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Dora Felix

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South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Dora Felix

Interviewer:

Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

January 23, 2015

Interview Location:

San Bernardino, CA

Length:

01:33:35

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Tom Rivera interviews Dora Felix, a woman who has strong roots in Colton. Felix first explains her family history, including her father coming from Mexico and meeting her mother and Felix having eight other siblings. One topic that is then discussed is Los Pobrecistas, a local mutual aid society that helped the community and in which Felix's father was a participant. After discussing community activism, the topic changes to the way all family members in Colton had to work to survive. Felix is asked by Rivera about her father's activism and union work and then both discuss manners taught as children. The following topic moves to Felix and what she has seen in bilingualism in both her home life and as an educator. Felix and Rivera then recollect memories of Felix's in-laws, and how they helped the community through both sponsoring softball and raising foster children. The subjects change to military service as people of color and to how prejudiced the housing market was at one point. The interview ends with Felix recollecting her best memories of being raised in Colton as a tight-knit community and memories of the Catholic faith.

Subject Topic:

- The American Dream
- Large Family
- Military Service
- Social Activism/Unions
- Las Fiestas Patrias
- Working as a Family Affair
- Speaking English and Spanish
- In-Laws and Extended Families
- Memories of School
- Entertainment
- Racism/Segregation
- Memories of Faith-based Celebrations

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
California State University San Bernardino	5500 University Pkwy, San Bernardino, CA 92407
Arizona	State in the United States
San Salvador Church	Colton, CA
The Derby House	Colton, CA
Colton High School	777 W Valley Blvd, Colton, CA 92324

Temporal Coverage:

1810 - 2015

Key Events:

- Felix's father came from Quilá, Sinaloa in Mexico to the United States in the 1920s.
- Felix's parents have a large family, including men in the military service and an activist father.
- During an event for Los Pobrecistas in Los Angeles, it lead to the death of three people and one of them was Felix's dad.
- Memories of working, as many families in South Colton did at the time, picking and drying fruit.
- Manners and speaking Spanish and English.
- De Facto Segregation and buying houses at that time.
- Catholic Celebrations and memories of Father Valencia.

Key Organizations:

- The United States Army
- The United States Air Force
- Los Pobrecistas
- Pacific Fruit Express
- The Masons
- Los Trabajadores Unidos

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:01:11 - 00:10:34	Felix explains her large family and having many siblings.
Digital Video	00:10:35 - 00:14:53	Felix talks about her father in community activism and the roles and beliefs of Los Pobrecistas.

Digital Video	00:42:35 - 00:49:23	Felix and her history with speaking certain forms of Spanish and her take on Spanish-speaking children relying on English.
Digital Video	00:49:24 - 00:58:14	Fred and Sarah Van Aken, the interviewee's in-laws, and the children they helped raise.
Digital Video	01:21:09 - 01:26:26	The best thing or the most memorable part of being raised in Colton according to Felix.

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, and welcome to our oral history of South Colton. Behind the camera is Mr. Frank Acosta, who's one of our committee members, and we are at the Pfau Library at Cal State San Bernardino, and it's approximately 2:40 in the afternoon. Today is January the -- let's see. January the twenty-third --

DORA FELIX: Twenty-third.

TOM RIVERA: -- 2015. And our guest this afternoon is Miss Dora Felix Van Aken. And, Dora, thank you very much, and welcome to our interview, and thank you for being with us this afternoon.

DORA FELIX: You're very welcome, Tommy.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. It's good to see you again. I haven't seen you in a long, long time. And, again, our apologies for retaking this interview again because we took this back in March, but --

DORA FELIX: [00:01:00] Last year.

TOM RIVERA: Was it March? Or it was November. It was November.

DORA FELIX: It was last year, November of last year.

TOM RIVERA: It was November, 2013. But, again, thank you (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

DORA FELIX: You're very welcome.

TOM RIVERA: -- for being so gracious with us. Why don't we start the interview and talk about -- the first one is -- let's talk about your parents. Tell me, where did your parents come from, from Mexico?

DORA FELIX: My parents -- my dad was from Quilá, Sinaloa, Mexico, and he came early '20s, and my mother was from Arizona, so she was not from Mexico. She was from Arizona. She was very --

TOM RIVERA: What part of Arizona? [Do you know?]

DORA FELIX: Nogales.

TOM RIVERA: Nogales?

DORA FELIX: Nogales, Arizona.

TOM RIVERA: Were her parents miners? Were they miners?

DORA FELIX: He's trying to get your attention.

P1: Could we get her parents' names?

DORA FELIX: Oh, absolutely. Sure.

P1: Your mom and her last name? Thank you.

DORA FELIX: My father was [José Maria?] Felix. My mother was [00:02:00] [Irma Valenzuela?] Felix. And she lost her dad very young, so grandmother never remarried, and she had -- she was expecting her last child when her husband died, and they came from Arizona to California. And the way my father and mother met -- they met in Fontana.

TOM RIVERA: You're kidding.

DORA FELIX: Dad was working in Fontana, where there was a big ranch. Big ranch. They used to call it -- it was like a big farm ranch of pigs.

TOM RIVERA: In South Fontana.

DORA FELIX: La Cochera. And employed a lot of people. And Mom lived close to there, and I believe this is where they met. They were married in 1928, [00:03:00] and they lived in Fontana, and they moved to Colton. I believe my two older brothers and my -- three older brothers and one older sister -- because we're

a large family -- moved to Colton. And we lived at 158 West M Street in Colton, so -
-

TOM RIVERA: Did you always live there, Dora?

DORA FELIX: Oh, no. We moved a block away. (laughs) My mother and father were renting at my godfather's place, and they saved enough money to buy their own home. This was the -- what, the American Dream? So-called. And they bought a house just a block away, the same direction. M Street. We lived on West M. We just moved to East M, right next to the railroad tracks.

TOM RIVERA: So, it was -- you moved from on the corner of M and 9th Street -
-

DORA FELIX: M and 9th, yes. Yes, [00:04:00] you're right. Because La Cadena would be the breaking point of --

TOM RIVERA: And you mentioned they had sons and daughters. How many were in the family?

DORA FELIX: Well, we were -- my mom and dad lost a boy when he was less than two years old, and -- seven... Nine.

TOM RIVERA: Nine all together?

DORA FELIX: Nine.

TOM RIVERA: How many boys and how many girls?

DORA FELIX: Oh, we were four girls and five boys. Let me make sure. I have to think because I have already lost two brothers and a sister. Six, seven --

P1: Could you name them?

DORA FELIX: -- eight, nine. Four girls, five boys.

TOM RIVERA: Can you --?

DORA FELIX: I was right.

TOM RIVERA: Can you give us their names?

DORA FELIX: Absolutely. The older one was [Dolores?], Dolores [00:05:00] Felix, who married [Luis Vasquez?], Colton.

TOM RIVERA: And Luis Vasquez was a World War II veteran and a --

DORA FELIX: Yes, he was.

TOM RIVERA: -- prisoner of war.

DORA FELIX: Yes, he was. Yes, he was.

TOM RIVERA: And tell us about his mom's story. His mom --

DORA FELIX: His mom's name was Doña [Maria Cristina?] Vasquez. They were originally from Mexico. They came to Colton many, many years prior to -- great people. Very respectable. And my brother-in-law was -- I think he was a navigator in one of the big planes, just like my godfather, and they were shot down in Europe. And my brother-in-law was hurt, and he was in a German camp. My [00:06:00] brother-in-law's family got notified that he was there, in the camp. He was injured. And Doña Cristina had made what you call promesa. When you ask our lord to fulfill a desire that they have, it will come true. So, she said that she would kneel, praying, from her house to the church, San Salvador Church, in Colton. And she did. And the ladies -- it was the talk of South Colton, but the ladies helped her with pillows and rugs, putting it prior to her to make a pathway for her to pray while she's going to San Salvador Church. So, if you think back the number of blocks that she knelt, praying all the time, [00:07:00] it would be -- one, two, three, four -- about five blocks, approximately five blocks, crossing the streets and all that.

TOM RIVERA: And her prayers were --

DORA FELIX: And her prayers were answered. He survived, came home, and married my sister. (laughter) And that was --

TOM RIVERA: So that was your --

DORA FELIX: And I know that was 1947.

TOM RIVERA: And that was your older sister, and then --

DORA FELIX: That was my older sister.

TOM RIVERA: -- after that was...

DORA FELIX: Beautiful sister.

TOM RIVERA: Who were the other members of the family after her?

DORA FELIX: Okay. After Dolores -- but they called her [Lola?] or Chinita because she had beautiful curly hair, and people liked her hair, and they say, "Oh, Chinita. Chinita Felix." So, if somebody says, "Oh, I know her from that name," which is true. The next one would be Junior. They called him [Chito?], but his name was [Joe?], José Maria Felix the Second. And he [00:08:00] also was in the service in World War II. He joined an infantry because he -- I notice him. We have many pictures of him with the boots, and I always thought he looked like Dennis Morgan. (laughter) I know I'm dating myself saying Dennis Morgan. Who is Dennis Morgan? But, anyway, he was -- he married and had three children. And then, it would be [Joe?], another Joe. He was José [Hector?]. He couldn't be Junior because [there was already a Junior?]. And he married, and he was also in the service. So, I had three brothers that joined the armed forces, Army and Air Force. And then, I had a brother that passed away prior to his second birthday. Then, [Mike, Michael?] Felix, which they called Spider in high school because he ran rather funny in football, I understand.

TOM RIVERA: (laughs) Nickname, huh?

DORA FELIX: [00:09:00] Nickname.

TOM RIVERA: Spider.

DORA FELIX: The Spider. And then, it's [Sofie?], Sofie Felix.

TOM RIVERA: And Sofie was quite a softball player.

DORA FELIX: Yeah, and she married [Leonard Eneas?]. And then, yours truly, and I married George Robert Van Aken. Then, [Albert?].

TOM RIVERA: Albert and I were in kindergarten together. We started in --

DORA FELIX: Yes, you did.

TOM RIVERA: -- '45 or so.

DORA FELIX: Yes, you did. You're -- well, you're the same age. You went to school together, and I remember you coming to the house and playing.

TOM RIVERA: And we're still great friends.

DORA FELIX: And you're still great friends. That's what's wonderful.

TOM RIVERA: And that was, what 69 years ago? So -- 69 years.

DORA FELIX: Then, [Ernestine?]. We called her [Ernie?] or Bunny because my grandmother named her Coneja. So, she goes by -- only in the family. If we're trying to get her attention, we'll say, "Coneja. Bunny. Bunny." Not B-O-N-N-I, but B-U-N-N-Y. (laughs) And that's my family. [00:10:00] That is my family.

TOM RIVERA: And are they still around the Inland Empire?

DORA FELIX: The only one that left was Mike. He lived in Walnut Creek because he worked at Berkeley. He worked at Berkeley and retired out of there, and I'm sorry to say that we lost him a year ago in October. And then, he was the last one that passed away, but Dolores was the first one, and then Chito. So, I've had three siblings that have passed since, from this day.

TOM RIVERA: Now, tell me about your father. Your father was very active in Colton social activities, movements to better the community. Tell us about his activities with [Los Pobrecistas?].

DORA FELIX: He was very involved in, that I know of, four organizations, and he was totally, totally --

TOM RIVERA: [00:11:00] Committed?

DORA FELIX: -- committed. He had -- he always had a man come and ask for him for favors in writing letters to someone, or he was also involved in the board of some sort in one of the -- as not a [participant. He participated?], but he was like help office in Los Pobrecistas, the [Masons?], or the other one that I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: Was it the [Congress of Community Clubs?]? That was one of the --

DORA FELIX: You know what? It might be. It might be, but I cannot tell you what it was.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, because you mentioned that he -- many people from the community would come into his -- to your house to talk to your dad and discuss various issues that happened in the community, and one of those people was Mr. [Lou Sosa?].

DORA FELIX: Oh, yes.

TOM RIVERA: [00:12:00] And he would spend a lot of time with your dad.

DORA FELIX: Yes, he would. Yes, he would.

TOM RIVERA: The other person that I do recall was Mr. [Manuel De Padilla?], and he also spent a lot of time with your dad.

DORA FELIX: And Señor [Carlos?].

TOM RIVERA: And Señor Carlos.

DORA FELIX: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) Carlos was also --

TOM RIVERA: And then, also, you -- another --

DORA FELIX: [Garcia?].

TOM RIVERA: Another person that you mentioned was Dr. Garcia's father. I don't know what his name is.

DORA FELIX: No, I don't either.

TOM RIVERA: Because Mr. Garcia --

DORA FELIX: He would come riding his bike --

TOM RIVERA: Mm-hmm, and he would --

DORA FELIX: -- two blocks away.

TOM RIVERA: Like your dad, he worked in the [PFE?].

DORA FELIX: Yes, he did.

TOM RIVERA: And, like my grandfather, they all worked in the PFE. And then, there's another person that I can't think of, but we'll get to him later. But they were all members of Los Pobrecistas.

DORA FELIX: Yes, they were. Yes, they were.

TOM RIVERA: And your dad was president of Los Pobrecistas?

DORA FELIX: Yes. He was president of one of them, but I couldn't tell you which one. I know he was secretary to one of them because he was very -- he was just involved.

TOM RIVERA: And Los Pobrecistas was a mutual aid society?

DORA FELIX: [00:13:00] That I know of, yes. They would go to different places and celebrate either -- I don't know whether it was yearly, but I remember going to dinners and dances where they would have -- I guess you could say changing of the guards. They would have [new?] officials, and then they would have -- like any organization, they would change.

TOM RIVERA: They wouldn't have new officers come in every year. But the mission of Los Pobrecistas was to provide aid to their members who could not afford burial services, and they would pay a monthly due. I can't -- I don't know how much the dues were, but they were very affordable, 50 cents or a dollar or so.

DORA FELIX: Yes. Very little.

TOM RIVERA: And, when somebody -- a member's family -- passed away, they would help --

DORA FELIX: They would be there.

TOM RIVERA: -- with the burial expenses. And then, the other thing is

[00:14:00] that the Pobrecistas were very --

DORA FELIX: They were very united.

TOM RIVERA: -- united, and they were very pro-Mexico.

DORA FELIX: Yes, they had a lot of -- I wouldn't say love, but I think pride, and, looking back, they knew they weren't going to go back. They knew.

TOM RIVERA: So, they [had a lot of?] pride being Mexican --

DORA FELIX: So, they held it -- yes.

TOM RIVERA: -- and the culture that they had, and the language, and the music, and everything that they brought from their homeland, and they wanted to preserve that and continue that. And that was one of the purposes of Los Pobrecistas, to be able to have those functions, and one of the big functions was Las Fiestas Patrias, where they celebrated the breaking away from Spain in 1810, and they were very, very proud of it.

DORA FELIX: They were.

TOM RIVERA: Tell us about the Pobrecistas, Las Fiestas Patrias.

DORA FELIX: Well, Dad was very involved with that, and [00:15:00] I couldn't tell you. They would hold meetings all the time. Maybe that's why the men would come, and they would discuss things. But they made it a big -- they always looked forward to this, which would be the celebration of the --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, we have a picture here.

DORA FELIX: -- the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). Yes.

TOM RIVERA: And what year was this, Dolores?

DORA FELIX: It had to be in the late '40s. That would be in the late '40s.

TOM RIVERA: And your dad is right in the middle of the line of --

DORA FELIX: My dad is right in the middle of --

TOM RIVERA: -- officers of the Pobrecistas.

DORA FELIX: Yes, marching there.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, marching.

DORA FELIX: And behind there --

TOM RIVERA: And behind there is the float.

DORA FELIX: A float, and behind is a group of people riding horses, and I understand that they started way back in --

TOM RIVERA: What was the name of that group, Frank?

FRANK ACOSTA: Colton Saddle Club.

TOM RIVERA: The Colton Saddle Club.

DORA FELIX: Colton Saddle Club.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, they were part of the parade.

DORA FELIX: And I don't actually -- I don't remember the group.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, we were too --

DORA FELIX: I see we were too little. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: We were too young. We were too young.

DORA FELIX: But I do remember faces and men coming to see Dad, and, [00:16:00] as I see here --

TOM RIVERA: And we have another picture here.

DORA FELIX: And I -- [yes, thank you?] Tommy -- that if my sister Dolores and Luis Vasquez got married in 1947 -- I know that for a fact -- this has to be 1946.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Yes. And this is the court, the [Queen's Court and the Princes?], and this picture is taken, and we have a group of people right in front. And, Dora, if you look at some of these young kids, tell me who they are. You (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

DORA FELIX: This is really funny.

TOM RIVERA: [The ones that you remember?] starting from the left-hand side.

DORA FELIX: Okay, and I'm going to take my glasses off so I can see better.

I only need them to drive. There is [Pete Luki?] Junior.

TOM RIVERA: Pete Luki Junior, the --

DORA FELIX: Right there at the end.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, he's tiny. And he became the priest for Colton

DORA FELIX: And look.

TOM RIVERA: He became the priest.

DORA FELIX: He doesn't change. He didn't ever change, did he? There is [Joey Rodriguez?] right here, [00:17:00] little guy. [Benny Serrano?]. A [Caldería?]. I don't remember his name. He was [Genevieve's?] -- one of the Court's sisters. He was the youngest, I believe. Caldería. They owned a tortilla factory. You remember that?

TOM RIVERA: Tell me.

DORA FELIX: Okay. It would be 7th Street, across the street from El Sombrero, kind of the parking lot. There's a big vacancy. Across the street, there was a -- right next to the alley. Do you recall that?

TOM RIVERA: Yes, yes, yes.

DORA FELIX: Okay. That was the Caldería's tortilla place.

TOM RIVERA: So, it was right on 7th street.

DORA FELIX: Right. Right. And I -- and looking -- oh, I remember her. Oh, [Rivera?], but I don't know if she's a Rivera.

TOM RIVERA: I don't know that cousin. (laughter) And then, we have another picture of --

DORA FELIX: And then, we have another picture.

TOM RIVERA: And then, this -- [00:18:00] that picture there.

DORA FELIX: This one right here, with the Court. The queen is -- it looks like [Cecilia Rosas?], and her sister, her younger sister, is [Ortensia?] Rosas, and next to her -- I figured it out. It's [Gertrude Velclan?].

TOM RIVERA: I'll be darned. And then, next to her is Albert, your little brother.

DORA FELIX: And (laughs) next to her is my little brother.

TOM RIVERA: He must have been about five or six years old.

DORA FELIX: Oh, yeah. And this is where I thought --

TOM RIVERA: And where's your sister? Where's your sister?

DORA FELIX: My sister, my beautiful sister, is right here.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Can you kind of show the picture?

DORA FELIX: Absolutely.

TOM RIVERA: And they can -- people that are watching --

DORA FELIX: Next to the --

TOM RIVERA: -- this video can see what we're talking about.

DORA FELIX: The left to the queen would be the Second Lady. That's -- and she's also a Rosas, and [Dora Torres?]. Dora Torres looks tall here, but she -- she was tall.

TOM RIVERA: Let's look at the next picture that has the band. Here we go.
[00:19:00] Where's your dad?

DORA FELIX: My dad is right there, and it looks like he looks -- Albert looks a lot like him right now. Yeah. And the band is in front, and I think I --

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember any of the band members, or can you recognize them?

DORA FELIX: Oh, are you kidding? No. No, no, no. No. No. It looks like a big band because it's -- two, four, six, eight --

TOM RIVERA: But there was a Fiestas Patrias at the Court, the stage. The stage.

DORA FELIX: Right in front --

TOM RIVERA: Let's look at the last picture.

DORA FELIX: Okay. This is men that probably are all members and their invited guest, but I, right away, recognize [Logan Jamil Carlos?], Manuel Padilla, my father. I --

TOM RIVERA: Your dad is also in there?

DORA FELIX: Oh, yeah. This is my dad. I recognize him and him, but I can't recall their names, and I guess that -- I just can't recall their names.

TOM RIVERA: Well -- [00:20:00] but, anyway, you were able to identify --

DORA FELIX: Some. Some.

TOM RIVERA: -- some of these pictures, yes.

DORA FELIX: And it's funny because you see them. See? There's Albert again. My sister again. This is the parade of their float, and it's -- the man that was in charge of the floats was [Pete Ortiz?].

TOM RIVERA: Pete Ortiz, and --

DORA FELIX: Pete Ortiz.

TOM RIVERA: -- Pete Ortiz was the son-in-law of your --

DORA FELIX: Mr. Vasquez. Son-in-law of Señor Vasquez, yes.

TOM RIVERA: Which was your --

DORA FELIX: My --

TOM RIVERA: -- sister's --

DORA FELIX: Brother-in-law. Pete Vasquez was my sister's brother-in-law.

TOM RIVERA: Father-in-law. Father-in-law.

DORA FELIX: Well, Pete Ortiz, yeah. Oh, my gosh. She became my sister-in-law. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Now, who is that?

DORA FELIX: This is [Stella Hernandez?].

TOM RIVERA: Stella Hernandez.

DORA FELIX: Uh-huh, and Genevieve Caldería married Pascual Oliva.

[00:21:00] And I'm trying to decipher who was the truck driver, but I can't.

TOM RIVERA: (laughs) What about the queen? Can you see the queen?

DORA FELIX: The queen was -- it looks like Cecilia Rosas, and one of the young ladies on her court is her sister, Ortencia, and then Albert, and then Gertrude Velclan, my sister on the side.

TOM RIVERA: And what year was this?

DORA FELIX: This had to --

TOM RIVERA: 1945? 1946?

DORA FELIX: It had to be '46. '46. I know that these are remakes. Maybe even '45 because I'm looking at Albert, and Albert -- if Albert was five, and --

TOM RIVERA: Albert hasn't changed, has he?

DORA FELIX: No, he hasn't. He was seven when my dad passed away, so you see that would only be '45.

TOM RIVERA: He was seven when your dad passed away?

DORA FELIX: He was seven years old.

TOM RIVERA: And how did that happen?

DORA FELIX: Was he seven or nine? Oh, I'm sorry. He was nine. I was eleven, he was nine, and Ernestine was seven. [00:22:00] I had the seven.

TOM RIVERA: And how -- what happened?

DORA FELIX: There were seven of the members, including my dad and my mother --

TOM RIVERA: Pobrecista members.

DORA FELIX: Yes, that went to Los Angeles.

TOM RIVERA: Where the headquarters of the Pobrecistas was.

DORA FELIX: Yes. And they went to a big to-do. It was very -- they were really looking forward to it, and there was seven, and I remember getting -- it was a Sunday. It was a Sunday.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember who the seven were?

DORA FELIX: Señor [Rillamas?], the barber, and his wife. Señor [Ochoa?]. My mother -- my mother, my father, my cousin, [Eloisa Plan?]. And we went to the movies that day, the new Colton theater, and, when we got home, the phone rang, and I answered it, and they wanted to know [00:23:00] if this was the Felix residence, and I said, "Yes." And she must have noticed my young age or something. "Is there anybody older than you there?" I said, "No." "Okay, thank you." She didn't leave me the message. About an hour later, my brother Mike arrives, and they called again while he was there. And I could see something had happened. I knew it. When he hung up, he said, "I want you, and Sofia, and you guys, go to [Amelia?]." Amelia would be my sister-in-law's mother who lived on Congress, right across the street from the park. Or Pine. Congress -- Pine -- I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: Pine. Pine. Pine.

DORA FELIX: Pine. Pine Street. Pine Street. So, we went there, and that's the day that my dad died, and my mother was in the hospital. So, three people died. [00:24:00] I believe there was three of -- three that I know of was my father, my cousin, and another person.

P1: What year was that?

DORA FELIX: 1949. 1949. On a Saturday, 1949, which is the month of my father's birthday. So -- and he was 47 years old.

TOM RIVERA: He was young.

DORA FELIX: He was young.

TOM RIVERA: He was young.

DORA FELIX: He was young. And my mother was 35, so they were still young.

TOM RIVERA: [They're very young?].

DORA FELIX: And they looked forward to these celebrations that they had, so -- because my father loved to dance. He waltzed beautifully, so, if there was any opportunity to go to one of these -- and that's the only thing they did. I mean, this was 24/7 for him, these organizations. He worked and looked forward to this. That's all I remember.

TOM RIVERA: And you said he worked at the PFE, the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) Express?

DORA FELIX: He worked -- yes, he worked at the PFE, [00:25:00] and I always remember, as soon as 3:30 -- if you were to go outside onto the street or just looked down the sidewalk, you'd see all the men walking. Not too many people had cars then.

TOM RIVERA: From the PFE.

DORA FELIX: From the PFE.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, which was --

DORA FELIX: They would walk out within --

TOM RIVERA: -- about three blocks from your house.

DORA FELIX: Well, not a few blocks. It's --

TOM RIVERA: No, three blocks or something.

DORA FELIX: Yeah, three long blocks. Yeah. Because it was on the corner, which is now -- every time I pass through there, it brings a lot of memories.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. And you mentioned that you would also take lunch to your dad sometimes.

DORA FELIX: Yes. If he would be in a rush, my mother would say, "The girls will take your lunch." And so, we would walk over there and take his lunch, and he would be waiting for us. It was like a -- if I remember, not a fountain, but maybe it was a fountain because I can't recall. It was neat, and he would be [00:26:00] there waiting for his lunch, but all the men would take his lunch. No roach coaches.

(laughter) Everybody took their lunch.

TOM RIVERA: Right. Right. Right. You mentioned other activities or organizations that your dad belonged to. We have Los Pobrecistas that were a mutual aid society that started in our area in 1929, and they had a total number of 68 lodges or logias --

DORA FELIX: Throughout California.

TOM RIVERA: -- throughout California, from Palm Springs, all the way to San José. And your dad's logia, lodge, was one of the most active in the area?

DORA FELIX: Really?

TOM RIVERA: Mm-hmm.

DORA FELIX: Was there not one in San Bernardino?

TOM RIVERA: There were several. There were several. There were some in San Bernardino, but another in Cucamonga, Rancho Cucamonga. But your dad made sure that the Colton one was always recognized and quite active --

DORA FELIX: Very active. Very active.

TOM RIVERA: Quite active in promoting Mexican culture. Tell me about the other [00:27:00] organizations. You said he belonged to the Masons.

DORA FELIX: He belonged to the Masons, and the meetings would be held upstairs on main street of Colton, La Cadena. There was a bakery. If I remember correct, it was between the bakery and the drug store, where it was an elderly man with a soda fountain.

TOM RIVERA: That was between J and --

DORA FELIX: It was between Valley and --

TOM RIVERA: And J Street on the west side.

DORA FELIX: It was on the east side. Right? East side. West side, I'm sorry. It was on the west side, yes.

TOM RIVERA: And there was --

DORA FELIX: Upstairs. We would climb the steps, stair, going up to his -- and I remember them wearing aprons, like some sort of a -- it wasn't an attire, but something --

P1: Ceremonial.

DORA FELIX: Yes, it was very ceremonial. And, of course, [00:28:00] when you're that young, you -- goes in one ear and out the other. You want to have fun. You want -- you don't want to --

TOM RIVERA: So, he was a Mason for how many years?

DORA FELIX: He was a Mason. That I can remember, several years, and I remember there was a to-do about -- he shouldn't be in because they'd excommunicate him, but he didn't --

TOM RIVERA: How did Father Valencia feel about he belonged to the Masons?

DORA FELIX: He didn't like it. He didn't like it at all. I don't think he -- I don't remember any other of these men going, which I'm sure there was, but I remember my dad saying, "This is what I'm going to do." So, he did.

TOM RIVERA: No, there weren't too many from South Colton, too many residents from South Colton that belonged to the Masons.

DORA FELIX: There was.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, there wasn't.

DORA FELIX: Oh, there wasn't?

TOM RIVERA: Not too many people belonged to the Masons.

DORA FELIX: There was also -- I don't know which organization would have their celebrations next-door to the [00:29:00] Brown Derby. There was a big hall, and we would go there and have a celebration.

TOM RIVERA: Now, where was the --?

DORA FELIX: And there was always a dance.

TOM RIVERA: Where was the Brown Derby located?

DORA FELIX: It was about a block east of Mount Vernon. Now, there's a great big truck station and a gas station. Was that area.

P1: Wasn't that the Derby House?

DORA FELIX: The Derby House.

TOM RIVERA: The Derby House.

DORA FELIX: I call it the Brown Derby.

TOM RIVERA: The Derby House.

DORA FELIX: The Derby House, yes. But it was next-door. It wasn't the Derby House because it was a restaurant. But, nearby -- I always thought it was next door -- was a hall. Big hall. And I remember going to dances there with my folks. Yeah, again, my dad loved to dance. So, which organization would have

their meetings or their celebrations there? I don't know. [00:30:00] But I remember that. I remember that we would go there, as well as to the Masons, as well as to other places. So...

TOM RIVERA: Tell me about your -- going back to your dad again and leaving Mexico, you mentioned that your dad left his home in Mexico because he did not want to become a tailor.

DORA FELIX: My grandfather was a tailor in their town, and he expected that one of his children would be taking over, and that wouldn't do to my dad. He just didn't want to. So, my -- excuse me. My grandfather thought maybe another business, a store of some sort. My father said, "No." But, then, I think there was a little involvement with somebody else that my grandparents didn't approve of, so there had to be some sort of friction, [00:31:00] and he left to come here.

TOM RIVERA: How old was he? Do you remember? Do you know, Dora?

DORA FELIX: He had to be in his early twenties. And, in fact, when he left, it was the early '20s because, like I said, I know that my parents got married in 1928, and he didn't come straight to Fontana, the time that they met and married. I know he was in Calexico. He was in -- oh, the towns nearby there. What he was doing, I do not know, but I know, one day, we were coming home in the bus. Remember, we -- if you wanted to go to San Bernardino, you would take the bus and go shopping. We were coming home, and my mother said, on E -- not E Street. On 3rd, where all the -- coming home. You remember where the [ice plant?] was in San [00:32:00] Bernardino?

TOM RIVERA: Yeah.

DORA FELIX: About a block south, there were buildings across the street.

TOM RIVERA: Well, the train station was close to the ice house.

DORA FELIX: Yes. Before the train station, there was this building, and my mother said, "Your dad built that." I said, "My dad built that?" "Yes, when he did construction, he built that building." So, he had to be in construction, so that's how I know that he had to have done that. And then, he worked at the cement plant --

TOM RIVERA: Before the PFE?

DORA FELIX: -- prior to PFE. That was his last employment before he passed away. He was at the cement plant in Colton. Portland Cement.

TOM RIVERA: Portland Cement.

DORA FELIX: Portland Cement. And it played heck with his eyes, as it probably did with many men. The powder, the -- and probably the majority of the people, the men, probably [00:33:00] worked at both places, right? At Portland Cement or --

TOM RIVERA: At one time or another --

DORA FELIX: -- PFE.

TOM RIVERA: -- or picked oranges.

DORA FELIX: Well, we also did that. My father and my brothers would do that on Saturdays. They would go pick oranges. Then, on summertime, we would go to [Hammond?]. We did that two years. We thought that was so cool.

(laughter) We're --

TOM RIVERA: What was at Hammond?

DORA FELIX: Apricots. La pisca. Yes. You would -- the men would pick the fruit and bring the fruit in, and they would be washed in that. Then, we would have this great big -- like a big building open with (inaudible), and the women would cut the pit off them. They would dry them. It was dried food.

TOM RIVERA: So, they would cut them in half, take the pit away --

DORA FELIX: Cut them in half --

TOM RIVERA: -- and then lay them out to dry.

DORA FELIX: Exactly. They would probably put them on [00:34:00] trays and put something on it so they can dry with some sort of -- yeah. Like a process.

TOM RIVERA: And Hammond was what? For about a month or so that you were in Hammond?

DORA FELIX: Yeah, it was always when we were out of school, summer. Remember, it was traditional of the time. Probably July, July or August. I can't remember.

TOM RIVERA: It was about four weeks or so that people left their home, went to Hammond, and stayed there for the duration of the crop, picking the crop

DORA FELIX: And I always think how difficult it had to have been for the parents, and the kids were crazy to want to go. We're getting in this truck and going over there, and what is it they use? No micros, no stove. Wood stoves. Wood-burning stoves.

TOM RIVERA: That's camping.

DORA FELIX: That's camping, yeah. We camped, yeah. Right.

TOM RIVERA: And, Dora, one of the things that I remember about you guys going to Hammond was that I was very jealous. I was very jealous because --

DORA FELIX: Because you didn't go?

TOM RIVERA: Because I didn't go. My parents would not let me go.

[00:35:00] And the [Castorena?] family lived next to me, and they would invite me, and Doña [Andrea?] would take care of us, but they still wouldn't let me go. So, I was jealous of you guys.

DORA FELIX: Oh. Yeah, it was -- for the kids, it was a great thing to do. We loved it. However, as I think back, it had to be very grueling for the women, and for the men too. But, on Sundays, we were allowed to go to downtown and go to the

movies, and then, where we walked, nobody was taken. Kids nowadays are so [spoiled, I think?]. Not only do we drive them, they have their own cars. Little cars - and I went to Hammond one time, and I thought, oh, my gosh. Where would that camp be? Because the camps were all over. The camps were all over, and they were all full of Hispanics doing the work.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. (laughter) Well, the other thing that I remember, the story that came back, was not only did we have [00:36:00] fun, but we met a lot of people from different cities. Yeah.

DORA FELIX: Yes. Yes. Yes. We made a lot of friends from San Bernardino, yes. You're right. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Albert and I were in the same kindergarten class together, and our other friend is [Willie Colona?]. Willie Colona. And Willie Colona went to Hammond -- I guess after high school. But, after high school, he finally went to Hammond, and that's where he met his wife, [Lucy?], and she's from San Bernardino.

DORA FELIX: Oh, that's funny. You see?

TOM RIVERA: Well, that's what happened. The social interaction. You mentioned that your dad also worked at the cement plant --

DORA FELIX: Yes, he did.

TOM RIVERA: -- that he was also involved with Los Trabajadores Unidos, and that was a union.

DORA FELIX: It was a union.

TOM RIVERA: A union to support and help the miners that worked for the Portland Cement company. And I understand that they also provided much protection [00:37:00] and service -- as little as there were because, back then, it was the owners of the company that called the shots, but yet, we had people like

your dad and some of the other members of Los Trabajadores Unidos that work hard to make sure that the company would treat them well and was honest in their dealing. So, he also did that. Your dad also --

DORA FELIX: He did. I did know that.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And then, the other thing is that you mentioned that your dad would get all these different members of the Pobrecistas or Trabajadores Unidos -- that your dad was provided much paperwork for them.

DORA FELIX: Yes, he did.

TOM RIVERA: He --

DORA FELIX: Every day.

TOM RIVERA: -- did letters for them. He filled out forms for them. He did anything that needed to be done in the paperwork area.

DORA FELIX: He did, and that was daily. That was daily. So, there was always somebody [00:38:00] there looking for him, and we just took it as a --

TOM RIVERA: Part of everyday life.

DORA FELIX: Oh, yeah. Exactly.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. And was your dad very comfortable in talking with people, speaking with people?

DORA FELIX: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Was he --?

DORA FELIX: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: He would go get in front of people and give his -- make a presentation?

DORA FELIX: Remember, he did not -- yes. He didn't speak English -- very little -- but he wasn't shy. He had a program to run or say, he would say it. He would -- and that was instilled in us. You're never going -- I always remember

education is going to be very -- is important, not going to be -- is important. Work is also important. Put your bootstraps on and go for it. [00:39:00] These are the things that, when you're little, you remember, but a lot of respect and how to act. In that time, if there was people in the living room or -- he had a desk in the corner of the bedroom, and, if he had somebody, you couldn't cross. If you did, you have to say, "Excuse me. Pardon me." It was very important to be polite, and it was very important not to hurt your name.

TOM RIVERA: Not to hurt your what?

DORA FELIX: Your name. One's name. One's name was very important. Yes, I remember that. And he was a disciplinarian. He didn't talk to us twice, and he would tell us, "No te hablo dos veces, no te digo dos veces. I won't speak to you two times. One time is sufficient." And I'm thinking maybe that's the way he was brought [00:40:00] up. It had to be.

TOM RIVERA: I would imagine so.

DORA FELIX: It had to be, yeah. So, there're the family traditions, and so, he was very respectful to other people. He was a role model for respect. So, that's one of the things that I really admire about my father. He was very fair. Strict, but fair. Strict, but honest. Strict, but loving.

TOM RIVERA: And had his code of ethics.

DORA FELIX: Yes. Yes.

TOM RIVERA: You mentioned that his English was --

DORA FELIX: Rough. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Well, wasn't -- well, was not fluent in English, but yet, he was (inaudible) --

DORA FELIX: He understood.

TOM RIVERA: He was a member of the Masons. Now, how did that happen?

DORA FELIX: To this day, I don't think -- I don't know. I have no idea [00:41:00] how he did that, how he managed. So, he had to have more knowledge in English than we realized. He understood what someone said, but he really couldn't converse. I never heard --

TOM RIVERA: Fluently.

DORA FELIX: -- him really. I don't remember hearing him speak in English [at great lengths?]. I don't remember that.

TOM RIVERA: Now, the --

DORA FELIX: But his Spanish was very good.

TOM RIVERA: Perfect.

DORA FELIX: Oh -- and he expected us to do the same thing. He had a -- my mother's sister spoke very [odd?], and, when she would say a certain word, he'd say, "Esa palabra la rechazo. I reject that word," because it didn't exist in Spanish. (laughter) And, to this day, I hear that word, and I say, "Oh, Dad. (laughter) You wouldn't like it." You know what that word is?

TOM RIVERA: No.

DORA FELIX: Asina. [00:42:00] There is no such word. Es así.

P1: Well, what it is is that it's an archaic form that was dropped, eventually, by people with an education. So, it's historically there, but several centuries back.

DORA FELIX: Oh, yeah. Well, I remember, when I was at Valley College, I wrote a paper, and I wrote -- it was Spanish -- and I wrote nadien, and oh, Professor [Iguanaua?] said, "Dora, why do you do that? (laughter) It's nadie."

That's another word that Daddy would say. "No digas nadien. Es nadie." So -- and we still -- and I hear it, and I picture my father because he just -- when you're used to it -- well, you reject certain words, don't you? Whether it's English or Spanish that you're versed in. Well, when I hear that, I'm going, "Oh, Daddy. I hear you. I

reject it too.” [00:43:00] And the gender. My husband, he didn’t speak very much Spanish. Eventually he did, and he said, “Why is there a gender in Spanish? El zacate, la comida.” (laughter) I said, “I don’t know.”

TOM RIVERA: That’s the way it is. That’s the way it -- yeah. Let’s see. Do you remember any of the members that belonged to Los Pobrecistas or (inaudible)? Can you name some of them?

DORA FELIX: Well, if some of them are here, I remember I told you the names of them, but the men that used to come would come and see Dad, and I remember them like if it was yesterday. And I remember -- the one I really remember because I thought he was so kind was Logan Jamil Carlos, and he lived close to his brother, but I don’t ever remember that Carlos family. There was two Carlos families close to the church on K Street --

TOM RIVERA: On L Street.

DORA FELIX: L Street. [00:44:00] And it was Logan Jamil Carlos that had girls. They were all girls, and the older one was a good friend to my sister Dolores. So, I always remember him and my dad would speak in great lengths. And --

TOM RIVERA: Anybody else that you would remember?

DORA FELIX: [Sosa?], El Señor Sosa.

TOM RIVERA: [Lou?] Sosa?

DORA FELIX: He was just a humble man. I remember his humor. Very humble man. Very humble.

TOM RIVERA: As a matter of fact, after your dad’s accident, his wife became the president of Los Pobrecistas. Yeah. [Gregoria?] --

DORA FELIX: Was she the first woman?

TOM RIVERA: Gregoria -- possibly. You're right. I never thought about that. But Gregoria Sosa became the president of Los Pobrecistas, and Mr. Sosa became the treasurer, and they were president and treasurer for many, many years.

DORA FELIX: And I'm sure they did wonderful because it's a great family. [Ida?], the youngest -- well, [00:45:00] one of them -- and I went to school together, and I remember talking to her --

TOM RIVERA: (coughs) Excuse me.

DORA FELIX: -- one of our reunion meetings that we had, and she said that they would listen to -- their parents would turn music on and would listen to operas.

TOM RIVERA: Classical music.

DORA FELIX: Classical music. I was very, very surprised because, in my household, it was the big band era. My older brothers were [taken in?] -- I think, for the Hispanics especially, in that period of time, when we'd get -- my first language was Spanish because Dad spoke Spanish, and I learned English in school. But I notice, in time, that English became my favorite. I'd rather speak in English than Spanish, [00:46:00] but I knew it. I think it's a very powerful language, so, when I started teaching, I always tell -- my parents would come to be and say, "Ay, maestra," and they would start crying that their children weren't speaking enough Spanish. I just told them, "You know what? They'll never forget it. They'll always remember their first language. Don't worry about it." But I try to show them how English is very powerful. I said, "Where do they play? Outside? Inside? With friends? Are they speaking -- what language? English. What do they see on TV? English. The language. English." So, I try to make -- their inundated with all this English that it -- and at the school, [00:47:00] although they're in a bilingual classroom because I taught bilingual children. It's a powerful language, and, eventually, some of these children have done so well. I met one of my students --

to get off the subject -- the other day at Home Depot, and he said, "Excuse me, do you know the Van Aken's from Colton?" And I said, "Yes." "Do you know Mrs. Van Aken?" I said, "Yes, I'm Mrs. Van Aken." "You were my teacher." Oh, my gosh. [Raul Hidalgo?]. He graduated from here.

TOM RIVERA: From Cal State?

DORA FELIX: From Cal State last June. He was waiting to hear from some big firm, and I said, "When you go to your interview, just kill it, right? Just do the best you can. Don't be nervous." And I said, "And I'll be there cheering for you. When I come back, I don't want to see you here." (laughter) I have had [00:48:00] the pleasure of meeting several of my students that have come here and graduated, and they speak beautiful English. So, this is why I'm saying it can be done, and I think of myself, of the [love?] I have to speak it, and --

TOM RIVERA: And I think all of us that come to this country go through that --

DORA FELIX: Process.

TOM RIVERA: -- process of becoming acculturated. Acculturated (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

DORA FELIX: Assimilated [person?].

TOM RIVERA: An assimilated, and then acculturated.

DORA FELIX: And then acculturated. Although sometimes, you find somebody, whether it's parents, but very few, that will reject it. More parents than the children because they don't want to -- they either don't have the time or not the desire. They'll let the children be the translators, which is fine, but I encourage them if I ever -- like at church now, this is where I'm seeing -- I encourage them. We become friends, and I sit. "You have free [00:49:00] babysitting. You have free -- do it. Do it. Do it." So --

TOM RIVERA: That is a -- it's a little tough. Those are the changes that we have now because, looking at the changes of demographics, that somebody that lives in the barrio now does not have to speak English --

DORA FELIX: I know.

TOM RIVERA: -- because they will survive very nicely in their neighborhood, the barrio.

DORA FELIX: Yes, you're right.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Talking about -- somebody recognized you as a Van Aken. Tell me about your --

DORA FELIX: In-laws?

TOM RIVERA: -- in-laws.

DORA FELIX: Beautiful --

TOM RIVERA: Fred and Sarah Van Aken.

DORA FELIX: Beautiful people. My father-in-law was originally from Michigan, and my mother-in-law was from East Los Angeles. And my father-in-law came to California -- well, they moved first to Arizona because his mother had very bad arthritis, the rheumatoid arthritis, and the doctor said she must have a dry, hot climate, so they moved to [00:50:00] Phoenix. He moved to California. He was already a young adult. I guess he [fell with?] a little Señorita Noriega. That was her maiden name.

TOM RIVERA: Sarah's maiden name was Noriega?

DORA FELIX: Sarah's name was Noriega.

TOM RIVERA: And where was she from?

DORA FELIX: L.A., Los Angeles.

TOM RIVERA: Los Angeles, okay.

DORA FELIX: And, when he -- I said, "What were you doing, Dad?" He said, "I worked for the stock firm," and I said, "Huh?" They would write it with chalk. And I said, "Are you kid--?" Well, of course. It was in the -- my husband was born '32, so it had to be before or after the stock market [died?]. And I thought that was interesting. Then, he came down with TB, and, in that time, they would put them in sanatoriums, and he got it. That's how he got interested in camellias. Remember?

TOM RIVERA: They grew camellias, that's right.

DORA FELIX: Yes, he did. Yeah. He got interested first in orchids and [00:51:00] started -- he said, "When I get out, I'm going to start with orchids," and he did. They lived on Pine Street. We used to tease him about the house he built, the house that [Jack?] built.

TOM RIVERA: And then, Pine Street was a cross street from -- well --

DORA FELIX: The park.

TOM RIVERA: The housing project. The housing project --

DORA FELIX: That's right. I forgot.

TOM RIVERA: -- and Pine Street, yeah. And then, that part of Colton, South Colton, was La Palomas.

DORA FELIX: La Paloma.

TOM RIVERA: La Paloma.

DORA FELIX: And [Los Cortez?] had that market, [Placido and Delia?]. Well, getting back to my in-laws, they lived there. In early '50s, they bought the other place with almost two acres of land.

TOM RIVERA: On Congress.

DORA FELIX: On Congress. So, they went about, what, three blocks --

TOM RIVERA: Around the corner.

DORA FELIX: -- west around the corner. And he loved it there. Then, he went into camellias full blast. He had -- probably half acre of camellias, [00:52:00] and he would graft them and do -- just amazing. But he loved -- he also learned Spanish by listening to music. He liked the Mexican music. I thought this was rather cute. He said one day that he told somebody he was from Michoacán, and I said, "You're from Michigan, Dad." Well, it sounds pretty much like Michoacán, right?" (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Well, I remember the family because, when I was a little kid, I lived on O Street, which was maybe half a block from the park, and, in the park, we had our softball team. And your in-laws would sponsor us --

DORA FELIX: Oh, how sweet.

TOM RIVERA: -- because [Freddie?], their oldest, one of their sons, played first base. And then, around the corner, on Pine Street, was the [Gonzales?], and [Danny?] Gonzales was our pitcher. And, anyway, all of us that lived in that area played on that softball team, and I remember your sister-in-law, [Mary?], being our bat girl.

DORA FELIX: (laughs) [00:53:00] I didn't know that.

TOM RIVERA: So, we played --

DORA FELIX: I got a teaser.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, we played there at the ball park, where the Mercurys played, that was next to your father-in-law's --

DORA FELIX: Actually, it was behind their place. He would sit, and -- during season, he would sit there, drinking his beer, watching the game.

TOM RIVERA: The other thing that was amazing about your in-laws -- were they very active in the community?

DORA FELIX: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Tell us about your mother-in-law. Your mother-in-law.

DORA FELIX: The barbecues. She was very active with the schools, which would be Woodrow Wilson, and the younger girls -- they adopted [Sandy?].

Remember Sandy? And then, she had Kathy, and she would be very active. And, at that time too, she would make corsages with Dad's orchids. Not orchids.

TOM RIVERA: Camellias, uh-huh.

DORA FELIX: Camellias. Take them to the teachers or bake. Then, somebody [00:54:00] approached them about having barbecues for the Colton High students, Latino people, students (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: That was our group. That was our group.

DORA FELIX: That was your group --

TOM RIVERA: It was our group that --

DORA FELIX: -- that started it, huh?

TOM RIVERA: What happened is that we collected a few dollars, and Sandy was graduating from Colton High School, and she got our first scholarship, and she went to the University of Redlands.

DORA FELIX: Redlands.

TOM RIVERA: And then, from then on, we had regular barbecues to raise money for Colton High School.

DORA FELIX: Did it every year.

TOM RIVERA: Right. And then, your mother-in-law was very active in the PT at Wilson.

DORA FELIX: Oh, yes. Oh, very. Very. Which I don't hear of PTAs anymore. I think it's a -- it's seen its demise, maybe. I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: And she was kind of always there for --

DORA FELIX: Always there.

TOM RIVERA: -- the teachers and the kids.

DORA FELIX: Yes. Yes, she was.

TOM RIVERA: Tell us about their children. [00:55:00] The first one was your husband, George.

DORA FELIX: Yes. He was the first-born. Then Fred, Freddie. He was funny. And Mary. They adopted [Sandra?], Sandy. Great person. Then, Kathy. Kathy. In between children, though, they took in -- they would take care of children from the county. It would be like the county placing these children -- like foster children -- and they took care of several, and I remember this one particular little boy, and I remember his mother. And I don't recall her last name. I know she was [Barbara?]. She came down with tuberculosis, and she would have to go to a ward. She had a son named [Tommy?]. He was a baby. Tommy was precious. Tommy had [missing fingers?]. So, when she was [00:56:00] released, she wanted her son, and my in-laws had gotten really attached to this child, and they took it real bad. They had to. Well, then, they were contacted to take this little girl. Sandy. Two weeks old. The father was -- well, it doesn't matter the case, but they took her in, and they said, "They're not going to come for this baby. We're going to adopt her." So, they adopted Sandy. So, I remember that.

TOM RIVERA: Well, the other thing that I remember about your in-laws was that, every summer, they would take us to the beach.

DORA FELIX: Yeah, you told me that.

TOM RIVERA: They would take us to the beach, and the whole softball team would go to the beach --

DORA FELIX: Where did you fit?

TOM RIVERA: I don't remember how we got there, but --

DORA FELIX: How did you fit?

TOM RIVERA: -- we got there, and --

DORA FELIX: Did they have a Chevrolet, then? That yellow Chevrolet?

TOM RIVERA: I don't remember, Dora, but we all got to Newport [00:57:00]

Beach, and we spent the whole day at Newport Beach. Your brother Albert, he was our catcher, and [Perez?], [Louie?] Perez -- not Louie. The painter, Frank. The painter who painted your house. His son painted your house.

FRANK ACOSTA: Perez.

P1: [Lucio?].

TOM RIVERA: Lucio. Lucio Perez.

DORA FELIX: Oh, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, Lucio Perez and all those guys would -- your father-in-law would take us, and I remember that.

DORA FELIX: And --

TOM RIVERA: And he used to call me Sparky. He called me Sparky.

DORA FELIX: (laughs) He had names for everything --

TOM RIVERA: He did.

DORA FELIX: -- and everybody.

TOM RIVERA: He did.

DORA FELIX: He had this funny chicken, (laughs) and he called it Hippie.

Hippie. At that time, there was Hippies in Berkeley [and that?], and Hippie had -- it was missing hair, and it was sticking out, and it named him right. And I said -- and I thought my father-in-law has the funniest names for people and things, [00:58:00] like this rooster or whatever. The hippie. So, he called you Sparky.

TOM RIVERA: He called me Sparky, and even later on, during the later years, he would still call me Sparky.

DORA FELIX: Did he really? Oh, yeah. He wouldn't forget. He wouldn't forget.

TOM RIVERA: Now, tell me about you. You said that you were about sixth grade when you lost your dad, and your experiences going to Garfield and Wilson schools

DORA FELIX: Wow. I never thought of it. I don't think we think of it as children, other than you make a comparison years later because, as -- what programs we have now versus what we were exposed to, and I always remember, at Wilson, there was this -- I don't know if you had her. I remember her name was [Ellen?], Miss Ellen, and we would go from my teacher to her so we could sing, period, amount of time during the day. [00:59:00] I didn't know this song. I didn't know the words, and she got into my face, and I said, "I want to hear you sing." And I felt so intimidated. I felt like a ninny. I felt like, oh, dear. She had a ruler (inaudible). (laughs) And I just thought, we got to learn. We got to learn. And that always stayed in my mind, and I'm wondering how many students had been exposed to -- I guess you could say that type of teaching.

TOM RIVERA: Intimidation?

DORA FELIX: Yeah. I didn't want to call it that --

TOM RIVERA: Bullying. (laughs)

DORA FELIX: -- but that's what it was. Bullying, intimidation, whatever.

Dislike. I know that some teachers really didn't care for us, but that was okay. We didn't know it then.

TOM RIVERA: No. What about high school?

DORA FELIX: We didn't know a thing.

TOM RIVERA: What about high school?

DORA FELIX: High school was wonderful. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Why was it wonderful?

DORA FELIX: Because I liked it. [01:00:00] Because I really liked high school. I really liked it. I began liking it at Wilson and started really enjoying it. By the time I got to high school, I thought it was great. Then, I was asked to go to Wilson when I was ninth grader so that we could -- it was about four of us that were chosen to go there, returning to Wilson and saying [how this?] is going to be when you go. So, I remember doing that, and I thought that was nice. So, they knew us. They knew who we were because we were there the previous year, so that was fun.

TOM RIVERA: Did you -- were you a cheerleader or a --?

DORA FELIX: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: You were? Tell me about that experience.

DORA FELIX: I was a cheerleader. (laughs) It was fun.

TOM RIVERA: Did you have to run for it? Did you have to --?

DORA FELIX: Somebody would say, "Oh, loud mouth."

TOM RIVERA: Did you have to run or get voted in?

DORA FELIX: [Jump?]. Yeah. I always liked -- the previous years was Pete Luki and [Cristina Valdivia?]. [01:01:00] They were the cheerleaders. And I don't remember the other --

TOM RIVERA: That's Pete Luki the priest?

DORA FELIX: Yes. Yes, the Junior.

TOM RIVERA: Junior.

DORA FELIX: He was a great cheerleader, but Cristina was even better. Do you remember Cristina --

TOM RIVERA: Cristina who?

DORA FELIX: -- Valdivia?

TOM RIVERA: Uh-uh.

DORA FELIX: Valdivias. There was Junior, [Terzo?] Valdivia.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, yes. I know. She worked for [Rodriguez's?] store across the street from you. Yes.

DORA FELIX: Cristina married Ralphie -- come on, Dora. Come on. [Negrete?].

TOM RIVERA: Negrete. And he was -- he played the guitar and sang.

DORA FELIX: He played the guitar and sang. In fact, many of his family, his siblings, sing. I know his sister [Sofie?] sings.

TOM RIVERA: Sofie. Sofie, the good singer.

DORA FELIX: Sofie sings beautiful, yeah. Yeah. And I thought Cristina -- she kind of was my -- I guess you could say a role model for being in high school, and she was cheerful. She was nice. She was a great cheerleader, [01:02:00] and I liked the way she presented herself, and I thought that's the way you want to be. Yeah. That --

TOM RIVERA: Now, did you have to run for that office, or were you --

DORA FELIX: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: -- appointed?

DORA FELIX: Yes. And you know who did my posters? [Contreras?]. [They lived?] -- [Jerry?] Contreras.

TOM RIVERA: And [Louie?].

DORA FELIX: And Louie. Louie was the older.

TOM RIVERA: They were on the corner of --

DORA FELIX: Then Jerry.

TOM RIVERA: -- 11th and M Street, the southeast corner.

DORA FELIX: Close to the PFE.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, southeast corner of 11th and --

DORA FELIX: That's right. That's right.

TOM RIVERA: -- M Street, yeah.

DORA FELIX: You've got a good memory. Well, if you're from Colton, everybody knew everybody, right? Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And Louie and Jerry were -- their social group were the [Knights?], the Knights.

DORA FELIX: Really?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

DORA FELIX: Oh, okay. Okay. I know Jerry was a great artist, and I gave him this picture that I happened to win at [Harris's?]. They drew my name.

[01:03:00] And then, he cut it. (laughs) He cut it. My mother got [a little?] upset.

But he needed it to make a body, so he did the body for posters. But I was okay. I still had the picture, cut-out picture of my face. His sister was [Emma?]. She went to Spain. That's where she passed away. She was (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: Oh, that's right. She was the oldest, and then --

DORA FELIX: [Lucia?].

TOM RIVERA: Lucia came afterwards, and we used to call her Tiny.

DORA FELIX: She was short.

TOM RIVERA: Tiny. Tiny. She married [Tom?] Gonzales.

DORA FELIX: She married Tom Gonzales, yes. She worked a long time for the state of California, I think, in the education field.

TOM RIVERA: The Department of Education state of California. She just retired a few years from there.

DORA FELIX: Oh, bless her heart. Yeah. Yeah, I liked all of them. They were -- everybody from Colton's nice. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Tell me, what did you guys do for entertainment?

DORA FELIX: Well, we didn't have TV. We listened to the radio. Build your imagination. Yeah. We played outside [01:04:00] (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: Well, the radio -- some of the programs were...? *The Green Hornet*?

DORA FELIX: *The Shadow Knows, The Green Hornet*. There was a young -- oh, my mother would listen to Stella Dallas. Probably every lady in Colton listened to that. There was a western, and I forgot the name, I had to listen to it.

TOM RIVERA: Was it *Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-B Riders*?

DORA FELIX: Yes. Yes. You listened to it too? (laughter) That one. Yes. I think we all did.

TOM RIVERA: And [I remember?], Saturday afternoons, we would listen to children's stories. Children's stories, and I can't remember what (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

DORA FELIX: What -- would you think the children would listen to radio right now, and a story?

TOM RIVERA: I don't think so. They have the iPads.

DORA FELIX: They have the iPads. Exactly. And remember also when the television in black and white was introduced? My father-in-- well, my husband said that all the kids from down there [01:05:00] would go and even sit on the porch because the living room was full. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: That was Congress Street.

DORA FELIX: They would go -- yes, on Congress.

TOM RIVERA: Congress Street. The black and white --

DORA FELIX: They would let --

TOM RIVERA: The Packard Bell.

DORA FELIX: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: The Packard Bell.

DORA FELIX: Big console with a small screen. (laughter) Yes.

TOM RIVERA: The Packard Bell.

DORA FELIX: They would allow the children to come and watch.

TOM RIVERA: So, that was a neighborhood TV.

DORA FELIX: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. But we had one. I remember even begging Dad to get one. So, he finally did. I watched *Hopalong Cassidy* on Saturdays. Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. That was it. That was it.

TOM RIVERA: Well, I remember --

DORA FELIX: They would go on -- they would have that Indian and the (sings).

TOM RIVERA: How about Cassidy? What's his name?

DORA FELIX: Hopalong Cassidy.

TOM RIVERA: Hopalong Cassidy.

DORA FELIX: Do you remember, at Wilson, that we had Tom Mix?

TOM RIVERA: Tom Mix. Tom Mix. I remember the *Riders of the Purple Sage*. Yeah.

DORA FELIX: But -- so, they --

TOM RIVERA: And then, the Mexican station was [Danny Landeros?] from [Redlands?].

DORA FELIX: Danny Landeros, [01:06:00] yes.

TOM RIVERA: Danny Landeros from Redlands. And he would be on Saturday afternoons, yeah.

DORA FELIX: That's right. My father's -- like I said, my father liked to dance, and he waltzed beautifully. But, at that time, it was [Veto Día?]. I remember that.

Veto Día. Then, I read a long time ago that the singer -- Veto Día would visit her dad. They were good friends. She's Hispanic. *Canciones de Mi Padre*.

TOM RIVERA: Linda Ronstadt.

DORA FELIX: Linda Ronstadt. Linda Ronstadt. But she remembers Veto Día coming to visit his father, and they would sit and talk. I think they were compadres. And I didn't realize that Linda Ronstadt was Latina because she never sang -- when I would listen to her, my kids would listen to her, the English songs. Then, she came in with Spanish, which sold like hotcakes, right?

TOM RIVERA: [01:07:00] Besides radio, what else did you -- as young teenagers, would do?

DORA FELIX: We played outside. We played outside. Tag, kick the can, red rover, anything that, now, you wouldn't (laughs) let your kids out in the street to play.

TOM RIVERA: What about -- did you attend any dances at the high school or community dances?

DORA FELIX: Oh, yeah. High school, yes. High school. Not junior -- yeah, high school. They had the girls [lead?]. But, now, it's so different. I remember the girls lead day was a big -- and I don't think we had the prom at that time. I don't remember proms. Very few, but I remember some of them. And many walked. (laughs) Many walked. Like I said --

TOM RIVERA: Did you ever meander downtown Colton?

DORA FELIX: Oh, to the library. We would walk to the library, which is now a museum. [01:08:00] Yeah. Colton and San Bernardino are two different places now (inaudible). I understand that even these malls are going to be out of whack.

TOM RIVERA: What?

DORA FELIX: Out of --

TOM RIVERA: The what? I'm sorry.

DORA FELIX: I said out of whack. Out of commission, that people are no longer going to two or three level of these shopping centers. Shopping centers. They're building them more like Victoria Gardens, and, eventually, Citrus Plaza will be one of them, I'm sure.

TOM RIVERA: And you mentioned going downtown Colton, and this particular sign caught your eye.

DORA FELIX: Well, it didn't catch my eye. The person who told me that he saw it and felt quite bad --

TOM RIVERA: What year was this?

DORA FELIX: Quite angry. Well, it had to be when he was a youngster, and that was my brother-in-law, Luis Vasquez, Shorty. He said, "How would you feel, Dora, if you were walking [01:09:00] down downtown Colton," if you want to call it downtown Colton, "going home or something, and you would see these signs that didn't want you?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, this place had a sign, says, 'No dogs or Mexicans allowed.'" I said, "That's hurtful," and he said, "Yeah." And then, shortly after that, I think, World War II happened, so it had to be while he was still young. Maybe even in high school.

TOM RIVERA: Prior to he going into the service.

DORA FELIX: Prior to him going into the service.

TOM RIVERA: Talking about going into the service, you had brothers that went in the service. You had a brother-in-law that went in the service. And you mentioned that incident that Shorty mentioned about that sign in one of the stores in Colton.

DORA FELIX: My godfather was into the service. In fact, he was lucky to have gone because he was up there in years, but --

TOM RIVERA: Who was your godfather?

DORA FELIX: [Antonio Reyes?]. Reyes. He [01:10:00] took care of his mother and father. He was very devoted to the church. He played the [piano and?] organ for the church. He was very helpful to Father Valencia. He baptized myself and Albert. He was always there for us. He was a wonderful man.

TOM RIVERA: What was his name?

DORA FELIX: Antonio Reyes.

TOM RIVERA: Antonio Rey-- where did he live?

DORA FELIX: 158 West M Street.

TOM RIVERA: Also? (laughs)

DORA FELIX: (inaudible) -- my mom and dad rented the front house from them. They lived in the back. Nice people. They -- his parents came from Mexico. I think, at that time, probably, we would take a survey. All of our parents, or most of them, came from Mexico, no, Tommy?

TOM RIVERA: Everybody, yeah.

DORA FELIX: At that time

TOM RIVERA: Yes, everybody.

DORA FELIX: And yet, I -- just a year or two ago, I was invited to go to [01:11:00] where George and I got married -- not San Salvador, but the other church on La Cadena, and I thought, oh, I'll go --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, the Baptist church?

DORA FELIX: No, no, no.

FRANK ACOSTA: [Was it Immaculate?]?

DORA FELIX: Conception? Are you --

FRANK ACOSTA: (inaudible).

DORA FELIX: Yeah. And I said, "Oh, I love to see people from Colton. I never run into almost anybody from Colton." I went, thinking I'm going to see a lot of them. I didn't see hardly anybody. I think I could count them on my hand.

TOM RIVERA: And, getting back to many of your family members being veterans -- and then, prior to that, [taking account?] to that sign that Shorty, your brother-in-law, saw in downtown Colton, was there a change of attitude of the guys coming back from World War II, coming back to their old town, their old barrio [01:12:00] and wanting to mentioned that they paid their dues?

DORA FELIX: I think so. I didn't take notice, but history will tell me that it was the door opening to education.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

DORA FELIX: The GI Bill.

TOM RIVERA: GI Bill.

DORA FELIX: And I know George took advantage of it. Leonard Eneas took advantage of it. My brother Joe took advantage of it. I don't think Chito did. I think -- I don't think Luis did, but Luis had already a very good job. Then, from Colton, Luis and my sister went to Orange County. He became -- working for agriculture, the state of California.

TOM RIVERA: Sure, he did. Sure, he did.

DORA FELIX: Yes, he was an inspector, and he had a good job. But, yeah, I think the military helped the minorities.

TOM RIVERA: Well, you mentioned the educational bill. What about housing [01:13:00] loans?

DORA FELIX: Yes. Yes. I know that my relatives went into the CalVet loans. I know we did. And it was -- as bad as war is, it had to have changed things. They say that song and that [how are you going to change the boys after they see gay

Paris?]? I think that's almost -- the only thing that didn't change was the women.

The women, if they worked during the war, they lost their jobs and went back home, and they had to.

TOM RIVERA: Well, one of the things that I remember is that your mom remarried, and I remember Albert, when we were in high school -- this was back in the '53, '54, '55 -- that his family, your family, moved to North [01:14:00] Colton.

DORA FELIX: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: And before that --

DORA FELIX: A lot of them did.

TOM RIVERA: And before that, we could not --

DORA FELIX: That's right.

TOM RIVERA: -- buy houses past the railroad track.

DORA FELIX: That's right. At that time -- I think the late '50s, the movement was buying homes. They were already building them. And it was almost into San Bernardino because, where my mother's house was, you go just about a mile and a half, and you're in San Bernardino, but it was still the Colton school district that the kids went to. Change. It had to happen. It happened, and I just -- it tears me up when I see the history of how the Black men were treated, and the last two of the navigators -- or the pilots -- just passed away, and they didn't take notice of them. They were -- it just tears me up to know that [01:15:00] such atrocities --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, these things happened in our communities.

DORA FELIX: Actually, we're already seeing -- we were seeing what's happening in Selma, right? We've already seen what was happening in the South. The --

TOM RIVERA: In the South, right.

DORA FELIX: Yeah. Lyndon, Kennedy, and Johnson giving them the right to vote. That had to happen. But --

TOM RIVERA: What I remember back in Colton, right after the war, we had many of the GIs come home, and you're absolutely right. They're on Rancho Boulevard, Rancho Street, Avenue. There were a lot of homes that were being built at that time.

DORA FELIX: That's right. Even Colton.

TOM RIVERA: So, many of our --

DORA FELIX: Even Colton.

TOM RIVERA: -- folks -- yeah. Many of our folks were buying houses --

DORA FELIX: Buying homes.

TOM RIVERA: -- through their GI bill, yeah.

DORA FELIX: That's right. Yeah. They were building all over because what was there, remember, were orange groves. Orange groves. I remember waking up and smelling the orange blossoms. And that cheered me up because development, [01:16:00] development, development, and I just hate to see them empty instead of orange trees.

TOM RIVERA: And that [actually was?] kind of coincidental because, as you know, as an educator, *Brown versus the Board of Education*, that passed in '53, and there was just of a -- during the same period that our relatives were buying houses in North Colton.

DORA FELIX: Yes, mm-hmm. Which you thought, wow, what would my dad have thought of that? Because they were all in South Colton, that tight-knit Mexican mentality, but, at the same time, assimilating. Assimilating, which they wanted, but they didn't want to let go of that Mexican mentality.

TOM RIVERA: That, and also the --

DORA FELIX: That pride.

TOM RIVERA: -- de facto segregation didn't let them cross the railroad track.

DORA FELIX: That's right. That's right. They knew. They knew.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. It's not written, but we knew. We're not supposed to be there.

DORA FELIX: That's right. [01:17:00] Heck, George and I were even denied.

TOM RIVERA: You and George were denied?

DORA FELIX: We were told in Rialto, wanted to buy a home in Rialto.

TOM RIVERA: What year was this, Dora?

DORA FELIX: '55. '55. A year or so after '55, '56. We -- I said, "Can we see this model?" "They're all sold." Right away. "They're all sold." And I said, "Oh, really? That --" George said, "Come on. Let's go." He got onto it right away. He said, "Dora, what's the matter with you?" "Why? They're sold?" He said, "Dora, (laughs) they don't want us here." Then, I got it. Then, it happened again. We wanted to rent a place. Can you think -- in San Bernardino, it was [Mill?]. Mill. San Bernardino on Mill. And there was a man sitting, rocking, in front of this porch, and it was an apartment for rent. [01:18:00] And we stopped, and we got down, and George says, "We'd like to see your apartment." He says, "Rented." Very quick.

TOM RIVERA: Right off the bat.

DORA FELIX: "It's rented." "You forgot to take your (laughs) sign down." George -- "Come on, Dora. Let's go." He knew exactly. Let me tell you a story about my in-laws in Arizona. This is how funny my father-in-law's -- that mentality of --

TOM RIVERA: That was Fred.

DORA FELIX: Fred. My father-in-law. They went to Arizona. They would go occasionally because his mother was still there. Grandma [Geraldine?] was still

alive. And they were living -- they wanted to rent a place there. I think he was working there at the time, or he was looking for work. And they go and see this place, and the man says, "I can't rent you this place." And he said, "Why?" "She's Mexican." "Oh, no, she's not. She's Greek." [01:19:00] "Oh, Greek." (laughs) He believed him, and he rented the place. I thought that was so funny. I said, "Dad, you're smart." (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: What year was that, Dora?

DORA FELIX: I don't know if George was alive or born at that time. I don't know if he was alive.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. [What year?] was George born?

DORA FELIX: He was born in '32.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. Okay, so it wasn't the late '20s or --

DORA FELIX: Oh, no. It had -- no, it had to be the '30s. '30s, before the '40s. Yeah, '30s. It's funny. He had so many funny stories.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, I can imagine. I can imagine with a mixed marriage like that. (laughter)

DORA FELIX: He said -- there's one particular time he said he had somebody [call the name?] Van Aken from back east come and visit him, knock the door, and he said, "I'm So-and-so Van Aken. I'm wondering we're related." And he saw some of the kids were there or something, and [01:20:00] very Latino looking, and he said, "You sure have some dark ones." (laughter) Fred said, "Yeah. We came from the South. (laughter) We came from the South," meaning Mexico. He just was full of humor. Full of humor.

TOM RIVERA: Well, he kind of took it all in stride.

DORA FELIX: Yes, he did. Yes, he did.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, he did. Yeah. And that's why he -- that's the way he lived. Yeah, just took everything in stride.

DORA FELIX: And everybody knew him, and he knew everybody.

TOM RIVERA: Talking about [our?] stories, in 1965, when I was 25, 26 years old, [Lily?] and I, after getting married, went to try and rent an apartment on the corner of Pennsylvania and Laurel. In '65.

DORA FELIX: '65.

TOM RIVERA: They said, "No."

DORA FELIX: In Colton?

TOM RIVERA: In Colton. '65.

DORA FELIX: '65. [01:21:00] Wow.

TOM RIVERA: Dora, we have --

DORA FELIX: Oh, my gosh.

TOM RIVERA: We've had a wonderful hour or so --

DORA FELIX: Thank you.

TOM RIVERA: -- and --

DORA FELIX: It was a pleasure.

TOM RIVERA: -- before we leave, before we leave, let me ask you my last question. What is the best thing or the most memorable part that you have about being raised in Colton? (pause)

DORA FELIX: There's so many. I loved it. I loved it. I liked the fact that people were kind to each other. I loved the fact that the women, whenever they had a baby or they were sick, here they would come with their sopa. I remember when my mother -- when my dad died, my mother was healing. She would have several people come -- you remember -- oh, gosh. [01:22:00] What was his last name? His

mother was such a sweet lady. [Danny?] was my age, and he died of kidney problems. He had --

TOM RIVERA: [Martinez?]?

DORA FELIX: No.

TOM RIVERA: No?

DORA FELIX: Danny. Danny. Oh, gee. Wonderful family. She would come quite often. Her name was [Julia?], and I can't remember her last name. She would come with a great big jar of chicken soup for her, and just the -- like you say, the unity that people have, the caring for each other. And, if I keep on going, I'm going to shed some tears. I think that's what I remember most, and, every time I hear about somebody passed away from Colton, [and if I know them?], it saddens me, but then, it's a remembrance of their kindness. It's a remembrance of Colton. [01:23:00] And, when I get together in my email, I communicate with two good Colton people. [Phil Gonzales's?] wife, [Marquez?]. [Jeanie?] Marquez.

TOM RIVERA: Jeanie Marquez.

DORA FELIX: Jeanie Marquez.

TOM RIVERA: Jean Marquez, uh-huh.

DORA FELIX: Her and I are email buddies.

TOM RIVERA: Were you in the same class?

DORA FELIX: No, she was younger. Phil was. And Phil actually was almost a neighbor of mine. Yeah. He was next-door neighbor to my brother and my sister-in-law on N Street. He was next door to [La Caitanes?]. Yes, [Rudy Caitan?]. And [Ruby Lynch?]. Ruby. She retired a lawyer. She lives in Crestline. She just lost her older brother. So, I want to continue seeing the people from Colton, and, when I [01:24:00] see them, I'm very happy, as I'm happy when I see you and Lily. And that's what I remember the most that has really -- close to my heart. I don't know if

it would have been the same anyplace else. I think so because, if it's the same people, you're going to have that bondage. Everybody bonded, and I think that's what really -- I'll never forget it.

TOM RIVERA: Brings back wonderful memories.

DORA FELIX: Yes. Yes. Good memories, sad memories, funny memories. It's okay, but they're memories, and they're good, and you can look back at it and say, "You know, we were all right. We were poor, but we didn't know it because everybody had the same status."

TOM RIVERA: Right. (laughs)

DORA FELIX: Right? Yeah. I remember my husband saying -- you remember [the Maurice]? The restaurant, Maurice?

TOM RIVERA: Yes, Maurice restaurant.

DORA FELIX: Yeah. He went to school with [Cecil?]. He was the rich kid from Colton High. [01:25:00] And, when George -- I didn't know him, but -- because George had already gotten out of high school. And -- but I knew him since I was a kid, and, if anybody would have told me, "You're going to marry George Van Aken," I would have said, "Estás loco? (laughter) Estás loco?" But I did. He was a blessing. It's like -- he said, "Cecil [Murray?], the rich kid --" or they had like a rhythmic sound that it had. "Cecil the rich kid" or something because he always had a car, and you didn't -- George had his jalopy. Remember George driving a jalopy? And he drove it when he was 14. At that time, he could get a license when you were 14. I couldn't believe it, but he had his jalopy. But, anyway, he was lucky. (laughs) Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: [01:26:00] Well, Dora, thank you so much.

DORA FELIX: You're very welcome.

TOM RIVERA: I --

DORA FELIX: I hope it brings memories to people because I'm sure I'm only one of many people that think the same way. What happened, what they saw, who they saw. And we didn't even talk about Father Valencia and his judío celebration and (inaudible). That's another thing that we always celebrated every year.

Remember?

TOM RIVERA: Right. Right.

DORA FELIX: Oh, I forgot to tell you, I always liked to go to the church when somebody was being baptized. Why?

TOM RIVERA: Bolo.

DORA FELIX: El bolo. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: And what is bolo?

DORA FELIX: Bolo is where the godparents come out and have a lot of change with them, and they throw it out, and the kids all go after like the piñata, like the candy from a piñata, right? Yeah. That -- I remember that like as if it was yesterday. (laughter) You couldn't move fast enough to get those nickels, and dimes, and quarters. If you had a quarter, you were [01:27:00] lucky. But, yeah.

Did you ever do that?

TOM RIVERA: No, I never did that, Dora. I'm sorry [I didn't?].

DORA FELIX: Wow.

TOM RIVERA: Well, I -- no, I never -- very rarely did I go to church, so that's why. I never went. I never participated in that.

DORA FELIX: Well, we had to go, and then I remember the sisters going for us at Wilson.

TOM RIVERA: At Wilson?

DORA FELIX: Yeah, they would go, and stand there, and wait for us so that we could march to the church, and they would give us our lessons.

TOM RIVERA: Well, I followed the line because Albert, and Willie, and Rudy, and [Turo?], they all fell in line and went to the church. So, I thought, it's a great place, and I had to go myself.

DORA FELIX: (laughs) Oh, that's how --

TOM RIVERA: So, I went. So, I went, and the sisters would provide the lessons. Catechism lessons?

DORA FELIX: Catechism.

TOM RIVERA: Catechism lessons. And I was just there for the first time, Dora. [01:28:00] So --

DORA FELIX: Oh, really? That's how you went.

TOM RIVERA: Because of the guys. The guys went, so I went with them. And, when they asked a question, and they asked me the question, I didn't know what the answer was.

DORA FELIX: What did you say?

TOM RIVERA: I didn't say anything because I got whacked across the knuckles --

DORA FELIX: (laughs) Oh, no.

TOM RIVERA: -- by the nuns. I never went back. I never went back.

DORA FELIX: Oh, that's a shame. So, they were just as bad as some of the teachers that gave us the ruler or the face-to-face. And you know what?

P2: [Could we hear about?] Father Valencia?

TOM RIVERA: You want -- yeah, tell us about Father Valencia.

DORA FELIX: Father Valencia was a character priest. Everybody knew him very well. He loved to play handball with the guys.

TOM RIVERA: Right, we played handball with him --

DORA FELIX: At South Colton.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, at the park.

DORA FELIX: And he could hardly wait. And the way they called him back to church was the church bells, that he had people waiting for him, probably to (laughs) baptize a baby or something. He was a character, and he would drive his car, and he didn't believe in stop signs. [01:29:00] Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep. Did you know that that's how he drove, and that's how he got killed?

TOM RIVERA: Right, he didn't stop at the stop sign.

DORA FELIX: He didn't stop. Everybody knew him, so everybody -- oh, it's okay. But he was all right. And, every year, [at Lent?] or --

TOM RIVERA: Easter. Or Easter.

DORA FELIX: -- Easter, he would have a form of Judas, and they would hang it, and they would put fireworks on his feet and sew them, and then somebody -- I don't know how they -- from the church to -- across the street, there was a --

TOM RIVERA: A little market, yeah, market.

DORA FELIX: Well, it was a big building, so --

TOM RIVERA: [Block?] -- it's a block market. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

DORA FELIX: -- somebody -- I think, probably, they lived upstairs. And, from there, they would move it. And then, the firecrackers would go on, and the kids would -- and he would walk with his staff. I called it Moses's staff. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: La barilla [01:30:00].

DORA FELIX: And he would yell out. He had a voice. And -- because the kids looked forward to this. We were dumb. (laughs) We were -- but he was always there. He was always there. He got upset if you didn't know your prayers or something, but he was kind of loud in the confessional, but you tried to talk as low as you possibly could. But he was a character of characters. But I think that,

mentally, he might have felt different. He was -- he came over here when the revolution against --

TOM RIVERA: 1937. 1937.

DORA FELIX: When the uprising, political [Colton?], and they were against the church.

TOM RIVERA: And we were -- yeah, they were. [01:31:00] And we were very lucky because he was with us for about 30 years.

DORA FELIX: He was there for a long time, and he knew everybody, and everybody knew him. But I miss those church bells. I really miss those church bells. That's how we knew [Mass will be in?], or they were looking for him, and that's how they would reach him because he was at the park playing handball. He loved to play handball. And I hear he was pretty good.

TOM RIVERA: He was good. He was good. And the best part, he took watermelons with him, so, after the handball game, we had a watermelon feast.

DORA FELIX: Really? Oh. Oh, I imagine he did. He was all right. He was a good priest. But he was rather odd.

TOM RIVERA: Well, the other thing that he -- when he came to San Salvador, San Salvador needed a lot of help in getting itself back into being a church that was serving the community. And what he did, he organized the women [01:32:00] of the parish --

DORA FELIX: Smart.

TOM RIVERA: -- and those women brought up the church and made it what it was after a few years.

DORA FELIX: That little church.

TOM RIVERA: They raised money. They had all kinds of celebrations.

DORA FELIX: Well, they cleaned for him. They -- he didn't have any -- he wouldn't take them -- laundry service. They did everything for him. Clean his place, washed his clothes, everything on the altar, the [amble?], everything was done for him. So, yes, he was smart in that way because, after all, God made women very special.

TOM RIVERA: Of course. (laughs) Of course.

DORA FELIX: I really believe that.

TOM RIVERA: It's true.

DORA FELIX: I really believe that.

TOM RIVERA: Because we've talked about your mom, and we talked about --

DORA FELIX: Sarah, my mother in law.

TOM RIVERA: Sarah, and we talked about --

DORA FELIX: My sister.

TOM RIVERA: -- Shorty's mom.

DORA FELIX: Mother-in-law. [What?] love. What faith. What faith. Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Well, with that, thank you so much.

DORA FELIX: So much. Thank you. Thank you for asking me. Brings back a lot of memories. And, now, I'm glad, when I [01:33:00] was here, I was asked to do my family tree with Dr. [Lucan?] from [UCR?]. And I said, "Really?" "Yes. You'll never regret it." And I know the last sentence of that report, I sat there and cried. It was soul searching. It was. Yeah. Our family history.

TOM RIVERA: Well, this is soul searching --

DORA FELIX: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

TOM RIVERA: -- for South Colton community. Yes, so, thank you, Dora.

DORA FELIX: You're very welcome.

TOM RIVERA: Thank you very much.

DORA FELIX: You're very welcome. [Do you want this?]?

End of Interview:
[01:33:35]