

**RANCHO CUCAMONGA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW COVER SHEET**

INTERVIEWEE: Celia Martinez

INTERVIEWER: Margo McBane

PROJECT: City of Rancho Cucamonga

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 7/09/01

TERMS OF USE: unrestricted

AUDIO EDITOR Margo McBane

TRANSCRIBER: Monica Allen

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Celia Martinez was born Celia Rivera, in San Elizario, Texas near El Paso in the 1920s. Her family came from New Mexico and Texas, they were not Mexican immigrants. Her father owned a grocery store and ranched in Alamo Alto, Texas. She came to Cucamonga with her father, two brothers and four sisters in 1932, during the Depression. There was no work in Texas. Two of her sisters were already married with children. All the families lived together in wooden framed houses in Cucamonga. They worked in the orchards and vineyards and lived in Northtown. Celia never worked in agriculture, she started at Cucamonga Elementary School, and lived with her sisters on Main Street until she married at age 16. Initially she lived with her dad and brother, but they returned to Texas so she moved in with her sisters. Some of the women of Northtown worked packing oranges, lemons, and peaches, and they also canned chilies and tomatoes across the street on Main Street. The canneries and the packinghouses faced the street on one side and the train tracks on the other. She graduated from 8th grade in 1933, and started 9th grade at Chaffey High School in 1934, unlike most of the other kids in the neighborhood. She married at 16 years of age, without finishing high school. She and her husband settled into Northtown, then he got a one-year job in Richmond, California, during the war. She had one boy, born in 1936. Her husband never went to war. After the war, he became an agricultural truck hauler, and then he opened a restaurant/bar, Tiger Café on 25th Street. He built a house next to it, so they could move from Northtown. She and her husband belonged to *La Sociedad Progressista Mexicano, Logia 19*, but she had to leave for beneficiary reasons. She then formed *La Sociedad Protectora Feminil* in 1954. In the 1960s she helped form the Northtown Lighting District to install lights in the neighborhood. She then worked by herself to install a sewer line in Northtown through a petition drive. She also participated on the Northtown Neighborhood Steering Committee and the San Bernardino County Citizen Participation Advisory Committee. She decided to go back to school in the 1970s, after her child had

grown. She finished her high school degree at Chaffey High School, went on to graduate from Chaffey Junior College, and transferred to University of La Verne. She received a B.A. majoring in Spanish and Social Sciences, and then an M.A. in Bilingual Education. She organized *Las Guadalupanas*, to commemorate the Virgin of Guadalupe. She also taught Catechism for five years. She then worked for the Council on Aging for five years, as a volunteer area coordinator. It was through this organization that she further developed her community organizing skills. Her husband did not want her to work for pay, but she could go to school and volunteer. She then formed the Community Participation Committee with Nacho Gracia, this effort turned into the Northtown Housing Development Corporation. She and the Corporation board worked for city incorporation of Rancho Cucamonga believing it to be a good thing for Northtown.

Length of Interview: app. 1.25 hrs Length of Transcript: 57 pages

**RANCHO CUCAMONGA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewee: Celia R. Martinez

Interviewer: Margo McBane

Date: August 12, 2001

MM This is Margo McBane and I am interviewing Celia Martinez. It is August 12, 2001 and we are in Rancho Cucamonga. This is for the Rancho Cucamonga Oral History Project.

CM: My name is Celia R. Martinez. My last name is spelled Martinez.

MM: Celia, where were you born?

CM In Texas.

MM Where in Texas?

CM San Elizario, Texas.

MM Where is that near?

CM Near El Paso.

MM Where were your parents from?

CM My father was born in New Mexico and my mother in La Piedra, Texas.

MM What kind of work was your father doing?

CM Farming.

MM What kind of crops?

CM Corn and cotton mostly.

MM Could you describe what your family life was like there? What it was like to live

on the ranch?

CM Well, we didn't actually live on the farm, we lived in the town. My father would go back and forth because we had a store where we used to live.

MM Oh, you had a store as well?

CM Yes.

MM What kind of things did you sell in the store?

CM Groceries and dry goods.

MM That was in San Elizario?

CM No, that was in Alamo Alto.

MM Oh, in Alamo Alto, Texas? Where was that located?

CM It was located about 50 miles from San Elizario towards Sierra Blanca.

MM Did your parents immigrate from Mexico? Had they always been in New Mexico or the Texas area?

CM They have always been in the Texas area.

MM So they never immigrated from Mexico?

CM No.

MM Okay, even your grandparents or great grandparents?

CM I don't know about that.

MM When did you come to Rancho Cucamonga?

CM May 2, 1932.

MM Why did you come?

CM Well it was [during] the Depression and things were very hard in Texas, there was no work for the men.

MM Okay, even on the ranch or the grocery?

CM Yes, it was dry.

MM Everything was dry. How did you get here?

CM By car.

MM Were there a lot of people that left your town?

CM At that time, yes, for different places but we came directly to Rancho Cucamonga because we had relatives here.

MM When did they come?

CM They had been here about a year before.

MM They also came from San Elizario?

CM No, they came from Alamo Alto.

MM So you didn't come in a caravan or with other people.

CM No.

MM How many brothers and sisters do you have?

CM I had four sisters and two brothers.

MM What were their names?

CM The oldest was Pedro and then Mary and then Nelly, Hermina, Jose and myself, Celia.

MM What was your parents' last name?

CM Rivera.

MM When you came here, what did your father do? What kind of work?

CM He worked in the vineyards and in the orchards.

MM Is that what your relatives were doing when they also came?

CM Yes.

MM Were you also working?

CM No, no.

MM Were you in school?

CM I was in school, in elementary school.

MM In 1932. When they worked in the orchards and vineyards, where did you live here in town?

CM Right here in the neighborhood.

MM In Northtown?

CM Yes.

MM Did most of the workers live in Northtown, who were working in the vineyards and the orchards?

CM Yes, most of them.

MM Did the ranches have housing on them?

CM No, most of them lived around here, they had their own homes.

MM How did your dad get to work? Did he bicycle or walk or take a bus?

CM No, they used to drive, they used to come and pick them up in trucks.

MM Oh, the ranchers did?

CM Yes.

MM They just came through the neighborhood and picked everybody up. What kind of house did you have?

CM A wooden frame house, yes.

MM Was it one story or two?

CM No, one story and my sisters divided it in half to make two living sections because they were both married.

MM When they came?

CM Yes.

MM Could you paint a picture or describe what your house looked like? Or what the area of Northtown looked like at that time when you were young?

CM See, I lived here on this street, Main Street, for 15 years after I came. Then after I got married I came back again. It was beautiful, beautiful gardens and people kept their little houses very neat, in fact this was one of the best streets.

MM Main St.

CM Yes.

MM You mean in terms of gardens?

CM And houses, they kept their houses very neat. The ladies worked too, packing oranges, and lemons.

MM Oh, the moms?

CM Yes, and peaches, cutting apricots and so they had that little extra money to put in the house.

MM In the garden, did they can their food that they grew?

CM No, they were working. My sister stayed home because she had four in the family, four boys. She was the one that used to can a lot, in fact there was a cannery here.

MM Where?

CM Here. Right here where we are.

MM Where we are?

CM Where we are! We used to live down over here.

MM What were they canning?

CM They were canning chilies and tomatoes.

MM I noticed there is a building at the end of the block, it looks like a packinghouse.

CM There was a packinghouse for oranges.

MM So it sounds like a lot of the work, the places for the women [to work] were nearby.

CM Near here, yes.

MM So the houses were on one side and the cannery and packinghouse on the other.

CM Yes, but they used to go out to the field, you know, and pack in the field.

MM Oh, the women?

CM Yes. They would come and pick them up.

MM What were they packing in the fields?

CM Peaches.

MM Peaches. Where did they grow peaches around here?

CM Right here!

MM Right here! Not south of here?

CM A little south of here where we have Via Del Norte, that was all peach orchards.

MM And chilies, they grew chilies around here?

CM Yes, chilies and tomatoes and potatoes and onions.

MM Did the whole family work in the row crops or was that just the dads?

CM Just the dads, most of the kids used to go to school and the moms used to work

part-time, you know, during the season.

MM In the [orchard] picking and packing.

CM Yes.

MM You said they had gardens, did they also have chickens?

CM Yes, chickens, most people did until the ordinance came in with incorporation, no more chickens!

MM People don't know that now.

CM No, they still have one or two somewhere, I can hear a rooster near my house every morning!

MM Everyone that lives in a rural area has had chickens but they don't know that now since the ordinances have changed. What elementary school did you go to?

CM Cucamonga Elementary, across the tracks, on Archibald.

MM Was that mostly for *Mexicanos* or was it for white kids too?

CM There were a few mixed, Italian kids, there was a lot of Italian people here, not right in the neighborhood, but around the ranches. But most of the kids were Mexican Americans at that time. School was from first grade to eighth grade, then we graduated to go to Chaffey High School.

MM Did most kids go on to high school?

CM No.

MM So, what year did you graduate from the eighth grade?

CM In '33.

MM So in '34 you went to the high school?

CM Yes.

MM But most didn't go?

CM No.

MM Why did you go?

CM Because I loved school and I used to walk from way up, about a mile, to catch the bus here. The bus wouldn't go into the *barrio*.

MM Oh, it wouldn't. Where would you pick it up?

CM Over here next to the tracks.

MM Over on Archibald?

CM Yes.

MM To get to Cucamonga Elementary, you just walked.

CM Across, we just walked from here to this street, to that. There were a few from Northtown.

MM When you were in elementary school what kind of things did you do for fun?

CM Oh, we used to play baseball with the boys and other games.

MM The girls played baseball?

CM Yes, they did.

MM Did you play in the streets other games?

CM No, not in the street. We were not allowed on Archibald, there was a lot of traffic at that time, two or three cars every hour!

MM Was there a light, a stop light or anything on Archibald?

CM *Nada*.

MM It wasn't big enough to have one?

CM No, no.

MM When your mom was working, who would watch you?

CM No, my mom wasn't here, she was in Texas, just my dad came.

MM Your dad and all the kids?

CM My dad and my brother and I were the only ones left at home.

MM And the two sisters.

CM No, they were here already but they were married.

MM You didn't live with them?

CM Yes, we all had to live in the same house.

MM So your mom stayed home with one other child?

CM No, she stayed by herself over there.

MM Why did she stay?

CM Well, we had property there and she never wanted to move.

MM She had family over there.

CM Yes, and friends and a lot of relatives.

MM Did you go back and visit a lot?

CM Yes, I did.

MM Did your dad take you and your brother to go?

CM We used to go about every six months.

MM To go and see her?

CM Uh-huh. Then my brother went back and stayed with my mom.

MM Uh-huh. He lives there now?

CM No, he died.

MM Oh, I'm sorry.

CM All my family is gone.

MM But he did move there when he was an adult.

CM Yes.

MM Why did you not feel like doing that?

CM Well, I was going to school, I was going to high school at that time that my dad decided to go back.

MM Oh, your dad went back?

CM Yeah, my dad went back to the farm.

MM Where did you live? Did you live with your sisters?

CM I still stayed with my sisters until I got married.

MM So when you went to Chaffey High School. So, when other kids dropped out of school, I mean they didn't go to high school. You said only a few went on to Chaffey. What did they do instead, your friends?

CM Nothing.

MM Did they work?

CM Some of them worked part-time but they were too young to be hired.

MM Was it their parents' decision that they not go on, or they just didn't feel [like it]?

CM Well, there were a lot of reasons, you know, the friction in the schools. I mean you got involved with, there were a lot of towns going there: Ontario, Upland, and Cucamonga.

MM At Chaffey?

CM At Chaffey.

MM So when you say friction, what kinds?

CM Well, a lot of the kids didn't like each other from different towns. They still don't!

MM Were there gangs then?

CM No, no gangs, but they just, you know, they knew right away that a kid was an outsider.

MM So was that even within the Mexican Americans that the Mexican Americans from Northtown didn't get along with the Mexican Americans from Ontario? Or was it more a White vs. Mexican American?

CM No, there was a mixture.

MM Of friction?

CM Of friction.

MM And why did that not bother you? You weren't part of that?

CM I never got involved, you know, my reason for going to school was to learn, to study.

MM Was that more of a friction felt between boys or something?

CM Yeah, most of the boys, the girls never got involved.

MM It was a boy thing.

CM Yeah, they didn't do much, you know, they just didn't like each other.

MM So, what was your favorite subject in high school?

CM My favorite subject was Geography.

MM Geography.

CM I thought I would travel and I never have much.

MM But that was your dream.

CM Yeah.

MM What did you do to socialize in high school? Did you have girlfriends that you did things with?

CM Yes, we had other friends, you know, from Ontario. We used to get together with the girls there and other towns. We had a Chaffey Day at Chaffey where we all mixed and had fun.

MM What would you do for Chaffey Day?

CM A carnival and we were free, we didn't have to do anything that day.

MM They just had free day.

CM Free day, yeah.

MM Did they have dances or something?

CM Yeah, dance and then sometimes they would, you know, the teachers would take us to the beach.

MM For free day?

CM Uh-huh.

MM Boy, that's nice.

CM If we wanted to go [fine] and if not, we just stayed there you know, to socialize with the boys!

MM Was that unusual? Were you allowed to socialize with boys outside of school?

CM Outside, no.

MM So that was exciting!

CM Yeah, yeah.

MM So it was through school you got to know boys.

CM Yes.

MM Is that how you met your husband?

CM Outside, he was only going part-time because he had to work.

MM Where was he working?

CM When I met him, well, he saw me first, here in the peach orchard.

MM Oh, you were working?

CM He was picking. No, I was at the church teaching Catechism and he sent me a peach and that is how we met.

MM How did he give you the peach?

CM He sent it with a little boy, one of the students, and said, "Take this to the teacher and tell her I'm gonna marry her!"

MM He kept his word!

CM I said, "Who sent this?" He said, "That boy that is over there picking and I thought he was crazy!"

MM So how did you have a courtship?

CM Well, eventually through, you know, letters and once in a while at the ballgames we would see each other.

MM Would those be school games?

CM No, they had a team of all the boys here.

MM A team in Northtown? So was it mostly Mexican American boys?

CM Yeah, but outsiders would come and play with them.

MM And they would be how old?

CM They were all young, 17, 18.

MM Did they travel around the region? Or just here?

CM No, they would come here and sometimes these ones would go to other towns, [it] would be like that.

MM Would that be something the whole community came out to watch?

CM Yes.

MM It was an event.

CM Um-hum.

MM Did you have other things come through town, like circuses or other events that the whole town would come out to see?

CM Yeah, we had quite a few circuses that used to come.

MM Were they Mexican American circuses?

CM Mexican.

MM Uh-huh. Do you remember any of the names of them at all?

CM No, I don't remember, we didn't pay as much attention to the circus as we did to the boys!

MM But going to the circus was a time to see the boys!

CM Yeah, I used to have a chance to talk to my husband. I remember one time we got stuck on the ferris wheel on the top!

MM And your parents would let you see him then?

CM My dad wasn't around!

MM And your sisters would let you?

CM Yeah, my sisters would.

MM So they were much more....

CM What happened, my husband got real friendly with one of my brother-in-laws,

you know, that way he would go visit the house to visit him, not me!

MM And your sisters didn't feel like they had to be as strict as your dad?

CM No. My sisters weren't. But they knew there was that line that you didn't cross.

MM Did you go to the beach very much? Did many of the Mexican Americans from Northtown go down to the beach?

CM Well, sometimes with friends but not very often.

MM Which beach did they go to?

CM San Pedro.

MM That was the one.

CM That was the one.

MM That everybody went to. When you married your husband how old were you?

CM I was about 16.

MM Oh. So you left high school?

CM Yes, I left high school.

MM Where did you settle as newlyweds?

CM Here in Northtown.

MM Did you start working?

CM No, I never worked.

MM You never worked.

CM No.

MM Okay. He continued to work in peaches?

CM Different ones in different things, like oranges and lemons and grapes.

MM Did he ever talk about the work? Which work he liked and didn't like?

CM No, men never do, never did. Where they had their problems were not, you know, they never brought them home, not my husband.

MM He never said, "Oh, it's grape season, I would like that better."

CM They just wanted to work to support the family.

MM There was lots of work around so you didn't have to migrate?

CM No.

MM Everyone stayed here because there were enough crops.

CM People that had big families, you know, used to go up north but would come back right away, they had their home here.

MM Oh, so they would buy a home?

CM They would have a home here, yes, owned.

MM And then they would go and just....

CM For the season and then come back.

MM Did many people in Northtown do that?

CM The ones that had big families.

MM When did that stop? When was it becoming more settled?

CM Mostly during the Second World War.

MM After the Second World War?

CM Yeah.

MM Did your husband, was he a veteran?

CM No, he was leaving that week and they signed the armistice, he would have passed, he was what they called A-1? Yes, I still have his card.

MM Well, lucky for you that he didn't have to go.

CM Yeah.

MM Do you have any children?

CM One boy.

MM And when was he born?

CM He was born in '36.

MM So your job was mostly taking care of him. Did you participate in school things?

CM For my son, yes. Then I put him in private school so I had to drive him every day to Ontario [to] St. George [School].

MM It was a Catholic school?

CM Yeah.

MM And you drove?

CM Yeah.

MM So you got your license?

CM Well, in the beginning I didn't. Somebody reported me because I wasn't of age. I was crossing Foothill and we didn't have any police here or anything, there was just one officer here, like a marshal, and then he stopped me and said, "Where are you going?" I said, "To my sister's." Then he asked if I had a license. I said, "No." [He said] "Why?" [I said] "I'm not of age and my husband won't sign for me." So he gave me a slip of paper and sent me to the Department of Motor Vehicles and I got my license.

MM But you were 16 when you got married.

CM Yeah, I was 17 then when the police caught me!

MM But you had to have a parent sign when you, an older person sign for you?

CM Or the husband if you were married and you were not of age.

MM Did a lot of the girls in the neighborhood get married at 16?

CM Yeah, very young, a very common thing.

MM How did the war effect the area? Did things change?

CM It changed because the boys could get better jobs, you know. They could go out and get better jobs in factories.

MM Why do you think that was?

CM I don't know, because in the beginning they just used to work in the fields and then they started working, when they came back, in other places like Kaiser Steel Mill and other places.

MM One thing we wanted to ask you about was when you were in high school, what kind of courses were you encouraged to take? You mentioned home economics.

CM Yeah. It was home economics because, I don't know, they never told us you could be a secretary, you could be a teacher, you know, an executive, no, never.

MM And that was mostly the Mexican American girls?

CM Yeah and one thing that sticks out in my mind is that when I went to quit and get married, they never told me I was going to lose all this credits you know, that I had. It was at the end of the semester. They didn't tell me.

MM But you weren't finishing the semester?

CM No. I had a couple of things that I had to take care of and I quit in the middle and they never told me, you know, you're going to lose them, don't do it.

MM Because they never thought you were going to go back?

CM I guess not.

MM Were most of the girls that were in the home economics class Mexican American or were they white and both?

CM About 2/3 were Mexican Americans. Yeah, we learned how to make an omelet.

MM You learned a lot of American cooking?

CM We learned to sew.

MM But they didn't teach any, they didn't teach tortillas or tamales.

CM No, no, we got that at home.

MM But they taught how to cook American food.

CM Uh-huh.

MM Was that useful?

CM Well, it was in a way, like now I still remember what I learned.

MM Did you ever have progressive dinners?

CM You mean together, the group?

MM Well, or you go to each others' houses. Some home economic classes you would have dessert or salad in one person's home and then the main meal at another and dessert at another.

CM No, we used to make everything there and then we had a dinner or lunch there.

MM Some places did it out in the community. After the war, what kind of work did your husband get?

CM He went to the shipyards.

MM And where was that, San Pedro?

CM No, it was in Richmond, near San Francisco.

MM Oh, way up there. Did you go with him?

CM I went with him.

MM How long did you stay there?

CM Oh, it could have been a year, I guess, I really don't remember.

MM Why did you leave?

CM We had to come back home because his father was very ill.

MM So he had to leave that job.

CM Yeah, and he was the only boy left, they were all in the Service.

MM Oh, so this was during the war. Then when he came back what kind of work did he find? More agriculture?

CM No, he started on his own [business]. He bought two trucks and he used to haul grapes and lemons and oranges and all that.

MM So instead of being a picker he was the hauler.

CM Yeah, he was the boss.

MM He was the boss. How long did he continue to do that?

CM Until we got the business.

MM What was that business?

CM It was a restaurant/bar.

MM A restaurant and a bar?

CM Yeah.

MM And where was it located?

CM It's over here on 25th Street, where I live [now].

MM What's the name of it?

CM It used to be the Tiger Cafe.

MM The Tiger Cafe, and what is it now?

CM It's closed. He closed it before he died.

MM Was your house part of the restaurant?

CM No, I used to live here and we had the restaurant there and then eventually he built a house next to it.

MM Oh, okay. Were you helping him in the business?

CM No, no, I didn't. I used to do his bookkeeping, that's all.

MM Uh-huh, that's work!

CM Yeah, that's work! But not the cooking.

MM You weren't hostessing or helping seat people?

CM No, no, no.

MM One thing we wanted to find out about is how did the Depression affect Northtown or this region? Did people come together because they didn't have much?

CM Well, they did, you know, but most of the time we used to get free [things], like free oranges, free potatoes, onions and all those things, which helped a lot at the house.

MM Who gave them to you?

CM The ranchers after the picking.

MM Would they let you go to the fields and pick them?

CM Yeah, after they picked the crop, they would let the people go and get onions and potatoes. But the oranges they would haul them in trucks and go around the streets and we would come out with a bucket and they would fill it for us, give it

to us free.

MM That's good.

CM Yeah, that was a lot of help.

MM Did people help each other in the neighborhood?

CM Yes.

MM If you couldn't make it, people would share?

CM Uh-huh, yes.

MM There's a lot of sharing. Did you know anybody, or had you ever heard of the Deportation or Repatriation Program that happened in the Depression to Mexicans?

CM I knew about it because I had read the book. I still have the book. We heard about it at school but recently I met a lady that, when I was coming, she was going and she told me that [the Mexican government] had given [her family] very bad land over there, rocky land, they couldn't plant [in exchange] for real nice homes here. Her father couldn't come back again, ever, but the boys and girls from the family that were born here, could come back.

MM Because they were born here?

CM Yeah.

MM But the father wasn't, so he couldn't come?

CM Yeah, so she came back and married here and raised a family.

MM Did she say if that was a common occurrence? That a lot of them tried to come back?

CM Yes, we knew that it was very common but as soon as the family got older they

decided to come back because where they were worse [off].

MM But you never heard of any round-ups of people that were sent back by train?

CM They were sending those flat cars where they put the cattle.

MM They were sending the Mexicans back? And did you hear of that?

CM I heard of it, but see, the father had to sign an agreement to go back because they were going to trade land.

MM That was a voluntary thing.

CM Yeah, voluntary thing.

MM But some of them were forced. Did you hear of any of the forced?

CM No, I never heard of anybody being forced. I knew the father and the mother had to sign to leave the United States and go back to Mexico, things were so bad here, you know. They thought that they would be better off there with their own land and the [Mexican government] abused them because they gave them bad land. Rocky places and couldn't do nothing with it.

MM So why do you think they did that? Why did the government do that?

CM I don't have any idea but I feel that if the people had been better educated or had known better, they would have gone and see where they were going to be transferred to.

MM Before they signed away.

CM Sure, before they signed away their rights. You wouldn't sign away your rights, I wouldn't.

MM But transportation was hard, it would have been hard to get down there, it would have been costly to go see it and then come back and then bring your family

down.

CM Yeah, but that, at that time, to cross the border you didn't need anything, you just crossed, that's all.

MM Do you remember that in El Paso?

CM I remember that.

MM What was it like?

CM Well, you used to cross the river on horseback or walking or whatever.

MM Pretty small in El Paso.

CM Yeah.

MM People would just come and go?

CM And go as if it was the United States.

MM Did people come and go just for the day?

CM Oh yes.

MM The border was very permeable?

CM Yeah. There were no restrictions.

MM So people would go and eat lunch on one side and you knew people on both sides.

CM Yeah and we had a lot of friends, a lot of family on each side because it was so close.

MM I guess people today don't realize, and even people who don't live in El Paso, people don't realize how the border is, people are coming and going all the time so you know, to describe that is helpful.

CM Yeah, they used to do it but not anymore, now it's restricted but then it wasn't and people just, they could leave in the morning and come back at night.

MM When do you think those restrictions happened?

CM Around '28, '29, I remember they were still crossing without any immigration around there, any restrictions.

MM In San Elizario, you remember that.

CM Mostly below because it was more ranches. San Elizario and El Paso were cities.

MM After the war, there were a bunch of strikes during the '30's before the war?

CM Yes, because [before] the war they were paying them 10 cents an hour, that was before the war, 10 cents an hour and then they had the strike and then they raised it to 35 cents.

MM And what crops would that be in?

CM It would be the same crops: lemons, oranges, peaches and grapes.

MM So any of the crops around here?

CM Any of them, [they] were the same and they would pay them by the hour, 10 cents.

MM Were people afraid to strike because they would lose their jobs and their homes?

CM There was no money. What little work they could get was for food.

MM If there was no money, why would they [strike]? Did the workers win the strikes?

CM Well, for 35 cents an hour.

MM Uh-huh, they did.

CM It was raised to 35.

MM Was that something the whole neighborhood got behind?

CM Well, you know, you always need a leader and some of the younger boys got together. I remember my dad and my brother and my husband were in a group

too, but there were quite a few people.

MM Who was the leader?

CM Well some people claim they were. I couldn't say the names, you know how it is.

MM So you don't remember one distinct leader.

CM Yeah. It happens even nowadays, when you do something and accomplish something, then somebody else tries to get the credit, see, and that was the same way then, you know.

MM You probably would know who the leader was if it failed.

CM Yeah, I guess so!

MM Did people take the Red Car [Electric Trains] to Los Angeles?

CM Yes, that was the only transportation to L.A. except if you had your own car.

MM Did many people have cars?

CM Well, a few. Because they were not that expensive you know. But we had to get the Red Cars all the way up in Alta Loma.

MM Oh, you had to go up to Alta Loma to catch it?

CM Uh-huh and when...

MM How far is Alta Loma? Can you describe?

CM It could be about five miles.

MM And you had to walk up there?

CM Walk.

MM To get the Red Cars?

CM Uh-huh and then they would leave the passengers there too.

MM Do you remember any segregation in the Red Cars? Would Mexican Americans

only be allowed to get out at certain stops or would white people and Mexican American's all sit together in one car?

CM No. There was [segregation] in the theaters.

MM There was segregation.

CM Yeah.

MM What theatres, can you remember?

CM The Grove in Upland.

MM How did the segregation take place?

CM All the Mexicans [sat] on one side and the Anglos on another side, even in the, lets see, in 1946 still that was going on.

MM When you were in high school, did people go to the movies very much? Or were they too expensive?

CM Well, we had the old place here, the hall, *La Progressista*.

MM And what kind of films did they show?

CM It was classics, black and white and silent movies.

MM Anglo or white classics?

CM No, Mexican.

MM So they were all in Spanish? They were silent but with subtitles in Spanish?

CM But we could also see the news you know, but they were silent.

MM Who sponsored that in the hall? The films?

CM There was a man that used to own the hall and would bring the movies and then we would walk to the place over there.

MM *La Progressista* had their meetings over there?

CM Well, there were dances and *Quinceneras* (15th birthday commemorations) and weddings and all that in the same place.

MM When you were younger, in high school, besides the circus, what other kinds of activities [were there]? Were there *jamaicas* (Mexican fiestas sponsored by the Catholic church)?

CM The church sponsored *jamaicas* because for a long time we were planning to build that church.

MM So the *jamaicas* were used as a fundraiser?

CM Yeah.

MM Can you describe for people who have never heard the word *jamaica*, what it is?

CM Well, *jamaicas* are mostly like, you know, they sell food and then have games and dance and music. Then over here they would close like one of the streets, you know, on both sides and then they would have the dance in the street.

MM How often would you have a *jamaica* like that?

CM About once a month we used to have them.

MM Once a month. This was a very exciting place to live!

CM Oh! Then I remember we used to celebrate all the holidays, like *Cinco de Mayo*, *Deis y Seis de Septiembre*.

MM And what would you do for those celebrations?

CM Well, we also had food and we also had the kids dressed up in costumes and have recitals.

MM Would you have a parade or a party or?

CM Yes. The trucks would be decorated with all kinds of paper, crepe paper.

MM Where was the route that they would take?

CM Just around town.

MM Around Main St., just around Northtown?

CM Around Northtown.

MM Would that last all day long?

CM No, that would be in the morning at 10:00 and then there would be the food and then the dances and there were also raffles and the shooting gallery that they have and all that. You know what they are? They put a bunch of prizes and then they shoot and if they hit so many little ducks they get a prize.

MM Oh, but what would they shoot? Water guns?

CM No, they were some kind of....

MM Like a bebe gun?

CM Like a bebe gun. No it wouldn't be a real one, that would mess up the whole place!

MM Did you have a *posada* at Christmas?

CM In Texas we used to. I remember, I was so little, they never wanted me to get a candle, so my mother got me a little lantern and it was cold, freezing, snowing and they went the nine days you know. Then the big one was in my house all the time.

MM Oh really. Could you describe the *posada*, for people who don't know.

CM Well a *posada* is when Mary was going to have the baby, Jesus, and they would go and ask for lodging at each house, knock at the door and then the people inside tell them no, they couldn't come in. Eventually they opened the door and all the

people came in and had sodas and cookies.

MM But you would come to a neighborhood door?

CM And they would sing and some would come outside and ask if we would like to come in to have the baby for nine days until the last day, they let them in.

MM And that was at your house?

CM Yeah, but the baby didn't show up until of course Christmas, just Mary and Joseph would be carried around, like little statues.

MM So, why do you think they didn't do *posadas* here?

CM They did them at the [labor] camp.

MM Did you ever go out to them?

CM No, I didn't go to the camp.

MM Was there much of a relationship between the people of Northtown and the camp workers?

CM Yeah, it was okay because people from the camp belonged to the same church here.

MM Oh, okay. So there wasn't a kind of a fear of the camp?

CM No.

MM The camp was mostly men, wasn't it?

CM No, no, there were families. Yeah, I wrote a paper, when I was going to Chaffey. We went to visit the Mexican families at the camp. They had their places very neat and clean and then they had a teacher who would come in and teach them once a week.

MM So the camp kids, did they go to Cucamonga Elementary?

CM Yes, uh-huh.

MM Do you still have [your paper]?

CM I still have it.

MM Could we get a copy?

CM With all the mistakes!

MM That's okay, you won't be graded! But it would be great to have that in the archive at the source to describe it.

CM It says there, you know, when we went and what we saw.

MM What year was that that you went?

CM Well, that was after I got married, and they asked us to write a paper on the camp.

MM At the school?

CM Yes, at the college.

MM Okay, so this was when you were in college?

CM Yes, um-hum.

MM What year did you start to go back to college?

CM In 1975.

MM So you were an older student?

MM Well, there were a lot coming in and we were amazed at what we used to hear because when you stay home you are just in your own home and you don't hear things, and then you go out and the kids are so outspoken, you know.

[End of Side A; Begin of Side B]

MM What kinds of things would you hear?

CM About drugs, about you know, the kids sleeping together and all that. We didn't

- know, we were in our own home, we didn't hear those things. When we went it was so different.
- MM You found out society had changed.
- CM Well, first I went to a summer class for conversation because I had been out of school for so long. We had a teacher who used to sit at the end of the desk, he would come with a little tie and everybody was scared, including the ones from high school! So were we. The atmosphere was cold in that room but eventually we learned to control it and by the end of the year we were okay.
- MM So who sponsored this introduction class in conversation?
- CM It was a college class.
- MM Oh, it was a college class.
- CM Yes, it was an elective.
- MM Was it like an English conversation class?
- CM Yes. It was English but then we had to read a poem and we had to tell a story and we had to write something on it and all that. But I remember the first time I had to say the oral, there...
- MM Recite a poem?
- CM Yes, recite a poem and he said "Well you can do it in Spanish if you want." "Good," I said, "I will do it in Spanish!" Then I dressed up and all that and went, it was about a flower, a rose, and then everybody would come and be dressed up when their turn came.
- MM So you set the pace.
- CM The example. But there were ladies that were more experienced than I and they

would just freak out.

MM What prompted you to go back to school in 1975? You had been out of school for almost 40 years?

CM Well, I had a lot of time because I used to stay home all the time, my husband was always busy.

MM What about your son?

CM My son was already in school, so I had a lot of time to do homework and study and all that.

MM But why school? Some people would just go back to work.

CM No, he wouldn't let me go to work, my husband.

MM So this was a different option?

CM My husband never let me go to work.

MM Why is that?

CM I don't know, he didn't believe in that. He said, "You can go back to school because I always wanted to see myself in a cap and gown." He said, "You can go back to college if you want to." He gave me a new car every year so I wouldn't have problems but he said, "No night classes!" He said, "You get in the day classes." So I had a very good person there that would...

MM A counselor.

CM Yes, and I said, "I don't have time to waste, I want the classes that I need to take to [get into University of] La Verne." And I made it.

MM What about all those classes you missed in high school? Remember you said that semester you lost?

CM I had to go and take them again.

MM You had to go back to high school?

CM I would go in the morning to Chaffey, take my classes. In the evening, the night class, I wouldn't go at night you know, unless I could get somebody to go with me. I took the English and the Geography and History I think it was.

MM At night? For the high school?

CM Yes. To make up so I could get a degree.

MM Then what college did you go to? You graduated from which high school? Chaffey High School?

CM I graduated from Chaffey High School and then graduated from Chaffey [Junior] College.

MM What year did you graduate from Chaffey College?

CM Gosh, I don't even remember, I threw away my degree and my husband found it. I didn't know I had thrown it away, in the trash! He said, "Look here, you worked so hard for this degree and it is in the trash!"

MM I was gonna say, a lot of people just keep those on the wall forever! So this is the '70's, like '75, something like that.

CM Yes, it could have been because I was teaching Catechism at the time over here. My secretary was the one that encouraged me to go, she was going, you know.

MM Was she a young women or about your age?

CM About my age.

MM Is this like your '50's?

CM She said, "Now everybody is going back to school, why don't you go to school?"

I said, "Oh, my husband would never let me." She said, "Ask him, try." I did and she was going too, she graduated from Chaffey High School the same day that I did.

MM Did she go onto college?

CM No, she didn't, she was working already. And then I continued my classes at Chaffey College.

MM Then after Chaffey College where did you go?

CM La Verne.

MM To the University of La Verne? Did you get your Bachelors degree there?

CM Yes.

MM What was your major?

CM Well, I had two majors. I had my BA in Social Science and I think it was Spanish. I should bring my degrees, shouldn't I? Or take them out once in a while and look at them! I don't have them on the wall, I have them put away. The last one was for Bilingual Education.

MM And that was your Masters degree?

CM Yes.

MM You did that at University of La Verne as well?

CM Yes.

MM Now for the Bachelor and Master degrees, were there many other Mexican American women of your age that were doing that?

CM Yes, they were offering a class all over, that's when they started this teacher's aide position, but I wasn't [in that]. [The school was] paying their way, not mine.

I had to pay my own.

MM Because you didn't want to work?

CM No, I couldn't.

MM Uh-huh, you couldn't work.

CM No, first the computers came in the schools and they asked me to work with the computers and I was going to take a trip and I told them I couldn't and I don't know, they got somebody else.

MM So what was that like to graduate with the ESL? Were you one of the few women to do that or were there many other Mexican American women with their Masters degree in the ESL?

CM There were not that many.

MM That's kind of unusual.

CM Yes, could have been about eight out of the 800 that graduated.

MM Was your husband proud of you?

CM Oh, he was there jumping all over the place! Yes, he got more excited than I did! Everytime.

MM If you had to look back on your school career, what's most memorable about it? What stood out in your mind as being something that really helped to shape you?

CM Well, I guess I went through it, everything helped because I had been away from school so long.

MM Did it teach you a different way to look at the world? Did it help you in the future things that you have done in all your boards that you have been on?

CM Yes, because we learned, you know, like behavioral science.

MM You learned how to deal with people?

CM Yes, a lot of things that we would never have learned if we hadn't gone back to school. At home you just do the housework and that's it.

MM Yeah. Now when you left school, when you graduated, you started getting involved in community activities. Can you describe a little bit about the Northtown Housing Development Corporation?

CM Oh yes, but you will have to talk to the executive director about that.

MM But what about your participation in it, because you're a board member aren't you?

CM Yes. I'm the secretary and a board member, from the beginning.

MM Were you a founder?

CM Well, Nacho and I were on another committee and it used to be called the Community Participation Committee and then this eventually was formed.

MM When you left your ESL program, what was your first political participation?

CM I always helped all through my life that was one of the things that my husband gave to me, to be involved in helping the people. All my life has been volunteer work.. I could get involved in politics, I could get involved in the school, I could get involved in the church, I was very involved in the church.

MM And the way you were involved was by organizing and overseeing the Catechism classes?

CM Well yes, that was one and I organized a group called *Las Guadalupanas* and we had 40 members.

MM What did they do?

CM Well, we are a committee to help the people and we stood to participate in having the fiesta for our lady of Guadalupe, the *mariachi* and all that. At one time we had our own banner, at one time we met the camp people over there on Arrow and Archibald and we marched from there to the church one day. They took a film of that.

MM What was the march about?

CM To meet the people from over there, they had their own banner of the blessed mother, we had our own. So we got together and we had a *reina*, a queen, and then we had the *mariachi* there waiting for the queen, all these young girls they were all excited, they wanted to win!

MM So it was to really kind of excite people about the church and the ways you could participate.

CM Yes, I taught five years, Catechism.

MM That is when you were younger?

CM Yes, because they sent us to school from church, the priests sent us to school to get our certificate to be able to teach, to be a Catechist.

MM Then could you describe a little bit about your participation in the incorporation of *Logia 19 of La Sociedad Progressista Mexicano*?

CM Well at the beginning I was in it. We used to help with the dances you know, to see the tickets and all that. I left *Progressista* because my husband and I couldn't be in the same lodge together.

MM That was a men's lodge?

CM No, it was men and women, but the wife and husband couldn't be in the same

one.

MM Who said that?

CM They did because we are supposed to have a beneficiary, and we didn't with just the two of us, so he put me as beneficiary and I dropped out. Then we started the *Feminil*, which was started in 1954.

MM Was that *La Sociedad Protectora Feminil*?

CM Yes, and then I have been in that since then.

MM And that is an all-women's group?

CM Yes, all women, no men.

MM But the *Progressista* is men and women.

CM Yes.

MM And the purpose of these organizations is mostly service?

CM Yes, well they make dances and fiestas and then they help the people with their needs.

MM Those are fundraisers.

CM Yes, uh-huh.

MM Then they use the money for....

CM For the members.

MM To do what?

CM Well to help them when they die, they give them so much.

MM Is it a loan organization?

CM No.

MM You can't borrow money from them to build or something like that?

CM No, it's a non-profit.

MM For social service?

CM For social service.

MM If you needed money for food or anything could you go to the *Progressista*?

CM I don't know what the *Progressista* is doing now but in the *Feminil* we would give them but it would be our own but not from the group, not from the club, it would be on our own. I could take something and somebody else could take something.

MM So it would be just one on one.

CM Yes. But when somebody dies and it's a member, then they get help for the burial.

MM If there is a birth, do people help with the cooking and helping the new mom?

CM Yes they do, they do. On their own time, you know.

MM Is this all over the southwest or just in California?

CM Just in California.

MM But they have different [organizations], each town has its own association.

CM There are 18 lodges.

MM 18 lodges. Of each? The *Feminil* and the *Progressista*?

CM I don't know how many of the *Progressista* but there's quite a few but the *Feminil* there are 18 lodges.

MM And did you meet annually as a state organization?

CM We had the conventions.

MM Where would they be held?

CM In different towns. It depends who asked for it.

MM Was there a state, like a director of the state agency?

CM Yeah, well the *Feminil* has a board [with members from each town, each lodge has their own board and we meet once a month.

MM Historically before the '50's there would be other organizations like *Cruz Azul*. Was there any overlap?

CM *Los Lenadores*, there was one, my husband used to belong to and there were quite a few.

MM Did the *Progressista* and the *Feminil* come out of that?

CM No, I don't think so.

MM You could belong to many of these?

CM Yeah, you could belong to as many as you could donate your dues!

MM They're always making some money!

CM Yes.

MM The old hall, the Northtown Housing Development Corporation purchased the old hall that the *Progressista* use in 1996? Is that true?

CM That's our hall.

MM Oh, that's your hall?

CM That's the Corporation's now.

MM They purchased it to preserve it?

CM Yes, but it's different now.

MM It's not used by the *Progressista*?

CM It's a Community [Center], but it belongs to the Corporation.

MM And why did the *Progressista* stop using that?

CM It was very, you know, couldn't be used, it was just run down.

MM Oh, it was too run down. They were maintaining it?

CM No.

MM They didn't own it? They rented it?

CM Well I don't know about their deal, you know.

MM Okay. What about the neighborhood lighting district? Were you a participant in that?

CM Yes, I was the president. We had the meetings at my house.

MM Do you know about what year that was and why did it start?

CM That was in the '60's because I had moved to that house in '61, [it] would have been about '62 but it existed before but I was the president then. We used to meet there, there were five of us, I have a picture of all the group.

MM Why did you create this organization? What was the need?

CM The need for lighting here, there were no lights.

MM In Northtown?

CM In Northtown.

MM You mean city lights?

CM Yes, city lights.

MM So this was to light up the streets. What was that like?

CM We were not allowed to have real big, use a lot of watts on one street corner you know. We had to ask for them and then they would decide in San Bernardino, the Board of Supervisors, which I can tell you that because I was the director here.

MM Yes. The director of the Northtown?

CM There was none here before incorporation but when it incorporated then the upper section went to ask the Board of Supervisors in San Bernardino for lights, that they wanted to organize a board and then they told them no, there is already one that exists. They said. "Where?" They said, "Northtown and you have to go to them." So they came to us. They gave us a dinner at the Cask and Cleaver [Restaurant], and then I had to tell them all the watts on each corner and you know, how it was formed and who was a member and all that.

MM These were the people from Alta Loma or something that were wanting the lights?

CM Lets see, we didn't have any lights from Arrow [up].

MM Oh, so it's not just Northtown it was the whole area had no lights.

CM Yes. But in the beginning only Northtown [had them].

MM Northtown had them because you got organized.

CM Yes.

MM You got organized because you could see the need? Or other people [saw the need] too?

CM There was other people involved, you know, I wasn't the only one.

MM You had served on a San Bernardino board before that? A County board? Were you a member of any other County boards for San Bernardino?

CM Well, we had several titles we organized to go and ask for things because anything that we needed we had to go to San Bernardino.

MM So was it difficult just to be a region in a county? Now that you are a city, is it easier to get the things you need?

CM You have to ask, you know, you have to request and then they, all the people work, and there are meetings and finally they let you know.

MM But the County is so vast. They have to respond to a lot of requests.

CM Well to me, it seemed easier when we used to go to San Bernardino, we used to get our permits and everything over there and we went and we always got them.

MM So it seemed easier?

CM To us, it was less red-tape then, lets put it that way.

MM So you certainly were an activist, they got to know you in the County government. What motivated you to want to participate like this?

CM Well I always wanted to improve the area, you know, it was my dream to see Northtown renovated because I could see it was a few houses that were nice houses, [but] not all of them and other things. We didn't have sidewalks, we didn't have sewer line, so you had to go and try and get them for the people.

MM Was that different than other parts of this region? I mean in the other areas or did Northtown suffer more in terms of not having enough services?

CM No, I guess you know how it is when a nationality congregates to one place and live in one section. The Italianos in one section, the French, and its the same way with Mexican Americans.

MM But did you feel that this section had less services?

CM We had less, yes. We had less and now we are looking a little better.

MM You certainly have a voice. You're giving advice to the other areas.

CM We have, like I think I told you, Nacho and I would go back on the '60's.

MM You go back to the '60's?

CM Yes, that [is when] we started [promoting relations] between the city and the Northtown.

MM What kind of things started in the '60's?

CM Well, when we, it's like when we got the street lights, we were already together. I got the sewer line by myself, the water by myself.

MM Did you form an organization for the sewer lines?

CM No, I went and did it on my own. A couple of girls helped me deliver the cards but we delivered a card in every door to see if they would sign it and then I took them to the [San Bernardino County] Water Department and I attended all of their meetings and that's when we got it.

MM And then what other issues besides the lights and sewer, you said water?

CM Yeah, the water, I think I mentioned that one owner used to own the water here and we used to pay to one owner. We wanted to be with the District because they had their own water rights.

MM So did you personally organize that?

CM Yes, I did.

MM How did you do that?

CM A petition.

MM You went door to door.

CM And got a petition and sent it to the [County] Water Department at one of their meetings.

MM What happened?

CM Well they kept it, you know, they couldn't discuss it I guess in front of me, but

they called me in, you know, they had their meetings and then they decided that they could give it to us but they had to buy this person out.

MM Well, was this scary to do all this organizing? I mean you're a Mexican American women, most of these boards you're dealing with, these city governments, are mostly white men aren't they?

CM Well, there were a few women in there, but [all] white.

MM Not of your culture?

CM No.

MM Was that an intimidating or scary situation?

CM Not to me.

MM You didn't feel like...

CM No. I felt that the area needed these things.

MM So you felt like that gave you more strength than your fear or anything?

CM Well, every time I accomplished something it made me feel good.

MM So then you could go and do something else.

CM Yes. So you know, like I say, the first thing we did was water and then the street lights that was already, this group together between the city and the...

MM What was your feeling about city incorporation?

CM I helped with the incorporation, we tried it two or three times until finally it went through.

MM Why were you for incorporation?

CM Well, we thought it would better our area also you know.

MM It would better Northtown?

CM Yes.

MM What about the Citizens Housing Task Force, the Rancho Cucamonga Citizens Housing Task Force? Were you a participant on that?

CM You mean from the City? No I wasn't on that, Nacho was, I wasn't.

MM Then what about the Northtown Neighborhood Steering Committee? Is that something that you participated in?

CM Well, I, like I say, I've been with the group since the '60's.

MM Well these were all different titles that we saw in Nacho's brochure.

CM Yes, but we worked together on all those.

MM What about the County Citizen Participation Advisory?

CM Yes.

MM That's San Bernardino County?

CM Yes, we had a certificate, there was a necessary certificate every year. That's when we worked for the streetlights and other things between the city and Northtown.

MM In terms of how this area has changed, can you describe from the time you first arrived here in 1932 to now? How does Rancho Cucamonga look different?

CM All over, you mean? Not only Northtown?

MM Well, why don't we start with Northtown. How is Northtown different?

CM Well, now we have good houses, we have sidewalks, we have paved streets, lights, sewer lines and well, we are really, you know, in taking care of the needs.

MM How about the community itself? Do you feel like there is more community spirit now, [more] neighborhood spirit? Northtown had different circumstances than the

rest of the region in the 30's, I mean, the people were much more enclosed, it was a separate neighborhood. Do you feel like there was more community spirit then?

CM Well, remember before it was our parents and so they didn't used to get involved [in the community]. When we went to school we started getting involved in things, at least like I used to work for the original Council on Aging when I got out of college. I attended one of their meetings because we had a little group of women and we needed some things and we heard that they would give you every year like a typewriter, adding machine or whatever. So, of course, I went and I started taking notes next to the president and he thought I was a reporter. Then finally he asked me and I said, "No, I just got out of college and we need a few things in our area, especially for the women." I was starting to form the self-improvement group for the elderly. I wanted them to be involved because way back they never did. All they did was the house, the house. So I got involved with the original Council on the Aging. I worked with them for five years and got several certificates from them. I don't know how they are doing now because I left.

MM Because you got more focused on Northtown?

CM Yes, oh yes. But then they gave me a committee of five and they gave me a secretary too. The five members that I had in this committee were the ones that would oversee the money that was given to non-profit organizations like Rancho Cucamonga, Upland, Montclair, Chino and Rancho Cucamonga, here. There were five of them and they were underneath me. Then we had to monitor, you know, what do we give them, we give them so much for their groups and then we

- have to monitor if they bought the material that they requested and how it was being used by the seniors and all that.
- MM So you learned a lot of directing skills.
- CM Yes. So I had this committee and at the same time I was secretary of a regional Council on Aging that they had in this area.
- MM But you learned a lot of valuable skills that helped you for future community organizing.
- CM Yes, they teach me how to go after things.
- MM Like what, like money?
- CM Like money, you know, like different things that we really have achieved is because we have to go and go and ask.
- MM Be persistent.
- CM Yes, be at the meetings, and then getting organized and all that.
- MM Yes, it's a lot. I mean, it's a skill and a lot of people don't know how to do it.
- CM But that's why, like I was saying, our parents were elderly and they never thought they could go and get these things.
- MM So it also sounds like you feel like the schools helped contribute to teach you how to do some of this, because you said going to school you learned.
- CM Your attitude changes.
- MM In what way?
- CM Well, that you can get things if you are persistent and that is only way to get them.
- MM So, in terms of the region, how has it changed from the time you were in the '30's

- to now? I mean it is much more suburban.
- CM Yes, it's a city now and there's a lot of building, a lot of the grapes, I don't think we have none at all, you know, vineyards and orchards and all that, very few farming, not much. All of that is gone and before this area used to depend on that.
- MM And the people living in Northtown don't really work here anymore, they commute?
- CM Yes, a lot of the younger people got out and left you know, to buy houses and get better jobs other places.
- MM So you feel like the area is getting smaller?
- CM No, not really smaller, some of them are coming back but some of them say I shouldn't have left, now they say I shouldn't have left. But if you live in an area and you see the area going down, you know that your property value is going down so you have to do something to bring it up.
- MM That is part of what Northtown Housing Development Corporation has done.
- CM Yes.
- MM Celia, if you had to say, who were the people most influential in your life? Who would they be? Do you have any heroes or heroines?
- CM In school you mean?
- MM Anywhere, in the community?.
- CM Well, a couple of my teachers at college you know, were really for helping me and there were also a few that were against you. Some teachers would bring their problems to school and they would take it out on the students. But most of the

time they would teach us right because we were adults and we behaved. Those kids from high school came in and they always thought they knew more than the teachers and we didn't. But I met all kinds of people. But over here, Nacho and I, like I say, we work together.

MM He's been your closest political ally?

CM Yes, for everything, we have worked together for a long time, since '60. I still have the minutes from when we had the participation committee meeting, from the '60's.

MM If you had to say, what institutions have been most influential in Northtown, over the years of helping shape it?

CM The institution of schools or?

MM Any institution, the churches, schools.

CM Well, the church has never got too involved with improving the area, you know. That has been mostly the group, like I told you, we formed that group, and we used to work between the city and Northtown.

MM So that has been the most influential group, so not the schools, not anything that was here before, you had to create it?

CM No, no, the schools were not, neither was the church. They were here, you know, they were organizations that had to be in each town, I guess.

MM But you had to do it for yourself.

CM And if you don't move, you don't get nothing. It's like the business, you don't move, you don't get ahead. I used to do all that for my husband, like getting all his permits and all.

MM And when did the restaurant close, Tigers?

CM Tiger Cafe?

MM Tiger?

CM No, Tiger.

MM When did it close?

CM It closed in '86.

MM And it was Mexican food?

CM Yes, Mexican food. At the beginning we had all kinds of food but eventually we just left a few [items on the menu]: tacos and menudo, and not too much to serve.

MM Do you have anything you would like to add at the end, in terms of something you would like to say about living in Rancho Cucamonga, this area and what it has meant to you?

CM I've been happy here because I came to this area when I was very young, I had the opportunity to go to school and I have never lacked for anything really. I feel that to get things you have to work for them, you have to go get them or they town won't get nothing.

(end of interview)