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South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

David Gasca, Jose Hernandez

Interviewer:

Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

June 19, 2024

Interview Location:

San Bernardino, CA

Length:

01:18:22

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Tom Rivera interviews David Gasca and Jose Hernandez, two residents of South Colton who were born and raised in the city. In both World War II and the Korean War, both men served in the military and had long since become involved afterward. At the time of this recording, they are associated with veterans' resources and affairs. The topic of military service continues as Hernandez speaks of his brother who became lost at sea during World War II. The interview moves onto life in South Colton, especially regarding the kinds of entertainment at the time and long-gone spots. There is also talk about discrimination, particularly being segregated from pools, restaurants, and movie theaters. The interview concludes with recollections of the 1938 Flood and advice for youth to remember the struggles of the past.

Subject Topic:

- Service in World War II.
- Service in the Korean War.
- Life in South Colton as a Mexican American youth.
- Segregation in one's own city.
- The changes that come with progression of society.
- Advice to the younger generations about remembering the past.

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Pfau Library in California State University San Bernardino	5500 University Pkwy, San Bernardino, CA 92407
San Salvador School	471 Agua Mansa Rd, Colton, CA 92324

Woodrow Wilson Junior High	750 S 8th St, Colton, CA 92324
Ulysses Grant Elementary School	550 W Olive St, Colton, CA 92324
Colton High School	777 W Valley Blvd, Colton, CA 92324
San Bernardino Valley College	701 S Mt Vernon Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92410
Norton Air Force Base	1601 E 3rd St, San Bernardino, CA 92408
March Air Force Base	1235 Midway Dr, Riverside, CA 92518
Sheppard Air Force Base	1810 J Ave, Sheppard AFB, TX 76311
Fidel Hernandez Post	Defunct Location in Colton
Colton Area Museum	380 N La Cadena Dr, Colton, CA 92324
Caldera Plunge	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Colton's Womens' Club	495 N 7th St, Colton, CA 92324

Temporal Coverage:

1900s-2014

Key Events:

- World War II
- Korean War
- Military Service
- Various Veterans Organizations
- Segregation
- Repatriation

Key Organizations:

- Norton Air Force Base
- The United States Navy
- Portland Cement Company
- San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
- The American Legion
- Congress of Community Clubs

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:47 - 00:04:42	Both men's military service and Hernandez's own journey within the military that lasted almost four decades.

Digital Video	00:12:12 - 00:13:54	Gasca's time trying to find work after returning as a veteran.
Digital Video	00:15:38 - 00:16:54	The dangers involved with working on silos.
Digital Video	00:16:57 - 00:19:18	Hernandez's brother who went missing at sea during the war.
Digital Video	00:44:14 - 00:47:05	Gasca's grandfather keeping his job while as a target then getting his citizenship.
Digital Video	00:47:12 - 00:50:31	Memories of the Caldera Plunge, of baseball, and other local spots.

Related Materials

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

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

TOM RIVERA: Good morning. I'm Dr. Tom Rivera, and this morning, in continuation with our oral history of South Colton, we have two guests. We have Mr. Jose Hernandez, who is a lifelong resident of Colton, born and raised in Colton, and am I -- is that right? Did I do -- say it correctly? Born and raised in Colton?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Uh-huh, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, very good. And then we have Mr. David Gasca, who was also born and raised in Colton, and I want to thank you very much for being with us this morning, especially on a beautiful day like today. And we're at the Pfau Library at Cal State, San Bernardino, and it's about 9:15 on June the 19th, so why don't we get started? First of all, I know that both of you are veterans -- military veterans. Joe, you're World War II, and David, you're a veteran of the [00:01:00] Korean conflict.

DAVID GASCA: Korean, right.

TOM RIVERA: And why don't we start with you, Joe? You mentioned that you were at Colton High School, and you were a junior, and somehow, an opportunity came to you where you could train to be an airplane mechanic at Norton. Can you tell us about that?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, well, we would -- I didn't like to go to school too much, so I spent about two years in high school. And then they had -- they were just opening -- they call it -- they didn't call it Norton. They -- it was a army air force base in San Bernardino, and they were just trying to get some more mechanics or get them started because the war was just starting. And they didn't know how long it was going to last, so [00:02:00] I went over and applied for the schooling that they

were giving. And they did pick me up, and I went to school -- part there for being a aircraft mechanic.

TOM RIVERA: And you were there for -- after they picked you up, you went to Valley College, and you got some more training at Valley College.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah. Well, that was part of their training. Part of the schooling was at Valley College.

TOM RIVERA: And then after Valley College, you went back to Norton.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Went back to Norton, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: What year was that, Joe?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: That was in 1943, I believe. It was '43, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And you must've been about what, about 16 years old, 17 years old?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Sixteen years old -- 15, 16.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And then after you were there for -- at Norton for a couple of years or -- how long did you -- then you joined the navy.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I joined the navy, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. And how long were you in the navy?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I was in the navy from 1944, [00:03:00] the last part of '44, to 1952.

TOM RIVERA: And then after that, you came out of the navy as a veteran, and then you went back to Norton. And then --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, they had a regulation that -- whatever job you left for the service, they had to pick you up again, so --

TOM RIVERA: And that's what happened in your case.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And that's what happened to me. They --

TOM RIVERA: And then you decided that you didn't -- still didn't like that, so you went back in the navy again.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah, uh-huh. Well, I had a broken area there between '44 and '46, and then I joined the navy again in -- I went to work for about six months at Norton. And then they -- I decided, "Well, it's getting boring," and what have you, so I joined again in 194-- last part of [00:04:00] '46, and I didn't get out until 1952.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. And then came back to Norton?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, came back again to Norton, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, they couldn't get rid of you at Norton, could they?

(laughs)

JOSE HERNANDEZ: No, they couldn't.

TOM RIVERA: And you were at Norton for how many years?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: A total of -- 39 years total.

TOM RIVERA: Thirty years total -- 39 years.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah. They included my service time into my seniority because [of a?] federal job and my military, so they added my military time to my civilian time.

TOM RIVERA: That's a good deal.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: So that was --

TOM RIVERA: It was a good deal. And then from Norton, you also -- where the war equipment or the weaponry improved, we went to missiles and all those modern activities. And you were trained, and you went -- they sent you to school [00:05:00] to also train on how to repair or upkeep some of those missiles in different bases throughout the country.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: That's right, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And you liked that?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, it was pretty good. It was interesting and scary at times, (laughter) so...

TOM RIVERA: Scary? What do you mean, scary?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Well, you work on these silos, and the missile sits in the center of the silo, and then they got platforms. Some platforms went up like this, and some platforms went out like this at different levels. And the ones I hated -- the ones I didn't like too well were the ones that came from the bottom up like this because you didn't know whether those things could go down, and that'd be the end of you, so --

TOM RIVERA: So anyway --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- that was kind of scary. And some of those missiles [00:06:00] like the Titan I or the Titan II -- they were loaded all the time, and you could hear -- you could put your ear to the missile itself. You could hear the little bit of bubbling.

DAVID GASCA: It's that 10-megaton.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah. And they were loaded with atomic bombs, or they -- it was a warhead and everything, so they were -- it was a risky business. And you had to go in a -- they used to call it a escape pack, and you'd get trained for it because they don't -- in case they had a leak or something, and you smelled some of those fumes, it'll kill you. So what they done -- when they trained you, they gave you 15 -- about 15 or 20 minutes of air with those escape packs, they'd call them, and you had to take it out of there quick.

TOM RIVERA: [00:07:00] Yeah. So anyway --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: If you ran out of breathing air from that, then you started breathing the air that's contaminated, and you would --

TOM RIVERA: You were a dead duck, then.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, you couldn't make it.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Now, you mention that you didn't graduate from Colton High School. You went to Colton High School, but you got your diploma. Can you show us your diploma that you had recently got? Yeah, apparently, the county of San Bernardino schools provided diplomas for veterans of World War II --

DAVID GASCA: Show it to them.

TOM RIVERA: -- that did not complete their high school diploma, and you got this from the county of San Bernardino. And the date is -- I cannot see a date here. Let's see. I don't see a date here, but it was done just recently because Gary Thomas is still this -- the county superintendent of schools.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah?

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Could you just hold it up and just --

DAVID GASCA: Show it to them.

TOM RIVERA: -- show it to the camera? [00:08:00] High school diploma because he did not -- Joe did not complete his high school. He went into, I guess, paramilitary service to make sure that our airplane engines were running right in preparation for the war. Well, congratulations. It's a wonderful thing that was awarded to you just recently, yeah, congratulations. And, David, you were a Korean veteran and -- when did you join the service?

DAVID GASCA: In 19-- July 1951. I'd been out of school, and I got a notice from the -- what was it? Selective board at that time, I think it was. Had to take a physical -- I took a physical in LA. They took us in a bus over there, [00:09:00] and I passed the physical and -- that I would be notified to go in the army. I went home, and I said, "Army? I don't want to be in the army." (laughter) So I went to the air force recruiter and got recruited, and I left in July to San Antonio, Texas for basic

training at Lackland Air Force Base. From there, I was classified as a automotive mechanic because in high school, I had taken trades, woodshop, automotive, sheet metal machine stuff; and so I had a little background. So they sent us to a tech school in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, and it was affiliated with Oklahoma A and M. And from there, we completed -- and it was kind of simple for me because I had already had the basics, and I was stationed from there to [00:10:00] Denver, Colorado at Lowry Air Force Base. I was there a year, so I started working on engine -- fire engines. It was a school for fire en-- for fire people -- firemen, so we had the equipment, and we had to keep it up. Let me retract back a little bit. In high school my last year, I had to fill in a class, so I took typing. That's where all the girls were.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you were not a dummy, were you?

DAVID GASCA: Oh, no. (laughter) So anyway, going back to Denver, I was working on the fire engines, and some sergeant came over. And he said, "You know how to type?" I said, "A little bit," and I guess he looked at my records. "So we need you in the office," so I went in the office, and I was scheduling vehicles to come in for maintenance and what have you. I was there exactly a year, [00:11:00] and then I was shipped overseas to Casablanca, North Africa, Morocco. There again, I started working on vehicles because that was my, what they call, MOS. So again, a few weeks down the line, a fellow came over and said, "You know how to type?" And I said, "Yeah," so again, they put me in the office to start scheduling vehicles to -- after so many miles, they'd have to come in for a tune-up or tires, whatever it consisted of. So I was there a year and a half. During that time, I took leave and went to Spain and -- as a tourist, and I came back 18 months later, and I was stationed at March Air Force Base, Riverside. There again, I was put into the main automotive shop, and there again, [00:12:00] for my last year, typing. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: It really has paid off, eh?

DAVID GASCA: It did -- it sure did. I didn't have to get dirty, full of grease, and [grimy?].

TOM RIVERA: Well, not only that, but you got all the girls, and then you got all the cushy jobs overseas when you were in the service.

DAVID GASCA: So there again, I had to do the contracts for anything the base couldn't do automotive: perch the JP-4 tankers, the buses, the cars, the trucks. I had the general's car painted, but I had to contract that outside the base.

TOM RIVERA: So you did that at March Field for how many years, David?

DAVID GASCA: I was there about a year, and then I got discharged from there.

TOM RIVERA: And then what year was that when you got discharged?

DAVID GASCA: Fifty-five, 1955.

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen fifty-five? And then you came back to Colton?

DAVID GASCA: Came back to Colton, and I started looking for a job. And I went over -- in South Colton, there was a pipe -- Concrete [Conduit?] was the name of that place, remember?

TOM RIVERA: Las pipas.

DAVID GASCA: Las pipas, they used to call it, yeah. Went over there, [and I said?], "I'm going to get me a job." [00:13:00] Here I was, and the guy said --

TOM RIVERA: You went, "I'm a vet--" he went, "I'm a veteran --"

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, "I'm a veteran. I'm going to --"

TOM RIVERA: "-- and I'm great. I'm wonderful."

DAVID GASCA: "I want a job."

TOM RIVERA: "I traveled all over the world."

DAVID GASCA: And the guy told me -- he said, "Come here -- come back tomorrow. We got some weeds over there that we want you to hoe." And that guy -
- I went home, and I said, "Man, this is --"

JOSE HERNANDEZ: (laughs) Weeds is --

DAVID GASCA: "-- not it." So meanwhile, I had put an application at Norton, and I got a job over there. I started at what they call a box factory. I used to make boxes and crates for shipping parts of aircrafts. I didn't stay there too long. From there, there was an opening in sheet metal, and they -- again, they sent me for -- to schooling, maybe a couple of weeks, in sheet metal. And I was working on the Globemaster, I think it was. It had that big -- had the big door in the front that -- opened up front.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Clamshell.

DAVID GASCA: And worked on that for a while, and then basically, [00:14:00] I was more of an engine person, so there was an opening in jet engines. So I worked the jet engines; I worked the J-78, I think, J-57. I've forgotten what -- the engines, and after that, I think we worked together in the missile -- we went to missiles. The first missile that was there was a Thor, and that was basically used in England. Then, the Atlas I -- the Atlas II came into effect, and when I got in, the Titan I and the Titan II, the one he was talking about. So they sent me to school at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas, and there, they taught us everything about the missile except the bomb. We never -- I remember they put us in a room and they -- "Put [00:15:00] your pencils down and just listen," and I remember there was five safety devices before the bomb would ignite. And came back to Norton, and we covered the southwest. We were on the -- our teams, and we covered Rapid City, South Dakota, Ellsworth Air Force Base; Cheyenne, Vandenberg --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Arizona.

DAVID GASCA: Arizona at Tucson.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Tucson, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: And I don't recall another one. Denver? Yeah, Denver. Most of the time that I spent was in South Dakota and Tucson, and we worked in the silos underneath it. And he reminded me, what he just said, that they called it the SCAPE suit. It was initials: SCAPE suit. And a lot of the guys didn't want to get into them, so I say, "I'll get into it." So it was like a space suit with a bubble, and you had a pack in the back. Inside [00:16:00] were oxygen you could -- so you could breathe, and all these valves on -- underneath in the silo -- they were pressurized. And you could see it or smell the fuel, and if it came across you -- they showed us pictures with -- your arms would just be sawed off. And if you got the fluid on you, it would affect your skin, so you had to wear this suit. And so we'd go down the levels, and they had these platforms that came down. The missile was here, and these platforms would come undernea-- then there was doors, and you had to work in the silo to change pumps or electrical.

TOM RIVERA: So just the upkeep of the equipment?

DAVID GASCA: Maintain it, have it ready, and it was ready. And we would lean against that to take a break. We would lean on the platfo-- sit on the platform and lean against that bomb. If that thing ever went off, we'd be ashes.

TOM RIVERA: You had a lot of power --

DAVID GASCA: And --

TOM RIVERA: -- behind your back that was protecting you. Let me kind of shift back a little bit and just say [00:17:00] it seems that both of you ha-- I had no idea that both of you were not only veterans, World War II and Korean, but also, you had a wonderful opportunity to continue providing service to our country by working at Norton Air Force Base. That both of you had great opportunities -- not only military, but also job opportunities by working in the military base at Norton. And getting back to Colton, David, you were heavily involved -- much involved in the

veterans' organization. You were part of the Fidel Hernandez Post in South Colton. You were also part of the American GI Forum in San Diego, and now, you're very actively -- have been for many years, almost 40 years, actively involved with the American Legion Post 155 in Colton. [00:18:00] Your brother, Joe -- your brother, Fidel, was a bombardier. He was a turret gunner with the P-17s [*sic*] that flew from France to Germany and bombed Germany, and in one of the missions in 1942, January of -- November 23, 1942, they suffered some plate damage. And they did not make it to their base, and they were lost at sea. Your brother was one of the 11 airmen that was lost at sea, so the citizens of Colton, the veterans that came back from World War II, decided to start the post, the Fidel Hernandez Post in South Colton. David, do you remember the number of that was -- must've been?

DAVID GASCA: I believe it was 754, if I'm --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I don't know, so...

DAVID GASCA: I don't even recall. Seven Fifty-four?

TOM RIVERA: [00:19:00] Seven Fifty-four?

DAVID GASCA: I believe so.

TOM RIVERA: Because we've had 26 sessions here with our oral history project, and we could never figure out who the post was named after until -- so now, we know it was your older brother who the post was named after. And can you tell me, both -- any of you, can you tell me who was involved in organizing the post, some of the guys? Can you remember some of the guys --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I think it was the -- los Oliva.

DAVID GASCA: The Oliva brothers --

TOM RIVERA: Angel Olivas [*sic*]?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, Pasqual Oliva --

TOM RIVERA: And Pasqual Oliva.

DAVID GASCA: -- Angel Oliva, and...

JOSE HERNANDEZ: [Maybe?] Pasqual.

DAVID GASCA: Quito was there.

TOM RIVERA: Who's Quito? What's their last name?

DAVID GASCA: Quito Oliva, but I --

TOM RIVERA: Quito Oliva?

DAVID GASCA: What was his first name? Do you remember?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I don't know him.

DAVID GASCA: We used to call him Quito, and God, I don't know his name.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And Laqua.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, that was Pasqual.

DAVID GASCA: That was Pasqual.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: That was his nickname too.

DAVID GASCA: Pasqual? Yeah, and --

TOM RIVERA: So the Oliva brothers and who else, David, Joe? Can you remember the names of the --

DAVID GASCA: Well, my uncle, Eddie Colunga, was [00:20:00] there.

TOM RIVERA: Eddie Colunga was also there.

DAVID GASCA: Who was that guy that used to play the saxophone -- tenor sax? The barber, [Cardé?] -- Nacho.

TOM RIVERA: Nacho Cardé.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: No, Nacho Cardena -- [Cabrera?].

DAVID GASCA: Cabrera.

TOM RIVERA: Cabrera, Nacho Cabrera, okay.

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, he was active in that then. Yeah, we held parades, and we had the funerals and stuff like that.

TOM RIVERA: Well, the -- starting the post, where did you meet? Where was the post located?

DAVID GASCA: It was located across from El Sombrero, the Cardena building, which had two stories, and we held our meetings upstairs. Downstairs, he had a business at La Tortería, and he sold --

TOM RIVERA: So Cabrera, the -- Mr. Juan Cabrera, the building that was used --

DAVID GASCA: No, Juan Caldera.

TOM RIVERA: Caldera. [00:21:00] Juan Caldera?

DAVID GASCA: Yes, the older Juan Caldera. Then, there was another one.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. And they owned the building across the street from El Sombrero on Seventh Street.

DAVID GASCA: On Seventh Street.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. And the American Legion, the post -- Fidel Hernandez met on the second floor?

DAVID GASCA: Right, that's the...

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And how long did the organization last? Do you remember?

DAVID GASCA: I don't know how long. I -- do you know?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: No, but I know that they were getting less and less people -- less veterans, and that's why it faded away.

DAVID GASCA: People were -- members were dying away, and nobody was coming in. And so it folded up is what happened because of lack of participation, but there was another post in Colton which was still going on.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Before I leave and talk about the other [00:22:00] post, we have a picture of Fidel here. Joe, would you mind holding it up for the camera --

your brother, Joe? Yeah, just point it to Frank and -- anyway, Frank, maybe we can take that and scan that, and put it into our files, but that's -- I finally learned who that post was named after there, so thank you both for the information. Thank you so much, and getting back --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I brought the picture because I wanted to put a face on the subject.

DAVID GRASCA: There you go.

TOM RIVERA: I'm glad you did. And we'll borrow that, and we'll scan it and put it as part of our archived files. And you mentioned the other American Legion, David. You mentioned the American Legion that you belong to also.

DAVID GRASCA: One Five Five.

TOM RIVERA: [00:23:00] One Five Five. And when you first went to the American Legion post, what happened? What was the reception back then?

DAVID GRASCA: Well, in those days, it was kind of cold. It was --

TOM RIVERA: What year was that, David?

DAVID GRASCA: I showed up there around '55 after I got out, and it was very segregated. You didn't feel comfortable in there, and the first Hispanic to come in there was -- he's -- as a matter of fact, we just buried him yesterday. And his name was Tony Lamos.

TOM RIVERA: Tony Lamos was the first member --

DAVID GRASCA: And --

TOM RIVERA: -- of that 155 post?

DAVID GRASCA: Hispanic -- yeah, he was first commander also, and he went all through the church. He was originally from Casablanca, and he moved to Colton and lived there many years. And then slowly, we started getting in there, and now, I would say it's a good 95, 97 percent Hispanic.

TOM RIVERA: And how many [00:24:00] members do you have?

DAVID GRASCA: Approximately 200, give or take.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. And 95 percent of them are Mexican American Latinos?

DAVID GRASCA: Right, and we do what they call Boys State. It's one of the programs that we do. Besides scholarships -- we do scholarships, Boys State. We send two boys to Sacramento to learn the politics, and they stay there at -- what's it, Berkeley? What's the college there?

TOM RIVERA: There's Cal State --

DAVID GASCA: Cal State.

TOM RIVERA: -- Sacramento, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, Sacramento. They go over there for -- and they're from the state. President Clinton was at Boys State from his state. Anyway, they learn the politics, and they come back -- they're sophomores. They have to be sophomores, and so we flipped all that, and it takes money. We have golf tournaments, and we [00:25:00] have scholarships, and we support the local little leagues and what have you.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, very good.

DAVID GRASCA: So...

TOM RIVERA: So you're actively involved in the community and giving back to the community. Yeah, we -- getting back to the Fidel Hernandez Post, were the members involved -- because again, it was mostly South Colton participation, were the members that were in the Fidel Hernandez Post -- were they actively involved with Congress of Community clubs, or Los Progresistas, or Las Fiestas Patrias?

DAVID GRASCA: Oh, yeah. There was -- Manuel Padilla originated -- he wasn't an American Legion member, but he originated the club -- oh, my God, memory. It was the United Clubs of...

TOM RIVERA: Congress of Community [00:26:00] Clubs?

DAVID GRASCA: Congress of Community Clubs. I think he was one of -- the originator of it. So that our clubs wouldn't conflict with the events, we met. There was a representative from each club, and we would state our -- advance our projects, whatever, so it was a good move.

TOM RIVERA: So it was a coordinating type of activity?

DAVID GRASCA: Right, and --

TOM RIVERA: And that was in the '50s?

DAVID GRASCA: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: The '50s, yeah. And out of that came the -- not only the coordination, but also the partnership in putting the Fiestas Patrias together.

DAVID GRASCA: Fiestas Patrias, and then on the veterans' side, the Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Christmas parade. And we had dignitaries come in from Washington, our local representatives and our city representatives, and we still do to this day have those. [00:27:00] Flag Day, I go to schools, and I -- elementary schools, and I fold a flag, and I teach the students. And I give a little talk about what the flag stands for and what it does, and it's, "You don't worship it. You honor it." And I get a couple of students to fold it so they learn how to fold it in the proper way. And so some people think that we're just in the canteen, but we do services.

TOM RIVERA: A lot of public service. Both of -- again, both of you were military people and participated as personnel in the military service, navy and air force. You were in there several years, David. Four years?

DAVID GRASCA: Four years military.

TOM RIVERA: And you were there six years or so?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: A little over six years.

TOM RIVERA: A little over six years?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I had a weird -- I [00:28:00] reenlisted for four, and President Truman gave me an extra year to call it the Truman years. So I was supposed to get out, and they said, "No, you're not. You're going to stay another year or so."

TOM RIVERA: See, you shouldn't have been that good. (laughs) The -- anyway, being in the military those many years -- did it influence your life? How did it affect your life? Did it make you more appreciative of this country, or did it make you more of -- "I belong here because I've paid my dues. I am a citizen; therefore, I am privileged to all -- everything that this country has to offer"? Or did it give you more confidence to attack or -- not attack -- to face the situations in the community? How did military service affect [00:29:00] you?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Well, it did affect me quite a bit and for the better, and it made me see the way the rest of the world lived. And it sort of -- it influenced me to, in a way, go about doing things, and yeah, I learned quite a bit in the service, and I wouldn't change it for anything. And I know I'd do it again if I could.

TOM RIVERA: So it was a positive experience for you, Joe?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. How about you, David?

DAVID GRASCA: Well, I think basically -- first of all, it showed you discipline. It showed you pride in your country and yourself. It showed you to take care of yourself and to be a team member. [00:30:00] I wish every young man would serve at least a year because I don't think we'd have as many people in prisons, but anyway, it made you proud. And I remember being in Spain at a movie, and I saw the flag, and it brought tears in my eyes.

TOM RIVERA: Wow. So it affected you and made you feel that you were part of this country?

DAVID GRASCA: Absolutely, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Now, the -- that sense of pride, that sense of belonging to, that sense of, "I paid my dues," kind of feeling that both of you got -- how did it affect the city or the community of South Colton? Because we had a lot of young people from South Colton that participated in World War II. For example, I [00:31:00] read someplace, in that big book that you have -- one of those books that you have there, David -- one of those books there? I --

DAVID GRASCA: Yeah, these --

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, in one of those books, I've read -- I don't know which one, David, but in one of those books, I read that the number of people from South Colton, the young people from South Colton, that fought and participated in World War II was 487 men. Young men, young Mexican Americans from Colton, that participated, and three female, so almost 500 altogether. So my question is, you multiply yourselves almost 500 times, and you have that same -- that feeling of pride and belonging to, how -- did that make a difference in our community of South Colton, everybody coming back and feeling [00:32:00] that way?

DAVID GRASCA: I think it gave you more energy, more thought, more inner power, I would say, to participate. [Means?] that some of us were in combat, got shot, got killed, got -- were prisoners of war and come back, and you could equalize or be equal to anybody else. There was a lot of discrimination at that time, and because of the war and -- you come back with, "Hey, I'm just as good." And therefore, you participated or find -- or try to look for evidence to do what you had coming [00:33:00] to you.

TOM RIVERA: So do those things like -- you got involved with veterans organizations, and you got involved with other community organizations which were geared towards helping people and also helping the community in general. Were

there any memorials set up for our Mexican American kids that participated in the war? Did we have any memorials in South Colton like that pila -- that fountain that's on the corner of O Street and La Cadena?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, there's a -- in Fleming Park, there's a plaque there with some Hispanic names. On South Colton, there's a -- on Seventh and N Street, I think that there's a couple of them there, and also, the South Colton park is called - - it's Veterans Park.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, [00:34:00] that's right.

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, and it's called --

TOM RIVERA: That's on Pine and O Street, right.

DAVID GASCA: -- Veterans Park, and the cement pla-- cement company donated that big rock, and there's a plaque embedded in there.

TOM RIVERA: So our community was proud of you guys serving in military service that -- they provided memorials or recognition to our veterans that participated.

DAVID GASCA: Well, even today, there's banners that fly over the city of military people that had served, so that tells you something for the city, that it honors veterans and respects them.

TOM RIVERA: Mm-hmm. Also, you mentioned that you'd do it again if you had to do it over again. For example, participating in the military -- did it affect the job opportunities for people that served in the military service? For example, did -- you came back [00:35:00] and you were able to get your job because you left your job, and you were given the job back. In your case, David, were you ever given any points on the civil service examination because --

DAVID GASCA: I was given those five points that you received when you applied for it because you were a veteran, so that happened.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. So there was that advantage of applying for jobs afterwards.

DAVID GASCA: But it's something that was embedded there that you deserved. I was recognized -- I guess I was...

TOM RIVERA: Right. What about -- getting back to the community, you started working with the organizations, the VFWs. And what about -- as you know, Colton was chartered in 1857, [00:36:00] and in 1941, we finally had our first councilman. Jeremías Johnny Martinez Perez, who was the first councilman of Colton, and that was 54 years later. Now, you coming back as military people, were you actively involved individually -- you couldn't do it as an organization because that was against the -- you ca-- just couldn't do it because it was a nonprofit organization. Did you as individuals help the Pete Luques and the Laquas, the Pasqual Olivas, get elected to office or participate in those activities that -- we would have representatives in city council. Did you have that sense of participation in the political process?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: No.

DAVID GASCA: I was -- I can't say -- [00:37:00] I remember attending some meetings, but I wasn't -- real young and not political-savvy. But that's where you -- that's the beginning of knowing meetings and how they're conducted and the politics that -- to me, meetings are formalities. Usually, meetings are prior to the meeting. Once you get to the meeting, more or less, things are pretty well set if you get your ducks together and then go through the process of implementing whatever you want -- changes.

TOM RIVERA: So there wasn't awareness of --

DAVID GASCA: Not at all, no.

TOM RIVERA: -- helping people get into office like Pete Luque or Pasqual Oliva or some of those folks that were running for office in the city of -- city council of Colton, yeah. Let me ask you about education. Again, may-- being a military person, [00:38:00] did you take advantage of the education that was offered by being a veteran?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: No, I didn't, but I regret it now. But --

TOM RIVERA: It was available to you.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- for whatever reason, I didn't because I already had a job, and I didn't need no formal -- I thought I didn't need no more.

DAVID GASCA: Well, I feel the same way. I went to Valley College, and I just took some social studies, but I had a job, and that came first. You have a family and children, you have a home to pay, a car, and so --

TOM RIVERA: Those things that you need to live: food --

DAVID GASCA: Right, exactly.

TOM RIVERA: -- transportation...

DAVID GASCA: And so because of the job and -- remember, we used to work -- going back to when we used to work out of town, the -- we used to get per diem. It was -- do you recall it was 16 dollars?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

DAVID GASCA: [00:39:00] Sixteen dollars --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: A day.

DAVID GASCA: -- a day, and nowadays, 16 dollars is not even wages an hour. And --

TOM RIVERA: But that was a lot of money back then.

DAVID GASCA: No, that was a lot of money. Yeah, we had our wages plus our per diem --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Per diem, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: -- and well, needless to say, you had a better car, you had a better life, and...

TOM RIVERA: Did you know many of -- the guys that you knew as veterans -- were you -- did you know any of them that took advantage of the American -- the GI bill?

DAVID GASCA: I think Nacho's brother did.

TOM RIVERA: Tom Cabrera did.

DAVID GASCA: Tom Cabrera, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, Tom Cabrera went to Woodbury Accounting School in Los Angeles.

DAVID GASCA: Offhand, I can't right now think of anyone, no.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, because when I was a kid, I was over at Valley College back in '70. [00:40:00] That was late. We still had many veterans that were enrolled either full-time or half-time, and they would pick up their GI benefits every month. What about --

DAVID GASCA: I did buy a house with the G--

TOM RIVERA: Okay, let me ask you that. You're an inquisitive guy because my next question was housing. (laughter)

DAVID GASCA: I did the --

TOM RIVERA: The housing back in Colton -- as you know, it was a segregated community: North Colton, and then you had the tracks, then you had South Colton, Mexican town. And then in 19-- and then one veteran -- two veterans: one that was in the navy, Mr. Sal Ayala, and then the other one that was, I think, in the army, Cervantes -- Ralph?

DAVID GASCA: Ralph.

TOM RIVERA: Ralph Cervantes. They wanted to buy a house in North Colton, but the situation that we had [00:41:00] back then is that, "No, you cannot buy a house in North Colton." But Ralph went ahead and went to court, and he won the ca-- his case, so he was one of the first people that bought a house in North Colton. And then Sal had the same problem. I think he was 53, 54, and he had the same problem. Were -- after you came back from the service, David, you mentioned that those guys made the groundwork for you, and when you bought the house in North Colton, you didn't have any trouble.

DAVID GASCA: No, well, the house I bought was in Utah when I was transferred over there.

TOM RIVERA: No, but when you bought your house --

DAVID GASCA: But when I --

TOM RIVERA: -- in Colton.

DAVID GASCA: -- bought a house in Colton?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

DAVID GASCAS: No, I -- there was no problem. [Andrew Olito?] was another one that wanted to buy on the north side and couldn't buy, so he went to Loma Linda and had a house there in the middle of the orange groves. And [00:42:00] now, there's houses all over the place; orange groves are gone now. Yeah, so he was one that -- he said, "To heck with them, I'll go someplace else," and --

TOM RIVERA: So there was that situation where you couldn't buy a house in North Colton.

DAVID GASCA: Well, also, I went to the municipal pool, and they wouldn't let me in because of the color of my skin. And we had two theaters, the New Colton Theatre and the Hub City Theatre, and we had to sit on the left side. You recall that?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I remember that, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: And so that's the way it was, but --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Matter of fact, I remember sitting there -- that's when the war started at Pearl Harbor. We were sitting there looking at the movies, and all of a sudden, they announced over the loudspeaker or the PA system that, "All military personnel report to their bases." [00:43:00] I said, "I wonder what happened."

TOM RIVERA: Oh, that was December 7, 1941?

DAVID GASCA: Forty-one.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and when it came out, and then we heard that they had bombed Pearl Harbor, I said, "Oh, my God." That was war with the Japanese or whatever it was. Everybody was scared. You don't know what's going to happen. You've never been in a war before.

DAVID GASCA: Do you remember that there was a few fam-- a couple of families in Colton of Japanese descent?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, tell me about that.

DAVID GASCA: Well, they came around, they picked them up, and took them.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, that was during the --

DAVID GASCA: Henry something was his name?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, he owned a market, and he had two boys, I believe.

DAVID GASCA: On I Street.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and I used to hang around with him because I used to like to build model airplanes, and he did the same.

DAVID GASCA: And then there was a barbershop on J Street. That's where the freeway [00:44:00] is now, and it was a oriental man. And all of a sudden, the next day, they were gone.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, they were gone. They -- never seen them again.

TOM RIVERA: David, you mentioned that your dad came to Colton in early 1900.

DAVID GASCA: My grandfather.

TOM RIVERA: Your grandfather in 1900. He worked for Portland Cement Company?

DAVID GASCA: No. He crossed San Anton-- no, El Paso in 1901, and according to my grandmother, they paid two cents to cross. And what I heard when I was a kid -- he worked at Patton State Hospital. He was a plumber, and after that, I don't know what happened. He got a job with the city of Colton.

TOM RIVERA: And then the city of -- being with the city of Colton, he was a -- he worked as a street...

DAVID GASCA: Sweeper.

TOM RIVERA: A street sweeper.

DAVID GASCA: He had a broom and a [00:45:00] little cart, and that cart's in the Colton Museum now. And --

TOM RIVERA: Now, was that Downtown Colton?

DAVID GASCA: Yes. He would get -- sweep around the main streets there.

TOM RIVERA: And then what are --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I remember --

DAVID GASCA: You remember him?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- him, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you do remember him?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: That's him right there.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And then back -- and then in 1931 or so -- what year was that when they -- one of the councilmen said, "We have to fire him because he's not a citizen," and therefore, they -- it came to a vote. And it was during the repay...

DAVID GASCA: Reparation -- repercuration [*sic*]. There's --

TOM RIVERA: Frank, how do you say that word?

FRANK ACOSTA: Repatriation.

TOM RIVERA: Repatriation --

DAVID GASCA: Repatriation, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: -- Program.

DAVID GASCA: And they were sending people back to Mexico.

TOM RIVERA: And he was caught in --

DAVID GASCA: And --

TOM RIVERA: -- that situation.

DAVID GASCA: -- one of the people in the city council put the finger on him that he wasn't a citizen, so there were other councilmen that backed him up. They liked him a lot. He was very popular, very well-mannered. [00:46:00] I remember that people would say, "Hey, your grandpa -- he always tips his hat when the ladies came around." So he became a citizen and...

TOM RIVERA: Well, they -- the vote was that he would keep -- he would not lose his job, and then two weeks later after the vote, he became a citizen, and then he got his permanent job again.

DAVID GASCA: Right, and my grandmother became a citizen also. Yeah, and it was tough in those days, not --

TOM RIVERA: I can imagine, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: -- reading and writing, and knowing the history of the United States and stuff...

TOM RIVERA: Well, yeah, and that was a personal issue -- situation, but overall, the feeling towards Mexicans was that, "They're taking our jobs, they're taking our schools, they're taking our health services, and they're taking them away from American citizens, so let's send them back to Mexico." That was the feeling, ¿verdad?

DAVID GASCA: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: That was the feeling, [00:47:00] and that was during the '30s, and --

DAVID GASCA: Right after this.

TOM RIVERA: -- your grandpa got caught in that. Both of you were born and raised in Colton, eh?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: What did people do for recreation? When you were a little kid, what did -- you mentioned the plunge in South Colton, the Calder-- you said Caldera Plunge?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. You mentioned the Caldera Plunge in South Colton, and you lived in -- on Fifth Street there in that area. Yeah, can you -- either of you or both of you tell us about your experience and what you remember about that Caldera Plunge?

DAVID GASCA: Well, I was just -- well, I guess I was six, seven years old, I don't know. And my grandma used to take me over there and -- because Juan

Caldera's wife, Eulalla, was my grandmother's comadre, so they'd sit there and [00:48:00] comadrear, you know?

TOM RIVERA: Comadrear, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: And then I was there in that little -- the children's -- they'd call it la pilita. It had a water fountain coming out, and water would be coming in, and I remember one of -- Rick [Castollena?]?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, that's him.

TOM RIVERA: Ricky?

DAVID GASCA: He used to climb -- that thing was humongous, the diving board, and he was the only one, man. And he'd come down and -- beautiful swan dives, he'd put in there, and so that's -- and then there was baseball teams.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, where was that located, David? Where was the center located?

DAVID GASCA: It was on Fifth and Fogg, right?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Fifth, yeah, uh-huh.

DAVID GASCA: Fifth and Fogg, and next door to it on the corner of Fifth and Fogg, that's where the ballroom, I guess you'd call it -- saloon or -- that was made out of --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, it was a dancehall.

DAVID GASCA: The dancehall that was made out of PFE boards from the railroad [00:49:00] cars.

TOM RIVERA: By the boxcars that were --

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, they had PFE on the side there. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: So the material -- building material was from the boxcars that were taken apart, and the PFE -- the lumber wood was brought back, and they built a dancehall with it.

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, and --

TOM RIVERA: They also tell me there was a baseball field.

DAVID GASCA: I don't --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, it was --

DAVID GASCA: Do you recall that?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- further north on Fifth Street --

DAVID GASCA: On Congress?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- just before you got to Congress. And there was --

TOM RIVERA: Well, what's the --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- a baseball field and also another ballroom on --
another ballroom too, dancing and all that sort of thing.

DAVID GASCA: Pickering?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I can't remember.

DAVID GASCA: (inaudible)?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: It was --

TOM RIVERA: (inaudible) stuff. (laughs)

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- some dance floor or whatever it was, I don't know, but
anyway, the bleachers were right against the wall [00:50:00] of the new -- of the
dancehall, the bleachers for the baseball. And of course, there was a big field
there, and on top of the dancehall, there was an eagle made out of wood, I guess,
and they had the lightbulbs on him. And the -- whenever they had a dance, they'd
light that up, and I used to go up there and sit by the bandstand and hear the music.

TOM RIVERA: (laughs) How old were you then, Joe?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, I don't know. I wasn't too old. I can't recall how old
I was, but I was just a kid anyway. I used to sit there on the --

DAVID GASCA: Band?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Next to the band and hear the music, and see the people dancing and what have you, and go get a -- they had a bar on the side, and the Caldera kids used to run it. [00:51:00] And they used to give me a soda pop.

TOM RIVERA: And you were in heaven with that soda pop, eh?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, I was part of the gang there, but it was a lot of fun. Just about every Saturday night, I think it was, they had dances.

TOM RIVERA: And was it -- did they have good crowds from South Colton?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah, they had good crowds.

TOM RIVERA: Anybody from --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Most of them -- hardly any -- most of them walked, I guess.

DAVID GASCA: Yeah. Well, let's see, I remember people from East Highlands used to --

TOM RIVERA: ¿También?

DAVID GASCA: -- come, yeah. And East Highlands were -- they had a little hall over there too, and at first --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: In East Highland [*sic*]?

DAVID GASCA: -- I think it was a dirt floor, if I remember right.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: In East Highland?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, I didn't know that.

DAVID GASCA: Right there.

TOM RIVERA: So a lot of people came to the Cabrera Dance Hall. And what about -- they also mentioned a bullring, David.

DAVID GASCA: Well, I vaguely remember there on -- you probably would know more -- there right on Congress [00:52:00] east --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: One of the --

DAVID GASCA: -- west of Fifth Street, yeah, on Congress, Caldera built a ring there. And he would bring the bull -- they couldn't kill him, but they lo toreaban back and forth, and it was a fiesta type thing.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I helped a little bit. They brought the boards from the PFE --

DAVID GASCA: PFE? (laughs)

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- I guess, and then put me and some of their daughters and brothers and what have you to take the nails out.

DAVID GASCA: To take the nails out. (laughter)

JOSE HERNANDEZ: That -- with a hammer.

DAVID GASCA: Bang, bang, bang all day.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And they would -- yeah, and I guess some other people - - some bigger people, I guess, was building up the arena, but it was exciting in a way.

TOM RIVERA: So it was good for the community, then. It was good for the South Colton [00:53:00] community because they had a place to be able to dance --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: To participate.

TOM RIVERA: -- and to be spectators at the ball game, and be spectators at the bullring, and then swim, so it was a good thing. David, you have a wonderful book about Colton there. You might -- what's the title of that book?

DAVID GASCA: This book has about everything in there: *As the Sand Shifts in Colton, California* by Hazel E. Olson.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. And you said it has about everything in Colton?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, it goes way back. Colton -- I think he was the gentleman that worked for the railroad. He was some superintendent, and then [the climbing?] park --

TOM RIVERA: So they had -- it's a history of Colton. Mostly North Colton, though, ¿verdad?

DAVID GASCA: No, it takes overall, pretty much.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, [00:54:00] yeah. And you also have some other books there. Now, what's the one where -- by the Seventh Street folks? They were the Matadors, I think, or -- what are they called?

DAVID GASCA: It was -- there's three books, and there's pictures. There's one military -- basically military -- whoops, it's not that one, but it has articles, newspaper articles, fiestas and parades, school pictures. What they did, these -- they went through the -- through a lot of people that they know and said, "Hey, donate some pictures. We're making a book," and a lot of people donated pictures. School pictures, fiesta pictures -- that's my mother there, (laughs) right here.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, what a pretty girl. And your mom was one of the few Mexicans -- Mexican [00:55:00] American girls that worked in North Colton.

DAVID GASCA: She worked for a department store [named Helman's?], and after that, she worked for Willet's, another department store. And when they made the freeway, she went and worked for Frank's Furniture, so she was in sales all her life. But she --

TOM RIVERA: She was kind of a not run-of-the-mill kind of Mexican American girl because she worked in North Colton -- in the stores of North Colton.

DAVID GASCA: Well, I guess the environment, being around -- and she was, if I recall, the first Hispanic to be in the Colton Women's Club.

TOM RIVERA: Ah, tell me about that. She was in the Women's Club?

DAVID GASCA: Well, she got through there through her boss, Mrs. Frank Batin, who owned the furniture store, and she introduced her to the Women's [00:56:00] Club.

TOM RIVERA: And she was the first Mexican American?

DAVID GASCA: If I recall, yeah, and so -- and there was a [British?] store, and across the street was Hunter's Restaurant? Remember the restaurant?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Hunter's? Yeah.

DAVID GASCA: We couldn't go eat there.

TOM RIVERA: Where was this? Tell me where the --

DAVID GASCA: It was right next to the Hub City Theatre, across the street from Frank's Furniture. It was Hutton? What was that name of that restaurant? Do you recall?

TOM RIVERA: Hunter's?

DAVID GASCA: Hunter's?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Hunter's, yeah. There also was Candy Palace.

DAVID GASCA: The Candy Palace was there.

TOM RIVERA: And you couldn't eat at the restaurant?

DAVID GASCA: No, you... After a while, though, you could eat.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: The only place they served you over there was the Mission Drugstore. Remember the Mission Drugstore --

DAVID GASCA: Oh, Mist--

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- where they had the...?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, Mr. McNair.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: [00:57:00] Uh-huh, and --

DAVID GASCA: The Mission Drugstore, and he had these -- it was a --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: A copper --

DAVID GASCA: He had copper -- brass or copper cups, and he made --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Root beer.

DAVID GASCA: -- root beer sundaes and stuff like that.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah, and...

DAVID GASCA: And at the back of the store, he had a weighing machine with the scales, so everybody would go in there in the back of the store and weigh themselves. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: And that was Downtown Colton?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, right -- yeah, well, right where the freeway's at now.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, just across the street from where the Anderson Hotel was?

DAVID GASCA: Anderson Hotel, and there was a jewelry store there, and a magazine store.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: JCPenney was in there.

DAVID GASCA: JCPenney was there, and --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Helman -- the Helman's store.

DAVID GASCA: And then in -- on the corner, remember Greyhound used to come by?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: Greyhound Bus?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

DAVID GASCA: And then down at the center of town to La Cadena all the way up to San Bernardino --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: The streetcar?

DAVID GASCA: -- we had a streetcar.

TOM RIVERA: You're kidding.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, the streetcar to --

TOM RIVERA: La Cadena [00:58:00] to San Bernardino?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: A streetcar?

DAVID GASCA: A streetcar. It was a red one, and it had electrical wires up on top. And the connector would come out and then change the wire to the other -- to go back the other way.

FRANK ACOSTA: Was that part of the Pacific Electric system?

DAVID GASCA: I don't recall.

FRANK ACOSTA: Okay, because they had the red cars, and they went up to the [Erwin?] Hotel.

DAVID GASCA: I don't recall that.

TOM RIVERA: So --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: What is it?

DAVID GASCA: The Pacific --

TOM RIVERA: Electrical.

DAVID GASCA: The car -- the rail-- well, trolleys or -- I guess you'd call them. I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: But they -- where did they start in Colton?

DAVID GASCA: Right there on J Street and -- right? J St-- yeah, around J Street...

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Where -- turned around with the -- across the street with the --

DAVID GASCA: You said J Street --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Railroad --

DAVID GASCA: -- before Ninth.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: That station, the railroad station?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Across the street?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: In a little park or [whatever they had?] that was --

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, that was J Street, and the Chamber of Commerce was [00:59:00] there in the corner and...

TOM RIVERA: So that was the turnaround or the pickup -- the start to San Bernardino?

DAVID GASCA: Right, and it'd go through La Cadena. I think it went through Valley College. Did it? Do you remember?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I think so, yeah, but I don't --

DAVID GASCA: Well -- God, I think there's still some tracks there in front of the Hutton Center. No, it's --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: No, they took them out, didn't they?

DAVID GASCA: They took them out? I guess so.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, they took them out. They made --

FRANK ACOSTA: It's --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- a bicycle thing or other. Exercise people walk by there.

TOM RIVERA: But we did --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: But --

TOM RIVERA: -- have an electrical passenger company?

DAVID GASCA: I think it's in here, and --

TOM RIVERA: I was going to ask you about school. Where did you go to school?

DAVID GASCA: Well, (laughs) I went to the northside school. Even though I lived across Garfield, my mother -- we had relatives that were close to the north. The kids were from -- on Third and L. They used to go to [01:00:00] the northside school, to Grant School. It was a four-room school. Had first grade, and then first and --

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember any of the Mexicans -- kids that went to your school with you there at Grant School?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, Rubin Aguilera; Angie, his sister; Sammy Hernandez, myself, Bobby Aguilera -- there was only about five or six of us.

TOM RIVERA: A handful of you folks?

DAVID GASCA: Five or six of us.

TOM RIVERA: And then where did you go to junior high school?

DAVID GASCA: Roosevelt High School. I didn't speak English in elementary school, so I was kept back one year. In those days, they kept you back, and so then Roosevelt --

TOM RIVERA: Roosevelt, and then Colton High School?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: That was the junior high, wasn't it?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, it was the junior high.

TOM RIVERA: And then Colton High School?

DAVID GASCA: And then Colton High School, yeah.

FRANK ACOSTA: What years did you go to Roosevelt?

DAVID GASCA: Oh, God. [01:01:00] It was in --

TOM RIVERA: Well --

DAVID GASCA: -- the '40s, I...

TOM RIVERA: Well, when did you graduate from Wilson -- from high school?

DAVID GASCA: Well, '50, '51.

TOM RIVERA: So it was four years earlier, yeah.

FRANK ACOSTA: And there's probably a permanent record card still at Colton Junior High from when you attended Roosevelt.

DAVID GASCA: Okay. Don't look at my grades, okay? (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: And, Joe, where did you go to school?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I went to grammar school. I went to San Salvador --

TOM RIVERA: Because you lived on Fifth Street, ¿verdad?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- on Agua Mansa or -- that was --

DAVID GASCA: Oh, that was --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- the cemetery, going to the cemetery. And there was a lot of --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, it was at Agua Mansa. The school was in Agua Mansa?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, Agua Mansa was the road. It's a -- that's the -- what do they call them?

DAVID GASCA: Well, that was the main road to Riverside in those days.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, uh-huh, it's a --

DAVID GASCA: And it used to go to the cement plant over in Riverside or at Crestmore.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, that's a -- what do they call it? [01:02:00] Mission --

FRANK ACOSTA: Mission?

DAVID GASCA: Mission Inn, Mission Valley, Mission...

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, no, that's where the missionaries --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, Agua Mansa.

FRANK ACOSTA: The school of --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: What's the name of the --

TOM RIVERA: -- (inaudible) --

FRANK ACOSTA: -- San Salvador, wasn't it? San Salvador?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Huh?

FRANK ACOSTA: San Salvador?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, San Salvador.

DAVID GASCA: There was a church there too.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: What do they call the -- where the missionaries used to go from The Asistencia in Redlands?

TOM RIVERA: Well, it was Agua Mansa Church.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and they used to go to San Gabriel -- the Mission of San Gabriel?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And they used to run -- and they used to come from San Diego and rest in Redlands, and then they'd go to San Gabriel's mission. And I guess they went up north wherever they go. [01:03:00] What do they call them, those roads or those streets?

TOM RIVERA: Oh, the --

FRANK ACOSTA: El Camino Real?

TOM RIVERA: El Camino Real.

DAVID GASCA: Camino Real?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, Camino Real. Camino -- that -- Agua Mansa's El Camino Real. And --

TOM RIVERA: (inaudible) --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- as a matter of fact, there was a little village there --

DAVID GASCA: And --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- on the...

DAVID GASCA: -- it got washed away in the flood.

TOM RIVERA: So you went to school in San Salvador there?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and the -- San Salvador was up on higher -- it was only a two-room school, and it had grades up to sixth grade. It's three on one room, and three classes on the other one, and of course, [you'd hear them from there?].

And the next thing -- I ended up in --

TOM RIVERA: Wilson?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- Wilson. It was junior high then, and -- but there was a lot of [01:04:00] early California families living in the area.

DAVID GASCA: [Laverados?]?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Laverados and Martinezes.

DAVID GASCA: And remember the milkman? What the hell is the name?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, Frank...

DAVID GASCA: Frank Suarez?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Suarez. He was Portuguese --

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, he was Portuguese.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- but he'd speak Spanish like he -- like nobody's business.

DAVID GASCA: And --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And he had a dairy there, so --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so you grew up with those guys.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Huh?

TOM RIVERA: You grew up with those guys.

DAVID GASCA: Well, they were older.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, they were older.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, they were older.

DAVID GASCA: And he used to deliver milk.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Milk, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: And then we had an iceman also come around, and he had a little cart -- yellow cart. And if you wanted five pounds, 10 pounds, or -- you'd put the --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Whatever pound you wanted --

DAVID GASCA: -- it in the triangle thing. (laughs)

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Whatever it was hanging on, that's the pound you -- the amount of ice you wanted, so the iceman knew. So he just carried it [01:05:00] and put it in your --

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Frank --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- icebox and...

DAVID GASCA: And as soon as he went in with the ice, us kids would go in the truck and get some ice cream. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Frank, you were going to say something.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: But it was --

FRANK ACOSTA: I was going to say the Suarez house -- isn't that on the corner of Agua Mansa and Rancho?

DAVID GASCA: Well, it -- yes.

FRANK ACOSTA: So the house is still there.

DAVID GASCA: I think Rosales lives there now.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, Rosales.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, yeah, right on the corner? Yeah. Now, if you go to -
-

TOM RIVERA: So --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: If you ever go to the cemetery there at Agua Mansa Road, you'll see a lot of old families still -- you'd recognize their names or their families.

DAVID GASCA: I have an uncle there, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, Socorro lives in one of those houses, Socorro Rosales. So from there, you -- Wilson School.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, I graduated from San Salvador and -- [01:06:00] to Wilson, to -- not to Wilson, to -- yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And then high school, Colton High School.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And then to Colton High School, and --

TOM RIVERA: We've been here almost an hour, so let me ask you another question, and I don't know whether --

DAVID GASCA: And let me interject one thing, another delivery. Remember the newspaper, *La Opinión*?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: *La Opinión*? Yeah.

DAVID GASCA: And they used to come in a big old Buick, I think it was, and it was -- he came with it from LA. I forgot his name. I --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, I remember.

TOM RIVERA: Well, what years were those, David, the '40s?

DAVID GASCA: In the '40s, I guess. Yeah, in the '40s, and we had the ice --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Before the war -- it was before the war, and sometimes -
-

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, I guess in the '30s, late '30s.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And there's also another man that -- they used to sell clothes.

DAVID GASCA: Oh, Marcus.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Remember?

DAVID GASCA: Marcus, is it?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, Marcus.

DAVID GASCA: Marcus used to --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And --

DAVID GASCA: -- come with a cart full of clothes and...

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Blankets and pillows and what have you.

DAVID GASCA: Even medicine.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: [01:07:00] Yeah, I guess so. I don't know about that one.

DAVID GASCA: It was -- there used to be another guy. He had a -- the Rawleigh man. The product, Rawleigh?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

DAVID GASCA: And he used to sell this salve, and that salve -- I still have one at home. It was for animals and humans, and (laughter) any little cut you'd get, boom! Put some of that salve on it. Boom, you'd be ready to go out then.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And when you paid him, he'd give you little candies, little wrapped up candy to the kids -- to the family that he sold the stuff to and... Yeah, and Marcus --

DAVID GASCA: Marcus --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- had this beautiful daughter. Man, oh, man, she was beautiful.

DAVID GASCA: Well, we were talking about -- what was that -- Javier, his son.

TOM RIVERA: Marcus, Javier Marcus.

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, he's still around.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, the -- I was going to say we're talking about old times.
What [01:08:00] about the Three Flowers pomade that you put on your hair? Three
Flowers --

DAVID GASCA: Three Flowers?

TOM RIVERA: -- or what was it?

DAVID GASCA: Tres Flores? I remember that they used to put [Jerys?], that
green thing when you go to the barber? They'd put Jerys on there. (inaudible).
(laughter) I won't say it here, but --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Oh, Jerys?

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, Jerys.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Jerys, yeah.

DAVID GASCA: Hair tonic or some kind of...

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah. Oh, it was a -- I think we had a pretty good young
life. We had a lot of fun. We didn't --

DAVID GASCA: We could be outside.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: They said they were oppressing against us, and it didn't
even bother me whatsoever. Just -- life still goes on, doesn't it?

TOM RIVERA: Oh, yeah, well, mostly because we were in our own community,
(inaudible)?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, uh-huh. Sort of, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: We were -- and then everybody that worked at the PFE or the
Southern Pacific or Portland Cement or [La Bharucha?] Citrus Industry -- [01:09:00]
they all lived in Colton.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Even I picked oranges when I was a young kid.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, so --

DAVID GASCA: We used to go to [Hammond?]. My grandmother would take me --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Apricots.

DAVID GASCA: -- to get apricots, and --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and --

DAVID GASCA: -- we'd go there picking grapes. They gave me a job of taking the fruit to the ladies, and the ladies would cut the fruit in half.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and put them on the boards.

DAVID GASCA: And then --

TOM RIVERA: To dry them?

DAVID GASCA: -- when you come back to go to school, you'd buy a pair of Levi's for five bucks. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: That was your -- for the whole year. (laughs) And, Joe, you mentioned that you would pick cotton.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, I picked cotton up north, up at -- by Delano, and I -- and you know what? I used to go to school -- it was a pretty nice school they had. It was a integrated school, beautiful --

DAVID GASCA: Where?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- and [01:10:00] the name of the little town was Earlimart. And they had -- at that time, they had -- what would they call it? The Air Battle Week, and you'd draw the -- you had to draw a poster, and whoever -- about Air Mail Week. And whoever won, you -- one in each room would win a airplane ride, and I happened to be the one that won on my room and another --

DAVID GASCA: How about that?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- girl. And they took us down to Delano at the airport, and that's where I took my first airplane ride in 19-- what was it? Nineteen thirty-seven, I think it was.

DAVID GASCA: Oh, my God.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: So it --

TOM RIVERA: -- were 10 years old.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, it was a [01:11:00] two-seater plus the pilot.

DAVID GASCA: Cessna?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: And man, and he took us around -- for about a half hour around the area, and man, it was sort of scary. At that time, I got down, and oh, my ears were plugged up. (laughter) And I couldn't hear him saying -- telling me, "Did you like it, or didn't you like it?" So I couldn't hear what they were saying.

TOM RIVERA: So that was one of the benefits of going crop picking, eh?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, that's one of them.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, it was an adventure, let's put it that way.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, the --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: A good experience --

TOM RIVERA: Oh, excellent experience.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: -- for both students. You talk about it now and sort of -- well, why not?

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. The -- one of the things that I asked both of you yesterday was -- we had a big flood in Colton [01:12:00] in 1938. We had a big, big flood, February of 1938. Do you remember that flood, or...?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: I remem-- we weren't -- I wasn't in Colton. We were still up north, but we came back and we were staying in Santa -- over there with our comadre. And my father was working there for a little bit, and when we -- when he decided to come back to Colton, we'd seen all the destruction and [vacated?]. Well, it's already happened, but we said, "Well, I don't know, so..."

TOM RIVERA: David, what areas were affected there on -- in -- where the -- O Street is and --

DAVID GASCA: Well, I remember I had an uncle that worked in Santa Fe, and right on La Cadena going south from Valley College, there was a dip. Remember that dip there, [01:13:00] now where --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah.

DAVID GASCA: The flood control canal's there now. There was a dip, and that thing was... And so somehow, the -- my aunt got word that he couldn't come home because it was flooded, so my mother and I -- we went to stay with her, and it was raining. Rain, rain, rain, rain. I thought it'd never stop, and we stayed there overnight -- a couple of nights. Finally, it did -- receded, and he came home, but he couldn't cross.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Couldn't cross. That bad, huh?

DAVID GASCA: That bad, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: And you mentioned the damage that the flooding caused in -- around the --

DAVID GASCA: Well, down there on --

TOM RIVERA: -- [Village?] Park area.

DAVID GASCA: In (inaudible) --

TOM RIVERA: Pine Street.

DAVID GASCA: -- and South Congress -- yeah, Pine Street and Forest Street -- everything was soaked and washing away. [01:14:00] You'd go down to the river, and you could -- (laughs) that was bone dry, but that area was -- it was terrible.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, I don't know. I just -- I wasn't there at the time, so we missed it. So...

DAVID GASCA: And then if you notice in some areas that the soil is sandy and rocky?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Uh-huh.

DAVID GASCA: And it came out from that flood, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, so that happened, so that created a lot of damage in South Colton, as well as North Colton. Let me just kind of wind up our conversation. Let me ask you the question -- did I miss anything? Is there anything that you would like to share with us? Did I miss anything that I should have picked up or something that you would like to contribute to our discussion this morning?

DAVID GASCA: Well, I'd like to say something that -- I wish these young people would, [01:15:00] nowadays, look back and understand what happened in those days. Every time I go to the pool, and I see nothing but brown [fields?] there, I -- they don't realize why they're there now.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, the saying is, "I stand on the shoulders of people that were before me, and that's how I got to this place."

DAVID GASCA: Yeah, because they wouldn't let us in, and --

TOM RIVERA: So --

DAVID GASCA: -- now, it's different, and thank God. I believe we all get along and things work together instead of against each other.

TOM RIVERA: But the idea that there was struggle before we got to this point, and then it would behoove our young people to learn about our history, because this happened just a [01:16:00] few short years ago or the --

DAVID GASCA: Really.

TOM RIVERA: Because you're 87, ¿verdad, Joe?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Uh-huh, 87.

TOM RIVERA: Eighty-seven, and you're 83, and it just happened a few years ago -- well, during your lifetime.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, it did. It's still fresh in our mind. The mind doesn't get old; it's just -- your body gets old. Oh, and I meant to tell you when I went to boot camp in San Diego, Gene Kelly was at boot camp with us.

TOM RIVERA: Now, nobody --

JOSE HERNANDEZ: The dancer.

TOM RIVERA: -- knows who Gene Kelly is. He's a dancer.

JOSE HERNANDEZ: He's a dancer.

TOM RIVERA: The Hollywood dancer.

DAVID GASCA: He was there?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, he was in a company ahead of us. I was in 68-- 619, and he was in 618, I think it was, and -- but we used to see him in the evening. They gave us a little time off to cool off from -- during the day, [01:17:00] and we used to go out to where he was at and to the barracks, go right next door. And he'd go out there and do a little tap dancing for the soldiers.

DAVID GASCA: Oh, yeah, put on a show?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and that --

TOM RIVERA: That was the early '40s, yeah?

JOSE HERNANDEZ: Yeah, in 1944, and he -- I wa-- we didn't know he was even there until they told us, "Hey, Gene Kelly's next door." "Oh, yeah?" And he was famous already, so it's just one of those things that happens that -- without you expecting it.

TOM RIVERA: (laughs) Well, listen, Joe and David, thank you so much for providing for us a glimpse -- a little window into the experience that you -- both of you went through and were able to, I guess, not only contribute [01:18:00] to yourselves, your family, but also to our community. And again, thank you so much for being with us this morning.

DAVID GASCA: Our pleasure.

TOM RIVERA: And I do appreciate if I could borrow some of your materials so we can scan them, and we'll give them back to you, okay? Thank you very much for being with us this morning.

DAVID GASCA: You're welcome

End of Interview:
[01:18:22]