

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

South Colton Oral History Project Collection

Special Collections & University Archives

11-15-2016

Manuel 'Opi' Delgado

CSUSB

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/colton-history>



Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [Latin American History Commons](#), and the [Oral History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

CSUSB, "Manuel 'Opi' Delgado" (2016). *South Colton Oral History Project Collection*. 33.
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/colton-history/33>

This Video is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections & University Archives at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in South Colton Oral History Project Collection by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewees:

Manuel 'Opi' Delgado

Interviewer:

Dr. Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

November 15, 2016

Location:

Grand Terrace, California

Interview Summary completed by:

Kimberly Morales, 2020

Topic:

Manuel 'Opi' Delgado talks about growing up in a close-knit Catholic family in South Colton as well as his fond memories with Father Valencia and Father Luque. He discusses how different things are in Colton now compared to when he was a kid.

Keywords:

- Tortilla Factory
- Catholic Church
- Father Valencia
- Father Luque
- South Colton Community
- Colton (Calif.)

Comments:

Some Spanish language phrases and locations are spoken throughout the interview.

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Streaming video	Video Section 1: 00:00:44 00:07:53 Video Section 2: 00:06:56	Father Peter Luque
Streaming video	Video Section 1: 00:01:31, 00:04:20 Video Section 3: 00:16:15	Tortilla/Tortilleria Factory
Streaming video	Video Section 1: 00:02:38, 00:05:37 Video Section 3: 00:05:49	Father Valencia
Streaming video	Video Section 1: 00:11:19, 00:16:45 Video Section 2: 00:02:26	The New Church
Streaming video	Video Section 2: 00:02:06, 00:11:23 Video Section 3: 00:02:00	El Sombrero
Streaming video	Video Section 2: 00:11:14 Video Section 3: 00:16:09	Seventh Street
Streaming video	Video Section 3: 00:05:19	Mercury's
Streaming video	Video Section 4: 00:16:39	North Colton

Related Materials:

Additional oral history interviews are available from the South Colton Oral History Project at CSUSB, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/colton-history/>.

Full interview transcript can be found below.

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Interview Transcript

Interviewees:

Manuel 'Opi' Delgado

Interviewer:

Dr. Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

November 15, 2016

Location:

Grand Terrace, California

Length:

1:14:62

Media format:

Streaming video

List of Acronyms:

TR = Dr. Tom Rivera

FA = Frank Acosta

MOD = Manuel 'Opi' Delgado

L = Lily

Interview Transcript completed by:

Kimberly Morales, 2020

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Video Section 1

[00:00:00]

TR: Good afternoon, my name is Tom Rivera and today is November the 15th, 2016. We are taping at 23170 Vista Grande Way in Grand Terrace. Our oral history team behind the camera is Mr. Frank Acosta and today's guest is Mr. Manuel 'Opi' Delgado. Manuel, thank you very much for being with us this afternoon, we certainly appreciate it, especially on a Sunday afternoon.

What I'd like to get started with is, talk a little bit about your cousin Father Peter Luque. Now Manuel, how are you related to Father Luque?

MOD: Well Father Luque's mom was my mom's sister, they were part of the Hernandez clan. And Father Luque's dad Pete Luque Senior, he was my stepfather's brother but you know, in our family we have four Hernandez's that are married, that were married to the Luque's so that's where we're so closely—

TR: —No, tell me about the Hernandez family. You talked about your Grandma Hernandez.

MOD: Well my Grandma Hernandez at 253 South Seventh Street had a little tortilla factory there. And most of my cousins were born in right there [*hand gestures*] in the house that she had next to the tortilla factory and I have so many fond memories about that place.

My grandfather was named Cruz Hernandez and my grandmother was Dolores [*inaudible*] Hernandez. And just all of our family worked there, we had uncles and aunts that would come during the summer and work there. I think every one of my cousins worked there, as far of us. We used to cut menudo on Thursdays, my grandmother would give us a dollar.

We're such a close-knit family and a real strong Catholic family. My grandmother would always say "God first, family second. If anybody comes in the door and they want something to eat, you give them something because you don't know if God's testing you."

MOD: She would make breakfast for the priest Father Valencia and we used to clean the church and all [*shakes head*] sorts of stuff with the church. And if you didn't go to church, you wouldn't get your quarter to go to the New Colton Theater [*laughs and smiles*].

TR: [*Laughs*]. Now tell me where was Grandma and Grandpa Hernandez from, what part of Mexico?

MOD: They were from Guanajuato, Huanímaro in the village of [*inaudible*]. I don't know exactly—

TR: —What's the name of the village?

MOD: Huh?

TR: What's the name of the village?

MOD: [*inaudible*].

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TR: [inaudible], okay.

MOD: [*Nods head*] Yeah. I saw it in the map once and I've got a good friend by the name of Danny Luna and his grandmother was also from the village [inaudible]. And she said she went to Mexico when she was alive and my grandmother's house was still standing in [inaudible].

TR: Have you ever visited the—

MOD: No, no, no, no. I've never been really to Mexico a lot except for Puerto Vallarta [*laughs*] or places like that. I've never been there. We don't have too many relative there anymore because most of them move to the United States, my grandmother's family.

TR: Was the Hernandez family a large family?

MOD: Oh yes, yes, yes. Remigio Hernandez and Emma Guzman Hernandez used to live in the house next to my grandmother's house and they had Marian, Ester, Martha,, Clara, Joseph, and Raymond. And they all lived in that area.

One of the fondest memories that I have in my grandma's house is the laughter that came out of the tortilleria. I mean, when you've got aunts and uncles there, they're all laughing, it was such a happy time.

TR: So the family business kind of kept the family together, united in—

MOD: —yes [*nods head*] —

TR: —in working together just added that, I guess, that [inaudible] core of being a family.

MOD: Yeah and we're still so close and we have a prayer group that we meet every Wednesday. We've been doing it for years, we've cried together, we've laughed together, we've shared together. And it makes it easy when you know, we're feeling down.

TR: You mentioned that you were very close to the church, grandma was very close to the church too. She would cook for Father Valencia. Were you an altar boy?

MOD: I think everybody on [*shakes head*] Seventh and [inaudible] were altar boys [*laughs*].

TR: [*laughs*]

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

MOD: And it was part of living in that area [*hand gestures*] and my cousin Clara, she was the first altar girl. And she—

TR: —In Colton in San Salvador—

MOD: — [*nods head*] in San Salvador, yeah.

TR: And you know, Clara was a couple of years behind me in school.

TR: So she must be what, 74 so 75?

MOD: [*Nods head*] Yeah like Marian, yeah. I'll be 74, I think she's like 75 or something like that.

TR: And you mention you were the altar boy for Father Valencia?

MOD: Yes, yes.

TR: Tell me a little bit about Father Valencia, your experiences with Father Valencia.

MOD: Oh, he was a wonderful person, you know. He was strict too. If you were laughing or making noise while he was doing his [*hand gestures*], he would get you out of where you were sitting and you would have to kneel down in the center aisle—

TR: —[*laughs*] —

MOD: And at that time the center aisle had like little [*hand gestures*] ripples all across and it was like four feet wide and it went from the front door all the way to the altar, to [*inaudible*]—

TR: —This is the old church, right?

MOD: [*Nods head and smiles*] Yeah, you had to kneel down there until the mass was over and after suffering with that then I get home and then I had to face my grandmother [*smiles*]—

TR: —[*laughs*] —

MOD: —and that was a no, no [*shakes head and laughs*], I mean—

TR: Well the other thing that you know, the family was so devoted to the Catholic Church that you mentioned while you were a teenager and you were at the movies with your girlfriend, Father Valencia would go into the movies with his

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

flashlight and look for all of you because he had a service to some place at Colton, is that right?

MOD: Well, he used to do a service on Sundays, I don't know if it was [*hand gestures*] Saturday or Sunday, probably Sundays. And he used to go to the New Colton and we'd be sitting there and all of a sudden, we see this flashlight going up and down the aisle and he would shine it on you and said, "Come on boy."

TR: [*Laughs*]

MOD: And we were so devoted to him and the Catholic Church that we would leave our girlfriends there and go do the service at the projects.

TR: Uh huh, on Pine Street.

MOD: Yeah, their little office, the recreation center they had at the projects. That's where we would do it and my compa Danny was the one that would get caught the most [*laughs*]. I'd dive under the seats once in a while but he was the one that got caught.

TR: Did you guys come back to the show?

MOD: [*Shakes head and smiles*] no.

TR: [*Laughs*] So that was it?

MOD: I didn't want to face my girlfriend after leaving her at the show [*laughs*].

TR: Now tell me, let's talk a little about Father Luque You know, he was your cousin and he also grew up in the same area, Seventh and L Street where the whole Hernandez grew up in and how much older was he than you?

MOD: With Father, I have so many fond memories when we were children and also when he came to Colton and we helped him build a church but as children he would always keep us entertained.

He would take us to trips, you know, we'd go to Jap Hill [*inaudible*] or the mountains around the area. He would take us to the Santa Ana River. He would even put on little shows for us like he'd cut the funnies, I don't know how he did it but [*hand gestures*] he would put them on a reel and they were all sitting there and he's [*hand gestures*] —

TR: —Were these the newspapers funnies?

MOD: Yeah, newspapers funnies, he would cut them up and put them in a big reel and he's cranking away and we're all sitting there amazed because he had

this [*hand gestures*] bed sheet there on the wall and we would see it. And he built carnivals for us, he would get orange crates and for building some kind of [*hand gestures*] railing and these orange crates and we were riding around but this thing that he built and he would do a lot of stuff like that, that's what I remember.

The memory that sticks the most to me is one time that he took me, Johnny, and my cousin Raymond to a restaurant and we never went to restaurants. You know, we had everything there, we had a tortilleria, if we were hungry, we'd just get a tortilla with butter or whatever. But he was starting to show us the other parts so he took us to this restaurant and he ordered steaks. I never used to have [*shakes head*], I never used a knife. All it was, was a spoon and tortillas. The tortilla was my utensil and everything else. So we're trying to cut this steak and the table kept moving because you got three [*smiles and laughs*] kids trying to [*hand gestures*] cut it.

TR: [*laughs*]

MOD: And we spilled the water and everything and he finally said, "Just pick it up with your hands!" [*smiles*].

So we picked it up with our hands and started eating it but Father was destined to be a priest so—

TR: —Oh, so he was trying to teach you social etiquette.

MOD: Yes [*nods head*].

TR: You mentioned Father was meant to be a priest, why?

MOD: Because my grandmother wanted a priest in the family real bad. And she would always ask us, "Who's going to be my priest?"

TR: She would ask who, all of the grandkids?

MOD: All of the boys.

TR: Okay.

MOD: It was Johnny, Joseph, Raymond, and me. And Lalo, you know my cousin Lalo—

TR: —Yes—

MOD: —and she was always asking us, "Who's going to be my priest?" And Father would always say, "I'm going to be your priest grandma."

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TR: And how old was he then? Do you remember?

MOD: Well he was, I was little, I was probably eight or nine and he was eight years older than me so he was probably 16 or 17 in that area. But he did it and my grandma was so happy.

Later on, he came to Colton and we built the church. And that was happy times too because we were working hard building that church and the women would cook for us at lunch time and they'd make the most fantastic lunches [*laughs and smiles*].

TR: [*Laughs*] Getting back to Father Luque's younger years, you said he was destined to be [*inaudible*] because he seemed to be quite a good kid.

MOD: [*Nods head*] Yeah, he was really, really good and you know he was the youngest in his family. Rosa was older and Father, you know he was kind of spoiled a little bit.

TR: So anyway, the Pete Luque Senior only had two children.

MOD: Yes [*nods head*].

TR: The oldest was Rosa.

MOD: Yes.

TR: And the baby was Peter Luque.

MOD: Yes.

TR: What are the characteristics you noticed or what did he have when he was a little kid that you knew he was going to be a priest?

MOD: Well he would do a lot; in high school he was in a journalism class and the school newspaper. At Valley College he was in a cheerleading thing there and then at [*inaudible*] high school. He was always the studious type and everything.

The rest of us were more [*hand gestures*] outgoing all over the place. I don't really remember him doing a lot of that. Like I said, I was younger and most of us were younger.

TR: So was he a good example, a good role model—

MOD: —Oh yes, all the time—

TR: —were you guys—

MOD: —one time father, me and Johnny were walking down the alley and I saw a dollar bill. And me and Johnny ran and grabbed that dollar bill and then we turned the corner of the alley, like going towards the Martinez store which was—

TR: —a bakery—

MOD: —the bakery, we turned that corner and there was another dollar bill. We grabbed it [*hand gestures*] and then another dollar bill and we grabbed it. Then we're sitting in the steps at grandma's house and we're counting this money and everything else. Then Father comes out and says, "Where did you get that money?"

I said, "We found it."

And he said, "Well let's go and track it and see where you found it."

So we found [*hand gestures*] it here, found it here, found it here. Finally went into the store and there was this old gentleman there searching through his pockets. He's the one that dropped the money so we gave it to him but me and Johnny were all bummed out but I remember that.

And it was a good thing you know; he had that kind [*hand gestures*] of, you know—

TR: —mentality of doing well or doing good and being kind.

MOD: Yeah [*nods head*].

TR: Did he go to seminary after Valley College?

MOD: Yes, he joined the seminary, he was there and my mother used to always write to him and everything else. We'd see him once in a while when he'd come to Thanksgiving or any function like that.

TR: Where was the cemetery located?

MOD: Uh—

TR: —Cemetery, the—

FA: —Seminary—

MOD: —oh the seminary in San Diego—

TR: —seminary, I'm sorry—

MOD: —San Diego, in that area.

TR: Oh okay, so it was in San Diego.

MOD: Yeah.

TR: When he was ordained, what kind of satisfaction, feeling did the family have?

MOD: Oh, we were, we knew he was going to be a priest but the smile on all of my relatives you know, “we got a priest in our family, yeah, yeah, yeah.” It was all celebration; it was something that was destined to be you know.

And there’s so many priests that have come out of Colton you know, we have had a few. And he was instrumental in getting these other guys to go through the seminary.

TR: Ah okay like Ray Father Ray of Rosales?

MOD: [*Nods head*] Yeah.

TR: Was also related to you in some way or another—

MOD: —Yeah—

TR: — [*inaudible*] —

MOD: —Yeah, I think, I’m pretty sure he was because everybody every Rosales and everybody like that were all related.

TR: Well they come from the family, the [*inaudible*] family—

MOD: —Yeah but at that time I didn’t know that he was related to me [*laughs*].

TR: Yeah, yeah.

MOD: Yeah it was fun times you know and then after he retired, he was doing Mass at his house and I learned so much [*shakes head*], especially about my faith—

TR: —Yeah before we get to that let me ask you about him being a priest, was he assigned to Colton right off the bat or where did he go?

MOD: Well he was assigned to a lot of different parishes. He was in Chino, he was in San Bernardino Saint George, he was in Colton and he was in Corona too. Those are the ones that I remember the most and I think he had two

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

assignments in Colton, I'm pretty sure he did have two assignments in Colton. He came and then he left and then he came again.

TR: Okay and how long was he in Colton?

MOD: I would say like nine years or so, something like that, I'm not positive. But when he came, he really started pushing to build a church and we got it. He—

TR: So his assignment, one of his goal was to build a new church for Colton.

MOD: Yes, because the parish had been building up a lot of money for a new church and he was having to deal with all of the red tape and he said, "well we're going to build it regardless." And we did.

TR: Did he get permission from the bishop?

MOD: Yeah, after we started yeah, they didn't have no choice, I guess.

TR: *[laughs]* So he started the church, building the church before he got permission from the bishop—

MOD: —I'm not positive of that *[smiles]* but I think that's what happened. But there were so many guys that helped out building that church, you know most of them are gone.

TR: The new church is at the same site that we had the old church.

MOD: Yeah.

TR: So, they demolished the old church?

MOD: I helped on that too, uh huh. We tore down the old church and then started—

TR: —How long did it take to tear down the old church?

MOD: The old church wasn't hard to tear down but building the new one, it took forever.

End of Video Section 1:

[00:17:56]

Start of Video Section 2:

[00:00:00]

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

MOD: And the way it's built you know, [*hand gestures*] with those angles and I put the air conditioning in and tried to go [laughs] around all those using a lot of elbows and stuff.

TR: So you mentioned that the new church, after you tore down the old church, you start building a new church and the whole parish came out to help build the new church.

MOD: Yes, yes, yeah and my wife was in the church council too. I have pictures of when we dedicated the church. I found some at the house.

I was talking to one of the older gentlemen, I forgot his name, he has a video of when we were building the church and I'm going to see if I can get him to donate it to you guys.

TR: Well if we can also borrow some of your pictures—

MOD: —Yeah—

TR: —it'll be okay for our [inaudible] —

MOD: —Yeah, I'll look through the ones I have because after my sister Terry died, we're going through some of her pictures and she has a lot of the pictures that belong to my mom [*nods head*].

TR: Now you mentioned that you had the construction going on and for lunch, you had wonderful lunches that the ladies would cook for you.

MOD: Oh [*shakes head*], they were the best lunches I've eaten. There's a house in the alley there, not where the priest used to live but the next one, we would use that. The ladies would have everything ready for us and we'd have our lunch there. It was a community thing and it was a lot of laughter and happiness and everything else.

TR: So it was really a community project. You know, I've read through some of the logs of all of the volunteers and they had about 450 volunteers that helped build that church.

Now during the period of construction, where were the services held?

MOD: We held the services at Wilson—

TR: —elementary school—

MOD: —I remember having services at Wilson [*nods head*] there, for quite some time. Lately, some gentleman donated a lot of money to the church and they remodeled it and we were having our services at [*laughs*] Sombrero [*inaudible*].

TR: Oh really?

MOD: Yeah, we had a couple at those Sombrero.

TR: So the school and then the El Sombrero. Any other place where you had the services?

MOD: I'm not positive, the only other, I remember Wilson that we were there [*nods head*].

TR: And how long did it take to build a new church?

MOD: Oh shoot, I think it took like three years or something like that—

TR: —three years—

MOD: —yeah.

TR: And it was completed when?

MOD: I don't know the exact date, I haven't really—

TR: —1976, '76 or so?

MOD: Yeah in that area.

TR: And you said there was a big celebration with the whole—

MOD: Yeah, they had a mariachi, I barely finished seeing a picture they had mariachis in the front [*hand gestures*] and a picture of Father walking in and a lot a lot of people in the back. And the bishop was there and quite a few of other priests were there.

TR: You mentioned the construction, the architecture of the new church that it was a little different than your ordinary or traditional church, wasn't it? Tell us about it.

MOD: Yeah, it was a lot of angles. If you look at the church there is a lot of [*hand gestures*] angles and doing the roofing on it and it was kind of hard because of trying to keep the leaks from [*laughs*]. And the stained glass that they put on there that was donated by a lot of people, you know it was—

TR: —Do you know where the stained glass was put together or constructed or built?

MOD: No, not really but all of that I can find out for you but it was mostly donated like different families would [*hand gestures*] donate one section—

TR: —Oh okay—

MOD: —I think if you look around the church, there's a little plaque and there's the names of the people that donated that section.

TR: They do have a crying section behind the altar?

MOD: Yes, behind the altar they have a crying section.

TR: Well you know, our church San Salvador the architecture is very different than the other churches.

MOD: Yes, it is.

TR: Other churches it's a straight building with two walls on either side and they have very high ceilings that when you go into these churches, they make you feel tiny, insignificant that you're not part of that. I mean, there's something bigger than you are.

But when we go to San Salvador, it's kind of a church in the round, a church in the [inaudible] where you have the parishioners sitting around the altar and it kind of makes you feel that you're in a community of family—

MOD: —that's one thing that the, you know, when I was little, I used to go to church and all of the older women were trying to out-sing [*laughs and smiles*] each other. They sounded all out of tune but it was nice, they all sang.

We're getting back to that; you know we have a small choir but it makes it feel like a community. If you go to big church, they got surround system [*hand gestures*] and then screens and everything else, it's like a production. And seeing all the people that I've grown up with there and slowly but surely, we're losing a lot of men. In fact, the guys that built the church [*shakes head*], most of them are gone, the very few of them are left—

MOD: And you know, I was born in Colton and all my relatives got their sacraments there, they got their funeral masses there. It has so much, for me, it has so much history. Because a lot of priests that came through Colton, I've known a lot of them such as Father Valencia and Father Brooks who were really good people that helped me strengthen my faith.

Because at that time, when you're a teenager you don't [inaudible] that much but when you get older and you remember your grandma praying every day, now I pray every day. You know, it's something that I do now and I feel empty if I don't do it.

But I love that church, I've been to a lot of them because in lent, I go to Mass everyday instead of giving up something, I said "I'm going to go to Mass every day" and I've been doing it for seven years. So I get to see a lot of different churches and I feel like inviting some of them to come to ours on a Sunday, you know [*nods head*].

TR: You've mentioned that after Father Luque retired, he gave bible instructions and you attended some of those instructions.

MOD: Yes, yes.

TR: And it gave you a better sense of you being a Catholic.

MOD: Yes.

TR: Can you describe that?

MOD: It's more on a one to one basis you know [*hand gestures*], that you're talking and he can explain it a lot more and I've learned a lot of it from everything they do in church during our services. I know how to follow it and I know how everything that they're doing and different things that they use and stuff like that.

Before, you go along with the program. It's something you do every day and you really don't know the meaning. But studying with Father, he would explain to that.

Once in a while, he had a little book sale and we get, collect a lot of [*hand gestures*]. He had a lot of books [*shakes head*]. He would share with us and I used to go to talk to him a lot more when he was, before he retired you couldn't talk to him that much because he was so busy. And this other way, I could stop at his house and we'd go to dinner, we'd go to the movies—

TR: —Where did he live; did he still live in Colton?

MOD: No, Father was staying at his dad's house on Herbert's Lane.

TR: Oh okay, okay. Is this where Rosa lives?

MOD: No, Rosa lives in Canary.

TR: Okay, it's a couple of blocks—

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

MOD: —[*hand gestures and laughs*] next door.

TR: So he was staying at his father's house then.

MOD: [*Nods head*] Yeah.

TR: And when did you retire, do you remember when you retired?

MOD: I don't know, I think it's been like 12, 13, 15 years [*inaudible*]. Because he's been passed away for like three years.

TR: So he recently passed away then?

MOD: Yeah like three years ago and that was so sad because I was coming from Los Angeles and I wanted to see him because I wanted to talk to him about one of my grandson's grandmother was attacked by a pitbull. It was pretty bad and they didn't know if she was going to make it so I wanted to talk to him and when I got there, something was out of place.

You know, he was so meticulous and everything, he would have everything [*hand gestures*], he was going to talk about in the front and everything else. Well when we went in there he died peacefully like if he was reading his bible and the same way my Uncle Pete died. He was reading his father's bible, in his rocking chair and Father found him the next day right there so [*nods head*], they were both a blessing.

TR: Father Pete Luque was a Colton son, a South Colton son—

MOD: —yeah—

TR: —then he built a church in South Colton. Was that his biggest accomplishment or biggest contribution he gave us in South Colton?

MOD: Yes, that's a couple of it and unity. You know, we were so close at that time. Everything after the church was [*hand gestures*] moving. We had a time there where [*hand gestures*] it was, after Father Valencia died, we had a transition there and everything else. He kind of brought everybody together you know.

TR: So building a new church.

MOD: Yeah, you know you're there with all of these people day in and day out and then you look at what you accomplished and it's [*nods head*], it brought a lot of joy.

TR: And the other thing was unity, bringing unity to South Colton—

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

MOD: —Then after the church was built, my uncle donated the property across the street for the parking lot—

TR: —which uncle was this?

MOD: Pete Luque Senior [*nods head*].

TR: Oh, Pete Luque Senior—

MOD: —that was where all the Luques lived, right across the street from the church. They donated it—

TR: So that's what the current parking spot—

MOD: —Yeah, it was donated by my Uncle Pete to the church. That's where [*hand gestures*] Father Luque grew up.

TR: So he almost grew up across the street [*laughs*] from the church.

MOD: [*Laughs and hand gestures*] A lot of the action was on Seventh Street.

TR: [*Laughs*] That's right, that's right. Everything happened on Seventh Street.

MOD: Yes.

TR: You had everything, the tortilleria, the market, the bakery, the Sombrero—

MOD: —barber shops, everything and bars everywhere. Four bars [*smiles and laughs*] —

TR: —Yeah, either everything happened on Friday, Saturday and Sunday at that area.

MOD: Yeah, [*smiles*] yeah and the [*inaudible*] passed by there a lot of times.

TR: Yeah and what about your pals, your pals that you grew up with in that area, that vicinity?

MOD: Oh there was a bunch of us.

TR: Who was, name some of them. You said Danny Luna was one of them.

MOD: Danny Luna, Bobby Luna. We had Johnny Anton that lived down the street. Later on, he was a little older, he lived on L Street too. We got Evertt Castillo, we have Raymond Hernandez my cousin, Joseph Hernandez and I mean, there was a lot.

Joaquin Granando lived on Seventh Street for a while and then he moved on the other side of the railroad tracks.

But at that time, we made our own games. We played marbles, we played tops, we played everything like that. One time, me and my compa Danny, we were like *[smiles]* mortal enemies because he was an Indian and I was a soldier, a GI. We had battles, I mean I had grenades which were eggs from the chicken coops and rocks *[laughs]* and BB guns and they had arrows. Actually, they made arrows with points on them, it's a wonder somebody didn't get killed.

TR: *[laughs]*

MOD: *[Shakes head]* Because they would come to the dump and get the pieces of metal that were like *[hand gestures and laughs]* —

TR: Si, right, right, *[inaudible]* —

MOD: —but it was fun, we'd make kites, we'd do everything, water balloons. In fact, my wife's grandmother used to walk down the alley there and I used to get on top of the Sarape Bar and throw balloons—

TR: —*[laughs]* —

MOD: —*[smiles]* and I had to apologize after I married my wife and told her, "I was one of the ones that threw a balloon at you" *[laughs]*. *[Inaudible and hand gestures]*.

TR: So it got back at you.

MOD: Yeah but it was a lot of fun growing up with those guys, it was—

TR: —Well growing up with those guys, did you guys ever develop a social group of some kind? You know, a kind of getting together and doing things together.

MOD: Yeah, well at one time it was like seven of us, we formed a club when we were in like junior high school and it was called the Heartbreakers *[laughs]*.

TR: The Heartbreakers?

MOD: Yeah and another time we formed another club. It was called The Condors. And then after that we were in The Conquistadors for a while, yeah.

TR: Uh huh. It was basically just a social club then.

MOD: Yeah, later on after a while the guys started doing a lot of stuff but I'm not, I wasn't *[hand gestures]* with them in a lot of that stuff you know. And after that, a

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

lot of them went to the service, like 70% of the guys went to the service. I didn't go.

After they came out, they started doing all these community things which I think is great. And we get together whenever some guys want to see the guys, we get together for breakfast a lot.

When David Gutierrez died, before he died, we had like 19 guys show up for breakfast with David. So there's a closeness with these guys, you grow up together, you share and we even picked apricots together, we—

MOD: —oh you went to Hemet also—

MOD: —yes, I went to Hemet. Me and Danny we're at the Bane's Ranch and I picked carrots or potatoes and Joaquin. But I was with Joaquin, we picked potatoes and the farmer didn't want to pay us. Joaquin hired us and told us to go help and the guy okayed it but later on he didn't want to pay us so we took the gas out of his truck [*laughs and smiles*].

TR: [*Laughs*] Did you get your money?

MOD: I got my money's worth in gas, I guess [*laughs*].

TR: But tell me about the guys you grew up with, you said 75% of them went into the service?

MOD: Yeah.

TR: What branch of the service? The army or the marines?

MOD: Every branch, we had some that went into the Marine Corps. We had some that went into the Navy Air Force, [*shakes head*] almost every branch.

TR: And these are Colton boys that joined the armed services.

MOD: Yeah like Robert Sanchez and Roger Sanchez, they were in the Marine Corps. Danny Luna, my cousin Dickie Matos, Neto Enriquez, a lot of them went into the Navy. Raymond went to the Air Force so every branch.

TR: Yeah. You mentioned after they came back then they after a while started to getting together again and working on community activities, community projects, and contributing to the wellness of the community.

MOD: Yeah, if you ever want to find out more about The Conquistadors, my compa Danny is historian and he has a lot of who were the first ones that attended the meeting when we formed the club. All that information, he has it.

TR: So he's a good historian eh?

MOD: Oh yeah and he's got a good memory. He remembers exactly, he was a little confused about who was there at the beginning and he knows exactly who was there [*laughs*].

TR: [*laughs*]

MOD: Because it was held right behind Johnny's house, Johnny Hernandez. He had a house in the back, that's where Joaquin and a bunch of the guys came over and the group we decided to form.

TR: And all of you guys went to Colton High School?

MOD: Yeah. We went to Elementary School, Garfield, all of them.

TR: Garfield the Middle School Colton Junior High School?

TR: And then the Colton High School?

TR: Did everybody graduate?

MOD: Most of us graduated. I think all of them graduated.

TR: Did most of the guys stay in the area and worked in the area or did they move away from the area?

MOD: A lot of them stayed in this area and after we've got married, we couldn't build ourselves going, the property is too small. Especially where I grew up, it's only like [*hand gestures*] 25 by 100 or so.

TR: They were small lots?

MOD: Yeah, they were small lots.

TR: 25 wide and they'd be 50 feet long or 100 feet long—

MOD: —We moved to the other part of the area, a place we never visited unless we were trick-or-treating because they give the best candy [*laughs*].

TR: [*laughs*]

MOD: But—

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TR: —What was that you were talking about, tell me how was it growing up in South Colton back then when you were a kid.

MOD: It was wonderful because we had everything [*hand gestures*] real close. Like for me, my grandmother had a tortilla factory and right next door was a panaderia. And like you had mentioned once, the storeowners were real kind people.

Dona Martinez, when I was little, I used to—

End of Video Section 2:

[00:18:47]

Start of Video Section 3:

[00:00:00]

MOD: —want candy so I'd pick up a rock and take it over there, I give her a rock and she would give me a candy.

[offscreen laughing]

MOD: Until later on when I got bigger, she said “Not no more [*hand gestures*]”. She gets a little box [*smiles and hand gestures*] of all of the—

TR: —[*laughs*] all the rocks she collected from you—

MOD: —[*laughs*] but she did that. I'm pretty sure she did it for the other kids too.

TR: Yeah.

MOD: You know, I knew all of the people there. Nacho from the barbershop—

TR: [*nods head*] the barbershop—

MOD: the barbershop, as he got older every time he'd nick your head he'd give you a lollipop [*laughs*]. As he got older we got a handful of lollipops from the nicks he used to give us.

TR: What about the India veterans' pulse or veterans' organizations after you came—

MOD: —yes, I wasn't a veteran but I was, most of the guys wanted me to join the GI form so I joined the GI forum and I was president—

TR: —Oh, with Eddie Salazar—

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

MOD: Yeah and I, you know, I was president of GI forum and we won the chapter of the best chapter in California when the GI forum was going strong—

TR: —what year was that, Opi?

MOD: Must have been in the 70s, in that area. And it didn't last very long.

TR: But you did have a GI forum chapter in Colton?

MOD: Yes, yes. We had it for four or five years and we did a lot [*shakes head*]. We'd go to Patton and make dinner for the girls in Patton. They had a little dance; we went over there—

TR: How many members did you have?

MOD: It was 15, I would imagine. Like [*nods head*] 15, 20 members. And we'd give out candy at Christmas time. I have pictures of all of that.

TR: Oh shoot, bring them over—

MOD: —I have pictures where we're giving out candy to the kids. We also used to have like a queen contest at the Sombrero every year. And then we'd go to the state and have a state [*hand gestures*] you know, queen contest and all of that. And met a lot of—

TR: —Do you remember what your queens were, that you supported back that went as far—

MOD: —One of them was [*inaudible*] but I don't have the names down but we used to have newspaper clippings of all the girls that ran and everything else.

You know, we did a lot and for the [*inaudible*] boycott, when they were mistreating the Mejjicanos, I had a bunch of patches made that said, "Chale Con Coors". And I was giving them out [*hand gestures*] and went to the fiestas and it got to a point where they switch beers. They got rid of the Coors and brought another beer. Then we had a float in the parade, the 16th of September. So the GI forum did a lot—

TR: —So you guys were quite active.

MOD: Yeah and also I attended all the meetings for Fidel Hernandez post—

TR: —Now tell me a little bit about the Fidel Hernandez post.

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

MOD: Well when I was there, it was later on, they would have a lot of stuff but I got to know Alvo Leyvas real good, Pasqual Oliva—

TR: —Who was that?

MOD: Pasqual Oliva [*nods head*], Angel Oliva and my Uncle Tony was a member of that—

TR: —Tony, Tony?

MOD: Hernandez.

TR: Hernandez, okay.

MOD: Yeah, he was a member of that and quite a few guys that I formed lasting friendships and we reunited in some other functions and it was good times.

TR: Where was the Fidel Hernandez post located? Where did—

MOD: —It was right across the street from the Sombrero and that two-story building.

TR: Ah the Caldera Hall—

MOD: —the Caldera Hall [*nods head*], yeah. They would have their meetings up there all the time. In fact, remember I told you I was going to try to get their [*hand gestures*] charter? They can't find it. And my Uncle Tony had it in the room there, I used to see it all the time. [*Shakes head*] So I hope—

TR: —Well it'll come up, it'll come up.

MOD: I hope so. I would like to have it in the museum [*nods head*].

TR: You mentioned his father, of Pete Luque Senior, was he originally from Colton? Or did he come from a different—

MOD: —He came from, I'm not sure exactly where he came from but he came from another part of the United States down here.

TR: Somebody said it was Kansas City, that he came from Kansas City.

MOD: He might have but I can get you that information and everything about him but he was another one of my uncles that I have so many fond memories of.

You could talk to him about everything and he collected coins and we traded coins and I'd have coffee with him every morning. He was involved in everything.

TR: Like everything, City Council, he was in City Council—

MOD: —City Council, las fiestas Patria, he coached the Mercurys for a while—

TR: —Oh yes, he was the announcer for the Mercurys every Sunday—

MOD: —and like we were talking, he would plug in the announcer equipment to his battery in the car and announce the games—

TR: —that was Sunday at the Veterans park, the old Colton park—

MOD: —and then my Uncle Tony was a ball player there and we'd go see my Uncle Tony play and we'd also go to Corona. But they had battles [*laughs*] [*inaudible*] at Corona, it was more than a baseball game—

TR: — Well before that, you mentioned that Father Valencia took you guys to Corona.

MOD: Oh, that was when I was in the Conquistadores.

TR: Yeah, when you were in the Conquistadores and you went to Corona—

MOD: —Yes—

TR: —and just tell us a little bit about that incident in Corona.

MOD: [*Laughs and smiles*] Well Father Valencia had a lot of influence on us. He used to take us to all the football games and everything. And he had a pass for himself but when we'd go to the game, he'd show the lady the pass and then he'd put his foot on the gate and we all ran in [*laughs and smiles*]. That's for all of the Valley College games.

But we had our club jackets for the Conquistadors and we're sitting in a football game and all of a sudden, we turn around and there's like 40 guys from Corona behind us. Then Father said, "let's go" and there was like seven of us. So we followed Father, we went down and he had an old Plymouth. Whenever we went to the game, there was like four in the trunk, four in the back seat and two guys in the front with him.

Well they followed us over there and we were going to get beat up so we start getting in the car. Father took his belt off and he had a little pocket knife like that [*hand gestures*] and got in front of them and said, "You're not going to hurt my boys."

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

And the guys backed off long enough for us to get in the car [*smiles*], start taking off and then that's when all the rocks in—

TR: —[*laughs*] —

MOD: and only one guy, Henry Matos got kind of cut in the ear.

TR: So they didn't respect the Father or—

MOD: —Well they did for a while [*laughs*], it saved our lives.

TR: [*Laughs*]. But anyway, to get back to Father to Peter Luque Senior, very involved in the community activity—

MOD: —Yes, they named the Luque Center for him.

TR: Oh, that's right Colton, the City named the Luque Center. There on Veterans Park.

MOD: Yes [*nods head*]. The air conditioning company I worked for in Anaheim, got the contract to put the air conditioning on that one and the [*inaudible*] center so I got to work on my uncle's building, his name out there [*smiles*].

Yeah, he was such a good man. You know, whenever we had a barbecue, he would not [*shakes head*] let anybody barbecue. He had to barbecue, that's the way he was.

TR: [*laughs*]

MOD: I was talking to my cousin Rosa and she has a lot of pictures of my uncle, of all of the organizations that he belonged to, and it was quite a few [*nods head*].

TR: Father Peter Luque did?

MOD: Yeah, Senior [*nods head*].

TR: Senior.

MOD: Yeah.

TR: He must be quite a guy, you know coming from Kansas City, coming to Colton. He worked at the cement plant, right?

MOD: [*Nods head*] For a lot of years he worked for the cement plant. And Father Luque worked for cement plant too.

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TR: Your kidding?

MOD: Yeah.

TR: Junior worked for the cement plant too?

MOD: Yeah [*nods head*], he worked there at the lab for a while.

TR: During high school or after high school?

MOD: After.

TR: After high school.

MOD: And he, what's the name of that guy from [*inaudible*], has a bird collection? Hanton or?

TR: Han, was it Han Lily?

L: Wilson?

TR: The person—

MOD: —The one that has the bird collection—

L: Hannah.

TR: Hannah.

L: Hannah—

MOD: —Wilson Hannah, yeah. He hired Pete. In fact, when Father became a priest he was there [*nods head*], he was there—

TR: —Oh, he was one of the big administrators for the cement plant?

MOD: Yes—

TR: —and he hired—

MOD: —he really liked Father and he went to, you know, when he became a priest, yeah.

TR: Yes, it's a small world.

MOD: I know, everybody we knew worked for the cement plant [*laughs*].

TR: [*Laughs*]. Tell me about your family, Opi. You mentioned that you were related to the Escobars, tell me how that came about.

MOD: Well my real dad's name is Federico Delgado and he was married to my mom Dolores Hernandez. And my great-grandmother was Josefita Rosales from Aguas Calientes Mexico. And she married Meliton Escobar and that's where the Escobar comes in, the Rosales comes in.

So I'm related to all of the people that live close to you, where you live [*laughs*]—

TR: —Yes, yes La Paloma—

MOD: —[*laughs*] from the Paloma—

TR: —across the street from the Veterans Park.

MOD: Yeah and I have so many fond memories of them too because I used to go down the allies. My great-grandmother had a wooden stove and as soon as I got there, they were so happy to see me because you know, my sister [*inaudible*], didn't go over there very often. But she had that wooden stove and she could cook the beans and everything else for me [*smiles*].

TR: So it's a wooden burning stove.

MOD: [*Nods head*] Yeah. I don't remember—

TR: So you had wonderful family there too.

MOD: Oh yeah. I regret not spending more time with them than I should have. I still have two aunts that are living from that side and I make it a point to go see them. My other aunt has Alzheimer's, my Tia Mary.

And my other aunt, I go see her all the time. We call her Nikki but I don't [*smiles*] know her real name.

TR: What do you call her?

MOD: Nikki.

TR: Nikki?

MOD: [*Nods head*] Yeah. And I make it a point to see her at least three or four times a month.

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TR: And you mentioned to your future mother-in-law, you said you used to throw water balloons to her—

MOD: —No, that was my wife's grandmother [*smiles*].

TR: Oh, your wife's grandmother.

MOD: Yes, yes [*nods head*].

TR: Well tell me about you getting together with or meeting your wife and what's her name?

MOD: My wife's name is Barbra Jimenez, Delgado now. Well I was married before and during my separation I was walking down L Street. I saw this beautiful woman sitting on some steps there like two or three houses down from where I live and she had a son, he was sitting on her lap, my son Johnny. And that's where we met, we've been married for close to 45 years and we—

TR: —Congratulations—

MOD: —we were you know, dating for another four years before that. Yeah, she's a good woman.

TR: So you got married 45 years ago and how many kids do you have?

MOD: Well from my first marriage I had two and she had one and we have three.

TR: Any grandkids?

MOD: Oh man, [*laughs and smiles*] I've got a lot of grandkids and I inherited a lot. They look like 16 of them.

TR: 16 grandkids?

MOD: Yeah [*nods head*], 16 of them. And I'm probably missing a few [*laughs*].

TR: Any great grandkids?

MOD: Great grandkids, yeah a few.

TR: Now you're retired.

MOD: Yeah, I used to be a sheet metal worker for 35 years and I retired from that. And then my daughter wanted, she went to UC San Diego where she got her bachelor's and then her master's. She's a financial advisor now or something like that.

When she went over there, I went to work for that junior high school with Senor Acosta and I spent 11 years up there at that junior high school and that was a blessing because—

TR: —Why was it a blessing?

MOD: Working at the school because for the teachers that were there, I coached them when they were 8 years old or in that area [*smiles*]. And Mr. Coyazo know, one of the—

TR: —Who were the teachers that were under your [inaudible]?

MOD: Mr. Coyazo, I coached his son and there was a fireman that went over there, I coached his son too. Then there was one of the PE teachers, her grandmother owns Cadenas, right here on [inaudible] —

FA: —the [inaudible] —

MOD: —Yeah, that one—

FA: —and then she married Sandoval—

MOD: —Yeah, Adrian. And then the principal, Chris Marin, I graduated with her sister. So I knew everybody and then my cousin's husband, Felix Soto, was there so—

TR: —Oh that's right—

MOD: —so when I got there, I knew practically everybody [*smiles*]. And it was a blessing, I had a wonderful, a lot of good years there.

TR: And how long were you there?

MOD: 11 years [*nods*]. And Mr. Acosta helped me a lot [*shakes head*], he knows every part of that school [*laughs*]. The stage, where all the light switches are and everything else [*laughs*].

TR: So Frank was kind of your guiding light there—

MOD: —Oh yeah [*shakes head*], I don't know where he got all of those pictures when I retired from seventh and eighth grade because I went to that school.

FA: From the yearbooks.

MOD: Yeah, from the yearbooks.

TR: We talked about Colton, I asked you how was it different, how was it when you were growing up in Colton. How different is it now, Opi?

MOD: You know, it's kind of sad when I go to South Colton because I know all of the people on Seventh and L and there's empty lots and my grandmother's place where she had the tortilleria, that's been sold and it's changed so much [*shakes head*].

You know, a lot of it has changed. There's a lot of empty lots over there and some people have built nice houses, yeah. But the majority of what I grew up with, the stores and everything [*shakes head*]. You could go down to the laundry which was down Seventh Street and jump on all of them clothes all day [*laughs*]. They would dump [*hand gestures*] the clothes, towels, jumping on the piles of towels—

TR: —Where was the laundry located?

MOD: It was on the north side of Seventh Street, in the corner of K—

TR: —Oh yes, yes, yes—

MOD: — they had blue [*inaudible*] I think, it was called something like that. That one was there and then we had the [*inaudible*] where they had the oranges, where they'd pack the oranges. We'd go over there and under the building, they had like a [*hand gestures*] little cart to go in and out. All of the oranges that were too small, they would go down the cart and collect in this big bin. We'd go down there and collect as many oranges as we wanted—

TR: —Where was the packing [*inaudible*] located?

MOD: You know where the old train station was?

TR: Yes.

MOD: A little more east of that—

TR: —okay, okay—

MOD: — [*hand gestures*] a little more east of that and right where the freeway goes, there used to be a packing plant there.

TR: Oh, so that used to be the old J Street—

MOD: —Yeah [*nods head*] —

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TR: —J and Ninth Street is where the station is—

MOD: —Yeah, right here in the railroad track there was a—

TR: —Okay—

MOD: —And if you go further down [*hand gestures*] there was a PFE. I used to go there a lot and then all of the grain [inaudible] they had. My grandmother used to send us over there because when they're filling the trains you know, a lot of it [*hand gestures*] would spill all over the ground and—

TR: —the [inaudible] were [inaudible] but on the—

MOD: —they were right next to the railroad tracks.

TR: Yes, on the east side of La Cadena, A Street.

MOD: Yeah [*nods head*]—

TR: —West side no, it's the west side.

MOD: Yeah and then we'd used to go up there and they'd run us out. We'd also go to the cement plant and they had a few little caves there, we'd go in there but they started blasting so they brought us out. I caught an owl there once—

TR: —So the seqia was a big playground for you—

MOD: —they had a little [inaudible] on Fifth Street, we'd swim there. We had a lot of places to swim—

FA: —Los Coninos—

MOD: —We had Los Coninos [*nods head*], yeah, I swam there a lot Jap Hill you know, up here. It was fun, we constantly—

End of Video Section 3:

[00:18:50]

Start of Video Section 4:

[00:00:00]

MOD: —we didn't, nobody had cars [*hand gestures*]. I didn't learn how to drive until I was 18. My step dad didn't get a car until shoot, later on. So, everything was walking.

FA: I was going to ask you; do you have a hobby of collecting of sports memorabilia?

MOD: I used to collect all kinds of antiques and collectibles and baseball cards. I have all the Ken Hubbs baseball cards and [inaudible] signed a bunch of my baseball cards and Rich [inaudible]. I think I have over a 100,000 baseball cards.

And I used to collect all kinds of old magazines from 1700s and stuff like that. I go to a lot of yard sales because I worked in Los Angeles and I was used to taking off in the morning around four o' clock in the morning. So, Saturdays and Sundays come around everybody is asleep so I would just take off to all of the little swap meets and collect a lot of stuff.

In fact, I had a lot of memorabilia about Colton you know, a lot of the old maps. They had the ranchos and everything else but they had a water leak in my garage. The hot water was [*hand gestures*] spraying all over and it ruined hundreds and hundreds of pieces that I had.

I also still have a lot of canceled checks from when people are sent to court and even little knives that they were used in the case. I think the Republican Party once was taken to court or something and they had to show all receipts so you got these letter heads of all the different stores in Colton. You know, and there's quite a few of them. I still have all of that stuff.

TR: Anyway, Manny we were talking about Colton being different now. You mentioned that it was sad that there were lots of vacant lots and vacant properties and it was just completely different from what you experienced from when you were growing up in Colton.

MOD: Yeah, there was a lot of action you know. We got so many kids that lived around the area and we all do some stuff. Our parents were working all of the time so we would have time to go all over the place and then just come back before dark.

I mean, I'd walk over here to get oranges and stuff like that. It was totally different and the closeness, I knew all of the elderly ladies in the area and now they're all gone.

TR: So very very different now.

MOD: Very different. Most of the houses where people were living that I recognize, they're empty or people from Mexico have bought them. One thing I have noticed, you go to South Colton there's no parking. Go to church, there's no parking [*shakes head*].

TR: No, there isn't.

MOD: It's terrible.

TR: Taking about differences, we have the church services on Sunday. We have a Spanish service and then we had the English service at 10 o'clock and then we have another Spanish service—

MOD: —Yes, yes—

TR: —so that's different too.

MOD: Oh yeah. We have so many people you know, for the Spanish service that it's getting to a point that we're going to have to build another church because I can see it, that's my own personal opinion. The fire department has already said, "You can't have people standing in the [*hand gestures*] sides."

And when we have the Spanish service, it's so packed—

TR: —Really?

MOD: If you look at—

TR: —Which one, the eight o'clock or the twelve o'clock?

MOD: The eight o'clock mass [*nods head*] on both churches. If you go to eight o'clock mass before it's over, you can see where they're parking behind the guys where you can't even take [*hand gestures*] off if you want to because all of it is full.

TR: Oh. I haven't seen or experience that because I just go to the 10 o'clock.

MOD: If you pass by eight o'clock to nine o'clock, you'll see there's quite a few people there [*nods head*], a lot of people.

TR: Getting back to Colton back then, back then Opi who were the community leaders in the South Colton area?

MOD: There was quite a few, I know Pasqual Oliva and Manuel Padilla. For music, in my area we had Juan Rios and Angie Oliva. There was quite a few of them, they were all involved.

Tula Padilla, she was such a nice lady but we would drive her crazy. She had [*inaudible*], the group [*coughs*].

TR: What group was that?

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

MOD: Excuse me.

TR: Go ahead.

MOD: [Inaudible], I don't know what it stands for but [*drinks water bottle*] had a boy's group and we'd meet at her house and she would teach us a bunch of stuff you know. We'd pray and everything.

TR: Tell me that name again, the other name slowly.

MOD: [inaudible]?

TR: No, the name of the group.

MOD: ACJM. I have a patch that we had.

TR: AC—

MOD: —I think [inaudible] something.

FA: Maybe asociación católica de [inaudible].

MOD: Yeah, it was like four letters [*nods head*]. But she would have a lot of stuff and she was so involved in the church, her and her sister Maria. And her granddaughter, [inaudible], they're still there at the church. They're a musical family and they all sing. One of them in the eight o'clock Spanish mass plays the piano.

TR: That's Terry.

MOD: Terry [*nods head*].

TR: Terry [inaudible], yeah.

MOD: There was quite a few of them in that area. Some of the older gentlemen, I don't remember quite their names but it was a lot of involvement.

TR: Let me just skip up over to Tony Hernandez, your uncle. Tell us about Tony, he was the youngest of the family.

MOD: Yes, so he got to do more—

TR: —Has he older brothers?

MOD: He had two older brothers. The older one was Ramiro Hernandez whose father of all the Hernandez clan, Clara and all [*hand gestures and shakes head*], Marianne, [inaudible] and he had Johnny's dad. Yeah.

TR: You mentioned Tony was quite an athlete.

MOD: Yeah, he was a master of hardly everything. I was closer to Tony more than any of my uncles because I met him more through the school district because he worked at the school district so I'd see him when I was in junior high school, all through my high school years.

He was also my compadre and I thank Mel Salazar a lot because what happened is with him, doing the history of the [inaudible] and the Mercurys, I got to find out a lot more about Tony and about my Tio [inaudible]. They were both super athletic.

Tony was letterman in football, baseball, basketball, everything. And he was also in the band but he had time because my other uncles, they went to work right away.

With Mel doing that, he told me to go to the museum and look through their annuals and I happen to be looking at their annuals in 1927. I was looking through them and I found my mom in there, I didn't even know she went to high school. I found two pictures of my mom in there and a picture of her and my uncle, they were in the same class. My uncle was older but they were in the same class and I got to see that [*smiles*] and I got to see about my Tio [inaudible].

TR: Your Uncle Tony used to play for the Mercurys.

MOD: Yeah, he played for the Mercurys and he was president of the Maintenance Department for the Colton Unified School District.

TR: He was also a musician, you said.

MOD: [*Nods head*] He played the piano. He learned to play the piano real young and he played the trumpet in the band. With Tony, he had so much talent and his hand writing, I've never seen a hand writing [*shakes head*] as good as my Uncle Tony. He had a beautiful hand writing. You know, I've seen some of the letters and stuff that he had.

But my grandmother would spoil him because he was the youngest you know [*smiles*]. My Tio [inaudible] could do nothing wrong [*laughs*]. But he helped me out immensely. When we were teenagers, he would lend us his car and we told him we'd go around the block but we took it [*hand gestures*] clear to La Habra—

TR: —[*laughs*] —

MOD: —to visit my cousins over there. And he helped me graduate from high school because in my freshman and sophomore year, I was just messing around. But when it came to my junior year, one of the cross-country coaches saw me running and wanted me on the team but I had too many demerits.

At that time, they gave demerits and I had [*shakes head*] a lot of them.

TR: Oh, you were a travieso.

MOD: Yeah [*nods head*]. So my Uncle Tony worked in the cafeteria and I asked him if I could work out a demerit if each demerit is an hour. He yes, “yes, but I’m not going to pull you any slack” which I appreciate because he had me going [*inaudible*] [*shakes head*].

At that time, they had steel trashcans, you had to get a steam thing [*hand gestures*] to clean them and stack them and everything else. I think I worked like, I would say [*laughs*] 15 demerits.

He helped me graduate because after that I loved running and I started to get real serious about my running and everything else [*nods head*].

TR: Talking about Colton now and the small community that we had, it seems like everybody took care of each other.

MOD: That was one thing my grandma taught us, she says, “You respect your elders.” And we did that because if you didn’t [*laughs*].

TR: Yeah.

MOD: You know and we’d help everyone out. That’s part of being a Christian, you got to love everybody, get along with everybody, love one another as I have loved you, you know.

TR: Yeah.

MOD: Try to do that.

TR: Your Uncle Tony was also a veteran?

MOD: Yes, he was in the Air Force.

TR: [*inaudible*]

MOD: Yeah, he was in the Air Force for a while.

TR: After the service, I met him at Valley College back in '58, that's how I know your Uncle Tony.

MOD: He was also a bus driver; I never know he drove a bus for the school district. Yeah. I spent a lot of time with him you know, through his sickness and everything else. I was with him and that was kind of rough.

That's one thing, you know, you have a lot of memories of everybody when you're real close [*hand gestures*] and I can see right now that it was kind of sad cause some of the younger ones are spread out [*hand gestures*].

I got a daughter in San Diego and I got another one clear over here [*hand gestures*] and I don't see them that often [*shakes head*] and I don't know if they go to church that often.

But now with our prayer group I see that some of the younger ones are joining and I see some of them in church now, it's just good. Maybe our prayers are getting answers [*laughs*].

TR: Getting back to your grandma and the family getting together, having the Thanksgiving and the Christmas—

MOD: —that was a must—

TR: —What was your best food that you had during those times?

MOD: Well, with my grandmother, you had to go to every function. That was Easter, Thanksgiving, every holiday; all the family would go to Grandma's and on Sundays. After church, you would go to Grandma's for menudo, she had menudo for the whole family there so I would say the menudo because [*shakes head*] —

TR: —[*laughs*] —

MOD: —even when I got older, I'd go with her with a hangover [*laughs*] and she'd give me some menudo.

TR: How did you prepare your menudo?

MOD: Huh?

TR: How did you prepare your menudo, what did you add to it?

MOD: What did I add to it?

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TR: Cebolla? Celantro?

MOD: I don't remember adding too much to it, but I remember cutting it—

TR: —[laughs] —

MOD: —and it was frozen because of the tortilleria and we were seven years old and we're working on—

TR: —but you were crudo and went to have your menudo, what would you add?

MOD: [laughs] Some chili and all sorts of stuff like. I used to eat the meat all the time then but now I crave it all the time and I eat it but I don't eat the meat like I used to.

That was one thing with my grandmother, we would all run from Wilson to my Grandmother's house to have lunch.

TR: [nods head].

MOD: She would make tacos for the whole, everybody that was at Wilson, we'd run to her house, eat real fast—

TR: —like four five blocks—

MOD: —Yeah and then we'd run back. You know, you go to Grandma's and she always had food for you and anybody else that showed up.

TR: Let me ask you, you mentioned Everisto Castillo—

MOD: —my uncle [nods head] —

TR: —Everisto, yeah and you [inaudible] Junior.

MOD: Oh yeah, my uncle would show up, well everybody, when we had functions and everything—

TR: —So Senior was nicknamed El Gordo, Everett's father—

MOD: —Yeah—

TR: —He was also a contractor for picking oranges, did you ever pick oranges?

MOD: Who?

TR: You.

MOD: Not really [*shakes head*], but Tony did. Tony picked oranges, he was a rata, you know what a rata is [*smiles*]—

TR: —Yes, yes—

MOD: —the one that goes to the bottom [*hand gestures*] and that's the only one I didn't pick. I picked apricots. The one thing I did with oranges was over here in Grand Terrance over here, all of this area, I used to spray DDT on that stuff.

You know we used to spray the bad, bad stuff in those days. There was like a tank that would go in the middle, me and Johnny would go around the tree [*hand gestures and makes a spray noise*] with hoses to spray all of the orange trees and half of the time there was a guy at the top that would get the top of the tree. And we sprayed more on each other than on the tree.

TR: [*Laughs*] Well Manuel, you know we had a wonderful chat this afternoon and thank you very much for helping us get more insight into you growing up in South Colton. Ah but let me ask you another question—

Anyway, we were talking about the Liberty of South Colton, but you know the transition came when you moved to North Colton. What year was that Manny?

MOD: The transition when I moved to North Colton?

TR: Yes, yes. What year was that?

MOD: Well, me and Barbara have been married for 40 some years and then I think 20 years ago or more that I moved to North Colton. Yeah, [*hand gestures*] we didn't want to stay in South Colton because there was no property there so we found one near the junior high school and we've been living there for 37 years, I would imagine.

TR: So back in the '70s—

MOD: —Yeah in that area [*nods head*]—

TR: 80s or 70s or so that you moved North Colton.

MOD: Probably earlier than that.

TR: You know in the old days, before the 50s or so, there was nobody of Mexicans living in North Colton.

MOD: Hardly any [*shakes head*]. I know when I moved to the area where I lived in, there was only a few. My current family is there and now it's the people that

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

were there are dying off and other people are taking it. So the [inaudible] is probably 90% Mejjicano now.

TR: Yeah, so it's changed quite a bit.

MOD: It changed a lot [*nods head*].

TR: From the—

MOD: —from the older days. Like the only time I used to go to North Colton when I was a kid is, go to the Stater Brothers or got to the plunge for trick-or-treating because they gave the best candies—

TR: —[*laughs*] —

MOD: —that's the only time I really went over and then when they were busting up to the junior high school. The high school, we walked. There were no buses to the high school.

I've seen the change but I love this town, my wife is crazy about this thing you know, we wouldn't move [*shakes head*].

TR: Well you know we certainly thank you for being with us this afternoon and sharing some of your experiences and thoughts. And also your stories about Father Luque and Father Valencia and your grandma especially, thank you so much for sharing those with us.

And let me ask you the last question—

End of Video Section 4:

[00:18:53]

Start of Video Section 5:

[00:00:00]

TR: What is the best memory or the best experience you had growing up in South Colton?

MOD: The best experience?

TR: Uh huh or the best memory.

MOD: I think the family gatherings were the best because there was so much laughter and everything else. You know, I have a picture in my house when I'm

dancing with my grandmother and I treasure that a lot because I think it was at Christmas and I took her out to dance, she's got a big ol smile and I made copies of it.

The family unity and the fun around the area there in South Colton, [*shakes head*] there was so much laughter, you know it's noisy and basically the family gatherings. Now it's kind of hard.

At that time, we'd spend all of thanksgiving with the family. Now they come and eat, they got to go to the in-laws. It's all hit and run.

TR: Uh huh. Well listen, thank you so much for being with us this afternoon. We truly appreciate you taking time out on a Sunday to be with us and share your family, so thank you so much.

MOD: It's my pleasure and I thank you guys for doing this because it's got me to thinking and researching and finding out and hopefully, I can help you guys out if I can find something that we can have in the museum. Because we need something like this [*nods head*].

TR: We appreciate any contributions that you can provide for us.

MOD: Yeah, I'll look around because I'm going through some pictures right now and hopefully I can help you guys out.

TR: Okay, thank you [*smiles*].

MOD: Thank you.

End of Video Section 5:

[00:01:56]

End of Interview:

[1:14:62]