

**Oral History Interview of  
Amanda Salazar**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez  
July 31, 2015  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Hispanic Interview Series***

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## Interview Series Background:

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

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Amanda Salazar. Salazar talks about growing up in Lubbock and her involvement with the Miss Hispanic Lubbock pageant, which she eventually won. Salazar also talks about attending Texas Tech and her major in biochemistry.

**Length of Interview:** 00:24:34

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**Daniel Sanchez (DS):**

My name is Daniel Sanchez, today's date is July 31, 2015. I'm in my office at the Southwest Collection, and today I will be speaking with Amanda Salazar. Amanda is a Tech alum and she's also been very active in the local community. Amanda, thanks for being here.

**Amanda Salazar (AS):**

Glad to be here.

DS:

And please state your complete legal name.

AS:

It's Amanda Catalina Salazar.

DS:

Okay and where, when were you born?

AS:

I was born here in Lubbock, Texas, December 9, 1986.

DS:

Okay, how about your parents, tell us about them, their names, where they're from.

AS:

My parents are Erasmo and Nancy Salazar, and my mother is from Slaton and my father is from Lamesa.

DS:

And when were they born?

AS:

My mom was born in June of '52, and my dad in September of '53, so—

DS:

Okay, and can you provide information on your grandparents?

AS:

My grandparents, maybe not so much, because one of each of them is passed away, so I only have, on my father's side it's Erasmo Salazar and I believe he's from the lower part of Texas.

And my grandmother, who's still surviving, is Catalina Salazar. And she is also from Slaton and this area, so not too far away.

DS:

And what is your grandfather's occupation, or was?

AS:

My grandfather? He was a mason, and so he built houses and was a bricklayer.

DS:

How about your grandmother?

AS:

My grandmother was a homemaker; she raised her children, so that's what she did.

DS:

And your dad?

AS:

My dad, he also runs my grandfather's business, he's also a mason and a bricklayer, so that's what he does now.

DS:

Okay, and your mom, is she a—

AS:

My mom works for LISD, she works for Brown Elementary, she's their attendance clerk, and so she's been doing that for quite a while.

DS:

You mentioned Brown Elementary, is that the school y'all went to?

AS:

No, me and my brother actually went to Christ the King for elementary and middle school and then Lubbock High for high school

DS:

You know, you mentioned your brother, what's his name?

AS:

Elliott Salazar

DS:

And he's your younger brother, right?

AS:

Yes, by about almost two years.

DS:

Two years. Okay, so you know, describe your life here in Lubbock, growing up, you know, what part of town you lived in, what it was like.

AS:

Well, I grew up on like the northwest side of town, it's kind of grown now, but it wasn't exactly that much then, it was mostly cotton fields, so we grew up next to cotton fields, but it was a good childhood, it was a lot of fun, you know, it was before the internet and everything like that, so a lot of playing outside and riding bikes and just getting out there and having a good time. And we went to a private school, and so wearing a lot of uniforms definitely since I was probably like five or four, somewhere around there, until I was fifteen. So it was a long time. And I grew up, I went to Catholic school, so you know, of course we knew everything about the Catholic Religion, going to mass at least once a month, sometimes even more than that. So it was definitely an experience. I really loved it. It made me appreciate my history and what my parents—you know, I got to see why they valued this religion and why they wanted us to continue and to experience it in such a different way.

DS:

And, you know, you mentioned wearing uniforms all the time, was that out of the norm for your circle of friends at that time?

AS:

Yeah, well it was kind of strange, because you know as a child you assume everyone is doing the same the thing as you, but when you're in a uniform, and let's say you go to the mall, you see everyone else not in a uniform, and it's kind of like, Oh I guess no everyone is doing this as well, so yeah it was different. And another thing too was that we had like a casual uniform and then we had a uniform that we would wear to mass, so it was little bit more formal, and so yeah, you know, just having to wear that and then even sometimes wearing the cardigan and everything and the skirt, you know heels and stuff like that, having to wear that and go to different places after school, you know, was interesting for people to kind of stare at you and kind of see you as somebody different.

DS:

And you mentioned the impact of religion on your family, were you brought up fairly traditional?

AS:

I would say so, especially for this area. Very much rooted in the Catholic faith, all of my family is Catholic and that's just, you know, who we are, and it's a part of who we are now and also our future, so it's something I learned to appreciate, and I would definitely want to do in the future for my own family.

DS:

And let's talk about that transition, when you transitioned from a private school, you went to Lubbock High, what was that like, those first years there?

AS:

Oh, it was a shock. Well, first of all, getting ready because I had to actually buy clothes, which I had never bought school clothes before. So that was a huge shock in trying to figure out how to do that and trying to figure out what to wear exactly and going from there. And then also, because Christ the King is a lot smaller than Lubbock High, it was a big transition going to something where my class went from about less, around thirty, to about, you know, in the hundreds. So that was, you know, a big transition. But it was something that I really, really loved doing because I got to be more active in my school. I was on pom squad, and you know, student council, and National Honor Society, and we were a lot more active because we did have more people, and we were allowed to be more a part of the community, so it was a hard transition but it was good, definitely was good.

DS:

How was it academically?

AS:

Academically it was pretty fierce. I remember the transition from middle school to high school was actually harder for me than it was going from high school to college because I was not used to the amount of curriculum that Lubbock High would give me. And I took all AP classes, I wanted to be in the IB [**International Baccalaureate**] program, but I missed it by one course [laugh]. So it was a bit unfortunate, but my brother actually did the IB program and it is pretty rigorous. It definitely pushes you to another level, I mean, I remember sometimes even doing, you know, projects and being like really worked and trying, you know, even being stressed, which is kind of unusual, at least what I've heard from other people who experience high schools here, to be stressed in high school. But it was a good learning experience because it prepared me for my college education, and I was really grateful for that.



DS:

Which instructors really had an impact on you then?

AS:

There was quite a few, it was more of the actual classes curriculum, because it was—I came from, kind of, Christ the King, and I was kind of going towards engineering and science, and I actually went to TexPREP here during the summers, and so I was kind of used to that mindset. I was kind of used to that mindset, I was like in science fair, I went all the way to state, you know that was kind of my thing, and so whenever I went to high school, it was a little bit different. A lot more classes at Lubbock High, or at least you can possibly participate in that, it's a little bit more in literature and the arts. And so it was a new experience, and I remember taking some classes on Western and Eastern Literature and completely opening up my eyes to things that I've never experienced or even heard and books that even to this day, people are like, "What? You've read that before?" And I'm like yes, you know, we've studied that. And so it was nice to have that kind of course given, especially for me as someone who is geared more towards science. And I also took painting with Mr. Gomez, and he would always push me to a different level, because I was slightly artistic. My parents really wanted us to be well informed of the arts, but it wasn't my strong point as opposed to science, so it was definitely something that made me learn more about myself that I didn't know previously that I had inside me. So it was good.

DS:

You know, and you mentioned the curriculum, but you're also expanding and doing more things socially, so how was it to balance both aspects?

AS:

It was a balancing act, that's for sure. Because I was also on pom squad, so we would have basketball season, which of course is at the end of the fall semester, so even when finals were coming around and things like that, we would have games and have to be there and after school commitments, it was a balance, but it made me very adamant about planners, and I carried that on to my college years, about having everything planned and figuring out time ahead of time and if we have a project due then then I need to be backtracking to when I need to start studying for it and so it gave me a really good way to measure how to balance that in the future whenever I did get to my college era.

DS:

Well, you know you mentioned college and you had done some stuff at Tech, was Tech always the place that you were going to go or—

AS:

Well, the thing was that, you know, because I did come from such—my parents did want us to be in the arts, I was a dancer, since I was five, my parents, my mother wanted me to be a ballerina, and so I was a competitive dancer. I wasn't quite a ballerina but still. And it was always kind of, they wanted us to move towards the arts, you know, there aren't very, not many minorities in the arts, and so they wanted us to kind of, you know, go in to that type of field, but I loved science, and so whenever I actually left my high school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, like I was completely confused because, you know, I love science but I had an appreciation for the arts. And actually went to South Plains for two years while I tried to figure it out and that was a really good experience for me, because it did give me that time to kind of get to try different classes. I mean I always knew I'd go to Tech, it was more of just like a transition ere for me, but I ended up falling in love with chemistry again, so that's why whenever I came here to Tech I went in to the chemistry department, so it was always, I knew I would eventually be here, and I was excited to be here, it was just trying to find the process to get here.

DS:

How many young ladies were in chemistry when you got here?

AS:

Not many, my degree, whenever I actually graduated, I was out of the twenty of us that graduated with my degree; there was only three or four of us that were women, so not many, there were many classes, especially when it came to physics and more classes that are geared toward engineering, I was sometimes the only woman in that class. And it was different, definitely.

DS:

And what was your plan, to do with that degree once you had it

AS:

It was probably to maybe work for a pharmaceutical company, which I still want to do, I'm trying to figure out what I want to do for grad school. It was one of those things that my parents had envisioned for us, is that they said, Texas Tech is wonderful University, and we want you to get your bachelor's degree there and then from then on where you want to go to grad school, it's completely up to, but we, you know, you need to go and utilize our resources that are here because this is such a great university, and it's right here in our neighborhood, this is a great opportunity for you, so I always knew that I would go to grad school, I just don't know where yet. And I'm still considering maybe Tech. My brother was the one who decided to leave, but yeah, he went to grad school somewhere else, but he did get his bachelor's from here too.

DS:

Okay, you know, and the first time I met you was a few years ago, you were promoting Miss Hispanic Lubbock; I think you were the reigning Miss Hispanic at the time. How did you get in to that?

AS:

Well, it's a very interesting story, whenever Miss Hispanic Lubbock was Miss Fiestas del Llano, I—we would actually go to that, me and my mother, since I was a little girl. I would go to that every single year, I mean since maybe I was eight, and every single year I would always see these women competing and it was amazing to me, because not only was I a dancer and I saw some of these girls up there as their talent dancing, but I got to see all these women, who were Hispanic and like me, and they were so well educated and wanting to further their education, and it was just like this huge, wonderful event, and we would go it every single year, I mean every year. And so I knew eventually that I wanted to do that, because I thought, Wow, if I get to be one of those women, that's a huge accomplishment. You know, they're so graceful and just, you know, educated that I want to be one of them, so my goal was eventually to eventually compete. And so that's exactly how I got into it, and it changed names over the years, and that's the reason why, but I feel like the main purpose and the mission of the pageant stayed the same, so it was something that whenever it did come to my time or my age, I had met the age requirement, I wanted to be a part of.

DS:

So were you already out of high school when you got in to that?

AS:

Yes, I actually was at South Plains, I believe, and was coming to Tech. I believe it was that transition year, because you actually enroll into the pageant in the summer, so it was the summer right before I was going to go to Tech.

DS:

You know, and one thing they're very good that pageant is, you know, helping you train and how to speak to the public and all that, what kind of things did you learn there that you carried forth?

AS:

Well we do learn how to speak to the public and also about beauty techniques, posture, grace, understanding the value of education and why it is so important and why we need to continue it, especially as a minority and being female. That's one thing that has carried with me, I do tend to—I'm a mentor at Mentor Tech, and so I do try to find girls that are in the same situation as me that are Hispanic and also, you know, science degree, but who want to further their education because I want to give them that insight that I learned from the pageant about how important this

is and that what we're doing is something extremely important, not only to our heritage but also to our nation, to help other people understand exactly where we come from. You know, our past and background.

DS:

Yeah, I think Rosa was still in charge back then wasn't she?

AS:

Yes, she was

DS:

And, Rosa Salazar, and can you tell us what you thought about her as a—

AS:

She was wonderful, I absolutely love Rosa, I still do. She is a beautiful person, inside and out, she's a wonderful friend and a wonderful mentor, and I cannot imagine, having gone through everything that I went to during, you know, the year that I was Miss Hispanic Lubbock, without her because she was so helpful, and she also had been doing it for so long that her insight great, and it gave me that extra advantage in many events that we had.

DS:

Well, in fact, I think you were very active that year, weren't you?

AS:

Yes, very much so. [laugh]

DS

Talk about what that was like, because that would have been your first year at Tech and then you're everywhere, right?

AS:

Yes, and I actually, I competed the first year and I didn't get it, I was the first runner up. And then I competed the second year and actually won the crown, so it was actually my second year at Tech, and I actually was in other organizations at that time as well, and so it was a very busy year, but once again, what I learned from high school about planning, I had a planner, and I had almost every minute of every day planned out, so it was busy but it was fun at the same time because I wasn't too stressed because I knew exactly what was going to happen, and so it was a good experience and I really liked it.

DS:

You know, and another thing you've done since then is you've done a lot of travelling. How did you get in to that?

AS:

Well, my brother went to graduate school in New York City, he went to the School of Visual Arts and got his master's from there, and so I, you know, he's still living over there, he was a freelancer and now he works for Highway 29 [?] [0:17:41], and so I go and visit him and we've gone to different other places, and it's having, getting out of college and having a job now and having the time and the money to travel is just wonderful, and so that's one thing that I've always wanted to do, and so it's just great that I get to do that now.

DS:

And you also were in an intern, weren't you? For congress or something?

AS:

For congress?

DS:

I thought for some reason that you were an intern for some rep or something like that.

AS:

No, I don't believe so.

DS:

Okay then I got it wrong [laugh].

AS:

It's fine [laugh].

DS:

I thought you had been for some reason, I don't know why

AS:

Oh, no, not really, no [laugh]

DS:

Are you involved in politics in any way?

AS:

No, not really, I wish I was. But not to the extent that other people are.

DS:

You've got enough going on already?

AS:

Yes, I do. Yes I'm, you know like I said, I'm a mentor at Mentor Tech, and you know of course I go visit my brother, I'm working and applying to graduate school right now so my hands are, you know, everywhere and I'm pretty busy

DS:

Have you finished your degree at Tech already?

AS:

Yes, I finished it quite a few—like a couple of years ago, so yes.

DS:

So you're just working full time and—

AS:

Yes, yes, and it took me—my degree was biochemistry and I minor in biology and a second minor in art history, so it was a lot of classes, and I did want to have that kind of, time off, before I went to graduate school, so that's exactly where I'm at right now is still in that, you know, period of, you know, getting used to the real world and also taking time off from being so academically focused

DS:

And you mentioned your Mentor Tech stuff, do you volunteer in any other way?

AS:

Not yet, I am currently looking for another organization to volunteer for, but currently I have two protégés so they keep me busy. And they are also both in—one of them, she is a biology major and the other one is computer science, and so they keep me busy, and I try to, you know, mentor them and tell them exactly what it's like to be a woman in a man's field, so it definitely takes up my time.

DS:

Can you talk about some of the people you've met along the way that have helped you?

AS:

I have met several people who have helped me and one of them was Rosa, she helped me, you know, see what it's like to work for the university, it's one of the reasons why I did want to work for the university because at that time she was working full time here and I saw the benefits of working for this wonderful university, and so whenever I first got out of my bachelor's degree, I applied straight to Tech. Like, I was like, "I want to work here, like, this place seems like a wonderful place and I want to be a part of it for as long as I possibly can." There's been several people who, employers and different things like that, who have given me insight, not only into not only the university and the way the university works but also in to the business world, and it's also made me consider possibly going to, you know, maybe the business side of some, you know, some of the pharmaceutical companies and things like that. And so it's given me a new perspective and maybe even a possible new path.

DS:

Well is there anything I haven't covered that you'd like to cover?

AS:

That's a good one. I'm trying to think.

DS:

Okay, well let me just get on to something else then.

AS:

Okay.

DS:

Well. how about what do your parent's think of now that both you and your brother have gone through and finished college and your brother's also pursued a master's and finished that and you're about to do something in that realm?

AS:

They feel very happy, relieved, excited. They still can't believe it sometimes, they tell me, like, I cannot believe both of you have already graduated college and one already has their master's and I never thought I would get to this day. It's just one of those things that you have a goal and you want to get to it, and it's all about that path of getting to it, and when you finally get there, it's kind of—you're just kind of in shock almost, and so my parents are kind of in that position right now, they're just still like in awe of like, "Wow, we actually got them and they've done everything we've, you know, had for them and planned for them, and now we're finally on the other side," and it's a wonderful thing for them to, you know, see both of us, and they're extremely proud because they both, me and my brother are both first generation college students,

so my parents were not able to attend university. And so it was a big milestone and something that they're very excited and proud of and tell just about anyone, so that's how they would feel about it.

DS:

At what point in your life did you realize that college was what you were going to do?

AS:

When I went to TexPREP. Those summers that I got to spend here on campus and seeing what the engineering world could offer me. My grandfather who is no longer with us, he actually was a mechanical engineer for a cotton company here and he got that title by many many years of experience, not necessarily a degree, and so it was kind of knowing that my grandfather was kind of in that area and here I was learning about it and seeing that it was a real possibility for me. Not only did I understand the material, but I also loved it and became passionate about it that I knew, at that moment, that college was not only something that I would dream about, but it was an essential, that I needed to do this, that if I wanted to be an engineer, I needed to get that degree.

DS:

Yeah, because the world has changed to where you can't really become a mechanical engineer without the degree.

AS:

Yes, you need to actually have the degree as opposed to working towards it.

DS:

Well, I'm glad you took the time to come in this morning, and if you think of anything else just give me a buzz but [laugh] thoroughly enjoyed it, thank you so much Amanda.

AS:

Okay, thank you.

***End of Recording***