

**Oral History Interview of
Maria Rivas**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
February 3, 2010
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 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Maria Rivas as she discusses her life and background living in Texas. In this interview, Rivas describes her love for education and how she got a job in the educational field, and the trials and tribulations she faced while growing up.

Length of Interview: 02:31:33

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Keywords

Family life and background, Mexican-American, Education, Prejudice

Maria Rivas (MR):

Este, my glasses glaring?

Daniel Sanchez (DS):

Not sorry. Are you ready?

MR:

Yeah.

DS:

My name is Daniel Sanchez. Today's date is February the third, 2010. I'm at the home of Doctor Maria Rivas, and we're going to discuss her life and her career at Texas Tech and her involvement at the student group at Texas Tech called *Los Tertulianos*. First of all, Maria, please, can we start your complete legal name?

MR:

Maria Rivas.

DS:

Okay. And when are where were you born?

MR:

I was born in Pecos, Texas or Pecos, Texas in 1943.

DS:

Okay. Do you have any siblings?

MR:

I have three brothers and two sisters. I have—I'm the oldest. I have a brother that lives in Louisiana. I have one that lives in Alaska. One that we don't know where he is. He's kind of—I kind of lost track of him, and a sister that lives in Minnesota, and then a sister that lives in Odessa.

DS:

Okay. Can you state their names?

MR:

My brother the second sibling is my brother Roy that lives in Lafitte, Louisiana. My brother Richie lives in Alaska. My sister Becky lives in Minnesota. My brother Orlando is the one that we don't know where he is. My sister Sonia lives in Odessa.

DS:

Okay. And how about your parents? State your mother's complete name and date of birth; the place.

MR:

My mother's name was Rita Rayos Salas Caras she married twice. My maiden name was Salas so, she married my father first, and they divorces when I was little, and then late in life she married a man named Carrasco.

DS:

Okay. And where was your mother from?

MR:

My mother was raised and born in Pecos.

DS:

Okay. And did you state her birthday?

MR:

My mother's birthday was May the 22nd, 1923.

DS:

Wow, and how about her parents? What were their names?

MR:

As far as I know, my mother's parents were from Pecos. As far as I know. My father on the other hand was—my grandmother apparently crossed the river with him when was little, so he was from Mexico. I think they said Monterrey. He was adopted by the man she married whose name was Salas. Apparently his name—legal name would have been Martinez, but he never carried that name, so I guess in my name there's also a Martinez—

DS:

Wow.

MR:

My surname so, you know how it is with Hispanic families. There's all this mixture all the time. We don't know where we came from [laughter].

DS:

Um-hm. You know, you mentioned that your parents separated when you were really young. Did you keep in touch with your dad's side of family or?

MR:

Not much with him as much as I did with my grandmother. Apparently the breakup within my mother and him was not very good. There was some gossip about whether I was his or not, and so he pretty much decided that I wasn't his, so we never had much interaction, and I found out about it, so that kind of made me a little angry, and so I wouldn't have anything to do with him. But apparently, he and my mother got back together again after that, and that's when my brother Roy came as a result of that reunion, but eventually they separated. They didn't divorce until—I guess I was already in college or something. He wanted to remarry and so they divorced then, but they were separated for years.

DS:

How about your mom? Tell us something about her and what she did for a living.

MR:

My mom as I said, because they divorced, or separated when I was little, she—as far as I know—she never went beyond the fifth grade in school. She was a single mom. She worked different jobs, without education, you know, she did things like working a laundromat or laundry I guess is what they call it. She also—her brother, my uncle, and she owned and ran a cantina in Pecos, and later in life, when she met my stepfather, Lalo, she became a stay at home mom, but for most of our life she worked and as a single mom, working mom, raising all of us.

DS:

What was the name of that cantina?

MR:

Geez, I don't remember—I don't remember it. I know that it was down on Third Street in what would be—Pecos was divided into east and west. The highway eighty went in the middle of town and kind of divided the town north and south, but we lived in the south part, of 80th, you know, highway eighty, which is the interstate bypass, and then, Cedar which is the street that went to Fort Stockton, and kind of divided the town east and west. It was a very segregated community, Hispanics and Blacks lived on the east side of Cedar. Anglos lived on the west side of Cedar. If you go back now, it's pretty much predominantly Hispanic. I think the sheriff is Mexican-American. You know just about any office that you go to is a Mexican-American. As the—there was a white flag from Pecos and the Hispanic or Mexican-Americans finally started moving across Cedar, so now they live everywhere, and so the cantina was just off of

interstate—or highway eighty, not interstate, highway eighty, but I can't remember. I used to know but I can't remember the name of it.

DS:

Well by any chance are there any photographs of that cantina?

MR:

God, I would have to ask my cousins. I don't—I don't have any, and I don't think it's there anymore. I think it was demolished. It was there for a long time, but it was an old bar—old cantina. There were many of cantinas in Pecos by the way on the east side [laughter]—

DS:

Was it like—

MR:

Just about every other block was a cantina.

DS:

Is it kind of like the way they describe the barrio here on Avenue K, there used to be a lot of places on Avenue K?

MR:

I'm not really that familiar with it, but it sounds like is pretty much that way. I don't think it was as—there was as much as the bootlegging kind of thing as there was here, because I think it's always been wet, but there were cantinas and quite around—especially around the east side of the city, of the town.

DS:

Now, we talked about, you know, you mentioned your grandparents. Did you all visit them a lot? Were they close by?

MR:

They lived in the same town. They—it's a small—it was a small town so it was pretty close. My brother and I visited my grandmother, now and then. When I was still in college, and I would go home, and it was late in the evening or something. They would pick me up at the bus station, and I would spend the night with them before I went home to moms. At that time, mom was living in a town outside of Pecos called Barstow, and so they would pick me up, I'd spend the night with them, and then they would pick me up and take me home.

DS:

Well let's talk a little bit about your childhood. Can you tell us some of your fondest memories as a child?

MR:

Fondest. It's funny because I was looking at my Facebook, and my brother joined Facebook and he's also joined the group called The Pecos—I think it's called The Pecos group or something, and I went to the Pecos group to see what's been going on and all of them put that they live in California or wherever they live, it's like, "Oh, I don't how care I lived anywhere else, Pecos will always be my home." I don't feel that way. My memories of Pecos were not the best ones. It was a very hard—growing up with a single mom who worked all the time. She also was a little promiscuous, although she had the two of us from my father side. She had children from two or three other men that she wasn't married to, and so I had to raise them, as the oldest—I was the one that was—so I had a lot of responsibility. In Pecos, I guess the fondest memories or where I really felt that I was safe and comfortable was in school, so school became kind of my asylum. I was good at it. I was better than most people, and so I always just loved school, and other than that, we—there was some friends I had there in the barrio. We would get together. I was laughing the other day because we used to—I was telling Jim some of the things they do now, we didn't have. We didn't have—I didn't have dolls, and so what we would do would be play with paper dolls. That was our big thing, and then I would take a mop, and fix her hair in braids and all of that, you know, and make like my doll, because we didn't have dolls. And then a group of us would get together at one of their houses, and we loved Mambos and Tongolele, and all of those Mexican dancers and dancing Mambo and all of that exciting stuff. And we used to take a towel and put it here and we'd take another towel and hang it down. Have you ever seen of those movies with Tongolele?

DS:

No.

MR:

The mambo?

DS:

I can't remember.

MR:

No? [Laughter] And you know, it's this really exciting thing, and then you move your—you know what, and we just put on our own shows, because there wasn't much entertainment for us in that town. There was one theater that was played Mexican—showed Mexican movies, and then there was the Anglo theater that at first we were not allow to go into, but when we were, we

had to sit upstairs instead of downstairs with the Anglos, but there wasn't that much to do in Pecos, so we kind of make your own: volleyball was very big, you know. The other—I guess another fun memory that I had was a lady that lived in our neighborhood, and at night—certain nights of the weekend—I can't remember how it worked, but a bunch of us would get together and go to her house, in that—late in the evening before dark, and she had the best *cuentos*. I mean, *La Llorona*, you know, whatever, all of these weird things that scared us to death, and then when it was over, we'd all go outside together and at the count of three we were all [take off] running to our homes because she had scared us to death. I mean, things like, "In that house over there, there used to be a man that came, and appeared," or "Do you know the story about this girl that wanted to go to a dance and her parents wouldn't let her go and she was—she had to go and she snuck out in her mother's car sneaking out, and she said, '*Te ha de tragar la tierra*, [You'll get swallowed by the earth]' and sure enough, as she walked out, started walking, the dirt opened up, and she was swallowed by the dirt, you know, *la madre*." So we made our own fun, so those were the fun parts, but other than that, it was not a—it was not the best time of my life. I'll put it that way. It was a hard time.

DS:

Okay. Well, what kind of activities was the family participating in as a whole?

MR:

We didn't have anything. We really didn't—we were very poor. We were raised in a one room house, like I said, my mom worked all the time. I don't remember Christmases; Christmas giving. I don't remember thanksgivings. On Christmas, we would all go to midnight mass. There were—some families, they would have a *tamalada* or something, and some of us would go to their house, but nothing really organized, a family thing, no, not much. Whatever—whatever you did, you created your own, but not as a family. I dint have much of a family unit per se. Like I said, I was the oldest and to a great degree, I was kind of the mother of the household. My mother was working and that was about it, so—

DS:

Yeah. In fact one of the questions is, you know, if you're raised in traditional roles, but I think you were assumed an adult role right away—

MR:

No—right, and don't think I ever was a child. I don't think I ever was that—I think that's probably why my brother and I are so dependable and so reliable, and the rest of them have kind of fallen by the wayside because they didn't have the experiences that he and I had. My brother is three years younger, and he at that time, we had the Bracero program, and he made himself a little shoe shine box, and he would go out and shine shoes for Braceros, and he would sell *novelas*, there was always somebody selling *novelas*, and he would take some and go around and

sell them and make some money that way. And me—I was at home, you know, taking care of the kids, keeping the house—cooking, whatever, and I mean, I learned to make tortillas and roll them when I was eight years old. They used to put a box so I could reach the table, and no, I never had a traditional upbringing.

DS:

Okay. Well, let's talk about your education. Talk about that first school that you went to or what that was like.

MR:

Well, I didn't start school until I was seven because my birthday falls in the summer in June, and so I turned—when school started, for some reason, I—maybe I'm wrong—it wasn't the age, but I still started school until I was seven, and I didn't know any English. I knew Spanish because my brother would bring us *novelas* home, and I taught myself to read in Spanish. So by the time I went to school, I knew math and I knew how to read in Spanish. And so the first grade, they held me back because I didn't know any English. Second grade, once I caught on to the language—this is what I eventually taught later in bilingual education: is that if you have a strong foundation in one language, once you learn to speak the second language, there's a lot of transfer from one language to the other because there are similarities between the two. And so, by the time I was in third grade, I was making the honor roll, and I made the honor roll all through high school. The first school I went to was called Earl Bell Elementary School. We had Mexicanos went to Earl Bell. Blacks across the street had their own school, and then we went to junior high, east junior high, and the same thing, Mexican-Americans had one junior high. Blacks had another one. Of course the Anglo were all on the other side of town, and the only time we were all thrown together was in high school, and like I said, I made the honor roll beginning in third grade and from then on, I was the best in the whole school all the way through until I graduated from high school when I was Valedictorian.

DS:

Well, you know, in the past we've talked about, you know, when you're in high school and graduated at the top of your class. Can you talk about being involve with any student groups while you were there? Something like that.

MR:

Well, you know the—I mentioned the segregation of Anglos, Mexican-Americans, and Blacks, and then thrown together in one school. In high school, the only—the only things that all of us would participate in and that was not—that either we didn't hold ourselves back or we didn't feel like we were accepted would have been things like sports: I played volleyball. Of course, the honor roll, so I was in that Spanish club. I was really good in Spanish, so I was in that. Beyond that, there were things that we did not vie for for. We had—nobody was a cheerleader, you

know, it was all an Anglo thing. We didn't belong to many of the—if you didn't get in because of your grade, either we held ourselves back because segregation and discrimination works both ways. You feel it, you're not accepted, they don't want you there, so you don't push it in. I've always—when I was teaching, I would tell my students that when I was in school, if they had told me, “You can't have that,” I would have accepted that as “You can't have it,” and the kids in college when I was teaching knew me and they knew I wouldn't do that anymore, so they couldn't believe that there was a point in my life where you didn't question the way things were, and so, when I—I think I told this story before. When I graduated from college, I mean, from high school, and I was valedictorian, there was talk that some of the parents had gone to the principal and wanted him to take it away from me, and I would always say, If he had come and said “We made a mistake. You're not valedictorian,” then I wouldn't have questioned it, but then—you know, the good kids knew me who I was and how strong I was later in life. It was like, “You wouldn't,” and I, “Yeah, I would.” My mom, we go to the store and we would be waiting to be served, and the Anglo would come in and they would serve them first, and I'd look at my mom, and I'd say, “We were here first, mom. Why?”, “That's the way it is, *mija*. That's the way it is.” And so, you develop this feeling that that's the way it is, and it takes a lot of growth. Sometimes getting out of that situation, which I did, to learn that no, that's not the way it is. It's kind of like a child that grows up in an abusive home. They don't see any other way, so they think that everybody lives that way, and that's the way things are, and they're not going to change, you know, it's just *así es*. And so, no, other than—like I said, things that I got into because of my grades, I did, but anything else, no. No, no, we all held back. I was—when I got on Facebook recently, I found that—or they found me—some Anglos found me that I graduated from, but never had anything to do with. I mean, we were just kind of there physically together, but I never had anything to do with them. One of them, is in Arizona, and she started emailing me, and I remember—I said—we were talking about this situation, and she never was that way. She came in from out of town or something, and she was very friendly to us, and so we got to talking about that, and I said—I remember that she had been elected—I think she was a princess, football princess, and the guy who got the prince of football was a Mexican-American, and they had, historically, the prince and the princess would hold hands for the picture for the annual, and she told me, she said, “You know, I hadn't thought about that.” She said, “But when that happened, my friends told me not to hold his hand for the picture, which we always had done,” and she said, “And I talked to my mother about it, and I said, ‘They said not to hold his hand’, why? What's wrong?’” and then my mother, she said, “My mother said, ‘don't listen to them. You do what you want to do.’” He was a nice looking kid, and we were talking and she said, “You know, Maria I opened up the annual and I looked at it, and I thought, ‘yeah, I remember that now. I know what you're talking about,’” but she did hold his hands, and they're holding hands together, Pete and her, and so, they were just things that you accepted as they were, so we didn't have any extracurricular activities. Those of us that would go home and create our own, but not associated with schools. Some of the boys played football because you know, that's a talent, you're a big guy, you know, you're good, and they put you on the team, but anything else,

there was not that much for us as females. It was either volleyball or nothing else in terms of sports.

DS:

And also, you know, being raised in environment, like you don't have much expectations, nothing—we touched on it before. I mean, you really weren't planning on going to college and a career. Can you talk about how that happened and—or what that did for you as a person?

MR:

Well, you know, I grew up in a home where I guess, like I said, my mother probably didn't go beyond the fifth grade, if she went that far. She was a smart lady. She wasn't dumb, and so I never had anybody in the neighborhood, anybody in my family that had gone even to high school or even finish high school, and so we didn't have—I didn't even know what college was. I didn't know that there was something beyond high school. Most of my friends that graduated with me from junior high and went to high school, some of them went maybe one year in high school, maybe two; the drop out rate was horrendous. I think that by the time those of us—I think—I'm saying there were about fifty or sixty of us that graduated from the eighth grade, and some went to high school. Some went for a year, two, or three, and I probably would say that a handful of us graduated as a group for years later from East Pecos. So, you got married, you went to work, there was pressure from families, you know, financial pressure sometimes to get out and work. There would nobody ever said when or if she goes to college, you didn't do that, but because of my grades, and then that senior year, I was valedictorian, my principal came in and asked me, "Are you going to college?" And I said, "No," and he said, "Why not?" And I said, "I don't have any money." To thing about college was you had to have money, and so he said, "Do you want to go?" And I said, "Sure." And so, he said, "If I find you the money, if I find you some support, will you go?" And I said, "Yeah. I'll go." And so, they put together a scholarship, Hiram Parks. There was a Hiram Parks scholarship that was offered every year to a Mexican-American coming in that was about, I think—I'm saying that it was about a thousand dollars a year or something. It was a four-year scholarship that he gave out. I think Paulina got it, Miss Castro the one who passed away got it. So, anyway, they filed all this paper for me. Somebody just decided the principal, the counsels, who had never spoken to me about college, they never counseled me. All of a sudden, they got together, and he was like, "We got to do something," so they put in the paperwork for the Hiram Parks scholarship. They found me a place to live, which was Casa Linda, and there was a house on the corner of nineteenth and University on the southwest side, a brick house, and that was Casa Linda. It was a part of Tech, it was like a dorm, but it was a cooperative dorm. That meant that we would do our own cleaning, do our own cooking, our own shopping for groceries, we did everything, and there were like eighteen of us that could live there. Well, I got in there. Somehow, they got me in there. I didn't get the Hiram Parks scholarship, but I got one—there was an O'Neil, he was an insurance guy in town. He gave out like a two hounded dollar scholarship every year to a Mexican-American, and so I got that, and

then as a valedictorian, of course back then, tuition was not what it is today, and I think it was fifty dollars state tuition, and so, because of my being valedictorian, my tuition for the first year was paid. I had to worry about books, you know, things like that. And so, oh, and then, there was a teacher of mine, who—Mr. Couch, he had been one of my teacher's in elementary school, and he became a juvenile parole officer or something, and he had an interest in me going. So he got the Church of Christ that he belonged too. They would always put money together for me, and before I knew it, I was enrolled at Texas Tech and then accepted and here I came, and so, but before that, no—there was just no discussion about it. There was—it was not in my vocabulary. I never heard it and then never used it. When you have kids—I never tell Sammy when you go. We would always talk about if you go. We always talked about when you go. It was always—it's always been a part of his vocabulary, but I never had that. So, it's—

DS:

So what was it like—what was the response from your family and friends when they found out you're going off to college?

MR:

You know, my momma never said no to me. She never encouraged me. She never did any of that, but whatever I said I wanted to do, she said, "*Lo que tú quieras, mija. Lo que tú quieras*" [Whatever you want, mija. Whatever you want]. And so, that was her support; her support of me. She knew no other way, but she always said, "*Lo que tú quieras*" [Whatever you want]. And as far as anybody else, I think—I think it kind of became—before that, I kind of became a celebrity because when I graduated from college, it was the same year that the whole scandal was going on in Pecos with—what was his name, Jim? Jim—oh, I guess he's asleep. Gosh, I can't remember his name. Anyway, they had a scandal of this guy that was stealing from the government, and I'll think of his name in a little bit. I'm having the senior moment. I'm sixty six.

DS:

Yeah, well the thing is I—I know who you're talking about because—

MR:

And you can't remember either?

DS:

I can't, yeah. I'm having senior moment [laughter].

MR:

I'll think about it in a little bit.

DS:
Yeah.

MR:
Anyway, there was an article that came out in a magazine, and it was a big scandal, and it was—they did a story of Pecos, a town that made it possible, and you go on talking about how this man did what he did and the kind of corruption that was in the town, *blah, blah, blah*, and way at the end of the article—it goes *Look Magazine*. In fact, have a copy of it. There's a little paragraph and it says, "In this year, the popular valedictorian of the high school class was: Mary Salas, a Mexican-American decent. And so, I didn't know that that was in there and everybody that went to the barbershop or somewhere were reading—everybody was reading those, "No, Maria, Maria is in the magazine," you know [laughter]. So they kind of were already set, and then of course being valedictorian, I guess it was expected and it was not really a surprise, but everybody was very supportive. It's—it just wasn't—nobody said anything negatively. Everybody was pretty positive about it, but—and we got to think about that name.

DS:
Yeah.

MR:
He—it was had have to do with ammonia tanks and agriculture and all of that, but we'll think about it.

DS:
I think there's a Billie in there somewhere.

MS:
Billie Sol Estes.

DS:
Yeah.

MR:
You remember Billie. Billie Sol Estes was his name.

DS:
Yeah.

MR:

Anyway, in that article, in 1962, and I think it was *Look Magazine*. There's an article "The Town That Made It Possible," and is listed in there, so I kind of became a celebrity in town. Everybody was happy for me and—but nobody, nobody, you know, was negative at all about it.

DS:

So I take it you had never visited Tech before?

MR:

Never—

DS:

So that was like first time.

MR:

I have never been outside of Pecos except, you know, I had told you when I was little, and when I was in about third grade, I went to a Scottish Rite hospital in Dallas, and mom and I would take the train. That was the only time that mom and I went outside of Pecos and you know, going in the train all way to Dallas and back, and so coming to Tech. Coming to Lubbock, Texas was like "What have I done and where am I going?" But it was also a very enlightening experience because like I said, it takes getting out of the place to find strength, to find your identity, to find that things are not what you're used to; that things can be different.

DS:

Okay. Let's talk about what was like moving to Lubbock, did someone just come and leave you to travel up here by yourself or?

MR:

Well, my stepfather, loaded me up in his pick-up truck and my mom, and he drove me here and took me to—we found—I don't know how we found—I mean, we have never been here, maybe Lalo knew his way around better than mom and I did, but they dropped me off at Casa Linda, and I, you know, I don't remember that—just being in awe I think of how big it was and the campus, and then me living in a house where I was living with Anglo females that I have never lived with before. That was enlightening for me because, like I said, we had grown up in this kind of environment where we didn't socialize or anything, and all of a sudden, my roommates were two Anglo females and there still—I mean I lost track of Barbara, but Kathy lives in Odessa, and we're still really good friends, but I found that that not everybody was the same. So they were not like they were in my hometown. So, I don't remember much about it other than it was scary. I mean, I think I cried when I missed home, but then at the same time, there was a freedom about it, you know, the first time you leave home. You can do things that you couldn't

do before, and going to the Student Union and meeting all those *Tertulianos* and having fun with them and going to parties and that kind of stuff I had never, ever done before, so it was different. It was very different.

DS:

You know, and you mentioned a *Los Tertulianos* and one of them, Jaime Garcia, were talking about, when he came, he didn't know he was supposed to bring his own sheets—

MR:

Yeah.

DS:

Was there anything like that that you just didn't know you were supposed to have done or something like—or maybe somebody said like, “Maria” and pulled you aside?

MR:

Well, like I said, Casa Linda was different because we didn't have to have all those thing except our own clothes and our own toiletries, stuff like that, and so the sheets were provided. The beds, everything, the curtains, everything was already up. We just to wash them and take care of them, and so I didn't go through what Jaime did.

DS:

Well, I don't mean that particular thing [laughter]. I meant anything that somebody else like, you know, you know, you know, “This is the we do this,” you know, you know, just expand it to something—other area.

MR:

Yeah, I think you go through “how in the world?” and I went through this quite a few semesters. How am I going to pay for the shampoo, and those things that you need to buy for yourself? The good thing was in that package deal that they got for me when those people moved heaven and earth to get me here, they got me a job. Hiram Parks did not get me—I didn't get his scholarship, but he gave me a job. So, he gave me a job at one of his theaters downtown. I don't know if you're familiar with the theaters that Hiram Parks had. He had a drive-in theater, and he had two theaters downtown. I worked for him at the Plains, which was right next door to *El Capitan*, which was his main theater, and it was Mexican movies basically, so it catered to Mexican-Americans, and I was a cashier at the front of—selling tickets there at the Plains Theater, so I did that every weekend on Saturday and Sunday. And so that's how I made my little money to buy the shampoo and those things that I needed to have.

DS:

Yeah because everybody needs to have their stuff.

MR:

Yes, their stuff.

DS:

So, what was—you know, you mentioned a *Los Tertulianos*. How did you come to meet those group of guys? And tell us something about that group and when y'all started to actually make an organization.

MR:

Well, I think I—just going to campus one time, you run into someone or other and before you know it, you're—there are others. At a Spanish class for example, that's where you found most of them taking Spanish. I don't why we took Spanish, but we did [laughter]. And so you run into some of them there, and then eventually they started inviting me to the SUB, and then before that, you knew quite a few of them, and I think at some point, there were some discussion about the fact that there were times that we could find each other, but then there were probably others that we didn't know of, and we wanted to see if we could form a group. We were alone, you know, we were—all of us were from the surrounding area, but we were still alone. The families were either in Plainview, or wherever they were, but we were here by ourselves, and it made sense to us that we needed to find and form some kind of—I guess a family unit or group that we could get together and discuss things and help each other out, and at the same time we had fun. And so I think it was in nineteen—see I got here in '62, and I think we started talking about it in '63, the following year, and I'm not too sure—was it '63 that we?—

DS:

I think your charter is '64.

MR:

Sixty-three—I think we started talking about it in '63, but at '64 was when all of that happened, and then, by 1965, my class—you know your coursework begins to become more central to what you're area specialization is, and mine was in education, and so the demands were higher, and so I didn't have as much to do. Once in a while, we'd see each other, there would be parties or something, we'd get together, but by the time I was a junior and had to take real heavy courses in my area specialization, and then my senior year, it was student teaching, and all that's involved with that, so I kind of did not have as much of interaction with them after we organized. So my experience was a little—got less limited as time went on.

DS:

Okay. Well, you know, let's talk a little bit—because we were talking about balancing, you know the social life with academics. On the academic's side, you know, you graduated valedictorian from Pecos High. Were you well prepared when you got to Tech for what you need to do for your classwork?

MR:

I don't think so. I think we talked about this before. Making A's came easy for me. I don't know if it was not—it was because we were not challenged by a small school district. I don't know if I was just too smart for my own good. I don't know what it was, but it just came easy, but I don't think I ever learned skills that are required of you when you are going to the university and you have courses that are very, very different, and are based on what you learned before. For example, I don't think I ever learned how to study. I just kind of, I guess, memorized. I just did what I had to do to pass the test, to make my grade, but I never learn studying, which is a skill that you're supposed to learn, and I remember when I came up here and Anita Harrison, Carmona then, always have a marker, a yellow marker, and she was always marking all over her books, and she had little index cards, and she was always making little notes on index cards, and I said, "What are you doing?" And so, as she read, she did that, and then she got and took notes in class, and then afterwards she'd go back and reorganize them, and she said, "I'm organizing my—I'm studying," you know organizing everything and makes things fit with the book, and stuff. I didn't know how to do that. I didn't know how to do that, and it wasn't as easy as it was because you had one semester to memorize a whole book, you know, and all these notes they gave you, and some notes were in the book, and some were not, and so I didn't know that going to class, listening to the professor, taking notes there, and not reading the book was going to help me, or if you're reading the book, What do you look for? How do you organize your thoughts? How do you outline the book? What's important? What isn't? you know, that kind of—those kinds of things that I think are very important, and some kids—some schools help you with and some don't, and I really don't think that I was prepared. And secondly like I said, you come, you're free, your parents are not around anymore to watch over you or tell you what to do/what not to do, and so you integrate a lot of fun within that time. I was not into dating or anything like that, but we loved to party and loved to dance and do things that I have never done at home, and so I didn't devote as much time to my studying as I should have either.

DS:

Plus, you—probably the first time you weren't the mother. You wouldn't have to take care of every body else.

MR:

You're right. You're right. I was—in some ways, I was living a childhood kind of experience by having fun, which I hadn't had before. I hadn't have any of that before.

DS:

Well, talk about your first year, some of the experiences you had that year.

MR:

Wow. First year. The first year, I think basically was just hard trying to find where everything is because you don't have the classes in the same building, and you have to find, you know, where—or just registration itself. Everything is, what do you take? What do you need to take? And then finding where all these classes are going to be offered and trying to—your schedule is so different because maybe one day you don't have anything in the morning but then you have something in the afternoon, or sometimes you have all day, and so trying to fit all of that and figure out how all that worked, you know, thing was difficult. Trying to figure out how much money do you need to survive, I mean, like Anita would think like say, we would talk about going to the SUB and you had to have some money to get a coke or something. How do you balance whatever little money you had to last you a whole month? And I think it was just the whole—it was just a different experience. It was just something that you had to get used to that you had never done before. Finding the library, finding the research that—writing a paper. Writing a paper in college is very different from writing a little term paper in high school, you know. But it was just kind of a *hit-and-miss* experience, you know, trying to find your way around. I lived on 19th and University, and I had to walk all the way across the campus to get anywhere, and that was hard. That was hard, but I don't remember any—I can't tell you that I remember anything anymore than any better than something else. I enjoyed and remember the experiences I had with my college roommates. The discussions we used to have. Figuring out how to—if I had duty for fixing dinner, for example, and all I ever had known how to do was tortillas and frijoles, and things like that, and here you had this different kind of menu, fixing meals and they were very different from what you had, so it was just different, very different. I can't think of anything significant about the first year other than trying to fit into this new world that I was in all of a sudden, and then, when the semester was over, trying to get home to Pecos for the break, and getting a bus or getting a ride, or getting my stepfather to come and get me, and then bring me back and all that stuff. It was a real different experience.

DS:

Yeah, because there's a lot of work for two weeks. You had to move up, go back home, then come back.

MR:

Yeah, yeah.

DS:

So, at what point did you finally feel like I'm getting the hang of this. I'm, you know, I'm being acclimated to, you know, college life and being a student?

MR:

I think it took—it really took a couple of years for me to find—to get over the—I guess the newness of it and learn how to study, and learn what was important and what was not. I think that some of us and any—I think anybody of the *Tertulianos* would tell you. Probably the first year, we could've made better grades than we did. I think the guys talked about the fact of how we struggled trying to find who was eligible to be an office of *Los Tertulianos* because of the GPA you had to have: 2.0 or 2.5 or something, and I think all of us had so much—so much trouble adjusting and at the same time enjoying our new experience that college or studying was not a priority for many of us and I think it took—I think by my second year I began to get the hang of it. By the time I was a junior, I had it down pat. I knew what I was here to do and what was important, and that's when you stop doing too much partying and doing too much socializing and concentrating on your school work.

DS:

You know, y'all were all going through this coming of age period right about the time where the contry was coming to grips with it's integration also, so—how did that affect y'all's experience?

MR:

I don't remember affecting me much in college. I remember going through a change and enlightening experience when I was teaching. After I graduated, it was when the whole movement came about for me. Chicano Movement, Brown Power, Kent State, The Sexual Revolution. For me, it hit when I was already teaching. I don't recall much of it happening at Tech when I was still there. It just—for me, it didn't happen until—I think in first and second year of teaching and getting involve with the Chicano Movement and things like that.

DS:

Okay. Well, let me ask this, how did you decide on, you know, teaching as a career?

MR:

I'm not sure, you know, sometimes I think I could have been anything I wanted to be. I have a very analytical mind, and I think I would have been a wonderful lawyer, for example. If I had wanted to do that, but coming from a small town, like I said, where you don't talk about going to college, much less talk about a woman being anything else but a housewife, and the first thing that comes to mind is a teacher. Women's roles were very defined at that time, and then some of us had very—had a—could look back at one teacher that had a profound experience on us, and for me it was Misses Hope. Her name Hope, and so you kind of think, Oh I want to be a teacher, because she was—she did this for me. She was so good to me, you know, from her I learned this and that and the other, and you want to be like her. You want to be a teacher, but I think probably because the limitedness of what we could be. I mean, who ever thought in 1960/61/62 about being a lawyer? Not coming from Pecos. I don't think—even some of the Anglos that came out

of there I don't think any of them had gone into non-traditional kinds of careers. So, I think it was the time, the limitation of role models and possibly traditional roles that were open to women, so I went into teaching, but then I found out I was good at it, and I was even better when I became a college professor. I was good at training teachers. I was good at working with kids, and so it fit. After I while, it was not just something that I felt into. It was something that I did well, but there will always be this little thing in my brain saying, "What else could you have been? What else could you have been?"

DS:

Well, let's talk about what you were, you know, when you got ready to graduate, what job opportunities were out there for you?

MR:

From college? Graduate from college?

DS:

Um-hm.

MR:

Graduate from college, it was really no problem because at that point they were discussing bilingual education, and they were discussing the whole issue of children in poverty. They were discussing the whole issue of the dropout rate and why our kids were not doing well in school, and so there was a need for teachers—eventually—initially, it was teachers that could relate to kids. It was teachers that could relate to kids in terms of our language, not necessarily to use it to teach, but the kids could relate too that they would be their role models more than anything, and so there was a great need for us, for people of my color to teach kids, and of course, we always ended up teaching Mexican-American children or low-income children. That's where the openings were. I never—when I graduated—the year—my last year at tech, I interviewed in Denver. I had a chance to go to Denver. I had a job in Denver, and I got pregnant when I was—right after I graduated. I was dating this young man, and I got pregnant, and I had to tell Denver I can't go to Denver, and so after I had Sammy, and after raising by myself, came back to Lubbock, applied here, and got the job here. I don't remember any place—I wanted to go to Denver, but I don't know why. For some reason, I—Denver just—a friend of mine lived in Denver. I don't know what it was. One of the gals that was at Casa Linda was from Denver, and she always talked about Denver, and so I—they had interviews. I guess it's called career days or something, when they come in to the universities from different areas and you interview with different school districts, and I wanted to go to Denver, so I had a job in Denver, and I had to back off from it, and so I ended up teaching at—in Lubbock, and I was teaching first grade. I taught first grade for two years, and then bilingual education came around and they needed a bilingual teacher, and so Anita and I and Maria De Leon Ranchel [?], Maria De Leon then—I

can't remember. There was five of us. Mary Gardner and one more that were involved in the developing of the first bilingual program at—with the LISD [Lubbock Independent School District], and I was at McWhorter and we started in kindergarten, so the program started in kindergarten. The following year they added the first grade. Next year, they added second grade. I stayed in kindergarten, and so I taught in McWhorter. And then, 1970 or so, I found out that I really wasn't going to move anywhere if I stayed in Lubbock—that I wasn't going to go up the ranks, I was always going to be a teacher because I remember saying—I had a consultant that would come and train us and observe us and all of that, and I said, “Oh, I want to show teachers. I want to train teachers and show other teacher” because she kept saying how good I was and how good I was, and I said “I want to help other teachers,” and I wanted to go to central office. So I wanted to be like her. Go around and help other teachers, and she said, “Oh, you're too good.” I remember I looked at her and I said, “Flores, are you saying that the people in central office were not good in the classroom? And that's why they're there? Training teachers and those of us that are going the classroom have to stay in the classroom?” She didn't know what to tell me, but she was like, “No, no, you're too good a teacher,” and by 1970, after the tornado—'71, I got a phone call and they were looking for somebody to move to Austin. There was a place—an organization there called The Southwest Develop—Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, and they developed curriculum for Chanita [?] [00:56:59] and I and those of us that were involved in the program here were doing. There were no materials, so we were developing materials to teach bilingual kindergarten, and so they wanted somebody to go to Austin and they were looking for a teacher trainer, which is what I said I wanted to be, and—but they had a migrant grant and I was supposed to stay in Lubbock, and they set up an Early Childhood Center in Our Lady of Grace that Maggie Trejo was in charge of. They had one in Hereford and they had one in Plainview, and it was migrant children and just three to five, and I was supposed to train the teachers. None of these teachers were professional teachers. They were all paraprofessionals. They were community people, and I was supposed to train them to implement the program. So I took that chance and left the school district and did that, and I would travel from here to Hereford and Plainview and Lubbock all week long. I would go and I would observe, and I would demonstrate, and I would teach, and so then, they wanted me to move to Austin. They wanted me to come in and write curriculum. They were developing some curriculum, so, Sammy and I took off and went to Austin and worked at the lab there for a couple of years, and then after that, Lubbock—I mean. The Austin ISD, had a grant and they wanted curriculum writers, so they called me, they hired me to teach and work with Austin ISD, so then I went to work for there. From there, it was just Kansas. It was like all—you know, for me, like I said, I don't recall why I became a teacher. I don't recall—have any conceived plans. My life was one stumble upon another. Okay, that's the only way I can describe it, and I would—this door would open and I'd walk in, and I'd do that, and then, “Oh, there's another door,” and I would go to that door, but it was not something I looked for. It just happened. It just happened, and so I remember running into—we were some teacher trainings, and a friend of—one of the guys that was involved with the training came to me and said, “Maria, do you want to

go work on your PhD?" I said, "Where?" He said, "Well, I'm finishing up my doctorate at University Kansas and I'm leaving, so they're looking for somebody. You want to go to Kansas?" I said, "Sure [laughter]. Sure, I'll go." So I went to Kansas, and I was there for three years, and I was in charge of their bilingual program at the University level and I was, you know, teaching people—they were both undergraduates and master's degree people. They were in a degree in bilingual education, and then I got my doctorate in three years, and then, from there, I ended up at UTEP [University of Texas El Paso] in El Paso, And I'm taking you a long way around. El Paso, and I was there for a couple of years, and then they recruited me at the Southwest Texas State in San Marcos. They wanted me there, *so ahí te voy*, and then from there, then they wanted me at Tech. I ended up—I made a complete circle.

DS:

So the little girl from Pecos just traveled everywhere more *mas*?

MR:

Just went everywhere, you know, and one of the things that I'm so proud of, and only somebody that have never done that can say this, but when I went to Kansas, I pulled a sixteen foot U-Haul truck tank with my car [laughter]. Me and Sammy and our dog, all the way to Kansas, and I had never done that. I had never done that, but I did it, and so there are things that had happened to me that have been very positive. One time I was talking to a group at Our Lady of Grace, and the bishop was there, and I was speaking—I was a Keynote speaker, and I said something like, "Sometimes I say—I feel like God said—you know, you're—I think I'll put a little obstacle in front of you Maria and see what you do. Do you go over it or not?" And you know what? I went over it, and he said, "Well, Maria, the next one is going to be a little higher [laughter]," you know, and after it was over, you know, and Jim said, "The bishop was here and you were talking about God playing with you [laughter]." But that's the way my life has been and lucky—been capable, able and combined with pure luck, I don't know, but somebody's been watching me for a long time and I guess He's up there somewhere, but that's kind of brought me full circle.

DS:

Yeah, well another question, you know, you mentioned those little obstacles and hurdles, you know, and then you talked earlier about, you know, somebody said no, you didn't question it. So when you—what made you start going like, Well that's a hurdle but I can get over it? What made you make that jump?

MR:

Well, I think—I think there were some things that I had already done before that because like with my father. I mean, there were so many times that that little girl could have collapsed and not want anything. Like my father denied me. He said I wasn't his. I mean I could have hung my head and, "Oh my father doesn't want me *blah, blah*," but I didn't. I stood up to him and I

remember telling him, “You never did anything for me. I don’t want you in my life,” and then, the polio was another one that could have been another obstacle, but it wasn’t. So I think I—and the poverty, the mom that always worked that wasn’t there raising kids, that I didn’t have to be raising, all of those things, anybody else—somebody else maybe not everybody else, that there’s those—and people always point to those examples. They’re people like that. For whatever reason. We rise above that and we don’t see it as an obstacle, but is an opportunity or something, and it sounds a little cliché, but some people are like that. Not everybody can get out of there. I also think that some of those things probably were the things that helped me get out of the situation I was in because if I—if there were certain things that hadn’t happened for example, everybody got married, even before they even finished school. That’s the only thing they knew. Well, I didn’t date, you know, so I wasn’t going to get married, but if I hadn’t had the limitations of the polio or the quote unquote “handicap,” that—you know, at that age, that’s what guys look at, you know, the pretty girl, pretty body, or whatever. I wasn’t that, and so I had no takers for a boyfriend or even like a life-time commitment at that level. [Recorder beeps]

DS:

Let me switch the tape out right here. [Recorder beeps] That’s an hour already?

MR:

You want to stop?

DS:

No.

MR:

No?

DS:

No. we just started talking about the no takers [laughter]. [Pause] do you need a break?

MR:

No, I’m fine. [Pause] I think I’m going to have them take this gizmo out. It’s not working.

DS:

It’s not working, oh.

MR:

Maybe it’s going to be another surgery. You know, I’ve always said—I’ve always said that bad experiences don’t make you bitter. They make you better and you never regret that’s why they’re

there, but you never regret whatever the experiences were, you never regret. I regret surgery [laughter].

DS:

Well, seldom sound like you've been very happy with the results.

MR:

No. not at all.

DS:

Let me get this started again [recorder beeps]. This is Daniel Sanchez and this is tape two with my interview with Maria Rivas on February the third, 2010. Maria, you were just talking about your experiences or not experiences dating and how that might have helped you out.

MR:

Well, like I said, I think that in high school, at least in the '58/'60, that's all girls did. They got married, and that's why some of them never finished school, but I didn't date, and I said, like I said before, there were no takers because I was not the specimen that they were looking for at the time. I had polio, I limped and all that, and I was smart and they—so they don't—I was not the classic kind of female that they were looking for, so I never dated. There weren't any takers. So, what could have happened, and I attribute to polio then, more as a positive experience than a negative because I think if I hadn't had the polio, if I had been an attractive and good specimen, not handicap, that I would have dated and I would have gotten married, and never finish school, or maybe never even gone to college. So I see a lot of those things as having been positive. That's why I don't see them as negative. They all have been positive in my life. The same experience with getting pregnant and having a baby and having to raise him by myself, you know, it was a positive thing. It was a joyous thing. I created a wonderful thing, and so you just—you—I guess some people say, They give you lemons, you make lemonade, and that's the kind of personality that I have. I don't let anything get in my way or if it's a negative experience, I turn it into something positive. I don't regret any bad experiences that I ever had. I just think that all of those bad things that happened to me have made me a better person. I mean, I am who I am and I'm strong and well-educated and I'm loyal. I mean, I'm a lot of good things, and I think it is because of the—a lot of this is because of the bad things that happened to me.

DS:

You know, another thing that you probably developed, and I think it's—you know, we talked about how you said, "Oh, an opportunity in Kansas, I'm going. I mean, you had no fear, you can do whatever was going to come your way you could deal with it."

MR:

Probably true and at the same time, I told you when the teacher in third grade said, "Do you want to go to Scottish Rite Hospital?" And I knew it was going to involve some surgeries and stuff and I went home and I told my mother about it, and she said, "What do you want to do? Do you want to go?" And I said, "Yeah, I want to go." And she said, "Okay. *Lo que tú quieras*," you know and so, it's—you approach it more as, Okay. It might be good. I can do it. I can do it, but then again, you go back to the way I was raised. I couldn't be afraid. I mean, I was just—in fact even until my momma died, I was more her mother than she was mine because we ended up taking care of her financially. She always fell back on me financially. She always fell back on me on everything, and so I always—we switched roles, and so you develop—my brother is the same way, you know, there's this strength that you develop, and for good or bad or no, I was thinking the other day about the fact that some of our kids—my grandkids in particular—have such cushy lives, you know, they're so soft. They haven't seen anything bad. If we ended up with a depression, I would survive. I would survive. There're people that have never experienced a certain kind of life. They wouldn't know what to do if they didn't have their plasma TV, if they didn't have all of the things that don't—I don't know if my son would survive [laughter], you know. And so all of those things I think have made you who you are and they give you that strength to do anything, and so, yeah, you're right. I mean, pulling the U-haul.

DS:

Yeah.

MR:

I remember I called my brother and I said, "I got this fourteen foot U-haul truck—I mean, trailer that I had to hitch to my car, and I had to take it to Kansas. I said, "Can you come and drive it?" And he goes, "Well, you have to wait until this week because I"—he was working one week out and one week in and *lalala* and finally I said, "Okay," so then I thought about it and I called him. I said, "You know what? I'm going to do it." He said, "Are you sure, Maria?" "Yeah. I'm going to do it." I mean, I have—the car's going to do the work. I'm just going to drive the car, and so, you kind of—you develop a strength that you otherwise wouldn't have if you didn't have—to me—and I've always felt this way—that a bad experience—if you had for example, some of our kids these days, their parents push, and push, and push, and they won't accept anything but an A, and you see cases of kids very young teenagers who come and suicide because the first time they fail is the end of the world, and to me failure is a positive thing. I mean, how do you know what's better or what's—you know, what's good if you don't fail. You don't learn to walk without falling. You don't learn a lot of things at a young age without failing, so you have to fail, and so to me, if there was something that not was of my own making, but I could perceive as a possible barrier that would cause me to fail. I wasn't going to have any of it, so that I—like I said, I don't know. Jim and I have this discussion all the time. Is it innate? Is it culture? I mean, do you get it from your surrounding or do you come out of the womb with certain attributes that

help you survive whatever. I don't know. I don't know. It could be a combination of two things, but—

DS:

Okay. Well, whatever that innate nature you brought that back to Tech and I think you came back to be the coordinator of the bilingual program?

MR:

Yes. I was teaching at Southwest Texas State and Frank Gutierrez I think—Frank Gonzalez was the director of the bilingual program here, and I—the thing is ran into him somewhere or he heard about me, I don't know, but he wanted me to come to Tech to be the coordinator of the bilingual program. He was the director but he needed a coordinator, and so he recruited me. I came here and—was it '82. Eighty-two, and it was a wonderful experience. I mean, it was a really, really wonderful experience that to come back and work with graduates and undergraduates, pretty much what I'd done in Kansas and what I'd done at UTEP in El Paso was the same thing. Teaching at the university level was a really, really wonderful experience.

Disappointment because I am a strong believer in bilingual education. I'm a strong believer. I get really concerned about people who don't pronounce names correctly. I just—I was listening to that Rick Sanchez's song on CNN the other day, and he was trying to justify why he said Sanchez, and I don't like that. I'm just a real, real—have real idea of what thing—the way things should be done and what bilingual education is, and how it should be implemented. And so when I was teaching, I would always teach to law, Texas Law, of bilingual education, and then you're disappointed because they go out to school district and then the school districts says, "All that you learned over there? You forget. This is what we do here," and so many times, they were not implementing the program, you know, like they should, and that was disappointing, but the rest of it was—I mean, I had a—when Jim and I got married, my students—we had a potluck reception. All my students brought food [laughter] to our reception, and it was really—I had a very, very good relationship that I still maintain with some of them. It's wonderful. What is not wonderful about university teaching that I have found throughout my experiences with university teaching is that probably, we need to divide people into those that teach-teach, and those that like to do research and all the other stuff do that. It is hard to find somebody that can do both and do them well. Both well. I was a good teacher. I was not very good at the other part, and that's very hard. When you go into university teach—system that requires a lot of that—those demands on you. Secondly, in bilingual education, you know, there's always a university level a publish or parish mentality, and bilingual education was new, so we didn't have the kind of old magazines or journals that are accepted at universities for us to publish in. But at the same time, the traditional journals didn't necessarily want to publish our stuff, and so you found—if you did publish, it was like, well, it is not the journal that it should be and it's not the same level, you know, they put all of those that are lower ranking level and stuff. And so that was very difficult

for me to handle at the same time, as a single mom. I was also trying to raise a son and that made it very difficult, so I never did fit into that kind of a role. If I had been able to just teach, and do that, and not make all those demands on me—teaching and service were my strong points. The other part was what I struggled with, and the politics, of course, that go on in a university level. It's very hard to deal with when you're not that—a political kind of animal like that. It's—or you know how to play by certain rules that are set up for you, and I think it's a lot harder for females to make it through university systems and it is—maybe it's getting easier—maybe we're learning, but I think for some of us that started by being very, very difficult, but thoroughly enjoyable. I miss that, and I was good at it. I was really good at it, but like I said, I was very, very strong about bilingual education, and I don't believe that you put a child in first grade and teach him a little bit of reading, a little bit of something in Spanish, and as soon as you can, transition him into English. I believe that there has to be a longer period of time for a strong foundation to be laid on both. I also believe that as long as we don't—as a nation—we don't value bilingualism. We don't pay people for knowing two languages. We don't reward people—they will never have it. I've seen at Tubbs elementary for example, they have a program where they bus kids, English speaking kids to their school and taught them Spanish, and then they have bilingual education, and I kept thinking, This would be a wonderful setting to have a total bilingual school and mix the kids together instead of this kids learn in Spanish and isolation—this kids learn in English and isolation and never brought them together. To me, if you bring them together and at the same time, you know, they're learning both languages and the in product is that they would be bilingual at the end, not that they will only know English because I think we're killing the other in the process.

DS:

Yeah. It's interesting I just hired a student assistant about two weeks ago, and I needed a bilingual student and so I asked her, you know, could I ____ [1:20:20.5] bilingual? “Okay, so you know you see you're bilingual but I want to make sure you are, “Well I got all my transcript. It says it on my high school transcript.” So, the school she had gone to actually had a curriculum setup where you could get that little notation that you were a bilingual student.

MR:

Was she?

DS:

Huh?

MR:

Was she?

DS:
Yeah.

MR:
Oh.

DS:
It's obvious. You know, she was like—and—well, she was a daughter of a diplomat, so—she probably didn't have the traditional upbringing either [laughter].

MR:
But it's a—to me, it's a—it's been a losing battle, bilingual education because again, we don't value it the way we should. It's—I would just get very, very upset. I remember going—and when I was at El Paso for example, I just got in there, and they had a—Ysleta [?] [01:21:12] independent district had this meeting, and it was about special education, and so I thought, You know, I want to go and see what they're doing for our bilingual kids. So they're talking about special education and kind of raised my hand and I asked, "How are you meeting the needs of limiting—they call them LEP?" Limited English Proficiency student in special education because you can be a special child and also be a limited English proficient child, so, "Are you doing anything different for this child in special education programs to meet the linguistics need? And you know, they answered my question. That was it, and I went—the next day my dean called me in the office, and he said that the superintendent from Ysleta [?] called him and complained that I badmouthing their special education bilingual program. I had just asked a question. You scratch and you find something that they don't feel very good about and they say you're complaining, and so I always had that problem. I'm just too honest and too upfront about it, and I remember this man that was an attorney in El Paso came to see me, and he was asking the same thing. He had a grandchild in special education, and he was concerned that they were not meeting his needs in his language. So I sent him to somebody in Special Ed, and I said, "I don't know anything about Special Ed." Well, you know what? The next thing I knew, I'm calling the office again, and I'm helping this man find somebody to file a law suit against the school district [laughter]. So it's very, very frustrating to believe in something like that strongly as you do and to teach it as well as you can and then to find out that it's just not valued—not valued at all.

DS:
And what's difficult is like, you know, you know what the right thing is yet they want to make you the culprit because you point out that, Well these needs aren't being met.

MR:
Um-hm, but anyway it's been a joyous experience. I have—I'm—in a way, I'm still glad I became a teacher, you know, you asked me why, and I didn't know why, I just kind of stumbled

into that, but it was a very rewarding experience. I really, really enjoyed it, and I miss some of it—

DS:

How long did you teach?

MR:

Well, I started teaching in '67 and then I must have—let's see, I must've quit about eighty—'87, so twenty years. About twenty years. A lot of it was—I actually taught in a school district setting for a very few years—about four, and then I made the jump into the lab in Austin and doing training teachers and then I ended up university, so it wasn't that long in elementary school setting.

DS:

You know, and we talked about your upbringing and how your mother worked and so you were always, you know, like a surrogate mother at home to the kids. You know, you had a situation where you were a single mother, you were going to graduate school, you were working, and you had a young son. How did you balance it so that he wouldn't feel—have to go through what you had gone through?

MR:

It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. I tried to make time for him, but he really—in some ways, I ended up with a good kid. I ended up with a young man who as a child was very independent himself, and so he—in Kansas for example, when we moved there, he was eight, and it was kind of a small town, and the kids could sit around and run around, I mean he had friends and they played together a lot. And if I was over at the university, studying or preparing for classes or something, he would be up there with his friends playing, or he would be visiting with them in the science lab with some of the guys that worked there. He was into butterfly collection and all that kind of stuff. When I was at UTEP in El Paso, he was twelve by then, and I used to teach two or three nights a week, from about six o'clock to nine o'clock, and that kid was on his own a lot. I mean, now, they would have hauled me in jail for neglect or something, but he was a good boy and never gave me any trouble. But we tried to do things on weekends. I supported him: if he was playing soccer, I would go to all his soccer games. Like I said, I think that you have to figure out how to balance it and at the same time, what I didn't do well, was a part that was required of me professionally because I had these other things to deal with. For example, the guy that I was working with at Tech had a wife at home, and so he would be up there on weekends. He would be up there at night. His wife was raising the kids. He'd fix dinner and he'd run home and eat and then he'd come back. I couldn't do that. I had to go home and fix the dinner and feed my kid and whatever, so it's very, very difficult to do. I am glad that I had a child that was as strong as I had been when I was growing up, but he was able to quote unquote, "take care of himself." I

remember just giving him advice because he was on his own a lot and I remember things like—and a lot of these things actually happened, and it became a teachable moment to him because I would say “Remember that if you’re with other kids and they’re doing something that you know I would not approve of, that it’s not good, or it’s not right, and you don’t walk away, if they catch them, they’re going to catch you, and there’s not going to be any, “I didn’t do it,” because you were there, you’re going to—you’re going to be as culpable as they are.” So one day, we were in Kansas, and he said, “Mom, we’re going to go to the park.” I said, “Okay.” “Me and so and so and them little kids” so he left. He came back about fifteen minutes later, and he said—I said, “I thought you were going to go to the park.”, “We were but the kids—there was a house that’s empty there and they wanted to throw rocks and break the windows in the house, and I kept saying ‘no, let’s go to the park.’ And no, they wanted to break rock—the windows and throw rocks, so I came home,” because he remembered what I told him. Well, in El Paso, the same thing happened. We lived in an apartment complex, and they had to walk down a very busy street to get to the elementary school, and some of the kids would throw rocks at cars, and one of the ladies that was in one of the cars stopped and went and reported them to the school, and Sammy and all of them were hauled in. They kept telling me, “Mom, I didn’t do it. I didn’t do it,” and so you try to teach them, if you’re not going to be able to be there all the time, I tried to teach them some responsibility that he had to have, that there’s times when you walk away. “You’re don’t—if you know it’s wrong, walk away.” So, he was a good kid. I mean, those—in El Paso, at the age of twelve, I was over there teaching, and I’d be home and maybe I’d feed him, and all of that, get all that ready for him, and then I’d leave, and he would go in the house and close the door in the apartment, watch TV, and get himself in bed. By the time I came home sometimes, he was already asleep, so—it was hard. It was hard, but we found a way. Like I said—and maybe if I had another kind of a child could have been different, but I ended up with the right kind of child [laughter].

DS:

Well, you know, we talked about everything, except I guess Jim, and—so when did you and Jim meet?

MR:

I came here in like I said in ’82, and I had been—I think it was thanksgiving—my first thanksgiving here. I had—I was living with a friend of mine who recently passed away, Mary Martinez. She had been a teacher with the LISD, a history teacher. I was living with her while we looked for an apartment, and I had gone to do a workshop somewhere, and I had flown in, and it was thanksgiving day, and she was having thanksgiving dinner, and she invited Jim. She knew Jim from church, and Jim apparently got a divorce in like April of that year or something like that. So she invited him to dinner, and so I remember I was dragging coming in. I was so tired and the doorbell rang and I went and he opened the door, and he was there standing with a bottle of wine, so I let him in. They introduced me and I was the only one that drank his wine,

but then apparently he had another commitment somewhere else, so he left. And then we ended up working together because he was involved in anthropology and so we ended up running into each other, committee meetings and things like that, and this guy that I was working with ended up being in a committee with him with Julian Yanez and them on affirmative action. And every time he came back, he would say, "You know Jim Goss? He said to tell you hi. He says he knows you and stuff." And then, at some point, he started calling me about something about founding a program [?]. So we would talk on the phone, and then I used to have on super bowl Sundays, I always had a dinner at the house: I did barbecuing, invited friends over, and we watched the game. And I invited him. That day I remember us making tortillas and we had—I think we were making fajitas, something outside, so he came, and then we just kind of talked and one day, he kept bugging me on the phone about stupid things, you know, and I thought, This guy is either too shy or something, and I remember I said, "Are you going to ask me out or what?" [laughs] And then I said, "Okay, forget it." And then, later in the conversation he said, "Would you like to go out?" So, we had our first date, and that was in—see—November—that would have been January, and then by February he went—he took me to see *Evita* for Valentine's Day. He came to town, the play, and he wanted to get married right away [laughter]. Yeah, he wanted to get married right away. So we had a June wedding. So we met in November, and then we got married the following June, and my son kept saying, "Isn't it too early, Mom? Isn't it too early? I mean, you've only known him for six months." [laughter]

DS:

It was really quick, yeah.

MR:

Yeah. Yeah, it was really quick.

DS:

But like everything else, you just—

MR:

Jumped into it. [laughter] No fear.

DR:

And it kind of worked out, right?

MR:

It worked out. It worked out. Yeah, we've been very compatible, you know, when I came to Tech, I got very involved with the Texas Association for Bilingual Education, and we brought the conference here in '90? I think, in 1990, and I was in charge of the conference here, and he was very supportive here with me, and he was involved with anthropology, and so he—I

supported him on that, and then I ran for president of TAVE [?] [01:34:28], and became the president of TAVE, and he said he would do the journal for us. The newsletter. So he became the editor of the newspaper, and he worked with me on that. So we've always been very supportive. One time I was flying in and he was flying out, and we ran into each other in Dallas, Fort Worth as were going to through airport trying to catch our next connection—wherever we were going—so we ended up—we didn't even know that it was going to happen, that we just—all of the sudden there he went. So, we're very supportive with each other. He's just—I think one of the problems I always found in Mexicanos is they don't like women that are a little more educated or smarter than they are, and for a wife, anyway, and he was very different, and would pretty much are equal. I remember when we got married I said, "I don't want to change my name. I said, you know, professionally, you know, I shouldn't do that, and secondly, my son has one name. I don't want to have a name different," and so—and then Sammy said, "Dad, you want—if you can, adopt me, but I don't want your name." And so we've always teased him about him changing his name to ours, and so that has created some kind of confusion for a lot of people because I had—Anita and I go around and around about this because she wants me to be Goss, and I don't want to be a Goss. And somehow there's some people that think that's—I mean, I even have a cousin who claims the Bible says I have to change my name [laughter]. And so he said, "Fine." He did. There weren't no problem with him. He said, "I don't like my name either." So it's been a—it's been twenty five years. It's going to be twenty-six years this June, and we haven't had bumps in the road. I think the thing that is interesting about our relationship is that we're both—we're both older when we got married. He had gone through a bad marriage, and she—I don't think she even had a high school diploma, and so they were very different, and so we were both equals to a degree. And so we didn't have to deal with ego problems or anything like that, and he—I do all the money stuff. I balance our checkbook. I do our taxes. I just got TurboTax to do this year. I'm really good at that kind of stuff, so I do it. I give him a checkbook, but then I have to take it and make sure I record every check he's written, you know, and stuff like that, and we started out and he—like today, you know, he would say who cooks one day, and the other one—we take turns—

DS:

Um-hm—

MR:

He doesn't have any trouble washing clothes or doing anything, so it was a nice fit. It was a nice fit

DS:

Yeah, and I think that y'all do together is community service—

MR:

Um-hm—

DS:

Can you talk about some of your involvement with the community, and I mean, everything from, you know, fiestas way back when, to even a couple of years ago back with fiestas again.

MR:

Yeah, when I was at Tech, I got involved with fiestas. That's when Marisa Mercado [?] [1:38:19.4] and that bunch began to form the fiestas concept: the Llano, the group. There had always been the celebration, but it was a church here, a church there, and they tried to put a group together to do it this way at the Civic Center, so Jim and I got involved. She also formed Hispanic Association of Women, and I got involved with that. I was an officer and a board member of the YWCA. I was involved with the United Way Planning Committee. I was a member of that. I was involved with the Census Count Group, what about—what—twenty years ago I guess, and so all those things were very important to me. I got involved with the—it was on—at the Health Science Center for abused children. That group that has some that they actually bring kids then that have been sexually abused and interview them and help them through all that ordeal. I was involved with that. So, while I was at Tech, I did—that's what I'm saying, see I was—good at two things. I was good at teaching, and I was good at service. I was very involved with the community and TAVE of course and LAVE [1:39:44]. And then when I stepped down from Tech, I had a bad experience, and I just told Jim, I said, "I'm quitting," and I came back—we came back from vacation one time, and they had moved me out of my office and given it to Herman because he wanted it. They never told me. They never discussed it with me. So I told Jim, I said, "I don't want to be there anymore." He said, "All right, if you don't quit, I'll quit." So I quit. So anyway, I jumped right into community service. I mean, all four of us, and LULAC, we formed our own group. I mean, you name it, I got it. I'm president of the YWCA, and I mean, I did it all. And so it—all Mexican-American democrats, when we have a group. So it's—I just enjoy things like that. It's very rewarding. It's—I especially enjoy doing things for the next second American community. As the years went on and it just became more difficult to get around and stuff, you know, I kind of begin to pull out. I also did the—I prepared taxes for low-income people for about three years, and it was the same thing, and my back was killing me, and I kind of have to pull back from that. So, yeah, I've done that. You name it. I did it, and it's—I love that kind of stuff. I'm very gregarious, and I think this is kind of one of the things that bothers me a lot these days that I can't, I can't do that anymore and it feeds my soul, you know, getting involved and things like that just feed my soul, and it's been very difficult only not to be able to do that.

DS:

Well, can you tell us about a couple of needs that you solved after you were able to go out and make a difference then?

MR:

I'm not sure. I think the whole issue when the dropout rate when I was involved with the schools was a big concern of mine. My—I also got involved with a group that was working with young ladies that got pregnant. I became a mentor for some of them, and that was something that concerns me. I don't understand it, and I know it's a very politically strong opposing views kind of a subject. But when I was young, when I was in junior high, you didn't think about things like that much less do anything like that, and as you go on in high school, it was the same thing. There was just not that kind of pressure on us. Secondly, I think we had a lot of more options, or they had more options than I did. I mean, there was a time when you got pregnant, the only thing you could do was give the baby up for adoption or raise him yourself. Abortion was not acceptable at the time. These girls that are so young and they just—they have a lot of options, but they choose to have children, and I have a hard time understanding that, and I don't know how to handle it any more than anybody else does. I don't know where I sit on the abstinence vs. birth control. All I know is I can tell you one thing. When my son was growing up, I told him plainly, I said, "Look, don't ever tell a young lady you love her, so you can take advantage of the situation, and secondly, if some girl ever knocks on my door, and says 'I'm pregnant and your son is the father.' I'll believe her before I believe you. I will take responsibility for that child because, you know—so don't put me in the situation to choose," and so one of the problems I see is that we don't—we put it all on the girls. We don't tell a young man that that is something that they have to be responsible about too. You can have two households. This one has a young man. This one has a young lady. This young lady is being told "Don't do it and *blah, blah*." This young man is getting told "Do it." Who is he going to do it with? You know [laughter], and so I just think we do enough in terms of that about telling a young man that they have some responsibility in all of this. Our dropout rate, again, I just—I always felt that the bilingual aspect of it, if done properly, would help a lot in reducing the dropout rate. The other factor that I don't know how to deal with is poverty because in Lubbock you can have a child, start elementary school, first grade, or kindergarten in X school, second grade in Y school, third grade in Z school, and so there's so much mobility and there's no continuity in their education. So the problem with that is that what you learn in grade A, you need to build on and take to grade—second grade and build on, and somewhere along the way, there's a gap. You can't build it on it anymore, and so the further up they go in education, the worse their grades get, and before they know it, it's like, "Why am I going to school?" So those are the two things that I saw as innate that bothered me. I mean, there are things now that bother me: hunger. I support the food bank. It bothers me. The other issue, of course, now that I have is with health care, and I'm a liberal democrat. I've always been a liberal democrat. I will always be a liberal democrat and I want some kind of way to take care of people. But back then—and I think that is a big issue right now.

I'm just not out there to see how bad it is, but I know it's bad. So there are things now that are complicating the lives of people who for one were poor, for two are dropout of school. There's a job problem, and if you can't find a job, you can't feed your family, and so the whole thing is all a big ball that started when that child started school and how well we took him through our system.

DS:

Okay, you know, and you mentioned something at the very end of that—that gives us a whole other area to talk about, and that's, you know, you were raised in a community that was segregated, you know, Brown, Black, and White, and last—not this November, but November 2008, Obama became the first Black president of the US and you've been a democrat. You said liberal democrat, What was your take on one—what it was that got him that opportunity and two, how he's done since he's been in office, and the obstacles he's faced because you know, whether he is—it's a democratic thing or because he's black, you know the obstacles he may have had to face?

MR:

Well, initially you should one I was a Hillary backer. In fact, I was in charge of my precinct for Hillary, and I kind of—

DS:

Well, she was in the same vote too—she was—had a chance to make history herself.

MR:

Yeah, I conducted the caucus here at my precinct down here.

DS:

Well, talk about Hillary first. Talk about what you saw as a Hillary backer. The opportunities there.

MR:

Oh, with Hillary, to me, a lot of it is based on what her husband did, Bill. I mean, he—we had a surplus in our budget when he was there, did a lot of things, but at the same time, as a woman, I think women see issues differently than men, and I thought it was time for a woman to get—have a woman make decisions about this country and to see how they were going to be different from men. For one, we don't say war is the first thing we're going to do, you know, we believe in diplomacy, and so I wanted to see more of that, and a lot of it was just me—at that point I wanted to see a woman. I hope that I get to see it in my lifetime like Black people hope to see a Black person. So, when Hillary ended up coming second to Obama or missing out or losing to him, and then of course, I began to support Obama. Obama's problems basically, I think, it

would be a problem for Hillary. It would not matter who got in there as a democrat, and maybe even a republican if McCain had gotten in there, I'm telling you, he would be having very similar problems. The only difference would be that he would not probably be fighting for some of the things that democrats want, which is health care. There are just so many policies that we're different on, but I think the economy would be just as bad, maybe even worse, I don't know, but whoever got in that office was going to have to deal with whatever Bush left, and it was not good. So I don't think the problems that Obama is having are of his making. I think what is making a bigger problem for him is if there's a lot of people out there who want him to fail because he's Black. There's still a lot of prejudice in this country. There is. We don't put signs on the door anymore that says no dogs or Mexicans allowed or whatever, but it's there. It's there, and so I think a lot of it has to do with that. If Hillary was in there, I probably would say that some of the same issues would come up because she's a woman, you know, no respect to a woman by some men, And I think Obama. There's just so much he wants to do. So much, and everything that he—that we need to do—that I agree that we need to do is going to cost money. The economy is bad. I don't know if the stimulus deal was good or not, but something had to be done. That he's black, I mean, it was a joyous thing for me to see. It was really—I just thought it was something that I didn't think I'd ever see, and—but I'm more sure than anything that it was easier for him to get it than it would have been for Hillary. They're not ready for a woman. For some reason they're not ready for a woman, but I think if McCain had gotten in there we would be having the same problems. I really do. I don't think it's anything that he has created.

DS:
Yeah.

MR:
At all.

DS:
Well, and I think the big issues is you know, the republicans as what Obama has done, but Obama is still trying to correct what Bush had done, so they're very successful with distancing themselves from having started the problem anyway the problem anyway?

MR:
Well, they never acknowledge that this would happen. They just won't because they want a little at his doorstep. I mean, the stimulus package first started with Bush, you know, bailing out the banks—

DS:
Well, wasn't it McCain that wanted to put off the first debate to go talk about the stimulus package?

MR:

Oh yeah. Oh yeah, yeah. I think to me it doesn't matter. Both left us in such a mess that I don't know if they'd be worse or better or what with a republican in there. And then the other problem is that we're a very divided country. We're very divided. I have—I've never seen the likes of how—

DS:

And not just divided but polarized.

MR:

Very polarized, yeah. Even with me and my son, okay? My son is a doctor. The whole issue of health care. I choose not to even discuss it with him because he's on one side and I'm on another, and I—the two would never reconcile. You reach a point where, you know, it's just—you agree not to—agree to disagree and let it go. But I've never seen hatred towards Obama—openly carrying guns, you know, and been allowed to, and openly, you know, with a gun, it's just crazy. It's crazy. I think—

DS:

You couldn't have gone to a Bush rally like that.

MR:

Unh-uh. No, no, and then the other problem again is—my concern basically is, the republicans are hanging together, for good or bad or not. The democrats can't get together because the Democratic Party is so embracing of differences more so than our Republican Party. I remember when I was doing the campaign, and we were trying to do delegates, you had to deal with the—making sure that you had to deal with the homosexuality issue, you know, that you have people, sexual preference, and you have a—just select the delegate from the different categories, you know. Women, handicap, I mean, the whole range. And so when you have a party that encompasses a lot of different kinds of folks, they're not going to get it together. I mean, you have a range from liberal over here, to whatever they call themselves, the progressive, or there's a progressive term, and then there's a conservative democrat, which it seems to be a little bit more like a republican than a democrat, and so they, the votes are there, but they can't get it together. The other problem I'm having just—right now I'm just really kind of down on the whole thing because I cannot take any more of this earmarks. I cannot take the fact that they have to pay for a vote from senator from Louisiana, from the senator from—what was it? Iowa? That he doesn't have to pay for Medicare or whatever, Ohio, or somewhere to get his vote. That boggles my mind. They just—I just—I can't understand them that you have to do that, and it's again—it's the same thing. They remind me of the problem. So I'm—how he's doing, I think he's doing the best he can under the circumstances. Whether he'll succeed or not—I just admire the fact that he's willing to sacrifice having all only one term to do what he thinks is right.

That—I hope he doesn't start playing the political game so that he can get another term added, but it's not looking good. But I—I was very glad that we ended up with one female and a Black to—I guess you can call both minority to some degree that could have been president, and we got one.

DS:

Um-hm, and you know, that's for the national level. What about the local politics, you know?

MR:

What about it? [Laughter].

DS:

Do you have any take on, on the stuff that you've seen since you've been in Lubbock?

MR:

All I know is Lubbock used to be democrat. Texas used to be a democrat state, and now is totally turned around. I have a problem with people who switch parties to get elected. I remember when one of my friends decided to switch parties to get elected, and he would tell me, "I'm the same person," and I'd say, "You're the same person, but the policies are not the same." But you know, and I just—that I can't—I can't stomach it. I can't understand. To me, that's hypocrisy. One of the problems that I have, and I think we have taught Vidal—he probably discussed with you—that we needed to revisit the whole single member district thing because the demographics are changing such that, for example, on the school board with two of minorities. I mean, you're never going to have them one on the city council. You're never going to have a majority unless you compromise. You're never going to get things done for your district unless you compromise, and when you're the lone vote, like Linda is on—somewhere I guess she has two now with—depends on whether they go together or not. It's her and Donna. Floyd Holder?

DS:

Price.

MR:

Price. Floyd Price, if they go together, there's two, but it's still a minority. But Linda was on the school board. It was—she was always the only one. You can't get anything done, and I think that the last time that Bidal was here, we talked about revisiting single member district that it was possible that we could get more than one Hispanic Mexican-American elected where the demographics are going. I haven't really kept up much with the goings on like Victor now throwing his hat in for, I guess, Linda. I don't know what that's all about. But there's a saying that *Poquito el amor y gastándolo en leche—gastándolo*—it's a—you can't—there's not—you can't divide people up that way. You got to get behind one person or another. We're not there

yet. We're just not there to be able to have people choose between two people like that for one seat, and the bad things that are said about each other and that kind of stuff. It's not good. So I don't know if Linda is going to run for one, I haven't heard. Have you?

DS:

No. In fact, the last time Linda I even talked about it, I think was—she was talking about some town hall meeting, and she was on agreement with somebody from a town that was going to be annexed to southwest Lubbock, and so she was speaking basically on their points, and afterwards, one of the guys came up, “You should run for mayor.” And she told him that we all know that there's no way she could get elected. Not the way the mind-setting is right now.

MR:

Yeah, Jim ran at large for a seat on the school board, and I think he got two thousand votes. That's when Bob Craig got elected. And so they had the single member, and they had the at large, and so, when you run at large, I mean, citywide, that is hard for a minority to do. Look at—you those polls. He's running for state rep and he's way, way behind. I mean, he's not running just a city. It's a larger area. So, it's impossible. It's just impossible—

DS:

Yeah, which you know, and you think back to, you know, before Salinas got it way back when in district eighty-three. That was like—how'd that happen?

MR:

How'd that happen? I don't know. I guess you have to talk to Torres. He ever said?

DS:

Well, I think we need—we've talked about others things, but not that. I think we need to one day sit down and—we talked about how his downfall came right afterwards, but—

MR:

He only one term?

DS:

Uh-huh, and, you know, it was interesting that he was actually displaced by another minority by Ron Gibbons, and when—

MR:

Were the lines drawn differently at that time?

DS:

No, when the republicans got back, because Gibbons ran as republican. They sent out their pamphlets and leaflets or whatever that had everybody in their photo. Ron just had his name and his background didn't have a photo—

MR:

No photo. It was an English sounding name. If it doesn't sound like a Mexican-American, then it's okay.

DS:

And—

MR:

And then they got the surprise [laughter].

DS:

That's—well, I think that's why he only had one term too after, and then it went back to Delbert Johnson. He's been there since.

MR:

Looks like he's got a battle this time. That—and I wonder if that Griffon guy is going to get it. He could, but I don't know. It's kind of hard—

DS:

Yeah.

MR:

But other than that, I haven't—we got involved with Linda when they were closing Thompson Junior High. We got involved with that, and then we got involved with her on the issue of getting Cavazos junior high—get a junior high—not necessarily Cavazos. We wanted it to be named after her, but they named it Cavazos. But I was involved with a—I was heading a tri-ethnic coalition, and then we were collecting money trying to keep the battle going and fighting the school district for the date that we needed the junior high for these kids. And so—and then she went gangbusters [laughs] and couldn't get anything done. Knocking her head against the wall, and everybody would just, “Oh, there she goes again,” you know. But eventually, I guess she learned, and she had to do some of that compromising and play nice.

DS:

Well, you know, you know the real story of how that school came about being involved with it at the grassroots level. What do you think about the piece the AJ wrote last year when they gave credit to the other guys on the board?

MR:

Oh—oh no, they didn't talk about the fact that they fought it tooth and nail. They didn't—I mean, it's always going to be that way, and the AJ is not going to do anything about it. They're not going to really check their facts and go talk to some people on the other side of the issue, which they didn't do. Just they acted like, "Oh, we were nice and we gave them that school because it was"—

DS:

After the federal lawsuit. [laughter]

MR:

But that's kind of the way they are. The way they are.

DS:

So, were you involve also when they came out with the first proposal to put it on the other side of the tracks?

MR:

Uh-huh. Yeah, we had a—I was always in front of the cameras. I think I gave you a picture of me when we were in front the camera. I was always calling the press conferences and have them group would come together opposing that site over there, yeah, yeah. We did all of that. Did all of that. We got a beautiful school. A beautiful school, and it really has helped that neighborhood there with the united also there and all of that. That's really become a nice corridor over there.

DS:

I think that's changed—

MR:

And I think that's about it.

DS:

I was going to say, we've gone an hour and some change. Is there anything that I haven't talked about that you'd like to talk about now that you have a chance to get something on the record for posterity?

MR:

For posterity. I think that—you know, when you brought those—that group—Hispanic group in for a reunion—

DS:

Hispanic—

MR:

Hispanic students. I remember having a conversation with them about the word Hispanic, and I would venture—I don't know—you know whether it's true or not. Is there any other Hispanic group in there other than Mexican-Americans? Are they all Mexican-Americans? Or are they Puerto Ricans or are they Cuban-Americans, or anything other than Mexican-Americans in the group?

DS:

In the Hispanic Society? I don't know. I know that the other group—because we have two groups at Tech now. *Unidos por un mismo idioma* [**United by the same language**]. They have a lot of Mexican, central and South American students, but they also have Russian students, and—

MR:

What do they call that group?

DS:

Unidos por un mismo idioma.

MR:

Okay.

DS:

And it's basically a group to—about the Mexican cultures and the Latin cultures, and the Spanish language, but it's open to everybody. So that one is more diverse. I don't know about Hispanics Society, if they have anybody outside of Mexican-American.

MR:

I always wonder. I guess it's politically correct, you know, but I don't know even know, and I think when we were talking, I said, Mexican-American, and Vidal I said American of Mexican descent. I grew up—when I was in schools in Pecos, we were called Latin-Americans, and then when that whole issue of desegregation came out, one of the reasons that Pecos got away with segregation for so long was that when the form came in and they had to say how many white students they had, and how many black students they had, and they classified us a white. And so

they never did show that they were discriminating because if they had shown—divided it and called us Latin-American or Mexican-American or something else other than—they divided us by race because Mexican-American is not a race. Hispanic is not a race. That's always the problem I have with you get a form and says race there's always so many races. So anyway, they saw the opportunity to say we're all white. So because we were white, then they, on paper, Pecos was not segregating. [Laughter] We're all white, and it wasn't until they made a visit into schools and they really checked to see what is the ethnicity, you break it down more, that they they find out that they were discriminating. When I went to high school, we all went to one high school, one high school. And we lived on—like I told you, that we lived on one side of town. The high school was on the extreme end of the Westside of town on the Anglo side of town. We had to walk. We didn't have cars. We had to walk to get to the high school. They had no cafeteria, and so, if you either took your lunch, you came home, you ran home, you ate, you ran back to get back. And so afterwards, when they really checked Pecos to find that they were violating our rights, they found out that the law says that if you live more than two miles from a school, they're supposed to provide a bus. They were not providing a bus for us. [Recorder beeps] It was over two miles . In Sonora, Texas [Recorder beeps]—

DS:

We're out of tape again. We're still rolling on that. Do you want to finish up your thoughts on that or do you want to put another tape in? We can.

MR:

It's not—not too much, and we'll end it on this, because I think this is—it kind of goes to the heart of what we're talking about in terms on minorities and segregation and discrimination.

DS:

Yeah, well, there's another thing that I'd like to interject on that and get on tape because it talks about that playing the white vs. Latin angle. It's—because it's depends on whose convenience is what you are.

MR:

Yeah. I remember that. That boy, Sanchez, was saying that if your in the media that you have to anglicize your name so that people can understand.

DS:

Well you don't know.

MR:

But that's what he said. That's how he justifies it—

DS:

Except, we know that's bull.

MR:

They don't make adjustments for us. [Recorder beeps]

DS:

Okay. This is tape three of my interview with Maria Rivas on February the 3rd, 2010. Maria was just discussing some of the aspects of the racism that was systemic in the Pecos area.

MR:

Anyway, and that—when they came in and they investigated further to see if there was segregation because they would give—most of the time, they responded to reports of people saying that there was segregation going on. So when they came in, they found that—they found out that we lived more than the two miles from school, and if we lived further than two miles, they were supposed to provide us the bus, and they were not. We were having to walk. My momma would pay a lady that had a car who was picking up her daughter and bringing her home to eat and taking her back; paid her a dollar a week, so that she could bring me too, and then take me back, and then when I was in Sonora, Texas, the same thing was going on in that area, and they had a high school, but they did it differently. They had a school—a high school for Anglos, and then they had what they called the Mexican high school, and that's where the Mexicans all went. One—the first Mexican-American student who finished and actually graduated from a Mexican high school—that got a diploma and finished—tried to enroll at UT Austin to college, the university. When they looked at his diploma and find out that he didn't have the state—the seal of the state of Texas on his diploma—when they investigated, they found out that that school that he graduated from was not certified by the state of Texas as a high school.

Furthermore, they found that the reason that was is that the teachers that were teaching in that high school were not certified teachers. So they had a high school, but if you ever made it through and graduated, your diploma was not any good. Of course, this is—Sonora is—do you know where Sonora is? It's from Pecos you go to Fort Stockton on the Interstate 290, which is now interstate what, 20 I think or 10? It's between—a path that you get Pecos, you go Fort Stockton, and it's on the way to Austin on that interstate. So there's a lot of those kinds of those things that happened, and I don't know. I just have a problem with—I would hope that all of us in a perfect world would be Americans and maybe the labels and all of that wouldn't happen, but it's not a perfect world, and to me, it just makes more sense to call ourselves something that is—that we can relate to. I don't relate to the Hispanic. I didn't relate to the Latino. I don't relate to Latin-American. Why I relate—I relate more to Chicana, but second to that would be Mexican-American, but I don't know. I have a problem with Hispanic because again, I think that tends to inflate the numbers of how many Mexican-Americans that you really have going to Tech vs. how many Hispanics, and there's a lot of people that come from Mexico that are foreign students that

come in. Are they counted in there? Do we have as high a number, which it isn't very high, but as high a number of Mexican-Americans attending Tech? Or is that number inflated because of the use of Hispanic?

DS:

Well, it was—and then there's another issue. I don't know if you realize this, but the former president Baldwin at the HSC, he's now left that position, his take on diversity was people outside of the country. So he wasn't looking at Mexican-American population had diversified. the university because, well, that in his own justification that didn't qualify as diversity, so those members were low, well it really didn't matter to him because that wasn't the diversity he was looking for anyway. And he justified by saying, "Well, you know, this campus is like this but the one by the boarder is the other way. It's 90 percent Mexican-American, but it's two different campuses, you know. But there's another issue you brought up about the being white—counted as white. There was somebody on campus, I forgot his name, but he had written a book on the case that preceded the board vs. education in the Supreme Court. It was a Mexican-American that've been tried and found guilty for a crime in south Texas, and the whole jury was white so they, you know, that was one of the reasons they wanted to ask for a new trial because the jury was all white and the district judge order said, well, according to them, he was judged by his peers, because he is white. We're not considered white, and so then he had to prove that even though they were saying he's white, they had to prove that they were considered different even though—because I mean, they had signs there, you know, colored men and *hombres aquí*, at the drinking fountains, if they were considered white. They shouldn't have been a distinction. They should be able to use the ones in the first floor instead of the basement. But again, it was a mindset that well, we're not really discriminating against you for your opportunity because you're white, so we can't discriminate against you.

MR:

So you have to look at different classes under that umbrella. Different groups of people that can be white but there's the ethnicity. There's different shades of that whiteness. Yeah, I just wonder like, what is my granddaughter—my grandkid's going to say? I mean, "What are we grandma?"

DS:

Yeah.

MR:

You know, because they're half and half, and you're running into—you eventually have to deal with—we're all kind of getting into those shades and mixtures that at some point—I mean, how far do we take this labeling?

DS:

Exactly. I mean, well, you know, and we saw it even just by putting this reunion together. What name goes on our banner?

MR:

Yeah.

DS:

That's just amazing.

MR:

Well, and what' was interesting was—you know, there was some, probably—well, there were not too many people would get into the discussion other than me, and Paulina, and most of the others—it was like, “Oh, I've been called worse, you know, I've been called everything, you know, Hispanic is fine with me, blah, blah.” Paulina, oh, Paulina is just [hisses] She didn't want to be Hispanic, but she had different reasons for it. But I just thought the way it worked out, the way that eventually it came back to Mexican-Americans and we ended up with *Los Tertulianos*, which was originally what this was about, and why—I guess it was Thomas and them that first started throwing the term Hispanic instead of *Los Tertulianos*. And I don't know if it was because they were inviting people that were not, but to me, it always was about Los Tertulianos, and I even told them, “You know, you always said it was a historical thing and nothing to do with Hispanic. It had to do with *Los Tertulianos*.” And so he brought it, it all came back, and I thought it was really—I don't know how it happened, but it came to that, and I guess it was because of Vidal's banner, and somehow it was like, “Okay. We'll go with Tertulianos,” and that was it.

DS:

So that was his closing gift to us, I guess.

MR:

Yeah, yeah, but it's just amazing. What do you call yourself? I mean, and even then if somebody says, “What do you want to be called?” And like Jaime would say, “Jaime” [laughter].

DS:

Exactly, yeah.

MR:

Jaime. But it—I have a pet peeves about things, and I'm sure everybody else does, but I remember the discussion with those kids, and it was like—they were looking at me like haven't thought about that [laughter].

DS:

Well, and the thing is, you know, because they are the group that y'all began: *Los Tertulianos*, and so I guess you just want to know because what was the natural progression to get you to Hispanic.

MR:

Yeah, I mean because it went from—I mean, we were not really an activist group, you know, we were just trying to get all of us together because we needed that. Whatever came after that, the meetings and inviting people to speak and the issues and things came after were fine, but then, there was a big evolving of Chicanismo, and then all of a sudden, we're going back the other way. That's what—you know, you think you can just keep going this way, but no, it was here, and then, it whoop, make that jump, and then all of a sudden now, it's Hispanic.

DS:

Well, are you like—were you at the symposium last year when Jamie was speaking? Not Jamie, when Thomas was speaking?

MR:

Well, you know, I was involved with the children's area, and Jim kept trying to get me to go over there, and I was too busy.

DS:

Well, there's one thing that Thomas mentioned how—about the generation now seems to be letting a lot of things slide back, and he was thinking, "We got to get together and start pushing forward on some of the causes that have been lost."

MR:

It's interesting because not only, we'll get more of us, and we're more educated, and yet there is that bigger—a gap is getting wider between those of us that are quote, "Climbing the latter of success or achieving the American dream or whatever." And then we still have a lot of people down here that are not finishing school, that are going through all these horrible situations and we're not—those of us that are in a position to do something to help in some way, you know, are not doing it. One of the guys, and I won't mention the name because it'll be on tape, but one of the guys told Anita when they were talking about paying fifty dollars and that we were going to give it to the Hispanic ___ [02:23:32] Society, whatever left over, he said, "I'm not going to." He said, "What did the Hispanic community ever do for me?" And so, some of us—I could probably say, you know, it was not the Hispanic community. I didn't get a LULAC Scholarship. I didn't get—anything that I've got, that helped me to get here was not because the Hispanic community did something for me. So I can take the same attitude, but that's not the way it is. I don't care how we got here, now we have this responsibility to do for others. I mean, we're in a position to

be able to do that, and we're just totally—some of us are totally going “I made it, who cares about the rest?” And that bothers me a lot when people kind of do that, and they don't care about—people talk about, well, Now then look at those Mexicanos over there. They must have gotten their welfare check and they're at Walmart, you know, and all they know is to make petty comments about people, and some of their own people are doing that. That bothers me, when we look down at our own.

DS:

Yeah.

MR:

We have all kinds.

DS:

Yeah, you in fact, you know, you mentioned that I was in my car, and then some of the—you know, I won't you know mention his name, but we were driving down and there was some guys doing some roadwork on the construction roadwork for the highway, and so he yells out the window, “You should have stayed in school.” I'm just going like, that's just so wrong. You don't do that. You don't.

MR:

Yeah.

DS:

You know?

MR:

And we have people like that and that's sad. That's very sad, and I remember when I was trying to put symposium together, and then we were trying to get scholarship money. And the big idea we had on single member district symposium was to get the attorneys because they were the ones that kind of helped us through the courts, you know, to give us money to support the travel and all that stuff that was going to go with getting people here. I couldn't get a penny out of the attorneys. The only one that—and it was because I went to see him, was Glasheen [?] [02:26:05], and he turned me over to—what's his name? The Mexican-American that works for him.

DS:

Noé?

MR:
Huh?

DS:
Was it Noé Lara?

MR:
Noé. I couldn't squeeze a penny. I don't know—none of them. I wrote—I went to see them, and nobody came through. Nobody, and that bothers me. It bothers me a lot, and I couldn't squeeze a penny out of them. If it had been for Glasheen's two thousand dollars, and then, of course, Muñoz wanting to have—to told ___ [02:26:56] that he would pay for all the hotel rooms [laughs] and all of that, you know, we really would have been—we would have had to pay for it because fiestas and them [02:27:09] are not very supportive of our plans, Okay.

DS:
That's why we want to ask back [Laughter].

MR:
But, I—that bothered me. That bothered me a lot. I mean, I went to see—personally took the letter to a couple of them, talked to them about it, and finally, you know that, one day I walked into Glasheen [?] [02:27:32] office, and he comes in and we reconnect in terms of our involvement in the past, and that whole thing with Linda with the junior high, and "Give this lady whatever she wants." Nobody else. Not a penny, not a hundred dollars, not fifty dollars. Nothing, and I had a list of about thirteen.

DS:
Yeah?

MR:
There's a lot of Mexican-American attorneys in town, and I had some that was supposedly to be supportive of Hispanic/Mexican-Mexican issues and stuff. Not a penny.

DS:
Yeah, and the irony is, it's you know, it was to help celebrate two of the early Mexican-American lawyers in town, you know, and the journey they went through there to make sure that voting was better. I mean, we had more of a voice. We don't have enough of a voice yet, but we have, you know, one more vote than we used to have on the council.

MR:
Um-hm. Well, really two because Mike's got one.

DS:

Well, yeah, but I mean, they're not always unified. They're still able to play against each other.

MR:

And yet, you know, that's up for debate, whether they have the strength and numbers to elect another Black or other the Mexican-Americans in that part of town can take that one over too.

DS:

Well—

MR:

We've been playing nice for a long time, so.

DS:

Yeah, well, they had the majority for the past two elections, but—

MR:

Things are changing.

DS:

I mean, the Hispanics had the majority but, you know, I don't think they put—what happens is you get too many candidates and the poll just disappears when you have thirty people running for the same spot.

MR:

And that's what happened in that seat. When they had Armando running, and who else?

DS:

Jamie?

MR:

And who?

DS:

Jamie? Was running—

MR:

Jamie? Was that for the same seat.

DS:

Uh-huh. Jamie and Armando and I think there was two other guys that were always running—

MR:

But if we just play our cards right, you know, and just don't say, Okay, so and so wants to run and so and so got together and say, "Okay, let's get one person. Which of all these people do you think we can get more support for? And let's go for it." Unh-uh. No, we don't do that.

DS:

Yeah, but that's because, you know, the diversity in thought, I mean, because, you know, Armando's—

MR:

Yeah, not democracy [crosstalk] [02:30:02]

DS:

I mean, because Armando's a polar different from Linda or Jamie, so you're not going to get the same people wanting either one of them out there.

MR:

How many votes did Jamie get?

DS:

I don't know how—a lot [laughter]. I'm not supposed to comment. Sorry.

MR:

Well, you have to edit all that stuff out.

DS:

I can't edit it. That's the worst thing. Well, is there anything left? I know we already passed two hours, and you might be a little tired?

MR:

Probably. That's about it. Who gets to see these, anyway?

DS:

Anybody and their dog.

MR:

Anybody and their dog. It's basically people that are doing research on something?

DS:

Yes, it'll be at Southwest Collection, and so researches typically, family members might want to come into community members, students working on projects for their classes. We have professors like Doctor Ibarra from the English department has a project this semester where her students are coming in listening to Mexican-American interviews and writing a biography on the person interviewed. So all source of uses.

MR:

Okay. So they may be checked out and may never be checked out.

DS:

That's a promise I couldn't give you [laughter].

MR:

All right.

DS:

Thank you, Maria.

MR:

Thank you [Recorder beeps]. How many hours did you get in *Los Tertulianos*? Have you had?

DS:

We have—

End of recording.

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