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### Ruben Aguilera and Ralph Medina

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# South Colton Oral History Project

## Interview Summary

**Interviewee:**

Ruben Aguilera, Ralph Medina

**Interviewer:**

Tom Rivera

**Interview Date:**

November 18, 2013

**Interview Location:**

San Bernardino, CA

**Length:**

00:32:39

**Interview Summary completed by:**

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

**Description:**

Tom Rivera interviews Ruben Aguilera and Ralph Medina, both men who have lived most of their lives in the South Colton area. Medina explains his family history in Colton and his roots in Mexico. Aguilera explained how he and his family arrived in Colton from Whittier when he was five, but had stayed most of his life in the former. However, Aguilera also explained his time in South Colton and being labeled as an “Uncle Tom” due to where he went to school. There is a focus on education, particularly on what schools Aguilera went to and racism. The dividing line that was the railroad track is another topic of discussion. The topic of Colton High School’s principal not allowing Mexican students in sports highlighted racism in South Colton at the time. Picking fruit, marriage, and other sports were also topics in this short discussion. The interview ends with Aguilera Medina, and Rivera discussing the Catholic Church and Father Valdencia’s handball sessions.

**Subject Topic:**

- Moving to Colton
- Being labeled an “Uncle Tom”
- School/Education
- Cultural Food
- Picking Fruit
- Sports
- Racism

**Spatial Coverage:**

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
John M. Pfau Library	5500 University Pkwy, San Bernardino, CA 92407

Garfield Elementary School	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Woodrow Wilson School	750 S 8th St, Colton, CA 92324
San Salvador Grammar School	471 Agua Mansa Rd, Colton, CA 92324
Ulysses Grant Elementary School	550 W Olive St, Colton, CA 92324
Roosevelt Junior High School	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Colton High School	777 W Valley Blvd, Colton, CA 92324
Guanajuato	State in Mexico
La Reserva	Neighborhood in South Colton, CA

### Temporal Coverage:

1929 - 2013

### Key Events:

- Medina's parents meet in Colton after coming from Guanajuato, get married, and start a family.
- Aguilera was born in La Habra and the family moved from Whittier to South Colton.
- Both interviewees discussed school and what they experienced in it.
- Then both men discuss the racism they faced and saw, particularly by the very principal of Colton High School.
- Mentions of working in fruit picking.
- Discussions of faith, the church, and playing handball with the local priest.

### Key Organizations:

- The Cement Plant
- Pacific Fruit Express
- Kaiser

### Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:09:06 - 00:11:34	Ruben Aguilera explains how he was labeled an "Uncle Tom" by people in his community.
Digital Video	00:13:01 - 00:15:47	Cultural foods and the changes from the term "tacos" to "burritos".
Digital Video	00:16:53 - 00:22:39	Ralph Medina's beginnings in picking fruits were thanks to his uncle.

Digital Video	00:24:11 - 00:25:03	Principal MacIntosh's view on Mexicans participating in sports.
Digital Video	00:28:51 - 00:32:28	Going to church and playing handball with Father Valencia.

### **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 morning, my name is Dr. Tom Rivera. I'm the associate dean for undergraduate studies emeritus and again emeritus means that I've been retired for a couple years. Today is November the 18<sup>th</sup> and it's approximately almost ten o'clock in the morning, and we're in the Pfau Library at Cal State, San Bernardino. And we are working on the oral history project for South Colton. And our guests this morning are Mr. Ruben Aguilera, Ruben, welcome this morning to Cal State, San Bernardino.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Thank you.

TOM RIVERA: And Mr. Ralph Medina. Ralph, welcome to our project this morning.

RALPH MEDINA: Thank you.

TOM RIVERA: Delighted to have both of you and we will be discussing life as you experienced it when you were growing in South Colton. We're looking at possibly [00:01:00] if you can relate to us your experiences as a little guy, as a little kid, growing up in South Colton, and maybe tell us a little bit about Mom and Dad and maybe a little bit about where Mom and Dad came from. So why don't we start with the idea of -- let me start with Ralph. Ralph, were you born and raised in Colton?

RALPH MEDINA: I was born and raised in Colton.

TOM RIVERA: When were you born?

RALPH MEDINA: When? December the 13<sup>th</sup>, 1929.

TOM RIVERA: So you're how old now?

RALPH MEDINA: I'll be 84 in December.

TOM RIVERA: Eighty-four in December. And Ralph, you graduated from Colton High School.

RALPH MEDINA: Colton High School, 1950, no, 1948.

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen forty-eight, 1948, and when you were getting your education in Colton, where did you live in Colton?

RALPH MEDINA: I lived in South Colton.

TOM RIVERA: What street?

RALPH MEDINA: Four thirty-eight West M.

TOM RIVERA: Four thirty-eight West M. In South Colton.

RALPH MEDINA: South Colton.

TOM RIVERA: And [00:02:00] then you had to walk to which?

RALPH MEDINA: Well, we had to walk to school, Garfield or Wilson School, that was grammar, and then junior high. And then to high school.

TOM RIVERA: So Garfield, you went to Garfield Elementary School.

RALPH MEDINA: I went to Garfield.

TOM RIVERA: Kindergarten? First, second, third?

RALPH MEDINA: Since kindergarten. Yeah. And then we went to junior high, which was Woodrow Wilson School.

TOM RIVERA: Woodrow Wilson School, that was seventh and eighth or sixth, seventh, and eighth?

RALPH MEDINA: I think it was sixth, seventh, and eighth.

TOM RIVERA: Sixth, seventh, and eighth, sixth, seventh, and eighth, and then from there you went to Colton High School.

RALPH MEDINA: Colton High School.

TOM RIVERA: Colton High School. Now tell me. Were you the only child in your family?

RALPH MEDINA: No, I was the only boy. There was only two of us, my sister and I.

TOM RIVERA: So that was rare that you only had two children.

RALPH MEDINA: At that time.

TOM RIVERA: It was very very rare. And your dad came to Colton. Do you know? Do you remember when?

RALPH MEDINA: He came from Mexico when he was about 14 [00:03:00] or 15 years old. Coming for a better life.

TOM RIVERA: And Ralph, why Colton?

RALPH MEDINA: There were more people there from home, so they usually look for a place where there's somebody to give them refuge, where they can come in and have a place to stay.

TOM RIVERA: Oh. So Colton was a place where he knew people from his pueblo in Mexico and it made it easier for him to come to Colton.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, he wasn't educated in Mexico, he never went to school. When he came down here he learned how, he went to school to learn English and learn how to write.

TOM RIVERA: And how old was he when he came to Colton?

RALPH MEDINA: He was just a young boy, he was maybe about 14 or 15 years old.

TOM RIVERA: And what town in Mexico did you say?

RALPH MEDINA: He came from the state of Guanajuato. [00:04:00]

TOM RIVERA: Guanajuato, Guanajuato.

RALPH MEDINA: My mom came from Guanajuato too but they didn't know each other out there. They were neighbors from the area but they didn't know each other until they came down here. Then they met and they got married when they were

about 23 years old.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, then they met in Colton?

RALPH MEDINA: They met in Colton.

TOM RIVERA: Where did they meet in Colton?

RALPH MEDINA: In Colton.

TOM RIVERA: ¿En las Escondidas? (laughter) Did they meet in church? Or at school or --

RALPH MEDINA: No, they just -- neighbors. They were just neighbors, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, they were neighbors, okay, and you said when they got married your dad was 23?

RALPH MEDINA: He was about 23.

TOM RIVERA: Twenty-three, and do you remember how old your mom was?

RALPH MEDINA: She was about two years, I think three years younger.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, so she must have been 19 or 20 or something.

RALPH MEDINA: Twenty some years.

TOM RIVERA: And they got married at the Catholic church there in Colton?

¿O se la [robó]??

RALPH MEDINA: No no no, they got married in church. It was a small wedding [00:05:00] because they had no money. But they got married in church.

TOM RIVERA: And your dad worked in Colton.

RALPH MEDINA: He worked different jobs and then he wound up working that cement plant, which was a typical place where the guys would work there and you got a job there and you were set for life.

TOM RIVERA: So he started working at the cement plant.

RALPH MEDINA: He started working the cement plant.

TOM RIVERA: He was there at cement plant for --



RALPH MEDINA: Oh, maybe 40 some years.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, a long long time then, a long long time.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, but he died, he got a rare disease, and he died when he was still working.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, I see.

RALPH MEDINA: He got sick and then he had to retire.

TOM RIVERA: How old was he when he passed away?

RALPH MEDINA: He was 59.

TOM RIVERA: He was young.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: He was young. And was the cement plant located close to your house?

RALPH MEDINA: Oh yes, we lived, it was about four blocks from the cement plant.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, very very -- right here.

RALPH MEDINA: That made it easy for all the guys around there working there to live nearby, [00:06:00] because they could walk to the job.

TOM RIVERA: So most of the people that worked the cement plant lived close by the cement plant.

RALPH MEDINA: Mostly all of them did. They'd ride a bike or whatever.

TOM RIVERA: And that barrio was called [La Reserva?]?

RALPH MEDINA: Well, we were near the borderline La Reserva.

TOM RIVERA: Well, which barrio were you at?

RALPH MEDINA: Well, would it clarify it -- well, we were known as from La Reserva but then we were I guess, I don't know, we just -- because we used to hang around with the [Calderia?] boys that came from the other area and then hang

around with La Reserva boys which were next door to us. So it was kind of a -- well, we knew each other. Went to school together and everything. There was no difference.

TOM RIVERA: So you guys palled around together, had games together, went to school together, hacían travesuras together. [00:07:00]

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah. Everything was -- yeah, now the Calderia boys were a big family. Bunch of boys. And the Calderia boys down there and then --

TOM RIVERA: And who of the Calderia boys was your friend?

RALPH MEDINA: [Marcos?].

TOM RIVERA: Marcos, Marcos Calderia.

RALPH MEDINA: Marcos and [Johnny?].

TOM RIVERA: Johnny Calderia. Okay. Let me move over to Ruben. Ruben, born and raised in Colton?

RUBEN AGUILERA: No, we arrived here when I was five years old I think from La Habra, Whittier, [Rancho Cordorao?]. In Orange County then I was born in La Habra.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, okay, okay, you were about five years old when you came to Colton? And why did Mom and Dad decide to come to Colton?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Well, Mom [00:08:00] came to Colton with my grandpa. We came with my grandpa. My dad stayed wherever it was in Mexico as far as I know. And we came with my grandpa to Colton.

TOM RIVERA: What was your grandfather's name?

RUBEN AGUILERA: [Filomeno Garcia?].

TOM RIVERA: And what was your mom's name?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Well, they called her [Chana?] but her name was [Crecencia?].

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

RUBEN AGUILERA: And my grandpa started, got work there at the cement plant, just like Ralph says. Most of them either worked at the cement plant or at the PFE. Preparing the boxcars or putting the ice in the boxcars. Until when Kaiser finally showed up my stepfather started working there [00:09:00] at Kaiser.

TOM RIVERA: That was in the '40s. Okay.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Now in growing up in Colton where did you go to school?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Well, all the people that I know of say that I was like an Uncle Tom.

TOM RIVERA: Why were you an Uncle Tom?

RUBEN AGUILERA: (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Is that a good thing? Because my name is Tom.

RUBEN AGUILERA: That's what they called them when you were supposed to be a Mexican but you were going to the white schools.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you went to the white school.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Well, according to them the white schools. The schools were above the railroad track.

TOM RIVERA: Oh. North of the railroad tracks.

RUBEN AGUILERA: The railroad track was the dividing line of South Colton and North Colton. And those were above the railroad track.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, north of the railroad tracks.

RUBEN AGUILERA: The railroad track was the [00:10:00] dividing line of South Colton and North Colton, and the school that I got enrolled to was at the top of the hill on the north side of the railroad tracks on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

TOM RIVERA: What was the name of the school?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Grant School. U. S. Grant School.

TOM RIVERA: You started in kindergarten all the way through fifth or sixth?

RUBEN AGUILERA: I went through, yeah, to sixth grade at Grant School and then went down the hill to Roosevelt Junior High School which was part of that Uncle Tom so and then after Roosevelt that was only -- well, it became -- at that time it became six, seven, eight, and then it went back to seventh and eighth. Then high school. [00:11:00]

TOM RIVERA: Now Ruben, how did you happen to wind up north of the railroad track? Where did you live?

RUBEN AGUILERA: I lived on L Street west of 3<sup>rd</sup>. But I don't know exactly how I wind up over there. But that's where my mother took me to Grant School.

TOM RIVERA: And the name of your barrio was what?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Well, Beverly Hills they called.

TOM RIVERA: Now we know the reason, Ralph. Why he went to those other schools. Beverly Hills barrio.

RUBEN AGUILERA: That one was at the base of the cement plant. Slover. Slover Mountain. The Slover Mountain had the story that it was bought from some Indian for practically nothing.

TOM RIVERA: And they started produce cement there in 1881, creo, 1881, it just [00:12:00] closed down just in the '90s or so. Both of you went to Colton High School. Both of you went to high school. And Ralph, you graduated from Colton High School when?

RALPH MEDINA: Nineteen forty-eight.

TOM RIVERA: And you, Ruben?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Fifty-one.

TOM RIVERA: In '51.

RUBEN AGUILERA:       Nineteen fifty-one.

TOM RIVERA:       And what was your experience like at Colton High School? I know that you were very involved in athletics.

RUBEN AGUILERA:       Well, I never had any problems there at high school, but it's just like it is now. That when a person of a different race gets to a town they normally look or try to find out where the barrio is or where is the Mexican area. And what is the other area that you're not supposed to be. [00:13:00] So that's what came up there at the school. And most of the time, at the high school, the majority of the Mexicanos, men mostly, would run home for lunch. And if there was some that took lunch, it was usually what they call burritos now but to us they were tacos.

TOM RIVERA:       Tacos.

RUBEN AGUILERA:       And you'd gather over there where estaban todos mexicanos comiendo los tacos for their lunch because they didn't want to come out into the open to the gringo to show them what they were eating. The gringos were eating their sandwiches and we were eating our tacos.

TOM RIVERA:       Les daba vergüenza, entonces.

RUBEN AGUILERA:       Well, I guess you would [00:14:00] call it, it was -- to me it wasn't vergüenza, it was just not sharing what we ate with them. Because their -- some of them the gringos wanted to see what we were eating. And they would -- I'll trade you a sandwich for one of your tacos. I had one of them before and they're good.

RALPH MEDINA:    They liked them.

RUBEN AGUILERA:       Yeah, they'd swap. But the Mexicanos didn't really care too much for the peanut butter and jelly.

TOM RIVERA:       That's right, so there was an area where you guys would hang

out and have your tacos and during the lunch hour and some of the kids would run home and go for lunch. Now Ralph, what about in your case? Did you experience something like that when you were in high school?

RALPH MEDINA:

Yes. I think it was very common in [00:15:00] that time. And if you had a white friend that would be your close friend, you gave a taco. He'd give you a sandwich or even if you just gave it to him and said, "Here, have one." Usually your mom would put you more than what you needed.

RUBEN AGUILERA: That's one of the things that I find kind of weird. That now they call them burritos and to us they were just tacos. Made up from anything.

TOM RIVERA: Whatever.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Whatever was left over.

TOM RIVERA: Beans, rice, potatoes.

RALPH MEDINA: Potatoes.

RUBEN AGUILERA: (inaudible)

TOM RIVERA: With some chili.

RALPH MEDINA: Oh, let's not forget too another thing that we had the other school, San Salvador School.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. Tell me about San Salvador.

RALPH MEDINA: Some like the [Izzaguerres?] that lived on 4<sup>th</sup> and I think it's [00:16:00] 3<sup>rd</sup> and M. They went to San Salvador. They were part of the people that lived on 5<sup>th</sup> Street went to San Salvador Grammar School.

TOM RIVERA: So San Salvador was on Mount Slover and Rancho Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Street and that area.

RALPH MEDINA: Agua Mansa.

TOM RIVERA: Agua Mansa. I'm sorry. Agua Mansa.

RALPH MEDINA: Right at the base of the cement plant.

TOM RIVERA: Right.

RUBEN AGUILERA: But see, that was a county school.

RALPH MEDINA: Oh. Was it?

RUBEN AGUILERA: It was a county school. It wasn't part of the Colton schools, it was county.

TOM RIVERA: Now Ralph, did you play sports while you were in school?

RALPH MEDINA: No, I never played sports. I was underweight.

TOM RIVERA: What do you mean you were underweight?

RALPH MEDINA: Underweight and scared. I didn't play no sports.

TOM RIVERA: Were you always working after school or during?

RALPH MEDINA: Well, working, I would go with my uncle. One of my [00:17:00] uncles used to be an orange picker. [La bolucha?].

TOM RIVERA: Right, [la bolucha?].

RALPH MEDINA: And on Saturdays he'd take me --

RUBEN AGUILERA: La rata.

RALPH MEDINA: The rata, yeah. It'd be the one that picks the bottom --

TOM RIVERA: The rata would be the one that picks the bottom.

RALPH MEDINA: The bottom. Yeah, because I was too young to get a ladder. So I'd be there helping him trying to learn. And then one day he caught me lifting the ladder trying to balance it on my shoulder and he started laughing. He says, "You think you can make it?" He says. I said, "Yeah, think so." He says, "Well, next year. Next. The next cycle. The next year. We'll give you a try." Then the next year I tried it. I was kind of unbalanced, going back and forth, but I made it. I wasn't too much of a good picker anyway. But I tried it. Supposed to make a lot of lugs.

TOM RIVERA: Well, a lot of boxes, you know, they were big huge orange crates that they had to fill either with oranges [00:18:00] or lemons or toronjas, grapefruit.

RALPH MEDINA: They had those lugs about, they were about that big. They'd pay you per lug.

TOM RIVERA: And the equipment to pick oranges. You had what? A saco?

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah. The side. On the shoulder and then the clippers.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Tijeras.

RALPH MEDINA: And you'd fill up the sack in the tree and then you'd dump it in the box. And you'd put it where the truck would pick them up later on. With your number that you were given. To keep a record of whatever you'd picked.

TOM RIVERA: And many of our guys that lived in Colton picked oranges. Many of the guys because the contractors that -- I remember when I was in junior high school. I picked oranges and the contractor would pick us up in front of the park. Where the big rock is at the --

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah. The veterans' park. [00:19:00]

TOM RIVERA: We'd get in the big covered truck, flatbed truck, that was covered on all sides. And then we'd head over to the orange grove. And like paratroopers we'd jump out of the truck.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, that's right.

TOM RIVERA: Get our ladders. Put on our sacks.

RALPH MEDINA: Your parachute.

TOM RIVERA: My parachutes and then our clippers and off and at it. Off and at them.

RALPH MEDINA: [Juan Peluga?]. Let's see.

TOM RIVERA: What a contractor?



RALPH MEDINA: Yeah. And [Elsarco Murataya?].

TOM RIVERA: Murataya was also contractor.

RUBEN AGUILERA: [Elgordo?].

TOM RIVERA: Elgordo.

RALPH MEDINA: Elgordo [Isto?]. Oh, then Senor [Ribas?]. Little [Juan?] Ribas or [Titit?] Ribas. Juan Peluga.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Es que piscabas con [Orgoya?].

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: You picked with who?

RALPH MEDINA: [Orgoya?]. That was a [00:20:00] measure for the size of the lemon. Wasn't it?

TOM RIVERA: Oh.

RUBEN AGUILERA: The size. When I started it was on account of the toronja.

RALPH MEDINA: Oh, toronja.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yeah. They wanted a --

RALPH MEDINA: Certain size.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Certain size. And you had to learn you only tried that thing on some of them until you got the eye to where that one is good enough you didn't have to go measure them anymore.

RALPH MEDINA: [Tomas Velasquez?] was a contractor too.

TOM RIVERA: So Ralph and Ruben, tell me who are the contractors. You mentioned Tomas Velasquez. You mentioned [Evenito?].

RALPH MEDINA: [Ebenisto?].

TOM RIVERA: Ebenisto [Castillo?]. [Lacieren Gordo?]. You mentioned Ribas. What was his first name?

RALPH MEDINA: Juan Ribas.

TOM RIVERA: Juan Ribas. You mentioned Juan [Colunga?]. Any others?

[00:21:00]

RALPH MEDINA: There was another guy near.

RUBEN AGUILERA: ¿Qué hacía el frijol?

RALPH MEDINA: El frijol ...

RUBEN AGUILERA: Did he have a --

RALPH MEDINA: I think he had. Yeah, (inaudible) el frijol, yeah, that nickname.

TOM RIVERA: Who was a frijol, what was his name? Real name.

RALPH MEDINA: La Reserva.

RUBEN AGUILERA: He was from La Reserva. I don't know what his --  
[Araiza?] was his last name. Araiza.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, el frijol, el frijolito, remember? Short and kind of chunky.

TOM RIVERA: So we have about five contractors in Colton.

RALPH MEDINA: What's his name? Right there on 4<sup>th</sup> and L. [Atec Vakya?].

RUBEN AGUILERA: Fourth and L.

RALPH MEDINA: Fourth and L. He used to work for -- he wound up working for the city towards the end. What's his name? He used to have a truck too. He used to take people up there.

TOM RIVERA: So [00:22:00] that would be number six then.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, and then we had another one. El águila de palo.

TOM RIVERA: ¿El qué?

RALPH MEDINA: Águila de palo. That was nickname.

TOM RIVERA: Águila de pamo?

RALPH MEDINA: De palo.

TOM RIVERA: De palo?

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah. His real name I never knew his real name. That was águila de palo.

TOM RIVERA: So we had a number of contractors there that would take us, all of us.

RALPH MEDINA: As long as they had a truck. They would be able to get in contact.

TOM RIVERA: Contact a citrus grower and then --

RALPH MEDINA: And then hire --

TOM RIVERA: Then work it out and then bring in the workers to pick the crop. Yeah. Anyway, we're talking about sports, Ruben. You played sports in high school. What did you play?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Football, basketball, track. Tried, senior year I tried baseball for a little bit, but -- [vale un gorro?].

RALPH MEDINA: Well, you tried anyway. That was good.

TOM RIVERA: Did you letter? [00:23:00]

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yes. I lettered in football and I lettered in basketball and I lettered in track. So --

TOM RIVERA: So you were pretty good then.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Well, you have to remember that I went to the gringo school. Junior high. And in Roosevelt estaba el maestro [Carson Finch?] and he was the one that was --

TOM RIVERA: I know the name.

RUBEN AGUILERA: -- into basketball quite strong. And he's the one that gave the high school all the stars that played basketball because they all went to junior high there.

TOM RIVERA: His program. They went through his program.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yeah, he's the one that taught them how to -- everything about basketball. Or taught us. Put it that way.

TOM RIVERA: What about football? What position did you play football?

RUBEN AGUILERA: For being short [00:24:00] I was -- I played left end, so ... Pero es más para andar ahí que entre la bola is what it amounted to.

TOM RIVERA: But you lettered. You said you lettered.

RALPH MEDINA: You were boys, that's okay.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yeah, well, see también, en ese tiempo -- en el tiempo de Ralph, at that time there wasn't too many Mexicanos going into sports. For the simple reason that the word had gotten out that el [Macintosh?] no quería los mexicanos --

TOM RIVERA: Now who was [Macintosh?]? Who was --

RUBEN AGUILERA: He was the principal and the superintendent of the high school.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. Superintendent, principal of the high school, and the word got out.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yeah. That he didn't really care for too much little Mexicanos in sports. They really had to be real good athletes in order to be in the sports. So a lot of them [00:25:00] never even went or tried the sports. And then the other thing too that the guy that came from Bloomington, but he was involved with the county museum so much that he did more for the county museum, because his boss was Dr. [Smith?]. And if you knew Dr. Smith, Dr. Smith was the one that had the county going left and right. So and the guy that was in charge over there at Grand Terrace, he didn't want it either, so he quit. And I wound up taking Grand Terrace and the guy that was over here at Bloomington was too involved with the county, because if anything came up [00:26:00] with the county the superintendent

at that time was Smith, Smith would call him. And he'd drop everything that had to do with the school district to go take care of the county stuff. So I wound up with that one too.

TOM RIVERA: And how many years were you with the school district?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Forty.

TOM RIVERA: Forty years.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Forty-two more or less.

TOM RIVERA: Forty-two. Now when did you meet your wife? In high school also?

RUBEN AGUILERA: No, no, I was in the service, I was stationed at El Toro and I used to hitchhike from El Toro to Colton almost on a daily basis. And I'd hitchhike back. And [00:27:00] when I hitchhiked back on one Sunday or a couple of Sundays I'd go by [Rudy Contrera's?] house there on L Street, this side of the railroad track, and I'd stop by there and shoot the shit before I went to La Cadena to put out my thumb. And I stopped by there and he started telling me that his cousin that lived there, her good friend was my wife, because they had a little clique of four or five girls that were always together. So he told me, said, "Why don't you ask so-and-so? She wants to meet you, she wants to go out with you." And all that bullshit that goes with it, right? So I told him, said, "Yeah yeah." So he [00:28:00] told his cousin [Alice?] and she went and got on the phone and called her and about half hour I guess she showed up. So that's how we started.

TOM RIVERA: What's her name?

RUBEN AGUILERA: [Josie?].

TOM RIVERA: Josie. And her last name?

RUBEN AGUILERA: [Rodriguez?].

TOM RIVERA: Josie Rodriguez. And you've been married how many years

now?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Well, we'll have 59 in April.

TOM RIVERA: And how many kids?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Three kids, 9 grandchildren, and 13 great-grand.

TOM RIVERA: Good, that's a good size family también. Let me switch over. I just thought about it. But we only have a few more minutes to go. But I wanted to hit this. Ralph, you're very Catholic, verdad?

RALPH MEDINA: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: You're very very Catholic. I don't know about you, Ruben.

RUBEN AGUILERA: What?

TOM RIVERA: Being a Catholic.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Oh yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah okay. [00:29:00] Tell me about, because you live around the corner from the church, Ralph, and you've always gone to Sunday and you always participate in church activities, and you knew Padre [Valdencia?], Father Valdencia very very well.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, he was well known with everybody.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Tell me about -- he was there in the '30s. The middle '30s I think until he passed away in the '50s or so. Tell us about Padre Valdencia.

RALPH MEDINA: He was really a very popular priest because he liked sports. He would always back up his Colton boys. Basketball, handball, for anything for Colton. Because he knew all the boys that played the sport.

TOM RIVERA: Because they were all part of his parish.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah. He always backed them up. He used to take his car.

RUBEN AGUILERA: He'd always [00:30:00] load up his car with boys to go to the game.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah. Go to the games, take them to the game.

TOM RIVERA: Was it a Plymouth? A white Plymouth? A '47 or so?

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, '41, wasn't it?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Somewhere in there.

TOM RIVERA: But was it a Plymouth? A white Plymouth? A '47 or so?

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, '41, wasn't it?

RUBEN AGUILERA: Somewhere in there.

RALPH MEDINA: Yeah, he used to take a whole bunch of kids in the trunk. In the back of the car. It was a coupe. So but he took them anyway. But he always went to the games. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And he was also -- you made signs of being a handball player.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Rebotero?

TOM RIVERA: Yeah.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Rebotero?

TOM RIVERA: He was a rebotero. He played handball.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Oh yeah, well, there used to be courts in the high school. [00:31:00] After high school there would always be a bunch of them that would gather there and see who beat who.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah

RUBEN AGUILERA: El más que padre era padre, pero también era muy chapusero.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, I remember the people saying that. Chapusero means that he kind of --

RALPH MEDINA: (inaudible) the game a fair bit.

RUBEN AGUILERA: He bent the truth of them.

TOM RIVERA: When he played handball. But he was very very supportive of

all the guys that were in his parish in terms of encouraged them to play ball and supporting them by attending these sports activities, and also he participated in handball.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yeah, I don't know if he ever went to the rebotores there on L Street, ahí de [los torres?]. I don't know if you've ever seen that wall or not, but [00:32:00] that was a tall wall. How tall was that wall?

RALPH MEDINA: That was another name too for them. The rebotores, remember? Used to call them the torres, the rebotores.

RUBEN AGUILERA: Yeah, they built that big tall wall, and they used to have -  
- I never did see them but they used to have tournaments there, the rebotes on the older people que iban a jugar rebote, on that big (inaudible) wall.

TOM RIVERA: And who were the [Torres?]? Who were the Torreses?

RALPH MEDINA: [Paul?] Torres.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, Paul Torres.

RALPH MEDINA: [Tony?] Torres. Tony was his older brother.

**End of Interview:**

[00:32:39]