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### Genevieve Perez

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**Oral History Project of Colton, CA – 7/3/14**

**Dr. Rivera:** Good morning, I'm Dr. Tom Rivera. I'm the retired Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies here at Cal State San Bernardino.

We embarked on a new project entitled the Oral History of South Colton; [today's oral history interview is on] July 3<sup>rd</sup>, and we're at the Pfau Library here at Cal State San Bernardino, on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor.

Our guest this morning is Ms. Genevieve Pérez. Genevieve has been a lifelong resident of Colton.

Genevieve, thank you so much for being with us this morning. We thoroughly appreciate you taking time off from your busy vacation, work-study, to be with us this morning, and especially, the day before July the 4<sup>th</sup> – so thank you very much.

The other thing is that we picked you up earlier than we were supposed to, and you were ready for us.

Prior to this interview, we talked about your Nina, what was your Nina's name?

**Ms. Pérez:** Luz Duran.

**Dr. Rivera:** Luz Duran was an avid collector of articles and materials of activities and experiences of Colton – and I see that you have her scrapbook here. It's the old scrapbook that she collected. Tell us about the scrapbook – do you know when she got started with the scrapbook?

I'm sorry, first of all, Luz was?

**Ms. Pérez:** Luz was my Mom's older sister; also more like a mother since my Mom's mother passed away when my Mom was 10. And she kind-of raised them a little bit. Luz only went to school to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

**Dr. Rivera:** And she was the oldest of the family?

**Ms. Pérez:** There was another one, Símon, he was the oldest, and then, Luz. She was very particular in keeping family records, [including] of her friends and everybody that was involved with her.

She and her husband were god-parents to over 40-some children. They didn't have any children of their own, and their god-children were very, very special to them.

**Dr. Rivera:** What was [her husband's] name?

**Ms. Pérez:** Vicenté Duran.

**Dr. Rivera:** Luz and Vicenté Duran. And where did they live?

**Ms. Pérez:** They lived on 7<sup>th</sup> Street right behind Dells.

**Dr. Rivera:** Yes, where the gas station was...

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, ok. There was a house there, and then, there was another house next to them – Myrtle, all I remember was Auntie Myrtle, she lived there. Those were the houses... and catty-corner was Navarro's.

**Dr. Rivera:** Right, because it was almost on the corner of 'O' Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, in that area.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, um-hmm.

**Dr. Rivera:** Were Luz and Vicenté born in Colton?

**Ms. Pérez:** I think my Nina was born in Mexico. [Or,] my Nina was born at 531 'O' Street in Colton.

**Dr. Rivera:** Okay. Where did her parents come from?

**Ms. Pérez:** They came from Mexico, León, Guanajuato.

**Dr. Rivera:** Do you remember what year they came to Colton?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, I don't.

**Dr. Rivera:** But early because Luz was born in...

**Ms. Pérez:** 1917.

My Grandparents were born in 1913 in Colton. My Grandma had been married before, but her husband and her firstborn had died. So she was here before then, when my Grandpa came over.

**Dr. Rivera:** Your Grandpa coming from Mexico – why did he come to Colton?

**Ms. Pérez:** I don't know.

**Dr. Rivera:** Where did he work?

**Ms. Pérez:** My Grandpa was the first Mexican barber in Colton.

**Dr. Rivera:** What was his name?

**Ms. Pérez:** Antenacio Chavez

**Dr. Rivera:** Where was his barber shop?

**Ms. Pérez:** His barber shop was on 'J' Street where the tracks were, but it was on the south side of the tracks. They hadn't built the overpass, yet. And so, it was right there where we don't have 'J' Street anymore... Then later, he moved to 'O' Street on the corner where Nacho Cabrera had his shop.

**Dr. Rivera:** The corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and 'O' Street?

**Ms. Pérez:** 7<sup>th</sup> and 'O'.

**Dr. Rivera:** Did he have any family?

**Ms. Pérez:** My Grandma and my Grandpa had 8 children. 3 boys: Símon, Ezekiel, Andreas; and they had 5 girls: Luz, Jessie, Petra, Jenny, and Theresa.

**Dr. Rivera:** It was a large family.

Did your Grandma work? Or was she just a homemaker?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, a homemaker.

**Dr. Rivera:** Now, getting back to one of their daughters, Luz. Luz compiled the scrapbook that we have in front of us, can you tell us a little bit about the scrapbook?

**Ms. Pérez:** (She opens the scrapbook.) You can tell that the scrapbook was in the 40s because there's a lot of soldiers that were in here. Their burials, their funerals, and some who came back.

(She holds up a picture.) My favorite one was the Medal of Honor, and I guess that's because my Dad was in the service and he made us very proud of going and being part of the service, and doing this for our country. But this Medal of Honor winner was, Ishmael Viegas, and he was from Casablanca; but he was our Medal of Honor winner.

**Dr. Rivera:** And your Aunt Luz collected the articles about him. There's a picture there, what is that picture?

**Ms. Pérez:** (She holds up and points to the picture). This is his wife and his son.

**Dr. Rivera:** Ishmael's wife and his son, okay.

**Ms. Pérez:** (She holds up more pictures). And this is the funeral, and this is more pictures of the funeral.

**Dr. Rivera:** So she collected many articles of our service boys from Colton who served in the armed services.

**Ms. Pérez:** (She holds up and shows another picture). This picture here is from the Casablanca Elementary School, and the kids all stood out there to salute him when he went by.

This is more pictures of the funeral.

**Dr. Rivera:** Does it say what year the funeral was?

**Ms. Pérez:** (She searches through the pictures). This one says November 6, 1945.

**Dr. Rivera:** I also noticed that she collected a lot of articles and memories of members of the family. Like there's a letter from somebody that went to St. Louis...?

**Ms. Pérez:** My Tia Petra, and this was after my Grandma died. My Grandfather changed religions – he went from being Catholic to being a Jehovah Witness, and they went to a revival in Kansas that was for the Jehovah Witnesses. And the Tia who had written that letter, she stayed Jehovah {Witness} and everybody else stayed in the Catholic religion. But that was a big outing for them, they had never been anywhere.

**Dr. Rivera:** They hadn't been out of Colton?

**Ms. Pérez:** No.

**Dr. Rivera:** And they drove all the way?

**Ms. Pérez:** They drove, uh-huh.

**Dr. Rivera:** All the way to Kansas City was it?

**Ms. Pérez:** All the way to Kansas.

**Dr. Rivera:** And they had kind of a revival type of meeting there?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, uh-huh.

So my Mom would have been about 11, and my Tia Petra, who wrote the letter, she would have been about 14.

**Dr. Rivera:** Because the letter was written in 1941 – that means that your Aunt Luz started this collection a long time ago.

What other articles do we have there that have caught your interest?

**Ms. Pérez:** (She holds up a page and points to a picture). This is my *Tio*, Ezequere, and he stayed in the house at 531 'O' Street where all of them were born – they were all born in that house. And [in this picture] he was in Japan... and they have a little article saying that he had come home. (She points to another area on the page). He sent a Western Union [Telegram] to my Nina.

(She unfolds a document). This one was how they could send [what] was called "v-mail" – and this was a Christmas card that [Tio Ezequere] sent from Japan.

**Dr. Rivera:** And it reads: "Greetings, it's nice to pause a moment when this season draws near to wish you a Merry Christmas and a very glad New Year." And this is signed by?

**Ms. Pérez:** Ezequere. But everybody knew him as Ezekiel or Kelly.

**Dr. Rivera:** Did he go to Colton High School?

**Ms. Pérez:** I don't think so. I know that he worked and retired from the cement plant.

**Dr. Rivera:** The Colton Cement Plant?

**Ms. Pérez:** The Colton Cement Plant, yes. But I don't know what his schooling was because I know that Luz and my Tia Jessie – I think they only went up to 3rd grade. And then, Petra, Jennie, my Mom, and Theresa – they were graduates of Colton High School.

**Dr. Rivera:** What other story drew your interest in this collection?

**Ms. Pérez:** (She goes through the pages). Some of these...

**Dr. Rivera:** You-know, you have a wonderful treasure here. Now, how did you happen to wind up with this?

**Ms. Pérez:** My Nina died in 1963, and my Nino wanted to make sure that all of us got something. And so he gave this to my Mom; and there was another book. [There's] a lot of history – there's so much history. So when I got old enough, my Mom saw that I was very interested in photography and I kept little scrapbooks myself, and stuff. And so she says, you know what? This needs to go to you because you've taken on this role; and so, I was very honored to be able to take this. (She holds up a couple pages from



the scrapbook). But it's so old and tattered, and as soon as you touch it—it starts falling apart, and you can see all these little pieces.

But they had in the paper where my Tia, Ezekiel's wife, (She reads): "Mrs. Chavez honored with a dinner party..." – and they had a party for her and people of Colton were all invited.

But the one that I always remember...

**Dr. Rivera:** What year was this?

**Ms. Pérez:** 1948.

(She holds up a page...) This one was in July of 1948, and it was the Van Akens.

**Dr. Rivera:** Oh, their backyard...

**Ms. Pérez:** Right. The Van Akens used to throw the best parties; and being a little kid, I mean, for sure for Easter we would be there and they would have a humongous Easter egg hunt, and food galore, and music, I mean, everybody was there.

**Dr. Rivera:** And this was on Congress Street?

**Ms. Pérez:** On Congress.

**Dr. Rivera:** Just behind the big baseball diamond?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, right. And their property was so big, yeah, so everybody fit; and they had parking for everybody. I really enjoyed those days.

There was a little article on her where she had given a farewell party for two of her friends, they were: Betty Ashe and Betty Chang -- they were going back to Hawaii.

And the people that were there were: Antonia Arroyo, Luz Duran, Jenny Chavez, Dolores Hernandez, Saul Shaffrey, (she repeats both Betty's names), and Mr. and Mrs. Van Aken.

**Dr. Rivera:** I'll be damn, you-know, Genevieve, what you just read brings back a lot of memories because I knew Antonia Arroyo. She was married to Louis Arroyo, and they lived there on 'K' Street next to the church house. Antonia was very involved in not only the church, but also the Garfield Elementary School because her son's went to Garfield: Arnold, and the oldest one, I can't remember the oldest one's name; but she was very involved in community affairs.

And the other person that you mentioned was Jenny Chavez. Jenny Chavez lived almost next door to the Van Akens, and they lived behind the baseball field at the Veterans Park. They were my Mom and Dad's compadres.

**Ms. Pérez:** Oh-okay.

**Dr. Rivera:** They baptized my youngest brother, Danny. They were also co-workers in construction. Especially, building roads and freeways, and paving roads and freeways. So they were both in construction, and very, very good friends of ours. Who else did you mention in that article?

**Ms. Pérez:** Dolores Hernandez, she cooked the dinner for me and Fernando's wedding...

**Dr. Rivera:** Dolores made the dinner for your wedding?

**Ms. Pérez:** Lola, uh-huh, Hernandez.

**Dr. Rivera:** I know Lola – she is Louie's Mom. They're also long life residents of Colton. Her husband, Pete 'Pedro', worked for the Cement Plant.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right.

**Dr. Rivera:** And he was also a very good baseball player. He played for the Cement Company's softball team. The softball field was next to the plant there in Colton.

**Ms. Pérez:** Um-hm.

**Dr. Rivera:** But a good ballplayer – just an excellent ballplayer.  
Who else did you have there?

**Ms. Pérez:** Well, some of these women, and not all of them are on here, but they had a group, these women, and they were called Las Teenagers. It was Luz Duran, Jessie Velasquez, which is my Nina's sister.

**Dr. Rivera:** Oh, Jessie Velasquez, her husband, Tom Velasquez, they owned the 76 gas station in Colton just before or at the entry of Colton... Right in front of the Wilson or Garfield School bridge.

**Ms. Pérez:** And Mary Muratalla...

**Dr. Rivera:** Mary Muratalla – a few feet from the bridge, had a hardware store and furniture store.

What was her husband's name? Sarco Muratalla.

Who else was part of that group?

**Ms. Pérez:** Nela Rodriguez.

**Dr. Rivera:** Who was Nela Rodriguez?

**Ms. Pérez:** That was Manuela -- and they owned the store: Esperanza Market.

**Dr. Rivera:** Oh, they were the ones who started Esperanza Market on west 'O' Street?

**Ms. Pérez:** On west 'O' Street.

And I think Mary Van Aken, and there were a few other women...

**Dr. Rivera:** Sarah Van Aken?

**Ms. Pérez:** Sarah Van Aken – uh huh.

**Dr. Rivera:** Mary was the daughter.

**Ms. Pérez:** Mary, okay, I forget... My brother was in her wedding.

They had a group and they did a lot of things, you-know. And a lot of things within the community, I would say, a lot of it would be something like a little Mexican women's version of the Kiwanis, or the Women's Club, or something like that.

**Dr. Rivera:** Yes, okay.

How about Mariana Hernandez, was she involved in this?

**Ms. Pérez:** Oh-yes, yes.

**Dr. Rivera:** Mariana took over the Esperanza Market...

**Ms. Pérez:** Mariana was the sister to Manuela – they were sisters; and she was the youngest one.

**Dr. Rivera:** Manuela was married to Victor Rodriguez who started the store?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right.

**Dr. Rivera:** Okay.

**Ms. Pérez:** And then, they sold the store to Esteban and Mariana.

**Dr. Rivera:** Okay.

**Ms. Pérez:** So that's where they got that.

**Dr. Rivera:** What other person was part of that group?

**Ms. Pérez:** You-know, I can't remember. I just remember them taking me to see the "Sound of Music" Grauman's Chinese Theatre in L.A.

**Dr. Rivera:** Oh, Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, we went to go see that. I was so excited, you-know, because all these women were a lot older than I was; I was maybe 10, you-know. But I got to go with them on the bus, and that was a lot of fun going with them.

**Dr. Rivera:** Yeah, well you-know, my Mom was part of that group – she and Mariana were very good friends. And you mentioned [they were] kind of an auxiliary, or they would be compared to the Women's Club in North Colton. But they would be a support group for the community. If there was a funeral, they would provide the reception, the food, or if there was something going on in the community they would also provide services – and volunteer for some of those activities.

**Ms. Pérez:** In here (in the scrapbook), before I change the page, I was real excited with this picture here because this is a picture of President Truman when he came through Colton.

**Dr. Rivera:** That was in what – 1946, 1947?

**Ms. Pérez:** 1948, April of '48. And I thought – Wow! That's pretty neat. Not only that he was here, but the train itself, you can see the train (She points to the picture).

**Dr. Rivera:** Was that at the Colton Depot?

**Ms. Pérez:** The Colton Depot.

**Dr. Rivera:** Which we don't have anymore.

**Ms. Pérez:** No, unfortunately.

**Dr. Rivera:** And there's some pictures of the Immaculate Conception.

**Ms. Pérez:** (She pulls out the picture). This is when the Immaculate Conception was opened and that they finished it; Father Keane was the priest; and it was consecrated in January 1948. My Nina has a little article here where they ransacked the home of the priest.

(Laughter)

**Ms. Pérez:** But he was the priest until he passed away here in Colton.

**Dr. Rivera:** And I understand that Bishop Stralin was also a Colton person?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, and this is Bishop Buddy who dedicated the church...

**Dr. Rivera:** Well you even have a picture of Bobby Velazquez.

**Ms. Pérez:** (She pulls out another picture) Bobby Velazquez...

**Dr. Rivera:** [He] was the son of Jesse and Tommy Velazquez.

**Ms. Pérez:** ...and Tommy, another one of my cousins...

**Dr. Rivera:** Oh, Bobby's your cousin?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, yeah. His Mom is my Mom's sister.

**Dr. Rivera:** (He repeats what she just said.) Everybody in Colton is related.

**Ms. Pérez:** You got it!

And I want to thank Bobby for his role in our family – [it's] because of him [that] so many of our younger generation went to college and graduated. You-know, they followed his footsteps and became college graduates which was awesome.

**Dr. Rivera:** Well, you-know the other thing that we could add to his honor is that he was a graduate of Cal State, which is where we're at now, Cal State San Bernardino. He graduated from here in the early 70s.

And he had a band.

**Ms. Pérez:** The Latin Lads, I think. And I couldn't wait to get old enough to go to the Crescendo, so I could hear Bobby play in his element, you-know?

**Dr. Rivera:** Uh-huh.

**Ms. Pérez:** But by the time I got to go to the Crescendo – he was playing Santana, he was playing Chicago, you-know, and not playing like the *Pérez Prado* music, and stuff like that – that's what I wanted to hear, you-know. But it was good.

(Laughter)

**Dr. Rivera:** Let's see, what other pictures do we have here?

**Ms. Pérez:** (She flips through some pictures). These are weddings, and I'm not real sure who they are, but she's got their announcements and their pictures. And then, these are postcards [from] 1947, and she would [write] little things from the weddings like – this must have been on the table for this wedding, and so she has those.

**Dr. Rivera:** Is this a picture of the background of the San Salvador?

**Ms. Pérez:** This is at the old San Salvador Church.

I was honored to be in the choir when Father Valencia passed away, the parishioners were not allowed in the Church. The people that were in the Church were all priests, nuns, bishops, cardinals, everybody in the clergy.

**Dr. Rivera:** At his funeral in 1966?

**Ms. Pérez:** In the Church, but, Father Wagner, who had a choir in the Immaculate Church, and I was part of his choir, we sang for that mass. They had to reconstruct the choir loft to hold us because it was so old. And so, we were there and we saw everything that was happening for that. Then, we traveled with him to, I think it was San Diego, where they buried him. That was a very memorable day – but, I felt sad for the people [who] had gone to that Church forever and ever – and were not allowed to go in.

**Dr. Rivera:** Let's see, what else do we have here?

She was quite a collector...

**Ms. Pérez:** (She holds up another page with pictures). This is the mortician, Kob Snyder, the original owner – this was his burial when he died. And this is a flower from his flower arrangements.

**Dr. Rivera:** The headline says that he was in Colton since 1905.

What else do we have here?



**Ms. Pérez & Dr. Rivera:** (Both read in unison). Wilson graduates!

**Ms. Pérez:** [They were] given a legion award, so this must be the American Legion. And it was Ramon Hernandez, Maggie Marques and Pasqual Oliva, Commander of the Fidel Hernandez Legion Post, and they made the presentation to these kids.

**Dr. Rivera:** What year?

**Ms. Pérez:** 1949.

(She holds up another page). This is a letter from the Post expressing [their] thanks for making the food, and serving those [who] attended from the surrounding cities for this American Legion. So this was another one of those things that those ladies did...

**Dr. Rivera:** This is addressed to who?

**Ms. Pérez:** To my Nina, Luz Duran.

**Mr. Acosta:** (Off camera) Could you repeat the names of the award winners?

**Ms. Pérez:** Yes. 2 members of the Woodrow Wilson Junior High School – 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduating class were presented honor awards of the American Legion, at the commencement exercise, June 8<sup>th</sup>, at the Colton School. Pictured during the ceremony are left to right, Ramon Hernandez, Maggie Marques, the students, and Pasqual Oliva was the commander of the Fidel Hernandez Legion Post. The Superintendent was Paul J. Rogers. They later named [an elementary] school after Paul J. Rogers. Glen Palmer was the Principal.

**Dr. Rivera:** What else do we have here?

**Ms. Pérez:** These are just little [notes that read]: “You've been my inspiration.” And this is from my Mom and my Aunt Terry (Theresa): “You have made my faith secure for my knowledge of your kindness, and your love is very sure. So with all my heart, your mother, I sincerely hope and pray that your life is very happy, most of all on Mother's Day.”

**Dr. Rivera:** Very good. And this is one of the letters from 1941 – that was sent from Kansas?

**Ms. Pérez:** Um-hum from Kansas.

**Dr. Rivera:** From Kansas to your Mom?

**Ms. Pérez:** [No], to my Nina, to Luz.

**Dr. Rivera:** ... From the Jehovah Witness Church?

**Ms. Pérez:** The Jehovah Witness Church, uh-huh – their revival.  
(She holds up another picture) This is a picture of Sacramento in 1941. I'm sure it looks a lot different now.

**Dr. Rivera:** No, it hasn't changed...

**Ms. Pérez:** (She turns to other pictures) Okay, these are Lucy Morales and Drusila or Rusela Lopez.

**Dr. Rivera:** Now, how do they fit into Colton?

**Ms. Pérez:** Probably just friends. But she took a lot of the pictures from the funerals, and I also did that – I would take pictures of everybody that I could at the funerals.

Now, this here is Theodore Galvan and he's also related to Sally Vasquez. He was, I think, an uncle, and he was thrown from a horse and was killed.

**Dr. Rivera:** And that was back in 1948?

**Ms. Pérez:** In '48, uh-huh.

**Dr. Rivera:** Who is this pretty girl over here?

**Ms. Pérez:** Now, this is my Tia Terry (Theresa), and this is her Wilson School 8th grade graduation picture.

**Dr. Rivera:** What year was that?

**Ms. Pérez:** This is 1945-46 – and the 8th grade at Woodrow Wilson.

**Dr. Rivera:** There's a list of the graduates.

**Ms. Pérez:** Here's all the graduates, uh-huh.

Tommy Castorena...

**Dr. Rivera:** I'll be darn! What year is that – 1948?

**Ms. Pérez:** '45-46

**Dr. Rivera:** Tommy Castorena is my neighbor.

**Ms. Pérez:** Marcos Calderia, Gilbert Alvarez, Vera Alva, Manuel Alanis, Albert Alanis, Reynaldo Abril...

**Dr. Rivera:** Ray Abril, Jr.

**Ms. Pérez:** I'm sure you would know a lot of these people.

**Dr. Rivera:** Oh, of course I do...

Well I'm going to have to scan this...

So let's see if we can move on to the others.

**Ms. Pérez:** This is in front of the house that my Grandparents owned – where all my *Tios* and *Tias* were born.

**Dr. Rivera:** And the address is?

**Ms. Pérez:** This is the 531 West 'O' Street; and this is one of my cousins, his daughter lived there.

This is a letter from Blossom E. George, from the Vice Principal of Colton High School. She wrote a letter to congratulate my Nina and Ezekiel Chavez for my Aunt Terry. So she wrote a letter of congratulations for them.

**Dr. Rivera:** What year was that?

**Ms. Pérez:** I would say it would have been after 1945, maybe 1947, 48.

(She turns more pages) And then, this was a little article on a benefit dinner at San Salvador Church, and it was – let's see what was it for? For the building fund of the new San Salvador Catholic Church.

Now, here are some of the people we were talking about that were the Las Teenagers. The group that sponsored the affair was headed by Mrs. Frank Ariza, J. Aguilar, Pete Colunga, J. Rice, L. Arroyo, Jean Monotaya, G. Perez, A. Castorena, Ramos, Mendoza, Vincent Duran, L. Sontonya – that must have been Louie. D. Guerrero, I'm sure he was part of the Guerrero Brothers, Panini, Rupert, and Trini. Van Aken, Zacharias, De la Rosa, Serrano, J. Lopez, Pete Chavez, Mary Delgado, and Natalie Salazar. They started this benefit for the new Catholic Church, but there's no date on this.

**Dr. Rivera:** I see the dates here 1947-1948.

**Ms. Pérez:** This was a report card from my Nina Luz, she was in 4th grade and was promoted to 5th grade... This was her award in writing, handwriting, and penmanship, and for perfect attendance. So correct me on that, I thought she had only gone to 3rd grade but she went to 4th grade.

**Dr. Rivera:** Uh-huh, it's a good thing she kept records.

**Ms. Pérez:** That's right, you-know. I cheated her a year.  
These were birthday cards that she had gotten from her friends.

**Dr. Rivera:** The footprints!

**Ms. Pérez:** The footprints of one of my cousin's, Freddie Chavez. He still lives in Colton. He married Sylvia Calderilla. Freddie graduated from Colton High School in 1965. He was in a band; and his kids went to Colton.

(She holds up a picture)

This is a new picture: this is me and my granddaughter. This is when I turned 55; and she had no choice but to be a Dodger fan.

(Laughter)

(There's another picture she brings out but the person is unknown).

**Dr. Rivera:** Well, Genevieve, you have a wonderful treasure here. In the future, would you let us borrow it for our oral history project?

**Ms. Pérez:** Yes, yes.

**Dr. Rivera:** And possibly, Frank Acosta, can scan the information, and we would have it available here at the University for people who would like to learn about some of the activities and incidents that your Nina had, and also learn about who the people were that she participated with in Colton during that time. So if we can borrow it, we'd appreciate it very much.

Now, what do you plan to do with this scrapbook?

**Ms. Pérez:** You-know, I was talking to Lily about that because nobody really wants to take it. Maybe one brother would take it because he also would do everything that I would do – he was my little shadow; taking pictures and getting information, I think he would enjoy doing this.

**Dr. Rivera:** So that would be in safe hands then?

**Ms. Pérez:** I think so. But I really wanted to give it to my daughter, Jennifer, because she's very involved in her dad's family reunions and writing historical things that's going on. But right now she's not too interested in it, you-know – so, I'll give it a couple more years and see what happens.

**Dr. Rivera:** Yeah, give it a few more years.

You-know, you mentioned to me that you were at one time part of the library board...

**Ms. Pérez:** The Colton Historical Committee.

**Dr. Rivera:** Uh-huh, and then you participated with them and an issue came up. Can you tell me what the issue was?

**Ms. Pérez:** The issue was that they wanted to put bronze plaques at historical places in Colton. But, all the bronze plaques that they were talking about were north of the tracks, the freeway – everything was north of the freeway. And I said that's not right, though,

you-know, I said, we have a lot of things that happened south of that track. And I said, that should be noted, you-know. We're talking about Colton – and they said, well, so [are we]. [I said,] you guys gave us the name: South Colton; I said, it's all Colton... There was a lot of things that happened – and I said, one of the things I know that my *Tios*, and especially, the men just thought was the ultimate was the Caldera Plunge. They said because of this man, Juan Caldera, he was a father figure in so many ways to the boys who were hoodlums that were just running wild, you-know. He taught them to swim, he taught them to box, and he taught them to do a lot of things. My Dad said that that complex was way ahead of its time.

**Dr. Rivera:** Tell us about the complex, what complex are we talking about? The Caldera Complex?

**Ms. Pérez:** Yes.

**Dr. Rivera:** Where was that located, on South 5th Street?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right – uh-huh.

**Dr. Rivera:** Okay, and what was in the complex?

**Ms. Pérez:** They had swimming, they had boxing, and they had a baseball field... They had a lot of things to offer the boys to [help them] stay out of trouble, you-know. I know my Dad just couldn't say enough about this [place]. He said this kept [him] from getting into a gang or going astray. And right after that he enlisted in the Army, and that's what a lot of these guys did – they enlisted in the Army.

But that was a big ordeal for these kids to go to – it was like the plunge in North Colton, only this was in South Colton.

**Dr. Rivera:** Yeah, because we couldn't participate in North Colton's recreational activities.

**Ms. Pérez:** With the plunge in [North] Colton, the only time the kids from South Colton could go was on Friday. And that was because that's when they emptied the pool out – that's when they were going to clean it. So they were allowed to go at that time.

**Dr. Rivera:** But they were lucky that Caldera built the complex that's on South 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Colton.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, right, um-hmm.

**Dr. Rivera:** And the issue was, then, on the Colton committee?

**Ms. Pérez:** [It] was that they didn't have anything that was concrete as to what [or where] they could put a plaque at. And, you-know, I brought up the Patio Supremo on 'O' Street... That for many, many, many years was a big function for South Colton.

**Dr. Rivera:** Fiestas Patrias...

**Ms. Pérez:** And the parades... That was just, I can't recall off-the-top-of-my-head, but at that time, I had them all written down – these places needed plaques also, you-know. So, when they said that they didn't think that would fly – I just said, well here, here's my papers, I don't want to be a part of [this], you-know. And I lived [in North Colton, except for two years of my life, all my life in North Colton, but my family, my roots, and all the history was in South Colton, you-know. So it was still part of my life and I thought it should be part of it.

**Dr. Rivera:** And you were not part of it as far as that committee was concerned?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, I didn't want to be part of it.

**Dr. Rivera:** You mentioned the Esperanza Market?



**Ms. Pérez:** Umm-hmm.

**Dr. Rivera:** There were about 10 little markets in South Colton. As you know, Colton was self-sufficient because everybody knew that there was de facto segregation – so we all stayed in South Colton. We did all our shopping in South Colton, we did all our recreation in South Colton, we did all our partying in South Colton, we had our tortilleria, bakeries, grocery stores, gas stations, churches, and schools in South Colton. Now, how did Esperanza Market get started?

**Ms. Pérez:** I believe it was Victor and Manuela Rodriguez who started that store.

**Dr. Rivera:** What year, do you remember? Early 1900s?

**Ms. Pérez:** I would say, yes. Because after they got pretty old, then the sister Mariana Hernandez and her husband took it over, and kept that store. But one of the things that was really good about these little stores: Navarro's, Martinez, and Cervantes, was that they had a little book with your name on it. And you could buy stuff and pay as you went, you-know. You didn't have to pay cash for everything that you bought...

**Dr. Rivera:** So you had good credit with all these different stores?

**Ms. Pérez:** You had credit with all these stores.

I overheard, not too long ago, Stater Brothers on Valley still has one lady from South Colton who has her book still – where she could still get stuff on credit, you-know. But she's the last – that's the end...

**Dr. Rivera:** Do you know who this lady is?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, I wish I did.

But that was one of the pros for having those little stores was that they would give you credit...

**Dr. Rivera:** Mariana and Estefan had the store for a long time.

**Ms. Pérez:** A very long time. And then it burned, and in my other scrapbook I found the article of when it burned, and then they moved to Navarro's store, which was, I think, a lot smaller.

**Dr. Rivera:** Yes.

**Ms. Pérez:** But, they moved to that store.

**Dr. Rivera:** Which is just a block down the street.

**Ms. Pérez:** A block east...

**Dr. Rivera:** On the corner of 'O' and 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, right.

And then across the street, I think was a Gaytán store...

**Dr. Rivera:** I don't remember that one.

**Ms. Pérez:** I think it was either Rudolfo or Albert that had a store there too. They had 2 stores... There was Toby's Market where Las Palomas was in Colton.

**Dr. Rivera:** Where the Veterans Park.

**Ms. Pérez:** Okay, okay. Then there was another store over there...

**Dr. Rivera:** *La Tiendita.*

**Ms. Pérez:** Uh-huh. So I guess we had Las Palomas, and Riverside had Casa Blanca...

**Dr. Rivera:** And then we had Rodriguez Market also – on the corner of ‘M’ Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Street near the railroad tracks – just east of Cervantes Market.

**Ms. Pérez:** Okay, okay.

Cervantes, I grew up with his family; his daughters went to Catholic School, and we were good friends.

**Dr. Rivera:** That was Cookie and Nadine?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, they were Irene and Mary.

**Dr. Rivera:** Okay, the younger ones?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, the younger ones. And then their son was...

**Dr. Rivera:** Ray, Jr.

**Ms. Pérez:** No, Mr. Cervantes was...

**Dr. Rivera:** Oh I'm sorry, I was talking about Rodriguez...

**Ms. Pérez:** Okay, now which Rodriguez' are you talking about?

**Dr. Rivera:** The ones that owned the market: Nadine, Cookie, Ray.

**Ms. Pérez:** Were they the ones that went to Rancho and Citrus? That Rodriguez?

**Dr. Rivera:** No, no. They stayed there and they closed there.  
You're talking about Charles Cervantes, he also went to school where you went.

**Ms. Pérez:** Yeah, Charlie.

**Dr. Rivera:** So anyway, my curiosity about the Esperanza Market was that a friend, Antonia Hernandez-Kelly, was adopted by the family. Did you know about that adoption?

**Ms. Pérez:** Antonietta, Toni's mother gave Toni to Victor and Manuela because she had 2 more babies. And I think one was like a year ahead and the [other one] a year behind. To me, poor Toni was the one that was chosen out to be raised by another family.

**Dr. Rivera:** Okay. But that was kind of the custom, wasn't it?

**Ms. Pérez:** It was, in a way.  
The family embraced her very well, you-know. She was a big part of their family and their traditions and everything.  
Excuse me. (She drinks some juice).  
She always corrected you, she was good at correcting you.

**Dr. Rivera:** Mandóna.

**Ms. Pérez:** Mandóna, aye-yai-yai! You could not say: "yeah", always "yes", "yes sir", "yes ma'am".

I lived across the street from Vic and Carmen, and down the street from Manuela and Toni – I was always [at their homes]; so I got corrected just as much as everybody else did, you-know. My kids thanked her for that, you-know, they said if it wasn't for Aunt Toni we would have been slobs...

**Dr. Rivera:** She worked for the school district for many years.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, and my daughter took her job many years later. She has that position now. But, you-know, it was very good.

**Dr. Rivera:** She's kind-of-a good legend for South Colton – in things that she did and the hard work that she produced, also a good role model for many people from South Colton.

**Frank Acosta:** Can you clarify the position she had with the school district?

**Ms. Pérez:** She was the Secretary for the Superintendent in Colton.

**Frank Acosta:** For how many years?

**Ms. Pérez:** I would say over 30 years; and she started out as a secretary at Colton High School. So she worked her way up.

**Dr. Rivera:** Yeah, she's a good legend.

I'm delighted that your daughter, Jennifer, took over her position.

Now, tell me about you, I understand that you were quite a softball player?

**Ms. Pérez:** I love softball, I love baseball. I wanted to be the first lady Dodger – that was my goal. I played for 10 years in the city league, and then about another 5 years with the co-ed team.

**Dr. Rivera:** Well, you were born in South Colton on Maple Street. When you were 2 years old you moved to North Colton, and then you went to Immaculate Conception. What age did you start playing softball?

**Ms. Pérez:** 7. I was 7 years old.

**Dr. Rivera:** Well you were a youngster. What drew you to be a softball player?

**Ms. Pérez:** Probably my older brother – he was an avid Dodger fan. And, I kid-you-not, we played wiffle ball every single day, every day we played wiffle ball. Because I was a little bit younger than the rest of them, I always had the worst position, you-know, when we were playing football or baseball, whatever it was... I was the catcher and [they told me that I] have to catch three flies to get up [to bat]. Well, the catcher never caught three flies back there, you-know, so I would never get up [to bat]. But then, they would put me outfield and I'd have to go chase the balls. But you know what, just to be with them—I was happy.

And in football, we played a lot of football and I was always the center; and as soon as I hiked the ball they would just shove my face into the ground and I was out of the play. But, we just all loved baseball, and my Mom and my Dad. So with baseball being a big part of our life, my Mom would make hot dogs and we would sit in front of the radio and listen to the Dodger game. Then, when the Dodgers came on TV, we only saw the Giants game and the Astros, I think. My Mom would push the TV up to the window, and we would sit outside and watch the game outside with the radio so that we could hear Vin Scully. And we loved it, we still do.

**Dr. Rivera:** But you were pretty good.

**Ms. Pérez:** You-know, I won All-Around Athlete for the City of Colton in the age 10 group. And this was all the grammar schools in Colton that sent their best athletes. And James Hayes...

**Dr. Rivera:** Who was James Hayes?

**Ms. Pérez:** James Hayes was a teacher.

**Dr. Rivera:** At Colton High School?

**Ms. Pérez:** Well, I met James in my Summer school in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, he was my Summer school teacher in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade; and this is funny but, what attracted me to him was that I had never seen such a hairy man. This man had so much hair, he looked like he had an angora sweater on. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, I remember going up to him and asking him if I could touch the hair on his arm. He started laughing, and he goes: "Well yeah, go ahead." And I was just amazed, you-know. And we became good friends when I found out that his only son, Steven, and I shared the same birthday. Well, he also taught CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) at Immaculate Conception, he taught at the junior high school, and then he went to the high school. He did the police explorers, and the firemen, I don't know what the firemen [association] were called, but a lot of his students went on to become firemen and policemen. He was also the baseball coach in one of our city leagues. He probably knew every kid...

**Dr. Rivera:** He was a great coach?

**Ms. Pérez:** A great coach, just a great mentor. He ran for [city] council and he won. I can't say enough nice things about that man.

**Dr. Rivera:** So he was a tremendous influence on your life, in terms of your softball and your interest in Colton activities?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right. When they started the Colton Recreation [Center] I think they had McKinley School, Lincoln, Grant, and probably Wilson. I don't think Paul J. Rogers was up yet. I know the high school had it also, and they had different people that ran this.

We did crafts, we learned how to play Carroms, and we did all kinds of athletic things as far as like the high jump, the broad jump, basketball throws, softball, baseball throws, football throws—all these things. And the one that would win: we got ribbons for first, second, third, and fourth, and maybe even fifth...

**Dr. Rivera:** So it was a well-organized recreational program?

**Ms. Pérez:** Very much so. I still have all my ribbons, but they kind-of got wrinkled, and one day I thought I'd iron them and [one of them] shriveled up, so I didn't do anymore ironing on them...

**Dr. Rivera:** My next question I was gonna ask you was – who were your heroes, and you mentioned two of them: Tony Kelly, and you also mentioned Jim Hayes. Were there any other heroes in your life when you were growing up?

**Ms. Pérez:** Actually, Tony wasn't until later. But it was Alice Molina, she was very [important in my life]. She went to school with my Aunt Teddy and she was very involved, at that time, with the GAA, which was like your...

**Dr. Rivera:** Girls Athletic Association?

**Ms. Pérez:** Right, right. And her daughter's went to Catholic school with me. She had our sports program at our Catholic school. And in 4th grade, I was on the senior volleyball, basketball, and softball teams, and she says: you-know, you're our first 4th grader that's on this team. I was so proud because I love sports; and when I graduated from eighth grade, I was the first one to receive a sports trophy for being involved in all the sports [during] those years – and I was very proud of that. She was also my baseball coach with my first team, and I couldn't have been happier because the name of our team was the Dodgerets. We weren't the Dodgers but we were the Dodgerets... [And with her as my coach,] I couldn't have been luckier than to have her, you-know, push me along all this way and make me strive to be a better athlete and a better



person – because she was very involved in the Immaculate Conception Church. So, in seeing that, [I] wanted to be like [her]. She was very involved all the way into my adulthood. Then, the tables turned and she was helping me with recreation, with kids, and just, you-know, she was a real big influence...

**Dr. Rivera:** [She was] a big hero for you...

If you look back, you-know, growing up in Colton, how have things changed? How has life changed in Colton during the time that you were growing up in Colton, and even looking at Colton now? Or have they changed?

**Ms. Pérez:** Well, they have changed in a lot of ways. First of all, I was very proud of being known as The Hub City because of our trains... And then, somewhere in the 1990s they took that away without putting it to a vote to the citizens. And I was really sad over that because that was what we were known for. We were known [as] The Hub City – everything was with the trains.

The thing about growing up, was one of my boyfriend's [whose] last name was Nuñez – my Dad [would] say: *“De cual Nuñez, de la calle ‘O’?” ‘O’ de la calle whatever.*

**(Laughter)**

I'm like, Dad you don't know him – you don't know his family... And then, my Mom [would] say: “What's his dad's name?” And I'd go: Tom. [Mom would say:] *“Aye! Pues es el hijo de Tommy Nunez y trabajo con tu Daddy”* – [she is saying] they worked together... And I'm going: Oh-my-gosh. Everybody was: *de la calle ‘L’ o la calle ‘M’, porque tambien tenemos, Garcias.* They knew everybody by their streets, you-know, who was who.

My brother lives in Georgia and a lot of times [he would ask:] so do you still see people? And I'd go: You-know Dave, the one thing that is so good about Colton is that I can come to a stop sign and I'll see somebody, and I haven't seen them for a while, and I'll go (she makes a motion with her hand of drinking and pointing someplace) they'll go, okay, and we'll go have coffee and talk, you-know, just like that—right now we're gonna go have coffee and talk. Or, I'll see the children, the grandchildren, or the great-grandchildren—and you know who their families were. And that's really exciting

because we don't have that hardly anymore. On my street when my Dad bought his house in 1955, there are still 4 original owners and they were all from South Colton. They all bought their homes with their GI Bill. One of them was in Normandy, one of them was in Germany, my Dad was in Japan, and I don't know where Socorro Reyes was.

**Dr. Rivera:** Socorro, his parents were from 'N' Street, but I don't know where he served. I know his brother Phil served in the Navy.

**Ms. Pérez:** Okay.

**Dr. Rivera:** But Socorro was in the Army but I don't know where.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right. I don't know where he was stationed.

**Dr. Rivera:** Socorro worked for the Colton Water Department for many years.

**Ms. Pérez:** Right. He retired from the Colton [Water Dept.].

And the other one, Bob Matus, he worked at the cement plant and retired from the cement plant. His family was from Colton.

The other one was Salvador Vasquez, and his family was also from Colton and they lived on 7th and 'O' up on like a little ridge.

These people were all from Colton and they all knew each other... and [as] kids, we all grew up with each other, also.

Bob Matus, his son Robert is my *compadre*. Sal Vasquez, his daughter is my *comadre*. Going to Catholic School has a big influence on you. [When I went] to Catholic School, in second grade I made my First [Holy] Communion; and Susan was in 2nd grade but she hadn't made hers.

**Dr. Rivera:** Who is Susan?

**Ms. Pérez:** Susan is Sal's daughter.

**Dr. Rivera:** Was Sal Vasquez the bandleader?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, no, no, no, no – but I know that Sal. [The] Sal [I'm talking about] worked for Santa Fe, and he worked for Kaiser. I would give, [his daughter,] Susan, her catechism lessons at home, and nobody knew that that's what we were doing. So one day we went to church, and I said okay, you guys are gonna make your First Communion. Now, we're in 2nd grade, and I said, this is how you go up, and this is what you do. Okay, so we did that – so [I said:] I'm your Nina and you have to call me Nina now because, you-know, I brought you to your First [Holy] Communion. Well, we walked home and she told her mom: "I made my First [Holy] Communion today." [Her mom said,] "Ejo! You weren't supposed to do that yet..." Anyway, so they got her into Catechism, and then, she formally made her First [Holy] Communion, and I'd go, that's your second Communion. I said, you already made your First Communion—and don't you forget it.

You-know, that was a big part of what we did: we would always be like The Supremes or the Beatles, and we would put shows on in the garage, and the kids from the neighborhood would have to pay a nickel to come and see us play. Sally, Sal's wife, would make peanut butter cookies; so my brother's friends would go, not because they wanted see us, but because those peanut butter cookies were-to-die-for, they were so good. So they would sit there and clap for us—and everything; we had these little plastic guitars—and oh-god, we loved doing that, you-know.

All of us, as other families moved in, we still stayed very good friends with these people. One of them were the Zendejas, and their son became a firefighter and he just retired a fireman.

**Dr. Rivera:** What was his name?

**Ms. Pérez:** Ray Zendejas. And he was from the class of '74. Again, James Hayes pushed him towards that...

The other family was the Glovak family, and they had nothing but daughters. The first son-in-law [was] also pushed into being a police officer—his name was Jorge Gomez. [Jorge's] family was from Colton.

We still have the second generation living in those homes, and we're still good friends.

**Dr. Rivera:** The extended family...

**Ms. Pérez:** Extended families – we all went to Colton high school, and we're still connected—we're so very connected.

**Dr. Rivera:** Well you-know, Genovese, people don't believe that I still get together with my kindergarten friends... After 69 years [we still get together] for breakfast. People do not believe that we get together as kindergarten pals... So I know what you're talking about when you're describing the relationship with people that you grew up with.

**Ms. Pérez:** Susan's been my friend since we were 2 [years old]. And like I said, we're *comadres*. Her daughters and my daughters were really good friends, and her youngest son and my youngest son are very good friends. So you-know, it's continued and we still are very much in tune with each other.

And it's funny because we talk about a lot of our childhood, you-know. A lot of times, if one of us was in trouble we couldn't go outside, and so we would go, like myself, I would go to the bathroom window and our call would be: Ah-ooo! And they would hear it and they would come to the bathroom window and ask, what happened, what's up? And that's how we would communicate, you-know...

It's funny because sometimes when we see each other we go: Ah-ooo!

(Laughter)

We had a lot of fun.

I see that now we are so protective of our children.

I used to walk to school and I was a kindergartener, you-know.

**Dr. Rivera:** You were about a mile away from Immaculate [Conception Catholic School].

**Ms. Pérez:** Well, for kindergarten it was Grant School.

But I remember, I would run, I thought I was Jim Thorpe, I would run because I never wanted to get caught when they still used to use that siren that they would use for fire drills—the air raid drills. I remember in kindergarten, one time I was right there and it went off, oh-my-god, I think I flew to my school – I got so scared. So I would run to school every day so that I wouldn't get caught with that...

But, you-know, the kids [today] have no idea what that is...

**Dr. Rivera:** It's a different life...

**Ms. Pérez:** It is a different life—we don't let our kids walk, they can't ride their bikes like we used to. It would be all over town [about them] riding their bikes...

**Dr. Rivera:** Do you need another drink?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, I'm okay.

I see it even more so, now, with the kids. The kids can be two blocks away from school, and they don't walk to school – they get a ride.

**Dr. Rivera:** We've been here a little over an hour, is there anything that I forgot or that you would like to tell us? You-know, [something I may have] completely forgot to mention during our interview? Or, things that came to mind while we were having the interview?

**Ms. Pérez:** You-know, in high school there was a contest, and what I did was, I took a picture of every Hispanic worker and teacher at the high school. And, I took a picture of

myself in the middle of this, and then, all these people that had some kind of influence in my life in high school. I had a little string that would come from each one of them and where they came from; and my project won – I won 25 bucks.

But everybody where they originated from, some from Colton, Arizona, Mexico, a lot of different places. And not only that but, [folks who would say:] are you from there? And they themselves got closer because now they had something in common.

[Anyway,] I was very, very proud of that project.

**Dr. Rivera:** That's a wonderful project. Were you a senior in high school?

**Ms. Pérez:** No, I was a junior in high school when I did that [project], but I was very involved with art. I took every art class you could imagine in high school. Mr. LaPlante was my art teacher. He [asked me], how come you didn't do that one for us one for us? I said, I don't know, I did it for my English class... He was real upset...

**Dr. Rivera:** Getting back to your project, which was you in the middle and all these Hispanic folks around you.

**Ms. Pérez:** The history that they have there is not enough of what that area was, you-know? I'm sure that people at home have stuff that they could lend [or share with others], or whatever. I had this at the library (she points at the scrapbook) and I had it opened to a page, just a page, and then I got a note from the librarian. She said [that a lady told her she noticed a picture of her uncle in an article on the opened page in my scrapbook]. This lady never knew anything about her uncle, and she would like a copy of that little article. I [told the librarian] okay, but I'll do it. I said because as you can see this was more than 30 years ago when this was on display, and it was already like this, [in this condition]. So, you don't want to have too many people handling [this scrapbook and its contents in this delicate condition]. It was in a cedar chest for 20 years before I got it. My mom just put it in there and never got it out. So, when I got it I was real happy.

**Dr. Rivera:** Well you're very lucky.

Genevieve, thank you so much for being with us this morning.

**Ms. Pérez:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rivera:** You-know, we normally go for an hour, [but] I think you and I have gone for an hour and a half.

**Ms. Pérez:** Oh, wow!

**Dr. Rivera:** It's been great, thank you very much for being with us this morning, and we truly appreciate you, again, being with us...

**Ms. Pérez:** Thank you very much, Dr. Tom, I'm very, very happy and honored.

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