

**Oral History Interview of  
Luis Estrada**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Urbina Sánchez  
September 25, 2013  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
Hispanic Interview Project**

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### Preferred Citation for this Document:

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### Recording Notes:

*Original Format:* Born Digital Audio

*Digitization Details:* N/A

*Audio Metadata:* 44.1k/ 16bit WAV file

*Further Access Restrictions:* N/A

### Transcription Notes:

*Interviewer:* Daniel U. Sanchez

*Audio Editor:* Elissa Stroman

*Transcription:* Elyssa Foshee

*Editor(s):* Cammy Herman

*Final Editor:* Daniel U. Sánchez, Elissa Stroman

## Interview Series Background:

The Hispanic Interview Project documents the diverse perspectives of the Hispanic people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11<sup>th</sup> 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Luis Estrada. Estrada discusses his time coming from Mexico to America. He describes his struggles in school, and where he began to find his passion in drafting. Estrada also discusses his family's store and the work he has done for his community in Lubbock, Texas.

**Length of Interview:** 01:40:10

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### Keywords

Cinco De Mayo, Mexican-American, barrio, engineering, drafting

**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Sánchez, and I'm at the home of Luis Estrada on September 25, 2013. And his home is here in the Guadalupe neighborhood, and we're going to talk about that and other experiences. First of all, Luis, thank you for sitting down with us.

**Luis Estrada (LE):**

You're more than welcome. This is—*mi casa es tu casa*. [my house is your house.]

DS:

Oh, good.

LE:

And we all Mexican, so—(laughter).

DS:

Oh, yeah. Well a whole lot of people use that [phrase] now. Can you please state your complete legal name?

LE:

Yes, my name is Luis Cecilio Estrada Uribe and Uribe is part of my mother's last name.

Normally in Mexico we go through the whole entire name. Luis Cecilio Estrada Uribe. That's the way it is. Now here I just go by Luis C. Estrada.

DS:

Okay. And when and where were you born?

LE:

I was born in Ciudad Acuña, which at that time was Villa Acuña Coahuila, Mexico in 1946. December 22, 1946.

DS:

Okay. And tell us a little about your parents, their names and places of birth.

LE:

My father's name was Luis Estrada Venegas, and my mother was Elvira Uribe Treviño before she got married, and she was born in Seguin, Texas, and my father was born in Guanajuato, but my mother moved with her parents into a Acuña and she became the first—you can tell an illegal immigrant in Mexico, because she was an American citizen. But she was real fluent in English and Spanish, so she worked for the telephone company in Mexico.

DS:

Go ahead, I was gonna turn this up.

LF:

And what the beauty about it is that my father married her when she was fifteen years old, and my father was forty-three years old.

DS:

Wow.

LF:

But my father was well-established. He was an entrepreneur person. He believed that nothing is free, you have to work for it. So he worked hard. And one of the things is that – he became an orphan when he was a small child and he moved to Monterrey. And then from Monterrey he came to Acuña. But when he was in Acuña, he met a German person that—they got acquainted and they started bottling their own product—soda pops, different flavors—and my father started his business with Canasta and he had a *chicles, cacahuates, neuces* [gum, peanuts, and nuts] and that's the way he started his business. But, then as time went by, he started buying the small Coca Cola bottles and he started taking everything into Sabinas to get it filled. And he became a real prosperous man with the Coca Cola Company there in Acuña. He also brought out to Acuña, the Singer sewing machines. And like I was telling you, there's not one Singer machine that is the same during those times. So then he brought the Mexican lottery to Acuña. And then there was no publications, so he got acquainted with the *La Prensa* in San Antonio and he started bringing the first newspaper, which was *La Prensa*, to Acuña. And he also worked for the—he was a tax collector for the city of Acuña, and he also was part of the—he also helped in the bull fights. He promoted bull fights in Acuña with the owner. So he was a real good man with—a real honored man. He worked hard and he was—he gave good education to all my sisters, and by the time things got real rough with the—they were mistreating the tourists, and we had a couple of floods destroy part of the stores, so we didn't have no other option but to migrate to the United States. Since my mother was an American citizen, she came to Lubbock in, like, 1959, and bought a store that belonged to one of her brothers. Her brother was Joe Uribe, and at that time my mother paid her brother 100 dollars to take care of Cinco de Mayo, and Cinco de Mayo has a lot of history here in the barrio de Guadalupe.

DS:

Can you tell us some of that history?

LE:

Yes. When I got here, it was real, real weird because when I was in Mexico, like I was telling you, my father was a real wealthy person and I used to go to a school in Mexico. And in Mexico,

you were supposed to take English no matter what - required. When I went for the first time, when I went to *secundaria*, first grade, *secundaria*, the teacher wanted us to say, "Good morning, teacher," and I refused because, you know, I told 'em, I said, "If we in Mexico, then we gonna speak Spanish." And she said, "Well, if you don't like my class, you can walk. You can leave." I said, I don't have no necessity. I'm never gonna go to the United States so I'll walk out of your class and flunk me and don't worry about it, because of my father's influence. When I came to Lubbock, I started noticing the behavior of the American people was completely different from the borders, you know. I told my mother, I said, "I'm gonna go downtown Lubbock." And I said, "I'm just gonna walk from here, from the barrio de Guadalupe to Broadway" - where my other uncle had a store. And my mother say, "Before you go, I need to give you 50 cents." And I say, "I don't need no 50 cents. I'm just gonna walk over there to the store." "No," she said, "Because if the police see you walking by the railroad tracks, across the railroad tracks, and they see you walking, and you don't have no money in your pocket, they're gonna pick you up for vagrancy." And I say, "Are you serious?" And she said, "Yes." She said, "When you go to the post office downtown, make sure that you don't bring water from the black water fountain." And I said, "What? What are you talking about?" "Yeah," she said. She said, "The water fountain—the black water fountain—is for the black people, and the white is for white and Mexican Americans." I said, "I'm surprised they don't have one brown one there." But anyway, there was one of the things that I noticed. So during that time that I was coming, you know, visiting my mother and going back to Mexico and visiting, I started noticing that about five people, or persons from the State of Nuevo Leon were coming to the Cinco de Mayo. And I asked my mother, I said, "What is this people here doing in our store?" She said, "Well they're not in this side of the store. They live upstairs in the Cinco de Mayo." They had, like, six or seven small rooms, and every year these people come from Mexico and they rent those little rooms. And they work in the gin, and the gin is working all those three or four months, and we cooked for them and they buy groceries from us, and it was real good knowing those guys because they saved every penny that they make. They don't spend hardly any, you know? They buy a Coke or sweet bread but that was pretty much it. And I said, I asked my mother, I said, "How long they been doing it?" "Oh, some of these guys have been doing it for five, ten years, you know. Come in and work three or four months and then go back." So when I was sitting there with my mother, she said, "You know, Luis, you need to go to school." I say, "Are you kidding, Mother?" I say, "I didn't learn a word of English when I was in Acuña, and you expect me to go to a school here? I say, forget it." I say, "I'm not going. I say, I'll stay here." She said, "Here in the United States, the law says that you have to go to school." I said, "Well, I'm sorry. I'm not going to." So she talked to one of the guys that used to come and deliver cokes, and he told her, he said, "Next time you come, pretend that you work for the LISD, and ask him some questions. They're not gonna answer because you don't understand English, but I will translate." So that's the way it went. He convinced me that I needed to go to school. So I told my mother, I said, "Okay. But you have to go with me." So she closed the Cinco de Mayo and we went to Carroll Thompson. And we got there to Carroll Thompson and my mother was in the interpreter, and the principal

asked my mother, he said, “Is this your adopted child?” Because she was really light complexioned. She said, “No, this is my son.” So anyway, I got there. I came to find out that they didn’t allow anybody to speak Spanish. So I was, like, 17 years old, and I asked this friend of mine—we were in Science class—and I asked him in Spanish, “Hey,” I said, “*no ententendo ese*.” [“I don’t understand, dude”] because that was a word I learned here in the barrio. I learned a lot of words that kind of commute [communicate] within the system here in the barrio, you know, like *ese, vato, carnal, trolas*. [slang for dude, dude, dude, and matches] I didn’t even know what *trolas* was until my mother told me. She said, “That’s *mechas... cerillos... fóforos*.” [three terms used for matches] So we were talking and Mrs. Pope—she was the Science teacher—and she said to me in English something that I didn’t respond to, because I didn’t know what she was talking about. And then she asked me again and I didn’t respond so she tells me—she grabs me by the shirt and says, “We’re going to see the principal.” So we went to the principal, and she told the principal, “This young fellow here refused to talk to me, so I want to spank him.” And I didn’t understand any of that, but apparently the principal told her, said, “The reason he didn’t speak to you is because he didn’t know English. He just got in from Mexico about a week ago.” So then I started kind of figuring it out that I needed to do something, to learn the language. And here in the Guadalupe neighborhood Gaspar Wilson—I don’t know if you know Gaspar Wilson—and Joe Bob Wilson, and all these guys were going to Toms...Carroll Thompson, and they were telling me, “Hey *ese*, you never gonna make it. I mean, we been here all of our lives and you’re not gonna make it.” And I said, “Well, just give me a chance—I need some help.” And I said, “When y’all get behind the store, why do y’all talk about?” And he said, “Well, one of these days, you come—Saturday.” He said, “Saturday you come to the back of the store, which was the Cinco de Mayo,” and there was Armando Yanez, Joe Bob, and some other guy. El Chango, [a common male nickname meaning “the monkey”] you know, that were here. And they were sitting in the back, and I noticed that all of them had some real shiny shoes, Stacy Adams. For the first time I found out what a Stacy Adams was. And they had just—one guy had just bought a brand new pair. I don’t know how much he paid, and the first thing he did, he took the heels off. Took them off. And then they sit there for hours spit-shining those shoes. You know, they get it and spit on it and they go—I mean, that shoe would look almost like a mirror. You can actually see—and I said—while they were doing that, they were wearing long khaki shirts, long khaki pants, and they were talking about, “Hey, *ese*, you know that Joe Bob just got back from the reform school? He’s a three-timer, *ese*.” “Oh yeah, but so-and-so is a four-timer.” And I ask one of the guys, say, “What do they mean about two-timer, three-timer, four—?” He said, “That means that’s how many times you been going to the correction school.” And I said, “Wow.” I say, “So that means, like, in the Anglo colony, you know, getting a master’s, a bachelor’s, a doctor’s degree? It’s pretty much the same.” And they said, “Yeah, pretty much.” And I said, “Oh, okay. Well I’m learning.” So one day, I was talking to one of the guys. I say, “You know, I need help. I need to learn the language.” He said, “Well,” he said, “The only thing you’re gonna learn here behind the store is all these words you already learned, you know. You know *vato, carnal, trucha, trolas, frajos*.” [the terms mean dude, dude, look out, matches, and cigarettes.]

And I said, “No, that’s not what I wanna learn. I wanna learn the language so I can communicate.” Well I start trying, and walking down the hall one day, one of the coaches looked and me and say, “Hey said, “Would you like to play basketball?” But I was with an interpreter next to me and he asked me and I said, “Yeah, I played basketball in Mexico, so I’d like to.” So I started going into going to play basketball. Every time I needed to go in for somebody, the coach had to go with me and say, “Luis going in for John Smith or whoever.” And that’s the way I started. So I started kind of associating into the Anglo pace, because here in the barrio I loved the people in the barrio, but it was not gonna take me anywhere. So I started playing basketball. So from there, I was having problems when I was in Mexico with a – I couldn’t spell in Spanish and I thought I had a handicap problem. One of the teachers at Carroll Thompson noticed that I was taking Spanish and I was misspelling, and she said, “I don’t understand, Luis. You’re coming from Mexico. You have bad spelling, you know, even in Spanish.” And I said, “I’ve had that since I was a kid.” So she kind of started doing research, and she came to find out, till this day, that I had that—dyslexia?

DS:

Dyslexia?

LE:

Dyslexia. But she said, “But don’t worry, because in this country nobody makes fun of people that has those problems, because you might have it in writing.” She said, “But you’re good in math.” I said, “Yeah, I’m real good in math.” So from there on I kind of took that off of my head. I said, “I’m not going to worry. I’m going to do my best.” So I started playing basketball. When I went to Lubbock High, I met some new guys. One of the guys that I met was a good friend, Amado Hinojosa . He was from Mexico, from the State of Tamaulipas and this guy’s friend was from the Guadalupe neighborhood “Hey, Luis.” He say, “I want you to meet another *mojado* [wetback – normally a slang term for undocumented immigrant; in this case it references anyone from Mexico] like you.” I say, “Who is it?” “That one over there, sitting over there, his name is Amado Hinojosa. But he’s a very intelligent guy.” I say, “He has to be from Mexico.” He says, “That’s why we call him ‘*Mojado*.’ He’s from Mexico.” So I went and talked to him, and Amando said, “Hey, man I’m glad I found somebody that is from Mexico.” I said, “I am from Acuña and I just got here a year ago.” And he said, “Okay, first of all, let’s go to La Casa Mexicana, and we’re going to buy you a dictionary, English and Spanish, so you can follow me to America.” So we went and got that English dictionary and he said, “Okay, you start practicing. You need to read a lot, even if you don’t understand. This is the way I learned, and *blah blah blah*.” Well, when I was at Lubbock High, I was walking down the hall and another coach come to me and say, “Would you like to play football?” You know I was 6’2” and like 250 pounds. I say, “Sir,” I said, “yeah.” I said, “I like to play football.” He said, “Okay, well come to the Chapman Field.” At that time my English was getting a little better, so I got to the Chapman Field and I walk there and start seeing all these guys putting all these pads in, knee pads, and—

DS:

What year was that?

LE:

'62 or '63. And I say, "That's not the football that I played in Mexico." I said, "Our football is called your football soccer." So this guy comes and brings me all this instruments, and he said, "Put them on." And I start kind of looking and trying to put it on, and then I went out and, at that time, the coach was Freddy Akers – was the head coach. And he say, "Son, welcome to the Lubbock High Westerners." I say, "I'm sorry." I said, "But I have never played American football." He said, "It's real simple." He say, "You're going to play nose man on defense, and the only thing you're going to have to do is you're going to either shift right, shift left, shoot the gap, and you can get the guy on the other side that has the ball, right under the center, because he's real tricky. He gets that ball and he runs back and then he'll give it to somebody else because he's a chicken." He said, "So you need to get him before he pass that ball." I say, "That's all you have to do?" He said, "Yes." I say, "Okay. You got a deal." So I start playing, and I really enjoyed it, you know. It was good exercise.

Well, we were playing Tascosa—and I don't remember this. Tascosa, or it was the last scrimmage that we had at Lowrey Field. And before I went to play, I told the trainer, I said, "Would you tape my knees because they're weak." And he said, "I don't know, man. You're too big, and besides what you play, you don't have to worry about it," and *blah blah blah*. So I said, "Okay." Well, I had never invited my parents because they don't understand what the game is all about, but I told my father, "Hey, close the store and let's go watch me play football." So him and my wife and my mother went, and sure enough, the last seconds of the game, I saw the gap open and I saw Robby Lane—which he was the quarterback—I think Bobby Lane was his father, but he plays for the—

DS:

Lions, right? Did he go to the Lions?

LE:

Yeah, he played for the Colts the first time, and I saw him and I said, "Man, I'm going to get him." And I shoot that and then the guard pulled and he caught me right here and busted my ligament. So I hit the floor and Freddie Aker came and said, "Come on, guy. Get up. Quit faking." And the trainer said, "Coach, he's not faking. That ligament's busted." So they took me to Methodist Hospital later on. Freddie Akers came and he said, "Son, I'm sorry. I thought you were faking something." Anyway, that was that. But during that time, I wanted to be more oriented so these guys that were at Lubbock—we were only like 25 Mexicans at Lubbock High at that time, and I was staying with Benny and Galarde, who was on the other corner. I said, "Benny, we need to make it, man. We need to get out of this school." And so they come to me

and say, "You want to be in a play?" And I said, "Yeah, why not. If I don't have to talk, if I just have to be quiet or laugh, I'll be part of it." So they invited me to be part of the play, and then the guys from the barrio started saying, "Hey, *vendido* [sellout], you're becoming a coconut now." And I say, "What's a coconut? What's that mean?" And they say, "You're brown on the outside and white on the inside. And *eso no se vale carnala, no se vale ese*. [and it's not worth bro. It's not worth it.] You're from the barrio." And I say, "Man, I'll tell you what. I want to break that. I don't wear khaki shirts and I don't wear brown pants. I'll wear Levi's and I'll wear whatever, but I will not dress like you guys." Well, it got to the point to where these guys here in the neighborhood, they thought I was a genius because I was different. But I was not a genius. I was sitting in math one time when I was at Thompson and our—the way we did division in Mexico is that you do all the subtraction in memory. You don't say, "Two—" say, "Forty divided by five," and they go like that. You do all the stretching mentally, so I was doing that and the math teacher looked at how I was doing it and, I mean, he thought I was a genius – the way I was doing it. But it was just partly the way we do things in Mexico. So when I became a junior at Lubbock High, we had to turn a paper—the junior term paper—so I went and talked to the teacher, and I said, "Ma'am, let me tell you. I cannot write this paper. Whatever you want me to do, I cannot do it. Because there's—no way. But I can draw everything that you tell me that is in that book. I can make drawings." And she looked at me and said, "Are you serious?" I said, "Yes, ma'am, I am very serious. You know, one thing that I learned in Mexico, when I was going to school, is to negotiate. If you don't know how to do something, you negotiate with that teacher, and if you don't agree you get out of there. And that's the bottom line." So she said, "Okay, I'm going to bend the rules, but if you're serious about it, this is your book: *Tom Sawyer*." And I said, "All right." So Gaspar Wilson he lived here in across the street, so I said, "Gaspard, you are going to read the book, and I'm going listen, and you tell me more or less what the book is talking about, and I'm going to start drawing. Every page, I'll draw something. You tell me, 'Okay, Tom Sawyer went to fish, and he had a cane, and he had short pants, and had some patches *aqui y este y otro*.' [here, there and so on]" So I start drawing. I start doing all that; so I turn it in on time, and it was all drawings, no writing. And she looked at me and said, "Luis, I'm going to give you an A over B for your paper." I said, "Fantastic. That's what I need to go to my senior year." I said, "Fantastic." But when I went to Lubbock High, you know, I had the problem in that my English was very limited. I started taking English with Mr. Meadow. Mr. Meadow was the English teacher. So I got there and I couldn't understand what he was talking about, and he noticed that, and he said, "You know, Luis, I'll tell you what I'm going do." He said, "I'll take you to a class where you're going be able to learn faster." And it click on me that when you in the border, and you come to school in Del Rio, they have special classes for Spanish-speaking persons. And I said, "Fantastic, that way I can pick it up faster." Well, he took me down the hall, across the hall from the cafeteria at Lubbock High, and I started noticing that everybody that was there was handicapped. They had a problem, you know, physically or mentally or whatever, but they had a problem. And he brought me there and said, "This is where you're going to be." And I said—I had an interpreter, and I said, "*Dile a este baboso que porque no entiendo su lengua o no*

*hablo su idioma, yo no me voy a metir aqui con esta gente. Se el habla Espanol tan rapido como yo hablo el Ingels, esta bien. Pero de otra manera no.* [Tell this slimy person just because I don't understand his tongue or better yet, I don't speak his language – I'm not going to join this group of people, If he speaks Spanish as rapidly as I speak English, then that's good and well. But, otherwise no.]” So when I was standing there I said—and I told him—I said, “Mr. Meador, I'm sorry. This is not for me. I'm coming from another country, but I'm not a handicapped. So I want you to understand that and I want you to flunk me, right now. I don't come to your class no more.” And I went and talked to Mr. Leslie, who was the principal, and he became, later, a part of the LISD.

DS:  
Superintendent

LE:  
Superintendent. So through an interpreter I talked to Mr. Leslie. I said, “Mr. Leslie.” I said, “Mr. Leslie, I don't know what's wrong with this teacher here, but he's trying to put me in a class that is for handicapped that has a problem. I don't have a problem. My problem is that I speak Spanish fluently. Now I'm not accepting this, so I don't want to go to this class, so put an F on my report card.” And then that summer I went to summer school for English. On my junior year, I went to summer school for English, and my senior year, I didn't have to go to summer school for English, but I told Benny. Benny said, “Luis,” he said, “you are never going to get out of this school. I mean, you have a problem. You don't speak English.” And, you know, I'd sit outside of the Lubbock High, across the street, and I'd see that big old monster—I mean, in Mexico it could be a university. Because the school that I went to in Mexico was only four rooms, and we shared rooms, you know. We had to take our own chair and all that. And I said, “No, Benny. I'm going to graduate and I'm going to graduate on time. I'm not going to be like you that you have flunked your sophomore, your junior year. I'm not going to do that. I'm willing to.” So during that time I started thinking, I said, “Ok, what's going to happen when I get out of high school?” And I said, “What am I going to do for a living?” I say, “Well I'm good in math and I'm real good in drawing.” So I started asking and this guy come and say, “Well, they teach drafting here at Lubbock High.” So I said, “How can I get in that?” So they told me how to enroll, So I start participating in drafting, and I start participating with some programs from A&M, you know, competition. And I started getting real good, so when I graduated from Lubbock High, A&M gave me a scholarship and a grant because I had started that James Connally Technical Institute.

DS:  
Um-hm.

LE:

And that was when they had too many engineers but they didn't have enough people between fabrication and engineers. They didn't have a liaison that can interpret what the engineer wanted for the welder to do, so I filled that gap. So I went to the program, and it was a two-year, but the demand was so strong that the first year, everybody that was in my class was hired, from General Dynamics, Bell Helicopter—the reason I went to work for them is because I was not a citizen of the United States, so I learned that when I was at Lubbock High, at the end of the year, when I graduated, Mr. Leslie shook my hand and he'd come real close to my ear and say, "Luis," he said, "I'm very proud of you. You did it." I said, "I didn't have nothing else in my mind but doing that. And he said, "So what are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going to do what I promised those guys in the border, that I was not going to become a lazy bum that was on government support." I came here *como dice fiolin*, "*Yo vine aqui hay triunfar.*" [like \_\_\_ says, "I came to triumph."] So, same thing. I went to the school, started having the same problems, I told that guy in technical writing, I said, "Hey guy, forget about me writing that paper. If you want me to pass, I cannot do it. But tell me what I need to do." And I say—he said, "Well you pick the topic." And I say, "I'll do this pen. And I'll explore this, and put it in 3-D. I put the spring, I put everything, I put the mechanism, I draw everything, and I present it to you on kind of a blow-up deal." And he said, "Okay that will work for me." I said, "Because in reality that's what I'm going for. I'm going for drafting and design and invent things."

DS:

Yeah, you wanted to explain through drawing.

LE:

Right, through drawing, and that's what I've been doing all this time. As a matter of fact, since I went to Clark and everybody—I always tell them, "If you expect me to write ten words for you, or explain something to you in writing," thank God now the computer does it for you. I said, "Forget it." But if I can draw it, I can understand what it is behind *blah blah blah*. So, going back to the barrio, then I started noticing that Armando Yanez graduated from Tech, got a degree.

DS:

What year was that?

LE:

I don't remember, but he got a degree *aye este otro muchacho* [and this other young guy] that also went to Tech, and he has a degree. It was not Joe Bob. It was Genaro Chavez. You know Genaro?

DS:

Um-hm.

LE:

Genaro graduated from Tech.

DS:

He may be at that meeting at Lenin's.

LE:

Yeah. So Genaro graduated from Tech, and those were the guys that they had gone to the correctional institute. El Chango. El Chango was a real good friend of mine, but he went the other way. And Pogi was also—he went the other way. And it was funny because I had brought a television to inform my father for the store—and he worked real hard, and he didn't have a television. So I bought him one in color from Zale's downtown, and we put it there on the refrigerator in the store so he could watch it—my father could watch it. Well, one day something happened and somebody took the air conditioner from the roof, went down and took the television. So I was real upset, and I talked to Nano Galvan, which he was a real good friend of mine that lived here in the barrio. I said, "Nano, you know they took me father's TV, you know." And I say, "He loved that TV. I think I know who did it." He said, "Well did you call the police, the policia?" Yeah but they tell me that they cannot do nothing if we're not sure. He said, "Well, I'll tell you what. I'll go with you." So we went to la casa del Chango. Chango Aguilar, he lived on the other corner. And he goes, he says, "Hey ese." Chango comes out and I say, "*Que pasa Nano ?*" ["What's going on Nano?"] "*Pues oie ese, ti jambastes el televisión del senior Estrada, verdad?*" ["I heard that you stole Mr. Estrada's television, right?"] "*Dice, "Cual televisión, ese?"*" ["What television, dude?"] "*Una que tenes hay.*" ["One that you have right there."] And he said a bad word. "*Es a colores.*" ["It's a color TV."] Dice, "*No, yo no fue ese. Hay me nomas me lo trajieron. Pero dice, "Vuelvesa al senior, es el unico que tiene."*" [He says, "No, it wasn't me. They just brought it to me." But he says, "Take it back to the mister, it's the only one he has."] You know, it's the only thing he has. So we went into his house and he pulled that television y otra vez dice [and again he says] And he say—Nano—say, "Chango, niegase [control yourself] we barrio we don't steal from us. We steal from the gringos, not from the Mexicans, man. This is barrio we together, *ese, este quel otro.*" [this that and the other] So one day I was outside with Chango. I say, "Chango," I say, "How the hell did you get inside of that store?" He said, "I went through the pipes on the side and you can see the pipes and I climbed and I took the air conditioner and I went in. And I knew you didn't have no alarm and all that, so I took the television and I walk out through the back door." (laughter)

So that's pretty much what I had growing up. We learned here, when the tornado hit at Lubbock and took part of the roof on the Cinco de Mayo, we start working on it and there was some newspaper, you know, the *Lubbock Avalanche* newspaper on the walls, that were like 1920 or something, and they might be there. They might still [be] there on the old part of the Cinco de Mayo. And I didn't take photographs. I wish I had done, but they were in that part.

So I'm very proud to consider myself part of this country, even though I was born in Mexico. The opportunities have been great. I mean, I have worked with big companies. I have been able to help my kids, you know, I have two sons, two daughters. And when my son—my oldest son was at Hutchinson—I told him, I said, “Son, it's time for you to find a job. You can work at McDonald's, Burger King, Amigo's, United, whatever, or I'll teach you how to do drafting.” And he say, “Well, Dad, yeah, I'd like to learn how to learn how to draw.” I said, “Well I'll teach you.” I said, “So let me go and talk to your teacher.” They're going to—he was going to take woodwork at Hutchinson, so I went to Hutch-- and started talking to the teacher. Well, it seemed like that teacher was the same guy I had for drafting at Lubbock High. So I told him, I said, “Hey guy,” I said, “I'd love my son to learn how to do woodwork,” I said, “but I'd prefer for him to learn how to draw on the computer. Do you have a computer? Do you have programs?” “Yeah,” he said, “but we don't teach that at Hutchinson.” I said, “Well, can you do it after school? After classes?” He said, “Yeah. If he don't mind.” I said, “No, he don't mind.” So he started taking three days a week at Hutchinson after school, just learning the computer, how to draw on the computer, and I was teaching him by doing it by hand, how to do it. So—and I say, “Okay, Ricardo. The thing is that, if I teach you how to draw, and you become good at drafting, your obligation is to teach your brother, your younger brother, because he's coming. Otherwise, forget it.” He said, “I know, Dad. I will teach him.” So he started learning. And we got a parts book from Lee Company, and I told Sonya, I said, “Sonya, I can do your parts book.” She said, “Well I need it in a computer format, not by hand.” And Ricardo said, “Yeah, Dad, we can do it.” And I talked to John Baker, who is a mechanical engineer and a good friend of mine. I said, “John,” I said, “how much CADKEY program costs.” “Well, about 3,500 dollars.” And I said, “Man that's too expensive. I'll tell you what, let me think about it.” So I talked to Sammy and Ricardo. I said, “Ricardo, let's build our own library, our own fittings, bolts, nuts, hoses and all that. I'll draw it and you put it on the computer.” And we created our own library with a program that he bought at Tech for \$99.00. So we created our first parts library. Well Sam, which is my other son, he started at Cavazos Junior High and he started taking drafting. And by that time he knew more or less how to do it, so he started competing when he was in the seventh grade to the twelfth grade. He became the best in the state of Texas in computer drafting. He is really good. He is—as a matter of fact, right now that's what he does. He trains engineers to use SolidWorks. And I told them, I said, guys, when I came to this country, I was so proud to be called an American, even though I was born in Mexico. I said, But I don't want y'all to be *una carga para este país* [a burden on this country]. So they started it, and then I had two daughters, and one—she works at Amigos. She's real happy with what she does. But my youngest daughter, she goes to Lubbock High, and I tell her, I say, “Don't feel embarrassed to say that you are the daughter of a migrant,” because my wife and I were both from Mexico. But she's looking into either Yale, Harvard, Colombia University. She was invited to MIT for a week, and she went for an engineering kind of course. So I'll tell you what, it is a pleasure to be here in Lubbock and to be around all these guys here in the *barrio*. Some did good. Some did real good. Some went down

the drain, you know, with drugs and all that, but the ones that I recall, they did good. So that's me.

DS:

Well that's you. Let me ask you a little bit about, you know, you talked about Cinco de Mayo, and has anybody—it's still standing right?

LE:

Yes.

DS:

And—because I had a call from this guy from San Antonio, that they're working with the Texas Historical Commission, and they're putting markers on sites, and from what I've heard Cinco de Mayo's an important site for Guadalupe. Would you be interested in trying to help maybe make that a site where they might consider it for a marker?

LE:

Yes, yes, yes. I think—

DS:

Because—

LE:

I think that Cinco de Mayo has a lot of history because out here they used to do dances.

DS:

Yeah.

LE:

In the bottom part, they used to perform dances, there was a lot of killings going on also. But there was a Cinco de Mayo made out of two stories, and then next to it, it was an adobe part that was added onto it. And then we opened that part to make the store a little bigger, and—but it was all adobe – I mean thick walls. And I think I can see if I have some pictures but not of the old store. I think I have [pictures] of the new one where we used to put signs on the windows: "*chicharones, tamales.*" ["fried pork skins, tamales"]

DS:

Oh.

LE:

Because we used to do all that, you know.

DS:

Wow.

LE:

And we used to cater *barbacoa*. [this does not refer to barbecue. It refers to the cooked beef usually from a beef head.] We'll call it la *tema* [*termo* – I believe his is referring to a thermos] to Dr. Luaff's Clinic on 19<sup>th</sup> street where McDonald's now is.

DS:

Uhum.

LE:

It was—they used to have a doctor—that doctor that I tell you. He—all his – *todos sus pacientes*— [all his patients] they were Mexicans. So we used to take, every Saturday—

DS:

Or Mexican-Americans.

LE:

Yeah.

DS:

Because that's where I was born. (laughs)

LE:

Yeah. I used to take a *tema* [*termo*]. You know, I used to get the heads from Post [for] free and then I come out here, I dig a big hole behind the Cinco, and on Fridays I put a fire and I put like ten heads and little *botes* [pails] and I cover it and in the morning on the next day I open it, and I peel it off, and while I was with them my mother was making *tortillas*, and we catered that food. That was our cater to Dr. Luaff's Clinic. My sister, when she came from Mexico, she was a registered nurse, and that's what she is. She started working for Dr. Luaff. Then she began at Methodist Hospital for 45 years as a registered nurse.

DS:

So she was one of the first Mexicanas working...

LE:

Yeah, she was.

DS:

....working in the medical field.

LE:

Yes, and she was—she became the director of the bilingual program there at the Methodist Hospital. She was the one that trained nurses who were not fluent in Spanish to be able to communicate with our Mexican population.

DS:

Wow.

LE:

But yeah, the Cinco de Mayo has walls there and they would take them apart. You can probably see some of that because I don't think they took all those newspapers out of it.

DS:

Yeah. Do you think I can look at the building someday?

LE:

It belongs to—

DS:

Oh, it's not yours anymore?

LE:

No, no, it belongs to Guadalupe Economic Service.

DS:

Okay. Yeah.

LE:

I think Richard Lopez—I don't think Richard Lopez owned the building. Guadalupe Economic Services own that building.

DS:

Okay.

LE:

And the part of the Northeast side is block [cement block] and the one on the other side is still the old stucco part.

DS:

You said you had photos of it?

LE:

Let me see if I have some. Like I said, I was cleaning—

DS:

We're talking just a little too late because we have a book we've been working on that's going to be released—or published—on the fourth of November that's about pictorials and that would've been a good type of photo to put in there. Something on that.

LE:

Let me see if I can find one. I took one of the engineers to Puerto Vallarta. That one right here. (Long Pause) This is when I was going to Lubbock High—very good friend of mine, Felipe. And that's my mother. That was outside of the store. That's that guy that I was telling you, Amado. You know, he was going graduate as an electrical engineer at Tech. He lacked a few hours and the Army drafted him. And he was so mad, so upset, that he never went back. But man, if you know anybody that knows Amando, and you ask him, oh, he'll say, "I know that guy who went to Tech. That guy lived in the library." There's Olguin. He also was a Tertuliano [the term Tertuliano refers to a member of Los Tertulianos. Los Tertulianos, coined by the first minority student organization at Texas Tech University in 1964, refers to them being 'social gatherers'.] This is somebody who worked on the side that I work on.

DS:

Oh, we didn't talk anything about the los Tertulianos on tape.

LE:

Yeah. Used to be Santa Claus at church here. Yeah, I remember that. That little girl peed on my pants. (laughter) Yeah, all this were kids from here, from the Barrio, and we were there at the church. And then—it should be—I hope I can find it.

DS:

Well when you find it just call me.

LE:

Because I have pictures for the store and I have also pictures for the—when we were doing that—over there at the hanger, and there were some guys there. They said, “No, man, we’re not going to do it. We’re not going to make—we only 13, 14 students at Tech and look at all those *gabachos* [refers to non-Hispanic white Americans] doing all that.” And I said, guys, I said, let’s do it. We can do it.

DS:

Let’s talk about that. Let me preface it. Back in ‘64, Texas Tech’s first minority student organization was formed, *Los Tertulianos* and you had the fortune. Were you a member of it or just working with them?

LE:

No, I just worked with them. It was kind of funny because I was acquainted with a few there: Armando *Mandito* [Armando Garcia] and his brother that is an accountant.

DS:

Jaime.

LE:

Jaime. And for some reason I got involved with it. They invited me to one of their meetings and even though I was not a Texas Tech student I became real friendly with them, and every party they had, they invited me, so when we started looking into it I came up with the idea to make a patch: “Ese, *Los Tertulianos*.” And I made that in Mexico. In Saltillo, we made some patches, and we put it on some nice-looking coats. And wore them, because we wanted to be different. So when they had that—we were going to be on the homecoming, and somebody, one of the ladies there, said, “Hey, the theme for this homecoming is ‘Texas Tech, Try It, You’ll Like It,’ and we’re going to get a float so we can be part of it. You know, that show that *Tertulianos*.” And then I said, “Well, if we’re going to do a float, let’s do something that looks good, that we can be proud of.” And I said, “I will do the drawings. I will design it.” And we started working on it and I started working on design, and there was a big old bottle of champagne, like—I don’t have the picture but it’s someplace here—and we put a little *Mandito* inside the bottle during the parade and the bottle would tilt and it comes out, and it has a cup on the bottom, and way in the back it had a trophy. It was so good because, you know, for being such a small group *Los Tertulianos* - like in I said, maybe no more than 20 we were able to capture every trophy except one, and there was nothing we—the ROTC took that one. But the main big one, we were able to take it—and in appreciation the *Tertulianos*, they, allowed me to go down to the field. And like you saw it in that picture, I got the trophy and all the engineers from Clark were saying, “Hey, what the heck are you doing in the middle of the field?” They said, “You don’t even go to Tech.” I said, “Yeah. Well I’m the one that designed the trophy. “ So we proved that when there’s a will,

there's a way, and from there on they keep growing – los Tertulianos. Lenin Juarez, the Garcia Brothers, the City Council of—I don't know.

DS:

Was Maggie on it?

LE:

No, they used to have a cement plant also.

DS:

Oh.

LE:

Linda DeLeon, her sister. There was another girl that we called Twiggy, Juana— San Juana was another one. There was the sheriff for Lubbock that was here.

DS:

Yeah, David?

LE:

David [Vasquez]. David was also part of that. I wish I could find that photograph. One of the council [counselors] ladies at Lubbock High—Mexican—a lady, also. Chavez [Anita Chavez.] I think she was also there.

DS:

Yeah, Anita.

LE:

Her sister.

DS:

Genaro's wife, Anita?

LE:

Yeah, yeah. So it was a really small group, but we believed what we were doing and we had fun. I mean, we really had fun. We used to sit in the stadium at Texas Tech and while they were doing their cheers in English we were doing it in Spanish. (laughter) So it was quite a memory.

DS:

You know, it's funny you say that, because last year—they'd actually done it before, but last year it became more of a thing through athletics that have a Hispanic Heritage Day for one of the football games. And so last year they were converting all the Tech slogans into Spanish so they could have banners for all of those. And they have done all of them except for guns up.

(laughter) I go, "That's the most important one!"

LE:

Yeah, I did learn a lot when I was with those guys. The one that I always had fun with, with a good old friend—man, my memory's getting away, but he was also an attorney. It was not Lenin.

DS:

Oh, Vilson?

LE:

No, not Vilson. It was—ay chihuahua.

DS:

Salinas was there. Tomas Garza was a lawyer.

LE:

His brother, his brother. Tomas Garza's brother.

DS:

Okay. David?

LE:

David Garza. With David, I learned a lot because he was in KLFB as a radio announcer. And I used to go there and talk with him on the radio. And then we have—we started with a program with Channel 34 on 50<sup>th</sup>—with a program called Mexi Pepsi, and it was a program that was given to us, and David and I, we were the ones that were doing that.

DS:

Wow.

LE:

And it was all about, like, American stand band [American Band Stand], but with Mexican music, you know, and they used to bring groups from La Fiesta, Pepe Viégas—Pepe Bustos, I think. They used to bring some *conjuntos* [conjunto is a specific Mexican American music genre featuring accordion players] and they'd play our music and we had people dancing, and then

during the intermission we had to go and separate them because they were fighting, and then they go “One, two, three” and everybody—

DS:

Everybody goes back to dancing?

LE:

Yeah, so they called it the Mexi Pepsi Program with David Garza.

DS:

When was that?

LE:

Oh, that was at the—I would say probably in the 70s. Early 70s. That was one of the programs—it was before Si Se Puede and all those programs, and that became real lengthy and grew a lot.

DS:

So was that about the same time that Carlos Perez was doing stuff?

LE:

Yeah, Carlos Perez was owner of the Fiesta, and also this other partner. But then I became real involved in the *Fiestas Patrias* [Fiestas Patrias – refers to events held to celebrate Mexico’s Independence from Spain] here in the Guadalupe.

DS:

What were they like then?

LE:

They were real good. They were real, real—they were real significant about the meaning of what *Fiesta Patrias* were, because my father was one of the ones that participated with the history about Aldama, Allende, Doña Josefa Ortiz Domínguez —all the *todos los heros de la independencia* .[ -- all the heros of the war of indepenence.] And he goes through a ritual about how it happened and then *el Grito de independencia* [the Cry for Independence] and there was a lot of people here in our neighborhood older than him that were real acquainted with the history of Mexico. I don’t recall the names of the persons, but they were real good and patriotic Mexican-Americans and Mexican people. So we used to have—we started right here behind the Cinco de Mayo, *La Plata Forma*, [the platform] they used to call it, and we celebrated and then we had a big old dance, and started—everybody with their little stands, *sus cuartitos y sus comida tipica, no había policía, había muertos pero.* , [their little rooms and their typical food,

there was no police and there were deaths, but.] Everybody was happy, and then we moved from there, and then we started celebrating at the Guadalupe Park, right here across the street from the church. During that time, I met the consul for Mexico, Luis Henrique Castriciano . He was in charge of the Mexican consul. So I told him about the *Fiesta Patrias* and at the beginning, him and I got kind of cross because he said, “Well, you’re not supposed to use the Mexican flag without authorization.” I said, “That’s probably in your country, but here we’re going to use it, whether you want it or not. This is the way we’re celebrating *las Fiesta Patrias* here in the barrio Guadalupe.” So during that time, the City of Lubbock employees started having problems. They were not getting paid well. They were mistreated. So—I don’t recall who came to me and told me about it, and I said, “Well I’ll tell you what. We’re going to do something about this.” So I get this microphone and say, “While we’re celebrating the Mexican independence and we’re proud of being Mexican, and Mexican-Americans, we need to do something for our fellow helpers, the city of Lubbock. Your trash collector, the guys that get dirty. What we’re to do for the city to hear their voice—we’re going boycott Lubbock Power and Light.” And I said, “We’re going to go to Southwestern Public Service.” I said, and I want everybody to help on that. And I’ll tell you what, it happened. We changed this house from Lubbock Power and Light to Southwestern Public Service. Our neighbors—everybody here did that. I believe that the city listened because they—

DS:

Money talks.

LE:

Yeah, so that was one of the things that we did. Then we—we still—while we were doing it here, we still pretty much [had] neighbor fiestas. You know, everybody. I mean, I would do—been doing it, and that’s why we start with *las Adelitas* through Bidal Aguero [historically *las Adelitas* where women who participated in the Mexican revolution and thus the modern day *Adelitas* dressed the part and participated in a contest to be selected as the *Adelita* of the local *Fiestas Patrias* celebration. Locally, the *Adelitas* eventually gave way to the Reyna or Queen of the *Fiestas*]. As a matter of fact, one of the magazines, or one of the papers that I have here—the first one that I recall was Mr. Gutierrez’s daughter, and she died already, a long time ago. But it was real close. We didn’t have no Anglo influence on it. I mean, if you want to sell a *raspa* you sell *raspas*. [flavored shaved ice] You don’t sell ice cream, you say you sell *nieve* [ice cream] and things like that. Well, then from there we moved to the Aztlán Park and from there we went with the Chamber of Commerce—the Mexican Chamber of Commerce and the American Chamber of Commerce—and it started pretty much catering to the whole entire city of Lubbock. And I told Bidal. I said, “Bidal, I don’t want to be master of ceremonies anymore. Because it’s—we say it all in Spanish, now we have to say it in English and Spanish, and that’s not Mexico, so I’m quitting doing it here.” Well, they invited me—they started inviting me to do the ones at the [Lubbock] Civic Center for the *La Reina de las Fiestas* [the Queen of the *Fiestas*], and I got a few

of those brochures here. But I didn't feel comfortable because there was not—you didn't have that feeling. You feel like—well, if I say *ay Jalisco no te rajes*, how are you going to say it in English? “Jalisco don't quit.” (laughs)

DS:

Yeah.

LE:

Yeah, so that's how I say no. So I just got off of it, got married, became a Christian. My wife was a Christian so we gave all that away. But my daughter, Claudia Estrada now it's Barajas, she still works with the Aztlán dancers with Zenaida. She does that for her. But the fiestas would be, say, from the '60, '61, '62, up to the, say, '70s, there were really real fiestas. You can feel it. You can really feel it. Then I told my wife one day, I said, “I tell you what. What we're going to do, we're going to start selling Mexican flags during the parade.” And we—I tell you what, for almost three [or] four years, every flag that you see going down Broadway, we sold it. My wife and I will get after—as a matter of fact, I still have some *rehiletas* [pinwheels], and I have some curios that we used to sell. I don't sell them anymore, but we used to bring all that. Plus we, my wife and I, didn't want for our kids to lose that touch of knowing where you came from.

DS:

Um-hm.

LE:

And I tell my sons, I say, “You guys, it's in your blood regardless of what you want to do. You might be perfect in English. But it's in your blood.” But my son started school here, in one of the schools—elementary. Julio went to talk to the teacher and she said, “Mr. Estrada, Mrs. Estrada, you have done terrible with your son.” I said, “Why? What are you saying?” She said, “Because he doesn't speak English.” I said, “That's right. He don't speak English, he speaks perfect Spanish. But you know what? That's your obligation. You're going to teach him English, just like I teach him Spanish. Like my wife did, you're going to teach him English. So that's your obligation.” And she kind of went like, “What? I didn't expect that.” Well, he started at one of those schools over there on 50<sup>th</sup> right off Avenue Q, and they called us about the middle of the year and say, “You know, Mr. Estrada?” They said, “Ricardo—we noticed that he's real bright for this school. He gets bored. He does everything so fast,” they said. “So we need to send him to a magnet school.” So they sent him to Roscoe Wilson, to a magnet program there. And it was funny because he told me one day, he said, “Dad? You know, we went to Math Bee. Me and other Mexicanos and we swept everybody. We took everything.” And so I was—we were real proud of him, fluently in Spanish all of them.

DS:

Um-hm.

LE:

And that's what I want people to understand, that being bilingual, you're not a handicap. You are someone. You know, I've been in Mexico City. I've been in Argentina, I've been in Ecuador, I've been in Peru, and the reason is because I know Spanish.

DS:

Um-hm.

LE:

And the gringo's that go over there, they don't know Spanish, so I'm the translator.

DS:

Right.

LE:

So I'm in business for them. So I encourage my kids—like my son right now working for this company is an engineer. He said, "Dad, I'd like to go and work in Mexico. I might go to Brazil to work on these programs." So who knows?

DS:

Yeah.

LE:

But the barrio is still here.

DS:

Yeah. Well even Tech's noticed the value of that. I mean, they have a—all the students have to do something, and a lot of them go to Spain to study for one semester, or two, then they come back. Because that way it's, you know, all of the global economy now. So—

LE:

Oh, yeah. It is all there. You know, when I was running a company in Mexico, for five years it was an American company from Lubbock. I spent six years working for them, and I used to go and talk to La Universidad Nacional de Coahuila and I used to tell those guys there, I'd say, "Hey, guys. Nowadays technology has grown over the borders. You'll find a computer. You don't need to work in Mexico. You can work anywhere through the computer. I'm doing it. So if I'm doing it, y'all can do it. So what's the problem?" So anyway—

DS:

Well, let me ask a little bit, you know, when you were doing that show about the music, if you were asked to describe the kind of music that Lubbock produced, and especially Mexicanos, what would you call it?

LE:

Tejano.

DS:

Ah.

LE:

Tejano. *Accordion, accordion este tambora , guitar. Este totalmente Mexicano. Como la estación esta 102.5. Ese tipo Little Joe.* [Accordion, accordion, and drums, guitars. It's totally Mexican, like the radio station 102.5. Like that guy Little Joe.] I think one time we had Agustin Ramirez, but one of those big guys came to the show and—but the thing was that it was sponsored by Mexi Pepsi—Pepsi Cola—and the reason I'm saying this in front of you is that Pepsi knew that eventually there was going to be more Mexican people than American people, so they wanted to get with it. And it was—and we had, you know, we interviewed guys from the Tertulianos. You know, we'd talk about, you know, what we were going to do, what is this and that, but mainly it was just music. One time I was working with Amoco Pipeline, and Gabriel Najera, he was the (unintelligible). He was a civil engineer, graduated from Michigan State University, and he came to Lubbock, and he went and visited and goes, "I need to work." And he went with another güero and I started talking to the güero. The güero said, "Hey, actually I want to talk to Mr. Najera." So Gabe said, "Hey, Luis, come over here. Let's walk outside." So I walked outside with him. He said, "Let me tell you, Luis. Just by looking at what you do, you don't know anything about piping problems." He said, "But let me tell you, I believe that if I'm going to a scene, I want to take two Mexicans—two Mexican-Americans, and you're going to be one of them. But two things: you never tell me 'No,' and you never tell me, 'I cannot do it.' Can you do that?" I said, "You got a deal." He said, "Okay. I'm going to start giving you work." So we went to New Mexico to see a pipe project. Chemicals were going to go through a steel tube. And he was the project manager, so we walked through the field and we noticed the rancher and Chris Randall, who was the electrical engineer. So there were ranchers parked at with Chris. And Gabe and I started walking. I said, "Let's walk out." And then, oh, probably about four blocks, we could see a gringo go, "Hey, come over here. Hey, come over here." And Gabe said, "You, come over here." So the rancher came to Gabe, and he told him, he said, "I want more money for that line to cross my property." And it was just probably about two and a half miles. And Gabe said, "Hey, I already gave you enough money for that piece of junk, a land that even reptiles don't live here, in New Mexico." He said, "So either take it or leave it." He said, "Well, I'm going to talk to my attorney." Gabe said, "You don't have to go and talk to your attorney." He

said, "Luis, you figure out how much money it takes to go around his property, and let's move on." So I said, "Okay, then." I wanted to say, "Okay, it's going to take about three miles." But I said, "Okay, I'll put it on the drawing." And that *gabacho* [*non-Hispanic White*] he was mad. So what I'm going through is that they invite us to a school in Levelland to talk to a bunch of Mexicanitos—third graders, fourth graders—and we were kind of there to present what we do for a living, and one of the little *Chicanitos* asked, "Mr. Najera, what does it take to become an engineer?" He said, "Being able to read, to write, and understand. Then you can become an engineer. That's all you need." And he said, "What does it take to do the drawings?" I said, "Being able to see behind what you are doing. If you can see behind what you're drawing, you can draw." I said, "Can you draw a circle?" "Yes." "Can you draw a line?" "Yes." I said, "You're an engineer. That's all it takes, being able to draw a circle and a line in any direction that you want." So they asked him, they said, "Mr. Najera, how long [did it] take you to get your degree in engineering?" He said, "Eight years." They said, "Wow. Why so long?" He said, "Because I was working for General Motors half a year, and then I used to come to Lubbock to play the saxophone in El Cheche's Lounge and the other one on the southside of Lubbock, over there by the strip." He said, "I used to come, during that time, and play the saxophone with a group from Chicago." And I said, "Really Gabe. I didn't know that." He said, "Yeah. I've got some pictures. I had long hair and I had my saxophone and we'd go and play at Cheche's and El Fronteriso." He said, "I used to go and play at Fronteriso." He said, "We'd never get paid. There was always a fight and we had to go to the back room." He said, and he tells those kids, "But that's why I took so long. Because I had to work half a year and I felt bad." And he said, "And what inspired you to become an engineer?" And he said, "I was working in the line for General Motors, and I was working, and there was a problem. And there was a couple of güero engineers and they were discussing the problem, and I said, 'I think that if we can do this, it will solve the problem.' And one of the güeros turned around and said, 'Are you an engineer?' And I say, 'No.' And he said, 'Well then stay out of it.'" He said, "From that moment, I said, 'I'm going to become an engineer.'" He turned around and he went to Michigan State University and became an engineer. He said, "I'm the top ten in Amoco pipeline." He had a lot of power. He always told me, he said, "Luis, never do anything without making a memo. Especially when you're working with güeros." He said, "Because they're going to get you. Remember, they're going to call it the Direct Us Protect Us Act for a Mexican. (DS laughs) And I said, "Okay Gabe." So—

DS:

And now it's an e-mail.

LE:

Yeah (laughs), and now it's an e-mail. So, you know, that's another guy that he went through and—and he didn't speak Spanish, but he knew how to play Mexican music. He said, "Man, we used to play in El Cheche's and Fronteriso. One of my uncles has a big radio station el Vale. I

don't know what the station is." He said—we just—and now he has his own business where he charges like - 500, 600, 700 dollars – to go talk about how to run your business fairly.

DS:

Where's he at now?

LE:

He's in Chicago.

DS:

Wow.

LE:

Yeah. He came here and helped West Texas League at no cost other than the hotel and meals. And did it for a simple reason that he knew me, and he wanted to talk to Sunny. He said, "Sunny's out. I'm not going charge you anything because Luis is a good friend. He has paid for my meals and all that and he got those guys straight to where they didn't went [go] bankrupt. He told them exactly how to do things.

So, his wife graduated from Texas Tech while she was here. She had already a degree from Michigan State and she got her law degree here at Texas Tech.

DS:

Oh.

LE:

Mr. and Mrs. Najera.

DS:

Yeah, I think I've heard his name before. I'm not sure what context, but—

LE:

Yeah. She graduated from here. And there was another guy that we became real acquainted. He wrote his thesis here at Tech about the Texas Rangers, and he's there—Rocha. His last name's Dr Rocha. He said, "Luis, you know," he said, "I tell you what." He said, "I get a class that wants to learn about the Texas Rangers." He said, "*Una bola de pendejos gringos.*[A bunch of idiots]" They start with thirty five but by the time I finish, they learn the way it was, probably eleven, five or six, 'cause I tell them like it is. He said, "I already did all the research here and in Mexico." He said, "I was in Mexico City for a long time. I went to Chihuahua, I went to Coahuila. I did a lot of research. My thesis there at Texas Tech, there with Dr. Rocha."

DS:

Yeah, if it's there it's in our building because we house the thesis there in our building.

LE:

Yeah. And, you know, you see Rocha one day, because he lived across the street from my apartment, when I got married. And I said, "Rocha, you know, when I saw you the first time, I didn't give nine cents for you. You looked like a ghetto guy." He said, "That's what I like people to think about me. (DS laughs) Yes, I'm here to get my Ph.D. on the Texas Rangers," so—

DS:

You know, you talked about the history and what people see. You know, there's that documentary that they're doing on PBS, and there's this one of the other Ph.D's there that he has an office next to me. He was talking about, you know—he goes, "Why didn't they talk about this guy? He was from the same time, but he didn't experience, you know, discrimination," and I go, "Well, because his experience was atypical." I go—and he couldn't understand—I go, "You're not going hold up the one guy that wasn't discriminated when thousands and thousands of people were not being let into that restaurant. You know, you're not going talk—because that's the point of view that you want it to be seen from. That wasn't the reality for many people."

LE:

Well, what happened is that he was going through—what I experienced when I came here to Lubbock is that *en Mexico dicen*, "*Hijo, hijo de campesino – campesino*." "[. . .in Mexico they say, "Son, son of a farm laborer – farm laborer.]" And that was the same way here. They thought they were going from elementary to junior high—if they were lucky—that was it. They were all big families living in this part right here (he points to his surroundings), where I'm sitting here. There was like ten families living, and we're talking about 150—about 150 square feet. There were little shacks all over the place, mechanics and everything, but their philosophy was "*vine a la limpia*, let's take them all." ["I came to work the fields, take them all"] Because my mother told me one day—we were really excited. She said, "Hey Luis, I bought you *un azadone*. [a gardening hoe]" [I said], "*Azadon, para que?*" ["A hoe, why?"] She said, "So you can go to the *limpia* with the rest of the kids here in the neighborhood. The truck gets here to *el Cinco* at six in the morning, and they all jump in the truck, they put their *azadone* and they take off to the field." I said, "Mother, *Yo sale de una mala y no quiero entrar a otra peor*. [I left one bad situation and I don't want to enter into one that is worse.] I came to this country to cut weeds?" *Digo*, "I can go and sell cokes and sell bread and candies. And I'll leave the truck parked here. I go in on the other end with all that and I give them credit and they pay me at the end of the day or the end of the week." I say, "But I'm not going to be going and getting with that *azadone*." [She] said, "Oh, but everybody's doing it." I said, "That's the mentality of the parents. The parents—if they'd had seven kids, they multiply seven times five - thirty-five dollars a day that they going to get, and they going to give probably ten percent to the kids. I said, "I don't do that."

So when we were in the—I also belonged to the other club, the a American G.I. Forum.

DS:

Um-hm.

LE:

And that's where I met Nano and some other guys. And one day we were sitting there and he said, "Hey, let's raise some money." And I said, "Yeah, that's a good idea." I said, "What do y'all got in mind?" He said, "Let's go and pick cotton, you know, buy those big old bags, two hundred and fifty pounds or a hundred and fifty pounds, and we just pick cotton." At that time I said, "I'll tell you what. I'll go but I will not pick cotton. I'll go just for the fun of it." And we went, and Lugo—I don't know if you remember Lugo—he died.

DS:

I know of him, but—

LE:

He was too—yeah. Lugo was the kind of chairman of the young group there, so they went to the field. These guys, they were living the Cinco de Mayo way. They get on their knees and *chh, chh, chh*. I mean, they're just like harvesting machines, and quick, quick. If we break 50 pounds with everybody that was there, it was too much. (DS laughs) But yes, it was that mentality telling me that, "What to go to school for? It's not good for you." That's for the White. The güeros need to go to school. And I would say, "Hey man." He'd say, "That's the problem. The güeros went to school and now they tell you what to do." Now, if you go to Midland, Odessa, because I go there all the time and I deal with a lot of Mexican/Mexican-American companies. This one, its name is Edgar Mayesa. That guy has built an empire. I mean, his company leases ten, fifteen million dollars, and they didn't give it to him. He worked, he learned, and he knew how to do it. There's another family there that's Salazar. They're also a big company. They're all graduating from Tech.

DS:

Well—

LE:

They're all mechanical engineers. I think business—business and I don't know the other brother, but he's some kind of—his parents are from Mexico, from Monterrey. And you see this: you see a lot of—here in Lubbock—you see a lot of Mexicans working. Where I work—I work for Pick Up Pals in the shop—there's only two, maybe three Anglos. The rest are all Mexicans. So where are we going with that? We're going to control this country. But we need to control—educate our people.

DS:

Um-hm.

LE:

Not with labor. I mean, we got plenty.

DS:

Yeah.

LE:

We got plenty labor. I mean, I don't mean nothing against hard labor, but we need to get some education here.

DS:

Yeah, and that's always been the problem. You know, you've got to be educated. That way, if that opportunity presents itself, you can take advantage of it.

LE:

And really, I didn't have that much of an education. I went to ninth grade, three years of high school, and one year of—

DS:

But you got what you needed for the field you were going into, right?

LE:

Yeah, and—

DS:

And then you had that drive.

LE:

And that's what I tell David Garza. I say, "David Garza. What in the heck are you doing getting a degree in—what was the first degree—it was in international law?" It was international business or something. And he said, "Well Luis, it's the only thing I could think about." And I said, "What are you going to do now?" He said, "Well, I'm going to go to law school. Get a degree in law." And he got his degree in law. And one day I walked there and he was taking a suit and tie, and I said, "Where are you going David?" He said, "One of my customers I'm going represent, I need to take him a coat and a tie." I say, "Man, I say, you should've become a priest instead of an attorney. " (laughter) But he was a good man. I enjoyed working with him. And we had a good radio program, a real good program. La KLFB it was the first radio station to start

opening the eyes of the Mexican people, the Mexican American people, because they had good good *locutores* [radio broadcasters]. And I used to go there and we'd did El Birimbl de Bohemia. We did that. We'd go with two real good *locutores* from Mexico. And it was a very, very, very serious *locutores*. Real real intelligent, good at Spanish. We used to say that *el radio no impede trabajar. Y leguo la otra que deciamos decía, "Si no sabes de leyer, debes de aprendier. Y si tienes la oportuna de saber, tienes el deber de enseñar."* [we used to say the radio did not impede work. And another of our sayings was, "If you don't know how to read, you should learn how. And if you have the opportunity to know, you have the obligation to teach."] "You know, that's the law – the law of the land. So yeah.

DS:

And you practice with your boys, you know. "I'll teach you, but you got to teach the next."

LE:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, so—

DS:

Yeah. Well, you know, I've really enjoyed—what, we've probably been here about an hour?

LE:

Yeah, probably so, but I appreciate it—you coming, and if I can do anything—if you want to do, like I say, more of the Cinco de Mayo.

DS:

Yeah. Let's talk more about this, because I really think that that's something we need to do, because I'm with the Lubbock Historical Society, and so there's lots of buildings that they've identified that, you know, "This is a landmark, this is a—" Well, it's not on this side of the town that had been marked, because no one's said, you know, "Hey, you know, this building's important."

LE:

Yeah.

DS:

That building's still there. It's been there years now.

LE:

Oh yeah, you can see—

DS:

And it has a storied history. Yeah, it's because we have the parks but none of the structures. You know, that building's still there. You know, the church—I don't if they've done anything on that. They might have.

LE:

The church was built—the old church, they demolished that. It was on Avenue M. Right about where (unintelligible), about three houses away, is where the little church was. Wooden floor.

DS:

Because there's some important structures, I mean, I don't know when Malinche went there, but it feels—I don't know how long ago that was.

LE:

Now Malinche I don't remember, but my sister used to play the piano there because it became—by accident, it became a well-known, La Malinche because they only served rice, beans, chalupas, enchiladas and tamales on a plate. That's all they would serve. That was the only thing, so you go there and that's what they're serving. And then my sister used to play the piano for Miss Barrera. Misses Barrera was a singer also.

DS:

Ah.

LE:

She used to sing, and she used to cater for all these Little Joe, El Camaronsito —everybody that used to come and play in Lubbock. They'd go and eat there.

DS:

Wow.

LE:

Tony Aguilar when he used to come to the Barrio, they'd go and eat there. *A quien mas estuvo aye? Tony Aguilar el hermano de Tony Aguilar tambien . este Little Joe, este Agustine Ramirez . Todos ellos. Lo conocian porque cantaban.*[Who else was there – Tony Aguilar, Tony Aguilar's brother, and Little Joe, and Agustine Ramirez. All of them. They knew about it because they sang.]

DS:

Now, you mentioned your dad—I mean your mom—came with you. Did your dad come with y'all when y'all came to the country?

LE:

Yes. Yes.

DS:

Did he play music when he was here?

LE:

No, no no. He didn't play any music, but—

DS:

Because you mentioned he's been in that orchestra in Mexico.

LE:

Yeah, in Mexico. But we use to bring a lot of *baños*, peanuts, *chili seco*. *Cosas medicinales como La Casa Mexicana. Hierbitas de todo eso*. [But we use to bring a lot of tubs, peanuts, dried chili, medical items. Like La Casa Mexican, medicinal herbs and all that.] We use to bring a lot of that. We used to—my mother used to make a lot of *tamales* here in the store, and a lot of *tortillas*, and it was good. We used to deliver you groceries to the houses, because they called it—we didn't called it Cinco de Mayo, we called it Urbie's Supermarket. (DS laughs) And we used to remember that, around ten o'clock, we used to turn the light out, on and off, on and off, to light the barrio know that it was the last call for milk or bread or whatever.

DS:

Ah.

LE:

Yeah, so—

DS:

They'd look out and see it flashing and know they'd better hurry?

LE:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we used to do that. But it was a—*la seniōra*—*la seniōra* Montelongo, she was one of our customers.

DS:

Petra?

LE:

*Petra, La Señora Petrita, ella is su daughter they used to live here in the barrio on the other side. And we used to give them credit to buy groceries. As a matter of fact, the other day – and I think I threw them away – we found some recibos, donde sacaban comida. And we used to go and get the braceros from the a donde los tenían en los campos. Aquí pa el lado del Lubbock. Los traíamos, paca pa el centro. Con la unica intención de que podrían venir y comprar todo lo que querían, pero todas las groceries las tendrían que comprar en la tienda. And then they buy the groceries and then we take them back – in a big old truck. It was fun. But you know, from des la tienda del Gallo – no sé si tu as oído de la tienda del Gallo que estaba allí en el centro – desde la tienda del Gallo hasta la dónde está el allí dónde está Levin's that was it. You could not go farther than that – as a Mexican. You pretty much just stayed between del la tienda del Gallo, allí dónde está Jimenez's había una tienda de muebles. El luego estaba la farmarcia y estaba la Chandler's. Era la barria dónde venían las trocas con todo la gente de los campos Venían a comprar comida, comprar estaba El Capitán. El cine Capitán, La Arcadia, todos esos.. They were strictly for Mexicans. We cannot go to el cine Lindsay a . They didn't allow us to go to the Lindsay Theater. That's upper-class. You tell that to my kids and they don't do believe you. And that's the way it was.*

*[Petra, La Señora Petrita, her and her daughter they use to live here in the barrio on the other side. And we used to give them credit to buy groceries. As a matter of fact, the other day – and I think I threw them away – we found some receipts, from where they bought food. And we used to go and get the braceros from the where they had them on the farms. Here on the other side of Lubbock. We'd bring them here to the center of town. With the only condition that they could come and buy anything they wanted; however, they had to buy all their groceries from our store. And then they buy the groceries and then we take them back – in a big old truck. It was fun. But you know, from the store of the Rooster – I'm sure if you've heard of the store of the Rooster that was there in the center – from the store of the Rooster up to where Levin's is, that was it. You could not go farther than that – as a Mexican. You pretty much just stayed between from the store of the Rooter, over ther where Jimenez's is there was a furniture store. And then ther was a pharmacy and Chandler's. This was the area where the trucks fulled with people came from the farms. They'd come to buy groceries, buy. There was El Captian. The movie theater El Capitan, the Arcadia, all those. They were strictly for Mexicans. We cannot go to el cine Lindsay a . They didn't allow us to go to the Lindsay Theater. That's upper-class. You tell that to my kids and they don't do believe you. And that's the way it was.]*

DS:

Yeah. I've got a picture that's on the cover of our book. Well, it's not on the cover of the book but it's—I've got the picture up on my desk as a desktop, and it shows downtown a bunch of shopping centers, and it's all Mexicanos, packed with Mexicanos and on it you can read the sign

that says "Ben's." Did y'all go that far down? There was a sign that said "Ben's" for the one of the stores. It said "Ben's # 2." You can come by one day and I'll show it to you.

LE:

Yeah.

DS:

It's an interesting photo.

LE:

I used to—I remember that, when I walked from here to the barrio, I'd take this street, and I'd go over the tracks, then I'd go past the newspaper Avenue H. – La H. – there, all straight. From there, I can go anywhere that I wanted that way, but from Avenue H. this way, I was not allowed, without having 50 cents in my pocket.

DS:

Yeah. That's a lesson you learned.

LE:

But, you know, but it was funny because coming from Mexico I didn't feel that. I didn't feel discriminated. I feel like a kid *de aquí* [from here] would feel discriminated, but I didn't feel discriminated. I was kind of, "Wow. This happened here in this country?" And when I went and looked at that "Black" water fountain there, the one in the bus station, I said, "Man, there's something wrong with these guys here." *Pero, no* [But, no.] I had never felt it. When I went to Lubbock High, I had never had *ni un chinga*. [I never had a problem] I won't say that as far for English class *como sea este, no era nada molesto* [as for as it went, it wasn't a bother] for I would try. It's not a handicap, so it might take me a little longer.

DS:

Yeah. Yeah well you had to be really strong to come in and have that deficit and know that—

LE:

Oh, yes, because that's what I was telling you, that when I was in Mexico, from elementary, they start teaching you how to negotiate, how to respect—whatever you want to call it. You need to defend yourself. You need to bring it home. There's some rules that can be bent, but there's some rules you cannot break, and that's like in this house with my kids. I say, There's rules that cannot be broken. There's rules that we can talk about. Whatever you want to say. Let's say that there's your way – there's the you are thinking, there's the way I'm thinking and there's the way to do things." *A si es la manera de ser las cosas, Es modo de ser los tu bien, a ser los yo bien, y la manera de ser los dos bien.*" ["Here's the way to do things. There's how you think it's right,

there's how I think it's right and then there's the right way to do it." So with that, yeah, my father always told me, "Whatever you do then son, do it right. And if they don't like it, you drop what you're doing with them, you go someplace else. Don't let nobody *muve la pata* [he made a kicking motion]." So when I started seeing these guys here, and I used to talk to Gaspar Wilson who was a good friend, I'd say, "Gaspar, (unintelligible)." [He's say], "You know I'm trying. I'm trying hard and I'm not from here." I'd say, "You were born here." "Yeah." You're smart. He'd say, "No I'm not smart. I just work hard. You'll get there." So when I find out this Genaro and *este muchaco* [this guy] that graduated from Tech, after the background *que tuvieron* [they'd had.] I feel good. I feel real good. But, you know, there was no drugs in this barrio. There was no drugs. There was smoking, there was drinking, but no drugs. One time my dad was outside the store, and some of the guys from *el hueso* [el hueso is the name for the neighborhood just west of Guadalupe neighborhood] and some other neighborhood went by and there was one who—I don't remember his name—he said something and then started shooting, and they told my dad, "Hey Mr. Salaz," said, "Go inside the store. Don't go out." But there was no cops that come here.

DS:  
Yeah.

LE:  
They didn't—one time they picked one guy here who—they would be highway patrols. They put one guy here every night. And man I thought they were going kill those guys, because this barrio was not allowed for cops to get here. He went on the dances—the Mexican dances. Only one cop that I remember—and I don't remember his name, but he was the only one that allowed—the Mexican people allowed him to be there. And there was an older guy. And but—

DS:  
Well you know that Andy, who introduced us, he was a cop here back in the 70's, and he used to—he told me he used to work at the beat at Crystal's on north—on University.

LE:  
Oh, yeah.

DS:  
Uh-huh. He said that was his—where he worked out there.

LE:  
So he probably—he probably knew when they killed Pepe Viegas outside of the club, that they killed—Pepe Viegas had a lot of influence down here. You know, he was the one that was

making all these big dances. Pepe Viegas and (Phone rings). I try to remember the guy that did all this paperwork, because he used to—you know where the Hi-D-Ho used to be?

DS:

Um-hm.

LE:

That's where we used to hang around. That was our hang-around for this neighborhood right here. And it was a lot of fun.

DS:

Well, I better go, so just—

LE:

Yeah, sure.

DS:

Thank you.

LE:

Hey, I appreciate you coming by and if you need anything, just give me a holler.

DS:

Well, I'm going to say—you know, you mentioned those guys in Midland?

LE:

Yes.

DS:

If you want to put me in contact with them, I'd be interested in hearing their stories if they want to talk about it. Let me—

*End of Interview*