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South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Lori Sanchez, Cynthia Llamas, Sally Negrete Rodriguez

Interviewer:

Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

November 26, 2016

Interview Location:

Grand Terrace, CA

Length:

01:44:01

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Tom Rivera interviewed three women, all of them having a history relating to Colton. From left to right, the women who were interviewees were Lori Sanchez, Cynthia Llamas, and Sally Negrete Rodriguez. One of the earliest topics discussed was the group “Happy Hookers Crocheting Club”, a group of older women who worked on the craft. This group eventually branched out into “Share the Word”, a Catholic group that spread their faith. A Bereavement Group was also started by some of the same women in order to help families in Colton grieve. Rivera also asks the interviewees about the roles or obstacles the independent women’s husbands have in their lives in a male-dominated society. Later on, there is a general discussion of faith. Particularly, the women mention the construction of the new church in Colton and the unexpected news that Father Valencia gave to his congregation. The interview ends with Negrete Rodriguez sadly remembering having to leave her daughter in Texas and the other women’s memories of family and Colton.

Subject Topic:

- Bonding/Talking through Crocheting
- Share the Word and Bereavement Group
- Women being independent.
- The Catholic Faith
- Segregation in South Colton
- Homesickness

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
The Valley Ballroom	San Bernardino, CA (Defunct Location)

Garfield Elementary School	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Woodrow Wilson Elementary School	750 S 8th St, Colton, CA 92324
Roosevelt Junior High School	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Colton High School	777 W Valley Blvd, Colton, CA 92324
San Bernardino Valley College	701 S Mt Vernon Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92410
St. Bernardine's Boarding School	California (Defunct Location)
San Salvador Church	Colton, CA
Llamas' Place	Colton, CA (Defunct Location)
Texas	State in the U.S.

Temporal Coverage:

1800s - 2016

Key Events:

- The creation of the Happy Hookers Crochet Club
- The connection between the crocheting club, Share the Word, and The Bereavement Group.
- The roles that South Colton women held.
- The role of the Church.
- The history of their predecessors, mostly going back to Mexico.
- The feeling of living in Texas while missing California.

Key Organizations:

- San Salvador Church
- Portland Cement Company
- Colton School District

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:59 - 00:18:18	The origin of the Happy Hookers, the crochet group.
Digital Video	00:37:13 - 00:47:20	Tom Rivera asks if the husbands of these women did or did not agree to their wives being out and about. The problems faced by women in a male-dominated society.

Digital Video	00:48:37 - 00:52:10	Father Valencia reveals to the congregation that he had given the funds raised to the Bishop in San Diego.
Digital Video	01:00:55 - 01:02:08	Tom Rivera talks about his experiences in segregation during his youth and in school.
Digital Video	01:34:19 - 01:38:52	Negrete Rodriguez's love for Colton and the hardships of returning and leaving family behind.

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 Tom Rivera and welcome to our South Colton Era Oral History Project. With me is my partner that has started the project three years ago, Mr. Frank Acosta who is behind the camera. And today is November the 26th, 2016, and it's approximately 11:30 in the morning. And we're taping at 23170 Vista Grande Way in Grand Terrace. And our guest this morning is Miss Lori Sanchez. Lori, welcome this morning and thank you for being with us this fine morning. And with you is your cousin. Your cousin is Cynthia Llamas. Thank you very much for being with us this morning and next to you, Cynthia, is Sally Negrete Rodriguez, welcome to our interview this morning. And again, thank you very much for being with us this morning. [00:01:00] And why don't we start off with our presentation weeks ago or maybe months ago, Lori, I asked you how did you get involved with this group of women from Colton, that were very, very active in all different activities in the community, and you were so young compared to some of these ladies. Like my mom was much older than you were. How did you get involved with these women from Colton?

LORI SANCHEZ: They were actually a bunch of fun ladies. They were fun and they would crochet and I wanted to learn how to crochet. So my mom suggested I meet with them. My Aunt Carmen was involved with them for a bit.

TOM RIVERA: That's Carmen?

LORI SANCHEZ: Carmen Llamas.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

LORI SANCHEZ: Carmen Negrete Llamas. She was involved. Cynthia was involved as well, and they were related to some of the ladies within the group.

TOM RIVERA: Can you remember some of the women [00:02:00] that were in that group?

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. I remember your mother, Jennie Rivera, and Lolita Luque and Jenny Rubio and Josie Fuerte and of course, Irene Llamas and Lori Llamas and Sally Hernandez and Gloria Arroyo.

TOM RIVERA: Jenny Rubio. Was she part of that?

LORI SANCHEZ: Jenny Rubio? Yes.

TOM RIVERA: How about Lolita?

LORI SANCHEZ: Oh, Lolita Luque. Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Luque. And anybody else? You can look at my notes if you want to.

LORI SANCHEZ: There was Tilly Rodriguez and Helen Martinez. And people would come and go.

TOM RIVERA: So there was a good group of maybe 10 women that got together,

LORI SANCHEZ: Maybe 20 at times.

TOM RIVERA: Twenty. So it was a large group. What did they call themselves, Lori? What was their name?

LORI SANCHEZ: They were The Happy Hookers.

TOM RIVERA: The Happy Hookers?

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. Because we crocheted. [00:03:00]

TOM RIVERA: Crocheting.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. So it was The Happy Hookers. And then later on we extended our name to the Happy Hookers (inaudible) Club.

TOM RIVERA: The Happy Hookers. Now, how did you befriend them? You said it was your mom said, "Well, Lori, you want to learn how to crochet. Why don't you join?"

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. She would say, go with the sewing group.

TOM RIVERA: So that's how it happened that you were interested in crocheting?

LORI SANCHEZ: Right.

TOM RIVERA: So your mom said showing them. And who got you in there?

LORI SANCHEZ: I think it was my Aunt Carmen. She did some there. And then I stayed and we did other crafts and we would share ideas.

TOM RIVERA: Now in doing that, where did you meet?

LORI SANCHEZ: We would share, every house -- was at everybody's house, so we would rotate and then we would have coffee and dessert. It was fun. It was on Tuesday nights. [00:04:00]

TOM RIVERA: Were there any days that you'd go out for lunch together?

LORI SANCHEZ: We would go out for dinner at Christmas time to really nice restaurants. I remember there was a restaurant in Yucaipa, I don't remember the name, off the freeway. We would make reservations and we would take two van loads actually, of women and we'd do a gift exchange. So that was a lot of fun. We'd celebrate birthdays, we'd celebrate. We had baby showers. It was a lot of fun. We were a lot of fun.

TOM RIVERA: So it was a good group. It was a good group.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes, it really was.

TOM RIVERA: And Cynthia, do you remember anything about this group?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Basically the same things. Just a lot of talking. A lot of sharing and lots --

TOM RIVERA: You mentioned talking. Tell us about talking.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, just about family and the good and the bad. Lots of laughing, crying at times, [00:05:00] sharing. There were families that grew up together and generations after generation that knew -- the children went to school together, the parents went to school together. And that's unique, I think sometimes. And so it was just a really good connection and it was just a lot of fun. And you learned a lot from the older generations.

TOM RIVERA: Did they talk about any of their history or things like that? Or would they talk about "Tomasito did this and he got in trouble?"

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes, a lot of more current time event things going on in current times. But every once in a while they'd say, "Like where is (inaudible)," and talk about an old memory or things that they used to do -- the dances they would have. [00:06:00] The Valley Ballroom was just always a big topic, especially with my mother and all of them, just all related to each other.

TOM RIVERA: It was a good memory. Going back to memory type of activity with the food and also doing some crocheting and doing some handcraft activities.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I wasn't very good at it. I wasn't very good at it. I tried to make a blanket that my aunt tried to show me and she couldn't even take it apart I had messed it up so bad, but I just used to go just because I liked being there and being with them.

TOM RIVERA: As a good social group.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Do you still have the blanket?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I do. And it's still a mess.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. And you, Sally, were you ever involved with this group of ladies?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: No, because I didn't live here.

TOM RIVERA: Where did you live?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Well, I moved around [00:07:00] with my family because my husband was military.

TOM RIVERA: What was your husband's name Sally?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: His name is Ramon Rodriguez.

TOM RIVERA: And where was he from?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: He's from San Bernardino.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, okay. All right, all right. And he was a military man?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, he was.

TOM RIVERA: Well, the girls miss you I'm sure. They would ask, "Where's Sally? Where's Sally?"

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I don't know if they asked. But I used to get homesick from time to time, especially when we moved to a new place. It was hard. But as my girls grew older, it was easier than when they were little and babies. That was very hard for me.

TOM RIVERA: How many family members do you have?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Well, I have four daughters. And like I said, as they got older, it got easier for me when we moved into a new place. When I was very young, I used to get very lonely [00:08:00] in a new place because I didn't know anyone, but we made it. We survived.

TOM RIVERA: Well, Sally, let me ask you, where did you live in Colton?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I lived on L Street.

TOM RIVERA: L and ?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: L and Seventh, by the church.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so close to the church.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Close to the church.

TOM RIVERA: Close to the church.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I lived there.

TOM RIVERA: Did you go to Garfield Elementary School?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I went to Garfield. I went to Wilson. I went to Colton High School.

TOM RIVERA: When did you graduate from Colton?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: In 1954, with Ethel. Graduated. With Ethel.

TOM RIVERA: Ethel? Oh Ethel [Viyas?].

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Ethel Viyas. She was in my class. Freddy graduated one year after we did.

TOM RIVERA: Freddy, I forget his last name.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Van Aken.

TOM RIVERA: Freddy Van Aken. They got married. And you said that I was in the wedding too.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: You were a groomsman, yes.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. And I was thinking about that wedding a couple of days ago, and I'm glad you reminded me. Now, do you have that [00:09:00] picture of the wedding? Do you have the picture of the wedding?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh yes, I have a picture.

TOM RIVERA: Could I borrow it and make a copy of it?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, you may.

TOM RIVERA: All right, give it to Lori and Lori will let me have it. Now Lori, where did these girls live? There were 10 or 12 of them. Where did they live?

LORI SANCHEZ: Most of them lived in South Colton.

TOM RIVERA: Lori, we were, I asked you, where did these ladies live?

LORI SANCHEZ: A few lived in North Colton and most of them lived in South Colton.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, various areas of South Colton.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: In the different barrios?

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, because we had different barrios. Do you remember the Barrios that we had in Colton?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh yes, I do.

TOM RIVERA: ¿Sí? A ver.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Las Palomas. La Reserva. La Calle Siente. La Calle Cinco.

TOM RIVERA: Right.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. She does know her barrios.

LORI SANCHEZ: She does. (laughter)

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I do. I grew up there. [00:10:00] I grew up in South Colton. I used to go bike riding with my friends all over and yes, I do know. I lived there all my life.

TOM RIVERA: And Lori, how did the girls get to the meetings? Because my mom didn't drive. And I would imagine some of the other ladies didn't drive. How did they get to the meetings?

LORI SANCHEZ: They would carpool. Jenny Rubio would pick them up. I know she picked up your mom and she picked up [Vicky?] and probably as well, I remember her and her little red car. Her little red Volvo. And she would pick them

up and she would actually take them to the market, take them to pay bills on certain days. Yes, she was very dependent and helped everybody.

TOM RIVERA: So she helped. Whoever had a car was designated driver for the rest of the group.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes, I remember her so clearly. [00:11:00]

TOM RIVERA: Did you ever have the occasion of driving some of the ladies back and forth?

LORI SANCHEZ: Oh yes. We would carpool. I had a really pretty car. It was a 1985, it was a red Camaro and the ladies would fight to go with me. They wanted me to drive them. And I remember Jenny Rubio being shotgun. I said it's kind of hard to get back there. And they got back there. I can't remember who the other two or three ladies in the back seat were, but actually we would. Then later on I had a van and we would load up the ladies and Laura Llamas would do the same thing with her van. And we'd go and have dinner wherever at a restaurant. We'd make reservations at Christmas time and we'd do a gift exchange. And it was just the funniest thing.

TOM RIVERA: What was it a formal group or was it informal?

LORI SANCHEZ: It was informal. It was informal, but we were very faithful on our Tuesday night. It was fun [00:12:00] to go.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, so you got together Tuesday nights?

LORI SANCHEZ: On Tuesday night.

TOM RIVERA: What time on Tuesday nights?

LORI SANCHEZ: I want to say at six o'clock. Like six to nine.

TOM RIVERA: Six to nine, three hours.

LORI SANCHEZ: And we'd have dessert. We had coffee and dessert, and we'd learn something or share some of our crafts we were into making. I remember at

Christmas time, angels out of the styrofoam head, and they were really pretty and they made lots and some were donated to charities. So it was so much fun.

TOM RIVERA: What about Thanksgiving? Did they do anything? Did they volunteer for any?

LORI SANCHEZ: Well, these group of ladies, along with other ladies did the soup kitchen. They started the soup kitchen. Everybody had a day to make soup for the little trampitas at the church.

TOM RIVERA: At the church, okay.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. So they started that in about the seventies, I want to say.

[00:13:00] And I think the kitchen is still going on today at San Sal and at

Immaculate as well. But that started with some of these ladies and other ladies, and they did soup kitchen every day.

TOM RIVERA: They did every day. Every day? And who did they serve, Lori?

LORI SANCHEZ: The trampitas that came out of the trains came off the trains.

TOM RIVERA: The hobos that came from off the train?

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. Yes. Do you remember that? I think Alicia was--

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I think she was a baby.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. Irene was taking care of Alicia and --

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: That's my daughter.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

LORI SANCHEZ: And she knew some of them, right? Alicia?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She grew up with them. She grew up with the elderly ladies.

And we were at church one day. It wasn't during mass, it was, I don't remember exactly why we were there, probably for something like that. And she went up to the statues and she said, "Hi, Jesus. Hi, Mary." [00:14:00] Like they were just her

personal friends because she grew up with them. And I think, didn't the sewing circle kind of evolve into Share The Word?

LORI SANCHEZ: I think so.

TOM RIVERA: I'm sorry.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: It evolved into Share the Word.

TOM RIVERA: What was that, Cynthia?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: It was a faith sharing group that my aunt, Irene Llamas pretty much started and led. And it's still going on today. And that's been 30 years, or it kind of just evolved, the same kind of group of ladies. A lot of them started to participate in that. And so not only did they crochet, but then they started to learn the word of God and they studied the Bible and they'd study the Sunday readings, and then they would discuss them and how it applied to their lives. And my aunt used to babysit my daughter, so therefore she was there and she heard all that. And so [00:15:00] they became her friends as they still are today. But anyways, I kind of, in my mind, think of sewing circle and kind of leading into Share the Word. Am I right about that? I have to ask my--

LORI SANCHEZ: I want to say so, yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: -- my aunt because they're still doing it.

TOM RIVERA: Well, it we're talking about 40, 40, 45 years ago. And what was the name of the group Lori?

LORI SANCHEZ: The Happy Hookers.

TOM RIVERA: The Happy Hookers evolved into the social group. And then they had the soup kitchen from the church. And that's San Salvador Church. Now, did the church provide them the kitchen for them to be able to do this?

LORI SANCHEZ: The soup kitchen, I believe so.

TOM RIVERA: The Soup Kitchen. So this is where they have their activities and prepared the food for people on a daily basis. And then from there, they decided to be a study group, [00:16:00] a religious study group. What else did they do besides that? Were they a bereavement group?

LORI SANCHEZ: That's right.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: A lot of the same ladies then started a bereavement group, which they still have that going as well.

TOM RIVERA: As a bereavement group. What did they do?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: They would help the families who had a deceased member. They would help with the reception because at that time, it's a difficult time. And they wanted to help. They wanted to help that particular family that was grieving. And all those little details sometimes are really burdensome. So they decided that they would do this and they'd go and they'd serve, they'd serve the food. They themselves would take a dish to share. [00:17:00]

TOM RIVERA: Kind of a potluck?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes, the family would provide and they would provide. But the big thing was that they would go and they'd do the work. They would serve behind the lines of food. They actually serve. They come, they make the coffee, they make the punch, and sometimes they provide the paper goods and whatever that they could do and whatever the family needed. Sometimes the family was able to provide pretty much everything, all the paper goods, and sometimes they can't. So whatever they can do, they'll help. But the big thing, and then they do such a good job, and a lot of them are not young. And they'll go, they do the serving, the cleaning. They leave the kitchen clean the way they found it. It's a lot of work. And my mother, who's deceased now, Carmen Llamas, she died in 2015, but sometimes she'd say, oh, that was a big funeral, and they would get [00:18:00] physically tired.

But they did it. And they tried to pick up some of the younger blood, the younger women to help. And they have, there's some younger women now, but that's something that they love to do and they still do it.

TOM RIVERA: Where were the receptions held?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: All over the place, but a lot of times at the Knights of Columbus or the VFW, the American Legion, mainly in the Colton area.

TOM RIVERA: So they were willing to roll up their sleeves and help with anything that they needed to do to make sure that it wouldn't be a burden on the families that had a deceased member.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: It was a ministry through the church that they started and still doing.

TOM RIVERA: And were they, [00:19:00] did they attend classes together at Valley College or sewing classes that they would attend?

LORI SANCHEZ: I don't know. I'm not sure if they did or not.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. And I know Antonia Arroyo was very, very active in the PTA at Garfield Elementary School. Do any of you remember of her participating in PTA activities or any of them participate in PTA activities?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: At that time when Antonia Arroyo was active, so was [Lasenora Alsodanya?] and Jenny Chavez.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Jenny Chavez was active. I remember those ladies. I can't think of anybody else. They were others.

TOM RIVERA: What about Dolores [Luque?]?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, she also, she was very active. Lolita.

TOM RIVERA: Lolita, they were all active with the PTA at Garfield [00:20:00] Elementary?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They were the cooks and all that. Way back when I was at Wilson School, the PTA and the school together had a May -- I think it was Mayday Festival. There was a program on the stage, remember there was a stage there. They had a musical program there. And then in the corridor that went to the wood shop and the homemaking classes there, they would put tables and they would serve Mexican dinner and they would sell it. A lot of people came to eat. And those ladies were the cooks.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, they were the PTA? They was doing that. Okay.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: What about, let's see, I forget her name. I have a senior moment [00:21:00] guys, help me with this one. Her son is with Huell Howser.

FRANK ACOSTA: Fuerte.

TOM RIVERA: Fuerte. Josie. Josie Fuerte.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Josie.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Was she also actively involved with some of these activities?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I don't remember her at that time. I don't know that if she was a Coltonite at that time.

LORI SANCHEZ: I don't know.

TOM RIVERA: So possibly she was from San Bernardino.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I don't know where she came from.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Her mother, Ada used to mention her, but I didn't know who she was. And a former sister-in-law to my husband, this lady was her daughter's babysitter. And one Christmas they invited us to go over for, they had a little, [00:22:00] not dinner, but they had food, like a little potluck, like a little

something. And they invited us to go to her house to, this Mrs. Fuerte, and that was the first time I met her. But then I forgot about her. She forgot about me. And then we moved away. And when I came back one time, I met her at a doctor's office and I sat by her, we got to talking and I realized who she was, and she knew Ada. And I think she knew Carmen too, but I never really knew her.

TOM RIVERA: One of the things that I get enlightened by is when I go someplace else out of Colton and I meet people that [00:23:00] say that they were from Colton, I go, that's great. And then we start talking, and lo and behold, we connect. We connect with the streets at church. And some of the families in Colton. I would imagine you got the same experience by meeting Mrs. Fuerte.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Mrs. Fuerte, yes.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Let me ask you another question. We mentioned several names of girls that were in the group. Did they ever talk about their parents and their parents where they came from from Mexico?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, they talked about them.

TOM RIVERA: They did? Yes. For example, your family, where did they come from from Mexico.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Both my grandfathers came in the late 1800s.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And my grandfather, Negrete, they brought his wife and his children, three children. [00:24:00] They came by train and they settled in El Paso.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

FRANK ACOSTA: And the name of your grandfather and your grandmother?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Pardon?

FRANK ACOSTA: Their names? Your grandfather.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, their names. My grandfather's name was the Demetrio Negrete, and his wife was Lorenza Hernandez. And they settled there for -- I don't know how many years. And then they moved on to New Mexico, Lordsburg. And we never knew what he meant. He used to call it Lewisburg. Lewisburg. Well then one time when we drove from Texas to California, I saw that Lordsburg, New Mexico. And I said, oh, this is where my father lived. This is what he was saying.

TOM RIVERA: And when did he come to Colton?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I don't know what year they came, but I asked my father, why Colton? Why did my grandfather [00:25:00] decide to Colton -- come to Colton? And he said, because she had a friend here in Colton, and she wanted to have not be totally lonely without any friends. So they came here because of that friend. I don't know who the friend was. And then both my grandfathers, when they came, found jobs at the Portland Cement Company.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. They worked at the cement company?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes. They worked there. They worked there. My maternal grandfather was killed there in the twenties in an accident. They blasted it and they didn't give out a warning. It was an accident. And he got killed.

FRANK ACOSTA: And his name?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: His name was Miguel Dominguez.

FRANK ACOSTA: And then your grandmother?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: My grandmother's name was Francisca Garcia.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember what year that was? [00:26:00] When that accident happened?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: What year?

TOM RIVERA: Yes, when your grandpa got killed.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I don't know what year. I know it was in the twenties. In the twenties -- I think 1928.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: But I'm not sure what year it was that he got killed.

TOM RIVERA: Where did they live?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They lived there on L Street.

TOM RIVERA: [Damien?]?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Because he bought that property when he arrived here in California from Mexico. My grandfather Miguel. And later his wife, Francisca Garcia and my mother. My mother was five years old. She always told us that she was five, but her sister said that she said she was eight when she came. And I thought, well, how would she know? She wasn't born yet? My aunt wasn't born yet. And so I'm going to leave it at five. [00:27:00]

TOM RIVERA: For the rest of the record, it'll be five, right?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: It'll be five. Yes. And yes, they settled there in that property.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: But you had said Grandpa had come first.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: My grandfather came first. See my grandfather Negrete, he brought his family. But my grandfather, Dominguez, he came by himself. And what I heard my mother said is that he was having a good time and he wasn't going to bring them. He wasn't going to ask, have them come to join him. And some relative told her that she better come because he wasn't going to ask her to come. So she got her kid and they came.

TOM RIVERA: Good for her. Good for her.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: He came, yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Which was your mother as a little girl.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: That was her kid. That was the kid. [00:28:00]

And apparently, according to my mother, my grandpa was a player.

TOM RIVERA: A player?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Womanizer.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, a lover.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: A lover, yes. (inaudible) And she said that when she used to climb trees, she used to find the Valentine chocolate hearts. And she noticed that my grandmother never got them. Well, my grandfather didn't want her to find all those, find out all those things. So he put her at the St. Bernardine's Boarding School. That's where he put her. But she said, I already knew all about my father. She said. And she learned to speak English there while all the ladies her age didn't speak English, but she did.

TOM RIVERA: Well, it's a good thing that your [00:29:00] grandfather was a lover boy because she learned how to speak English as you (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes. My mother never would've never learned to speak English.

TOM RIVERA: How about you, Cynthia? Where did your folks come? Your grandparents come from?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: My grandparents?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Well, her grandparents are my parents.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, okay. Okay.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: So they're from--

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: From [Guanajuato?].

TOM RIVERA: Okay. What about the Llamas family? Where'd they come from?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, Mexico, I don't know. I didn't ask. I could have asked, but I don't know. I just know that my grandfather Llamas, Jesus Llamas, he married Rosa and I don't know what her last name was, but they had three sons. And when my father, [00:30:00] Carlos Llamas was about 10 years old, they used to, because there was no underpass on, was it N or M? What street is that that the underpass is on? N?

LORI SANCHEZ: N?

TOM RIVERA: Like (inaudible) or N Street.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: N Street off of -- okay. They used to go under the trains when it would stop. And she happened to go under the train and it moved and it cut off her legs and she died. But my grandfather was very involved in the city of Colton. He owned right by the Sombrero, that corner there.

TOM RIVERA: Is that your grandpa Llamas' Place?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes, Llama's Place. Then he owned the pool hall. Yes, there was a barbershop.

TOM RIVERA: He was quite a businessman.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: He was. And I understand he owned the Tampico as well, the bar.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And yes so [00:31:00] my aunt was just telling me a story of he was an air raid warden where when they used to have the air raids a long, long time ago.

TOM RIVERA: Through World War II? Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And everything was to be dark. And he was one of the ones that used to go and walk up and down the streets to make sure there were no lights on. And if there were lights on, then he'd knock on the door and tell them to turn everything off.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They were assigned certain neighborhoods. The one in our neighborhood was Pete Luka Senior. They go around checking all the windows to see if there was any light coming out. We used to have real dark window shades. Real dark green.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes. So he was real involved in politics.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, he was.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And my aunt was also telling me that, is it Congressman Shepherd?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Okay. He was a real good friend of his. They used to spend time together. And so yes, that was my grandfather.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, your grandpa [00:32:00] was quite a person. He was involved in anything that happened in Colton, Congress and Community Club, las fiestas patrias being a patron to some of the activities that they had in Colton. But tell me, he had sons. Tell me the name of which one is your dad.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Carlos. Chuck.

TOM RIVERA: Carlos. Okay.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: So the eldest being Gus Gustavo Llamas. Ruben Llamas.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Who also owned the store on La Cadena, which was a dairy.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. La Cadena and O Street.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Right. And it's still there. He rents the property out. And then they had Carlos, my father. And then when my grandmother, as I mentioned, she died going under the train. He remarried. He remarried, my step-grandmother, which is her name was [Lucila?], but I don't know what her maiden name was. She was also from Mexico. [00:33:00] And then they had two more sons. Jess Llamas, who's deceased and the youngest Bobby or Roberto Llamas. So it's just Ruben and Bobby who are still living. My uncle Bobby lives out of state and he's done real well for himself. So those are the five sons of my grandpa.

TOM RIVERA: And your dad was Carlos. And your mom was Carmen?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Carmen Negrete.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: My sister.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Her sister.

TOM RIVERA: Your sister.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: So they married? Carlos Llamas and Carmen Negrete married.

TOM RIVERA: Lori, how about you? Where did your family come from?

LORI SANCHEZ: My Sanchez family came from Veracruz, at least my grandfather did. His name was Gavino Sanchez. And my grandmother's name [00:34:00] [Rebecca?] was her maiden name. I'm not sure about her, but I know they met in Arizona. I don't recall when they came to Colton, but they lived on Seventh Street.

TOM RIVERA: On Seventh Street.

LORI SANCHEZ: For many years.

TOM RIVERA: And your grandpa worked where?

LORI SANCHEZ: He was a construction worker. He built homes. I remember that. My dad used to tell us what homes he built around the city of Colton.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. And how many kids did he have?

LORI SANCHEZ: Oh, they had lots. Lots of kids. I want to say about nine. Nine children. He had like four boys and five girls.

TOM RIVERA: And your dad was Frank?

LORI SANCHEZ: Frank Sanchez.

TOM RIVERA: Was he the oldest or the youngest?

LORI SANCHEZ: One of the youngest. He was like the third from the bottom.

TOM RIVERA: And he was a World War II veteran?

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. He was.

TOM RIVERA: Or was it Korea?

LORI SANCHEZ: It was Korea.

TOM RIVERA: Korea. [00:35:00]

LORI SANCHEZ: It was Korea.

TOM RIVERA: And how large was his family?

LORI SANCHEZ: There were five of us.

TOM RIVERA: Were you the oldest or the youngest?

LORI SANCHEZ: I was the youngest. So I had three older brothers. Walter, Billy and Frank, and then my sister, Jan and myself.

TOM RIVERA: So again, where did you guys live?

LORI SANCHEZ: We lived in Colton on Fourth Street.

TOM RIVERA: Fourth.

LORI SANCHEZ: Fourth and G. Right, a block from the buses that are the bus depot parked at Colton High School. We were in that area.

TOM RIVERA: Well, I'm still amazed by how you became acquainted with the ladies in South Colton.

LORI SANCHEZ: Because--

TOM RIVERA: You lived in North.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: It was through family.

LORI SANCHEZ: Through family. Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: It was because my mother and my aunt Irene were sister-in-laws. So Irene Llamas. So it was through them that she joined

LORI SANCHEZ: And we all went to the same church. [00:36:00] We saw them every Sunday at San Salvador.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Everybody knew each other.

TOM RIVERA: I was going to ask you, this group that we described, this group that we described of the ladies, how important was the group to each of them?

LORI SANCHEZ: We were very important to each other. It was like family. We were like family. When someone was sick, we would get a donation and we'd make food for them. If their husbands were sick and dying we were there for the widow, but we were very close.

TOM RIVERA: So a wonderful support group.

LORI SANCHEZ: It was a very good support group.

TOM RIVERA: So everybody knew that if anything happened, there would be somebody that would come and comfort them, right?

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. [00:37:00] At the hospital if they were, we'd stay in the lobby if we needed to to take some food, take some water. Yes. Remember the deaths of their husbands?

TOM RIVERA: Yes. I was going to ask you about the husbands. Did the husbands support these? Because in the old days, the men, el que manda la casa -- so how did these women get away from that --

LORI SANCHEZ: Not these ladies.

TOM RIVERA: -- sort of (inaudible)?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: These ladies were pretty independent and they did what they pretty much wanted to do. I know my father wasn't going to tell my mom what to do, so I don't think that that was ever a problem. Too much of a question.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: It was another generation.

TOM RIVERA: That's why I'm asking the question.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes, it started in the seventies. We were liberated by that time.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: But I don't remember any of them ever saying that their husbands [00:38:00] didn't want them to come. To me I don't know, but I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: So by that time, it was just kind of a natural thing that they did.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Well, let me tell you about my father. My father was very strict with my eldest sister. He named her Lorenza after his mother, but he named her [Chatta?]. He started calling her Chatta when she was a baby. So she was always Chatta. And when she was working at the base during the war, during the big war, she was self-supporting. And he would let her go to the dance. She was in her 20s, 24, 25. He wouldn't let her go. And she wanted to go with her friends. And she wouldn't go. If he said no, she wouldn't go. I would've gone, but she wouldn't go. And she cried and cried and her friends would come and ask him why didn't he let her go? Sometimes he would say, okay, sometimes not.

[00:39:00] And my eldest brother, Felix would tell him, let her go. Let her go. She's not a child anymore. But he wouldn't let her go. And if he did decide to let her go, she'd go with swollen red eyes to the dance. And when I was young and going to the dance, I didn't even ask him. He knew that I went on Fridays and Saturdays to the Valley Ballroom.

TOM RIVERA: Sí.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And he would say, oh, you're going to the dance again. ¿Ya vas a ir al baile de vuelta, hija? That's what he would tell me.

FRANK ACOSTA: Let me ask you this. How did you get to the Valley Ballroom

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: With friends that could drive

FRANK ACOSTA: You'd drive? Because we've had some people tell us that they walked.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh no, I didn't walk. It was too far. No, I was wearing high heels. I didn't walk. You know Cherry, [Cherry Garcia?]??

TOM RIVERA: Yes, she was in my class.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Cherry. She was very daring. [00:40:00]

If she and I made plans to go to the dance, the girls that like to go to the dance, we would get together and see who was going. We'd call each other, are you going?

Yes. Are you going? No, no, no. Yes, whatever. And she called me that she wanted to go with somebody. So I said, I want to go too. I said, but we don't have a ride. And she said, I'll find a ride. And she would go out. And the first guy that drove by, she stopped them and tell stop them and tell them to take her to the dance and they'd come and pick me up. And I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't do that. No.

TOM RIVERA: So when there's a will, there's a way.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes. Yes. That's right.

TOM RIVERA: But that's why I asked the questions because I remember it was a male-dominated society, era lo que decía el padre, that's the way it was.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes. See, my sister was the eldest. She was 18 years older than me. So things changed in our family.

TOM RIVERA: And then [00:41:00] when the girls wanted to go out, there was a lot of chaperones for that. There was a lot of chaperones.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: He wouldn't allow her to go on a date. He wouldn't allow a boy to come to the house and take her out on a date. He wouldn't allow it. She still went on a date from time to time. He was rude to the boys that came up to take her. He was very rude. And when I started to date, I told dad, you better not be rude to them, because they would stand on the porch and he would say, (inaudible) so they didn't want to come back. And I knew, I told dad, you better not say that, you better not say (inaudible) that, better not to my dates.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: He was a big man. He was a tall, big man. I could see that he would be very intimidating.

TOM RIVERA: Of course. And tough to boot. [00:42:00]

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: But when I started to date, I told him, you better not. I said, you better be polite. You better be nice. And he was. He was. He was nice to my dates. Yes.

TOM RIVERA: It was the older girl suffered the most.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: My eldest sister.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. By that time, the dad had mellowed out.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, he mellowed. But we were five girls. By the time it came to me, he was very mellow.

TOM RIVERA: Let me ask you another question. Let's go back to the girls, the 10 or 12 or 15 girls that we had at the group. Their personalities. Their personalities. If we look at say Mariana, [Mariana Grandes?], her personality because she owned the market, the grocery store. What kind of personality did she have? Was she a kind of easygoing or a tough person or make the decisions?

LORI SANCHEZ: Did you know who was that? Mariana?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: No, I didn't know her. [00:43:00]

LORI SANCHEZ: She didn't know her.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She was Sammy's mother, Chuck's friend, Sammy.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, Sammy. Sammy.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Sammy.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I never knew her very well, but we had jury duty one time and she had a kind of strong personality.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I don't remember her.

TOM RIVERA: What about Antonia Arroyo?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, she was very nice.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, but she also has a tough personality. I remember her as a toughy when the boys were growing up?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, with the boys maybe she was tough, but she was very nice. When I got married, Father Valencia wanted what he said. He wanted the ropes and he wanted the silk or sitting cushions for the bride and bridegroom to kneel on. So I went and asked her if she would make them for me when I got married. I had a little wedding. I didn't have a big wedding like Ethel did. [00:44:00] And so she made it for me. And then she made me a little bag with, I don't know what you call them.

FRANK ACOSTA: [Aras?]

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

FRANK ACOSTA: The gold coins.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, dimes. I still have them. I still have the dimes in the little bag.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She must've been a good seamstress, because I understand she was probably one of the main ones that taught the others.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes she was.

TOM RIVERA: Who was it that taught?

LORI SANCHEZ: Antonia?

TOM RIVERA: Antonia.

LORI SANCHEZ: She taught them how to crochet. And if you did it wrong, she pulled it out. You'd have to start over. She would not let you leave the mistake in your blanket.

TOM RIVERA: So she was a perfectionist.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I still have the tablecloth that she gave me when I got married. I still have it.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Talking about strong personalities. What about Lolita? Lolita Luque.

LORI SANCHEZ: Strong, another strong personality.

TOM RIVERA: What about Delia Rosales? [00:45:00]

LORI SANCHEZ: Do you remember her?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I don't remember her.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember her?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I mean, I know her, but I don't remember her in the group. I joined in the later years because I was much younger.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Wasn't she--

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She was one of the heads of the bereavement.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Didn't she die already?

TOM RIVERA: No. I don't know what she did. But her husband just passed away a few days ago. Socorro.

LORI SANCHEZ: Her husband did.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: He did.

TOM RIVERA: Socorro just passed away.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: But she was in charge of the monies and calling the ladies and all that, getting it organized.

TOM RIVERA: Kind of like the secretary of the group.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes. Yes. But she's not doing that anymore.

TOM RIVERA: No. Any other girls that she can think of that had a person?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, Jenny Rubio.

TOM RIVERA: Jenny Rubio.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She was very strong.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Very, very, strong.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She was very opinionated in the discussions. I just remember her -- [00:46:00] "Sorry girls, but I don't agree." I remember her saying that all the time. Yes.

TOM RIVERA: What about [Jenny Chavez?]? Jenny Chavez.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Penny Chavez?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Jenny.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Jenny. Oh, Jenny Chavez. Oh, she had a strong personality. She was little, but she had a strong personality. Her eldest daughter is a good friend of mine.

TOM RIVERA: Tonya?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Tonya.

TOM RIVERA: Tonya.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: She's a good friend of mine. And she has a strong personality too. She's little, but she has a strong personality.

TOM RIVERA: Anyway, talking about changing the attitude of the men being in charge of things, I guess my dad, Roberto [Rumba?] kind of just gave up because mom was going to go to be with the ladies no matter what on Tuesdays, no matter

[00:47:00] what he said but she was going, my dad would say, "Bueno, I guess ya no es la pendeja de antes." Anyway. That's what my dad used to say about my mom, "Ya no es la pendeja de antes."

LORI SANCHEZ: Oh my gosh.

TOM RIVERA: And let's see. You mentioned that they helped in the church along with supporting the bereavement group, but what about, did they help build the church?

LORI SANCHEZ: I remember that they would take lunch or dinner or both to the men that were building the church on Saturdays. My mom used to make a big pot of beans, a big pot of rice and a big pot of chili con carnes for all those men that were literally building the church. [00:48:00] They would have their lumper and they had hammers on Saturdays, and she would do it quite often. There was a list going around, and some of the ladies, I know Jenny Rubio and Lolita would go and provide food for the workers.

TOM RIVERA: For the workers. For the workers.

LORI SANCHEZ: That happened quite often.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. And I would've imagine your father-in-law Llamas.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: My grandfather.

TOM RIVERA: Your grandfather would do the same thing?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: That he would provide resources for them to help build that church.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Do you remember anything about helping build the church with your family?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I know that my mother contributed money every month to build a new church. And then Father Valencia one day announced that he had given it to the bishop, that he had given the money to the bishop.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: That the church had been collecting? The building fund?

[00:49:00]

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Collected money, the bishop, we collected money to build a church and he said that he had given it all to the bishop. No more money.

TOM RIVERA: Sally, you mentioned that Father Valencia made the announcement that he had the money that had been collected to build a new church that he, Father Valencia had given it to the bishop in San Diego. Did you hear that from people that went to San Salvador?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes. Yes, because he announced at a church. So everybody that heard it at Mass just came up with their mouths open, just in shock.

TOM RIVERA: That their money had gone to the Bishop.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I couldn't believe it. I know when my mother walked in the house after hearing that she was flabbergasted. Couldn't believe that he had, that she had faithfully given them, I think she gave them \$24-\$25 a month.

TOM RIVERA: That was a lot of money back then. [00:50:00]

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And it was all gone and that she was flabbergasted that he was all gone to the bishop.

TOM RIVERA: So how did Father [Luque?] build a new church? You said that there was a lot of support from the community. Your mom or your grandma did, provided lots of meals for the workers. How did the Father Luque rebuild or build that church in the seventies? I guess he just got a lot of help from the community.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I wasn't living here anymore. I had moved. I had moved to Salt Lake City with the Mormons, and so I didn't know anything about it. One of my sisters in-law's husband told me that he had seen it and that he didn't like it.

TOM RIVERA: So anyway. Cynthia, any, how did Father Luque [00:51:00] build that church? I guess there just a lot of support from the family.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I guess they had to from scratch. Donating money.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes, they had to. I know my parents donated, and my dad also was a handyman and also worked. And also I guess with the help of the diocese, of course.

LORI SANCHEZ: I remember big fiestas, big fundraisers. Remember the fiestas?

TOM RIVERA: Oh, [hamikas?].

LORI SANCHEZ: They used to be on the street. There was lots and lots of people at the time. So maybe that's --

TOM RIVERA: That was a big challenge for Father Luque, remember, to start from scratch, like you said, and then have fundraisers and then mobilize and organize the community to come in and whatever talent you have, cement work or carpenter or window installer [00:52:00] or plastering or just digging holes. He had to mobilize a whole community to come in and help build a church. Did he do it through his [cursillo?] or? Because I know that he organized people to become actively involved in their church. And they had cursillos where people would go for two or three days on a weekend.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I lived one of those retreats.

TOM RIVERA: Oh you went to one of those retreats?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: In the eighties. My parents went first and then my husband and I went later. We were very young. We were in our twenties. That's part of the message, to learn about God, to read the Bible, to make it part of your everyday life and that relationship with God. And part of that is doing the work and [00:53:00] yes, it was a wonderful experience.

TOM RIVERA: Well, the other thing is it kind of tied in people very closely to the project of building a new church.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: Now, what was it about Father Luque that people liked? They liked him. Everybody liked him. What was it about his personality or his persona that everybody liked to be with him, would like to do things for him?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, for me, just the fact he was a great speaker.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes. That's what I liked about him. He was a very good speaker.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: He was a good motivator. You felt his emotion. I don't know how many sermons I heard where he cried and how many priests do you hear cry giving a sermon? I don't know that I've ever heard another one. And he did that every so often. And so I really felt his love for God that really attracted me to him. And when he would, [00:54:00] Father Benson also was involved with the cursillo, at that time and Father Luque. But he was a great speaker, a great motivator, a great lover of God. And that just really pulled me in.

TOM RIVERA: I interviewed one of his relatives, one of his cousins, and he said that the grandmother --

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: ¿Doña Lola?

TOM RIVERA: -- Doña Lola would get all the kids together, her grandkids, and would look at all of them in the eye and ask him, which one of you is going to be my

priest? And it came out that Father Luque was the chosen one. So you're absolutely right. I think he was destined to be a priest.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: He was a natural born leader. He lived next to us. And Carmen and I used to love to go over to his yard where he lived, and he used to organize all the kids [00:55:00] and organized gifts. Real fun games. Very fun games. We had a good time After breakfast, we'd go straight over there to play. And then my mother, I guess, was in a bad mood one time, and she said, "Today, I don't want you to go over there. No salen de las casas." Well, I didn't go, but she sounded like she meant it. But Carmen went, her mother went, and Carmen tried to sneak into the back door and she caught her and she hit her with a belt. I had never seen her hit her with a belt. She never hit me with a belt. But she must've been in a bad mood. She hit her with a belt, not too many times, I don't think. But it didn't hurt me. So I don't know how many times she got it. And well, that's what you get if you disobeyed her. But he was a very, I used to see him play with the [00:56:00] red ants. Father Luque would collect all the ants. I'm sure he got stung by it by them. He collects red ants and divide them, and they'd have a war. He'd pretend they were warriors and they were fighting. I should like to see him play with the ants.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: That's funny. How can you even control them?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Well, he tried, but that's why I think they got him. And he liked to see the boys play with their little cars, my cousin Mike.

TOM RIVERA: So anyway, people just liked him, and he was part of the community. He grew up in the community, he had relatives in the community. So it was kind of a natural thing for him to not only be a priest, but also want to have a nice church for the community. When the ladies got together [00:57:00] and when you got news about serious things happening in the world or a serious incident

happened in Colton, did they ever discuss the idea that they lived in a segregated community? Or did they have any thoughts about living a segregated community? Any discussion about that?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, yes, there were stories about the things that they could and could not do. Drive through Grand Terrace was one of them. And I think you used to say--

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Or buy property in Grand Terrace.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: They would drive straight through on Barton Road, but they wouldn't veer off that main road there. And I live there now. But it just -- to think back about that --

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: How things have changed.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: My mother also said that when they were in [00:58:00] high school, they were embarrassed to take a burrito to school for lunch. And she says, back then they were called tacos. Anything in a tortilla was a taco. She goes, burrito was not even a word. That's not a -- she would say that is not a Spanish word. And so they were embarrassed and they'd hide, kind of hide as they were eating their lunch.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I never took a burrito.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She must have.

LORI SANCHEZ: My mom did.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And now you know the change.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: But back then.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And now the gringos love them.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: But back then they were ashamed of what they ate.

TOM RIVERA: What about crossing the railroad tracks or going to North Colton, anything like that?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: We could only go so far. Like that ice cream -- don't remember that place. It was next to the Hub City. Remember the Hub City theater?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And then there was an alley, and then there was a ice cream fountain there that was for [00:59:00] whites only, for white teenagers. They went in there, but we didn't go in there. We were afraid. We were afraid that they would probably not serve us.

TOM RIVERA: The embarrassment of going in there and being denied.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Remember McNair's Drug store?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: He was real sangrón. He wouldn't always serve you if he didn't feel like it.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. But the ladies, did they have any hard feelings or thoughts about not being included or excluded from the other part of Colton or their kids, their kids being excluded also at the schools? Well, we had our own schools, so that wasn't a problem. We had our own grocery stores, so that wasn't a problem either.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, so I'm a child of Carmen, but I didn't really feel it by the time -- [01:00:00]

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: We didn't go further north of the Fleming Park, we didn't go further north of that area. And her dad told my sister that he and a couple of friends, they wanted to see the nice homes on La Cadena and they went walking. They took a walk and the people there called the police right away.

LORI SANCHEZ: My dad?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Your dad and Rudy [Oliva?] and another one, I don't remember who that was. They wanted to see the nice homes down Eighth Street, but the gringos that lived there called the police right away.

LORI SANCHEZ: Oh, wow.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They saw --

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: They were like high school, high school.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I don't, maybe around that age.

TOM RIVERA: Because things I think started changing in 1953 when they built [01:01:00] Colton Junior High School and put Wilson and Roosevelt together.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, they didn't like it. The gringos didn't like it.

TOM RIVERA: Well, I know.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They couldn't.

TOM RIVERA: I was there for the first year.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh yes? How were you treated there?

TOM RIVERA: It was the worst academic year of my life because we know that they didn't want us there. Not only the kids, but the parents or the teachers. And then that's when I first found out that what a lawn was, because people in that part of the world, part of that neighborhood had lawns, curb, and gutters and sidewalks, and we didn't have that. We had on O Street, we had that dirt road. So I said, huh, it's a different world out here. It's a different world. But I was just curious about the moms. My mom was part of this group, and I thought what they discussed or were angry or were [01:02:00] disappointed about some of the things that happened to them as they were growing up in Colton during the early years.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: One story that my mother told us was that when she was young, that the Colton Plunge, that they didn't want Mexicans there. They

had a big sign in front of where you enter “No Mexicans”, big letters. My mother said.

TOM RIVERA: But you mentioned that Mr. Caldera earlier--

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: He built a pool, then he built a pool at South Colton.

TOM RIVERA: And you mentioned that your dad played or somebody played on his team.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: My dad played in.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: My grandfather. Her, Andres Negrete, her father was part of that team.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. And the name of the team was?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: The Centrales, The Central.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: [01:03:00] This was after I was born, I mean, before I was born. Because when he told me about it, I didn't believe him. I never saw anything about a game. I never saw a bat and ball. I never saw anything. He used to tell me stories about the team. And he said say “Sí, hija. Éramos muy buenos para jugar, hija. (inaudible) las [castorenas?] eran muy buenos para jugar.” Y me decía, “Les podríamos haber ganado a los Yankees.” (laughter)

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, they did play the semi-professional teams, didn't they?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: From out of state, country.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I didn't believe anything he told me.

FRANK ACOSTA: And they played teams from Mexico too.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And China. I understand. A team from China came and The Centrales with them, they beat the team from Mexico too. They beat

everybody that dared them. [01:04:00] That's why he told me, "We could have beat those Yankees, también, hija."

TOM RIVERA: So that was your dad?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, that was my dad. I didn't believe anything he told me. Nothing.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And it was true.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: It was true.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. The other thing I wanted to ask you about, the girls, the ladies, the Hookers, eh?

LORI SANCHEZ: The Happy Hookers.

TOM RIVERA: Remind me their name, the hookers. And then they had a second thing.

LORI SANCHEZ: The Happy Hooker Crochet Club.

TOM RIVERA: The Happy Hooker Crochet Club. Okay. Let me ask you another thing about them. What was the thing that they like about living in Colton? Did they talk about that? What did they like about living in Colton?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, I don't think they knew anything else.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They didn't know anything else. They didn't know anything else. When I was, when Carmen and Ada and I were little in elementary school. my eldest brother Felix wanted to send us to [01:05:00] Saint Bernard Catholic School. And we didn't want to go. We didn't want to leave our ghetto school. We didn't want to and we didn't. That was a big mistake on our part.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I don't think that they ever --

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: We didn't know any better.

TOM RIVERA: They didn't talk about, I feel good about living in South Colton because Tom is getting a wonderful education. My mom didn't mention any of that?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I've learned since then that Roosevelt Junior High School taught their kids preparation for algebra. We never heard about that in Wilson School. Why didn't they teach it to us?

TOM RIVERA: Yes, different part of town, different part, different group people.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Because the few [01:06:00] Mexican kids that went to Roosevelt Junior High and took algebra in high school, they didn't have a problem with it. But one of my friends that took it, she said I had to struggle with it. And she was very smart. She was very smart, she said but I had to struggle with it if I had had the preparation to algebra, I think they called it like the rest of them did, she said I wouldn't have had to struggle.

TOM RIVERA: What was your first name?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Sally.

TOM RIVERA: And her last name?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Negrete.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: No, your friend.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, my friend.

TOM RIVERA: Your friend. Yes.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, Virginia Guel. She's now Singh. Virginia Guel. She was very smart. She was our, let me think, let me think. Our class, she was a very good speaker. Our class --

FRANK ACOSTA: Valedictorian.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Valedictorian. [01:07:00] She was our class valedictorian, and she competed with another girl. It was a tie between my friend and another -- a white girl.

TOM RIVERA: In high school.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: In high school. When we graduated from high school, that other girl was a daughter of professors that taught at [Redwoods University?]. My friend was poor from South Colton, South Fifth Street. And it was a tie between them to be valedictorian. And I don't know who decided to give it to my friend, but she said she was going to go to Stanford. But she said they were so poor she couldn't afford to take the bus to Stanford. So she went to San Diego.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. What was her name?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Virginia Guel, Singh now.

LORI SANCHEZ: G-A-I-L?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: G-U-E-L. Guel. [01:08:00]

TOM RIVERA: Yes. That's the Fifth Street. Huh?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Fifth Street.

TOM RIVERA: We interviewed Mary Guel from Fifth Street. Pardon?

FRANK ACOSTA: Josie.

TOM RIVERA: Josie. I'm sorry. Josie. Josie Guel, yes. She still lives? No, she's passed away a few months ago.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh, Josephina.

TOM RIVERA: Si.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: She just passed away. Yes.

TOM RIVERA: So she was from that family?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, she was the eldest. The eldest sister. I think there were six girls in that family. No men. They came from Arizona during the war. A lot of families came from New Mexico and Arizona and other states Hispanic families came. And the Mexican settled here in Colton.

TOM RIVERA: Si. Yes. Well, I was just curious [01:09:00] about that. And let me ask you, are any of these ladies, Lori, are any of them alive? Who's alive from that list that you have?

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. Irene Llamas is alive. She's still very active with the bereavement and Share the Word. And Sally Hernandez, she's still alive. Gloria Arroyo. Rena Gonzalez and Rachel Silva and Lori Llamas. And that's about it. And myself.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And me.

TOM RIVERA: And you. So we still have a group alive. And their legacy would be what? That they were, first of all, to themselves [01:10:00] a very good support group. Secondly, that they set up the bereavement group that's still going on. Thirdly, they set up the soup kitchen. They set up a soup kitchen at San Salvador. Thirdly, they helped build the church. And fourthly, ¿qué más?. Very involved with the PTA.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And the fiestas also.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, they also helped with the fiestas.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: They used to sell what they made. They would set up a booth and they'd sell their things that they had made.

TOM RIVERA: The crochet and --

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Crochet, embroidery, aprons. Yes. My mother and my aunt Irene Llamas, you would start getting so many things in the [01:11:00] mail.

Religious things. If you joined one thing, they collected like boxes and boxes of stuff. And they said, what are we going to do with it? So they would go, the two of them would get a booth at the fiesta and they would sell that stuff just to help the church out that way.

TOM RIVERA: I'll be darned.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Medals and rosaries.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And they would get sent stuff, tons of it. So yes, so they were real involved with anything, A simple little thing like that to try to help the church.

TOM RIVERA: Well, and this is their legacy. So when I talked to you, Lori, you mentioned to me that you were part of that group. It threw me back because you're so young. And they were older ladies that were involved in this activity.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: They were our mother's generation really.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: But we just got involved because we liked to be with them.

LORI SANCHEZ: They were a lot of fun.

TOM RIVERA: Now, [01:12:00] Lori, if we look back just a few years ago, what was Colton like when you were working with these ladies?

LORI SANCHEZ: It was a happy place. We did attend church and we would go to dinner together and everybody made sure that we voted. I remember that being a big thing. Who we're going to vote for, who's running for what, that type of thing. So I remember voting being a big deal.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: You mean how was Colton like?

TOM RIVERA: Yes. How was Colton like?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Very jolly, La Calle Siete was very jolly. A lot of bars and stores, grocery stores. It was a jolly. Traffic, [01:13:00] when people could afford to buy gas. A lot of, on the weekends, a lot of boys came right into Colton from other towns to see the girls. And I think the guys from Colton went to other towns to see the girls too. But you don't see that anymore. Guess it's too expensive. And we thought it was very jolly. Like I said, that was very jolly. And when we were growing up, their mothers and me and Father Luque's sister. Rosa Luque.

TOM RIVERA: Rosa.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: And Esther Ramos that spoke on your -- and her sisters. She had four sisters and they lived next door to the Martinez from the Martinez Bakery. And Nick Martinez, one of the sons, had a little orchestra and he would practice in their house in the summertime with the doors open and windows open before [01:14:00] anybody had AC. And we would sit in front of the tortilleria, all the girls, we would gather there and listen to the music. And across the street were the Oliva's, the Oliva's oldest brothers and all their friends. Her father was one of them that was there, and probably her father too. And it was real fun. It was very jolly and very fun. And now it's dead. It's dead. Nothing is open. Nobody, you don't see anybody. It's so sad when I go by there. So sad.

TOM RIVERA: So back in those days, it was a lot of movimiento, a lot of activity.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: A lot of activity.

TOM RIVERA: A lot of interaction between people.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: But not anymore. South Colton. South Colton is dead.

TOM RIVERA: So completely different now.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Very different. [01:15:00]

TOM RIVERA: Now let me ask you, who were the community leaders during that period of time when the group, the Happy Hookers were --

LORI SANCHEZ: The Happy Hookers? I want to say it was like Frank Gonzalez was mayor.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

LORI SANCHEZ: Do you remember Cynthia, the eighties?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes. Because by that time in my generation, it was more in the seventies growing up. So I think being involved with these groups, it was a very safe place for us too. Very comfortable, safe. But also in the city of Colton, I remember things were starting to happen. And I remember the riot, there was a riot at Colton High in the seventies, and I graduated in 1973. And I know that my father ran for a school board.

TOM RIVERA: Tell me your father's name again.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Chuck Llamas. Carlos. He ran for school board. And that was in 1970, because that's the year [01:16:00] Lisa was born, my little sister. So I saw a lot of, they were starting to talk about things about the things that were not fair in education and things like that. And Frank Gonzalez and Manuela Sosa. There was an attorney that he used to live up in San Maria. He got involved. Henry? Hank?

TOM RIVERA: Henry.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Henry.

TOM RIVERA: I can't remember his last name.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes, I can't remember right now. But they used to come over to my house a lot and they'd have these meetings and they decided that my father was going to run for school board. They supported him that way. They met a lot and all that. I remember one year they had, at the time, Superintendent Jacobson was a superintendent at that time. I don't know what the details or what it was [01:17:00] they were trying to get him to say, but they had him over to my house and it was a big meeting. And yes, they had him there because they were very unhappy with what was going on with education and stuff in the unfairness of the white person versus the Mexican and all the benefits that they had. They were trying to fight that at that time. So my dad ran for school board. He didn't win. But look at who has won since then.

TOM RIVERA: So during that period was the, well, the cornerstone of when all the activities started happening, where people started participating in the politics of the city.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Frank Gonzales became mayor and yes, so for me, that was the start of that. Because that's what I remember. If it happened before that, I don't know.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: We've had more than one Hispanic mayor too.

[01:18:00]

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: But my father was very, I don't know how you would explain him, but he was very in tune with what was going on. He used to compete against the white man. And if he beat them, he was very proud of that. He was superintendent of communications at March Air Force Base. That's where he ended up retiring from. So that would've been his character to run for school board.

FRANK ACOSTA: Tom, when did you run?

TOM RIVERA: 1978 and I was on the board 1978 through 1981.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Ray Brill. And yes, they were all real involved back then.

TOM RIVERA: I can't remember the lady that was with Dr. Sosa.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Pauline?

TOM RIVERA: Pauline.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Pauline Garcia.

TOM RIVERA: Pauline Garcia.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She was another one that was real involved with that, that whole movement thing. [01:19:00] Later on I think but not right at that time. Maybe later, but not right in the beginning of that,

TOM RIVERA: Patty was elected in 1976 to the council. To the council.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And it was in 1970, right, that my dad ran?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Around that time.

LORI SANCHEZ: Who was his opponent, do you remember?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I don't remember.

TOM RIVERA: But anyway, there was quite a -- the late sixties, the early seventies, quite a year of people actively deciding to participate in making changes in the city.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: So that's what I remember in the seventies. So that's what I remember Colton being like at that time. But in all that, we still continued to go to either Share the Word or Happy Hookers or still staying -- that just never died. Just never died. [01:20:00]

TOM RIVERA: Now Lori, tell me about you. Your mom and dad are -- remind me again.

LORI SANCHEZ: Adela Negrete Sanchez and my dad is Frank Sanchez. Both grew up in South Colton.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, they did? And what did your dad work?

LORI SANCHEZ: He worked for Amax in Riverside. It was an aluminum factory.

TOM RIVERA: And then he was a veteran in the Korean offering.

LORI SANCHEZ: In the Korean War.

TOM RIVERA: And brothers and sisters,

LORI SANCHEZ: There was a lot of them.

TOM RIVERA: Your brothers?

LORI SANCHEZ: Oh, my brothers, the three boys and two girls, me being the youngest.

TOM RIVERA: And where'd you go to school?

LORI SANCHEZ: Colton High School. And then I went to Cal State, went to Valley a little bit, and then I went to Cal State.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, which elementary school did you go to? I

LORI SANCHEZ: Went to Grant. I went to Grant. My six years there, I started kinder [01:21:00] so seven years at Grant. I went to Colton Junior High School, and then I graduated from Colton High School, a real Colton girl.

TOM RIVERA: A yellow jacket.

FRANK ACOSTA: What year did you graduate high school?

LORI SANCHEZ: 1979.

TOM RIVERA: And Valley College.

LORI SANCHEZ: I went to Cal State first.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes, that's where I met you. That's where I met you.

TOM RIVERA: That's right.

LORI SANCHEZ: In 1978, 1979.

TOM RIVERA: I'll be darned. How nicely and quickly the years go by.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes, I remember that EOP office.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: So then shortly after that, I got married, didn't continue school until a few years ago. So I did graduated from Cal State.

TOM RIVERA: Congratulations.

LORI SANCHEZ: In 2011.

TOM RIVERA: Then tell me about your family.

LORI SANCHEZ: I have two daughters, Andrea and Sarah.

TOM RIVERA: And Sarah was a future leader and --

LORI SANCHEZ: They both were. Andrea was as well.

TOM RIVERA: Andrea and Sarah. [01:22:00] And Sarah went to after high school --

LORI SANCHEZ: UCLA.

TOM RIVERA: And then after that?

LORI SANCHEZ: She went to Michigan. She went to Oakdale University. She got her master's in education and she taught there for three years. And from there she went to Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh. And the program is another Master's for Public Policy so she's in Pittsburgh for one year. The second year of her Master's is in Washington, DC.

TOM RIVERA: Where do you work?

LORI SANCHEZ: I work for the Colton School District.

TOM RIVERA: And where do you work and what do you do?

LORI SANCHEZ: I work for the special ed department and I'm the secretary for special ed.

TOM RIVERA: And what school?

LORI SANCHEZ: I have six schools that I am in charge of, and I schedule IEPs.

TOM RIVERA: Okay. I don't know what IEPs are, but they sound serious.

LORI SANCHEZ: An IEP is an individual [01:23:00] educational plan for special ed students.

TOM RIVERA: And then your husband, Oscar is very active with a Mariachi group. Tell us about that.

LORI SANCHEZ: He's a director of Sinfonia Mexicana Mariachi Youth Academy. Been doing it for, I believe eight years now. And they have about 90 students, beginners, intermediate and advance. And they won several competitions throughout the state. While they were in San Juan Capistrano we took first place. So he has a really big thing going on there. And he has a wonderful show. You've attended, I'm sure. Cindy, you've attended.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: It was beautiful.

LORI SANCHEZ: Beautiful, beautiful. Very well disciplined kids. And they're kids. The oldest may be about 19.

TOM RIVERA: It's a tremendous program for not only [01:24:00] keeping the history alive, Mexican history alive, but also it teaches the musical concepts and theories and the ability to read music.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes. And he focuses on education and he gives scholarships out to certain students. There's criteria and that they have to meet. And he's really proud of his students that go to the universities. And he has one in Notre Dame. He has one at UCLA, he'd had several of course at San Bernardino and Pepperdine I believe. And he's really, really proud of his military students, he has about four in the military. And it just warms his heart and they sent him pictures of where they are all over the world. A couple in the Army, [01:25:00] there's one in the Marines, and someone in the Air Force and women too. Little Serena is in the Air Force.

TOM RIVERA: So that's quite a legacy. That's quite a legacy for both of you. What about you, Cynthia, tell us about your family.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, I'm married to Leonard, Lenny Minjares from San Bernardino, and we have two children, Alicia, who is a teacher at Wilson Elementary.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, my old school.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes. And my mother was kind of thrilled about that because their elementary, was it Garfield?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Oh, okay. But that was her neighborhood, her barrio and her granddaughter went back to teach there. So that's what -- she's been there for three years. And then I have a son who's 17, who's a senior at Grand Terrace High

School, and he's been accepted to go to Embry-Riddle [01:26:00] Aeronautical Engineering School.

TOM RIVERA: Oh wonderful. He wants to fly.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Well, he would be an aerospace engineer. I'm not sure I want him to fly, lead him back that way. But he should. Well, he hasn't totally decided. But that's really what he wants to do. And then I have one granddaughter who's a sophomore, [Linnae?] at Grand Terrace High School as well.

TOM RIVERA: And do you work?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I work at the Colton Middle School also. I mean for the Colton Joint Unified School District. And I worked with Mr. Acosta for --

TOM RIVERA: You did?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: I tell you everybody in Colton is related.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: So we would have conversations just about people that we knew and during the workday sometimes. So yes, so I've lived here all my life, but I graduated in 1973 from Colton High and I started Valley, [01:27:00] but I did not continue my education, which I really regret. But my husband has his degree from the University of Redlands, and he used to work for Anheuser-Busch for 25 years.

TOM RIVERA: What's his name?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Leonard Minjares. Lenny. His grandfather was Leonard Minjares.

TOM RIVERA: Yes, he worked --

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: He was a musician. And then my husband's father is also Leonard Minjares. And he used to also work for Amax.

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Good friend of my brother's.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Oh, is he?

TOM RIVERA: Yes. Good friend. Ray Rivera. Ray Rivera, Yes. Good friend of him. Yes.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: He just turned 80. And then my husband is his son. And Yes, he just turned 80 and he's a piano player. I don't know if you remember that. And they were at my home during the week for his birthday, and he played the piano a little bit for us. And then my son, he's a piano player, he's 17 [01:28:00] and he's really good. And they played together and that was a moment, grandpa 80 and grandson 17. And they play very similar. So yes, I've been at the district now. I was in banking, but I've been at the school district now for 17 years. I believe the time flies.

TOM RIVERA: It does very, very quickly.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: I didn't think -- I had been in banking for 23 years and I retired. Well, Washington Mutual had bought out Home Savings anyway, so I saw my dad got sick, he got cancer, and I stayed home, took care of him until he died. And I thought, well, I need to go back to do something. We adopted our son. I ended up three hours at Colton Middle School, and that's all I wanted. But there I worked five hours and now I'm eight hours and now it's been 17 years and I can't believe that. So anyway.

TOM RIVERA: Well, that's good timing. [01:29:00] You have the time now. The kids are older now.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Yes. Yes.

TOM RIVERA: How about you, Sally? How about you? Tell us about your family.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Well, I told who my parents were. Andres and Guadalupe Negrete, they had eight children. I'm the youngest and the last survivor. And I got married at 21. I had been working at the base, at Norton Air Force Base.

I worked there four years. And then I got married and I went to Guam with my husband who was shipped there. I was there two years. And then we came back and he was stationed at North Island and [01:30:00] we lived in Chula Vista for two years, two or three years, I don't remember. I'm forgetting a lot of those things. And then from there, he was sent to Point Mugu, California. And for a while we lived in Oxnard. And then we moved to the base. We had two daughters on Guam. And then when we went to Oxnard, when we were in Mugu, we had two had twin girls. And then from there, we went from Point Mugu to Georgia at, what's the name of that base? I don't remember that base. I remember where we lived. [01:31:00] We lived off of Georgia on Jekyll Island. We had to go travel two toll bridges to get to -- where was that base? I don't remember the name of that base, but the town before the base, I don't remember that either. The girls used to go to school there. They used to go by bus. They sent one bus to the island to pick up all the kids that went to school. Brunswick. And my girls were the youngest ones. And they liked to go on the bus with all the big kids, high school kids also. And they told me that one time when they had a fire drill on the bus that all the big guys jumped off and left all the little ones behind. And the driver told them they had to do it all over again [01:32:00] because they had to take the little ones with them. They couldn't leave them. So they did it again. And they took, my girls were in first grade I think. They had to take them with them, not to leave him behind.

TOM RIVERA: And did you work at all?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I worked, we lived here in Colton for five years. He was completed his last military tour and he was going to school at Pomona. What's the name of that school?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Cal Poly.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Cal Poly Pomona. Yes. I'm sorry, I'm forgetting a lot of things from the past.

TOM RIVERA: That's a good thing we are recording.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: That past, I'm forgetting things. And during that time when my husband was going to school, I went to work [01:33:00] for the school district in San Bernardino. I worked for Dr. Caldwell, he was in charge of the business department. And then it was --

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: Did you work at the base?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes. Before I got married I did. And it was very difficult at that time for me because one of the twins is a sick girl. She's mentally challenged and she's mentally ill. And she gave me a very hard time. And I told my husband, I don't know that it's worth going to work with this girl. I don't know. And we decided that he would join the Reserves, the Navy Reserves, and he would get a little pay for that. And then he was getting paid from the, [01:34:00] what do you call it? What do you call it? When he was going to school?

LORI SANCHEZ: GI Bill. The GI Bill?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, the GI Bill. The GI Bill. That's what he said. And we made it. It was very hard.

TOM RIVERA: Now where do you live now?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I live over here in the Cooley Ranch area.

TOM RIVERA: Cooley Ranch, okay.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, down there.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She moved back to Colton.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I moved back to Colton. After many years my husband and I got divorced when we were in Texas, so I didn't want to stay

there. I didn't like it. I liked it where we lived. It was a nice place, but I didn't like the climate and I wanted to come home.

TOM RIVERA: I'm glad you came home, otherwise we wouldn't have you here today. So thank you.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I wanted to come home. The only bad part is that -- [01:35:00] I'm going to cry. I had to leave one of my girls over there, the other twin. She's married. She is fine, she's fine. She has a husband and a home and one daughter. She's a nurse practitioner. But I miss her. I miss her like Thursday, for Thanksgiving. I miss her a lot. And we call her that night and she's fine. She was happy. She cooked dinner for the three of them, but all day I missed her a lot.

TOM RIVERA: Where does she live?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Where does she live? She lives in Kilgore, Texas.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, okay.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: It's a small town.

TOM RIVERA: So you do miss her.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Oh yes.

TOM RIVERA: You do miss her. Well, let me ask you my last question.

What's the best thing about living in Colton or what's the best memory that you have about living in Colton?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Well, [01:36:00] I wanted to come home because my sisters were here. But they're all gone now. They're all gone. And I miss them so much. But I still have friends. I have my friends, I have my daughters, I have my three daughters here. And when my eldest daughter got married in Texas, she didn't like Texas either. She said, I want to go to California. So she talked her husband into coming and moving to California. And when I was over there and she

was over here, I missed her a lot too. And so I talked my second daughter to come to California and she came and she looked for a job and she found one, she's a probation officer. So she moved. [01:37:00] And then as soon as my divorce was over, I came. My twin daughter that lives in Texas, drove us all the way. Drove me and my handicapped daughter all the way. And I lived with my daughter that moved here first to Texas. I moved back from Texas. I lived with her for 10 months while I was looking for a home to buy. Then I moved over here to -- down there to the Cooley area. Cooley area, that Cooley Ranch area. I like it. I like it. I had moved around in so many too many places. So I took what I needed, what I wanted. It was near the market, near the drug store, near the dry cleaners. And that's the only places I can go now because I don't walk very well, nor do I want [01:38:00] to drive very far.

TOM RIVERA: So the best thing that happened was for you to be back in Colton?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I was very happy.

TOM RIVERA: Familiar territory.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I was very happy to come back. Was very happy

TOM RIVERA: Feeling safe being here.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I did feel better here. I had some friends over there, but not a lot of friends. I went to a water class aerobics for 11 years and I had a lot of friends there. I missed them for a while.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: And we're glad to have her back.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I was very happy to, and I'm still happy to be here, but my sisters are all gone now. But I have my friends, I have my daughters, I have one granddaughter here, the other one is over there in Texas. I only have two granddaughters and a lot of my friends have a lot of grandchildren.

TOM RIVERA: What about you, Cynthia?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: The best memory or the best being in Colton? [01:39:00] Well, I'm the eldest of five. It's me and then my brother, Peter, who's deceased now. And brother Mark, my sister Karine and Lisa, the baby. But I think just the deep roots. My roots are real deep here in Colton. Going back to my great grandparents that came in the late 1800s. And just the bonds and the friendships and I speak to people that have moved around and they don't have that. They don't see their friends from school, they don't see a lot of family. And for me, I do. I have friends from kindergarten that I still see and all through the years middle school and my family that I see. [01:40:00] And so that's deep. Those bonds, the history that we can share, that we know.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They have never moved away from home.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She was one of seven, the youngest of seven, and she's the only one that moved out of the area.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: The youngest of eight.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: So on both sides really. I just have my youngest uncle Bobby Llamas that moved away. But everybody else is here.

TOM RIVERA: This is home.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: They're afraid. They're afraid to move away. Her mother wouldn't move away when her husband had a job out of town,

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: He had made suggestions sometimes. Why didn't they move to whatever?

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: But she wouldn't.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: She wasn't going to leave her mom, but, but I think that's a blessing to have that, to have those bonds and to know who you are and know

where you come from and [01:41:00] get together with friends and be able to share a story or a memory.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: See, I don't have that. I don't know a lot of people when I moved back, I don't know a lot of people, they're strangers to me and they don't know me. When her mother died, people are giving the condolences to her sisters-in-law, not to me. They were bypassing me and giving them to them, and I got hurt.

TOM RIVERA: Rightfully so.

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: They didn't know her again. See, I never even stopped to think about that. That happens. But that what's important are those the bonds and the memories that you have with others that you can share? Like me and my friend, we can look at each other and we both laugh because we're both thinking the same thing. And nobody else can do that with you.

TOM RIVERA: Lori, what about you? I know we talk [01:42:00] about you being a grandmother.

LORI SANCHEZ: Oh, I know we missed that. How can we have missed that?

TOM RIVERA: We missed that. I don't know how we could miss that.

LORI SANCHEZ: I meant to tell you that he is a beginner student with the youth Mariachi group already. I can't believe that he's there. He's with his violin playing.

TOM RIVERA: La abuelita.

LORI SANCHEZ: Yes.

TOM RIVERA: How many grandkids?

LORI SANCHEZ: One.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

LORI SANCHEZ: The one. I'm not complaining though.

TOM RIVERA: What about your best memory or best experience that you had being in Colton?

LORI SANCHEZ: In Colton? I think when I do go to Colton, it's like you know everybody. You go to that market on the, the Stater Brothers, sometimes I'll go there on my lunch. It's like everybody. And there's so-and-so's Nina, and there's so-and-so's dad. And we'd go up and do you remember from this family? They have a joke at work. Whenever my boss is interviewing somebody, she'd show me a list. Are you related [01:43:00] to any of these people? Because she did interview a lot of my cousins. So it's just kind of a running joke when they do introduce somebody. Are you related?

CYNTHIA LLAMAS: There's how many? About at least five that I can think of that work for the district, the district, school district.

TOM RIVERA: So it's a big family.

LORI SANCHEZ: It's a big family.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, enterprise it. Well, listen, I truly appreciate you coming down this morning and it was a wonderful interview. We got three distinct points of view and three distinct experiences and it worked out beautifully. Thank you. Even with Sally that didn't want to participate. Well thank you.

SALLY NEGRETE RODRIGUEZ: I'm sorry.

TOM RIVERA: Thank you for participating. And Cynthia, thank you so much. You're welcome. And of course Lori, thank you for helping us put this together this morning. [01:44:00] Thank you.

LORI SANCHEZ: You're welcome very much.

End of Interview:
[01:44:01]