

**Oral History Interview of
Pete and Amy Terrazas**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
October 15, 2015
Fort Stockton, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Fort Stockton Interview Project***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Pete and Amy Terrazas of Fort Stockton, Texas. Pete talks about his involvement in local politics and his experience as a businessman in Fort Stockton. Amy discusses coming to the United States with her family and her experience working in Texas.

Length of Interview: 00:52:08

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Keywords

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Pete Terrazas (PT):

Well, you have collections. See, I need you.

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

Oh, (all laugh) not that kind of collections.

PT:

I can use you. I can use you.

AW:

Not that kind of collections. People—although, when we call on the phone, sometimes they hang up.

Amy Terrazas (AT):

Because they feel, Is this collections? But it's another kind of collections.

AW:

Yeah. So, let me get the spelling of your last name. T-e-r-r-a-z-a-s?

PT:

That's correct.

AW:

Okay. And—Pete and Amy. A-m-y?

AT:

A-m-y.

AW:

Okay. We'll—we're going to ask you to sign a release that lets people listen to this, you know, a hundred years from now or whenever they're going to hear it. So—

AT:

And he's wonderful. He has a big—the legacy—the history behind Pete is unique.

AW:

That's great. That's exactly what we're after.

PT:

Now what was that he said?

AT:

That your legacy—what you have done in your life in Fort Stockton is the most wonderful.

PT:

Kind of. (all laugh)

AW:

Let's—speaking of your life, let's start off with your date of birth.

PT:

Right, 3/31/28.

AW:

And Amy? I know it's not polite to ask a young lady, but what is yours?

AT:

It's 5/25/55. Am I going to be in—? Only Pete?

AW:

Yeah, but I—

AT:

Okay, 5/25/55.

AW:

But, when people listen to this—again, we like to think about people listening to these interviews a hundred years from now.

AT:

Yes. Okay.

AW:

And, so they'll want to know, you know, exactly who's here and who's not, so we try to get all that.

AT:

Okay, sure.

AW:

And let me—could I get a mailing address, too?

AT:

██████████ in Fort Stockton.

AW:

And the zip code?

AT:

██████████

AW:

Great. Okay—

PT:

Okay, now actually, now ██████████

AT:

No. But, I'm putting my address so I make sure that I get the mail because we're right next door from each other.

PT:

Oh, yeah.

AT:

He's been in the business for sixty years, so his is ██████████. But if we put ██████████, we never get the mail. I mean, the other girls—so I make sure that we get it on ██████████

AW:

Okay. I'm just going to make a note of where the building is, but the address is ██████████

PT:

It's all one building.

AW:

Oh, it is?

AT:

Yeah. It's all one building, but they—

AW:

I'm confused.

AT:

—they divided them—

AW:

Yeah, got it. Okay, so you're born March 31 of 1928? Were you born here?

PT:

Well, no I was born over there about a block from here. (all laugh) Well, I really am. I was born right in my grandmother's—

AW:

Yeah.

PT:

—on Division Street.

AW:

Great.

AT:

He was born here.

AW:

And so is it good to assume that you grew up here?

PT:

Yes. I don't have a choice.

AW:

Well, you've been in this business, and tell us what this business is that you've been in for sixty years.

PT:

Well—well, I would say that that's a good question, but I've got so much stuff involved. I'm in the furniture business.

AW:

Great.

PT:

Yeah. Typically, I'm in the buying and wholesaling furniture, and so I carry—I finance my own people—my own finance. And, so I have furniture, and I've been selling furniture for—what is eighty years, or whatever? But not many—

AT:

He had a furniture store in Pecos, Texas, also, but also, he was a real estate agent and a broker here in Fort Stockton. And he was on everything. He was the president for, like, nine years, or more years, for the school board. He was involved with politics. He did a lot of other things besides just the—

AW:

How did you get into business? What got you started in business? What was the first business you had?

PT:

Well, making money. I wanted to make money. My father had a little old dry good store just—everything real close here, and my father, some way, he was working the farms. And he decided that's no way to make a living, so he went ahead and started selling furniture—things—and buying and selling things to people.

AT:

Clothing to the braceros.

AW:

Really?

PT:

Yeah. That—that building there, bracero.

AT:

A lot of pants and shoes that will go to San Antonio.

AW:

So dry goods—not a grocery store, but dry goods and things like that?

PT:

We had a—he had a dry goods store, and then we also did—well, a lot of—

AT:

The pants—the pants and the shoes. I think your Uncle Johnny was the one that had, like, the bar, and then Fidel had the dry goods store.

PT:

We were all after the bracero—the wetback or whatever—whatever they call them.

AW:

Yeah.

PT:

Times were—times were real hard.

AT:

But—I can help you. And I'm sorry that I'm interrupting, but I can help you because, when I met Pete, we've been married twelve years ago—twelve years ago, and he's a very interesting man. He's wonderful. But he told me the first thing—he started selling cars. He was in a car lot selling cars. And he didn't get along with his boss, and he told him he will never do—no, no, it was the pharmacy at the boutique where you were selling—or you were washing dishes?

PT:

Well, I was washing dishes there at the drugstore.

AT:

A drugstore.

PT:

Right down the street, here—turn the corner and to the right.

AT:

And then you—where was the place that you stopped working and they told you you would never go anywhere? You're never going to do anything in life? And you said, "Yes—"

PT:

Well, it was in that same area. There was a lot of discrimination here. I mean, you—you're a Mexican? You're not wanted here. Well, all we want is to get the work out of you—try to put you to work, and loan you a little money so we can make money. That was the beginning of it which was right down the street here. And so I got to see this part of life where we were being used, and we couldn't go into business for ourselves. And they went in to business; we just did

the dirty work. And, so, that's how I got into it because I could see—I could see real quick what they were trying to do—just use us, and they were using us.

AT:
Okay.

AW:
Was your—your father's name is Fidel?

AT:
Lupe.

AW:
Lupe.

AT:
At—what are the initials? Everybody knew him by—

PT:
G. R.

AT:
G. R. Terrazas. G. R. Terrazas.

PT:
That's my father's—see, now—

AT:
G. R. Terrazas.

PT:
Okay, he got caught in the same boat that—I mean, he couldn't go anywhere and make any money, and so he started selling—we had the Bracero Program for Mexico; they would come here, and then—so he started selling shirts and pants—work clothing.

AT:
But, another thing, how you started your—when you grew up already in business, you were selling the money orders and teaching people how to get the driver license, and they will pay you pay you fifty cents for every driver license that you will take the people to get their driver

license, and you will sell money orders to the braceros for twenty-five cents, I believe. That was your first office that you opened up.

PT:

Yeah, they—we—yeah. That's true. And I saw the injustices taking place, and we couldn't—we couldn't buy or sell anything ourselves. Everything went to them.

AW:

What was your—was your father born in the United States or in Mexico?

PT:

In Mexico.

AT:

Your mother is from Mexico. Your father is from Fort Stockton. Yeah, G. R.

PT:

I don't think my father was born here.

AT:

Yes. Yes, he was born here. And Fidel and Angel and Clarita—all of them were from Fort Stockton.

AW:

Well, the reason I was asking is that one of the things that I heard the last couple of—that I've heard a couple of times when I've been down here interviewing people was that relationships between Anglos and Americans of Mexican heritage were better early and got worse about the time you were born.

PT:

Yes. Yes.

AW:

Yeah. And I just wondered if you knew something about that?

PT:

Yeah. It got worse. I was right in the middle of it. Yeah. I got right in the middle of it. It was—we couldn't borrow money.

AT:

No. He could never borrow money. And they were never—and I can tell a little bit more because I've heard and I wrote down just like you did. We have a book—because I know with age you forget things. But he had—they—he hated to be living here in Fort Stockton so much that they moved to San Antonio. He graduated in San Antonio, and he was going to be a lawyer. He started going to college to be a lawyer, and he says, “I would have been killed by now.” But then he got very, very sick, and they had to come back. And then they settled back in Fort Stockton, and they stayed here. He was—it was a guy in Marfa that was letting him borrow furniture—washer—I guess a washer, refrigerator, and stoves every week. And he will come to Fort Stockton and sell them, and then he will go and pick up some more, and they will give him some money. That's how he started his business. The only thing that hurt him—and he still think about it—they never let him rent downtown. He had such a hard time—and also with the banks—until, finally—I don't remember the guy. He told me the name—in First National Bank, I think, it was the one that help him with money—with loan to continue with his business. And that's all. He really regrets not graduating from Fort Stockton, and he loves Fort Stockton. It's his life. Sometimes I wish—I tell him, “Can we move?” And he says, “No.” He's going to remain here.

AW:

Where are you from, Amy?

AT:

I am from the state of Chihuahua.

AW:

Ah. And when did you come the United States? Were you small?

AT:

No. I remarried—I got married, and I moved as an adult. Twenty. I was twenty years of age, and I had my children here. But we have a lot of things in common. And you know that, being from Mexico, I don't—I never—maybe one or twice on discrimination. And it doesn't affect me, and it doesn't—I have not felt it at all. Maybe—just a little, but not like Pete did.

PT:

Yeah. We went through a lot of discrimination in trying to go to high school.

AW:

So that's why you went to San Antonio to go to high school. Do you have brothers and sisters?

PT:

I have one sister.

AW:

Uh-huh, what's her name?

PT:

Lucy.

AW:

Is she older or younger?

AT:

Older.

AW:

Older.

AT:

She's ninety.

AW:

Oh, gosh. And—any other brothers or sisters?

PT:

No.

AW:

So when you were ready to graduate from high school—or, going to high school—your family moved to San Antonio.

PT:

Um—what is that called, how they say—my father also went through the discrimination—

AW:

Mm-hm. (Amy laughs)

PT:

—pretty bad. And I—and went through—with him, I got to see all these things because he couldn't—he was trying to get himself a little business going right there on the corner here—at two corners—and so he started selling clothing to the Bracero—Bracero Program—and—

AT:

And moved to San Antonio. You moved to San Antonio.

PT:

Yes. Well—well, he started doing that in—my father and I would go to San Antonio and buy the clothing—work clothing—wholesale. And we'd bring over here, and it's just right at the corner. We started selling dry goods.

AT:

Yes. But how did you move to San Antonio? Why? You—I know he told me that he hated it here. You could not continue going to school. They could not go to swimming pool. Like, the swimming pool—

AW:

Yeah. Right over there.

AT:

—that they have. At seven o'clock, they could go. All the Hispanics could go at seven o'clock when they were ready to clean it up, and then put clean water, and then again the next day they had to go. They could not go to the theater. And Aurora Gutierrez can tell you—Aurora Gutierrez and all of the people his age—and they had to sit on the top—

AW:

In the balcony?

AT:

In the balcony, but they said it was even better. And, they tell me a lot of things. But—

AW:

Now, you—when you say you couldn't go to school: that means they didn't have high school for Mexican-Americans? Is that right?

PT:

That's correct.

AW:

Yeah.

AT:

They did, but I saw where one of his uncles on his father's side, the youngest brother on his

father—he graduated. He was the only Hispanic that graduated that year, and on the program, they put his name in the very bottom—even though the Ws, the Ys, and the Vs were on top, but him, his name was handwritten and in the very bottom. And we have that. It's—

AW:

Really? I'd love to see that. I really would like to see that.

AT:

And they had a program, like, on TV—on Channel 38. It was the city channel, and Pete—they interview Pete a few years ago—maybe seven, six years ago—and he was the only one that would stand up and say—you know those—that land in so and so and so belonged to the Primeras, and the other land belonged to the Hispanic. But, when I think it was Dodge Wilson—it was a Wilson guy, and I'm not from Fort Stockton—but he raised the taxes so high, and then they had to give it up. Either they let the properties go, or they had to sell them at a very very—so they rescind all of these—all these ranches, and they belonged to Hispanics—and they had to—and he keeps talking about it, and they have the rights to talk about how they feel. And he—

AW:

Sure.

AT:

But he went through so much. When he bought the—and I—you're familiar with Fort Stockton. The Reeves? Was it the Reeves? No the—what is the name of the—the museum?

AW:

Oh. The Annie Riggs.

AT:

The Riggs? He bought the building from the Riggs. After they died, I guess the children or whoever sold—

AW:

For your business now?

AT:

Not the business, but he's got a big warehouse and he's got some—some—something rented there. And he said, when he was ready to erase, he said, "I never had—" And I wish they didn't have this in their heart, but they do. He said, "It was the most pleasure I had. They never wanted for me to rent downtown. And, when I was erasing, the Riggs—the children came in and said, 'You know what you're doing. You better not erase the name.'" And he said, "The building is

for sale if you want to buy it.” And he says, “I just could not finish—you know—erasing the Riggs because they control—” I remember when I first arrived to Fort Stockton, I didn’t know anything about Fort Stockton. But he would tell me, “Don’t buy gas there, because they control the whole gas there, the wealthiest.” And he will tell me, but and he told me, “There’s still two good ole boys here.” And I remember walking into a restaurant, and he says, “Please don’t say hi. They give us a hard time.” And you probably already know who they are. And it’s Delmon Hodges and Billy Moody. (laughs) And they gave him a hard time, and he can tell you, “They gave me the hardest time in the whole world.” So I’m telling you how—what I learned from him. What he tells me. And I don’t know if he—if he doesn’t want me to repeat this, but this is what—you like to tell me things about what they did to you and to the community. He really didn’t care about him. He sleeps very good. When people complains—if it happens to him, it really doesn’t matter, but if it happens to other people, he really gets angry and he gets upset about—

PT:

There was a period of time there where the Mexican-Americans and Mexicans were being used only as laborers. And nobody could hire them except—they would put them out to work, and then they’d get paid minimum.

AT:

But your uncles did very, very well. Uncle had the tortilla factory that the _____ [00:19:35] were working—

PT:

That came later.

AT:

Okay.

PT:

All that came later.

AT:

Okay. What about G. R.? G. R. was accepted at the mercantile. He was—

PT:

That came later. That came later.

AT:

—your father. And then working at the museum—because his pictures are at the museum—your father's pictures.

PT:

That came later.

AW:

When—when was later? When did things start to change, and how did that happen?

PT:

Um—somewhere or other, some of my kinfolks had the idea about buying and selling, you know. And my father—we used to go to the farms on the weekends, Saturdays, and then we'd—we'd go out there and—what did we do?

AT:

A dump truck.

PT:

—yeah, dump truck. He had a—

AT:

(speaking over Pete) You said he had a dump truck that would sell for five dollars—the dump—

PT:

Yes, but it was—we had a hard time making it. The Anglos didn't want us to have anything to do with us being involved in the selling business, or they wanted to keep the—

AT:

But when did it change. I guess you were like—when I read your papers, everything they change for you when your—it was—you were, like, nineteen because, at age twenty-three, you were already running for city council. You were running on everything that—and you were twenty-three. So, I guess, around nineteen when you came back? Because every one of your relatives had a good, good business, and you had a really good business.

AW:

So the first time you ran for office, you were twenty-three years old?

AT:

Twenty-three.

PT:

I think so.

AW:

Yeah. And what office did you run for? What was it?

PT:

Um—

AW:

City council, or—?

PT:

It was a city council—

AT:

Was it the school first and then city council, or city council first? I think it was city council.

PT:

Yeah. It was one or the other.

AW:

Yeah. Did you win?

PT:

Yes.

AW:

Really?

AT:

One vote. I think they were, like, one vote different, and then he worked hard.

AW:

So this was—this was pretty early? 1954 if you were twenty-three, right? That's—and 1954. That's pretty early, in Fort Stockton history, for a Mexican-American to have an office? Is that right? Was Pete the first? Where you the first?

PT:

There weren't any.

AT:
—the first.

AW:
You were the first? Yeah.

PT:
Yep. There weren't any. We were not allowed to have any jobs except, maybe, working the farm, and—

AW:
How did—how did—(coughs) excuse me. How were you treated in the community after you got elected?

PT:
Oh, real well.

AW:
By Anglos as well as—

PT:
No.

AW:
No? (laughs)

PT:
Got elected, but, by that time, things were kind of cooling off a little bit. It wasn't as bad.

AT:
Can I help you? I think you said that they didn't have any Hispanic or Spanish teachers at all. They will not attract—and he had to bring MALDEF and involve LULAC, and he brought MALDEF in into the city and that's how—

AW:
And what—now I know what LULAC is. What is the other one?

AT:
A Mexican American League of Something [**Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund**]. It's really—

PT:

League of United Latin American.

AW:

Right, and that's LULAC, but what—the other name you said?

AT:

Is—MALDEF is really strong—

AW:

M-A-L-D-E-F?

PT:

Yes.

AT:

Yes. MALDEF.

PT:

Mexican American something-or-other.

AT:

League—oh I don't know. MALDEF.

AW:

I just don't know that one. That's the reason I—

AT:

I can call Carol because that was involving Odessa. I have a big history too, like Pete, so he was—we were so much alike that I really—

AW:

So you were involved in Odessa.

AT:

I've been involved in everything that you can think of from Ann Richards to everyone. And I knew, like, seventy percent, I guess, of the population of Odessa—especially the Hispanic and the black community—and worked, I think, twenty-four hours a day. When I met Pete, I said, "It's time for me to rest. I did enough, and I'm coming to Fort Stockton." When I arrived to Fort Stockton, not knowing anything, and they didn't have to tell me—I was teaching—and I did

here, too—the citizenship classes in ESL for the adults. I did it in Odessa like for seventeen years. I learned how to speak the language at age thirty-six. I was a single mother, and then from there on I worked for Odessa College in ECISD.

AW:

Yeah. You didn't speak English until you were thirty-six?

AT:

Mm-hm. Thirty-six.

AW:

Really? So you'd been in the United States a long time.

AT:

A long time—but no opportunities. But then I married someone that would not let you speak, work—I was brought here to the United States to just bear children and cook. That's all.

AW:

Mm-hm. That's an old fashioned person.

AT:

Yes. And they're still—the concept is you bring a person from Mexico, and they're going to work, work, work, and make a lot of tortillas; but—then—

AW:

So, what changed your thinking from making tortillas and babies to doing something else—to learning—

AT:

I had to. I had to. I was very, very—my mother was a teacher in Mexico, and my mother says—and I know, out of the five children, I was the only one that didn't listen to Mother. I knew I was going to be free. I love freedom. And, with Pete, I knew a love of healthy freedom. You know, everybody has to be free, and, whatever they like to do, let's go ahead and do it. Let's go ahead and try. But sometimes you just can't, so I got a divorce. And after the divorce, I remembered—the first thing I did, started going to learn the ESL and then get my driver license and started working. And, there, I just went on and on and on. And a lot of wonderful people are by my side. I had the opportunity to work for the bilingual department. Then I got hired for ECISD. Then I started—I continued going to school. It was just school, and then—three children, and then—they're all went to college. I worked, like, every day—every day of my life that I can think of. So I said, "I'm not going to work in Fort Stockton. I'm just going to take it easy." I came in. At the

time when I came in, it was in 2003, and it was the most divided time that I ever seen—a town. The city councilman—he didn't have to tell me anything. I just read about it and by knowing the people. It was not very nice. Everybody was just against each other. But then I saw that the people from Chihuahua are—are in one place, and the ones from Coahuila are in another place. And, then, the Tejano, the Chicano, and then the people that had a little bit more money—everybody's divided. We're—and we're divided. So I said, "I don't know, but we're going to do it." So we started working very, very hard, and seventy people from here—especially elderly and very poor—became naturalized citizens. We used to do a lot of fundraising. But it's hard.

AW:
What—

AT:
This is the hardest place to work—and try to—what is it? Unite, or—?

AW:
Yeah. Yeah. So, when you say you worked very hard—what kinds of things did you do besides take people to a naturalization classes. What other kinds of things did you try to do to get these different communities together?

AT:
I worked for the cluster department. The cluster students are the recent arrived immigrants from different countries. I make sure that every one of these students—I had, like, one hundred thirty-five every year—one hundred thirty-five to a hundred and sixty-five students every year at Ector Junior High. I made sure that every student had school supplies, but not only them. It was for everybody, and then working with every church in Odessa—every denomination, and I worked with the Big Brothers and Big Sisters, with the census. Every census—the census 2000, I was very, very involved with the food bank, with the Odessa College, with scholarships, with the Hispanic Heritage, with the LULAC, but—with every program—in trying to help—especially the black community—very close with almost every one of them because I work in different schools, and working—I was teaching, or doing, the parenting classes—the parent-to-parent workshops for the whole community, so everybody was wonderful. I don't think—I just—what else? Oh, politics—politics, getting everybody to vote. I never tell them who to vote for, I just wanted them to read, especially here. We're going to read the paper, we're going to listen, and we're going to bring the candidates so they can tell you what they're going to be offering to you, what they have, what their plans are, so that was my—and Pete did more than anybody. But it's his interview. I don't want to tell you about—

AW:
No, no, no. This is—

PT:

No, no, no.

AW:

It's your interview. It's all of you—interview.

PT:

Yes.

AT:

When I met Pete, I remembered it took us months and months and months. Finally, I was teaching an adult ESL class in Barbara Jordan in Odessa, and he walked in. And I didn't want—I didn't want to have nothing to do with anybody anymore. I said, "I'm done." Well, he walked in, and I put him to work. I didn't—because he was taking pictures, and I said, "He's not going to take pictures of me." I was sort of a—not into men anymore. So he said, "Okay." And I said, "Okay. I'll put him to work." You're going to read the paper, and you're going to come to the board, and you're going to write down what you ate today in English so the other people can learn from you. So, then, it took us about six more months, and Pete invited me to his little house. He's got an adobe house where we spent almost eight years together there, and everything in his house, it was exactly the way his mother left. And everything is blue—it's this blue—in his house. The couches were blue. The counters are blue. The floor is blue. The outside is blue—everything, but very modest—but the most wonderful feeling of my life: secure, freedom, wanted, love. And we started dating, and I never asked him for his age because Pete looked very—I thought he was, like, fifty-nine until we went to a physical. He went to a physical, and I saw the driver license, and I saw it again because he's very, very healthy, very healthy man.

AW:

Well, now, let's back up just a minute. You said you came here to retire, but it doesn't sound like you've retired. (laughter)

AT:

No. No. I'm working. I keep telling him—this morning I told him, I said, "You're going to have to work. You didn't warn me I was going to be working so much." But, okay. So I did my classes, and then Elva helped me to—and I didn't have a place to help my classes. Then the library opened their doors, and we were coming every Tuesday. But then I started, also, like Pete, selling—retailing—and it's taking all of my time there. Especially, like, right now for Christmas. Then he decided we were going to build a house. Now that house—and believe me, I wish we could go back to the little ole house, really—and then that store is taking all my time.

AW:

What's the name of the store?

AT:

Bella Terrazza.

AW:

Yeah.

AT:

Yes. Have you been to the store?

AW:

No.

AT:

I invite you to come.

Woman:

I told him already. It's beautiful. The home is beautiful. Your home is beautiful.

AT:

The home is beautiful, but it's not homey. It's not—we don't have time. We work six days a week. On the only day that we take off is on Sunday, but he did so much. I mean, I wish you could see the newspapers and all his clips and the books and—he was the man of the year, and he was—what else did you do? I mean, he did a lot of things. But—

PT:

Well, anything. They let me do everything except get into the authority or—don't get into anything too big and stuff like that. And they wanted me to remind everybody that, still, we were Mexicans and the Anglo ruled and kept the order. And they kept the lies on all the business. And all we were being used for is to work in the farms or—or do the errand running.

AT:

But tell us about—tell him about the furniture store. Why—or where did you—where did you go and buy all of your goodies, and how do you expend so much.

PT:

Wow. That's a—that's—I got involved—of course, we were—a lot of discrimination. It's totally

discrimination against us here in Fort Stockton, and, of course, I was an Anglo—I mean, I was a Hispanic. But the Anglo community did not want us to get involved—

AT:
Okay.

PT:
—with businesses or hiring people or doing anything.

AW:
So how did you do it when they didn't want you to?

PT:
Well, I'm pretty stubborn. (all laugh)

AT:
He is stubborn. Very.

PT:
And, so, I got involved with the—working with the workers—the people involved like me. I got out of—I worked the farm, by the way. I did work at the farms and picking cotton and stuff like that.

AT:
And selling cars.

PT:
And—but at that time, they wanted to keep it the Anglo—wanted to keep—stay in control.

AT:
Okay. In—but what they want you to do and say *how* did you get successful into the furniture store. How? That's the ingredient that we want to—

PT:
Okay. My father—my father also was involved in discrimination, and he was working the farms a little bit. Well, we had no place to go, and he—and then my—one of his brothers got into the little grocery business, and then my father got into the dry goods. In fact, those buildings are still standing. They would go and buy wholesale in San Antonio and bring the clothes down here, and then offer—to sell these people the clothing—primarily clothing—

AT:

Okay. What about your furniture store? How did you do it?

PT:

Oh, that was—

AT:

Okay.

PT:

That came later.

AT:

Okay. They want to know about it.

PT:

How did we get into this one?

AT:

You were behind that motel—the Springhurst Motel. They rent you a place right there at the motel by your furniture store. You had a little store there, and then Winkler really helped you by selling you that big building. And you expanded with that.

PT:

We—well, we just struggled and were able to buy some dry goods and clothing, and as I got out a little farther in San Antonio, they had the markets. And I got to go, and I got to see what they were wholesaling—dry goods wholesaling—

AT:

And furniture.

PT:

—and furniture?

Woman:

He's saying Ed Winkler. Mr. Winkler helped you?

AT:

And Mr. Winkler helped him a lot. He loved Pete. When he passed away, he gave him property,

all the—because Pete didn't own the—behind the store, and he make sure—and Mr.—what is his name?

Woman:
Mr. Winkler?

AT:
—the son?

Woman:
I—he was here not too long ago.

AT:
What is—?

Woman:
Marty. Marty. Yes

AT:
Marty. Marty—

PT:
They were going through the same problems because they were Jewish, okay? So Ed Winkler—

AT:
Help you a lot.

PT:
—is a—helped me a lot. He's a—he was Jewish.

AT:
And then he bought the Morrison building. The Morrison building, I think, is the one that I have in Bella Terrazza. But when is—what is the other building besides Winkler?

PT:
Which?

AT:
Do you remember? Right next from Winkler where Mr. Winkler—the first furniture store that you had, the little—that space.

Woman:

Is that Mr. Cards office? The accountant, Mr. Card?

AT:

No. No. You know where Pete has his furniture store? The first door where you enter? The furniture store? That was his only store, and then Mr. Winkler sold him the other place. And then he bought Morrison. But what—what was the—

PT:

Well, my father got involved with the—

AT:

No—but the building right—the first one where the main doors—what store was that? Who did that belong to?

PT:

Which—?

AT:

Not Morrison and not Winkler's. The other building. Not the Cash Express.

PT:

Are we talking about that building—?

AT:

Where you have your furniture. Right—the main building where you have your beautiful doors as you enter. I don't think that was Winkler's. Winkler's was the other.

PT:

Yep. The Winkler's were Jewish. They were allowed a little more—

AT:

—freedom. Well, they had a lot of money. They do have a lot of money.

PT:

Yeah. They had money, and they also helped each other.

AT:

Very smart.

AW:

You—Amy, you mentioned something about papers. You said in his papers, talking about Pete. What do you mean? Do you have, like, news stories or letters or—?

AT:

I can bring you—I can bring you the book where they put a lot about his bio. His—the history of Pete, and—

AW:

Yeah. You know, that would be really nice to have a copy of that made to—for your historical association.

AT:

I can—

Woman:

If you would let us, we can make a copy of it.

AT:

And I know his—his daughter took a lot of the clips—the newspaper, but I have—I love the—to read. And his mother left, also, a lot of information about Pete because we know that one day, you know, you don't remember the things. And—but I can bring you—I found a book where they started writing everything that Pete had done, or he did, in life.

PT:

There was—There was a certain Anglo community—the Anglo community—that were determined not to allow us or these Spanish or Mexican or Jewish—

AT:

But there were a lot of them that did—that embraced you, too. There were a lot because there at the store there's a lot of friends of yours that come, and they love you—doctors and the pharmacist—and very good friends of yours. That—and all of his children married Anglos. All—the three, and they don't speak Spanish and—

AW:

Do they all live here?

AT:

And they live in Austin, and they have the most beautiful children. And his—he laughs about it, but they're beautiful people—the three. The two guys married beautiful—one of them was just

here—Joyce and Amy, and then the daughter married an Anglo. And they're the most beautiful people you've ever seen.

AW:

What—after that first election in 1954 when you were twenty-three, were you active in politics for a long time afterwards?

PT:

Yes.

AT:

All the time, until—I'm going to say until two years ago. I see that he didn't have that energy anymore. And we take him to vote, but he doesn't have—like, before he used to get very, very upset, and he will say, "No. We're going to go." And he will bring all these—what is it? The voting copies so everybody will go. And he will go door-to-door. He worked the elections very hard, but two years ago is when he started declining on—

AW:

So, city council, school board, county commission—

AT:

Were you—no.

AW:

No? Not county, but on the city.

AT:

City council.

PT:

It was the battle between the Anglo—the community—they didn't want the Hispanic—

AT:

(Amy laughs) I'm sorry.

PT:

—community to get involved with—

AW:

Which groups did you serve, though, as an elected official? City council? Is that—?

PT:

I guess—I got into the city and also I got into the school.

AW:

School board?

PT:

Uh-huh.

AT:

Yeah, because he's got a lot of pictures that—people are bringing me pictures where he used to hand out the diplomas to all the students.

AW:

Uh-huh. Let me suggest something: one of the things that really, really important—especially for these children that now live in Austin, and—where do your children live?

AT:

They live in Alpine, and one of them is in Germany.

AW:

Oh. That's a long way apart. When their—they have children, and their children have children, and they want to know about the two of you, it's going to be hard to find that sort of stuff. So, if there is a place—like either the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech where we collect these kinds of things or with the Historical Association here—if you have some of those photographs and the printed material that you were just talking about—the summaries of what has been done and when and those dates of election—that's really valuable stuff, and that way it'll be—it'll be around for—

AT:

Forever.

AW:

Yeah. No matter who wants to look at it.

AT:

Oh, wonderful.

AW:

Yeah, so—

AT:

I'm going to bring it to you.

AW:

Yeah.

AT:

Yeah. Get you a box.

AW:

Make sure—I'll give you each a card, and that way—

AW:

I wish you can one day maybe do my mother. My mother is eighty-four.

AW:

Where does she live?

AT:

She's fixing to be eighty-five—here. And very—I mean, she's the only, I guess, survivor right now out of the whole San Antonio. I was born and raised in San Antonio del Bravo right across from Candelaria, Tejas—is the border town. Do you know Candelaria, Ruidoso, Presidio, Ruidoso—

AW:

Mm-hm. Yes.

Woman:

Ruidoso.

AT:

Okay. Ruidoso, Candelaria, and then we were born and raised. So she is—she can tell you the history of everything, and she keeps everything on Pete's. And she's just there to read the paper and to know, and clip, and save all the clips. And she's wonderful. She's—

AW:

Will we have time, this trip, to talk to her? What is your mother's name?

AT:

Barbara Calanche. But she wasn't—she's not from Fort Stockton.

Woman:

Yeah. It's okay.

AW:

I don't care. I'd like to hear—

AT:

But especially if you ask her about the—Pablo Acosta—about how they smuggled drugs, how what—that's—that's what she likes to talk about—Pablo Escobar, Chapo Guzmán, and she can tell you—you better not interrupt her when there's something going on in the TV that she needs to know. And she remembers dates. She remembers everything. She's wonderful, wonderful.

AW:

And, so, we would call you to—

AT:

Yes, yes.

PT:

Yes.

AW:

How—what—how do we get ahold of you?

AT:

Just call me at 290—and Elva can tell you—290-4879. Elva works, also, at the store.

AW:

Forty-eight seventy-nine?

AT:

Seventy-nine. Yes sir.

AW:

Okay.

AT:

And I'm going to—one day, hopefully soon, I can write a book. My book is going to be comic. It's going to be all my life, I think, is happy and it's chiste—me rio (45:32)—I laugh about what

happen in my life. I think it's wonderful. And Pete was that way, too. Pete—but, you know, time changes.

PT:

Well—

AT:

And we tried for him to—

PT:

There was just a lot of discrimination in—

AT:

He's—

PT:

—in the—between the Anglo and the Mexican.

AT:

Yes.

PT:

Mexican-Americans. There was everything else that we got—

AT:

But, also, you had a lot of rewards from that. You learned and you got stronger and you did a lot of good things in life, right?

PT:

Well, yes. I had no choice.

AT:

And he speaks to Delmon the other day—honestly—Delmon is coming when the elections were done here for his son, and I said, "I hope he doesn't sit down, and—" We were at the voting place, and—because they pick on each other, still, like little kids. So I said, "Oh," and Pete had to turn, and he went back. And I said, "Pete, let's go. Please, let's go." And he said, "No. Let me say hi to Delmon. "Hi, Delmon. I've heard that you're paying twenty dollars per person so they can come and vote for your son." Is—this what we told them just recently. And I said, "Pete, you didn't have to tell—" And he turned, and he says, "No. I'm paying better than twenty dollars." So, I mean. I'm just— (all laugh)

PT:

There was a lot of discrimination. A lot of it.

AT:

Yes. Okay.

AW:

Would you mind signing the release, and—

AT:

Yes, sure.

AW:

—both of you. Each of you, rather. I'm sorry.

AT:

You sign it here.

AW:

And then sign right after.

AT:

Thank you. Thank you for inviting Pete, and I wish—

AW:

I think we would like to—

AT:

I'm going to go and look for it right now, and then I can bring a copy. Yeah, right here. Just Pete Terrazas. Just Pete Terrazas. He might forget everything, but he doesn't forget his business, how to sell, the bank, and the money every day, and the employees.

AW:

Yeah, ask Amy to sign that, too.

AT:

Okay.

AW:

If you would—if you would, please.

AT:

Where do you want me to sign?

AW:

Just right along—

AT:

Right—right here.

AW:

Yeah, perfect. Just wherever you'd like.

PT:

There's been lot of material written about this.

AT:

—on him.

AW:

Yeah, that's what we're looking for. Amy, what was your maiden name?

AT:

Tercero.

AW:

T-e-r—

AT:

C-e-r-o.

AW:

—c-e-r-o?

AT:

Yes.

AW:

And—maiden name—And your married name before you married Pete?

AT:

Okay. Renteria. R-e-n-t—

AW:

E-r-i-a? Okay, great. I really wish you would look for that, and I think it would be a great asset to have all that in one place. And, especially, with all the different kids—if there's a digital scan of this, then everybody can make a copy off that, and, so, they have it available to them. I think that'd be a really nice thing.

AT:

And his ex-wife still alive, and she lives in Austin [sic]. And she is from here—from Fort Stockton, still. But she lives in—I mean, she lives in Austin, Texas.

AW:

Yeah. Good. Well, thank you so much for coming out.

AT:

Thank you, and I wish—

AW:

Do you need some water?

PT:

I wish—could make more sense to you, but—

AW:

Oh, no we—this is helping us a lot, and there's going to be—

AT:

He still resents it, but—and everybody has a right. And, like I'm telling you, I had never seen—only—but it didn't hurt me. I was working for Anthony's—do you remember Anthony's department store?

AW:

Oh, yeah.

Woman:

I've only been here for—

AT:

Anthony's? They had an Anthony's here. They had a—you remember?

AW:

Well, I don't remember them here, but I used to go to Anthony's Department Store when I was a little kid.

AT:

Yes, and I've worked, like, nine years—for nine years there at the Anthony's in Odessa on West County Road. And I remembered—and this is the only time that ever, ever felt—I helped this lady, and we were—we work under commission, but I was the head department or the department head. And, then, I remembered I helped her for about an hour with all the clothing and everything. When I was ready to check her out she said, “No. I don't want you to ring me up.” So I said, “Okay,” but I didn't think anything of it. Then Mary O'Neil—it was an older lady—she came in and she put it under my name and my number, and she said, “Amy. That lady said—by the way—that girl helped me, but I just don't want Hispanics to help me. I don't want them to get credit on my clothes.” And when she told me, it hurt me more than Mary told me than what the lady—it was the only time that I ever—I had just a tear, but, after that, never again. (laughs) Never. It's been wonderful. The United States embraces all of my family that that we're very grateful—my father died when I was nine, and they were very wealthy. They were the wealthiest people in San Antonio [**del bravo, Mexico**]**—that—that building out—or the hacienda—where they—my father was born and raised, it's, right now, a bed and breakfast.** Theresa Chambers—do you remember Theresa Chambers from Alpine?

Woman:

I don't know her.

AT:

You remember her brother, Robert Chambers, got caught with drugs—him and Sheriff Thompson—in Marfa?

Woman:

I might have heard that story.

AT:

Okay. Well, she bought the building and converted it into a bed and breakfast, and this is where my—my father—I wish we can get that building back. But, then, when he died, they took everything from us. Everything. They had cattle. They had farming, and they—my mother was not going to get anything. So this is when we arrived, illegally, to the United States. I was nine, and I was here to just take care of my brothers. And my mother would work in the field, and this

is how we started coming in. And then we became resident aliens, then American citizens—or naturalized citizens. But it's been wonderful. All of us love it here, and when I teach my classes—I say only—we need the best citizens, the best example here in this country. I love it. I love it. I think it's wonderful. But, we're going to go, so you can continue.

AW:

Okay. Great. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

AT:

Thank you.

PT:

There's no end to this

AW:

Yeah. I know it. That's true with all good stories.

AT:

Yes.

Woman:

Amy, I want to tell you—when we moved—

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