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Alice Rodriguez-Contreras

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South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Alice Rodriguez-Contreras, Rick Contreras

Interviewer:

Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

November 7, 2015

Interview Location:

Grand Terrace, CA

Length:

01:16:37

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Tom Rivera interviews Alice Rodriguez-Contreras and later her son Rick Contreras as well. Alice herself explains the history of her and her family's arrival from New Mexico to South Colton. The majority of the interview revolves around Alice's father's grocery store and the life that surrounds it. Especially during its life, the store was a hub for kindness, community, and good butchered meat. After discussing her time in Colton's schools, her son Richard is brought into the interview as a guest. He talks about his own story with his grandfather's store as well as living in South Colton in the Mexican American community. The interview then ends with Alice and Rick reminiscing about the pleasant childhood memories in South Colton.

Subject Topic:

- Moving to South Colton
- Grocery Store
- Family Run Businesses
- The Art of Butchery
- Being Generous to Less-Fortunate Customers
- School in South Colton
- School Sports
- Segregation
- Parties and Large Families

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Lordsburg	New Mexico
Silver City	New Mexico
M and 9th Street Store	Colton (Defunct Location)
San Salvador Catholic Church	Colton, CA
Colton Plant Calportland Co	20706 Slover Ave, Colton, CA 92324
Abraham Lincoln Elementary School	444 E Olive St, Colton, CA 92324
Rosevelt Junior High School	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Colton High School	777 W Valley Blvd, Colton, CA 92324
Colton Junior High	670 W Laurel St, Colton, CA 92324 (Colton Middle School)
Ulysses Grant Elementary School	550 W Olive St, Colton, CA 92324
New Colton Theatre	250 E. Valley Boulevard, Colton, CA 92324 (Defunct Location)
Hermosa Gardens Cemetery	900 N Meridian Ave, Colton, CA 92324

Temporal Coverage:

1905-2025

Key Events:

- Alice's family moves from New Mexico to South Colton.
- Alice remembers her hardworking parents and how the store was bought.
- Many people respected Guadalupe, Alice's father, and his affluence grew.
- Rick says his memories of being raised in South Colton.
- The topic of Hermosa Gardens Cemetery and how many of South Colton wish to be buried there.

Key Organizations:

- Pacific Route Express
- San Salvador Catholic Church
- Colton High's Mexican American Club
- Anheuser-Busch
- The Progresistas

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:10:37 - 00:11:15	Alice's father's store and his method of having a unique credit system.
Digital Video	00:12:33 - 00:14:55	Guadalupe treated everyone with kindness, even those who suffered from alcoholism. A further recollection of old, local customers.
Digital Video	00:33:17 - 00:34:16	Gene Evans, his family, and his role in the film industry as someone from Colton.
Digital Video	00:35:43 - 00:39:41	The sock hop and other things from Alice's youth.
Digital Video	00:50:13 - 00:51:37	Rick's memories of working with his grandfather Guadalupe.

Related Materials

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

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

TOM RIVERA: Good afternoon. My name is Tom Rivera, and welcome to our South Colton Oral History Project. Today is November the 7th, and we are taping this afternoon at 23170 Vista Grande Way, and it's approximately three o'clock in the afternoon. And our team of people that are on the committee are behind the camera, Mr. Frank Acosta, and also our historian, Mr. Henry Vasquez, who's sitting close by. And our guest this afternoon is Mr. Rick Contreras, and Rick is the son of Alice --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- Rodriguez-Contreras. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Alice Rodriguez-Contreras. And I hesitated for a while because I only know you as Cookie.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I know.

TOM RIVERA: I only know you as Cookie.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I told them just my creditors know me.

(laughter)

TOM RIVERA: [00:01:00] Well, Cookie, welcome. Welcome to this oral history

--

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, thank you very --

TOM RIVERA: -- project.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Thank you.

TOM RIVERA: And thank you so much for participating this afternoon.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Appreciate it.

TOM RIVERA: Well, not only is the appreciation here, but the fact that you were able to make time, especially from some of the many illnesses that you've had

lately, that you're able to with us to share your experiences growing up in South Colton. Yeah. I'd like to start and talk about your father. Your father was one of the few businesspeople that we had in South Colton. He owned a grocery store. When did he open up his grocery store?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, I have the date. (rustling papers)
Opened in 1943.

TOM RIVERA: In 1943?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: That was during the war years.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And then he closed the store in 1974.

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen seventy-four?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, (inaudible), he closed the store.

TOM RIVERA: And how many [00:02:00] years is that that he operated the store? Frank, I can't --

FRANK ACOSTA: Thirty-one.

TOM RIVERA: Thirty-ones years that he operated that store? That was a long time --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Long time, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: -- that he operated the store.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He really worked, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Tell me, what was your dad's name?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Guadalupe.

TOM RIVERA: Guadalupe?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Rodriguez? Did he have a middle name?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I never -- I don't even remember.

TOM RIVERA: No?

FRANK ACOSTA: Do you know your mother's name?

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

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Ernestine.

TOM RIVERA: Ernestine. Ernestine.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And Cordoba Rodriguez.

TOM RIVERA: Cordoba Rodriguez. And when did they come to Colton, Cookie?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: My gosh. They came from New Mexico. We came when we were little, and then we moved to Cucamonga, and we lived with my grandma -- my dad's mom.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you were already born?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh yes, we were born.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, how old --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: All of us were.

TOM RIVERA: -- were you when you came from New Mexico, do you remember?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No. Well, I guess I must not have started school because I remember going to school (laughs) in Cucamonga.

TOM RIVERA: So you were really young, then, when you came to Colton, okay.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Were you the only member of the family that came during that period or did you have older brothers and sisters?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes. My older brother [00:03:00] [Armando?] and [Cecilia?], my sister, [Nadine?], which is [Naid?].

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Where was Nadine born? In New Mexico or Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: All of us were born in New Mexico.

TOM RIVERA: How about [Ray?]? Was he born in New Mexico?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: New Mexico. Lordsburg, New Mexico.

TOM RIVERA: What's the name of the --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Lordsburg.

TOM RIVERA: Lordsburg, New Mexico?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And when they came to Colton, where did they live? Where did they live in Colton? Because you said --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, we rented -- I guess my dad rented a house with a -- the [Gonzales?], and I don't remember. We moved a couple of times.

TOM RIVERA: What street was that on, Cookie?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: That was on L Street.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, L Street, okay. And that's not too far from where your dad bought a property and built a house.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, that's the same street crossing La Cadena. That's where he built the house.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And then you said you came from Cucamonga?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: We came to Cucamonga because my grandmother lived -- my dad's mom. We stayed there a while, yeah, until we got settled [00:04:00] over here because it was so far (laughs) to go, a long time.

TOM RIVERA: Well, the -- during that period, that you moved, why did your dad move to Colton? Do you remember why you moved to Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I think all the jobs, probably, because he used to work in the mines over there, Silver City in the mines. It was kind of hard. Then they moved over here.

TOM RIVERA: Silver City was where?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: In New Mexico.

TOM RIVERA: In New Mexico?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: So when he came here, did he work for the cement plant in Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No.

TOM RIVERA: No?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Mm-mmm.

TOM RIVERA: And where did he work when he came to Colton -- when you moved to Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I don't remember. We were so young. Little odd jobs here and there. And then my mom worked también. She was working to help support all of us. Yeah, she used to work for the PFE. You know the PFE right there where the trains --

TOM RIVERA: [00:05:00] Pacific Route Express? Your mom worked for them?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, because she had -- ran the cafeteria there.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, tell me about that. (laughter) How did your mom get started with the PFE?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, because she needed jobs, and then hacía la comida right there.

TOM RIVERA: So your mom was hired as a cook for the PFE. And how long did she work --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: But they had a lot of workers.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And how long did she work there?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: For a while. She took odd jobs here and there. Then they got the store.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. Before we get to the store -- because that's a very, very interesting topic -- but your mom worked at the PFE -- was a cook at the PFE. And for how long? Do you remember?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No. We were so young, I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: And how did your dad get interested in a grocery store?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I don't know. I guess he was (inaudible) because some place that was selling -- the [Evans?] were selling the store.

[00:06:00] And I guess -- Gene Evans's uncle was the one that -- and then they got the store and the property next door. The house was next door.

TOM RIVERA: So the store was located on M and 9th Street?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: The northwest corner in front of the railroad tracks.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: In front of the railroad tracks, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And then that store was owned by the Evans family, and they were -- they sold the store and your dad said, "I'm going to buy that store."

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, he must've gotten a good price for it.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. What motivated him to buy the store, do you know?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I really -- we were so young, I don't really know how.

TOM RIVERA: Did he have experience of owning a store?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No. But then you know what? When he got the store, he was a very good butcher. He used to sell a lot of meat, fresh meat. Rick remembers. Rick used to help him. (laughs) [00:07:00] A lot of people would go (inaudible) to him, but they would go just to buy some of the fresh meat at the store. I remember I'd describe it, as soon as you come in, to the right was a wine rack. (laughs) And then the fruits, the lettuce, then that, and in back, the cereals. I can see them in my head, how it was all organized.

TOM RIVERA: Tell us again. As you walk in front of the -- in the store, describe the store. What was on the right side?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: The wines. (laughs) The wine was on the right side by the windows.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. Okay, and then next?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Canned goods.

TOM RIVERA: The canned goods. And then the next area?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: The next area was across. That's where they had washing powders and all that -- at that time, Clorox and all that -- the sugar también (inaudible) this side, and the vegetable stands were on that side también.

TOM RIVERA: And where was the meat department located? Where was the [00:08:00] meat?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Towards the back.

TOM RIVERA: Towards the back. And you said your dad was an expert, excellent butcher.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh yes.

TOM RIVERA: Do you know where he learned how to be a butcher?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I guess he just learned by himself, little by little.

TOM RIVERA: And you said that he was an excellent butcher and people would line up to --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, to get the meat.

TOM RIVERA: -- to get the meat.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: But it was fresh meat, no mixture of fat, nothing. Rick remembers all that because he used to help my dad in the store.

TOM RIVERA: So Rick was also part of the --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [Lucky?] was a good butcher.

TOM RIVERA: -- operation there at the store.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah, I was about seven years old, eight years old stocking shelves. (laughter) In high school, I was still working there too.

TOM RIVERA: Did you have any experience in being a butcher, Rick?

RICK CONTRERAS: I just wrapped the meat and everything. He already had it cut, and I just waited and wrapped it, priced it, and gave it to them.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: My dad had the butcher block and everything. Everything was fresh. Everything was fresh.

TOM RIVERA: Now, where would he get his meat from? Who would --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They would deliver it from the meat companies, but [00:09:00] one whole half of a side of beef. They would deliver the meat.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. And do you remember which companies would --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: -- deliver the meats?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I don't remember. Yeah, it was a long time ago. But they know they had -- they delivered it there. And then my dad would just cut it up.

TOM RIVERA: People that worked at the store, Cookie -- I'm sure you worked at the store.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: (laughter) Yes, I did. We were young. I had to stand on a box so I could reach the counter.

TOM RIVERA: Well, so you had to get help from a box.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, because my dad, when he was first starting, he couldn't afford to get a lot of workers, so it took us -- my dad used to open the store at 7:00 in the morning and close at 7:00 at night.

TOM RIVERA: Twelve hours. Twelve hours.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And then my mom.

TOM RIVERA: So your mom also helped at the store?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh yes. She was there todo el tiempo. She would go home to make dinner or something, yeah. It was all of us.

TOM RIVERA: So you were one of the --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- employees. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: -- employees. [00:10:00] Who else worked at the store besides you?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Okay. My sister Cecilia and Naid, my other sister. She would hardly work, but she worked también. And then afterwards -- way, way afterwards -- Moni, my brother Raymond, would help.

TOM RIVERA: And Raymond was the baby of the family?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, he was the baby of the family. And we all had to because he couldn't hire any help by then. I think I got paid a dollar

an hour, something like that, yeah. But at first, we didn't get paid because everything had to go to get the things for the store and everything. It was tough getting started.

TOM RIVERA: Now, all of you learned the grocery business?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: And you learned --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Even Rick. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: And you learned how to run a cash register?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, a register, uh-huh. And I learned también the ones that couldn't afford it, my dad would make bills for them.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so he had credit. People could buy --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, they could.

TOM RIVERA: -- products on credit.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. My dad gave them credit.

[00:11:00] And I remember when they used to come and pay what they owed. My dad let this -- people didn't have any money. He would give each one a pie. (laughs) We would always have fresh pies to give them when they paid. But then we would deliver the food to their houses.

TOM RIVERA: Well, tell me about that. You had a delivery service to the house?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: We delivered everything. My dad used to have -- [Pancho Carrera?], he used to help there and deliver.

TOM RIVERA: Now, Pancho Carrera, who was he? Was he a relative?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No, just a -- he was always in the store.

TOM RIVERA: An employee?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: An employee, uh-huh, but we've known him for years and he would help a lot en la tienda. And here and there, my dad had different ones helping, trying to help other kids también.

TOM RIVERA: And you had the delivery service.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: (laughs) I delivered.

TOM RIVERA: How did that work?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It worked pretty good. (laughs) My sister Cecilia, when one of the -- the ones who bought them, los hombres [00:12:00] or whoever to buy them, she would deliver them with the groceries.

TOM RIVERA: Was there a charge for delivery?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No.

TOM RIVERA: No charge for delivery.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: We had an old Chevy truck that my dad had.

TOM RIVERA: What kind of delivery truck was it?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: A little --

TOM RIVERA: Panel truck?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No, a regular truck, chiquito for the Chevy. The groceries (laughs) went in there.

TOM RIVERA: And you delivered to the neighborhood and people would get their --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, to get their groceries. But it was kind of hard for them.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. You mentioned, when you described the store, that you opened at seven o'clock in the morning and that on the -- when you go in the store,

on the righthand side were the wines. Tell us about who were your first customers that lined up when the store opened?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, mostly the ones right living on that street right there.

TOM RIVERA: But you were telling me about the winitos.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, the winitos. [00:13:00] They were passed out most of the time. (laughs) They would be like that, just waiting for their wine.

TOM RIVERA: But you said they would be waiting for your dad to open the store.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, my dad to open the store. They would be sitting in front of the door, waiting. (laughter) They were good, though, pobrecitos. But they wanted their wine -- tokay, muscatel, those bottles.

TOM RIVERA: So they would be the ones that would be banging on the door to open the door because --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, he would be waiting for my dad to open the store so they could get their wine. (laughter) But it was fun, that store. We had a lot of customers and we got along with everybody, so I met a lot of --

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember any of your customers?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh yes.

TOM RIVERA: A ver?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [All those Guerreros?].

TOM RIVERA: Which Guerreros?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [Fidel?] Guerrero and then there was [Consuelo Alba?]. And then there was -- down that street -- Martinez, Martinez también.

TOM RIVERA: Danny Martinez's family?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, Martinez, [00:14:00] uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh. And then the [Felixes?] --

TOM RIVERA: Across the street from you?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- across the street, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, that was [Jose?] Felix.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, y luego was.... But in back was [Espinosas?].

TOM RIVERA: Oh, that's right.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: The back of the store, [Ronnie?] Espinosa and his mom, and (inaudible) street. And then even on L Street, the [Riveras?] were there también, the [Portios?].

TOM RIVERA: There was the three people, three Riveras, that family. Okay. And then the Portio family.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: The Portios, uh-huh. They lived on L Street. [Arandas?].

TOM RIVERA: Los Arandas also lived almost across the street --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- from me.

TOM RIVERA: -- from you, right.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: From our house, where my dad built the house. And then qué más vivía allí? [Casadas?]. The Casadas, then the Portios lived there también, and my gosh. Muchos vivían allí (laughs) in the street.

TOM RIVERA: Well, Cookie, I remember when I was [00:15:00] a little boy, I was a kindergarten. I used to go to the store -- to your store with my grandfather, [Sisto?] Rivera.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I remember Sisto.

TOM RIVERA: What do you remember about my grandfather?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He was big, tall, husky. Cecilia used to deliver [to men?].

TOM RIVERA: Oh, he would also be -- they delivered?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: To Sisto.

TOM RIVERA: The best thing that I remember, going with -- to him to the store, and after we were -- did his -- the shopping, he would buy me a soda, so I remember the soda that he would buy me (laughter) and I loved going to the store with him because I would get a soda.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And I remember sometimes, he would take the -- remember the beer? They had it in bottles, the Burgie and all those, and they would get five cents for a bottle refund or whatever.

TOM RIVERA: A nickel. A nickel for a bottle, yeah. Yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: A lot of them would save their bottles and then exchange them for real beer, whatever -- Acme beer and beer más antes.

TOM RIVERA: [00:16:00] But I do remember it. You reminded me about the deposit. The deposit of the bottles, the soda bottles and the beer bottles. Yeah, we'd take in the soda bottles. We got a penny or two bottles. And for the beer bottles, we got a nickel for the quart-sized bottles. Yeah. And that was neat because we could buy our candy. (laughter)

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And I remember when they used to deliver the ice cream. My dad would always say, "Do you have extra ice cream?" They would give us big containers of ice cream for us to take home (inaudible). My dad got along with everybody. And one time, the men on the weenies -- what do you call that commercial? The weenies, delivering the weenies guy. I don't know.

FRANK ACOSTA: Oscar Mayer?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oscar Mayer.

TOM RIVERA: Oscar Mayer. It was Oscar Mayer.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Even en our tienda también, all of them went to markets, and I remember (inaudible). (laughs) My dad would get [along?] with anybody.

TOM RIVERA: So you --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: We were happy there.

TOM RIVERA: [00:17:00] Uh-huh, you were? Well, the store was prospering. Well, tell me, you said your dad got along with everybody. What kind of personality did he have?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, sometimes he would have his ups and downs.

TOM RIVERA: Like all of us.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Like everybody else, yeah. But he got along with everybody. He treated everybody nice, like giving them credit and all that, and he was ready when they came to make a payment. But he never told them, "I want you to pay me when you'll be able to afford it." But no beer, no wine, just food. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: So he understands the situation of people, and he was very empathetic and sympathetic of people when they needed groceries, eh? Yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And then too he would help the church a lot.

TOM RIVERA: Well, tell me about the --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: San Salvador with Father Valencia. He would help them a lot for the fiestas and everything. He would give them big sacks

of beans and big sacks of potatoes, whatever they needed, and my dad would just donate it to them.

TOM RIVERA: So when the church had fiestas or Jamaicas, [00:18:00] he would provide some of the product that they would sell for a fundraiser.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh, sacks of beans.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Sacks of beans.

TOM RIVERA: Flour también? Flour?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I remember when they had the 25-pound -- the flour, the small packet también flour.

TOM RIVERA: And he would donate those?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, the big ones.

TOM RIVERA: Besides providing support for the church, did he participate in the Fiestas Patrias?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: With donations.

TOM RIVERA: With donations?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And what kind of -- was it? Monetary donations? Or was it product donation?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Sometimes money to help them. For the fiestas, the floats and all that.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, he would help by donating --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He would help them.

TOM RIVERA: -- funds to be able to put the floats together?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: To have the parade and everything. They used to be beautiful, those [states?] parades.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, they were nice.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Weren't they really?

TOM RIVERA: They were nice. I remember when I was a little boy, four years old or three years old, my [00:19:00] cousin ran for Queen, and I was on the -- she was Queen so I was one of the --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Who was that?

TOM RIVERA: Cómo se llamaba? [Jo Ouisa?], Jo Ouisa, Jo Ouisa. Yeah. But that was back in the early '40s.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. They had pretty queens. [Christina Valderia?].

TOM RIVERA: Well, tell me about -- Christina worked for you.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, she helped the men in the store.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And then she passed away -- got sick.

TOM RIVERA: But she was also -- she was working at your store for a long, long time.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, Christina.

TOM RIVERA: Pretty, pretty girl.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Very nice, Christina, era mi comadre.

TOM RIVERA: And también she has a wonderful personality.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh yes.

TOM RIVERA: (Inaudible) yeah. And she ran for Queen? Did she -- was she elected as a Queen?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, and I remember [Moni Calva?]. She was pretty too and she ran for Queen.

TOM RIVERA: Did she also work for you?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No, she didn't. But the other -- [Alice Alba?] worked at the store for my dad también (inaudible) [00:20:00] [Monica?]. She worked at the store too. Pretty good workers.

TOM RIVERA: So your dad was very supportive of the church activities.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, a lot. And you know what? Rick and them would do (inaudible) for Christmas Eve, Rick? The priest would go (laughs) to the house on Christmas Eve to be with the family. The priest --

TOM RIVERA: Father Valencia would go to your house to spend the Christmas Eve with you?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

RICK CONTRERAS: Christmas Eve, yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And who -- whatever the Father would do that day.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, yes, yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, he got along (inaudible) with Father Valencia. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Well, how was Christmas Eve there with Father Valencia? Did you have tamales?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Tamales.

TOM RIVERA: You had tamales?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, all the time.

TOM RIVERA: And who made the tamales that you -- did you have somebody make them for you?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No, we made tamales with Mom.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, your mom used to make tamales?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: My mom (inaudible), yeah. She used to make tamales, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And you -- [00:21:00] the family would help her?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, and then I'd make tamales también and the boys were helping me. By the time they were getting older, they were helping me make tamales. There's nothing like homemade tamales.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, of course, of course. And then for Christmas --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: For Christmas, mm-hmm.

TOM RIVERA: And then what about Misa de Gallo? Did Father Valencia -- how did he get from your house to --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: On Christmas Eve?

TOM RIVERA: Yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I don't know, but he was there, Rick.

RICK CONTRERAS: That was weird that he did it. I didn't think it was weird until later on that we had a priest at our house for Christmas Eve. (laughter) Like, wait, how'd that happen?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Father Valencia was always kidding around and everything también. He got (inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: But he and your dad -- well, Father Valencia was very fortunate that there were people in Colton like your dad that helped the church.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: That helped a lot, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: That helped a lot. And also [00:22:00] your dad and other people in the community, the other merchants, would also support Las Fiestas Patrias.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They did.

TOM RIVERA: They supported the Fiestas Patrias, yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, the other stores, [Esteban?] and all those stores.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, yes. Esteban and --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- Cervantes.

TOM RIVERA: -- Cervantes and Martinez and all those people always helped support the Fiestas Patrias.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. I remember one of the Martinez -- what was her name? Muy bonita. She won for Queen one time. They had the market right there on 7th Street and she was very pretty. But she had a -- everybody had to help. We had beautiful fiestas at that time, and everybody would like to go and watch the dancing, watch everything. Now it's [comora?].

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, there was a big support for those fiestas. Because we couldn't go to the north end of town, then we had our own [00:23:00] fiestas, so we would have -- make sure that they were well done, verdad? And that everybody participated, yeah. Getting back to your dad and his store, you said that your dad gave credit to people. Was it -- how did -- how was that handled, Cookie? People would pick the products that they needed --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, and I would -- we had bills, two copies. It was a little book. It was like that, and we would write and jot them down. They would take the second copy, knowing what they bought, and he would keep the white sheet. And then they -- we had a big chest at the end with the bills alphabetically la gente que está sacando.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes. And you said that at the end of the week or at the end of the month, people would come back and pay -- take care of their bill. Did he have any problems with anybody not paying?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, once in a while, one or two.

TOM RIVERA: But for the most part --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They were all -- they were very -- my dad was [00:24:00] very generous to all the people.

TOM RIVERA: And if they paid their bill, your dad would give them a --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- a pie. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: -- a big pie.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, he would give them a pie. He had the pie -- might give them -- my dad got a whole bunch of pies from the pie man. He used to go and then my dad would give them a pie. Well, that was something. They were all happy with that. "Oh, for my coffee," they would say. But it was an honor to work there. We really enjoyed it. We'd meet so many people, and even white people coming in -- on the other side -- would come and get meat from my dad, the special cuts or whatever they want because it was fresh.

TOM RIVERA: So people from North Colton would come and visit the grocery store and tell Mr. Rodriguez or Guadalupe, "I need a cut of whatever," and he would prepare it for them.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. So he established a relationship with North Colton also.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, también, uh-huh. [00:25:00] [I miss it?].

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. So the people in -- that shopped -- I know my grandfather worked for the PFE, and my grandfather started working at the PFE in 1905. So -- and then you said your father opened the store in 1942. So that was --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: That's (inaudible) when she called on the phone, 1943, she opened. They closed it in 1974.

TOM RIVERA: So 1943's when they opened the store.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: That's what the (inaudible) my sisters told me on the phone.

TOM RIVERA: My grandpa that was with the PFE, did any -- have any people that worked at the [Cero?], at the cement plant that were also customers?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, they used to come in también, the cement [boys?].

TOM RIVERA: And they also lived close in that area también, verdad?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, they were all scattered, the ones that used to (inaudible) [Portland Cement?].

TOM RIVERA: Right. What about the people that picked oranges? Los [volucheros?]. Would you -- did you have a lot of customers that picked oranges?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, my dad would give them credit when they couldn't afford it. [00:26:00] He felt sorry.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. But that was a -- picking oranges was pretty steady in Colton because it was almost a 10-month employment that they had because of the different types of oranges that they grew in the area.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, there were oranges all the time.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, there was always work there.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Orange trees, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And qué te quiero preguntar, what about -- what kind of -- did your dad have any hobbies, any activities that he participated in?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He liked to go to football games or baseball games. He liked to go. But yeah, I guess he did follow sports. He would take us to go see the sports. I didn't understand any of those. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Where would you -- where would he go to --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Sometimes to see the Dodgers.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, back then?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Back then, uh-huh, and football, [00:27:00] the Rose Bowl and the (inaudible), and vaguely I remember part of it. But he liked all that.

TOM RIVERA: So your dad was very -- what can I say --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: When he had the time. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: -- was very adventurous, verdad?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Sí.

TOM RIVERA: Very adventurous. "Let's go to the football game and let's go to the baseball game in Los Angeles." Porque LA was far, Cookie. We didn't have the freeways.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I know it. It took us forever to get to the beach. You remember the side roads?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Took us forever to get there because there was no freeway. I remember that part.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, going to Riverside and all the way --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- all the way up there. Y con las sandías. (laughter) Boloney sandwiches or whatever. Whatever we threw in here, but we would always be together, the family.

TOM RIVERA: So you had a good picnic, eh?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: That's good, that's good. Let me see what I have here también. The -- in setting up the business, [00:28:00] Cookie, was it hard for him to get established in the grocery business or with people? His -- you said he trusted people and he was honest with people.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: So that type of attitude just carried him through a lot.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, throughout everything.

TOM RIVERA: Throughout all the years, verdad? Throughout all the years, that he didn't have any problems with anything.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: The only time when he closed the store because of his health, and then he -- they moved to Grand Terrace, my mom and dad.

TOM RIVERA: So when he -- in the later years -- you said 1976, you said? Nineteen seventy-six when he closed the store? Was it because of health reasons.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I guess they were just tired, his age and my mom's age and everything.

FRANK ACOSTA: I think that was '74, Tom.

TOM RIVERA: Seventy-four? Seventy-four that they closed the store. When they closed the store --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Nineteen seventy-four.

TOM RIVERA: When they closed the store, they retired and moved to [00:29:00] Grand Terrace.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, to be over there by my brother Raymond. And they continued right there.

TOM RIVERA: What did he do after? When he retired, did he continue going to sports games?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. Yeah, he did. I only remember vaguely because I wasn't living there no more when -- but I guess he did. He liked sports a lot. He liked to buy cars. I know he had (laughs) Cadillacs and everything.

(laughter) Cadillacs and (inaudible) like that. Well, I know nothing about cars. But he took good care of his cars.

TOM RIVERA: Well, he -- like you said, he -- one of the very few people that owned a Cadillac, verdad?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, my dad. He worked a lot.

TOM RIVERA: And do you remember the first Cadillac that he bought?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No. [00:30:00] It must've been -- I was already a teenager, I think, when he got it.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember the color of the Cadillac?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No.

TOM RIVERA: But he loved cars.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: By that time, I didn't understand about cars.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, no, it's understandable. But he loved cars.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, he did.

TOM RIVERA: He loved cars.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: My dad. Yeah, he worked all his life, suffered and everything. But good workers. Him and my mom really got in there and worked.

TOM RIVERA: Well, they seemed to have been a wonderful partnership, a good marriage, that they supported each other.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They did. And then afterwards, my dad passed away, my mom stayed a widow, and then my mom -- my mother's first son, he passed away también. My mom really took it bad. We had three losses in the family in one year. [00:31:00] We had -- my dad had passed away, my brother had passed away, and my grandma passed away.

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

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I think he was in his seventies, probably, seventies.

TOM RIVERA: In the seventies or so. And what about your mom?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: También ella, my mom was in her nineties, I think, when she passed.

TOM RIVERA: Estaba grande, then. Yeah, she had a wonderful long life.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, she did. Yeah. And then she passed.

TOM RIVERA: We talked about the store, Cookie, and I can't help but call you Cookie. I'm not going to call your Alice.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: (laughter) No, I won't turn. "Who are you talking to?"

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. (laughs) Anyway, tell me, what nice things do you remember about the store? You were there for -- since '43.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, but you know why? Because we had good customers that came in who liked to talk and we met a lot of people.

[00:32:00] We had business. We got to know a lot of people. And, "Oh, here comes Señor (inaudible). Here comes --" We'd see them coming in. You get used to it.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. So the good memories you have are your customers.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. Well, if it wasn't for them -- they helped us so much.

TOM RIVERA: Y qué más? What about your dad's relationship with the suppliers, the people that he bought his product from?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He had good. He was never in debt with them or nothing. My dad always was -- paid his bills and everything by (inaudible).

TOM RIVERA: Was your dad ever contacted by the people in North Colton to participate in activities in North Colton, like the Chamber of Commerce?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Not that I know of, uh-uh.

TOM RIVERA: Like the Chamber of Commerce?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: If they did, I don't know. I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: Because I would imagine he had a wonderful reputation.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He did.

TOM RIVERA: And that reputation, [00:33:00] I would imagine, also carried him far from the store into North Colton or possibly other communities where people would come to the store.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. A lot of them from North Colton would go to the store to buy -- especially the meat, uh-huh, because it was so fresh.

TOM RIVERA: Now, you said that your dad bought the store from the Evans family and he bought the store in 1943.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I believe so. Yeah, 1943, he opened the store.

TOM RIVERA: And the Evans family was a family in Colton --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, they had another little store, but we had the [Macko?] around there. They had a little store.

TOM RIVERA: There on 9th Street? Ninth and --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I believe so.

FRANK ACOSTA: Seventh and B.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Seventh?

FRANK ACOSTA: Seventh and B.

TOM RIVERA: Seventh and B. And also one of the sons of the Evans family was a movie star.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Gene.

TOM RIVERA: Gene.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Gene Evans.

TOM RIVERA: And [00:34:00] his famous movie was *Steel Helmet*.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, he was.

TOM RIVERA: And when the movie came to Colton, (laughter) (inaudible).

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, the theater. I liked to go to the Hub City and the Colton theaters. We liked the movies there.

TOM RIVERA: Now, tell me about you. Tell me about you. You were born in New Mexico, you said?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, Lordsburg, New Mexico.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. And when you came to Cucamonga and then to Colton, and you started school where, Cookie, in Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: In Colton, I started school. I started in Lincoln School.

TOM RIVERA: Why Lincoln? Because you lived in South Colton.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, there was a boundary line.

TOM RIVERA: And your street -- L Street -- was the boundary, so anything north of L Street would go to Lincoln School.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. I remember the people that went with -- [Rosa Gonzales?] and [Josie?] Gonzales and [00:35:00] [Ruby?]. I

remember the ones that had (inaudible) Gonzales. He was a baseball player. And all the ones that used to go from here.

TOM RIVERA: So all of you from --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And we went to school there. We rented a house. My dad rented a house right there by this side of L Street when we first came from Cucamonga, and we lived there for a while, and then we got the store. And then we took (laughs) off from there.

TOM RIVERA: When you started school at Lincoln, what grade was that, Cookie?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: About kindergarten.

TOM RIVERA: Was it kindergarten that you started there?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And then you went through junior high school at Roosevelt?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: At Roosevelt, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And then you went to Colton High School?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, I did.

TOM RIVERA: And what year did you go to Colton High School?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, I graduated in 1953.

TOM RIVERA: So 1949?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Around there, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And what are some of the things that you were involved in at Colton High School?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [00:36:00] (laughs) Well, at the high school?

TOM RIVERA: Sí.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They had the Mexican American Club, Mr. [Toledo?],

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Tell us about the Mexican American --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It was at -- we would have dances, perform for the people that -- we didn't have no auditorium, so we'd have it in the gym, the dances and everything. We liked that a lot. Then we had our sock hop dances there. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember any of the members of the Mexican American Club?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, almost all of them.

TOM RIVERA: Who do you remember that was part of that group?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Okay, the [Saldañas?].

TOM RIVERA: [Joe?] Saldaña and --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh God, there's 14 of them. [Connie?] -- I used to hang around with Connie Saldaña. There was [Margarito?] and Joe. It's a big family.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, 14 members, and they lived on Maple Street.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Maple Street in la casita chiquita. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. But they had a lot of parties and activities there.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: All the time.

TOM RIVERA: [00:37:00] Do you remember any of those parties?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I used to go (laughs) to some of them, uh-huh. I remember I used to stay over nights with Connie there. They had -- inside, instead of having a regular kitchen table, they had a table like for a picnic so everybody could sit, there were so many of them. Some of them would live in the back house. But it was nice. Señora, it was real nice, Saldañas. It was a big family, but I went to one of their reunions not long ago. My goodness gracious, it the park -- jiminy, did I see grandchildren, great-grandchildren, all of them from each family of Saldañas.

TOM RIVERA: But the Saldañas were -- the mom and dad would open -- always open their house for the kids, and they had so many kids that you always had kids. You always had parties. You always had reunions.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And they loved to dance. All of them loved to dance.

TOM RIVERA: They were all good dancers.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They were all good dancers, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: [Modo?], I'd see Modo at some of the fiestas.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Modo, yeah. [00:38:00] (Inaudible) yeah, Modo. And there was [Louie?], but he passed away. Louie Saldaña, he passed away también. Joe passed away. And I think they had a brother that passed away in the Air Force -- I mean, on a plane. He passed away. [Yolanda?]. There's a lot of them.

TOM RIVERA: But you were a good friend of the Saldaña family.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, very good. I always used to go to their parties. They always would invite -- even just to the family reunions. "Oh, Cookie, you have to come. You're part of the family." (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: And getting back to the Mexican American Club, the Saldañas were part of it. Other members of the club. Do you remember any other members?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It was quite a bit. I don't remember the -- many of those names. But it was nice.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember who your advisor was for the club? Who was your advisor?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Mr. Toledo.

TOM RIVERA: Quién?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Mr. Toledo.

TOM RIVERA: And what did he teach?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I [00:39:00] think he'd teach Spanish, I believe.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, okay. And what kind of activities did you have besides the -- did you have a big program for the high school, that you had a production for the high school that you would --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Participate? Uh-huh, musicals, and then the dances we would have, and the sock hops. We had to dance in the gym, but they were beautiful dances.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, you started with the sock hop and I interrupted you. Tell me about the sock hop.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh my God. (laughs) The old songs, like Elvis Presley all those before all Elvis and all those.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember any of the songs?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Ay Díos mío. That far back? I don't know.

HENRY VASQUEZ: That was the -- was it the bebop era?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: The bebop era, mm-hmm. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember any of those songs, Henry?

FRANK ACOSTA: Well, what year --

TOM RIVERA: The '40s, the early '50s.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Early '50s. [00:40:00] I know there was Pat Boone.

FRANK ACOSTA: Perry Como.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Perry -- oh, I loved Perry. Dean Martin and -- I --

FRANK ACOSTA: Doris Day.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, I loved Doris Day.

FRANK ACOSTA: Vaughn Monroe.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Excuse me?

FRANK ACOSTA: Vaughn Monroe.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Monroe?

FRANK ACOSTA: Vaughn Monroe.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. They had good bands.

TOM RIVERA: And what other activities were you involved at the high school?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I used to help in the office quite a bit, and they would send me to the rooms, who was tardy and this -- here, go with this slip of paper. (laughs) Going to the rooms, or going outside the football fields to tell them, "You're wanted in the office." I would stay there and watch all the football players. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Did you participate at the football games?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I went to all the games, especially when they played San Bernardino. That was --

TOM RIVERA: That was our rival.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh my goodness. Yeah, and basketball and anything.

TOM RIVERA: What about [00:41:00] como se llama? -- football -- how about basketball? I would imagine basketball was big in Colton.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh yes, uh-huh, especially -- como se llama, one of the good players. Rudy Oliva was one of them.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, Rudy Oliva was a good ball player? South Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Basketball.

TOM RIVERA: Good basketball player.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh. [Paulie Carlos?] was one of them también, and there was [Nini?]. Cómo se llamaba? [Della Rosa?] was one of them. They were all Mexican.

TOM RIVERA: What about Mike who lived next to the church? Mike --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: -- Mercado?

TOM RIVERA: No, Mike -- he was a basketball player. His father -- his son is the district attorney for San Bernardino County.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Ramos.

TOM RIVERA: Ramos. Mike Ramos.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I went to school with Mike.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you went to school with Mike? He was a good ball players, verdad?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Mm-hmm. In fact, he went to school at Lincoln también because he lived right across, like that.

TOM RIVERA: On L Street, [00:42:00] yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. Mike. There was quite a few that were good basketball players at that time, but we -- then afterwards, after the games, we went to McDonald's.

TOM RIVERA: Where would you go?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: McDonald's. Everybody used to hang out when they opened McDonald's. It was always packed. I think --

TOM RIVERA: Is that in San Bernardino?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: You'd drive after the ball game up to San Bernardino on D Street?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, and 15 cents for a hamburger, uh-huh, and the cokes, and everybody would just show up there. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: So it was a good meeting place for --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, for everybody.

TOM RIVERA: -- for everybody after the ball --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: After the games, uh-huh. We had fun. I participated in a lot of those games. I went to all of them [for credit?]. It turned out good.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Now, how did you meet your husband?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Richard?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I was a senior in high school and he was in the Marines when I met him.

TOM RIVERA: Was he from Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [00:43:00] Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh. He's Rudy's brother.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I met him, and then afterwards we got engaged and we got married.

TOM RIVERA: Did you have a big wedding?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No, it (inaudible). (laughs) We went to Yuma.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you eloped?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: We eloped, yeah, because he was in the service. I remember [Manuel Suche?].

TOM RIVERA: Manuel Suchee, yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He was my padrino. He went with us.

TOM RIVERA: And he played for the Mercuries.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: He played for the Mercuries, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: He was a pitcher, Dynamite Suchee.

FRANK ACOSTA: That wasn't his brother. Dynamite was Manuel's brother.

Dynamite Suchee was Manuel's brother.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I don't know Dynamite. I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Anyway, Suchee, I do remember the Suchees, and it seemed to me that they were all involved [00:44:00] with the Mercuries and all those baseball activities in the South Colton.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [Mercado?] used to play with them too, and my cousin used to play with them too, [Lalo Gomez?].

TOM RIVERA: Who did?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Lalo Gomez.

TOM RIVERA: Tell me about Lalo. I don't remember the name. The name doesn't --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh. Well, he was my aunt's child. She had 10 kids también, were my cousins, and they were all involved in sports. One went to Notre Dame también, one of those kids. One went to the Air Force Academy. They were real religious también. But he used to play también con el team, the Mercuries.

TOM RIVERA: And we were talking about you meeting your husband, you eloping to Yuma. Was the family upset?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: My dad. (laughter) I wouldn't tell him. My mom knew. My dad got mad at me. [00:45:00] I said, "Dad, you'll get over it."

TOM RIVERA: He [probably?] (inaudible) what you did because --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I used to have a lot of parties before then in my house. My dad always let me have a lot of parties. He had a jukebox there, and we invited -- "How many are coming?" my dad would say. "Dad, just a few." At 7:00, everybody would show up --

TOM RIVERA: I was going to ask, what did you guys do for entertainment? I guess you had parties --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I had a lot of parties.

TOM RIVERA: -- and you were the life of the party.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, they were always showing up. "I remember we used to go to your parties," and I'd try to think back. I always had parties with all my friends right there at the house. At least they knew who we were.

TOM RIVERA: So the parties, you would have a little dancing.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Dancing, uh-huh.

TOM RIVERA: And it was an open party? Or did you invite just certain people?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Certain people. They brought friends or whatever from San Bernardino, friends that we knew, all of us. But it turned out nice. My dad let us have parties at his house. I remember my dad getting some baloney [00:46:00] or I don't know what else, mixing it to make sandwiches and all that for us.

TOM RIVERA: So the place to be was at Cookie's party.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: All the time, I had parties. My sons had parties all the time too. (laughter) They take after me.

TOM RIVERA: Well, not only that, but I was going to ask you, after you got married, did you live in Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, we lived in Colton.

TOM RIVERA: And your husband was in the Marine Corps?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, he was in the Marines.

TOM RIVERA: And after he came out of the Marine Corps, did you still continue living in Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, we rented a little house, [then they?] were in another little house. Times are hard, that time. And then we bought our home.

TOM RIVERA: Did you work, Cookie, during this period?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: All the -- yeah, I used to work all the time. I used to help. I even helped my dad at the store and I would get odd jobs here and there.

TOM RIVERA: So you were all working, then.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yep, always.

TOM RIVERA: You were always working.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Even after [00:47:00] I got married -- way afterwards, when my husband retired from Kaiser, we opened a store -- video store. We ran it and met more people there. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so the Rodriguez family -- you -- opened a video store in Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh. Over there by Rancho.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, by Rancho and -- what was it -- C Street.

FRANK ACOSTA: Near Country Boy?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, right next to Country Boy, and we had a lot of customers. And then they would ask, "Cookie, don't ever close." But when I closed, I felt real sad because I was tired already. I missed it. A lot of

people used to go just to talk. They would call and say, "Is Barbara still there?"

And I said, "Yeah. Barbara, they're waiting for you at home," I would say.

(laughter) But we had tables and they would sit down and talk. They would take us food. They would just come in with tacos [00:48:00] or anything and they'd open the refrigerator, rum and cakes and I don't know what else. They always had food at the store.

TOM RIVERA: So you had a wonderful time growing up in Colton.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, I did.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Yeah. And how many kids did you have?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Three. Three boys.

TOM RIVERA: And the boys -- is Rick the oldest?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Rick's the oldest, and then [Roland?], and then my son -- he passed away, the youngest one.

TOM RIVERA: And Rick graduated from Colton High School also?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Was he a ball player?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Rick?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, with his friends. Yeah, he was a ball player, uh-huh.

FRANK ACOSTA: What was the name of your youngest son?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [Russell?].

FRANK ACOSTA: Russell.

TOM RIVERA: Should we bring Rick in? Come on in, slide in. Slide in.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Come on, Rick. I'm not blind. I used to have my parties at the house. Now they used to have parties at my house like this. I would wake up in the morning [00:49:00] like, "Who are all these guys?"

TOM RIVERA: Rick, you're one of the Rodriguez family and the Contreras family, both Colton families. And you graduated from -- first of all, what years did you go to junior high school in Colton?

RICK CONTRERAS: Well, I'd say '67, '68, I was at Colton Junior High, and then Colton High School from -- I graduated in '72.

TOM RIVERA: Seventy-two.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yes.

FRANK ACOSTA: And what elementary school?

RICK CONTRERAS: Grant. US Grant. US Grant, then Colton, then Colton High.

FRANK ACOSTA: Did you have Mr. [Hansel?] any?

RICK CONTRERAS: The name sounds familiar, yeah.

FRANK ACOSTA: Miss [Fisher?]?

RICK CONTRERAS: Miss Fisher? Oh yeah, there was a bunch of -- yeah, I mean, she's got a better memory than I do about teachers. (laughter) I was kind of in and out of school. (laughter) It was a fun time. We just graduated, then went to Valley College after that, and then graduated from Valley College. Then I hit the workforce.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. And are you still working for Budweiser Distribution Company?

RICK CONTRERAS: Yes, [00:50:00] I'm working for Anheuser-Busch still, and been there -- it's going to be 35 years in June.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you're one of the old-timers now.

RICK CONTRERAS: I'm probably the oldest timer there. (laughter) Based on what's happened with [in-depth things?] and all that stuff.

TOM RIVERA: And Rick, growing up in Colton, what are some of the things that you remember that stand up in your mind as -- being a resident of Colton and growing up in Colton?

RICK CONTRERAS: Well, it gets back -- at the start of our conversation here with my mother, it -- working at my grandfather's store. I was very underage working there. They dropped me off on the weekends and I always wanted to work, and then they got me off. I'd stock the shelves on the weekends and we -- it wasn't much -- five bucks a weekend, I think it was -- and then I continued working there even through high school. I got my car, I'd go to school, I'd go work over there. And it'd be fun just to watch all the people come in and watch how my grandfather handled credit issues and just talk with everybody and see the same people over and over again. [00:51:00] Kind of they all developed patterns of what they would buy, and you could see it. So I'd see somebody walking in and I'd go, "He's going to get this."

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you already knew what they'd have.

RICK CONTRERAS: Oh, got that, easy. (laughter) And then working behind the meat counter. Basically I'd just weigh --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: You used to sell a lot of meat then, Rick.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah, we sold a lot of meat and cheese because it -- I mean, everything was the big loads and my grandfather had great relationships with everybody, whether it be the beer vendors, the -- any vendor that came in, they would give them things -- just give it to them. It was that type of a barter and buyer and stuff. So he did real well. So that was a fun time right there, going through all that time.

TOM RIVERA: Growing up with your grandpa?

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: What were some of the good things, or things you remember growing up with Grandpa?

RICK CONTRERAS: Well, it kind of seemed -- kind of as a kid, you're seeing the respect that he had in the community. That was kind of, "Wow, this guy," everybody knew him. Then seeing the -- you kind of look at it as he had power or what have you because you have a priest coming for Christmas Eve and you've got about [00:52:00] 20, 25 grandchildren running around, (laughter) you've got a priest right there, we're all holding candles. But he's doing mass in there. You don't think about it then, but then later on, you're thinking, "Wow, how did somebody get a priest to come in Christmas Eve?" That was pretty amazing when you think about it later on. I guess because he had that good relationship with the pastor, with Father Valencia, and I guess all these things he gave to the community, that Father Valencia would -- that was his way of showing his thanks. That was pretty fun, and all our family being there. We'd all gather all the store, all the kids. There were about 15 of us, maybe, cousins. They'd drop us off at the store and my grandpa would cut a piece of baloney that thick and cheese and everybody would get a bottle -- a soda bottle -- and we would walk down the tracks. (laughter) They'd send us all to New Colton there. And back then it was, what, a quarter to get in or something like that? Candies were -- we wouldn't have to buy anything because we already had our candies and everything there. We're just eating our food and watching the shows go on there and then [00:53:00] you'd hear the bottles roll down because there was no carpet. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Tinkle-tinkle-tinkle-tinkle.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah, you'd just roll them down and everybody would be looking at us. (laughs) Yeah, so it was a fun time. And then we'd try to come back, but they didn't let us come back because they were having a good time. They were partying. (laughter) So we had pretty good -- it was a fun time with all the [candy?] and stuff.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: A lot of kids.

RICK CONTRERAS: It was kind of like the centerpiece of -- my grandparents' house was the centerpiece where we'd all gather at the holidays and a big backyard and stuff. So a big house at that time, compared to what everybody else had. So it was a good time. It was -- kept the family together, pretty much, because as everybody gets older, everybody goes their own ways, but as kids, there were all the cousins. We were all cousins there.

TOM RIVERA: And you still have a relationship with the family, the cousins?

RICK CONTRERAS: Oh yes, yes. Yes, we do. Everybody's spread out a little bit and stuff, but we still have a good time on that side of the family. I've got my other side too, [Rico?] and Rudy's side and stuff. We play golf the day after Christmas, so we still hang out and stuff. [00:54:00] It's fun. It's different, being homegrown and not really leaving anywhere when a lot of people would leave and go to different parts of the country. I chose to stay here versus taking another position someplace else, and it's worked out pretty good for me.

TOM RIVERA: And do you have a family, Rick?

RICK CONTRERAS: Yes, I do. I've got three children and two grandchildren.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you're a grandpa now?

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Abuelito.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yep. And you were instrumental with my daughter -- my oldest daughter -- with Cal State San Bernardino. You gave her a tour of the university. So [Rini?] -- my daughter Rini graduated from Cal State San Bernardino. Got another daughter that graduated from Cal State Northridge. My other son, this close to Cal State LA. So they're all doing well.

TOM RIVERA: Oh my God. Cookie, you did a good job.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Of course I did.

TOM RIVERA: (laughs) You did a good job.

RICK CONTRERAS: Surprisingly enough, I even got a degree.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: (laughter) You're so lovable, though. Very lovable, my grandchildren.

RICK CONTRERAS: I'm a University of Redlands guy, yeah. So -- and it's one of those things [00:55:00] that you want to pass that onto your other generation, that getting a degree helps you and that it opens your -- broadens your horizons but gives you that extra opportunity, that extra door to get in a future --

TOM RIVERA: Well, the good foundation was with your grandfather, your grandma.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah, he was very good. He was stern but he wanted -- if you just followed his directions, it was good stuff. But it was good guidance. That's the whole thing. It was not bad guidance, and it was -- he was a strong man. He was a very strong man, and I was proud to have him as a grandfather and stuff. It worked out real well for us and I guess a lot of that's embedded in me, so I translated that into my family too, so they could move on -- hopefully move on to get good careers in their lives as well.

TOM RIVERA: Good. Cookie, I was going to ask you, you were born in the '40s, verdad? I'm sorry, you were raised in the '40s, 1940s. Your dad opened the store in the '40s. And then Colton was segregated. [00:56:00] You had the north end of Colton, you had the railroad tracks that separate North and South Colton. How did that affect you? Were you cognizant -- were you aware that there was that separation? Or in your case, was more of a, "I went to Lincoln School, so no problem there, and I went to Roosevelt School"? So --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I didn't think too much of it, as long as I went to school, because I wasn't the only one. If I was the only one, I would really feel sad that a lot of us had to do that, for the schools.

TOM RIVERA: And how was life different now when your dad was operating the store in the '40s and '50s and '60s? How was life different now in Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I don't keep track about the ones that are South Colton, just who I see [00:57:00] and who I'm always talking to. It hasn't affected much.

TOM RIVERA: You said you went to the Hub City Theatre and also you went to the New Colton Theatre. Did you notice anything that -- in terms of seating or --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes. I remember that Mexicanos had to sit on one side and the whites would sit on another side at the beginning in the theaters.

TOM RIVERA: So those are just those things that you would remember.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, it was true. They [did abide?] that.

FRANK ACOSTA: And then do you remember when the New Colton Theatre started showing movies in Spanish?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, I remember. A lot of people went. I remember the Hub City, we would go to the theater to see spooky movies (laughter)

and I didn't want to go in because I didn't want to see *The Mummy* or what of those. I went and sat in the lobby. My brother came out with his umbrella. "Get back [00:58:00] in there. What did I bring you for?" I said, "I'm scared." (laughter) But then next door was the Safeway Market, and we could go outside and buy ice cream cones or something. You remember Safeway?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It was right next to Hub City.

TOM RIVERA: Well, Downtown Colton was nice, verdad?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It was nice. Ahora está...

TOM RIVERA: Nada.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Nada.

TOM RIVERA: But that then, they had the little stores --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They had the buses coming in and then -- it's true.

TOM RIVERA: You had the banks and the grocery stores and the soda fountains and things like that. They had all kinds of things.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And the bakery.

TOM RIVERA: The bakery was there too.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I remember the Masonic Hall. It was right on top of the bakery. You had to go up some stairs. We had dances and everything. I remember on 7th Street, the Caldera store. They used to sell tortillas and all that. The American Legion would have their meetings up there.

TOM RIVERA: Upstairs in the Caldera Hall, uh-huh.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: We used to have that, [00:59:00] the movies.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. (laughter) (inaudible) the movie. They did mention the movies, yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Because I used to go with my friends, stay there sometimes. Of course, she lived upstairs. Alma Caldera. But they were always helping in the bottom. I remember La Señora. It was short, the Calderas.

TOM RIVERA: Did you know the Caldera family?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, I was real close to them.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, you did?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. I would stay there sometimes. I would go to LA with them and stay with them. We'd head up towards Hollywood. I would go stay with them sometimes. "Come on, Cookie, you want to go with us?" "Of course." (laughs) Yeah, that's a big family too, the Calderas and all those. So that's 7th Street for you.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, yes. And did you ever visit their recreation activity on 5th Street, La Calle Cinco, where they had the plunge?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No, not very much, where they had the plunge, [01:00:00] uh-uh. But they had other activities. I remember when they opened up Pago Pago Club. Do you remember the Pago Pago?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: We used to go there. It was nice. The boondocks. (laughter) It was nice.

TOM RIVERA: Well, it was on -- what street was it on?

FRANK ACOSTA: [Autumn?], where Fogg curves around to 8th Street.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: A lot of people would go. They had good bands.

TOM RIVERA: So you went there, eh, Cookie?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, and I used to go to the Valley Ballroom, where they had dances all the time with good stars coming in. The time they had (inaudible) and everything. They had stars coming in. For a dollar, you could go in.

FRANK ACOSTA: That was over by [Rabida?] -- [Yubida Springs?]?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yubida Springs, uh-huh, true. That's where they built a shopping center.

TOM RIVERA: Rick, I had no idea that I met your daughter back then at Cal State San Bernardino. Tell me about your daughter. What is she doing now?

RICK CONTRERAS: Well, she's a supervisor now [01:01:00] at the County of Riverside right now, and she's moving along pretty well. I sent her to visit with you. I called you personally. You said, "Send her over," and you took her for a tour of the campus. So that sold her on going to Cal State San Bernardino. Yeah, so I was very, very pleased with her doing that, and she's doing well at the County of Riverside now.

TOM RIVERA: And what about your other daughter?

RICK CONTRERAS: My other daughter has a job. She works at ESPN, so she works in Connecticut where their home office is. So she's part of the football program that's over there right now. So anything that's -- it's *NFL Live* on ESPN. She does that. She does cuts. She puts together some scenes for the commercials we see on TV and stuff. So I'm pretty proud of her. She's trying to move up in the company over there. She's doing well.

TOM RIVERA: Just two children?

RICK CONTRERAS: No, I have a son. He's just -- he's out in LA. He's been there for a couple of years. He's a bartender at an Outback out there, and he's

going to school. He'll hopefully finish -- getting his degree this year. So that'll be the last [01:02:00] college payment I have to make. (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Then you can retire.

RICK CONTRERAS: Oh yeah. That's coming up around the corner too.

FRANK ACOSTA: Is that Cal State LA?

RICK CONTRERAS: He's at Cal State LA, yes.

TOM RIVERA: How long have you been with Budweiser?

RICK CONTRERAS: I've been with Anheuser-Busch for 34 years. It'll be 35 years in June.

TOM RIVERA: That's a long time.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I know.

RICK CONTRERAS: It's a rarity to do that anymore, with a company changing and InBev buying the company now. So -- and I'm one of probably -- there's only maybe two guys, two of the warehouse men, they are longer than I have been there. So it's been fun. It's been a fun ride, great company. I'm starting to come to the end of calling it quits and starting retiring (inaudible) as well.

TOM RIVERA: Wonderful. Cookie, you did a good job with your --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Sure did.

TOM RIVERA: -- son and your grandkids. You did a wonderful job. And Henry, you mentioned something about your grandmother sending you on an errand to the grocery store. Tell us about it.

HENRY VASQUEZ: Yeah, my grandmother [Margarita Gomez?] used to live on the corner --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I know who she is, uh-huh.

HENRY VASQUEZ: -- of 10th and M Street, just a block away from your store.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: [01:03:00] She used to go --

HENRY VASQUEZ: So when she wasn't able to go -- maybe she was cooking or something -- she would send me or sometimes my cousin [Chuck?] and me to the market. She would have a little lista and she would say, "Lleven esta lista a la tienda de Lupe y compren estas cosas and dile que pongan esta mercancia en la cuenta de Margarita Gomez."

TOM RIVERA: So she also had an account?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes, she had an account.

HENRY VASQUEZ: Yeah. I remember the meat. Very often, we would buy different kinds of meat, especially like hamburger meat or baloney. I remember that the hamburgers that we made with the meat from your store were so good.

(laughter)

RICK CONTRERAS: It was about nine cents a pound back then too.

(laughter) It was cheap.

TOM RIVERA: Well, Cookie, I think when [01:04:00] you have baloney now and you had baloney back then, oh, it was so different, verdad?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It was very different.

TOM RIVERA: The baloney back then was so good.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: And then too when he used to cut the baloney, Rick or my dad, they would say how many inches they wanted. We had the slicer. You could adjust it, see how thick they wanted it or whatever for the baloney, because it was --

TOM RIVERA: But it was so delicious, verdad?

RICK CONTRERAS: Fresh.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Fresh baloney, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Then one of the questions that came up was your dad being involved with Las Pobrecistas and some of the community. Tell us about his involvement with Pobrecistas.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, that's a club that they used to have, I think, and my uncle -- his brother, [Isavel?], he used to belong to it too.

TOM RIVERA: What's his last name? Isavel?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Isavel was [Aroyo?].

TOM RIVERA: Again?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Aroyo.

TOM RIVERA: Oh. Isavel Aroyo?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Isavel Aroyo, uh-huh, and they would belong to all those clubs, and he would [01:05:00] help them out también, my dad.

TOM RIVERA: What kind of activity did the Pobrecistas do? What were they involved in?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, the men were selling insurance and all that también, but they were the club and they would be at the fiestas and all that.

FRANK ACOSTA: They would help put on the fiestas.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh, yeah, the Pobrecistas.

FRANK ACOSTA: Then the individual clubs would sponsor the girls who were running for Queen.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: For Queen.

TOM RIVERA: Did they have an insurance program, Frank?

FRANK ACOSTA: Well, you've told me about that, especially for burial insurance or --

TOM RIVERA: Mutualistas.

FRANK ACOSTA: Yeah, right.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, they had a burial insurance for people, and they would pay a quarter a month or whatever it was so when they passed away, the Pobrecistas would help them in the burial expenses.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It's true. And now it's so expensive just [01:06:00] for a burial.

TOM RIVERA: Don't die. (laughs) Don't die. (laughter)

RICK CONTRERAS: That's the secret.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I'm not going to let you know when. But if you see Alice, you're going to know who it is in the paper because it is. I mean, I've talked to a lot of my friends. They all bought ahead of time because it's really going up, because I want to be over here in Hermosa, next to my son Russell, and then my mom's up there on the hill, my dad's up there on the hill, and my sister's up there también. All of them are there.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so everyone's in Hermosa Cemetery.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Except my brother Armando. He's at Green Acres in Bloomington. He bought his a long time ago.

TOM RIVERA: Cookie, I'm glad you brought that up because many of my friends and people that -- from Colton, they all say, "I'm going to be in Hermosa Cemetery. I want to be in Hermosa Cemetery." And I said -- I went to a funeral [01:07:00] for my cousin, and he was at -- the burial was at Hermosa. The service was at Hermosa. So I went to the office and I bought myself a plot.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Oh, you did?

TOM RIVERA: I did, right off the bat, because after dark, I want to get out with my friends and we want to play baseball and basketball. (laughter)

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: One time, I was with my friend in the car. We were going to (inaudible) remember where. I told [Julio?], my friend, "That's

where I'm going to be. I bought property." He says, "Where, Cookie? Where's the property you bought? Which house?" "Next to you, over here." (laughs) Meaning the plot.

TOM RIVERA: That would be another area we should explore in terms of the oral history project because a lot of our families are there at Hermosa Cemetery, yeah. And then --

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: It's true.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, it is. Frank has given me the finger, saying that we've gone over [01:08:00] an hour now. (laughter) Before we stop our interview, I wanted to ask you, growing up in South Colton, Cookie, being -- having lots of friends in South Colton, what is the best memory that you have about growing up in South Colton?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Well, I think the memories that I have -- I knew almost everybody in the two streets -- Canal Street and M Street. Good people that would -- you could confide in them because it was like a meeting place there at the store. They were -- that's what I miss most of all. When I had my business también, like I told you, everybody would go in there too. "Don't sell, don't sell, don't move out, don't move out," they would tell me because it makes you feel good to have all those people coming in and reminiscing and talking about everything. They didn't want to leave (laughs) or nothing. Those are my good [01:09:00] memories.

TOM RIVERA: So your family, your memory of living -- growing up in Colton was the people there.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: The people.

TOM RIVERA: The people, and having good relationships with everybody.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, because we knew almost everybody right there by the store, all those blocks.

TOM RIVERA: And the good support system that you had.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Uh-huh. I learned from them. They're good people, yeah. Some of them, I would [learn?] (inaudible). But I remember all of them.

TOM RIVERA: Good.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They used to go to the store -- my dad's store. The time goes on.

TOM RIVERA: It does.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: But you have your memories.

TOM RIVERA: Well, I'm delighted that we were able to record some of your memories this afternoon.

FRANK ACOSTA: Tom, you might want to ask him what his favorite memory is (laughter) growing up.

TOM RIVERA: I'm going to put you on the spot, Rick.

RICK CONTRERAS: Colton was a fun place. I mean, we were in a generation where we had vehicles, so we were able [01:10:00] to bring together a lot of people from San Bernardino and Colton, and we were able to -- back then, we had a car club, so --

TOM RIVERA: What was the name of your car club?

RICK CONTRERAS: We were called the Wheels and Things car club. Back then, there was Little Mexico and the [Chancellors?]. Those were the car clubs, and we were the younger guys. But we were able to bring people from San Bernardino and Redlands and Colton, and we had a great time in Colton because we all got along with each other, and we'd always have really nice cars, and we

threw parties and we threw dances. We had parties in our backyard. (laughter)

The funny thing is, getting back to my grandfather, he still had the store back then, and I'm -- this is crazy. Don't let the police see this. (laughter) But we were 18, 19-year-old guys, having this big party in my mom and dad's backyard in Colton, and we'd charge two dollars, three dollars to get in, but we'd have 10 kegs of beer that we bought from my grandfather's store. (laughter) [01:11:00] We're all 18, 19-year-old guys, and we're just -- everybody's having beer. We had live bands.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I didn't know.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah. So we were having a party at your house. "Oh, it's just a few people." (laughter)

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: That's why I said --

RICK CONTRERAS: A few people in the backyard.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I said, "Rick --" "We're going to have a party, Mom." I said, "Well, how many are going to come?" "Just a few, Mom."

Three blocks full of cars. Really. Next day, there was no grass. Everybody drove - - I saw more girls, more boys. But at least they were there. But when I said, "Where did they get the beer?" My dad.

RICK CONTRERAS: To piggyback on that, it was like the area where everybody gathered. All my friends would gather there.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: My house.

RICK CONTRERAS: They would spend the night at my house. We'd come back from -- as we got older -- going to nightclubs, back when they had a lot of nightclubs, everybody would come back to the house because we had a pool table there. I mean, we'd bring people back at one o'clock in the morning and they'd be in their bedroom, but there'd be about 20 of us playing pool or going swimming and stuff. But I got a lot of friends that still call my mom [01:12:00] their mom.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: They call me Mom.

RICK CONTRERAS: They call her Mom, and my dad, they say to him Dad, they say, "Hey Pops, what's going on?" So they only had -- they just had the three of us, or just two of us living now, but multiple -- probably 20 guys that call my mom and dad Mom or Dad.

TOM RIVERA: Wonderful.

RICK CONTRERAS: To this day, they ask, "How's Dad doing? How's Mom doing?" Because the house was open, we were able to do a whole lot of things there, and it was just a gathering point.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: New Years Eve parties.

RICK CONTRERAS: Oh yeah, we'd have a band in there every New Years Eve, a live band, and it was a big family room. It's really not that big, but we'd still get 100 people in there (laughter) and everything and have live music in there. People from bands, they ask how my mom's doing still because they remember my parents were open.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah. They come up to me and say, "Cookie, do you remember me? I used to go to your parties -- boys' parties." "Really? I don't know what the --"

RICK CONTRERAS: [01:13:00] We had a lot of people there.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: A lot of people. At least I knew where they were.

TOM RIVERA: Rick, you mentioned car clubs. You had a car club. In the old days, when a group of Mexicans got together, it was a gang. Did you get that feedback from Downtown Colton?

RICK CONTRERAS: No, not at all. At the time, it was -- the racial -- there were still some racial barriers because they still had the -- I forgot the group -- they

still had an organization that was fighting for Mexican rights back then. That's when the Hispanic youths started [open Glory Harrison?]. That -- she started her publications right about that time, getting really active in the community. But during high school, it wasn't so much racial as much as it was -- there was still a gang environment. There were still the clubs, like the -- I think back then, [Real Lords?], [World Gym?], the [Gents?] and you had the [Conquistadors?] and those groups would fight. But then you had the car club guys, the Little Mexicos, [01:14:00] the Chancellors, us, and there was another one around. We still -- it was more of a social environment. They would have -- Little Mexico would have their dances or the Chancellors would have their dances and we would have our dances and stuff. We weren't so much of a gang. We never got bikes. We were just -- we're the guys walking around with the long hair.

TOM RIVERA: It was a social club.

RICK CONTRERAS: Very, very social because we would play football against each other, the car clubs -- street football -- then we'd have all these gatherings at Fairmount Park or Colton Park or something, or we'd go to Pomona or Redlands.

TOM RIVERA: Do you still remember some of the guys?

RICK CONTRERAS: Some of the guys from the --

TOM RIVERA: From the clubs.

RICK CONTRERAS: From my car club?

TOM RIVERA: From Colton, yeah.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah. Well --

TOM RIVERA: Well, your car club specifically.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah. Well, it was [Steve Garcia?] and [Mario Gomez?], [Anthony Valdez?]. These guys are still -- to this day, I still go camping with and we still go and have a good time. We just went to a [01:15:00] this last -- about two

weeks ago, there was a Little Mexico dance that myself, Steve, and [box?] with Anthony went to, and there was Mario Gomez. There were all kinds of guys -- [Salvador Cambrero?] -- that are still around, and a couple have passed away, but most of us have been around. The Ramoses. The Ramoses were good football players at (inaudible) High School. We just liked to have a good time. We were just young guys taking off in cars and liked to meet people.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. Now, when did you graduate from high school, Rick?

RICK CONTRERAS: Nineteen seventy-two.

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen seventy-two.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah, a while back. A long time ago. (laughter) Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Forty years or so, 42 or so.

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Then he started the camping. We started him on the camping. My husband and I would go camping, all of us. We'd be some place. "Who's coming?" They found out where we were going. The cars showed up with all their friends. (laughter)

RICK CONTRERAS: I guess that's why they call her Mom.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: I'm real close to all of them. In fact, most of them are going to be my pallbearers. [01:16:00] My other sons.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, wonderful, wonderful.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Because they'll be too old and won't be able to carry me. (laughter)

RICK CONTRERAS: Yeah. That'll be a while still.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yeah, I already asked them.

TOM RIVERA: Cookie, did I forget anything about your story or your dad's story or your mom's story?

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: No, I don't think so.

TOM RIVERA: I don't. Well, listen, I want to thank you so much. Rick, thank you for bringing your mom.

RICK CONTRERAS: My pleasure.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Thank you.

TOM RIVERA: And thank you so much for being with us this afternoon, sharing your dad's history and his contributions to Colton.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Yes. He really helped Colton a lot.

TOM RIVERA: He did.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: My dad.

TOM RIVERA: Thank you.

ALICE RODRIGUEZ-CONTRERAS: Thank you.

RICK CONTRERAS: Thank you.

End of Interview:

[01:16:37]