

**Oral History Interview of
Daniel G. Rascon & Ernestina R. Sanchez**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
May 11, 2019
Fort Stockton, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Fort Stockton Interviews***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Daniel Rascon, and Ernestina Rascon Sanchez as they discuss their local community and church in Fort Stockton, Texas. In this interview the siblings provide background information about their family and their church, and how the community and church have changed over time.

Length of Interview: 00:52:55

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Keywords

Religion, Catholic, Fort Stockton Community

Daniel Sanchez (DS):

Okay.

Unknown Speaker 1 (US1):

Well you said three interviews I'm like, "Where's the other one." [Laughs]

DS:

My name is Daniel Urbina Sanchez, today's date is May 11, 2019, I'm in Fort Stockton, Texas and we're interviewing Ernestina R. Sanchez and Daniel G. Rascon. Thank you both for being here today. And Ernestina could you please start off with your complete legal name?

Ernestina R. Sanchez (ERS):

Ernestina Galindo Rascon Sanchez.

DS:

And where were you born?

ERS:

I was born here in Fort Stockton on April 23, 1948.

DS:

Now I'm going to introduce her brother. Daniel go ahead and give us the same information.

Daniel G. Rascon (DGR):

Hi, I'm Daniel Galindo Rascon, and I was born here in Fort Stockton too, in October, 17 1957.

DS:

And could y'all tell us about your parents. Their names and where they were from?

ERS:

My mom and dad were Epolito Rascon and my mom Angelina Rascon.

DGR:

Galindo.

ERS:

Galindo Rascon. Dad was Epolito Gomez Rascon. My grandparents were Livorio Rascon and Estefana Rascon.

DS:

And were they from this area?

ERS:

They were born and raised here in Fort Stockton.

DS:

How many generations back?

ERS:

Three, four generations.

DGR:

Four generations. I think so.

DS:

So, y'all have been here—your family has been here forever.

ERS:

Yes.

DS:

Wow.

ERS:

And, also my great grandfather Pedro Romero, which I know lived in the house that they have here. I live in their house. It's still standing. Made out of adobe you know, but it's still there.

DS:

Did anybody—any of your ancestors tell you any stories that you recall about early Fort Stockton, that type of thing?

ERS:

Oh God, I can go back to when my dad was growing up. There was a lot of discrimination. He, when him and my grandfather would go into town there used to be a drugstore, The Galley Moore, they could not go in there. They had to go through the back. So, they went through a hard time back then. And when they built the church here, from stories that I would hear from my relatives, they came to church and they had their kids baptized at the church. Back in—my dad was born in 1915. And not all of my—well, at least well my uncles were baptized there, that I know of.

DS:

So did they all live in that area that is now referred to as Little Mexico?

ERS:

Yes. I still live out—right behind the church.

DS:

What's the boundaries of Little Mexico? You know if you were to ask for the physical boundaries, what are they?

ERS:

Oh God. From, not forty-second but the other street.

DGR:

Forty-second and well it's—

ERS:

Forty-first.

DGR:

It's forty-second street and then San Ignacio lane is where we've gone. And the church is right there as well. And of course, this is not the city but it's the county. Pecos County so it's not in the city of Fort Stockton.

DS:

Okay, so we're just outside of the city. That's where the church is? That's why on the flyer or whatever it said, there wasn't really an address just a crossroads.

DGR:

Yeah, yeah.

DS:

Oh, okay. That explains it. So, y'all grew up in the county then, technically.

ERS:

Yes.

DS:

And what schools did y'all go to—where they the one's in Fort Stockton or did you have something here in Little Mexico.

ERS:

No, we went to the one in Fort Stockton. Butz Elementary.

DGR:

Butz, I went to Butz too.

DS:

Well, you know, you mentioned your dad was born at that time—what was it like—did he talk about what the neighborhood *La Vecina Era ahi* [The neighbor was there]. When y'all were being—when he was growing up, did he talk about what it was like?

ERS:

It was a happy time for them. My dad would help the Jesuits priest that were here. They had a little farm area back on Storm Road where they grew their vegetables and yeah, my dad would go help out there. My dad was about like ten. Ten, eleven years old and he would help them. And of course, they had a wagon. Back then hey didn't have any cars [laughs] just horses.

DGR:

And dad, dad's family and the Gomez's and the Romero's family have always been close to the church. And dad used to go to mass every day I think.

DS:

In fact, I was going to ask you that because this is about the church. You know, how close were y'all, how involved was the family?

ERS:

Oh God. Very much involved. My grandmother, when we were growing up, would take us to church. All the grandkids and of course, she would always sit up front. Never in the back, always in the front. And right there was the sacred heart. Where we sat. And she would tell us, "You better be still. Because he's watching you." And we would look at the sacred heart and we would go like this and of course, the eyes to move. And the sacred heart's there right now. And when you look at it and you just kind of move your head around it the eyes move with you [laughter].

DGR:

I think it was a way to control us [laughter].

ERS:

Even so, but no. Even now you look at him, and you kind of turn and the eyes kind of move. The sacred heart was given to me by Father Fry. Andres had asked me, how come I have the sacred

heart? Well, Father Fry had given it to me back in 1967 when I graduated. I don't know why, but he gave it to me.

DGR:

And Father Fry was very close to us. He was one of the pastors here.

ERS:

Yes, he was an amazing priest.

DGR:

And then Father Sam Homsey became the priest also for our parish and I remember growing up going to religious academic classes. It was on Wednesdays, we would just walk from the house to the church there, and we would have them. And then on cold days, when the church was too cold, they would come to my mom's house and we'd have the classes there. Yeah, it was cool [laughs].

DS:

About how many families were going to church there when y'all grew up?

ERS:

God the whole neighborhood went. The whole neighborhood.

DGR:

Yeah.

ERS:

I'd say about more than twenty families.

DS:

Wow so it's pretty—because that building's not very big so it must've been full all the time.

ERS:

It was always full. Always full. Father Frankie when he had mass one time, I mean, everybody would sit in the back. And when Father Vialdares came in he looked at everybody and goes, "Hey, I don't bite. Sit up front." [Laughter] But, that was after, I was already out of school, and I wish I would've said that a long time ago when we were growing up. Because everybody sat in the back [laughs]. Yeah.

DGR:

And I remember the church bell. Father—they were ringing the bell by fifteen minutes before the service started. And I can still picture the neighbors walking to the church looking by the house. And I was one of the lucky few that was able to reach the bell and I would ring the bell.

ERS:

But, he would fly up with it [US laughs].

DGR:

Oh yeah because I was small.

ERS:

They had to hold him down [DGR laughs].

DGR:

So that's the kind of memory I have for that church. It was really awesome.

ERS:

And also my grandfather, when my dad came home from the service back in 1945 he had made a promise to San Ignacio that his son ever came back alive he would walk on his knees from the road all the way to the altar. And he did. So, that's sacred land, to me it's sacred. It's still is and it always will be. I mean, the founders put a lot of sacrifice in that church.

DS:

Your family has basically been there from the start of the church. So, what's it like you as adults now to have seen it change over the years and now to come to this hundredth anniversary.

ERS:

It is a blessing; to me it's a blessing. I usually go during—when it's a nice day I go to the church and I have always sat out there and I just reminisce. I can close my eyes and hear my grandfather, my grandmother, the people just talking and the kids running around. And to see it today all the people there it just brought back a lot of memories.

DS:

Your brother mentioned that his favorite memories were ringing the bell, how about you. What are some of your memories?

ERS:

My memories are going to the novenas, to mass—especially the novenas. You know the—my, an aunt that would sing a ballad to San Ignacio, there is a ballad. And I should've wrote it down when she last sang it. She knew it by heart. And I found it on Google [laughter].

DGR:

Oh really?

ERS:

I did, uh-huh.

DS:

Like everything else.

ERS:

Yes, um-hm. I found it, and I'm like, "Oh, I got all those chills when I heard it." But it's—they sing it with a choir. My aunt just sang it from her heart.

DGR:

And I remember the choir was the—the woman of the neighborhood.

ERS:

Doña [madam or ma'am] Francisca, and yeah.

DGR:

And my favorite song that they would sing is called "*Bendito, Bendito, Sea Dios*" [Blessed, blessed, be God] and it was just an old, old song.

ERS:

Oh, yes. Oh, they would—and I still get chills when I hear it. Because they would sing it with no music. They would just by heart.

DGR:

It was very cool. And I remember during those days of classes, beginning classes, they would open the doors of the church. And we would sit around there and you would see the mesa right there, and I was just amazed that from the whole church I'm looking at this mesa just beautiful. And once in a while I'd go to another church and I'd just sat there by the door and just reminisce and just think about growing up and just looking at that mesa. Yeah, it's very, very cool.

DS:

What were some of the events at the church was important to the family life?

DGR:

Mom's first communion right?

ERS:

The communion, I know my aunts and uncles were baptized there at the church. My dad wasn't. Was he? Yeah, my dad baptized there at the church and his sisters, and brothers were all baptized there. And of course, did you ever see a marriage? My mom when she was small; I think there's a picture there at the church where her aunt had gotten married and my mom had *madrina* [godmother]. Yeah, when Andres showed me that picture I go, "[gasp] That's my mom right there. How did you get the picture." [Laughter] you know.

DS:

Well, I was going to ask you, do y'all have any family photos like that?

ERS:

I don't know what happened to the old pictures, mom had a lot of pictures.

DGR:

They're there yeah.

ERS:

Yeah, they're there somewhere. But, I looked for them and couldn't find them.

DGR:

There's a picture of grandpa and grandma, but there's a picture I have at home that's grandad and my grandma with my father being a child. He's in the lap, and then his older sisters was—yeah, very, very cool.

DS:

Are y'all the only siblings or do y'all have more brothers and sisters?

DGR:

We're eight.

DS:

Eight? Wow. Is everybody still here or have they moved off?

ERS:

We lost two brothers.

DGR:

We lost Joel, who was the oldest brother, and my brother Raymond.

ERS:

Just a baby.

DGR:

He was the youngest one. So it's Ernestina, Griselda, Joel, David, Daniel, Susana, Junior—Epolito junior, and Raymond.

ERS:

Plus two that passed away and died.

DGR:

And you look at the house where I was born, it's small—I don't know how mom and dad.

ERS:

I know I mean—

DGR:

It was small.

ERS:

And we were always happy. I mean we fit in that house perfectly.

DGR:

And so we didn't have a lot of money but we never went without food or clothing or stuff like that.

ERS:

That house belonged to my grand—our great grandfather Pedro Romero. He was one of the founders of the church.

DGR:

It's an old house too though, but how old do you think the house is?

ERS:

Close to a hundred.

DS:

Wow.

DGR:

Really? Wow.

ERS:

Um-hm. The adobe's already falling.

DS:

Wow. It's an adobe structure?

DGR:

Yeah, it's adobe.

DS:

So what kind of updates have been done to the place over the years?

ERS:

Not much. I haven't—

DGR:

No, remember growing up we didn't have any bathroom out so we had to go outside for the—

DS:

Okay. Well, that's kind of what I was asking because I know it probably was outside, I was wondering if it was re-plumbed inside.

ERS:

No, no plumbing.

DGR:

Just water.

ERS:

No plumbing [laughter].

DGR:

Yeah, I was just [laughs]—I did not like to go to the outhouse because I was scared of the spiders and the snakes [laughs].

DS:

Wow.

ERS:

Yeah, we had snakes in there. Black widows.

DGR:

Oh, and we had a cistern that would collect the water, and that's the water we would use to drink and wash pour clothes and dishes.

DS:

And did y'all have other water sources or was this strictly just off of the cistern. I mean did y'all have like a well or something?

ERS:

No.

DGR:

No, dad would go to town to fill up the barrels with water for us. For bathing and stuff like that.

DS:

Yeah, the necessities.

ERS:

Yeah, we didn't have electricity in this area until nineteen-what? Nineteen fifty-eight, fifty-nine.

DGR:

No.

ERS:

Yes.

DGR:

Are you serious?

ERS:

I'm serious [laughter]. Yeah, we had kerosene lamps. Yeah, that's how we did our homework. With the kerosene lamp right there and then—and I still have the kerosene lamps.

DS:

So I guess you were already going to at least elementary by then right?

ERS:

Yeah.

DS:

So, what was that, since you're like a decade older than us, what was that era like for you growing up in the late fifties here?

ERS:

Oh God. Looking back now, I wish that time would come back over here because nowadays technology. The kid's don't know nothing about going outside and playing or going out and getting the quail. My dad had traps out there.

DGR:

Oh quail? Yeah.

ERS:

Yeah, we would catch up to a hundred quail. That's good eating. Better than chicken.

DS:

So you had to subsistent and go out there and do your—

ERS:

Um-hm, yeah.

DGR:

Right we had goats, and pigs, and chickens, and a duck I think?

ERS:

Yeah [DGR laughs].

DS:

Wow.

ERS:

Yeah, it was a lot of, I mean I enjoyed that time. Compared to now, it's like I wish I could go back. If only time would go back.

DGR:

That was in the sixties right?

DS:

Yeah. When you graduated '67 in high school where you among the first *Mexicanas* [Mexicans female tense] to graduate from the local school or where there already others that had done that?

ERS:

There were others that had already graduated in.

DS:

Because I know from our timeline in Lubbock it's about the sixties. Late sixties, early sixties when people start graduating high school there.

ERS:

Back in the fifties there were only a few.

DGR:

A few, yeah.

ERS:

The Mejia's, Maria, my cousin she graduated in 1958.

DS:

So after you graduated high school what did you do next? What was your next thing? Did you go into the workforce, get married?

ERS:

No, I went to school. I went to school in Odessa. Right after graduation my parents really wanted me out of the house.

DGR:

Yup, because we didn't have enough room [laughter].

ERS:

Right after graduation they took me to Odessa and found me an apartment and that was it.

DGR:

Going to school.

DS:

That's kind of unusual because usually the female is the one they don't want moving off, and you, they helped you—not only wanted you, they helped you move out. What was that like?

ERS:

It was scary. It was scary at first. I was out there by myself like experiencing life, you know. Because our parents were kind of strict. Especially with the girls. We couldn't talk to the boys. We couldn't. My mom would say or my dad also, "If I see you talking to any boy I'm picking you up." And that was at the Rooney park they would take us on weekends like Sunday afternoon to just walk around. And, "No talking to the boys." And boys would come over here and we were like, "Oh, no. Get away from us." [Laughter]

DGR:

You're going to get us in trouble.

ERS:

Yeah, yeah. One time a bunch of guys came from Pecos, which they call *Los Peuquitos y los monitos* from Monahans. They called *monitos*. There was always a fight between Pecos, Monahans, and Fort Stockton. The Fort Stockton guys were called the *stacitas*.

US1:

There still is fights [laughs] today. We don't like each other [laughter].

ERS:

Yeah they've never liked each other.

US1:

Our biggest enemy is Pecos.

DS:

Pecos.

US1:

Yes.

ERS:

Yeah. Back then it was *Monahans los monitos*.

DS:

Monitos huh.

ERS:

Monitos.

DGR:

Oh, I didn't know that.

ERS:

Yeah, they did a lot of stabbings here back then. Dances.

DS:

So would they have like—that brings up another thing. What was the music scene like back then? Was there like groups you could go out to see or people come through here to play music or what?

ERS:

Yeah, they would come and play like—

DGR:

The Blue Notes right?

ERS:

The Blue Notes.

DS:

Blue Notes? Oh.

DGR:

We'd get that Selena Sanchez, and the Blue Notes.

ERS:

Of course, we had Little Joe, back then, and Augustin Ramirez. It was more our style of music not the, you know.

DGR:

And the radio station just played country western. So we grew up listing to Patsy Cline because when I was born they played—when I was born she had passed away and when I was growing up that's all I heard was Patsy Cline music. So I like that's my music [laughs].

ERS:

And of course, we didn't have TV

DS:

It was in it's infancy too, TV as a medium I mean it wasn't until what 96' when the first phones started coming out. Flip phones in 2006 or the first iPhones. Y'all were right at the edge of that.

DGR:

And for me growing up, dad was very influential with my professional life, my spiritual life. When I was in high school I was really involved with the church here and Saint Agnes, and Saint Agnes used to be the other church in town and stuff.

ERS:

Then it was dropped.

DGR:

And Father Sam was the one that encouraged me to look into become a priest. So, right after high school I joined the precious blood fathers. Which was in participation in Kansas City so I went to a Jesuit school at Saint John's University in Kansas City. I was there four years, I graduated with a BA in theology and a minor in education and philosophy. And part of the seminary training, I had to spend a year in a church so I spent it in Sweetwater, Texas. Which was also a precious blood run parish. And then after that I went to graduate school at Saint Johnson college in Minnesota at the school of theology there. Then I graduated in 1986 there from graduate school. And then I decided not to become a priest so I did a clinical pastor cation. Clinical pastor cure residency program to be trained as a chaplain at Des Moines, Iowa at Mercy hospital. And, then after that I started work in Chicago in 1987 or so as a chaplain. So I've been a chaplain now for thirty years.

DS:

Wow.

DGR:

Yeah, so mom and dad—dad was very influential. My aunts and uncles, oh they prayed for me like—they prayed a lot. So every time I come here all this, elders come to me and say, "Oh Daniel. Daniel." They give me big hugs and stuff. That's affirming, it really is affirming of my faith.

DS:

So, what was it about your upbringing that made you choose the path you chose?

DGR:

The influence. Dad would take us to mass a lot and I remember the holidays like Christmas, Easter. We had to go to mass [laughs]. And then Father Sam Hompsey he had a lot of influence on how he encouraged me to get involved with the church groups. I was involved with a church group, I got involved with the choir, retreats stuff like that. I think that had a lot to do with that. And faith. I would spend a lot time in the church by myself [laughs]. Sitting there right by the altar as a little kid, when I was in high school. And so, Father Sam said, "I think this guy has a special calling [laughs]."

ERS:

Well, grandpa—when Danny was small he, all his shirts where always up. Buttoned up to the top button. And grandpa would say, "This one here is going to be a father." [Laughter] In his heart he felt that Danny was going to be something big.

DGR:

Yeah. It was interesting. Then when I got baptized, mom says that my veil or the, you know, actually went down to the floor. It's kind of like, I don't know what was for. I guess I was special, I don't know [laughter]. *Travieso* [mischievous] [laughter].

ERS:

Out of all my brothers and my sisters, this one is the one that got the spanking. My—

DGR:

And I turned out to be the good guy [laughs].

DS:

What was, you know, we left you in Odesa going to school there. What was that like? Growing up there or going there and how many years were you there?

ERS:

I was there for about three years.

DS:

Three years.

ERS:

Then my dad got sick so I came home and I—to help out the family. Of course, I didn't go back to school, I went to work at *The Pioneer* as a typist.

DGR:

Really? *The Pioneer*?

ERS:

Yeah.

DGR:

Oh, I didn't know that.

DS:

The Pioneer was what.

ERS:

The newspaper. And in there they taught me how to print. Because I was typing a hundred and twenty words a minute.

DS:

Wow.

ERS:

And every time—

DGR:

And this is old type writer.

DS:

The old, what's the word, ole reliable [laughter].

ERS:

Yeah, and Mr. Baker the publisher he would give me the papers for me to type and I would finish everything and he goes, "You know what? Ernestina I don't what I'm going to do with you." He goes, "Come on back over here." And he'd—I got to the printing place and learned how to print.

DS:

Oh, so you learned how to set the type and all that?

ERS:

Um-hm.

DS:
Wow.

ERS:
It was—I enjoyed that.

DS:
How long did you work in that industry?

ERS:
I worked about a year. And then I got married.

DGR:
And she had a kid [laughs].

ERS:
My grandfather when I got married he goes, “Well mija—” not my dad, my dad didn’t talk to me it was my grandfather. And he goes, “*Mija eres harina de otro costal* [daughter you’re flour that belongs to another sack].” And I kept saying, “What does he mean by *harina de otro costal* [flour that belongs to another sack]” you know. But, I mean—

DGR:
What does that mean?

ERS:
I don’t know, I always pictured, “Well, I guess I’m the flour to the other bag.” [Laughter]

DGR:
Oh.

DS:
Yeah, literal translation right?

ERS:
Yeah. And I raised my kid, I raised four boys and then I had my fourth.

DS:
Did you raise them in the same church?

ERS:

My stepsons yeah. Because I remember David he made the communion. He made his first communion here.

DS:

Wow.

ERS:

Then of course, the other ones when I took them to their mother because there mother wasn't around them all the time. So, I had to reintroduce them to their mother. That was, I felt good about that because they got to know their mother. From then on, they got real close.

DGR:

Dad taught us service—to give service to others. And I think that's why I was interested in becoming a chaplain is helping others. And then my sister Griselda is a nurse also too. So she works in the nursing home here. So it's just that helping with someone professional.

DS:

You know, you must've looked at this day with some sort of pride because even your families was among the founders.

DGR:

Yeah. And I was going to make sure I was going to be here [laughs]. And I was able to ring the bell.

DS:

Again?

ERS:

Yes.

DS:

Did you hold him down?

ERS:

No. [Laughter] Back then we had a rope.

DS:

Did you?

ERS:

Um-hm. It was a rope and every time you went up, this one went up with it.

DS:

Well, you remember because you know, you're ten years older than him right?

ERS:

Um-hm.

DGR:

Yeah, I fell down, if I'm nervous. The singing, after the singing the ladies and stuff so. They would sing off tune but they were singing to the angels so it didn't matter. [Laughs] Beautiful.

ERS:

What I miss is having the novena of San Ignacio. At the time of the novena which was what, nine days? Nine days the ladies would gather and the prayers Dona Francisca is the one that started everything. Dona Francisca Calderon. She knew what she was saying, and we didn't move.

DGR:

The catholic purse, the rosary, and then when my dad was very sick and dying one of our neighbors came and let us in the rosary. That's how close this community is.

ERS:

Back then, when one of the families would get sick, kill a pig or a goat, the whole community would get together and help—

DGR:

Prepare and eat and stuff.

ERS:

Yeah, I mean it was so exciting because everybody got together. That's what made everything happy that everybody got together. Nowadays it's like do it on your own.

DGR:

Yeah, it's different now.

DS:

Well, you know, your family for the most part has stayed together. How about the community? The other families that you grew up with? Do you still keep in touch with any of them?

DGR:

The neighbors yeah.

ERS:

Yeah, with Nan, yeah. And Linda. They're the only ones now—

DGR:

No, the Dortes the Nadias.

ERS:

Los Dortes, yeah but the elders have you know, they're not here anymore. They're all gone.

DS:

Yeah, day's like this are kind of bittersweet because you think about your parents, your grandparents and all that.

ERS:

Yeah. Well yeah.

DGR:

A lot of members are coming back. And also the feeling too because they're feeling of safety, happiness in the church.

ERS:

Yeah it was. Everybody knew each other, and it just a whole one family.

DGR:

It was cool.

ERS:

And everybody after mass, everybody would be standing outside talking. The men over here, the woman over here, and the kids would be running up and down.

DS:

I mean, because it's not like today where you could run out to the mall. You know, something like that after mass. You had very few options you got to stay there right.

DGR:

And everybody would walk.

ERS:

Yes, everybody from this area we would walk to church. There were only a few that had their cars. But, it was mainly walking.

DGR:

I know most people walked. In the winter time too and they were there.

DS:

What was it big enough at the time that you needed a car for anything? Or was it just small enough that walking would get you by?

ERS:

No it's—I guess it was just something that we did because—

US1:

It was a part of the church?

ERS:

Yeah, you know. We all just walk over there.

DS:

Yeah because it was your neighborhood church.

ERS:

Yeah [DGR laughter]. We had to be there at church [laughs].

DGR:

If grandpa would be here, God he would be so happy.

DS:

I was going to ask you that, what would your parents and grandparents think about today?

ERS:

Oh God.

DGR:

They would be honored and humbled I think. Especially dad, yeah. Very, very humble. And today when I went to El Sancto I just felt humbled. Like, “Oh my God this is where I was fully embraced in my religious traditions.”

DS:

You know that's how Alma described it also. That it was a very humble place but at the same time, it was like a place where you knew you were there in the presence and had to be there.

ERS:

You know when I go to the church and sit out there. Of course, I always say—bring my rosary. And I pray out loud. I don't—you know, I'm not—I say it out loud. And it just gives me a lot of comfort.

DGR:

A lot of piece.

ERS:

And peace. That's where I find the peace. Right there.

DGR:

Oh, and that steeple and that cross, we kept—light during the day would just give us a lot of comfort. Especially when the moon was coming up.

ERS:

Oh when the moon was coming. And it would come right there, you can see the cross. Oh, it's beautiful.

DGR:

Oh yeah, yeah.

ERS:

Beautiful.

DGR:

Yeah, I remember that.

DS:

Well, I wonder if that was just happenstance or somebody thought that through. When they put the building there.

DGR:

Yeah. And looking out is the mesa there so [laughs]. It's just beautiful.

ERS:

Back then we didn't—there wasn't a lot of—

DGR:

Houses.

ERS:

Houses or anything it was just a few. But now, back then it was dark.

DGR:

Oh, it was dark, yeah.

ERS:

Dark, dark.

DGR:

That's right we didn't have any lights in the streets [laughs].

DS:

Yeah, I was going to say you didn't have any—well like you mentioned it wasn't until '58 when the electricity went out there.

DGR:

It was dark, yeah.

ERS:

Back then they used lamps at the church.

DS:

So where sermons at the church more intimate when it was just lamp?

ERS:

Yes. The way my grandfather would talk. It was more peaceful I think.

DS:

Well you know, you chose this as your life's work, what did you learn after you left from here, or lessons that you learned along the way that you had no idea where out there?

DGR:

The community, Simon Franco, and Juanita, where very spiritual people. And I was—took that to school, that we as a community it's a powerful, it's a powerful community. And I remember Father Frank talking about Raymond at the funeral. He says, "The gathered community at Fort Stockton has a history here." And he says, "And we also have the presence here. And the presence is that this community at Fort Stockton is coming to honor my brother right now. But don't forget there's also the future." And I've never forgotten that. So it's kind of like, wow. That's what church is. It's the present. No, the past, the present, and the future.

DS:

Maybe in a different building. I mean, we're over here, but we're here doing this interview about the old church and there's people attending church right now out there.

DGR:

And I never knew growing up that I was going to end up going to college, graduate school, living in Minnesota for four years, living in Chicago for sixteen years at different households, and being able to minister to all different faiths. From Baptists, to protestants, to atheists, to pagans, to Muslims, to Jewish and stuff. And it was all the same, treat people the same. Treat people with respect. And I never knew I was going to be a chaplain for thirty years when I was a little kid [laughs]. Yeah, it's just amazing.

DS:

So what was it like for a young man from Fort Stockton to go live in Minnesota? [DGR laughs]
Was there any cultural shock to you?

DGR:

Yes. Well, my first cultural shock was when I was in Kansas City. There the priest took us to an African American catholic church. And because we were so isolated in this town, though, I didn't realize that there were other ethnic groups that could be catholic. So I called my mom, I said, "Mom I didn't know blacks were catholic." [Laughs] My mom was like, "Yes, there are." It was just that cultural. Then in Minnesota there's a lot of German, Irish, so I learned how to do a good German polka up there [laughs]. But winter was cold it was—for the four years I was there warm enough [laughs]. It was cold.

DS:

What was it about Chicago that made you stay there for thirty-six years you said?

DGR:

For sixteen years.

DS:

Oh, sixteen years.

DGR:

I missed the setting. Because I used to right by the lake. So it was beautiful. And I worked for three hospitals there. Saint Francis hospital, it was a catholic hospital. And then I got hired as the director of catholic administration and worship at the University of the Rush hospital. And then I got hired as the director of pastor care at the University of Illinois at Chicago medical center. And I was there for ten years. And then I moved to Florida for a couple of years, and then I ended up in Texas. In Austin.

DS:

Is that were—are you in Austin now or are you back here?

DGR:

Yes. Austin.

DS:

Wow. You just came down for this event?

DGR:

Oh yeah.

DS:

Wow, that speaks volumes.

DGR:

I was not going to miss it. I think I was more excited than anybody else [laughter].

DS:

Well, it's been your life's work in a sense.

DGR:

Well, it's affirming. It's coming home to where it all started at. Spiritually and culturally too, though.

ERS:

And all this is due to grandma and grandpa. And our great grandfather.

DGR:

And I remember the women—the women had to wear their veils wherever.

ERS:

Oh yeah, we could not go in the church without a veil.

DGR:

They were strict.

ERS:

I wish it would come back.

DS:

When did those policies start to loosen a little?

ERS:

To change? Oh God. Sixties.

DGR:

It was right after the Vatican too also.

ERS:

It was back—

DGR:

Like the sixties, '69, '68 right?

ERS:

Somewhere around there, um-hm. That's when it all stopped.

DS:

I guess right around the same time as the cultural revolution that was going on in the US.

DGR:

Um-hm. And the catholic church, they reversed the—alter. The priest would always face the alter during mass and then they turned it around so the priest can face the community. So it could be part of the celebration of the—that was in the sixties.

ERS:

Yeah, sixties.

DS:

So you grew up seeing the backs when—

DGR:

I vaguely remember that discipline.

DS:

Wow. I wonder what type of symbolisms on that whether they're supposed to be in part and just leading and follow, you know what I mean?

DGR:

Yeah.

DS:

Because one your just—you don't know what's going on behind you.

DGR:

Right, it's the center, and the Vatican too wanted to change it so the community of people would be part of the celebration and be part of the mass. So, it was interesting.

DS:

All right. We've been going on for a little bit. Not quite an hour. Is there something I haven't asked either of y'all that y'all want to talk about?

ERS:

Just the little things.

DGR:

No, but Saint Joseph, it's like a family here, Saint Augustine and Saint Joseph. We use to go to mass there all the time or retreats and stuff like that. Or baptisms and funerals and—

ERS:

Saint Josephs. And we haven't had any new weddings here at the church right?

DGR:

Here?

ERS:

Um-hm. It's been a long time. I don't know which was the last wedding that was held here.

DGR:

I don't know, I don't live here [laughs].

ERS:

I know, what's her name? Mary Garcia. I know they got married there at the church. That was back in what? The early sixties or early seventies. Early sixties, early seventies was when they got married there at the church. I don't know why she wasn't there. She knew about it, her husband knew about it. I told them. They went to the store where I work and told them, "Be there at the church." And, "Oh yeah we got married there." And then she didn't come.

DGR:

I think that's it, huh?

ERS:

Yes.

DS:

Yeah. I thank y'all for coming here and letting us be a part of y'all's special day.

ERS:

Oh, yes. And I hope we have it every—I hope we have it open once a year at least, you know. Bring the community back together.

DS:

Has it been refurbished on the inside or anything?

DGR:

I'm sorry?

DS:

Has it been like refurbished or anything on the inside or just been maintained?

ERS:

No.

DGR:

No, it's the same.

ERS:

It's the same.

US1:

I think they're going to get new windows. And they're going to remake the roof to how it original was.

ERS:

Yes that's what they—

DGR:

Oh good.

US1:

I think they polished the floors. That's what I was told this week.

DGR:

And those are the original floors, right?

US1:

Yeah. They have to have it all original to make it a what's it called? To make it a historical.

DS:

Did they get a historical marker out there?

US1:

Yeah, that's why they have to make it—that's why they have to put the same roof and everything so they could have it as a historical marker.

ERS:

They ought to have a plaque also for all the—

US1:

The founders?

ERS:

The founders.

US1:

Yeah, there was a list—there was a frame in there with handwritten names. And it was in a green frame. And they are going to make a plaque for the founders, Urza Gonzales, and Rubios, and Romeros, and different last names on there.

DS:

Yeah because the way that markers work is when they're writing about the description that's when people can include and so and so was the founder of this. You know, somebody donated this property and it became—that's the way they handle it in general. Because I used to be on our Lubbock County Historical Commission so we were involved with stuff like that.

DGR:

And the *primera* [first] Hernandez Duartez de Esperanzas were—we knew each other well. And we used to play baseball up there in the _____ [0:51:09.1].

ERS:

Yeah, with the sisters. The sister when they held the catechism there, they would go outside and play with the kids soccer. And back then the sisters wore their you know—

DGR:

Veil and habit.

DS:

Yeah.

ERS:

And they'd be out there kicking the ball [laughs]. That's one thing I remember is having the catechism there.

DGR:

That was with sister Bertina right?

ERS:

Sister Bertina. That's one sister I'll never forget. I've never forgotten.

DGR:

I vaguely remember her though.

DS:

Where any of the old fathers able to come back for this or anybody from the church?

ERS:

No, none of them. Bruce came back.

DGR:

No, Father Sam passed away.

ERS:

Yeah, Father Fry.

DGR:

Father Fry passed away.

ERS:

Father Vialdares went back to Spain and passed away. He was something else. He's the one that brought the youth—the communion closer. Father Vialdares he was a missionary. And he always had jokes and would be laughing there at the church. And of course, we weren't supposed to laugh, but he was just very outgoing, Father Vialdares, and my dad liked him so much.

DS:

I thank y'all.

DGR:

Well, thank you for giving us this opportunity.

ERS:

I hope it is what you wanted.

DS:

Yeah, thank you Ernestina. Thank you Daniel. You have a good name by the way.

End of recording