

Dr. Rivera: You mentioned that your motivation and your goal was to graduate from high school, and that's why you left that part-time job, and you also mentioned that you wanted to get a job right away. What kind of work did you get after high school, Joaquin?

Joaquin: Well, at that time, you'd go after anything that's available. So I started working at this auto body and fender shop that Henry Mendoza used to run...

Dr. Rivera: On the corner of La Cadena and 'M' Street.

Joaquin: ...So I worked there for maybe a year, and then soon after that my girlfriend at the time, [who] is now my wife, her uncle asked me if I wanted to work with him at (inaudible) food processing...

Dr. Rivera: What was his name?

Joaquin: Benny Orquiza. He had been there since... I don't know...

Dr. Rivera: So you worked at Mayon, a pickle factory?

Joaquin: Yes. They made mayonnaise, mustard, and pickles; and then they also used to supply the lounges with bar supplies. So anyway, I worked there until about '66-67, and then, I left because I was talking to this friend of mine, Ray Hernandez, he worked at Dunham-Bush, which was an air conditioning and refrigeration place.

And we just got to talking about... and I said, you know I'm looking for another job that pays a little more. So that's when he told me, why don't you come over to where I work and you can get one there; he said ask for Eddie Cortez. Eddie Cortez was raised in the barrio...

Dr. Rivera: He was raised in Beverly Hills...

(Laughter)

Joaquin: So Eddie [was] nice to give me a job there and I worked there until '69 because at that time we got word they wanted to close down the plant and moving to Virginia. So I said, this is no good, I've only been here a couple of years. Anyway, I started looking for a job and within a week I found a job with a cement plant.

Dr. Rivera: And how long were you at the cement plant?

Joaquin: I was there 18 years. I worked 10 years as a laborer: 5 years labor and then 5 as what-you-call a powder-man. You load part of the mountain with charged dynamite so they can get the lime rock out of there—so that's what I started doing. Then I was asked if I wanted to be part of a... which they were starting a safety department, which they didn't really have a safety department. So the person, Frank Dioresy, who came in to take over the department, in fact, he took over the department for California-Portland, and our sister-plants in the Mojave Desert in Mojave, and then in Rillito, Arizona; so he was in charge of 3 plants. So he asked me if I wanted... [and I said] why not; so I got

training through him and then I attended community colleges – pertaining to my job – what I needed to learn. And I did that for 8 years, which is very rewarding, I learned a lot, quite a bit; not only from Frank but from the work that was done as far as on [the] management-side.

Dr. Rivera: How did you get involved with the job in Colton, for the City of Colton? Was it also [from] one of your friends [who] mentioned [it to you]...? You said they had a big lay off at the cement plant...

Joaquin: Because I was the newest one in the department... and [in] the safety department I was laid off, and I was off for about 3 months. And then the plant manager asked me, why don't you come back? So, why not, you-know. During that time I was off, I was working all over the place: I worked at the Jet propulsion laboratory installing windows for the buildings there with a contractor from Ontario. And rather than driving way over there, I'm only 5 minutes away from the plant – sure why not. So I went back and I was there for about 6 months, and I said...I was already considering leaving when this friend of mine that I worked with he said, you know what, they're taking applications for the City of Colton. So I went and put one in...

Dr. Rivera: ...And you got hired...

Joaquin: ...Took the test and at that time they were looking for personnel in the water department, and building maintenance, and what-they-call parts department. So I got hired in the water department.

Dr. Rivera: And you were there for how long?

Joaquin: I was there for 15 years.

Dr. Rivera: 15 years? And when did you retire?

Joaquin: I retired in 2003.

Dr. Rivera: You retired young.

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: And Tony, you didn't like being the plumber, and you didn't like being the lumber guy, and you didn't like... I don't know what else you didn't like but... Did you belong to any of the clubs, Tony? Who was your best friend?

Tony: No, I never did belong to the clubs, but my best friend in high school was Jimmy Alaniz. Jimmy and I...

Dr. Rivera: Where did Jimmy live?

Tony: He lived on 4th Street; [on] 4th between 'K' and 'L'.

Dr. Rivera: Okay... (inaudible)

Tony: No, up there on 4th...

Joaquin: Almost in Beverly Hills...

(Laughter)

Tony: I met Jimmy in junior high – because that's when, as I said, I went to school in South Colton, I went to Garfield. I [was] in Kindergarten and first grade [at] Garfield, but because I lived on this side of the tracks...

Dr. Rivera: On 5th Street...

Tony: ...On 5th – to go to Garfield, you had to cross the tracks.

Dr. Rivera: I see...

Tony: So my Mother didn't like that. At that time, San Salvador School, down at the end of Congress opened up. So from 2nd grade to 6th grade I was over here at San Salvador.

Dr. Rivera: So, El Constantino couldn't pass the railroad tracks.

Tony: No, there were some people got killed there – a couple of kids... So that's where I went to school. And then when I went to junior high in 1957 – whoa! What a rude awakening, yeah? I was totally different...

Dr. Rivera: Why was it a rude awakening?

Tony: Because you got to be with the Americanos, you-know; and you weren't used to being with them and they weren't used to being with you, and so it took a while. I assimilated in there pretty good; I didn't have problems. I know other people from South Colton didn't like that – they had trouble assimilating. They're from there and we're from here...

Dr. Rivera: Yeah – because we integrated in '53...

(Joaquin's cell phone rings)

Dr. Rivera: Anyway, we integrated the junior high schools, Wilson Jr. High School and Roosevelt Jr. High School in '53. I remember being part of that class. But your experience was still kind of a little leery...

Tony: Yeah, very apprehensive because I didn't think I was gonna make it – and I did. I was able to assimilate and get through it. I had no problems...

Dr. Rivera: Did they bus you to the junior high school?

Tony: Yes they did...

Dr. Rivera: Where did you pick up the bus?

Tony: On 4th Street; about 4th and 'L'

Dr. Rivera: So you had to walk about 3 blocks

Tony: Yeah, I would walk up there and Jimmy Alaniz, my friend, he was there so I would pick him up, and then we'd go pick up the bus and we'd go to Colton Jr. High. He was my real good friend right through high school—we all hung around together. Jimmy and I, we hung around together but we didn't hang around here in Colton... we didn't come to San Bernardino – that was a no-no. We used to hang around in Riverside – that was our stomping ground, out there at Fairmont Park on Sundays you'd cruise around and see all the girls over there, and go see the war tank over there at the end of the lake. It's still there, by the way, the war tank is still there. And Frankie Bustos, Frankie had that old model A... we used to cruise around in that – that's who I hung around.

But I never did join any of the clubs, no, I never did.

Dr. Rivera: And after high school, Tony, again, I have to remind you that you didn't want to be a plumber...

Tony: No, no-no-no... I went to Valley College for a couple years but I didn't graduate. And then I got a job over at Kennedy Pontiac in Riverside just doing general maintenance there. And then, I met this girl in Riverside... Alice, my wife... and so we were gonna get married. So I got me a job over at Rohr Industries, aircraft subcontractors over on Arlington Ave. So, I got me a job over there and we got married, and I thought I had it made over at Rohr, you-know, it was a good job. The only problem is, after 5 years their contracts ran out so we got laid-off. And so, after that I went to work for the County of Riverside for about 3 years. I worked for Corona Municipal Court; I was working in the office. The office I loved; a big fine desk—that's fine. So I worked for Corona Municipal Court and I was one of the deputy court clerks where the people

came to pay their fines and everything, you-know, tickets... so we'd take their money and everything. And I was there for about 3 years and then Rohr called me back, and my old boss said, this time we got it and we're gonna do good. Well, like a dummy I quit my job, and then I went to work back to Rohr and it lasted less than a year. Then [here we go again] with the lay-offs. So, I'd work a month and get laid-off, work a month – laid-off; and finally this job became available.

Dr. Rivera: Here at Cal State?

Tony: Yeah, I didn't even know where Cal State was.

Dr. Rivera: When did you start here at Cal State?

Tony: 1976.

Dr. Rivera: '76?

Tony: 1976. In fact, my friend, Jimmy, told me about this job. He was working for the state at the time.

Dr. Rivera: Jimmy Alaniz?

Tony: Jimmy Alaniz. He was working for the state, and he knew I was out of a job, and he saw the posting down there at his office... and he said, there's a job that's in your alley... it's at Cal State. Where's Cal State? I don't know, I think it's in the mountains somewhere. Okay, I found it... I came up here and they interviewed me; I remember the man who interviewed me; and I said, well, I guess that's it. I didn't know anybody here... and about a week later they called me and offered me the job.

Dr. Rivera: And you were here for how long?

Tony: 30 years.

Dr. Rivera: And we're celebrating our 50th anniversary this year, 2015.

Tony: That's right because they opened in 1965. So then, like I said, I put in 30 years and this is where I retired from, in this building.

Dr. Rivera: Well, you-know, the other thing I was gonna ask you... I was kind of intrigued by your club – number 1; and number 2, the connections that you made with the club – that people would tell you about things – [about] jobs that were out there, the recommendations that they made for you, or just the word that got to you that there was a job opening... Joaquin, do you still keep in touch with the guys?

Joaquin: I do. In fact, most of them have passed away. But I still keep in touch and, you-know, the guys that come from where they came from...

Dr. Rivera: From Colton...

Joaquin: ...From Colton, they did pretty well for themselves...

Dr. Rivera: In spite of the fact that [there was] discrimination, the isolation, the poverty, and, you-know, many people said that our schools were not good; but they were pretty good.

Joaquin: They were good. After we got acclimated to the families... and the school, and the kids, and the teachers... it turned out pretty good.

Dr. Rivera: Even in spite, Tony, the fact that they didn't let us speak Spanish... We'd get whipped if we spoke Spanish.

Tony: I think one of the reasons they did that was because they were all Anglo teachers. They didn't understand Spanish – so it made it harder on them. But basically, I had very good experiences with all my teachers – they were all Anglo teachers during my elementary school and even in junior high. I can recall way back in, like, maybe the 2nd or 3rd grade... I'm left-handed... and, you-know, in Mexican culture being left-handed is not a good thing – that's a (inaudible) thing, and my father didn't like that. So I remember [one of the] teacher-parents conference came and he (my father) told the teacher: you-know he's left-handed, don't you think we need to tie his left hand? They used to tie your left hand... so you would learn to write with your right hand. And she told him: you leave him alone, that's the way God made him and you just leave him alone. I'll never forget that.

Dr. Rivera: What grade was this?

Tony: This was about 3rd grade. And he did... he (my father) never said anymore about it.

Dr. Rivera: So they did you a favor back then...

Tony: They did. Mrs. Butterfield, I remember that teacher...

Dr. Rivera: What was her name?

Tony: Mrs. Butterfield – I still remember her. She was an older lady—she was already an older lady, at the time. She's one of the teachers that I can remember, fondly... at San Salvador when I was there.

Dr. Rivera: Joaquin, back to your friends. You still keep in touch with them, and I've learned recently... Richard Rios and I were good friends, [and] we were in the same class. 2-3 years ago you got the Conquistadores together again, and you activated them... Tell us about the projects you're doing now?

Joaquin: We decided to have a reunion [with] the guys from the '58 era, and it was late 2007 when we said, why don't we get together and have a reunion? So I said, that sounds good. So we started working on it, and then by the time we collected all the members that were in the club at one time, well, there [were] members from our era '58 all the way up to '74, I believe.

[So they wondered], what are we going to do? Well let's have a dance—we [can] put together a dance for the club members and their wives. Well, somebody got the idea: why don't we print up tickets and sell tickets – that way we can get money and then, whatever we get we give it away. [They agreed], okay. So we decided to do that. We filled up the American Legion Hall with...

Dr. Rivera: What year was that?

Joaquin: In April of 2008. It [The American Legion Hall] only holds 200 people; well, we had over 300 people... So it turned [out to be] such a success. Everybody [thought] this is better than a high school reunion, when [are we going] to have another one? So we had another one the following year and it turned out pretty good.

Well, there was this lady there [who] worked for the National Orange Show, and she talked to us and said, why don't you have your next dance at the Orange Show, at the Renaissance? So we talked about it and said, well, we really can't afford it. [So she said,] I'll tell you what, we'll let you have the hall and you pay for security, and if your gonna have food you pay for... (inaudible), and that's it. So we decided, let's give it a try. Well, we had 500 people—we filled up the Renaissance; and that went on for about 3 years. And then finally, the lady was taking off from her projects and it was kind of costing more than we could afford, so we decided to go ahead and have it at the Sombrero, which is an old stomping ground for a lot of our [members]...

Dr. Rivera: The Sombrero is in South Colton; it's on 7th Street...

Joaquin: ...On 7th Street, and that's where a lot of the entertainment used to be early in the years... [that] was the place to be.

Dr. Rivera: Well they used to call it the Broadway of South Colton...

Joaquin: So anyway, we have other fundraisers, in fact, we have a 'Jack 'n Jill' Golf Tournament each year for couples [who] want to join... and whatever proceeds we get from there that goes to our scholarship fund.

Dr. Rivera: So you have a scholarship?

Joaquin: We give scholarships to kids that don't have the high GPA but they want to go to a community college or a trade school – we help them out with a little bit of money.

Dr. Rivera: Now, where do these kids come from?

Joaquin: They come from the Colton Unified School District.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, they're Colton High School students?

Joaquin: Yeah. Though, we welcome anybody that is in need, regardless of their race. It's a little bit of money. We have a scholarship application that we give them, and they have to get their transcript from the high school, make sure that they have no lower than a 2.0 GPA.

Dr. Rivera: So, it's open for students that are 2.0 students, [who] want to continue whatever field or trade that they are interested in, and you contact the high school. Do they identify some of the students that you would like to interview?

Joaquin: Well, we started doing that but when we talked to them and told them we would like to have some of the students... to see if we can offer small scholarships to them...

Dr. Rivera: Now, your organization had a big fundraiser recently at the Sombrero. And you had about 500-600 people there?

Joaquin: Well we had about – pretty close to 500 people, we had about 480...

Dr. Rivera: And then those funds that you collect, you use for scholarships for students from Colton High School?

Joaquin: Well our golf tournament is strictly for the scholarships, and we make about maybe \$2,000, and from there we give out scholarships.

The dances that we have [and] the money we get from there and other fundraisers, we help war veterans whenever they need clothes, a meal, or... some of it is used to help them out with a month's rent... anything we can contribute to help them.

We also contribute money to youth organizations, sports, softball, soccer, even to high school students if they don't have enough money to go, for example, to a seminar that pertains to their resume, whenever they graduate. So we sometimes donate money to them so they can have enough money to go...

Christmas, Thanksgiving – we buy gift baskets for 10 people and we give them out and take them to their homes... and those are some of the things that we do.

Dr. Rivera: You've become an organization that has given lots back to the community.

Joaquin: Yes, because when we were young, you remember, there were people that helped us along the way. So this is our way to kind-of thank them for the help that they gave us...

There was this family that moved from Texas to California – they moved to Perris, and they were homeless. There was 5 of them: the oldest was 12 years old, and they were looking for a home. Anyway, somebody found a trailer for them to live in. My daughter, who is a registered nurse who works for Riverside Community, heard about the family and they invited the family to one of their Christmas... (inaudible) and they provided clothes, toys, food, and money for them. And we were asked if we would help

contribute – so we talked to them and said, why not? They're in need so we donated some money, some of the committee members bought clothes and donated clothes for them, and some of them donated bicycles to them. So that is just one of those...

Dr. Rivera: ...One of the many activities that you do. So your organization seems to [have] become a charitable organization for the community where you provide not only funds but also food, and some of the shelter for some of the people [in] need in the community.

Tell me about the guys back then, you-know, you were a club, a gang... how are those guys doing now?

Joaquin: Richard Rivas, I mentioned, he became a very well insurance salesman. And when he retired, they moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico – Las Cruces. He bought himself a 2 acre place up there and loves it.

Dr. Rivera: What about the other guys – some of the other guys?

Joaquin: Johnny Hernandez, he became a physical therapist; Manuel Delgado, he worked for the city schools – their air-conditioner man; and Cedric Canales became a successful lawyer. So they became successful in their own right, in their own particular field.

Dr. Rivera: So, growing up in Colton and being part of the everyday experiences that we went through in the barrio, provided the foundation for many of these guys to be successful.

Joaquin: Well, in spite of everything that was going on, their families kind-a kept a close eye on them. I remember being called then by 2 or 3 of the parents of some of the guys that were in our organization, and they [said], I know they want to be in the club but there's dangers with others... just do us a favor and just keep an eye on him, just watch him.

The older, like Richard, myself, Henry... we were the oldest ones in the... (inaudible) and tried to kind-a guide them along. So we talked to the parents [and said], you-know, we'll do whatever we can... And of course, you try but it doesn't always work out.

Dr. Rivera: It seems that most of them became outstanding contributing citizens of our community.

Joaquin: They did. A lot of them, after graduation, they either got married, they went into the service, or they went into a field... school.

Dr. Rivera: Tell me about marriages, Tony? You married Alice, and what year was that?

Tony: 1964

Dr. Rivera: And you were how old?

Tony: I was 22.

Dr. Rivera: You were a young guy

Tony: I was just a little (inaudible)

Dr. Rivera: Tell me, you and Alice raised a family, how many kids did you have?

Tony: 2

Dr. Rivera: Boy or girl?

Tony: A boy and a girl.

Dr. Rivera: And your daughter is teaching?

Tony: My daughter graduated from here, Cal State, and she got a job with the Colton Unified School District as a teacher. She's taught there for 25 years.

Dr. Rivera: And your son?

Tony: My son works for the County of San Bernardino. He works for the 911 emergency dispatch, like, when you call 911, he's one of the people who answers the phone. He's been there about 15 years – the County of San Bernardino.

Dr. Rivera: Boy! That's a tough job...

Tony: Yeah, it is. What he told me was the toughest call he got: One time, this man called and was frantic, he said, my wife, my wife, she wants to commit suicide. So he's gotta get the police down there. Next thing, I heard a shot and I heard the body hit the ground. He said that is the hardest call I ever got.

Dr. Rivera: Also, Tony, you were kind-of a religious kind-a guy, you went to church every Sunday.

Tony: Still do.

Dr. Rivera: You still do?

Tony: Still do.

Dr. Rivera: Good Catholic?

Tony: Good Catholic.

Dr. Rivera: And you go to church in South Colton?

Tony: San Salvador...

Dr. Rivera: And it's located on?

Tony: 7th and 'L'

Dr. Rivera: 7th and 'L'...

Since [you were] a little kid, [you had your] first communion, confirmation...

Tony: I did my first communion there (at San Salvador Church), my confirmation – I didn't get married there because when we got married – I know that tradition was that you had to get married in the parish of the bride. Well, Alice was from Riverside; so we got married at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine in Riverside.

Dr. Rivera: Tell me about Father Luque?

Tony: Father Luque. He was a very good speaker, he could draw people to you...

Dr. Rivera: When was he the priest at the church?

Tony: He's the one, Father Luque... remember the old wooden church?

Dr. Rivera: Yes

Tony: And then, now we have this new one, the new building – well, he's the one that got all that done... At that time, they didn't have such oversight as the diocese does now – we were part of the diocese of San Diego. So he managed to get some money and knock the old one down and was able to build this new one. That was in 1975-76, and I think we moved in there in 1977.

Dr. Rivera: And Father Luque was a Colton boy?

Tony: Colton boy! He was born and raised right across the street from the church.

Dr. Rivera: Did he get permission to build that new church?

Tony: Not really. Not really.

Dr. Rivera: So he had the Colton attitude?

Tony: Yeah. If it needs to get done – let's get it done.

Dr. Rivera: Besides building the church, what else about Father Luque, you said that he was a very good person [who] brought people in.

Tony: Yes he was, yes. He was older than I was... he was older. I really didn't know him as growing up but I did get to know him when he was a priest. Him, and we had the other Colton boy that became a priest, Father Ray Rosales.

Dr. Rivera: Oh that's right. Tell me about Father Ray? He was your age wasn't he? No, he was younger.

Tony: He was younger, he was younger than me. Father Ray was born of traditional old-style priest, which is kind-of hard to imagine because he was younger. But he was in the old-style... and two different contrasts, but Father Ray was very dedicated to the church, and he died at a fairly young age. He was, like, in his late 50s when he died, and that's been about 5 years ago.

Dr. Rivera: I completely forgot about Father Ray. Thank you for reminding me. How about Father Valencia?

Tony: Oh, I remember him. We remember him – Joaquin remembers him. He was there at the parish from about, what? In the 30s...

Dr. Rivera: 1937 to '67 almost. In '66 he died in the accident.

Tony: In fact, he had just gone by my house because his sister lived down there on Aqua Mansa just past Rancho. He used to go down to see her just about every day or every other day. And one thing about Father Valencia, he did not believe in 'stop' signs. He would just drive... and he would go down 5th Street because he lived there and he'd be just honking... and everybody yelled "Hi Pop" – you called him 'Pop' – "Hi Pop." And that day, I remember because I was already married and so I still lived at where I am now, and he happened to go by, and about a while back somebody said, you-know, Father Valencia just got killed. What happened? He ran the 'stop' sign over there and they hit him. If he hadn't got killed, he'd probably be still over there at San Salvador. But he was a very different kind-of a person. I was always scared of him. He always carried his little *varita*, stick... [and he often said], Hey boy! He called you boy... Hey boy, come 'ere boy, you sit right there boy. He'd make you kneel, and in those days you had your little catechism book, the 'Jesus and I' book, so I was pretty good at [memorizing]... those were easy. They would give you the question and give you the answer and you could memorize it. So if you would sit there, and then you would tell him, he would ask you the questions—you'd give him the answers; he'd ask you about 1 or 2 questions, and [he'd say] okay boy, [then] he'd give you nickel. Well a nickel was good; then, right there from the church I would go across the tracks because there was no freeway there, [and] go on 'I' Street, there was the Kenny Bakery—the donut place. I remember this big glazed donut for a nickel – that I remember.

Dr. Rivera: So Father Valencia was quite a guy?

Tony: Oh-yeah. When I got married, I came to see him because, like-I-said, remember our house burned? So I didn't have the records... you have to show your baptism records, you-know, that's where I was baptized there, [and] my confirmation records – I

had to come and see him about them. [I said], Father I came to get them. *Porque* boy, how come you're not [getting] married here? I said, you-know Father, I can't because she's from Riverside... I have to get married over there. [He said], okay, come 'ere boy, let me show you—come 'ere. So he took me in the back and he had this old refrigerator, and he opened it up and that's where he had the book where he had the records, in those days. And he had beautiful handwriting... and he said, *mira* boy, in case there's a fire nothing will happen to the records. Well, that was a smart thing to do; I'll never forget that.

Dr. Rivera: Also, do you remember Judas?

Tony: Oh-yes. Every Easter, every Easter after Mass he had this wooden mannequin, and [it was] Judas, okay? I remember across from the church there was another building, a two story building...

Dr. Rivera: ...A little market, yeah...

Tony: So they would run a rope across, and then they would put him up, and they were dancing up there and they would always play for him "*Tu ya no soplas*" – that song in Spanish; and they'd light him up and it'd blow up, and all that. They do that every Easter, I remember that.

Dr. Rivera: Let me ask both of you. Growing up in South Colton in the 40s, 50s and 60s – who were your mentors? Who were your heroes from the community?

Joaquin: Well, there were several people: number 1 was my father. The reason I say it is because whenever we used to go out to work, he drove me. [He'd tell me,] you don't get anything until I see a good days work. I mean, he would be on me... And at the time, I didn't like it but, when you grow into an adult you start forming the same habits that he did... it gave me a good work ethic. It gave me a sense of responsibility, commitment, and that's what I owe him.

The others, well, when you're growing up, you start going into different directions... well, I think I mentioned Frank Quinonez...

Dr. Rivera: The Spanish teacher... at Colton High School

Joaquin: ...Yes, in fact, he is the one that got me enrolled in that wrestling program with Jimmy (inaudible), and Frankie Bustos – we got into that... and again, it teaches you a lot of things. He was one of them; and again, I have to mention the group, remember the congress of community clubs?

Dr. Rivera: Oh! Manuel Padilla, Tony Garcia, Angel Oliva...

Joaquin: Those were the ones [who] took us under their wing and said, we will sponsor you and one of us will always be there to give you advice of whatever you need. I used to talk to them after the meetings, because we used to meet there at the club, at the hall...

Dr. Rivera: Which hall? Oh, the Fidel Hernandez Veterans Post...

Joaquin: ...That's where we used to meet; and I used to stay afterward and talk with them. They used to give me some good advice... I also used to go to other guys... I have to mention you were one of them...

Dr. Rivera: Don't say that Joaquin because I get watery eyed.

Joaquin: I have to because your group was a little older than me, but for some reason, you always used to do things: Boy Scouts, you had your own little gym, and I used to like that. And then that's why I started in Willie's Gym – I started hanging around with you guys because I liked the things that you did and you never got into any trouble that I knew of. So, again, people that I hang around with I like because you learn a little bit from everybody, and it kind-of keeps you out of trouble.

Dr. Rivera: Well, thank you for the compliment. I never heard that before by anybody.

Joaquin: Tommy, anytime I talk about anybody who is [influential in my life]... Tommy. Because I remember you going with me one time when my car that I drove to school was missing. It was one of my friends... who took it without asking. And I found out where it was... and I was standing there dumbfounded; and you came over and said, what's the matter? I said, well, my car is missing but I think I know where it is. So you told me, come on, let's go... So you got me in the car with you and Willie and Omar Sosa, and we went up to the guy's house and... (inaudible). Because I knew if I would have been there by myself I would have come home without it, I know. And because of you guys over there... they [said], he just borrowed it...

Dr. Rivera: Well, thank you so much, thank you...

Joaquin: I'm always grateful for that, and that's one of the reasons that I hold you as one of my best friends – one of the people I admire.

Dr. Rivera: Thank you so much. You've humbled me... and you said it in front of my wife.

(Laughter)

Joaquin: I've known Tommy since high school; in fact, we used to play sports together for a while.

Dr. Rivera: And Tony, what about you, any mentors or heroes?

Tony: The person that I [admired] most was my father because I had him for a very long time. You talked about and you said, 'well you were spoiled because I was the only child' – that's the good part. The bad part is, if you're an only child there's a lot of pressure on you. Remember, when there's a lot of children in the family, you see Mexican parents always expect the first child to be perfect, right? But if somehow that

child disappoints them, well they can go on to the second and third and fourth. When you're an only child, there is nobody else. You are expected to be perfect, okay? So there's all this pressure on you. But I always admired my father because... when he wasn't working, he taught himself how to be a plumber... and he'd go out and get a job—and I'd go with him—and this is how we had money. In fact, he taught me how to drive; I used to drive the car when I was 13 years old—no, 11! With that Model 8 Ford, I remember, I had an old Model 8. And we used to go from my house to Estevan's Store, and he used to let me drive it from there. So I was driving since I was 11. We were stopped several times by the Colton Police Department. Jess Kennedy and those people... but they said, okay, just don't do it again... Okay, we won't do it again... but they caught us about 2 or 3 times. But most of the time I just drove from there to the Estevan's and places like that...

Dr. Rivera: Estevan's was a grocery store?

Tony: It was a grocery store there, and then where we lived on 5th Street, it was one down there... There was Jimmy's Store—that was more like a beer and wine place, but if you went further down there was the Trini Bocanegra – he had another grocery store down there on 5th Street.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, on 5th Street they had a liquor store?

Tony: Oh, at Jimmy's place – it was like a beer and wine place.

Dr. Rivera: And there was a grocery store?

Tony: Further down was Trini Bocanegra... [that] was the store down there.

Dr. Rivera: So your Dad was your role model and hero?

Tony: He was my role model; and other people like... another one that taught me also was Ray Brill, Sr. because he had the boy scouts – troop 45. I remember that because I [had] never been out of South Colton—that was our life. And joining his troop, he would take us camping outside to San Diego or something like that—my God, to me that was a million miles away from home, I'd never been there. So that was the people that I can remember that I looked up to.

Dr. Rivera: You-know, we went over our time but it's been a very interesting conversation. Before we close this afternoon, is there anything else that I forgot that you recall during our conversation that you would like to share with us?

Joaquin: There's so many things—where do you start? All I can say is, my experience in being raised in Colton, and South Colton for the most part, it was quite an experience. You talk about old times, how people lived in the (inaudible). In a way, for some of us... we lived in a house with no floors – dirt floors. I remember my Mom used to wet it down to keep the dust from coming up. But you didn't know whether you were...

Dr. Rivera: All of us were poor.

Joaquin: Yeah. At the time, we thought everything was good as long as the families were living together everything was good. You didn't know until later on [when] you started going to other peoples houses... better than you are... But at the same time, back home, [there's] nothing like home, regardless of the conditions.

And then you have your friends that you can always rely on to be there whenever you want to talk to them...

It was a good experience, personally, for me it was a good experience; I made a lot of friends. You meet a lot of kids now that you worked... their grown up now. They come up to you and they recognize who you are, and they talk to you...

Dr. Rivera: You were also a coach...

Joaquin: I coached for 15-20 years until my son grew out of it – that’s pretty much when I stopped. But yeah, for many years I worked with little league kids.

Dr. Rivera: (Inaudible) got 3 kids from the high school... Roadrunners...

Joaquin: Roadrunners... In fact, we used to meet here at Cal State for our workouts; and we used run the hills here quite a bit. We got to where we would go nationally, Albuquerque... out of state to run for the national title. That was also an experience because you went out of Colton for a little bit... And from there you learned a lot. As you grow you’re still learning and that’s...

Dr. Rivera: Colton was a good foundation for you?

Joaquin: Colton was a very good foundation for us, yeah, it was.

Dr. Rivera: Tony, anything that I forgot?

Tony: No, no... I agree... As we found out later – was that you guys were poor. But we didn’t consider ourselves poor. I thought it was difficult for some families but then they managed to get food on the table. You had a bed to sleep in – maybe you had to sleep with a lot of your brothers in there but you still had a place to sleep. Like you said, we didn’t have a place to go play like a Disneyland or something like that but we had our (inaudible)... you-know, and for us that was good enough – that was all we needed. So, what Quin said, yes, it was a very good experience to be in South Colton and I don’t regret ever being there.

Joaquin: Remind Tommy, when we were kids going to grammar school, it was normal to go to school barefooted because you didn’t have any shoes. And nobody said anything because that’s the way things were, nobody thought any differently. And like-I-said, it was a culture shock when we went to junior high...

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Joaquin, you were a new beat to Colton, 5 years old, born in Mexico; so, when you came Colton, people didn't accept your family, they ostracized you because you were Mexican.

Joaquin: Yeah. I was also born in (inaudible). But Tommy is right; when they find out that you're not from here, you get picked on, you get bullied... and I was telling Tommy that I had my share of fights in grammar school because of kids. My aunts, Manuela, Carmen, and Jenny, we used to walk to and from school together because there was always somebody waiting for us. Especially, (inaudible) the bridge... and my God, you hated it; and you try to take other roads... and the same thing. But that was also an experience...

Dr. Rivera: So you were just about fighting everyday?

Joaquin: When you go to school and they wait for you everyday, yeah...

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: And all because you were a new one, and you were a Mexican from Mexico?

Joaquin: They grab you and they don't let you go... not only me but my aunts, they had to fight for the same thing. Carmen was the feisty one...

Dr. Rivera: She was in my class...

Joaquin: Yeah. She was the one [who] stood by me. Carmen, Jenny, and Manuela they kind-a stood off to the side but Carmen was a gutsy woman.

Dr. Rivera: Well, I wanted to bring that up... because I think that's one of the important things that's still around, that attitude is still there. But like you said, in spite of that – it

was a good foundation to grow up with and be part of – that gave you that sense of belonging to a community and giving back to the community.

Joaquin: Yeah, it's rewarding to us.

Dr. Rivera: Well Tony, thank you so much, and Joaquin, thank you. I thought we were gonna go an hour... we went an hour and a half.

Joaquin: We discussed a lot of things but there's still a lot of things that we discussed that went on the years we were in Colton... you growing up in Colton – you understand. But we covered a lot of the main things.

Dr. Rivera: Well, Joaquin and Tony, if you remember something else we'll have another taping session. But thank you very much for being with us and the project this afternoon.

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

