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South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Al Vasquez

Interviewer:

Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

July 9, 2016

Interview Location:

Grand Terrance, CA

Length:

01:00:50

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Tom Rivera interviews Al Vasquez, a man from South Colton with an extensive family history in Spain, Mexico, and California. As Vasquez says throughout the interview, much of the family genealogy consists of colonizers who came from Spain and settled in Mexico and, later, the United States. With familial ties to even Pio Pico, Vasquez explains working with cement and having a good work ethic thanks to his impactful grandfather. The interviewee then continues to go over the role of the Catholic Church and parochial schools in his youth, especially the San Salvador and the Immaculate Conception churches in Colton. Vasquez then discusses his time at San Bernardino Valley College and how his life currently revolves around art, especially his at-home ceramics studio. He also speaks of working as an assessor in San Bernardino, Ventura, and Orange Counties. The interview then ends with Vasquez's happiest memory being getting a bicycle from his father and how a then-girlfriend persuaded him away from joining the Marines.

Subject Topic:

- Colonization
- Extensive Genealogy
- Migration/Gold Rush
- Cement Work
- Catholicism
- Art and Ceramics
- Education
- Baseball

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Agua Mansa	California (Defunct Settlement)
The Agua Mansa Pioneer Cemetery	Agua Mansa Rd, Colton, CA 92324
St. Bernardine Catholic Church	531 N F St, San Bernardino, CA 92410
San Salvador Catholic Church	Colton, CA
Immaculate Conception Catholic Church	1106 N La Cadena Dr, Colton, CA 92324
Immaculate Conception School	1106 N La Cadena Dr, Colton, CA 92324
Aquinas Catholic High School	2772 N Sterling Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92404
St. Bernardine School	San Bernardino, CA (Defunct Location)
San Bernardino Valley College	701 S Mt Vernon Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92410

Temporal Coverage:

1500s - 2016

Key Events:

- Predecessors travel with Hernan Cortes to the Americas.
- Interest in family trees and genealogy.
- Family migration from Spain to Mexico and then to California.
- Grandpa Dave as well as the role of the church.
- Discussion on baseball and people from South Colton he knew.
- Art and Ceramics

Key Organizations:

- San Salvador Catholic Church
- Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
- St. Bernardine Catholic Church
- San Bernardino Valley College

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:53 - 00:09:18	Al Vasques'z explains the details of his family tree that spans centuries.
Digital Video	00:12:22 - 00:14:13	Vasquez's tales of his grandfather David.

Digital Video	00:34:53 - 00:35:03	Pio Pico and the connection he has to Vasquez's family.
Digital Video	00:47:22 - 00:49:31	The story of the perfect, Maltese Cross.
Digital Video	00:57:11 - 00:58:34	The happiest memory in Colton according to Vasquez.

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.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

TOM RIVERA: Good afternoon. My name is Tom Rivera, and welcome to our South Colton oral history project. Today is July the ninth at approximately three o'clock, 3:30 in the afternoon, and we're taping at 23170 Vista Grande Way in Grand Terrace, and behind the camera is my partner, Mr. Henry Vásquez, who will be doing the DVD taping for us. And our guest this afternoon is Mr. Al Vasquez. And, Al, welcome to our oral history project, and thank you for being with us this afternoon. I know you had a very, very busy family reunion this morning in [Guasti?], California, but welcome to our oral history project. And, Al, why don't we get started? You mentioned that you've done extensive genealogy of your family, and I [00:01:00] noticed that your family was one of the pioneers that settled the area of Colton in Agua Mansa. Can you tell us a little bit about your relationship to some of the people that came and were the colonizers of Agua Mansa?

AL VASQUEZ: Yes, thank you. My great-great-grandfather, Pablo Belarde, was part of the settlers that came from New Mexico, from Abiquiu, and I think was also with Rubidoux. Might have been Loius or one of the Rubidoux. So, he was -- he came with a party, and they settled in the Agua Mansa area. And, subsequently, there were some more families came later to the area.

TOM RIVERA: Mm-hmm. And your relatives were [00:02:00] the -- you mentioned the [Alvarado?] family.

AL VASQUEZ: The Alvarados actually came from Baja California. They were all military people who had been colonizing Mexico, and they came up to San Diego with Father Serra and Portolá. And so, that was my great-great-great-grandfather, [Francisco Javier?] Alvarado, and they subsequently moved to Los Angeles and to

the San Bernardino Valley. So, yeah. So, they're -- eventually, the two families intermarried. And so, I have cousins on both sides.

TOM RIVERA: And it's the [Velari?] family and --

AL VASQUEZ: [The Avlarados?].

TOM RIVERA: -- the Alvarado family.

AL VASQUEZ: And the Alvarados, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And you mentioned that you were able to trace many of your family not only to Mexico, [00:03:00] but also back to some of the history in Spain.

AL VASQUEZ: Yes. I've actually traced back the Alvarados to where they came from in northern Spain, in Cantabria, and it came from a little village called [Secadura?], and it started off with a [Pedro?] de Secadura, and, eventually, his name evolved because he had built a bridge, and they used the [Avara?], part of the log or whatever it was. And so, over a couple of generations, it evolved to Pedro -- or his son was also called a Pedro -- [Alvara?], and then [de Vara?], then de Alvarado, and, eventually, Alvarado. And so, the family had moved around from Cantabria, [00:04:00] and they eventually wound up in [Badajoz?], which is a city in the western territory of Spain, adjacent to Portugal, and they came to the Americas in about 1510 with Cortés after discovery. And so -- and they were all military people, and Pedro de Alvarado was one of the more well known Alvarados. He was eventually the governor of a lot of Mexico -- most of Mexico. And -- but he had five other brothers who were all military. And so, they were colonizing most of Mexico, and, eventually, they wound up in Baja California at the [Presidio Loreto?], and, [00:05:00] by 1769, they were part of the group, the garrison, where three of the brothers -- there was Francisco Javier Alvarado, there was a [José?] Alvarado, and [Juan?] Alvarado, and they came up into Alta California. And some of them stayed

in the San Diego area, and then Francisco and his family had moved into the Los Angeles area.

TOM RIVERA: And when did the family come to the Agua Mansa area?

AL VASQUEZ: The Alvarados actually were here before the settlers from New Mexico. That was -- [at least?] they weren't really in the Agua Mansa area because that area, I think, was given to the settlers in about [00:06:00] 1830 or 1840. I think [Lugo?], who was a land owner -- and so, he told them that they could -- if they were to help protect the area and they could graze cattle and raise crops, then they could be there. And so, I think there's a -- so, the -- and the Alvarados were just to the north in what is Colton and San Bernardino area. And so, one of my ancestors was [Juan Palmoceno?] Alvarado, and he was the majordomo at the Asistencia near Loma Linda. And --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, yes. Okay.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah. So, he was the majordomo. That was one of the Alvarados, and he was born 1799 in Santa Barbara, the mission, and his wife was [00:07:00] also born [Barbara Palomares?], so that was the other family that -- and they were all Spanish families. And so, eventually, they had moved to the Asistencia, and they continued to live in this area and grow.

TOM RIVERA: So, the Alvarados came. They were not -- they were close to the settlement of Agua Mansa.

AL VASQUEZ: Correct.

TOM RIVERA: Now, how did the families get together, Al? We had about approximately 40, 45 families that came from New Mexico and settled in Agua Mansa. And, as you mentioned, the primary purpose was to protect the livestock and the [Lugo holdings?] that we had in the area. How did they eventually just come together? Was it the trade or [market?]?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, what happened [00:08:00] was, because they had large families where they had to assist in the family's -- if they had a farm or something, they needed a lot of children. And so, it was inevitable for the children of the Alvarados or any of the other settlers that came to the area to eventually meet the children of the other families, and the [Trujillos?] were one of the families, the large families. And so, eventually, the Alvarados married into the Trujillo family. And so, a lot of my cousins are Trujillos, and I have cousins who are also Rubidoux. They married into the Rubidoux, and they're -- every family that had moved to settle California, eventually they had to [00:09:00] find suitable mates. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Partners. (laughs)

AL VASQUEZ: Partners for -- I have cousins that are [Sepulvedas?]. I have [Dominguez?]. I have -- the names that you see all over the place, I have many of those cousins.

TOM RIVERA: Well, and Agua Mansa, like I mentioned, we had about 40 families. You must be related to most of them.

AL VASQUEZ: Most of them, oh, yes. Yes. Yeah. Quite a few of them. [Archuleta?], yeah. I mean, [Acuña?]. There's just a lot of names there, the family names. I have -- yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Now, when did you learn about your relationship to the Agua Mansa colony?

AL VASQUEZ: When I was very young, my mother showed me a book that had been published in about 1939, [00:10:00] I think it was, about 1939. It's called *Windows in an Old Adobe* by Bess Garner, and, in the back of the book, it had family trees, and one of the family trees outlined were the Alvarados. And so, I started -- I became interested, and, when high school -- or grammar school, you are given projects, history projects, and so I did projects where the missions were involved,

and the history. You started learning about the history of California and the colonization. So, I -- it became a real interest in my life.

TOM RIVERA: So, it became an interest because your family was part of that history.

AL VASQUEZ: Exactly. Exactly, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And were you -- now, where did you grow up?

AL VASQUEZ: I grew up in Colton, San Bernardino, [00:11:00] and I lived there until about 1964. I had been -- I did some college, and then I went to work for the county of San Bernardino in the assessor's office, and I worked there for about four and a half years. And an opportunity popped up, and so I went to the county of county of Ventura. And so, I went to work in the assessor's office in Ventura, and I worked there for about three years. I'd roam around, and I even went to the cemeteries and looked at headstones, stuff like that, not knowing that, actually, a couple of my relatives were buried in Ventura, and that would be the [Barelas?]. And so -- but, after I had worked for Ventura [00:12:00] County, I had an opportunity for another job in Orange County. And so, I moved down to Orange County. And so, I worked there from about 1969 until I retired in 1999. 1999.

TOM RIVERA: Anyway, Al, you mentioned your grandfather, [Dave?] Alvarado. Tell us about [David?], your grandfather.

AL VASQUEZ: My grandfather, David Alvarado, grew up doing cement work as a young boy, and he worked in 1900. And so, he worked at the Portland Cement Company, and, eventually, he started his own block manufacturing on N Street in Colton, and I think it was about --

TOM RIVERA: N and 4th?

AL VASQUEZ: N and 4th.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, the [00:13:00] northeast corner of N and 4th, yeah.

AL VASQUEZ: So, I used to go over there as a young boy, and we didn't have a typewriter, but Grandpa Dave had a typewriter, so I would do a lot of my homework. And so, I was one of the few kids (laughs) that would turn in his homework on this old typewriter. But it was -- the only problem was that Grandpa didn't really service the typewriter too often, so it had a lot of cement dust. (laughter) So, I had to really pound on the keys. But, when I talked to Grandpa and he would talk about the history of the family and everything -- and so, that's when I started doing more searching, and --

TOM RIVERA: Did he mention other relatives that he had?

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, yeah. Yeah. He made -- he mentioned a lot about his father, and the cousins, and stuff like that. And so -- but Grandpa Dave also, every year, would have [00:14:00] a family barbecue at his home. He had a large gazebo, had a fire pit and an oven, and they'd have the -- everybody would come in from all over parts of southern California, and it was really --

TOM RIVERA: Where was his home?

AL VASQUEZ: His home was in Colton on L Street.

TOM RIVERA: On L? And --

AL VASQUEZ: 214 L. 214 L Street, Colton. And -- but he wanted to maintain that old California, the California's spirit, and to have family gatherings, and -- so...

TOM RIVERA: Did he ever talk about his father?

AL VASQUEZ: He -- I don't remember that he ever talked about him to any great length. I have many pictures of his father, [Pablo Alberto?], but I never knew him because he died just before I -- died, but his wife, my grandma [Nanita?] or [Juanita?] [00:15:00] Alvarado, was -- she lived until 1948, and, by that time, I lived up -- well, I would have been about seven years old, but I used to stay at Grandma [Lucy?] and Dave's house during the war, when my dad and mother were both

working at the air depot or Air Force for the war effort. So, I'd stayed with Grandpa and Grandma, Grandma and Dave [Alvarado?].

TOM RIVERA: The reason I mentioned his father, Dave Alvarado's, your grandfather's father, is because I saw a picture once that he had some type of grocery store.

AL VASQUEZ: It was a liquor store.

TOM RIVERA: A liquor store, okay.

AL VASQUEZ: He had -- I have a picture. I have copies of that, and there's pictures of Grandpa Dave and his father, Pablo, and he actually had little glass [00:16:00] jiggers with "Alvarado Liquor," whatever, on there. I've tried to get one, but unsuccessful because I got outbid. You can't -- it's hard to find, and some of the collectors won't let them go, but I always wanted to get one. But he also had a lot of other little types of can openers and everything that had "Alvarado Liquor Store," something like that. But, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And did your grandpa Dave ever mention or name some of the other relatives that were part of the family?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, there were many, many cousins, many cousins. Grandpa Dave only had one brother, [Joe?], and he lived in Azusa, and they were -- both Grandpa Dave and Joe were born in Riverside. And so -- [00:17:00] but they had a sister who died. And so, there were just the two brothers, but there were other family members that he would mention, but I didn't really get to know anything about them.

TOM RIVERA: Now, currently, do they -- does the colony still have reunions?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, the -- I think that the people in Agua Mansa have gatherings. I know that one of my cousins, [Dorothy?], she's a Trujillo, and they do have a gathering in Grand Terrace, where the old adobe is, or what's left of it, or whatever. Yeah. And she actually -- let's see. She is close to 90, and she told me that she

had used to stay there, sleep at the little adobe and everything up there in Grand Terrace.

TOM RIVERA: And where would be the [00:18:00] location of the adobe?

AL VASQUEZ: It's (pause) -- I'm trying to think of the -- I can't remember the name of the street there. It's kind of -- the roads have been changed because of improvements and stuff like that, but I can't remember the names of the streets.

TOM RIVERA: And, also, you mentioned the cemetery, the Agua Mansa Cemetery. Do you have -- I would imagine that you have lots of relatives that --

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, many. Yeah, most of -- all of the Alvarados are buried at Agua Mansa Cemetery, but, again, some, subsequently, are in Colton. But my grandfather made a point to try and restore and fix up the Agua Mansa Cemetery. He built -- also helped build the bridge [00:19:00] to give people access and everything. And so, I have pictures of him in about 1976, where he was working on the project, and they took a picture of him and a bunch of the other men from the community that were working on the cemetery.

TOM RIVERA: So, the colony itself has tried to maintain the cemetery.

AL VASQUEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: And now, does the cemetery have locations for the various families in the cemetery?

AL VASQUEZ: No. I -- there is some information, but a lot of actual burial plots have been obliterated because, when they initially -- some families had the money to put in cement markers, and others had only [00:20:00] wooden headboards, and those either were -- vandals may have removed them, they destroyed them, but the records are not real good about where everybody is. They have a lot of people, most of the people, but there are some places where they're not quite sure where individuals are still (inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Yeah, so, basically, there's a lot of families of the original colonists from Agua Mansa that were buried in that area in Agua Mansa. Yeah. Now, tell me about you. You mentioned that -- no, I'm sorry. Let me skip you (laughter) and talk about your grandfather.

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, sure. Sure.

TOM RIVERA: And talk about your grandfather, David. [00:21:00] I worked at Henry's gas station there on La Cadena and N Street, between N and M Street, and your grandfather David was one of our customers, and he had a little pickup truck.

AL VASQUEZ: Green one.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. (laughter)

AL VASQUEZ: Yes, I remember.

TOM RIVERA: He had a little pickup truck, and he would come to the gas station, and he looked so -- he was thin and tall, thin and tall, white hair, and sometimes wore glasses. Sometimes wore glasses. And very -- kind of all business kind of person, all business kind of person.

AL VASQUEZ: Very much so, yes. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: A very serious kind of person.

AL VASQUEZ: Yes, that was Grandpa Dave.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. But he was always working. He was always tending to his business with making the cement blocks, and he had a partner. He had [00:22:00] an employee, big, tall --

AL VASQUEZ: [El Mudito?].

TOM RIVERA: El Mudito.

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, yeah. Strongest -- one of the strongest people I ever knew.

TOM RIVERA: Did you? I was going to ask you, did you have a chance to meet with him?

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, I used to stay there. I used to go over there quite often. Grandpa Dave actually gave me one of my first jobs, my first paying job. And so, Grandpa would go where they would demolish old buildings, especially with the red bricks. And so, he'd have workers go to that site, and he had a big truck that was -- it had a dump truck, and he would have them load the bricks on there, and then he'd bring them back to the yard, and he'd just dump them there. And then, he gave me work gloves, leather gloves, and a chisel, and everything, and my job was to clean all the red bricks, and he paid me a penny a piece. (laughter) And I made money. I just sat out there, and I just [00:23:00] cleaned those bricks. But the first time I started stacking the bricks, (laughs) he kind of got -- nobody instructed me on how to stack bricks, and I just stacked them straight up like this. And so, course, they all fell over, (laughter) so he came over, and he showed me how to stack them, and then -- so they would [stack?]. But I think I had cleaned about 10 thousand bricks, at least 10 thousand bricks [to make?] 10 dollars or something like that. But that was one of my first jobs, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And you were working with [El Mudo?], El Mudito?

AL VASQUEZ: El Mudito. And when they would take the cement, they would combine the sand, the gravel, and everything and put it into the machine, and the machine would shake it, and they would mix it. First, they'd mix it, and Grandpa had these steel -- let's see. What would you call it?

HENRY VASQUEZ: Forms?

AL VASQUEZ: The forms, the steel forms, and [00:24:00] he would shove all of the wet cement in there and then turn on the machine, and it would just shake it, and it would settle it. And then, El Mudito would take a pallet onto that thing, and then they'd clamp it and then turn it over and pop the steel forms off, and El Mudito

would pick that thing up by himself, and lift it up, and take it over, and stack it. And you can't believe how big -- I mean, [I've never seen?] --

TOM RIVERA: How strong he was?

AL VASQUEZ: He was so strong. He was a big man, and he was happy. He was really nice, and I liked him.

HENRY VASQUES: How much did that weight, that thing that he picked up?

AL VASQUEZ: But I don't know. I have no memory of actually how many blocks. It could have been four by four, sixteen. I don't know. I don't know what the weight is, but then, he would move those pallets, and then they would stack them. [00:25:00] And then, Grandpa would -- then, after they dried a little bit, then they had to be hydrated every day to strengthen the cement. And so, when Grandpa got a job, a concrete block job, then he would load them, have the men load it up onto his truck, and he'd drive the dump truck over to the site, and he just dumped them out. And I said -- and so, I asked him, "How come -- aren't they all going to break?" He says, "They don't have to pay for the broken ones." (laughter) And so -- and not too many of his bricks -- or the blocks, the concrete blocks, ever broke, but that's what I remember. He told me that. "They don't have to pay for the broken ones."

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Again, talking about your grandpa, was he -- I know he had a wonderful work ethic, but did he have orgullo of being an Alvarado and being one of the colonizers [00:26:00] of Agua Mansa? Did he have that orgullo? That --

AL VASQUEZ: He had a lot of pride. He had a lot of pride in his family, and -- yeah. And, yeah, he -- whenever Colton had their celebration thing, and Grandpa was one of the older citizens there, and he always was -- they would celebrate his time, his family, as long as his family had been here and all he'd done. A lot of the -- I can remember walking down the streets at Colton, and I'd see these sidewalks with his

names in it, D. Alvarado, [Alvarado and Sons?]. I don't know if there's any left, but I used to -- I was really proud to see that. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. So, anyway, he -- I know that he also participated in community activities [00:27:00] by sponsoring and giving money to some of these community activities, like the Fiestas Patrias. He would always buy an advertisement to support the Fiestas. He would always be a good --

AL VASQUEZ: Community leader.

TOM RIVERA: -- community supporter of the Fiestas Patrias. Now, Al, now, where did you live in Colton?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, when I was born, we lived on N Street.

TOM RIVERA: N and...?

AL VASQUEZ: On N, just -- let's see. Would be -- let's see. I'm trying to look it up.

East of La Cadena. There was a little house that my parents rented, and I think my parents lived on Congress before I was born, and then we lived on N Street. And then, we lived there for a couple years, and then my brother came along, so my parents had to get a bigger home, [00:28:00] and they moved to -- they actually -- there was a house at the back end of Grandpa Dave and Lucy's home because there were two houses, and the back was the one that was occupied by his father, Pablo, and Juanita. And, after they passed on, then we lived in that house for a little bit. But then, Mom and Dad bought a house up on 3rd Street, 3rd and L -- [L and J?]. One of those. And so, the house needed -- it had had a fire, so my parents got a good deal on the house. And so, my dad went through and started rebuilding the house. And then, course, my dad also worked at Grandpa Dave's. He had worked at Kaiser, but, whenever there was a strike, then he would go over, work at Grandpa Dave's during that time until he could go back to his [00:29:00]

other job. Lot of the bricks -- Grandpa would supply a lot of the bricks to build the new house on 3rd Street, so...

TOM RIVERA: Now, did Grandpa Dave have any kids?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, yeah. There's -- yeah, he had a daughter, [Esther?]. She was the first. And then, there was a son, [Lawrence?], and my middle name is Lawrence. I was named after my uncle Lawrence. And then, there was [Albert?], and then there was -- and he's named after his grandfather, Pablo Alberto, Pablo Alberto Alvarado. And then, the next child was [Harold?], my mother's older brother, and then my mother, [Lucille?] Alvarado. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Now, did your Grandpa marry somebody from the Agua Mansa colony?

AL VASQUEZ: Absolutely. He did. [00:30:00] He married Lucy [Sanchez?]. Lucy Sanchez had married [Alejo?] Sanchez, and -- let's see. Okay. So, Lucy Sanchez was the daughter of Alejo Sanchez and [Edvinia Velarde?]. And Edvinia was the daughter of Pablo Velarda, who came from Mexico -- or New Mexico -- with the Rubidoux colonists. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: So, they were -- they still stayed with the same families that -- they came to Agua Mansa.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, because the heritage, the natural heritage, the Spanish -- the old colonists and everything. And so, once you find out that there's other families that have the same [00:31:00] things that you enjoy, and then they get together. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Now, did the kids -- were they able to stay with the families of the original colonists? [Say?] -- like in your siblings and your cousins that were your same age?

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, my siblings or --

TOM RIVERA: I'm sorry, your --

AL VASQUEZ: -- my parents' or my mother's siblings, or...? I'm not sure.

TOM RIVERA: Let's say, for example, did you marry anybody from Agua Mansa?

AL VASQUEZ: No. No. My --

TOM RIVERA: So, by that time, you were getting out and --

AL VASQUEZ: Lot of the children, because of the -- once, from 1850, after the Gold Rush, the influx of the [00:32:00] other European peoples, lot of our families were not marrying Hispanics. They married a lot of Europeans. And so, a lot of my cousins that were -- their names are all very European.

TOM RIVERA: For example...?

AL VASQUEZ: [Slaughter?], [Peters?], Jensen.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so you were -- because the Peters and the Jensen were part of the Agua Mansa colony.

AL VASQUEZ: Eventually, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, eventually, because they married into the families.

AL VASQUEZ: Yes, they married into the families. Yeah. So, yeah, my cousins are -- I have a lot of -- they're all Jensens. And, in fact, one of my dearest cousins, [Jaqueline Dooley?], she was the great-granddaughter of Cornelius Jensen and Mercedes Alvarado.

TOM RIVERA: Now, [00:33:00] who is Cornelius Jensen?

AL VASQUEZ: Cornelius Jensen was a captain from Europe. He was a Danish sea captain, and he came to the Americas, and this was probably early 1800, and he met Mercedes. Mercedes was the oldest daughter of Juan Palmoceno Alvarado. And so, the Jensen Alvarado Ranch in Rubidoux -- I think it's Rubidoux -- that was their home. So, yeah. And so, she was a genealogist, and she actually is one that, when we met 20-something years ago and we both shared [00:34:00] the

genealogy interest, so I would go to her house, and she shared many of the documents, so I wound up with birth records and marriage records from Agua Mansa, the San Salvador. I have a lot of those copies of all those documents.

TOM RIVERA: And so, that was a treasure that she had for you.

AL VASQUEZ: She -- yes, she did. And so, she was part of many historical societies in this area. And so, for years --

TOM RIVERA: Tell me her name again.

AL VASQUEZ: Jaqueline Dooley. Now, Jaqueline Dooley lived in Hacienda Heights, and so, I used to go to her home, and we'd make copies of the documents for me, and we'd go to the Pico House. The Pico -- Pío Pico was married to one of my great-great-great-aunts, but they didn't have children. [00:35:00] But, anyway, so, for many years, she shared all this information with me. She even came to the Alvarado reunions and stuff like that, but, unfortunately, she fell into dementia, and her family has taken her, moved her back, and a lot of her records are gone. But, anyway.

TOM RIVERA: But, anyway, you had the opportunity and the luck to -- she shared those with you.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, she did. And so, yeah, she was a very wonderful person, and she enjoyed meeting all of the other cousins, the Alvarados and other branches of the family.

TOM RIVERA: What about the [Aguaió?], the Aguaió family?

AL VASQUEZ: Aguaió... I don't -- I'm not [00:36:00] familiar with the Aguaios.

TOM RIVERA: [Calvez?]?

AL VASQUEZ: Calvez. I don't know if I have any in my -- if they married into the families from New Mexico, and I don't remember that they were into any of the

Alvarados. There may be some other -- there may be under other names that I may be -- I just haven't really searched out everybody yet.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. Now, how are you related to Henry?

AL VASQUEZ: Henry is my first cousin. He is he --

TOM RIVERA: [Wow, how is he?] -- (laughter)

AL VASQUEZ: First cousin. (inaudible). But Henry is the son of my father's brother.

TOM RIVERA: Your father's brother? Okay.

AL VASQUEZ: My father's brother.

HENRY VASQUEZ: And my father is [David?], David, [00:37:00] and then his father was [Alfredo?] or [Alfred?], or --

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, Alfred.

HENRY VASQUEZ: -- we called him Fred.

AL VASQUEZ: It was -- his birth certificate just says Alfred or Fred. Then, it was -- I think he initially changed it to just Fred.

HENRY VASQUEZ: Oh, really? He did?

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, his birth certificate. Yeah. But -- so, yeah. I mean, yeah, there was -- Dad was probably the fourth of the children, I think fourth, or fifth, or something like that because your dad -- well, there was [Jesus?], and then your dad, and then it was --

HENRY VASQUEZ: There was the brother (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

AL VASQUEZ: It was [Santiago?].

HENRY VASQUEZ: Santiago was two years older than my dad if he had lived.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah. But it was -- I think he died in that influenza in 1920s -- is when he passed away, and another sister had also died, I think [Guadalupe?]. And so, she had -- and they both died in that, I think quite -- in the '20s. And so, it's [00:38:00] quite possible that was the influenza.

TOM RIVERA: And when did the Vasquez come to Colton? Do you know?

AL VASQUEZ: 1905 or something like that.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. Early 1900s.

AL VASQUEZ: Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

HENRY VASQUEZ: Did I show you that thing that I found when I was digging through Grandpa's stuff, and there was a thing that showed that he had crossed the border in 1905?

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, really?

HENRY VASQUEZ: Yeah.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah. I had done searches on Ancestry dot com, and I'd found a lot of -- and I went in to do searches for border crossings, and I also found Grandpa [Soltero's?] -- his World War I registration card. I have a copy of that, yeah, and I -- so, yeah. Yeah, for World War I, yeah. So...

TOM RIVERA: So, early 1900s that the Vasquez were here, and where did your dad work?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, my dad worked -- [00:39:00] he worked at the California Portland Cement, and he worked there until -- no, he worked at the roads, the railroad yards, and, when Kaiser opened up, then he went to Kaiser, and he worked at Kaiser until he retired. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Now, you. Where did you go to school?

AL VASQUEZ: I went through parochial school. I went 12 years. I went to St. Bernardine's in San Bernardino. And then, I went to Immaculate Conception. And then, I went to [Aquinas?] High School in Del Rosa.

TOM RIVERA: Immaculate Conception was primary school?

AL VASQUEZ: It's --

TOM RIVERA: Elementary school?

AL VASQUEZ: It was grammar school. It was -- oh, St. Bernardine's from first through fourth, and then I went fifth through eighth at Immaculate Conception in Colton. [00:40:00] And then, I went up to Aquinas from freshman through senior.

TOM RIVERA: And you graduated from Aquinas?

AL VASQUEZ: Aquinas, yes. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Now, after that, you mentioned that you gave a list of places that you worked. Now, did you go to Valley College?

AL VASQUEZ: I went to Valley College, yeah. Yeah, I did. I was at --

TOM RIVERA: And you studied -- what did you study at Valley?

AL VASQUEZ: Engineering and journalism. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Why do you laugh?

AL VASQUEZ: We're just -- yeah, it was -- well, I did journalism in high school. And so, when I went to Valley -- and so, they looked at my papers, and they asked me if I wanted to be on the yearbook staff, so I wound up being the editor of the college annual.

TOM RIVERA: The --

AL VASQUEZ: Editor --

TOM RIVERA: I think the (inaudible) at that time was the Indians.

AL VASQUEZ: The Indians. [Exactly?].

TOM RIVERA: San Bernardino Valley College Indians. (laughs)

AL VASQUEZ: Yes, I know that they've -- the name is no longer... (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: No. No. [00:41:00] So -- yeah. And you were there for two years?

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, couple years. Yeah. And then, I started working. I got a job with the assessor's office, but I continued to -- I took some night classes. And so, I worked at the assessor's office in San Bernardino until 1964, until I got the offer of the job. I was looking around to see if I could get a better job, and I got a promotion

for the county of Ventura assessor's office, and it worked good for me. And so, then, after about three years, I was looking around to the newspaper, and I saw another position that was in my same pursuit. And so, I went down, and I got a job with Orange County assessor's office. And then -- so, I started there in 1969, [00:42:00] and I stayed with the assessor's office until 1980, when I found that I could get a promotion, and I transferred to the Environmental Management Agency for the county of Orange, and I worked in the (inaudible) engineering. I did mapping. I did -- I drew maps, engineering maps. I did surveys and stuff like that.

TOM RIVERA: When you were growing up in Colton, Al, do you remember any of your friends in the neighborhood or people that you palled around with?

AL VASQUEZ: Very few because I they were all going to the local schools. They were going to Colton High School, or Lincoln Grammar School, or something like that, and I was always going to the parochial school, a Catholic school, so -- I knew some because I played some baseball. I played [00:43:00] [Colton League?], and I played in [Pony?] league. And so, yeah, I knew some of the boys. Knew [Kenny Hubs?]. I played against him, and, I mean, some well known -- and there were other great guys that I got to know in Colton, but it was only through these other sports, the venues. Yeah. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: During that time, how did you guys, young kids -- say, elementary, junior high school, high school kids -- how did you keep yourself entertained?

AL VASQUEZ: Are you talking about -- well, on the weekends?

TOM RIVERA: [I guess?], you mentioned sports was one thing.

AL VASQUEZ: Well, yeah. Yeah, we -- yeah, sports was big because my father loved baseball. He played baseball, softball. And so, I played. I was always playing baseball with my brothers and an organized team or so. And, [00:44:00] in high school, I ran track, football. And, yeah, I loved sports, so, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: So, you were always involved in sports?

AL VASQUEZ: Always, yeah, even ever since. I mean, even in college, I took up handball, which is with a little ball. In grammar school, course, I played with the little [pinkie?], but I graduated to the little hard ball, and that was quite a (laughter) surprise.

TOM RIVERA: Quite a big step.

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, man. It's a -- yeah, you had to really get -- it's quite an adjustment to hitting that ball.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh, it is. It is.

AL VASQUEZ: I played that until, oh, maybe five years ago. I would still play that. I played in a lot of leagues, handball leagues, tournaments. I played twice in the US nationals. Just -- I made it to the first round, and that's about it, but there were just some phenomenal handball players.

TOM RIVERA: I'm a handball player too.

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, really? Oh.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Stuffy Singer, [do you?] --

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, Stuffy. Oh, yeah. [00:45:00] Yeah. Paul Haber.

TOM RIVERA: Paul Haber. Paul Haber.

AL VASQUEZ: Paul Haber. Oh, yeah. Those guys, yeah. I used to go see -- I used to go to tournaments and just watch those guys. But, yeah, I loved handball.

TOM RIVERA: And what's the name of the Mexican kid that was from --?

AL VASQUEZ: Naty.

TOM RIVERA: Naty.

AL VASQUEZ: Naty Alvarado.

TOM RIVERA: Naty Alvarado. Naty Alvarado. Naty Alvarado. He was quite a ball player.

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, yeah. I met him. Yeah. I mean, he would -- I was at the club. I used to play handball at Los Caballeros in Fountain Valley, and we had the nationals there a couple times. And Naty was there, really great, nice, a great guy. Very nice. And he has tournaments still, but yeah.

TOM RIVERA: How about [Tom Molesky?] from San Bernardino?

AL VASQUEZ: Tom Molesky.

TOM RIVERA: He was also a skinny, wiry guy that could kill with either hand.

AL VASQUEZ: Really?

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Yes. Yes.

AL VASQUEZ: No, I never... I tried to play handball at the YMCA in San Bernardino, but I wasn't able to play there. But I [00:46:00] used to play against the back of the church at St. Bernardine's. I played against the back wall in Immaculate Conception. And then, my first handball was at Valley College, yeah. So...

TOM RIVERA: Well, I challenged Naty.

AL VASQUEZ: Really?

TOM RIVERA: We played at San Bernardino.

AL VASQUEZ: Did you?

TOM RIVERA: We have wonderful [ports?] at San Bernardino. So, I challenged Naty. He [spited?] me 20 points. (laughter). He beat me 21 to 1. (laughter)

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah. Yeah. He's -- yeah. Yeah, he was a wonderful handball player, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And, in our neighborhoods, in the Latino neighborhoods, everybody played handball. Everybody played. We played the -- talking about entertainment, the one-wall handball or with the three-ball handball, and I remember our priest, Father Valencia, was a good handball player too, [00:47:00] and he used to play with us at the South Colton Park. And he'd pull up his -- I was going to say skirt.

AL VASQUEZ: His cassock. His cassock, yeah, or whatever. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: He pulled it up and tied it around his waist, and "Vámonos."

AL VASQUEZ: I knew Father Valencia well.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, did you?

AL VASQUEZ: Because --

TOM RIVERA: Tell me about your relationship with him.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, they -- well, the church was right on L Street, and my grandparents' home was across La Cadena, and then there's the railroad tracks, and that's where my grandparents lived. So, I used to go over there quite often.

TOM RIVERA: What street was that, Al?

AL VASQUEZ: L. L Street.

TOM RIVERA: L and...?

AL VASQUEZ: L and -- well, of course, La Cadena, and then it was --

TOM RIVERA: 9th?

AL VASQUEZ: Maybe 9th. Was it 9th?

TOM RIVERA: La Cadena was 8th, and then --

AL VASQUEZ: 9th.

TOM RIVERA: -- 9th.

AL VASQUEZ: Or 7th. Maybe it was 7th.

HENRY VASQUEZ: Going west or east?

AL VASQUEZ: Going west.

HENRY VASQUEZ: Yeah, that's 7th.

AL VASQUEZ: 7th. 7th.

TOM RIVERA: 7th and 6th.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, [00:48:00] that's the old -- when the old church was there, that's the old church. And I loved Easter, when they (laughs) --

TOM RIVERA: The Judas?

AL VASQUEZ: The Judas, yeah. But the other thing was Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday -- because I was going to parochial school in San Bernardino at St. Bernardine's. And so, when I found out how they made the ashes at San Salvator, I made a point. I wanted to go get my ashes on my forehead with Father Valencia. Do you remember how they used to make it?

TOM RIVERA: No. I have no idea.

AL VASQUEZ: He took -- they'd make the ashes, and then they put water in there, and he had a stamp, and he'd take it, and he'd put this little cross -- but it was a perfect cross, like a Maltese cross.

HENRY VASQUEZ: I remember that.

AL VASQUEZ: You remember that?

HENRY VASQUEZ: Yes, I do.

AL VASQUEZ: And so, when I went -- so, I got on a bus. I went to school, to St. Bernardine's, [00:49:00] and all the kids, (laughter) "Where'd you get that? Where'd you get that?" I said, "[It got it at?] San Salvador in Colton, so..."

HENRY VASQUEZ: Yeah, the other ones look kind of messy because they were with the thumb, usually.

AL VASQUEZ: A smudge. Yeah, it was just a smudge, but this is a beautiful, perfect, little cross.

HENRY VASQUEZ: It was a -- una estampa de la cruz that was very nicely done. Yeah.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah. And so, all the -- everybody was wowed. They were impressed. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so Father Valencia did a good job in making sure that you had a wonderful cross that you could brag about. (laughter)

AL VASQUEZ: Yes. Yes, it was -- yeah. Yeah, and then I used to see him tearing around town on his car, just, [man?], just going (laughs) whatever speed limit he wanted or need to. So, yeah. Oh, yeah. [I knew him?]. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And did you attend service there, at San Salvador?

AL VASQUEZ: Once in a while, yeah. We -- yeah, sometimes, we'd go to Immac Conception, but, because we lived closer to San Salvador, so I'd go down there (inaudible). Yeah. [00:50:00] And then, I'd sit within the pews and see him going up and down the row, the aisle, and really (laughs) giving a sermon. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: I do remember the old church. It was a wooden church.

AL VASQUEZ: A wooden church, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And the --

HENRY VASQUEZ: Yellow

AL VASQUEZ: Yellow.

TOM RIVERA: Yellow, and you would go in, and you have benches on either side, and it was kind of at an angle, wasn't it? You had a -- when you come in, and then you walk down a little bit towards the altar?

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, it sloped. Yeah, it sloped down. Yeah, you had to -- yeah, I don't know if it was meant to be like that, but the whole -- towards the altar was very low compared to where the entrance was. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And did you make your -- what do you call it? The --

AL VASQUEZ: I didn't -- my first Communion was -- I'm trying to think. My first Communion was at St. Bernardine's, and then [00:51:00] my Confirmation was at Immaculate Conception. So, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And let me see here. In growing up in Colton, Al, do you remember any of the community leaders that we had besides Father Valencia? Any

of the community leaders that we had in Colton? Any of the council people, or the mayors, or any of the politicians?

AL VASQUEZ: I knew very few. There was one that I (laughs) knew. I think it was -- and we were speaking about that, but his name was [Mel Fuchs?]. He was -- I think, at one time, he was mayor or something, or... But I happened to -- (laughs) as it turned out, I was dating his daughter. (laughter) So, anyway. But, so, I went to their home, and so, the daughter and I went out a number of times, but...

TOM RIVERA: Was this -- you were still in high school or after high [00:52:00] school?

AL VASQUEZ: No, this was after high school.

TOM RIVERA: After high school.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, I was maybe at Valley or whatever.

TOM RIVERA: And tell me about your family. You married and had kids.

AL VASQUEZ: I'm -- well, I'm divorced, and I have children. I have a son and a daughter, [Larry?] and -- actually, yeah, his name is [Alfred Lawrence?] Vasquez also, but he goes by Larry. And then, I have a daughter, [Dina Marie?]. She goes by [Deedee?]. And so, Deedee is married. She had a daughter, five, and she also has a son, who's about twenty-two, [Levi?], great kid. And my son, (laughs) he's been close, and so -- but he's not married yet.

TOM RIVERA: So, you have two grandkids.

AL VASQUEZ: Two grandkids, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Two grandkids. And they all -- they both live in the area?

AL VASQUEZ: No. Well, my grandson lives in [Caipa?], [00:53:00] and my granddaughter and my daughter live in El Cajon, El Cajon in San Diego.

TOM RIVERA: Now, Al, did I forget anything about -- during this interview that I should ask you about? I've asked you about your relative, Henry. Anything -- we talked about handball. You and I have that in common. (laughs)

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah. Well, there's -- I mean, I'm pretty happy. I do a lot of art type of things. I have my own ceramics studio at home, and I do glass, stained glass, and I -- actually, now, I'm doing fusion and slumping in glass if you're familiar with that. But I love art, [00:54:00] the arts. And so --

TOM RIVERA: Those are tough medias to work with.

AL VASQUEZ: They're fun. They're fun.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, they're tough, though. Yeah. They're not like a brush and oil or watercolor.

AL VASQUEZ: No. Now, my brother [Dan?] went to San Bern-- he graduated from San Bernardino State, and he did ceramics, but now he's painting and everything, but he loved art, also loves art.

TOM RIVERA: Did I forget anything about your family from New Mexico or the Agua Mansa saga?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, there's so many facets. I mean, there are so many -- I'm still searching to find more relatives. And so, every time I go to a reunion, I take my books with me, [00:55:00] and I share, and then I get updates on what new children, new cousins have been added to the family. And I'm still in touch with a couple of other genealogists, and they invited me to workshops. And so, there's a couple in Los Angeles that I'll be going to. And, every once in a while, more information is found and shared with other genealogists, so I continue to grow in that area.

TOM RIVERA: Expand in that area.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah. I've gone to New Mexico, to Abiquiu, where Pablo Belarde came from, and I went through their records, and I've made contact with other

Belardes in New Mexico. I've done the DNA testing, and so, now, I get [00:56:00] emails from people all over the world who have genetic markers that are family.

Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: So, it's been quite a trip for you, then.

AL VASQUEZ: Yeah, it has been. Yeah.

HENRY VASQUEZ: There's one thing that I thought, maybe, that you might want to mention -- you said that you had visited, when you were young, over at the Trujillo Adobe over there in the [La Cita?] area. What recollections do you --?

AL VASQUEZ: Very few because I was very young when I was there.

HENRY VASQUEZ: Who was living there at the time?

AL VASQUEZ: Well, Dorothy Trujillo was living -- at the reunion, she told me that she had lived there as a young child, but --

HENRY VASQUEZ: And she's a cousin, or --?

AL VASQUEZ: She's a cousin. She's on my mother's -- excuse me, my mother's side in the Belarde [00:57:00] family, and a Trujillo, yeah. But there's a lot of -- yeah.

TOM RIVERA: My last question, Al. Looking back at being born and raised in Colton and looking at your family genealogy, what is the best memory that you have about growing up in Colton? (pause)

AL VASQUEZ: I -- it was a very happy time when I was a younger man. I enjoyed -- in 1950, my father bought me my first bike. It's a 1950 Schwinn Panther, and I still have it. I got it restored, and [00:58:00] I'd loved riding that bicycle all over Colton, ride it down to the Santa Ana River and ride down Agua Mansa Road. I'd ride it all over the place. Friends -- some of my grammar school classmates had bicycles. They'd come by, and we'd get on our bicycles, and we'd take off, and we'd ride up towards Grand Terrace. And so, we would -- the roads were smaller, and there was less traffic and everything, and it was a very nice time.

TOM RIVERA: Did you ever go up Blue Mountain?

AL VASQUEZ: Blue Mountain?

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, this big mountain that we had here in Grand Terrace.

AL VASQUEZ: I was in that area, but I never climbed up. But I've climbed San Gorgonio and -- let's see. San Gornonio, and then Baldy, and I was with the Sierra Club, and so we did a lot of mountain climbing. [00:59:00] And so -- but yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Let me deviate a little bit. Were you ever in the military?

AL VASQUEZ: No. No. No. I almost -- I had thought about it, but then my girlfriend talked me out of it. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: She did you a favor.

AL VASQUEZ: It would have been -- because I had a friend. One of my fraternity brothers was in the Marine Reserves, and he was trying to talk me in to go active and into the Marines, and I liked the Marine -- everything about the Marines, but no. She talked me out of it. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Good for her. Well, listen. I'm delighted that one of your best memories that you have on growing up in Colton was that your dad gave you that bicycle in the '50s, and you were able to -- it almost gave you wings to go anywhere that you wanted to, and you used that bicycle to explore, and get acquainted with, and visit different places in the community.

AL VASQUEZ: Oh, yeah. It's changed, and I -- [01:00:00] now that I live in Orange County, I'd like to sometimes drive through Colton, and lot of the places are gone, but still good memories.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Well, Al, thank you so much for being with us this afternoon. Thoroughly enjoyed our conversation.

AL VASQUEZ: Well, thank you, Tom.

TOM RIVERA: And I think the information that we got from you regarding your family is very -- I think it's a wonderful treasure that we have here in Colton, and I'm delighted that we caught it in our DVD, and it'll be available forever for people that will be looking at these DVDs. These DVDs are going to be at the Special Collection Library at Cal State, San Bernardino.

AL VASQUEZ: Wonderful.

TOM RIVERA: So, again, thank you very much for --

AL VASQUEZ: Thank you.

TOM RIVERA: -- being with us this afternoon.

AL VASQUEZ: Thank you, Tom.

TOM RIVERA: Thank you.

End of Interview:
[01:00:50]