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Bertha Bocanegra-Guerrero

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South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Bertha Bocanegra-Guerrero

Interviewer:

Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

February 18, 2015

Interview Location:

Unknown

Length:

01:15:31

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Tom Rivera interviews Bertha Bocanegra-Guerrero, a woman who is a native of South Colton. As the interview goes on, Bocanegra-Guerrero tells of her father's background, the store his parents ran, and her father's death. She tells of the times that her father was strict with the children and she needed to be sneaky to hang out with friends, date, and eventually get engaged. She moves on to tell Rivera about learning how to drive and eventually using that skill to deliver for the grocery store. Moving on from being a young woman at a time when driving as such things were not common, Bocanegra-Guerrero explains her hobbies as well as her family life. At the end of the interview, the guest explained what her best memory of South Colton was as well as discussed the people in the community who were related.

Subject Topic:

- Migration
- Family Store
- Fiesta Patrias
- The Great Depression
- The Caldera Swimming Pool
- Strict Parents
- Political Leaders
- Future Generations
- Safety in one's community
- "Everyone in Colton is Related"

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
La Calle Cinco	Neighborhood in Colton, CA
Grocery Store	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Martinez's Bakery	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
San Salvador Church	Colton, CA
Caldera's Swimming Pool	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
San Salvador School	471 Agua Mansa Rd, Colton, CA 92324
Wildrow Wilson Junior High	Colton, CA (Defunct)
Colton High School	777 W Valley Blvd, Colton, CA 92324

Temporal Coverage:

1890 - 2015

Key Events:

- Bocanegra-Guerrero's father left for the United States in order to support his family.
- Trinidad Bocanegra worked in a bakery and then opened his own grocery store.
- Going to church by the influence of her grandfather.
- The Fiestas Patrias and the businesses participated in them.
- The Caldera swimming pool.
- Strict parenting from Trinidad Bocanegra.
- Learning how to sneak around the rules to meet with friends and date.
- Memories of the best times in Colton.
- Family and the relations in the people of Colton.

Key Organizations:

- Chamber of Commerce
- The Cement Plant
- Harris Store

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:51 - 00:05:11	Trinidad Bocanegra's history and his grocery store.

Digital Video	00:18:08 - 00:21:16	Bertha Bocanegra-Guerrero's father became "slower" and eventually passed away.
Digital Video	00:44:43 - 00:51:14	Father Valencia's stepping in to help Bocanegra-Guerrero get married and the reaction from her strict father.
Digital Video	00:56:12 - 01:00:25	Bocanegra-Guerrero learned how to drive at an age when it was rare for women.
Digital Video	01:00:26 - 01:02:4	The interviewee's hobbies and love to read in her spare time.
Digital Video	01:09:51 - 01:11:42	Tom Rivera asks the guest about her favorite memory in South 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.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

TOM RIVERA: Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Tom Rivera. Thank you for being with us this afternoon in our project recording the oral history of South Colton from 1890 to 1960. Our committee members -- we have one of our committee members that's behind the camera, and that's Mr. Frank Acosta. Frank, any time you want to chime in during this interview so we can get a complete interview this afternoon. Our guest this afternoon is Mrs. Bertha Bocanegra-Guerrero. Bertha, thank you very much for being with us this afternoon.

TOM RIVERA: Thank you for taking some time out to be with us.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: You're welcome, Tom.

TOM RIVERA: I'm delighted that you were available. Why don't we get started, Bertha. Let me ask you. Your dad, in the '30s, was one of the few
[00:01:00] residents of South Colton that owned a business, and his business was a grocery store. What was your dad's name?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Trinidad.

TOM RIVERA: Trinidad Guerrero?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Bocanegra.

TOM RIVERA: Bocanegra, Trinidad Bocanegra. Guerrero was your husband.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Right, (laughter) they're all Trinis.

TOM RIVERA: Sorry about that.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: That's all right.

TOM RIVERA: Tell me. How did -- before we get into your dad starting the grocery store, where did he come from from Mexico? What part did he come from?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He came from Irapuato, Guanajuato

Mexico.

TOM RIVERA: When was he born, do you know?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: When he came to Colton, why did he come to Colton?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Because he had relatives here. His father had died and he wanted to help his mother and his brothers. The only way he could do it was to come over here with his relatives and try to find a [00:02:00] job here.

TOM RIVERA: So he was the oldest in the family, his family in Mexico?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I think so.

TOM RIVERA: And you had relatives here in Colton?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember who -- the name of the relatives were?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Salvador Pimentel. They were on N Street, corner from the [Voledo?], the little store that was there. The Voledo, then N Street, there was a couple of houses there and they lived in one of those little houses.

TOM RIVERA: How long had they been here in Colton?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: But they'd been here.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: They'd been here, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: They were here and then your dad decided to come here and be with the family. And then when he came to Colton, did he get a job?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Not right away, but I don't know how soon he got a job. That's when he was a panadero, Mexican bread.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, he made bread? He was a baker.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, so he got a job in Martinez's

Bakery.

TOM RIVERA: So that worked out well if he was a baker. Do you know how old he was when he started working as a baker?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know. [00:03:00]

TOM RIVERA: But he started working at the Martinez's Bakery.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Martinez's Bakery, mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: And Martinez's Bakery had been established for a long time.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, it had been there quite a while.

TOM RIVERA: It was a market and then also lots of bakery goods, bread that we used to call [pan Mexicano?].

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Pan Mexicano. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: He was an expert at doing that, eh?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, he was very good at it.

TOM RIVERA: How long did he work for Martinez?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Until him and my mom got married.

TOM RIVERA: When did he meet your mom?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He met my mom there at Martinez's Bakery --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, she also worked --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: -- because my mother worked at the store. My dad was a panadero. My mother sold groceries, [knew some math?].

TOM RIVERA: What was your mom's name?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Angelia Ramos.

TOM RIVERA: Angelia Ramos. Any relatives in Colton?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Not anymore.

TOM RIVERA: Who were the relatives back then?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: She had a brother, Marcelino Ramos that lived over by [00:04:00] Lola on Third Street.

TOM RIVERA: On Third and L?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, Third and L.

TOM RIVERA: And they met there at the store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Your mom and dad met at the store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Did they have a long courtship?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: ¿O se la robó?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, they got married. She lived with her father, my grandfather, Marcelino Ramos. She started working there and they met. I don't know how soon afterwards they got married.

TOM RIVERA: Did they have a church wedding or did --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes, they did.

TOM RIVERA: Did they marry there at San Salvador?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: San Salvador; old, old San Salvador, (laughter) yeah.

TOM RIVERA: How long did they work at the grocery store before they made a move?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Martinez's you mean?

TOM RIVERA: At Martinez's, yes.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know. I don't know how long they were there. After they got married, I guess they started saving money. I don't know if the store that we had then when I was a little girl, if they bought it or they

[00:05:00] rented. But as far as I knew, it belonged to my dad. And then there was a little house in the back and he would rent the little house in the back. It did pretty good for them.

TOM RIVERA: So, after they got married, they started having a family?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Are you the oldest of the family?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes. There was two of us, my brother and me.

TOM RIVERA: When were you born?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Nineteen thirty. I mean 1931. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen thirty-one and your brother came later?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He came three years later.

TOM RIVERA: You were Bertha, and he was?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Trini.

TOM RIVERA: Junior.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: He was junior Trini. And then you mentioned that your mom and dad worked at the store and then they -- what motivated your dad to buy his own store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know. I think he just wanted to be on his own, do his own thing. He stopped -- after they bought the store, he stopped making [00:06:00] bread. He wasn't working. He had his own business. It started growing and he started -- he learned how to be a butcher, cut his own meat. I remember them bringing maybe half a cow or pieces of pork or something, and then I would see him at a great, big table there cutting the meat and then making -- he learned how to make the hamburger too.

TOM RIVERA: Tambien?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, yes.

TOM RIVERA: Was the store offered to him or did he locate the place?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know. I remember I was maybe four or five.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you were tiny then?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: All you know is that you worked at the store, or your dad and your mom worked at the store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I grew up in the store too. I grew up in the business, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: So your dad left being a baker to being a complete store owner and did everything that needed to be done to run the store, including being a butcher.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes. [00:07:00]

TOM RIVERA: And you said he learned how to make his own hamburger.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm. I would watch him. And then I started growing up and then I would start helping him, stock up here cans of tomato sauce, the string beans, canned corn. There was a place where we would go pick up what he needed, Smart & Final. It used to be -- this was a hundred years ago. Where the show, the New Colton, and there used to be a -- on the corner next to it used to be that Smart & Final.

TOM RIVERA: On the same side of the show?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh. We'd go over there and he'd -- he had to have some kind of a permit license, and he'd buy tomato sauce or whatever stuff, beans, bags of beans, whatever we needed and bring it to the store

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: So, all his supplies were bought at the Smart & Final.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Smart & Final, mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, they're next to -- what street is that? That's Valley Boulevard.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know what it is.

TOM RIVERA: I Street.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, I Street.

TOM RIVERA: Where he bought all his provisions. [00:08:00] And then he would take them to the store and have you put them where they belong.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh. And then as I started to grow up, I would have to help him price them and make two cents here or three cents over there, stuff like that. And then all the people that -- the neighbors started coming over and asking for credit because in those days, nomás el hombre -- just the man would work, not the wife. The wife would stay home and take care of the kids.

TOM RIVERA: How big was the store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: It was fairly good size. We had a meat counter and then we had all the walls -- one, two, three, about four walls, shelves where we would stock up. He had a walk-in refrigerator and that's where he would have the meat and we'd have the cheese and the milk. Behind that, he'd have great big boxes of eggs. We had [00:09:00] a man that would deliver the eggs. And then he would make me put 12 eggs -- I didn't know it was a dozen -- 12 eggs in a bag and fold them up and put in there. People would come, "I need a dozen eggs," or, "A dozen and a half," or, "Six eggs," whatever they needed. If all I had was a dozen, I'd go and get another bag and put six eggs or whatever, take them to them. I don't remember how much, a quarter or whatever it was.

TOM RIVERA: Now, when you walked into the store, there was a front entrance, was there kind of an open space in the middle where -- and then on either side you had the different products that you --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: When you walked in, on the left-hand side was what, was the meat market or --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, on the left side he had glass shelves too, a counter, something like that there. We had candy there, all kinds of candy and balloons and marbles. At that time, my grandfather, since he lived with my [00:10:00] mom, he was the one that was taking care of the candy department. Kids would come and buy -- in those days, it was three candies for a penny (laughs) or something like that. And then on the other side was a counter and a cash register. Next to where he had the candy, that's where the meat counter was where he had his meat. He would slice the bologna.

TOM RIVERA: So Grandpa Ramos was in charge of the candy?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And then next to it was the meat market?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: The meat counter, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Now, did your dad -- you said your dad made the hamburger and cut the -- butchered the meat to be sold. Did he also make chorizo?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No. He would buy the chorizo. Somebody else would come, se llamaba Cinco de Mayo. It was somebody that had a business. I don't remember where it was, donde estaba el remate hundred years ago. An area there, they would make the chorizo and they would make [00:11:00] chicharrones, and they would come to my dad. My dad would buy so much chorizo and so much chicharrones.

TOM RIVERA: So la remate was the swap meet, where the swap meet is, the current swap meet, Bertha, in that area?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: ¿Sí? ¿Allí estaba?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Allí estaba, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Your dad would buy the chorizo from there?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: Chicharrones, las trompitas. What about menudo?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No. We had the menudo in [bulks?]. He would cut that up. People would come and, “Quiero dos libras de menudo (inaudible).” He’d get a piece and cut it up for them, and las patas.

TOM RIVERA: Either patas de Puerco or -- pork or beef.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, but most of the time it was pork, patas de Puerco.

TOM RIVERA: And then on the right side what did you have? The cash register?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: We had the cash register and then we had another area with all the vegetables; the lettuce, the tomatoes, carrots, and stuff like that. And another counter with the Mexican bread [00:12:00] because Martinez would come and deliver Mexican bread every night or three o’clock in the afternoon fresh bread. If there was any Mexican bread left, they would take the old one and put in the fresh one. That’s what we had there. And then there was a wall behind the counter there on the right-hand side, and that’s where he had the liquor store. It was Jimmy’s Liquor Store.

TOM RIVERA: Next to --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Attached to the store, to the grocery store.

I don't know how him and Jimmy met, but he rented the space to Jimmy and then Jimmy started selling liquor there.

TOM RIVERA: Jimmy Reese, did he rent from your dad or did --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He rented from my dad, uh-huh. And then after a few years -- and then there was a house next to the building there that belonged to my dad too, and my dad would rent him part of -- so, the liquor store and then the house. [00:13:00] And then after a few years, Jimmy and Florence, the wife, saved money and then they moved about four or five houses down.

TOM RIVERA: Four or five houses down towards --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: To the right, which was next to the Vasquez.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh, going towards N Street?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, going towards but not that close, just four or five houses from the store.

TOM RIVERA: That's where Jimmy bought his (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, that's where he made his store. He bought the house there too.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember who your dad bought the store from or the property from?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No.

TOM RIVERA: Can't remember that, eh?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-uh.

TOM RIVERA: After they bought their meats and their pan dulce and their latas of whatever they needed, they would pay. Who would run the register, your mom or you?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: My mom and then I learned how.

[00:14:00] As I grew up, I knew how to do the register. After years and I got married and that, then I told Trini, I said, "I want to go look for a part-time job." I said, "I don't know what I'm going to look for but I just want to work a few hours." He said, "Okay, look." But I ended up at Harris, a cashier (laughter) for 25 years.

TOM RIVERA: So you got good training at the store then?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I got good experience, yeah. I knew how to work the register, give you change, and count it out to you. Uh-huh, so I learned.

TOM RIVERA: The other thing is that -- did your dad give credit to his customers?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yes.

TOM RIVERA: So he did give credit?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yeah. We'd have little books. People would come and on top -- on the label here would be their name like Hernandez or Gonzales, whatever. And then I would write down, "Pan," whatever it was, "13 cents; leche, 15." [00:15:00] So then at the end of the week they would come, "a ver, ¿cuánto debo?". So, 7 dollars or whatever. They would pay.

TOM RIVERA: So at the end of the week they would come and pay your dad?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: They would pay, mm-hmm, and start over again.

TOM RIVERA: So it was regular then, they were trustworthy customers.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Everybody there on Fifth Street had the -- they were all customers. That's how I got to know a lot of people, the families. And I would learn, which was good for me, good experience.

TOM RIVERA: Well, not only that but you also did a lot of favors for people that were waiting to get paid at the end of the week.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm, and we would deliver. We would -- because very few people had cars. If they wanted a -- in those days, they would buy 25-pound bags of flour, harina para hacer las tortillas. If they lived five houses down, a woman, she couldn't carry that. She always had three or four kids with her. So my dad put them in the truck and whatever else, canned stuff, that she would buy, and we'd go over there and he would deliver.

TOM RIVERA: What about sacks of potatoes and --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: ¿También?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: [00:16:00] Mm-hmm, todo. Todo lo que quería. He would deliver it. We were busy. (laughter) And then when he started -- he decided he would start closing on Sundays at noon.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you were open up --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: We were open every single day.

TOM RIVERA: What time would you open the store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I think about eight, and then he would close it about seven in the evening. So then he decided, "Well, we need some time off." My brother and I were growing up, so that's when he decided to close on Sundays at noon. People started complaining, "¿Cómo que vas a cerrar?," (laughter) because people would have company on Sundays or something, or a relative was coming and they needed food, they needed something to drink or something. My dad said, "No, pues y también -- I need time. Necesito tiempo con mi familia." So we would do that.

TOM RIVERA: So he would start closing at noon on Sundays.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: On Sundays, uh-huh. We weren't going anywhere, just sit around and relax, [00:17:00] go out and eat something. We'd go

to the show or something. It was great.

TOM RIVERA: I'm delighted to hear that he gave credit because many people that -- we had a lot of people that worked at the cement plant, and I'm sure you had a lot of customers from the cement plant. You had some people that worked for the PFE, Pacific Fruit Express, and you had some customers from there. You had a lot of people that picked oranges.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: The [most of them?].

TOM RIVERA: La volucha.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Then in the summers, they would go pick walnuts. They would go to Hemet and pick walnuts. Because during the summer the kids were out of school, so they would take half a dozen kids, whatever kids they had, and the kids would all help pick walnuts. They would come home with their hands black. It would take a week or something for all that stuff to get off their hands. I remember seeing that.

TOM RIVERA: So, families would migrate [00:18:00] with whatever was available to harvest.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Whatever they could, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Let me ask you another question. When did your dad give up the store or retire? Do you remember the year?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He never retired. He died in '54.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, he passed away.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He passed away. He had a heart attack. He was fine and then he just started getting too tired and slowing down. In those years, you didn't go for a checkup with doctors or you didn't have a permanent doctor. When you got sick, that's when you would go see some doctor. After my mother passed, and then --

TOM RIVERA: Your dad passed away in '55?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Fifty-four, and my mother died in '44. After she passed away, my father remarried. After he was remarried, and then one day my stepmother [00:19:00] calls and she tells me, "Your dad's not feeling good. His chest hurts a lot and his back." It was New Year's Day. I said, "He's hurting?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "Is he catching a cold or what?" She said, "I don't know." I thought maybe he's catching the flu, so, "I'll be right there." I went and I said, "Turn over Dad." I was rubbing him with Vicks. In those days, that's all we knew.

TOM RIVERA: It was Vicks, yes. I remember Vicks.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He laid down on the bed and I'm rubbing his back, and then I told him, "Now turn over. I'm going to rub your chest." When he turned over, he just kind of -- (inaudible) "Call the ambulance! Call the ambulance!" When they got there, he was already gone. He had a heart attack. That's what he was having.

TOM RIVERA: It was quick.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh. You didn't know the symptoms of a heart attack then. You didn't know anything. So then he passed, and after a few months -- well, my stepmother didn't know anything [00:20:00] about the store. I had the kids. I didn't want to (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: You were married by that time?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yeah. I wanted to stay home with my family, so she closed it. Then after that, I guess she sold -- I don't remember now. I think she sold the place or whatever. So then whoever bought it, they knocked down the building. I heard there was a house there but, like I told you, I don't go by there. Too many memories and I don't want to think about them.

TOM RIVERA: Once your dad passed away, then it was kind of -- the family

didn't participate in continuing with the store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, there was nobody. He had nobody. He had a brother who lived -- my dad sent for him from Mexico. It was one of his younger brothers. My dad loaned him money and he opened a bakery in Ontario. It was [00:21:00] Bocanegra Bakery. And then he passed away too, so that was the end of that too. My dad was gone too, so that's all there was. He didn't have nobody else. His relatives were all gone too, so that was the end.

TOM RIVERA: Let me ask you. Did your dad participate in activities, community activities, Fiestas Patrias?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I remember Fiestas Patrias, they would come and ask him if he wanted to --

TOM RIVERA: Sponsor?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, to decorate his car. We'd be in the parade. That I do remember.

TOM RIVERA: What kind of car did you have?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: It was a Chevy but I don't know what year. He would put a serape where the top of the wheels are, something on top of the wheels. And, of course, I'd sit in the front with him. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you'd be part of the parade?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: We'd go -- and then there was Esteban Hernandez.

TOM RIVERA: Esteban Hernandez store, yeah.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: [00:22:00] He'd have a car too. I know Martinez did too. Everybody that had a little business or something would have a car decorated and just drive all the way several streets, Septiembre parade.

TOM RIVERA: What was the route of the parade? Do you remember?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: Down Eighth Street, La Cadena?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: It was probably Eighth Street. I remember people standing on corners there. On the car, you put Bocanegra Store or Fifth Street Store and Martinez Bakery so people would know whose car that was.

TOM RIVERA: Or who was participating in the parade.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, who it was.

TOM RIVERA: Did they cheer for you when your car --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Of course, (laughter) of course. And then once a week or every two weeks they'd have a meeting. It was the Chamber of Commerce.

TOM RIVERA: Was it the Colton or the South Colton?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: The Colton. It was just Colton Chamber of Commerce. [00:23:00] The ones that had a business would all go and meet, I guess, and discuss what was going on or what was better or what to do or hours or whatever.

TOM RIVERA: So, your dad was a member of the Chamber of Commerce?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yeah.

FRANK ACOSTA: When you participated in the Fiestas, do you remember about what years that would've been? It would've been -- what -- in the mid to late '40s or in the early '50s?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, not in the '50s. It had to be probably the middle '40s, something like that.

FRANK ACOSTA: When you were in junior high and high school?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: Bertha, you had your store during the '30s, during the

Depression. Did the Depression have any effect on your store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't remember because I was born in '31. I guess it probably did. Because as the years went by my dad would keep adding more stuff to the store, so I think in those days maybe he just had a few things. [00:24:00] I don't know. I never questioned it. Just a kid you don't know what's really going on.

TOM RIVERA: You're just going through the motions of growing up.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Whatever, (laughter) whatever, uh-huh.

Too many years ago, these memories. But I remember Caldera's, his pool, and he had the --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, yeah, I was going to ask you because --

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: A night club.

TOM RIVERA: -- you lived on Fifth Street. I've heard that Mr. Juan [Cabrera?] --

FRANK ACOSTA: It was Caldera.

TOM RIVERA: Caldera. I always miss that last name. But Mr. Juan Caldera had a swimming pool in that area. Tell us about that pool. How far was it --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: It was just a block from my dad's store because they had -- the Calderas had a house, two-story house, practically across from where he had the swimming pool. I think all of that property belongs to him. Of course, I remember the house was there and the swimming pool was already there. And then [00:25:00] I started growing up and I would ask my dad if I could go on the cement. Around the block, that's where he had a dance hall. People would have parties there or have a dance. I don't know if it was certain holidays or what, but I remember going with my mom and dad and they would dance. And then there was that other store, Aguilera on N Street but where the trucks are, where the

underpass is now. There was a grocery store there too, Aguilera's Grocery Store.

TOM RIVERA: Did it change to --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: It was Negrete.

TOM RIVERA: Negrete. Afterwards it was Negrete, yes, uh-huh.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: See, you do remember something.

(laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Te digo, I'm an old guy. (laughter) What about -- tell me more about the swimming pool. Was it a big swimming pool?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: To me, it was fairly good sized and the water was just right. And then they had dressing rooms. But I don't remember [00:26:00] if they had any kind of -- something to drink, a soda. There was no bottles of water, so it had to be soda. I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: Did you swim?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, I would just get my feet in there. Like I told you, my father didn't allow me. I could just go there for 15 minutes so I would sit on the edge there on the cement and stick my feet in there.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so your father made sure that you were well chaperoned?
(Bertha Bocanegra-Guerrero laughs) Tell me about that chaperone that your dad made sure that you were protected.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Like on Sundays -- I was in high school. On Sundays, I was at New Colton and wanted to go to the show. He would tell me, "I will take you at three o'clock." Three o'clock on Sundays in the afternoon, he'd drop me off right in front of the show and he would --

TOM RIVERA: Which show was this?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: The New Colton. He would stay right there on the street until he saw me get my ticket and walk in the show, and then he would

take off. And then he would tell me, “A las siete, aquí estoy por ti [00:27:00].”

Sometimes I would tell him, porque -- in those days, it was two movies and a cartoon and previews and something else. And I would tell him, “No se va a acabar a las siete.” “A las siete aquí te quiero” Darn. So, that was the only way I could go to the show.

TOM RIVERA: And that was on Sundays?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: And only on Sundays. And then when I got a boyfriend, I didn’t know how to tell him because I knew what his answer was going to be.

TOM RIVERA: How old were you when your dad took you to the show?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: About 15; 14, 15. He would take me and my girlfriend. The same thing was with her. Then we started lying. I would tell my dad -- because sometimes he would -- they would start showing movies on Wednesdays, and I would tell him, “Quiero ir al show.” He’d say, “No, ya fuiste el domingo.” I would say, “Papá, it’s Wednesday. Es otra movie.” “No, ya fuiste el domingo. No vas.” So then I would tell him [00:28:00] that my girlfriend --

TOM RIVERA: What was your girlfriend’s name?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Nancy.

TOM RIVERA: Nancy, and her last name?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: At that time Esquer.

TOM RIVERA: Esquer.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: She wanted to know if I could go to the show with her or else he wouldn’t let me go to the show. She would tell her mom that my dad wanted to know if she could go to the show or else I couldn’t go.

TOM RIVERA: So it was a conspiracy?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, we would lie to get -- (laughter) and

we'd get a kick out of it because we were both lying. That was the only way. They were parents and things were different then. He'd say a certain time and that's all there was to it. He didn't care if I saw half of the movie or if I didn't see it or what. He'd be here.

TOM RIVERA: Would you go to the show on Wednesday and Sunday?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, just on Sundays.

TOM RIVERA: Just on Sundays. How much did they charge you at the movies? Do you remember?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Then I think it was 50 cents. Well, it used to be a quarter and then things started to go up, but I think it was 50 cents. By the time I got married, it was 50 cents.

TOM RIVERA: You got your money's worth, two movies --

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, mm-hmm. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: [00:29:00] -- a cartoon, the news, and the previews.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: There was a chapter, or I forgot what the heck we called it.

TOM RIVERA: And the chapters were -- I think I saw *Batman*.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Something like that, mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: Or *The Little Ranger* or somebody, yeah.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: See, you do remember a little bit. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: A little bit. Now, did you ever have a chance to go to the salon and enjoy the music or the dancing there at Caldera's?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Just with my parents, uh-huh. I would sit there. They would dance and I would just sit there like this. That's all there was to it. A couple of hours, yeah, "Vámonos." It would be on Saturday night, and next day I had to get up and go to church.

TOM RIVERA: You were also a good Catholic then?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yes. My grandfather was very devoted Catholic. In fact, my grandfather would go to church every single day.

TOM RIVERA: Was this Grandfather Ramos?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, my mother's father.

TOM RIVERA: Your mother's father would go to church every day.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: And I remember we would sit down to eat. My grandfather was always there. We would eat and then [00:30:00] when we'd get through eating, you just didn't get up and leave. No. We would sit there tenías que darle gracias a dios. My brother and me and my mom, we'd get our plates, put them in the sink. But every day tenía que darle la gracias a dios que nos dio de comer. We would do those things. He taught me how to pray the rosary. At night, we had to go to his room and kneel down next to his bed allí tenía un santo, and we would pray, "Our Father" or "Hail Mary" so we could go to bed.

TOM RIVERA: So, you were brought up a good Catholic and you went to church every Sunday?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Every Sunday. During Easter, Holy Week and that, every day because my grandfather went every day but he would make us go -- the Holy Week we would go every day, get our ashes, no carne. We would give this up [00:31:00] or give that up.

TOM RIVERA: Fish on Fridays or --

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, we would give up -- when we were doing Lent, we couldn't eat candy or we couldn't eat ice cream, nothing.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you had to give up something.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: We had to give up something.

TOM RIVERA: For 40 days?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: What did you give up?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't remember what I gave up. They would watch me. (laughter) It was probably candy. I don't know. That's the way life was then.

TOM RIVERA: Tell me about church on Sundays. What time was your church?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I think it was at nine. It was only one mass then in those days. I remember Father Valencia.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, he was your priest.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, he was -- there was probably another one before him, but I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, because Father Valencia came in 1937. I guess that's when you were --

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah. We used to go. Father Valencia knew us. He'd come by and [00:32:00] he'd walk down the aisle. It was the old church with one aisle. He'd walk and he'd look and make sure we were there, who was there and who wasn't. Then we'd go to catechism every Saturday. I hated to go to catechism because I -- all week I'd get up to go to school, and on Saturday I wanted to sleep late. No, te levantas. Tienes que ir. Oh, gosh.

TOM RIVERA: What time was catechism?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know. Ten o'clock, I guess, but to me that was -- I wanted to sleep until noon. When you're a kid, you want to sleep half the day. No, get up and go to catechism. You learn this and you learn that. That's the way life was.

TOM RIVERA: Getting back to your store, you mentioned that you gave credit

to many of the customers who were on Fifth Street. Did your dad have any desgustos from people? How did he keep people coming back to his store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know. I don't [00:33:00] remember him having anything -- people would sometimes move away or pass away, move to another town or something. But as far as I remember, everybody that I knew that lived there on Fifth Street had credit and they would come and pay. Like I said, we would give them -- I would write down pan or leche, queso, whatever they would buy, and then I would give them a receipt. Then they would come in to pay. Some of them had already added up how much they owed. So then they would come over here, and -- well, we had an adding machine. You know, I'd have to pull this. Then I would give them the slip of what it said, the amount, and they would check their bills to see if it amounted to the same thing. They would go ahead and pay.

TOM RIVERA: It was really just, I guess, a friendly, neighborhood grocery store.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I think so, mm-hmm. Everybody knew each other.

TOM RIVERA: And everybody was happy with the service.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: [00:34:00] And your dad didn't have any desgusto with anybody?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Not that I know of. Everything went fine all those years, nothing.

TOM RIVERA: So, he ran the store for about 20 years or so?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Probably more, maybe around 30 probably.

TOM RIVERA: Thirty years or so?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I think so.

TOM RIVERA: That's a long time.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, a long time, but whatever. That's what him and my mom liked to do, so they did it. That was their life. To each his own, but we learned. We experienced a lot, my brother and me this and that. I don't remember my brother helping as much in the store as I did, (laughter) but that was my brother.

TOM RIVERA: They probably chaperoned you more than [00:35:00] they did him, ¿verdad? Yeah, because he was a boy.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: (laughs) And, of course, we'd get into it. Me and my brother would get into it for one reason or another. Then he'd tell me, "Lo voy a decir a mi papá." (laughter) And I'd tell papá, "Es un mentiroso. Es puras mentiras lo que está diciendo" Then he'd go like he was going to beat me up. He never hit me or anything.

TOM RIVERA: Talking about you going to the show and lying to go to the show, that was part of your entertainment. What other things did you do for entertainment? Did you go --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Sometimes we'd -- I'd get invited to parties but he didn't let me go to parties. A couple of times he'd let me -- he'd have a few beers and then I knew that was my time for me to ask him because he would say, "Okay, vete." You know? (laughter) But then he'd go get me. I'd be there 30 minutes or something, and it was so embarrassing because they'd go, "Your dad, your dad." I'd come out, [00:36:00] "Súbete. Get in the car, vámonos." "No, papá, no." "Sí. Vámonos, te estoy diciendo." But I couldn't argue with him, so I'd go home and go to bed.

TOM RIVERA: Were the parties neighborhood parties?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, yeah, neighborhood parties.

TOM RIVERA: In South Colton?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, South Colton. But it wasn't like -- years later it was all drinking. It wasn't. It was --

TOM RIVERA: Just getting together.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Everybody had records, record players, and you'd put a record on and turn it on.

TOM RIVERA: Were they the big 78?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes, yes. We would dance and just sit around, talk. Sometimes they had a piece of cake or something, not a whole meal and no even -- beer didn't ever come to nobody's brain in those days. It was just Kool-Aid because that was the cheapest thing. You could make gallons of Kool-Aid. Drink Kool-Aid and have a piece of cake and go home when my dad came to get me, [00:37:00] so go home. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: How long did he let you stay at the party?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Not more than an hour. One day, he was feeling pretty good so I asked him if I could go. A friend was having a party. He told me okay, this and that. I'd been there maybe about an hour and one of the girls told me, "Your dad's out there." I said, "Well, he didn't say he was coming for me. He didn't give me a time then." So I go out there. Well, he was feeling pretty good, "Vámonos." I didn't like to argue with him in front of friends or people. So then we got home and he said, "Yo no te dejé. ¿Por qué fuiste?". Because he forgot. He was so mad I thought he was going to beat me up because -- not that he would beat me up or anything, but he would scold me or punish me. He would make me and my brother -- [00:38:00] this was in the store, Tommy. We would disagree with him or we would find out he was lying or my brother and I would get into it, he would

make us kneel down in the store on the cement. I'd kneel down on one side, my brother like that. People would come into the store to buy groceries and they would look at us. I was so embarrassed. I put my head down like this. (laughter) But that was the way of him punishing us so we would be embarrassed and stop doing whatever we had done. So people would know that we were being bad kids.

TOM RIVERA: Bertha, any of your friends, were they disciplined like that or was it common?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't think so.

TOM RIVERA: Was it common for parents to discipline their kids [like that?]?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, it was because I would hear sometimes they got hit with a belt. Dad would take their -- most of the time they wore belts, take the belts off and let the kids have two or three. Or grab them by the hair, stuff like [00:39:00] that. After a while, the kids would say, "Oh, my dad hit me. Oh, my mom did this. My mom did that."

TOM RIVERA: Because I remember going to school, and I hated bringing report cards home (Bertha Bocanegra-Guerrero laughs) because I'd get a whipping every time I brought a report card home. Anyway, I was just curious because of the punishment that you described. I wish I had that punishment instead of getting the belt on my nalgas. That would've been much easier.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, just things that you remember.

TOM RIVERA: Before I forget, the parades, you mentioned the parades to the Fiestas, the Septiembre Parade. Do you remember how long the celebration was? Was it one day or two days?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, I think it was two, the 15th and 16th of September.

TOM RIVERA: The 15th and 16th?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, [00:40:00] just one -- the parade was one day, one afternoon, but the fiestas were 15th and 16th of September. They had a queen.

TOM RIVERA: And the queen was chosen. Do you remember how the queen was chosen?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Well, I knew a family who had three or four girls. They would go and ask one of the girls if she wanted to run for the queen. And then they would have some kind of a dance.

TOM RIVERA: Like a fundraiser?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah. I forget the name of the hall, not American Legion. There was another little hall. This was a hundred years ago when there was a drugstore and bakery right there on (inaudible) underpass. But they would have a little dance there, like a family gathering. But you pay I don't know how much, and whatever money they would get that if you want to be the queen and you win, then they would -- to buy you the crown and buy you a dress. You'd sit in this truck and ride around.

TOM RIVERA: So they would [00:41:00] recruit girls to run for queen, and the girls would go and do their fundraising. How were the queens chosen? Do you remember?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: That I don't remember. Do you remember Pete Luque?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Pete Luque -- do you know Rosa, his daughter?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Okay. Well, Pete Luque was a friend of

my dad's. I remember -- I must've been 14, 15, and I remember Pete Luque coming over to the store and he was talking to my dad. My dad looked at me, and he told Pete, "Allí está. Pregúntale." Pete comes over to me, and I didn't know what was going on. He said, "Quiero saber, would you like to be the queen for the 16th of September?" I looked at him, and I said, "No." He said, "¿Por qué?". Le dije, "Usted tiene a Rosa. Rosa está muy bonita." To me she was always the pretty girl, "Ella quiere ser la reina." But the reason they would come and ask certain people because -- like my dad, [00:42:00] he had the business so he had the money. He could afford to buy me a dress and buy me the crown and give them some money or whatever. Pete didn't want Rosa to run because he didn't have the money. He went with my dad knowing that I was his daughter, and I said, "No." My dad went "¿No quiere? Pues, no quiere." (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: You missed a situation for glory.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No because Rosa's a very pretty girl. I used to look at her and say, "She's so pretty."

TOM RIVERA: And she still is.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, but she's been very sick. She's very, very sick.

TOM RIVERA: She married Tommy Castorena.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: They've been married a long time.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I know, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Getting back to the Fiesta, after they announced who the queen was, what would happen next? Would they have a court or a --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah. The girl, she got to pick whomever, three or four of her friends to be [00:43:00] the party and she was the queen. I

forgot what the girls -- they all had a title. She would ride in the parade, like I said. And then the Fiesta used to be -- donde está el -- Sombrero market now on the corner there on N and --

TOM RIVERA: And Eighth Street?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: La Cadena?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh. They used to put out -- set it up, and then that's where they would have the Fiesta. The queen would sit there and her court.

TOM RIVERA: You would have a stage?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: The queen's stage and the court and the different people in the court. And then they had booths.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah. People would sell all kinds of stuff. And then they would dance in the street.

TOM RIVERA: They would close off the street?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, N Street.

TOM RIVERA: N between Seventh and Eighth?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, yeah, they would close it off.

People would dance in the street. I remember that, dancing in the street. (laughter)

Can you imagine? But that's the way [00:44:00] things were a hundred years ago.

TOM RIVERA: Other entertainment besides -- you mentioned the show, the New Colton, with your friend. And then you mentioned the party that your dad picked you up from. Any other thing that you did for entertainment with your friends?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No because he wouldn't let me go. That's

the way it was. That's the way parents were then. "No vas a ir," and that's all there was to it. In a way, as you grow up and you find out things, you figure your parents were right by not letting you do this or stay late or this and that. But when you're a kid you want to -- if somebody else stays there until midnight, why can't you? (laughs) We weren't allowed. We could only go to the show. When I met my husband was because it was New Year's Eve and my cousin was going to a dance with her boyfriend.

TOM RIVERA: How old were you then?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I must've been 15, 16. She came and [00:45:00] she asked my dad if he would let me go with them. I hadn't even thought about it because I knew what he was going to say. And so he said yeah I could go. That's when I met my future husband. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Trini. Where was this at that you met him?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: At the [Entosasena?] Valley Ballroom, or [Vira?] Ballroom.

TOM RIVERA: Where the [Inland?] Center is?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Where the Inland Center is. What shocked me more was he had the same name as my dad and my brother. I was in a state of shock.

TOM RIVERA: So you couldn't get away from the Trinidad, eh? (laughter)

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: That's when I met him.

TOM RIVERA: How did you learn how to dance?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I had a cousin. He was a year ahead of me in school and he knew how to dance.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember the name of your cousin?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, Rudy Ramos. He knew how to

dance. After my mother died, my aunt, his mother, would come over to the house and cook dinner for us because I was 13 when my mother died. [00:46:00] My brother was 9. My dad had to work in the store. Who was going to cook? I didn't know nothing, [not?] how to cook beans. I didn't know how to do anything. I knew how to wash dishes, do the beds, stuff like that.

TOM RIVERA: And run the cash register.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, uh-huh. So my aunt would come over in the evening and fix dinner for us. Then I'd have those records, so then I would play music. One time, Rudy said to me, "You know how to dance?" I said, "No, I don't know how." He said, "Come on, I'll teach you." So they'd come over and we'd dance and we'd dance. That's how I learned. (laughter) I learned to dance.

TOM RIVERA: So a family member taught you how to dance?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm, he taught me how to dance. It was fun.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember the type of music that was popular then? Was it swing or was it --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No.

TOM RIVERA: Perez Prado?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, no. Harry James. The Mexican music no me acuerdo. That was probably [00:47:00] [what I could buy?]. I just remember Harry James. Years later, it was Perez Prado and all the others.

TOM RIVERA: Harry James, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Glenn Miller, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: So you were part of the swinging years?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes. (laughter) And then in school

sometimes we'd have a dance after school. Well, I would have to lie and tell my dad I had to stay there and do homework so that I could stay at least for an hour. My girlfriend would do the same thing and tell her mother, "Tenemos que -- We have to stay after school to do this, do that." Yeah, we'd stay there and we'd dance. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: What school was this, Bertha?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: High school.

TOM RIVERA: In high school?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: It was high school, mm-hmm. Yeah, that's the only way to enjoy life, lie about it. (laughter) That's the way it went.

TOM RIVERA: Then I would imagine you didn't play marbles?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, I played marbles with my brother. That's how I learned.

TOM RIVERA: [00:48:00] Hopscotch?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, hopscotch, and jacks.

TOM RIVERA: Jacks, uh-huh. Where did you go to elementary school?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: To Wilson. From San Salvador, went to Wilson.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you went to San Salvador first?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: What grades did you go to San Salvador?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: From kindergarten to sixth.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, five, six years. And then you went to Wilson Junior High School.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: To Wilson, yeah, seventh and eighth at Wilson, and then the four years at high school.

TOM RIVERA: At Wilson, did you graduate from Wilson? What year did you graduate from Wilson?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Probably '46.

TOM RIVERA: Forty-five, '46?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Forty-five, probably, '45, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And then high school?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: And then high school in '49.

TOM RIVERA: You graduated from Colton high school --

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: In '49.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember anything that -- did you go to sports activities, football games and baseball games, or --[00:49:00] You mentioned you went to dancing pero a las escondidas.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Sí, escondidas, uh-huh. We went to basketball games, a couple of them, because that's when he became my boyfriend. And then I would tell my dad we were going to see a basketball game. Time, what time to leave and what time to come home.

TOM RIVERA: But did your dad know that you were dating Trini?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Well, then he knew. I had to tell him.

TOM RIVERA: What was his reaction?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He knew his sisters, especially Lola.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, he knew the family?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yeah. I introduced him. I had to tell him. But then when I got engaged, I didn't want him to know because he didn't want me getting married so soon. To me, it wasn't soon. I was 19. Estaba vieja.

TOM RIVERA: You were an old lady. (laughter) But at that time, girls generally got married after high school, yeah.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: But then I [00:50:00] finally told him and then Father Valencia. In those years, the father would come and ask for your hand. He would talk to your parents.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, tell me about that. I didn't know that.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, the boyfriend would go and ask the priest if he would go to your girlfriend's -- to my house and ask my dad for my hand. If it was okay, we got married. If he said no, well then things changed. But most of the time the parents would say yes. Since I didn't have a mother, then he'd say, "Well, Father Valencia's going to go on a certain night and ask your dad for your hand." I thought, Oh my God. I didn't know how my dad was going to react. At the last minute, I just told him, "Hey papá, va a venir padre." When I said that, he knew. Sure enough, here comes Father Valencia. My father said, "Fine. Si quieren casar, que se casen." So, everything went fine.

TOM RIVERA: Did you have a big wedding?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I didn't want a [00:51:00] big wedding. I wanted just to get married, and that's all we had. We just got married and [had?] pan Mexicano chocolate. That's what we had.

TOM RIVERA: At your reception, eh?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, that was it.

TOM RIVERA: And then Trini was in the service?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, he was already out.

TOM RIVERA: He was already out? Where did he go, Korea?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't remember. It's been too long. I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: And then Trini comes from a large family too. The Guerrero family's very, very large. You mentioned that his father passed away when he was

very young. And then they had -- what -- 10, 12 children?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Ten kids, six girls and four boys.

TOM RIVERA: And Trini's mom raised all of them?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: Where did they live?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Right there on M Street.

TOM RIVERA: The same place that they live now?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Between [00:52:00] Ninth and Tenth?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm. They had other houses before when the kids were small. But after he started working at the cement plant, then they was able to save some money and buy that house. And then after that he died, so they stayed there.

TOM RIVERA: Trini's father worked for the cement plant too?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: You mentioned something about the cement plant being -- your store being so close to the cement plant that you would always hear those alarms. Tell us about those alarms.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: They would go on once a day or sometimes maybe twice, and you would just hear (makes sound of alarm). That meant -- and then you would wait because when you're a kid you know you were going to hear the explosion. To me, it was an explosion. Like I said, they had to explode the rocks to make little pieces and then whatever they did, grind them or something, to make them into cement. But all the people that worked there, when they would hear that whistle they knew where to go hide and this and that. But at that time, a piece of rock just fell on his father's [00:53:00] head and killed him

instantly. And then I don't know if in those days they had -- she must have received something because it was an accident. And then with 10 kids, what are you going to do? She never worked.

TOM RIVERA: How old was he? Do you know how old he was?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: He was in his 40s.

TOM RIVERA: That must've been a hard situation for the family.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: And then everybody knew because you would hear that so loud (makes sound of alarm), and everybody -- sometimes when I was younger, I would hear the Santa Fe at twelve noon or at three o'clock in the afternoon you would hear (makes sound of train horn) and you knew it's twelve o'clock. I'd look at the clock and sure enough. It was the same way with the cement plant. You'd hear the (makes sound of alarm) and you know it was the explosion.

TOM RIVERA: And then the blast would come and then you'd hear the news that somebody might've been in an accident. That was a tragic [part?].

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Very tragic, very tragic. There were several people that got killed like that. [00:54:00] The only one that I remember was his dad.

TOM RIVERA: Let me switch a little bit. Do you remember who the leaders of Colton were, the political leaders of Colton in our South Colton neighborhood? You mentioned Pete Luque.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, Pete Luque, and I think [Stan?] Manuel Padilla.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, Manuel Padilla.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't remember what he did, but he was something because I remember him.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, he was very active in the community, Congress of Community Clubs and things like that. Who else do you remember?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: That's all I remember, Pete Luque and then -- I don't remember. It's been too long, Tommy. (laughter) I don't remember who else. It's been a [00:55:00] long life. It's been fun.

TOM RIVERA: Now, at Colton High School, anything that you remember that kind of stayed in your mind all these years? A class or a teacher or sports or things that you did there, anything?

FRANK ACOSTA: A club?

TOM RIVERA: A club.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: There were a couple of clubs but I don't remember what they were because I was never involved in anything because I had to be home by a certain time.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so you were expected to be home quickly then?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yeah. School was out at three, I better be there by 3:15, 3:20, or what's going on with you? (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Your walk was not too far, right?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, it wasn't too far. We didn't think anything of it.

TOM RIVERA: About a mile or so, mile and a half or so?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Probably, but didn't think anything of it, walking. Everybody [00:56:00] walked everywhere. Everywhere you walked. And then after you learn how to drive and you get spoiled. My dad taught me how to drive and I didn't want to learn.

TOM RIVERA: How old were you when he taught you how to drive?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Probably 15; 14, 15.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you were young?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, I was very young. He needed help after my mom passed. He needed help to go deliver the groceries to people around the corner or something or go to the bank and this and that. When he told me, "I'm going to teach you to drive," I told him, "No, yo no quiero aprender," because in those years, in those times, there was very few women that drove, least of all --

TOM RIVERA: None at all, very few, very few.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Only the men had -- they had one car if you had a car. Other than that you'd ride with somebody else to go to work or something, so I told him I didn't want to learn. He told me that I didn't have a choice. I had to learn. So, every Sunday he'd take me out over to the cemetery, Agua Mansa because there was nobody around [00:57:00] there (laughs) and taught me to drive. I thought, well, thank God he did because he really needed me, but I -- you're a kid and what does he need me for? He can do it. You don't realize that one person cannot do it all.

TOM RIVERA: Your training environment was the Agua Mansa Road --

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm on Sundays, every Sunday.

TOM RIVERA: -- which was close to your house.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah. Every Sunday afternoon we'd go. Then I used to think, "Why was we at the cemetery?" Well, because there was nobody. (laughs) No traffic, nothing, so stop and go and this and that. It was stick shift and all that. Thank God I learned.

TOM RIVERA: Now, when you got married, tell us about your family. How many kids do you have?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Me?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I have two kids.

TOM RIVERA: Boy? Girl?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: One of each, [00:58:00] a boy and a girl.

TOM RIVERA: A boy first?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: What's the name of the boy?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: George.

TOM RIVERA: George, and the name of your girl?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Teri.

TOM RIVERA: I would imagine they all went to schools in Colton. They were raised in Colton.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yeah. And then I think when Teri got to high school I said to her one day, I said, "I think your dad's going to start teaching you how to drive." She looked at me and she said, "Mom, I know how to drive." I said, "You don't know how to drive." She said, "Yes, I do." I said, "No, your dad hasn't taught you yet. You're only going to be 15." She looked at George and she said, "He taught me."

TOM RIVERA: (laughs) Her brother.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Can you imagine? He had a Volkswagen. That's the kind of car that Trini liked, and he taught George how to drive the Volkswagen. He taught Teri. He let her drive to school and then drive back, and I didn't -- I was at work. I worked. I would get off at three o'clock, so by the time I got home they were there. I didn't know she was -- [00:59:00] no permit, nothing, and she was learning to drive. They were my good kids. You know how you hear on TV, "Oh, my son wouldn't do that. He's a good boy," and this and that. Mentirosos. Pues, que that's what they were.

TOM RIVERA: Well, I think there was a mentiroso in the family when they were growing up. (laughter)

FRANK ACOSTA: You mentioned that you worked. Where did you work?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I worked for Harris Company. I was there for 25 years. I was a cashier.

FRANK ACOSTA: How did you get to work?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Well, I drove.

FRANK ACOSTA: So the driving did come in handy?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes, very. (laughs) I picked up one of my friends and took her to work. She didn't know how to drive either. But thank God that my father made me learn. It came in handy.

FRANK ACOSTA: What department did you work in?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I worked in the restaurant. I was a cashier in the restaurant, coffee shop. And I loved [01:00:00] the hours, ten to three.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, perfect.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, and off Sundays.

TOM RIVERA: When you told Trini, "I want a part-time job," this just worked perfectly for you. '

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Perfect hours, perfect days. The kids would go to school and I'd go to work. I'd come home and they'd be home, so we were there all together thank God. It worked out.

TOM RIVERA: Now, Bertha, do you have any hobbies?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Not really. I never knew how to -- you know, most women know how to crochet. It wasn't my thing, so nothing.

TOM RIVERA: How do you keep yourself active?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: (laughs) I read a lot, Tommy; a lot I read.

Every day I read. I read for maybe 30 minutes, and then I watch the news and go outside in the back yard.

TOM RIVERA: How did you acquire the [01:01:00] liking to read? How did you acquire that?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: When I was young, I used to love to read magazines about the movie stars, whatever it was saying. And then as I started to get older, I started switching to the books like James Patterson or whatever; just books, not those magazines that I used to. Now, all this time I'm all the time -- I have all the time in the world, so I do my thing around the house and go in the back yard, go in the front and water, pull weeds, this and that. I like to do it. It keeps me busy, especially when the weather is good. If it's cloudy or ugly I stay inside. That's about all I do.

TOM RIVERA: You don't babysit grandkids?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't have any. Well, my grandkids, I told you, my grandson is 40. My youngest granddaughter is 34. The other one is [01:02:00] 38. (laughter) Who do I babysit?

TOM RIVERA: Are you a great-grandmother?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Just a grandma.

TOM RIVERA: How many grandkids?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Three. That's all I have, three grandkids. When they were small I couldn't babysit them because I started to work. The other grandma would -- once in a while George would bring them over. We would go here or there, be there for a few hours, this and that. Nothing really that --

TOM RIVERA: And your George is a retired policeman. What department did he work for? Was it the Colton or San Bernardino?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No, San Bernardino. He was a sergeant

for 25 years.

TOM RIVERA: And Teri?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Teri works for some other company. She's in Rancho Cucamonga right now.

TOM RIVERA: I understand your granddaughter is also a [01:03:00] policeman.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, the youngest one. The middle one is a doctor. She's an OB/GYN.

TOM RIVERA: What hospital does she work at?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: She lives in Irvine, so some hospital over there.

TOM RIVERA: Well, congratulations. Where did she go to school?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: She went to high school here in Colton but then she went to New York.

TOM RIVERA: What is her name?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Jackie Guerrero, and then she went to Columbia University in New York. We went to New York twice, once to see her on her graduation. When she was a little girl, she used to come over and tell me, "Grandma, when I grow up I'm going to be a doctor." I'd go, "Okay, mija." She would follow me, "Grandma, I mean it." "Okay, fine." And one day she says to me, "Grandma, you don't believe me that when I grow up I'm going to be a doctor, huh?" I said, "You sure?" "Yeah, I'm going to help ladies deliver babies." I turned around and I looked at her. She must've been about eight. [01:04:00] I said, "You're going to help ladies have babies?" "Yeah," and then I said -- before I even asked, I think she read my mind. She said, "But I'm not having any." I said, "Why not?" "Grandma, it hurts. It hurts, so I'm not going to let -- I'm not having any." (laughs)

And she hasn't.

TOM RIVERA: To this day?

BERTHA BOCANEGRAGUERRERO: No. She said, "No." And then one day she comes because -- the way she works, if she's got all these women that are pregnant, she's their doctor so she can't leave the house or her apartment because she's on call, "Come on in, your patient is here. This one's been here for two hours." So, if she's got something to go, she's got to stay with that phone and she's got to get to the hospital. So she says, "Sometimes I don't have time to sleep or to eat. I'm at the hospital with this woman." She says, "Do women know how to stop having babies?" I said, "Well, you ask them. You're the doctor." (laughs)

FRANK ACOSTA: [01:05:00] Jackie has a brother, doesn't she? What's her brother's --?

BERTHA BOCANEGRAGUERRERO: Jesse.

FRANK ACOSTA: They were both students at Colton Junior High and Colton High School.

BERTHA BOCANEGRAGUERRERO: Yeah, all three of them went to --

FRANK ACOSTA: Right. I remember both of them.

BERTHA BOCANEGRAGUERRERO: -- to Colton High, all three of them, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Anyway, not only did they all go to Colton Junior High School but I understand with this project that we're doing now that everybody's related in Colton. Todos son primos.

BERTHA BOCANEGRAGUERRERO: Uh-huh, that's right, one way or another. Sometimes it takes years and then you find out, "Oh, you're related. Oh, we're related." Yeah, so it goes.

TOM RIVERA: Our other member of our committee that's doing this project is Mr. Henry Vasquez. Henry Vasquez is related to the Guerreros.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm, Oralia.

FRANK ACOSTA: My mom was Luz Gomez [01:06:00] Vasquez.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: La de David?

FRANK ACOSTA: My dad was David.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, I knew David because they were -- they lived about five houses from where my dad's store was.

FRANK ACOSTA: Well, we actually -- where was the store?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: You know the Vasquez house was right here like --?

TOM RIVERA: North.

FRANK ACOSTA: Oh, it was north. Oh, it's knocked down.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, yeah, there's no more store. It was about five, six houses down from the Vasquez, my dad's store.

FRANK ACOSTA: Was it at the corner by any chance of Fifth and Maple?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: No. It was -- there was a dirt road going up to the cement plant.

TOM RIVERA: Georgia.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: We were practically right in front, a little bit to the side. The dirt road would run this way and my dad's store was right here. Yeah, but Oralia Vasquez or Gomez.

CHUCK VASQUEZ: My mom's Oralia.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, he had told me that.

TOM RIVERA: [01:07:00] And then when you're talking to David -- what's your last name David?

CHUCK VASQUEZ: Chuck.

TOM RIVERA: Chuck, I'm sorry.

CHUCK VASQUEZ: Vasquez.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Didn't you go to school with George?

CHUCK VASQUEZ: Yes, exactly.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: You said Chuck and it rang a bell.

CHUCK VASQUEZ: Yeah, I went to school with George.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah because I think -- what's your sister's name?

CHUCK VASQUEZ: Ann.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I think she went to school with my daughter too.

CHUCK VASQUEZ: What's the difference in age between George and Teri?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Four years, about four years apart. Yeah, I knew Lucy, David, Charlie.

FRANK ACOSTA: Small world.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oralia, Martha, Tony, all of them. I knew them all. But the years have gone by too fast.

FRANK ACOSTA: Well, out of the Vasquez only one is left of the men.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Is he in a wheelchair, isn't he?

FRANK ACOSTA: Yes, and then the two aunts, Lupe and Rachel.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Rachel.

FRANK ACOSTA: They're the only two [01:08:00] left.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Lupe's still alive?

FRANK ACOSTA: She still is alive, yes.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh my gosh.

FRANK ACOSTA: She's about -- what -- 90--

CHUCK VASQUEZ: She's 92.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: She's got to be because --

FRANK ACOSTA: She's not well. She can't walk much anymore.

CHUCK VASQUEZ: Tomorrow she'll be 92.

FRANK ACOSTA: Oh, tomorrow -- that's right. Her birthday is on Valentine's.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh really? Oh, my gosh.

TOM RIVERA: This project, Bertha, has really been about getting the families together, family reunions, because everybody's related.

FRANK ACOSTA: The neighborhood where your father's store was, at that time when you were little, what was the name for that barrio?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: La Calle Cinco.

FRANK ACOSTA: Are you familiar at all with that barrio being referred to as La Catolica?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I barely remember that because estaba la church -- [01:09:00] there was a Catholic church on the corner.

FRANK ACOSTA: It was -- at one time, San Salvador Church was close to Congress.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah, on the corner. It was on the corner there. I remember one time -- when I used to go to school to San Salvador and I would turn there, and one time I saw this great big layer of cement, just the cement.

FRANK ACOSTA: The foundation.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: And I remember asking my mother one time, or I asked somebody, "Why is that cement there?" I didn't know. Somebody told -- I don't know if it was my mother or somebody that said to me, "San Salvador Church was there." But I don't know what happened.

FRANK ACOSTA: It burned down in 1917.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, my gosh. But the cement stayed there

forever. As long as I can remember it was there.

FRANK ACOSTA: Yeah, very few people seem to remember that [about the?]
(inaudible).

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah too many years ago.

TOM RIVERA: They've gone by fast. Bertha, let me ask you my last question.
What is the best [01:10:00] memory that you can think of or remember of growing
up in Colton? What were the best memories that you have about growing up in
Colton?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I guess just everybody knew each other.
We never had a problem with somebody breaking into your house or stealing your
car or beating you up or shooting you. It was nothing like that. Everything was --
we didn't have a problem. Now you have to watch everything. To me, that was the
good old days. No problem with nothing. You'd walk anywhere. Now, especially
things that have happened to me, I quit driving because I won't drive -- I'm afraid
somebody will follow me because it happened one time. Or you're walking down
the street, somebody will grab you, "Look at that old lady," this and that. Things are
just entirely different. I don't know. If I know you're coming to my house I'll wait for
you, I'll watch for you, or you call me, [01:11:00] or if I know you, if I know your car.
Other than that, you can come to my house and ring the doorbell but I'm not going
to open the door because I don't know who you are or what you want.

TOM RIVERA: So it's a lot different now.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Very, very, very different.

TOM RIVERA: Growing up in Colton when you were young was just a nice
place.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh, you didn't worry about anything,
nothing. Well, things have to change. Luck changes. Women didn't work.

Everybody has to work now. If you want to have anything, you have to go to work or nothing. In those days, it was just the father. But that's the way it is.

TOM RIVERA: Well, thank you so much for being with us this afternoon.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: You're very welcome, Mr. Rivera.

TOM RIVERA: Before I leave you, did I forget anything that I should mention?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Tommy, I don't remember (laughter) unless you ask me. [01:12:00]

TOM RIVERA: Thank you so much for being with us this afternoon, also bringing some of those memories of La Calle Cinco to light because I've always been curious about your store. Then when somebody mentioned your store the other day, I said, "Aha, I'm going to have to call Bertha." I'm delighted that you were available to be with us.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't know who could remember that store because it's been such a long time; a long, long time.

TOM RIVERA: But it was a great contributor to the neighborhood, to La Calle Cinco.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yeah. You got to know everybody. But half the people that I knew then, they're gone. It's just like now, there's -- when I graduated there was probably, from high school, about 40 of us. Of course, high school wasn't like it is now. It was the small auditorium and we graduated and we all got up there on the stage, all of us about 40 or 50 of us. From Wilson there must've been 25 of us [01:13:00] that graduated from Wilson. We sat outside just a few chairs there, and that was it. Now, the stadium.

TOM RIVERA: Football stadium.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Uh-huh. But that's life. Things change.

FRANK ACOSTA: One question about that. You graduated from Colton High from

the auditorium there at Colton High?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

FRANK ACOSTA: Because I know some time in the '40s they started using -- for graduation, so maybe it was in the '50s, they used the [group theater?] at Valley College.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Oh, uh-huh, it was probably later because we were in the auditorium there.

CHUCK VASQUEZ: I had a question. Is your main name Bocanegra?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Mm-hmm.

CHUCK VASQUEZ: Are you related or were you related to Margarita Bocanegra by any chance? She was in my grandmother's choir at -- the people that sang at San Salvador. I just thought maybe there might be a connection. [01:14:00] Do you remember that name?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: I don't remember Margarita, no. But there was another family Bocanegra. I went to school with one of them, Ramon Bocanegra. His father was my father's cousin, so she could've been related there. But the only one I knew was Ramon. But then the years go by and you don't remember. You forget.

TOM RIVERA: Well, and you mentioned that people used to pick on you because of your last name.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: ¿Qué decía?

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: Black mouth. Bocanegra, Black mouth. That's the way it was. People would just -- there was this girl. Se llamaba Adelina. Le decían, "Adelina patas de gallina." (laughter) There was another, David Mendoza. David Mendoza, cola pestosa. I can just imagine what went on with

Bocanegra. I can [01:15:00] imagine. (laughter) But that's the way it was.

TOM RIVERA: That's the way it was.

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: That's how it was.

TOM RIVERA: Well, again, thank you so much. Frank, I think I forgot to mention the date today. Today is February 13, 2015, and tomorrow is Valentine's Day. (laughter)

BERTHA BOCANEGRA-GUERRERO: See, he remembered.

End of Interview:
[01:15:31]