

**Oral History Interview of  
Fidela Perez De Lira**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez  
November 14, 2009  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:**  
*Hispanic Interview Series/ University Archives*

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## Interview Series Background:

The Hispanic Oral History 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 Fidela Perez De Lira as she discusses her life growing up in Lubbock, and working in the medical field as a nurse. In this interview, Fidela describes why her family moved to Lubbock and what it was like growing up in the town. She then moves on to explain how she got into college, her career, and her involvement with Los Tertulianos,

**Length of Interview:** 00:45:27

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### Keywords

Los Tertulianos, Nursing, Ethnic Minorities, Cotton

**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Sanchez today's date November the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009. I'm at the Southwest Collection interviewing Fidela Perez—

**Fidela Perez De Lira (FPDL):**

De Lira.

DS:

De Lira as part of the Texas Tech University celebration of the reunion of *Los Tertulianos* [The Social Gatherers], Texas Tech University's first minority organization. Fidela. First of all let's start off with your complete legal name.

FPDL:

Fidela Perez De Lira.

DS:

Okay and where and when were you born?

FPDL:

I was born in Lockhart, Texas April 24, 1942.

DS:

Okay. How about your parents? Tell us about your dad and then your mother. Their names and where they were born.

FPDL:

My mother Agripina Morio *nacio* [born in], she was born in Guanajuato.

DS:

*Si lo quieres hacer en espanol esta bueno.* [If you want to do it in Spanish that's fine.]

FPDL:

Okay, I'm not very good in Spanish.

DS:

Okay.

FPDL:

And my father was born in Austin, Texas. He is the fourth generation American Texan. My great, great grandfather was in Texas before Texas was Texas. And my grandfather at one time

in his life was a Presbyterian minister. My grandmother on my dad's side was a wonderful, wonderful cook, about to the time maybe about five years before she died she was still catering weddings because of her moles and her food that she used to make like in Mexico. And my—I don't know much else about my grandfather other than he did come—you know he worked as a butcher also. And he was always in business of some sort. You know running fruit stands and such. My dad eventually put the family together, all of us and we moved to Lubbock. Now from my mother, my mother was—like I said was born in Guanajuato, and she came here during the revolution when Pancho Villa was doing his—you know whatever he was doing. And they lost their ranch, their cattle, their money. They lost everything because Pancho Villa took it away from them.

DS:

How old was your mom at the time?

FPDL:

My mom was a child. She was only about four years old and she came to the United States. She was born in 1913 and she was about four years later she came to the states. And she said that they got on a covered—on a wagon with mules and they just hightailed it out of town because Pancho Villa was on his way to their farm.

DS:

And that's so similar to a lot of stories where they were like you know you had Pancho Villa on one side and then you had the other fraction on the other group. Did she ever talk about encountering them on the road? Encountering them on the road or anything?

FPDL:

No because they were ahead of them and my grandfather and my uncles they all got together because they all lived in that ranch and worked the ranch. They all had piled up all their clothes on their wagon and they hightailed it to Eagle Pass and that's how they came in. And they did have their proper credentials when they came here.

DS:

Okay and you know they left in a hurry from there. What did they do once they got to the US? Was it anything similar to what they had been doing before?

FPDL:

Yes my grandfather obtained a job working in a farm and they were like you know farm workers, cotton, cattle, chickens, hogs. They did all that. They were very, very good when it came to sustaining themselves because during the Depression, according to my mother, they did not feel the depression like other people because they were self-sustained. They had their own

vegetables, their own cattle, their own chickens. The only thing they had to barter was sugar and coffee and flour. And whenever they bought materials they were wonderful seamstress, my aunts. And they taught my mother how to sew things without a pattern. She could see a shirt, a jacket, and my mother said, "Okay, let's go get the material." And she would cut it and she would make our clothes.

DS:  
Wow.

FPDL:  
She was a very, very intelligent lady who had maybe only a second grade education. If not, just maybe a first. She spoke very little English. As we all grew—she had children then, that's when she learned her English and she became very well bilingual.

DS:  
Okay and how about your father? We talked about his background being a nationalized citizen—I mean being a fourth generation Texan. What was his experience like compared to your mothers?

FPDL:  
I think his was a better than my mother's you know because my grandfather was already settled here in Austin.

DS:  
Did they lose any land after?

FPDL:  
After Pancho?

DS:  
After Mexico lost Texas?

FPDL:  
No, I don't think so. That part I am not sure so I'm not going to comment because I don't know, but it was very interesting. But my grandfather like I said was a Presbyterian minister. He was also a Mason, which was unusual for a person of Mexican descent, but he was a Mason at that time.

DS:  
And what was your husband—I mean your father's occupation?

FPDL:

My father was a farm worker. And he sustained us by living on the farms and you know doing the cotton and the growing of the vegetables and whatever they were going to grow for the summer.

DS:

Okay and you know you mentioned you went to high school in Frenship High. When did y'all move to West Texas?

FPDL:

We moved to Lubbock when I was maybe four years old. My father decided to move up here to go cotton picking because he wasn't making enough you know money to help us sustain. And this is like after World War II. He didn't go into the Army because he was rejected. Apparently he had two bum knees because a mule hit him on the knees and he was injured, and so they rejected his petition to go into the Army because he wanted to volunteer, but wasn't able to do so. And in doing so he went to work at an ammunitions plant making bombs. And after all that was over then that's when he decided well you know the company closed down so we're going to go pick cotton up towards Lubbock. And so we moved up this way, and my mother said okay. So they were like about—oh they were about four of us or five of us in the family and we all got in a big truck. You know one of those—oh gosh, three quarter type ton truck. And we were in the back and we came to Lubbock, but we came into a farm where my parents were picking cotton and working in the summer, pulling the weeds and such, and that's how we stayed here. And my mother liked this little dusty town as she called it. She loved it so much that she did not want to go back to Austin.

DS:

Wow.

FPDL:

And she says, "No this a place where I will be." And so my father said, "Okay." [Laughter]

DS:

You know that's interesting because you know I've heard other people and when they make a decision to settle down it always seems to be the wife that said you know it's time we stopped moving around and just made a home. And so where did y'all live?

FPDL:

We lived on a—I believe it was Avenue N on—at the old Guadalupe—the *barrio* [neighborhood].

DS:

The *barrio*.

FPDL:

We lived over there and we had just a huge room where we lived and there was a—I do not remember the gentleman's name but he was a Mr. José and Mrs. Maria, his wife. They rented this little—this large place. And we all had our little spots where we slept. We didn't have no beds. We just had a mattress, and then after a while my father says, and my mother says, "It's time for us to move from here." So he moved us to a house over on Avenue D which is on the other side of Lubbock. You know from one side to the other. And we lived there on Avenue D for about—I'd say for about four, five years and it was a huge house that we had. It was very nice, and after that my dad made the decision that we should go and try to better ourselves, and move to a different part of town because he saw that there was a lot of marijuana, trafficking, and bootlegging in the area. And my father did not want us to be influenced by those activities. So he moved us to West End where the family home is at. Across the street a brother lives, a niece lives on the—a couple of blocks down. Everybody in my family, the Perez family, they all live close to the old family home.

DS:

And you said on West End so that's? That's on the other side of Fourth Street?

FPDL:

No it's over on—it's Nineteenth Street. They live on Twenty-Fifth Street.

DS:

Okay.

FPDL:

Going towards oh gosh Hurlwood towards that area. And that's why in that area we were in the Frenship School District. We were not in the Lubbock School District so the bus would pick us up in front of our house and was very convenient and then we would go to school at Frenship.

DS:

Well talk about that school, the differences between going to Lubbock schools and then Frenship.

FPDL:

I feel that when I was—see this is when I was in high school. He moved us away. When I was at Lubbock High School I was lost. Not only lost because I was just a student there, there was no interaction from the teachers. I mean I didn't feel comfortable. I mean I didn't feel special—not

special but what I was saying—I wasn't recognized as a viable student there. But when I moved to Frenship because it was small, we had closer interaction with the teachers. We could ask questions. We could do a lot of things. And then I became active; I was invited to join the drill team, and so I joined the drill team. At that time I was a cute little thing. [Laughs] And so I had a really wonderful time at Frenship High School. And I don't have any negative feelings about that. To the point that I look them up on the internet whenever I'm lonesome for Texas. [Laughter]

DS:

Well that was a good experience and it's good for you that your dad decided to move out there then.

FPDL:

Yeah he was always moving us to a better situation for us improve ourselves. And so we—you know like for me I wanted the socialization with my friends, with the girls, and the guys, and you know in the football team, and to this day I love football. I mean I'm totally involved in it. My husband who grew in a big city doesn't have that type of feeling because you know he didn't grow up in a small town.

DS:

Um-hm and well that is the thing you know and Frenship has always had strong athletics even from the beginning. And so it's like you know they are that type of town where everybody goes to the game.

FPDL:

Exactly.

DS:

So what was that like you know being an integral part being on the drill team? Being out there?

FPDL:

It was a real happy experience. I was very happy. It made me feel really good. And I felt good about myself and everything was positive. And I enjoyed all my classes, my science—I love science. I never took home making because I thought, Well I'll learn that later. And I said no, I said I just—I love the sciences and I love to be—you know just to be a part of the school, you know just whatever activity it was other than being in home making was good for me.

DS:

And so I mean being a woman in the sciences were there a lot of girls that were taking the same type of curriculum you were there?

FPDL:

There were a few, not that many, but I did. I just loved the sciences. I loved everything, anything that had to do with science. I truly, truly enjoyed.

DS:

And did y'all come into Lubbock on the weekends or anything as teenagers hanging out?

FPDL:

No. No. No, what we did was we—we worked in the fields, if we could or we did something. We always worked. And so when they say some children even friends of mine now, that I know of, they say, “Weren’t you ever bored during the summer?” I said, “No, I was always working in the fields.” Because I was asked one time, “Well get on the internet and play Solitaire. I said, “How do you play Solitaire?” I don’t do Solitaire. I don’t know any of those games. Mine was helping my mother with the kids because there were ten of us. And I was number four so I helped her with six, and so I always busy. And either trying to keep the kids behaving themselves or I would be washing and ironing for my mom or just doing something or tending a garden because we loved to garden. And we always had you know our tomatoes and zucchinis and whatever else we could grow on the side. Unless—unless a bad storm came and the hail chopped it down to nothing. [Laughs] But we had fun, we had fun. I don’t—all those experiences I don’t find them depressing. I find them that they gave me grounds to what I am.

DS:

The sentiments that Noé echoed about all that led to him being who he is now.

FPDL:

Yes.

DS:

And you know at what point did you start thinking about maybe college?

FPDL:

I didn’t. This is what happened. I had a wonderful, wonderful teacher in Spanish and I was a part of the Spanish club. And we were kind of interested in what’s happening and all this. It wasn’t a very aggressive group but it was a nice little group to give an introduction about the Hispanic issues and things like this. And this wonderful teacher came to my house one day and says, “You have a scholarship to Tech.” I had no idea. And it was the Lunex [?] [0:15:25.0].

DS:

So they gave you a scholarship without you even having applied?

FPDL:  
Correct.

DS:  
Wow.

FPDL:  
Because of my earnest on sciences and you know to do things.

DS:  
And so you know after you got that award what were you thinking then?

FPDL:  
I said, "Good. I get to go to college." [Laughter]

DS:  
So then you applied?

FPDL:  
I applied. Well I did take my test. I think it was the ACT not the SAT, and I did well on that so I was accepted, no problems. So I was able to come to Tech for those two years because you know they paid for the two years which I think was great. And I could not continue because I had no money. And so I had to go to work and I went to work for my—the family physician because he did—he called me at home and says, "Would you like to work in the office because I know that you've gone to college." He told me I was smart. I didn't know I was smart. So I said, "Oh okay." I said it means money you know in the pocket. So when I was working with him I decided, well you know what, maybe I can go out and become a nurse or something you know. Something in the medical field because I—he had—this family physician was Dr. Lawrence Lough. He was here for a long time. Hardly anybody knows him but this gentlemen was such a human. That he—older people that came you know that were coming over, migrant workers, if the lady was going to give birth he would only charge them fifty dollars for the birthing of the baby. He was a good man.

DS:  
Did he work Dr. Porter also?

FPDL:  
Yes, yes he did. Dr. Porter they were also good people. Because when Dr. Lough couldn't do in his little residence then he would send them across the street to the Porter Clinic.

DS:

Yeah because I think where half of us were born about one half by the other in our family, so yeah.

FPDL:

Yes. Yes. Yes. I have four brother—no five brothers that Dr. Lough delivered. And he told me, he says, “You know what don’t go to LVN school,” he says, “You’re smarter than that. Why don’t you go to Methodist and go take a test over there?” And I did and I passed it, and I was told that I had such great perseverance. That they had to take me.

DS:

Wow. And what was that experience like there? Going there and starting?

FPDL:

It was wonderful. It makes me tearful.

DS:

Can you talk a little about that time?

FPDL:

[Voice breaks] In a second.

DS:

Okay.

FPDL:

Yeah, it was wonderful. My nursing school career was great. And this is when I met my friend. And we had such a great you know classes. We learned a lot and I made a hundred—I made an A on my anatomy and physiology and I was so proud of myself and dietarian was great and of foods. And of course OB [**obstetrics**] I was great in all that and I enjoyed all of my nursing career. It was the best experience of my life.

DS:

You were there in Methodist how long?

FPDL:

We were there like maybe a little over two years studying but we went the whole year, summers included. We had no break. We started one class and then we went to another. It had a few days off and we then we start again. So we worked all the time. Studied and worked.

DS:

Did all your background in the sciences give you a leg up on the stuff?

FPDL:

Oh absolutely. Oh yes. Oh yes. I think that's one of the greatest things that you can do is if you show a little bit of interest in something I think it should be nurtured. And I nurtured myself because I had no—I didn't have anybody to encourage me, but I just loved what I was doing.

DS:

And I know you got married sometime during that stretch right?

FPDL:

No, I graduated on June 2 of 1967 and on June 10 I married my husband.

DS:

Wow.

FPDL:

So we had a lot of things going on.

DS:

And did you—did you stay in Lubbock for a short while after that?

FPDL:

My husband was—this is during Vietnam. My husband volunteered for Vietnam, but he was not accepted because his brother was already overseas. So instead they sent my husband to Korea for a whole year, all of 1968. And he came home December of '68 and we moved to Los Angeles in '69. And the reason my husband wanted to move there is because he is Californian and he says, "You know there is a lot of disparity and a lot of racism here in Texas, that I don't think I can make a go of it here because of the way I feel." So we went back to LA—I mean he went back to LA and he was able to get a job within a month or so once we settled. And we settled in the San Gabriel Valley area. He is from the east LA part of Los Angeles. He did have a very Catholic upbringing and living in San Gabriel we lived there for—I would say for a maybe about a couple of years. After that I was working at the hospital there in the San Gabriel Valley Community Hospital and I worked there for almost thirty years. I worked as a first—when I went in there I worked only maybe for a couple of weeks in the medical surgical ward and then they had an opening in the critical care because my specialty was critical care. And I worked critical care step down all the way up until about nineteen—I would say until about 1989 and that's all I ever did. I worked nothing but cardiac patients. I was lucky enough because being a Hispanic in California the racism part was not as—as visible as it was over here. Although when I was here I

didn't see it because I just never thought about it because I was doing my own thing. But over there—I just went over there and I applied for jobs and I got them without any hesitation from my superiors and I excelled. I went from one area to another and I stayed there. And the reason I stayed in critical care was because I enjoyed the challenges, the everyday challenges of a critical patient. And the activities and your brain did not have time to get stagnant because when you work in those—in that type of setting you have to constantly take classes. And be updated on medications, on procedures, and new ways of doing CPR, and new ways of doing you know like pace makers. I used to have to go in with patients that needed pace makers and I would be the one that was watching the monitor to make sure they did not go into V-Tech or ventricular tachycardia or atrial fibrillation and if they did I was to notify the physician. And if I needed to do cut in—you know a cardiac version or something like that I had the physicians there with me and an anesthesiologist and I was the one that was handling all the drugs. You know the lifesaving drugs for the patients. So it was—it was a very, very, good experience and I think that made me stronger as a nurse. And then after I finished my critical care I decided to step down from it and I went to work in a case management department. And that has to do with discharge planning and utilization management and that entailed knowing the patient completely. You know what their home situation is. Are they going to need home health? Are they going to need nurses at home? Or physical therapy or IV therapy? What are they going to need? And I would arrange things like this. And also equipment, if they needed a bed. They needed a walker. They needed other special equipment. Say for example somebody with an orthopedic problem we would arrange braces for them. Or if they came in and they had a colostomy I would have to arrange for a colostomy nurse to go in and put bags on their stomachs and how to teach the family how to work with it and just make all those arrangements. And it took a lot you know like transportation to home. It could be either by car, ambulance, or a special van. And we did this every day and it was—it was satisfying. It really was and I stayed there at San Gabriel like I said almost thirty years. And then I went to work at Arcadia Methodist's which is another hospital and it across from the San Anita Race Track. And I worked as case management. I worked there only for about five or six months. The drive was kind of horrific because in California the traffic is so bad. I mean it takes you about an hour to go fifteen miles so it's really hard and especially when you start to have back problems or something like that it's really hard. So when a new hospital opened up which Kaiser Permanente, that is an HMO [**Health Maintenance Organization**] hospital. And I had been an HMO patient for all the time I've been in LA because my husband grew up under that system. And he says, "Let's go into that system." And everyone that I knew they used to tell me I had the worst insurance ever. And now to this day Kaiser is a premium place to have because you get—you go into the hospital into the emergency room. They have everything there ready for you. If you speak Spanish, Chinese, Mandarin, Cambodian, Indian, whatever. We have interpreters for everybody and there's always a case manager there to go in and start doing a history of why did they come in. Was this a heart attack because you didn't take care of yourself? Or was this a trauma caused by somebody else? An accident or maybe they're abused, and all this is recognized right away through the emergency room with

Kaiser. And the nurses are the eyes of the case manager because they're the ones that say, "You know what I think somebody is abusing this lady or this gentleman or whatever." Be either financial or be either physical or mental or drugs or any of the sort. And then when they go to the floors, I as a case manager, would continue that type of scenario and then I would involve case—I would involve the social services. The pastor would come in also to help them if they needed counsel—you know some religious—what's the word I want to use? A religious—I can't think of the word right now, it escapes me, but you know support, you know. And usually things like this is what makes the patient feel comfortable and better. And with Kaiser you say you would come in with a—say a stomach ache or something. They immediately haul you to the X-ray department and they abdominal series or an ultrasound or a CT scan. Depending on what it is or where it is. And then they bring in the consultant almost within less than a few—less than you know eight to three hours. I mean some are easier to see whether it's in the middle of the night or in the daytime. In the daytime they're there because they're making rounds. But in the evening they have one physician that is making rounds at all times and they're called a rounder and it's usually an internal medicine doctor that comes in and checks on everybody. So this is—this is one of the things that I think works very well and I think patients are taken care of. Although I know that over there they don't care what you look like. You're taken care of.

DS:

That's good.

FPDL:

And like I said the interpreter service is wonderful. And over there they do have classes and if you pass a class on your dialect, your Spanish or whatever you speak, they give you a little broch. So that everybody knows that you are the Spanish speaking person or French or any kind of language and they have very unusual languages. Indonesian, Mandarin, and Chinese, Cantonese, because they're all so different. So it's wonderful the way they take care of patients and I noticed that immediately when I went to California which we did not have here in Texas. I know that they're trying to improve that here, but I—like I said I did not feel the racism in California at all.

DS:

Okay, and you know we're talking about you know we skipped over the part of when you were at Tech about *Los Tertulianos*. Let's talk about that experience about coming to Tech and getting to meet people outside of your normal circle and getting involved out here.

FPDL:

My early recollections are the Student Union. And I remember just going in there and having a sandwich and a soda and this is when I met my friend Tom Garza, who's very strong with *Los Tertulianos*, and Desi, Maria, Solace, and of course Anita Carmona. Anita Carmona and I go

back all the way until elementary school in the Guadalupe area. So that's how long we've known each other. So we go a long way and so it was nice. We used to have a wonderful time. Talking, joking, listening to music, eating. And then one day my recollection of Tom was that he came in to me and he says, "You know we are going to start a social club and we're going to call it *Los Tertulianos*." And because my Spanish is not as good as it should be and I said, "What is the word *Tertuliano*? What does it mean?" And then he says, "Oh that means the party goes." I said, "Okay." [Laughter] I said, "I'm for it. Anything to have fun." And this is where I started to meet all the rest of the group. And we had a wonderful time on those two years that I was here.

DS:

And you know that group also did a lot of social things just because given the times.

FPDL:

Um-hm.

DS:

Did y'all individually or as a group ever feel any outside pressure about what was going on? What y'all were up to?

FPDL:

No. I really didn't. I really did—I didn't—I didn't feel it. You know what, I don't know what's wrong with me but I don't—I do not look at any pressures like that. I said, I'm my own person and I do what I can do and to heck with everybody else you know? I'm like focused or maybe narrow minded, I don't know, but they didn't bother me. I mean like water on a duck's back. I just kept going.

DS:

Yeah even Noé said there—as far as he could tell there was none. Y'all were free to do as y'all wanted with that group.

FPDL:

Yes.

DS:

And administration didn't really—you know wasn't concerned about it.

FPDL:

No, no.

DS:

And so that's refreshing you know?

FPDL:

Yes, yes.

DS:

That you know Thomas Stride, they were able to voice what they felt needed to be said.

FPDL:

Yes, yes. And I have to give Tom the edge right there because he was wonderful. He's the one that started to introduce us to *Tertulianos* and getting it going and we signing the charter and all this and everything, so that was wonderful.

DS:

So what'd you think about their idea when they said we're getting together?

FPDL:

I thought, "Hey that's great. Let's party!" [Laughter] Yeah and that was the whole thing, you know, and we did. We got together and we just—we just felt very close. To this day I haven't seen some these people in about forty years or maybe longer. And all I can say was we picked up where we left off. You know there's not that, oh you're here you're there. No you just go together and we start talking and it's like we never left each other.

DS:

Well that was evident last night wasn't it?

FPDL:

Can you tell? Yes, yes, yes. All of us. We were like that. We're like an extended family. We're just like a large, large family. Because you don't have any prejudices against any of them. You know you accept them and you—you know you applaud them for their accomplishments and all this. So I think it's great. I really do. It's a great organization.

DS:

Well because y'all were here when you were blossoming into young men and women.

FPDL:

Exactly. Um-hm. And like I said I—if they had any problems you know I didn't hear of them. I didn't hear about them. And it was all like I said we didn't—we didn't think anything back then.

DS:

What do you think was it about that group that made them so successful? I mean the number of master's degrees, PhDs, and lawyers that came out of that core group is amazing.

FPDL:

I know. I know. I was there with all of them. They just wanted to do it and they weren't going to let anybody tell them anything different. They were focused and they followed their dreams.

DS:

What could generations now that wanted to know about the struggles that some of them went through take from a group like that?

FPDL:

Oh my goodness. To be honest because I haven't been here in Texas all this time, but in—with my son you know his attitudes are greatly different. They're greatly different. He doesn't understand the struggles that we went through. And sometimes he says, "Well mom that was then and this is now." But he does not understand and it's quite frustrating. And I feel that the younger people nowadays they don't understand how focused we were. And I tell them, I said this is like the—the generation that nothing was going to stop them you just keep going. We may not be like the World War II, the greatest generation, but I think we're not too far from there.

DS:

When you were talking last night about the *Grapes of Wrath* and how you were Delano during the time that Chavez was there.

FPDL:

Oh yes.

DS:

Can you talk about that experience?

FPDL:

Oh yes. This is very interesting. When we were in Delano I had a brand new baby, and he was allergic to milk and I couldn't go to any, any, any store other than Safeway. And unfortunately Safeway was the store that Chavez was out there saying, "Don't go to that store. Don't buy things." But it was my child's life and I had to choose between them and my child. And unfortunately you know I went there and I said, "I have to buy milk for my boy." And I said, "And if he was a healthier child maybe I could forego that and feed him something else." But I couldn't so it was a matter of choice, but I respected their fight because at one point in my life you know we had been farm workers and I know how difficult it was for my parents. You know

and we did live in tents at one time. You know so living on a farm moving for the first couple of times, but we seemed to just progress you from there. And I did feel sorry for the farm worker and I know that like my spouse he's city bred, born and bred and he doesn't understand the plight of the farm worker. And I do feel for them and I said, "You know but Richard you don't seem to grasp the hardships that they have." And there's a lot of hardships but you try not to let it bother you. You just—you just keep going. And that's—I feel that this is our group here because we all worked so hard in our childhood that made us strong. And I remember picking cotton on one winter and my mom says, "No you can't go to school until November." And school started in August. "Because you have to pick cotton because we need the money." And I remember I was in the—oh I think it was fifth grade and I said to myself, "You know you're going to go to college and you're going to do this forever." I said that to myself. I said, "You're not going to do this forever." And I didn't.

DS:

Wow. How did you know about college at that—because I mean like I know from my experience that wasn't something we really were even exposed to at that young of an age.

FPDL:

Well I saw students, the agricultural students coming into the farms and inspecting the growth of the crop, the seed, this that, and the other. And this is when I started to become interested in sciences you know because I would think, "What is he looking in there?" I had a curious mind. And I read a lot and so that's when I—that was my turning point that I was going to go to college, that I was not going to work outside anymore. Because I was very fair skinned and my mom tried to do everything to protect our skin. You know she used to cover our faces and she made sure we wore gloves so that our hands wouldn't become so, so hard, and callused because we were girls you know? My sister and I. And so I said, "No I'm not going to do this anymore." And that was the last year that I worked in the field because I told my mom, "I'm not going to do this anymore. I am going to do something else." And so I went to—to work in a restaurant you know just not really waitressing, but just being in a restaurant and—because I was good with numbers. I could handle the cash register and such. So I went to—I went to work inside and I told—anytime you work inside it's better than working outside. And that was my whole mindset even in nursing. When I was working very hard to the point of dropping I would say to myself, "You know what this is hard, but it's not as hard as working in the cotton fields picking cotton." So everything was to that year. Yeah and when I went back to—when I went to school in November I was the tiniest girl in town. You know going to the fifth grade I was very, very small and my school teacher Ms. Conley was just a lovely person. She thought that I didn't know very much, and by the end of the school year I had mastered my English, I had mastered math and—everything, spelling. When I was in the sixth grade I won the spelling bee contest. I beat everybody in the whole school. You know so I was a good speller, even in nursing school. Except now in my old age I forget. [Laughter]

DS:

We can blame it on the old age right?

FPDL:

Yeah so I keep a dictionary handy—handy you know so that I can—so that I can look up a word. Yes, curious mind.

DS:

So what is it you take from all your experiences both at Tech and as a child growing up that you cherish the most now?

FPDL:

I think—actually I enjoyed my college tremendously. I did not enjoy my childhood working in the fields and my best part was when I went to nursing school. That to me was—if I were to experience life again, nursing school would be it. It was beautiful.

DS:

You got so emotional when you started talking about it earlier.

FPDL:

Um-hm.

DS:

So what are you doing now?

FPDL:

I'm retired. I retired and I am painting, and I'm taking classes on how to paint and I've done a few pictures. And they're hanging in my bathroom, which is amazing. [Laughs] And my husband, a federal employee he belongs to a group that he's president and I help him. I am like the social person. I take all the goodies and I bake all the cookies and cakes and stuff. And I really don't have the official title as social—as a social director but it's something that I do on my own and I don't accept anybody to give me any money because I want to do it on my own because I enjoy it. I enjoy making people happy.

DS:

Have you also volunteered in any civic organizations?

FPDL:

I haven't gotten to that point. I tried several times to go to different hospitals to volunteer, but apparently they have a lot volunteers that they never called me. And I said, "Well thank you."

[Laughter] So what can you say? You know and so but if there is anything that needs to be done you know I'm there. And in my painting class, in my painting groups—they're not classes they're groups. It's two clubs. We do charitable work. We do painting. They're called memory boxes. Unfortunately this little memory boxes may have little flowers on them or little stars or something like that. And we give this to the hospitals to give to the parents who have lost babies. And they put all their stuff in there.

DS:

Kind of like a memorabilia.

FPDL:

Memory box. It's a memory box.

DS:

It's kind of almost like a—well you know like *Dia de los Muertos* [Day of the Dead], like the *ofrenda* [altar] type thing. Almost that same type of idea.

FPDL:

Yes.

DS:

Because I know here a local widow \_\_\_\_ [0:42:58.7] and one of the things that's been done a few times, they'd be shadow boxes and they fill them with memories like that, and it's—

FPDL:

Yeah this one is just a regular little box and we paint it in beautiful serene colors. Not anything bright and shiny and all this, but just something sedate and beautiful to give to the parents who have lost their child, a baby. And then at the other group in Orange County that I belong to we do a lot of projects, and we do fundraising, and we support a women's shelter. You know that have had problems. So we give them either brand new clothing. At Christmas time we fill up you know the sacks from like Nordstrom or Macy's or something like that. We fill them up with toiletries and clothes and you know little jewelry, candy, you know things like that to make their life a little bit better. And they have children at the homeless shelter—you know this shelter because they have been abused. We give the children toys and we just go there and you know we do this. So I guess you would say it is a charitable—you know we have the social, but we also do help other people.

DS:

So what's that like being able to have gone from where you were to where now where you can help others?

FPDL:

It makes me feel good.

DS:

And you did it all your life as a profession, but now you're just doing it because you want to.

FPDL:

I want to. Oh yeah I like to do that. To see a smile is good.

DS:

Do you have any closing thoughts?

FPDL:

No. I just love Lubbock. [Laughter]

DS:

Well I think you mentioned that in your bio right? That you were just—even though you've been in LA you really miss this area? Like your mom?

FPDL:

I do. I do.

DS:

You like your dirt.

FPDL:

[Laughs] I like my dirt.

DS:

You like it the dust you said? [Laughter]

FPDL:

Yeah. A *pueblito tormentado* [dusty town] yes. [Laughter] Yes, my mother loved this dusty little town and I love this dusty little town.

DS:

And did your mom and dad stay here until they passed away?

FPDL:

Um-hm. They're both buried here. And a sister and a brother. Yes. Um-hm.

DS:

Well I thank you for taking the time out from your trip. I know that you're catching up with old friends and we had one of your friends sitting with us right here.

FPDL:

Um-hm. Um-hm.

DS:

And we really appreciate you coming in for this interview.

FPDL:

Thank you. Thank you.

DS:

All right. You did good.

*[End of Recording ]*

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