

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Alfredo Garza
At the Shute Park Library in Hillsboro
December 28, 1999

Informant: Alfredo Garza
Interviewer: Barbara Doyle
Transcriber: Emily Pfeifer

A= Alfredo Garza
B= Barbara Doyle

B: So, first we need a little background from you. Where were you born and when?

A: *mumbles his birthplace and year*

B: Just get a little closer, please.

A: February 16, 1951

B: In Texas.

A: In Texas County, yes.

B: And when did you come here? And 'here' being Oregon... the first trip...

A: The first trip we made to Oregon was February 19, 1964. And, uh.... we... first started our trip as migrant workers between west Texas... and we lived in a labor camp in north Texas for a week or so. And there was enough- not enough work for the whole family so one of the relatives that my dad was working with told us that we could come to Oregon; that Oregon wasn't that far and we had a big family and everything... so, we packed our '57 Ford and headed to Oregon. Well, we're a family of nine... and... we realized when we got there, that we didn't have enough money. So, Dad had to borrow money from the bank. Get a loan. I think we got 100-150 dollars... that brought us all the way to uh; we made it to Portland- or Gresham actually. And, uh.... when we were in Gresham we were looking for a family... uh, that Dad knew in the past from our area, from Victoria, Texas. And so, we were looking for that person. I guess at the Post Office, we were supposed to see him post something to help us identify the name... and, uh, we couldn't locate him. So we went and rented out an apartment. We had to find a place to sleep. And, uh... it was on our way here we slept in the wagon wherever we could... and, on the road- on road... on the... uh, what do you call it, road-side parking. We just pull in. And then when we got here, well, Dad said, "Well, we have to find a place to stay." So, we went up to.... several places and one place this lady said, "Well I have just this small apartment with a kitchen and a bathroom. But you guys are quite a few."... And asked us why were we here; were we vacationing? And we told her, "No, we're here to work. We're here because we hear

that there was a lot of farm labor and we want... work." And she said, "You sure you're not here for the Seattle World Fair?" And we said, "Oh, no." [Laughs] So... I don't remember how many days we were there. I think it was a little over a week, maybe nine days... in the meantime, my mom wrote back to Texas... and asked some of the folks back home if they had an address for the people we were looking for, the Garcia's. And they wrote back and told us, yes, they had an address. And finally, we... uh, were able to find them through that address and they were located in a, uh... in a labor camp up in, uh, Dayton, Oregon in the grand island.* So, we visited them and we made contact and we were all happy because we were not- we didn't feel stranded anymore. We knew somebody. And um... they introduced us to our first uh, farm labor job which was picking strawberries. And they also gave us a place to stay. We um... we stayed at the-

B: Um, excuse me. The Garcia's were another migrant farm peoples?

A: Right.

B: Oh, okay.

A: They'd been here many years before us. And, um, the owners of that camp were the Stienroots. And-

B: Stein...?

A: Steinroot. I don't remember... S-T-E-I-N...

B: That was the name of the farm family?

A: Yeah, mmmm. The farm owners. And so they provided us a place to stay, I think there was like ten or twelve little cabins in the uh, labor camp. And... the cabins were not very big. They were like 14 by 12 or something like that, and we had all of us live in one of them. We had like, 4-2- a bunk bed and one bed and we had a kitchen- a small kitchen- uh, stove... I can't remember if we had- I think we had a refrigerator. But we had no indoor plumbing. And um-

B: Did you have electricity?

A: Yes, we had electricity. It was cold; we weren't used to living in those conditions. It was rainy, humid weather. [Chuckles] And anyway, and when we were out picking, I remember how humid it was out in the fields picking strawberries and I hated it. I didn't like it. And then when it rained, it even got worse. It was cold on your back. And then you were toiling in the mud. But when the weather was great, it was better. It's uh..... it was not as... it was good conditions for picking.

B: Do you know about what time of year you arrived?

A: We arrived in... it was after school was out so it was in early June, late May, early June. Yeah. It was strawberry season, the perfect time 'cause it was the first week-around the first week of when strawberry season begins. And we pick uh, berries around... in that date area.

B: And now who is 'we'? How many of you were working?

A: Hmm...

B: Your father...

A: My father and four boys and... uh... my mom. And then I had a sister but she... an older sister but she, she worked, she works um, in... well she didn't work... she worked but at a different station... like packing.

B: So, did you all earn the same amount of money per container of strawberries? However it worked?

A: Right, right, it was all piecely, you know, according to how much- how many crates you picked. Yeah.

B: So, with basically with six people working...

A: Right.

B: What was your... Was your income enough to keep you going?

A: On good days, yeah.

B: Yeah.

A: Okay well, times weren't very gloomy once we worked you know, like seven days a week then we were able to... to earn our good income. And since we didn't have to pay rent because they labor camp, there was no rent, so we were able to accumulate our money. And... my dad liked that because it was better than what he was used to back in Texas- he was a farmer in Texas and they cut back on a lot of that share cropping... with the government control and how much you could, how much, what was that called, they had control over how much cotton that was growing. And then there was problems, if you didn't get enough land to grow your uh... to grow your cotton or whatever... you had problems... so there was bad times for harvest and that was one of the reasons for why we left.

B: So now you're up here and picking strawberries but the strawberry season lasts about a month or something like that-

A: Less than that.

B: Yeah. And then what?

A: And then, we went on to pole beans. They used to- now they have a hybrid which is a bush bean picked by machine, but back then they had a pole bean which had to be strung on poles, on long poles. They had thousands of acres there... of pole beans we had to pick and that was probably another months worth. And from the pole beans we went to the raspberries and from the raspberries to the blackberries and then from there it was getting later and in September- early September we would be done and by then there was time to go back there. That first year we went back to Texas.

B: Now let me just ask, I mean, you said you got a place to stay, a fairly small building and there was some pieces of furniture in there. But there were nine of you in one car, which sounds pretty crowded, so when you got up here, did you have pots and pans, sheets? I mean, you know, what did you have with you and what did you get when you were up here besides a place to sleep and sit?

A: I know we had blankets.

B: Okay.

A: But I don't know how many pots and pans. Mom... I can't remember what we had. But, I remember going- that mom would go... they would go to the Salvation Army and buy things there. So, yeah.

B: Okay-

A: So we were very limited on stuff that we brought.

B: Okay. So you had to supply some of those things here. When you left did you take them back with you? Did you leave them here to come back to next year?

A: I think we did. I think we left some thing here in one of the cabins because we planned on returning next year and we did return.

B: Now the planning on returning, is that something that the farmer offered you or you told the farmer you would like to come back?

A: Well, the farmer was happy with our production and what we did, so... they would like us to come back.

B: The farmer invites you, the migrant worker...

A: Right.

B: Now I've heard a story from somebody who said that... um, migrant workers would be paid but their social security part of their pay was taken out and this particular person said, "Well, we knew that was a lot of bologna because the farmer didn't know the names or the social security numbers of the migrant workers so, in a sense, the migrant workers were being ripped off... by the farmer or whoever was in charge of pay." Now, did you have any of those kinds of experiences where you felt that your family was exploited by the, the farmer?

A: Well, I was very young and I... I don't, when I look at my social security statement, I didn't start earning social security until '68 or something like that. So... I never personally remember comments on that problem.

B: Okay. Any other-

A: I do remember... I do remember we used to work from sun up to sun down in harvest and... where the farmer was paying us hourly and... I was always good at math so I would keep the hours for everybody in a little booklet. And, after two weeks or a week and a half of tallying all the hours because there was five hours- five of us working hourly at that time for that farmer and, after tallying up the hours and presenting the hours to the farmer, my dad, being president, he'd say, "Oh, no, this is too many hours. You couldn't have worked that many hours." And I told him, "We were working- you remember you wanted to get the crop out and we were working up from sun up to sun down trying to get this crop-", "Oh yeah, but you made a mistake here somewhere. This is too many hours." And I looked at Dad and I said, "Dad, we don't have to put up with this. We don't have to stay here. Let's...you know." And he said, and he kinda, looked kinda, [makes a face to describe the look on his father's face and chuckles], you know. And so, I went home and I was disgusted. And, I remember just, not wanting to come downstairs and eating 'cause... 'cause, I mean, I, my judgment was good. I knew my hours were right. And uh...but... later that night the farmer's wife kinda talked to the farmer 'cause she also counting the hours and she called to apologize. She said, "I'm sorry." That was one incident. Uh...

B: Good for you! [Barbara and Alfredo both laugh] And good for the wife.

A: Yeah. Right. So, uh... there was times when we were [I don't know what he says here. Minutes 17:06-17:20] But uh... but I can't remember any social security...

B: Okay. Well, that was just something that somebody had told me and those things kinda made an impression on me. So, you obviously got along well enough with the farmer then, that they asked you to come back the next year.

A: Right.

B: And no more short changing you on hours.

A: Because we were good workers.

B: Yeah. And you paid attention, you kept good records.

A: Right. [Laughs]

B: So you were here then, the whole family was here in 1964 for the harvest season and then you all went back to Texas?

A: Returned to Texas. And then we came, came back. We, we, I guess we saved enough money to spend winter in Texas and by the time we were coming next year, we would go back and do our school year.

B: Yeah.

A: And then we would come back in late may.

B: And was there any earning capacity in Texas?

A: My dad would work.

B: Okay.

A: And he'd be about the only one because we were in school. And we would work weekends with sub-farmers in their rice fields. That was pretty. In Texas.

B: So you came here in '64 and went back. Then you came here in '65 and went back.

A: Mhmm.

B: And when you were here in '65 were you at the same farm?

A: That's right. In the summer of '65 we were.

B: Okay.

A: Oh, and we did earn some income in Texas. Because the planting season for... for cotton is in March and so we worked on weekends in the cotton fields. Uh... pulling and when the cotton came out, we cleaned it, get the grass out...

B: And so after this second year, were there any big things to remember there? Did you have a better place to stay in? Did you earn more money per hour or per crate?

A: I think after the first year... for the kids anyway, it was like an adventure. But I think for my mom, it was stressful because of the trip. For us, it was kinda like... I remember the first time we saw snow in Nevada... or it was Arizona, it was Arizona, I think. We thought it was sand. We didn't know. But it was good, I think, for the kids because we

were- we could go back and we could tell people about our trip. Even though- we wouldn't tell them about that part. [Laughs] So, um, after the second year we were back on the farm.

B: Was that the same relationship with the farmer?

A: Right.

B: Did you stay there for the whole season?

A: Right, we stayed there for the whole summer.

B: And were you invited back for the third year?

A: We were, but... we were but, my dad started, uh, becoming more aware of possibilities-

B: Yeah.

A: -and so he was meeting with people- local people; farmers and business people. They arranged for us to come and work in a... in a farm in Newberg out in Chehalem Mountain. That was a large farm. They had a variety of crops. So we decided to go over there. Dad decided to stay. And I was one of the people who didn't want to stay. I wanted to return back...

B: This is now the- this is the, um, end of the...

A: This is our third year- no, the second year, right. The end of the second. The fall, in the fall.

B: Okay.

A: And so Dad decided that we're staying because we can get this job. The whole family can work- or at least the boys and it's more stable. But, I'm already what, 15 years old? My other brothers were 16, 17. By that time, we had my older sister was 18, she had graduated- no, she hadn't graduated yet, but we were... I guess I was working at... at uh... my dad figured we could stay and it was miserable because of the rain. We worked in the fall in the prunes and the filberts and we were working through the school year. We worked after school.

B: Now you said this was Newberg and you were up on Chehalem Mountain and I know a little bit about it because I live up there. So were you going to school in Newberg or up here in Washington County?

A: We were going to school in Washington County.

B: Okay.

A: Let, let me go back a little bit because I think I got confused on my years because it was 60... we came and went, '64... we ended up staying until '66... or was it '65. Well, I need to think this through.

B: Okay.

A: I graduated in '69; I was a junior in '68... '67...so it was '66 that we stayed- the fall of '66 we stayed after coming and going for a couple years.

B: Which had to be kind of tough, wasn't it? I mean to-

A: You leave all your friends behind... you're starting to...you're at an age where... you have a girlfriend and you miss your friends. When we were first put into school here we couldn't identify... It was all Anglo when we were like... [Chuckles] Not that we were treated bad! It was a whole different setting.

B: You all spoke English?

A: Yeah.

B: So that was not a problem.

A: No.

B: But you weren't like the white people that were here?

A: [Laughs] We weren't used to that.

B: No. So your reception within the community was much better in Texas than it was here?

A: I think so, yeah. We had friends. I mean, we had friends that we grew up with. We expected to go back. It was a surprise because my dad didn't plan it. He just said, "We're staying."

B: Oh, well, I mean, I guess you had to finish high school before you could say that I'm going to do it on my own or that I'm going to go on my own.

A: Yeah. Yeah, at those times you did what they told you to do. There was no, "Let's discuss it with the children." Nowadays, it's, "What's this going to do to the children?"

B: Yeah, well it seems like it didn't do bad things to you!

A: No, no! It didn't! It didn't! No, my dad was right. When I was that age, I was right.
[Laughs]

B: So, now you've decided to stay over and now you need, you need income that's going to support you through the winter and the non-harvest season up here. So do you still live in a place on a farm?

A: We lived on a farm where we were given a big house.

B: Nice.

A: This house had a kitchen, and living space and had 1, 2, 3 bedrooms so it was a 2 story house. So it was very adequate.

B: And this was in- on the mountain but basically the Washington County side of the Mountain.

A: Right.

B: Okay. Do you know the name of the...?

A: The Zeiglers. Norman Zeiglers Farm.*

B: And is that where you folks stayed until you moved out of...?

A: We stayed with him until we moved and Dad bought a house.

B: Okay. And how many years were you there with the Zeiglers?

A: I'm guessing we were there from the fall of '66 to some time in '72.

B: That's quite a while. Was life getting better?

A: Yes, life was getting better.

B: But you all had to work? You and your brothers basically.

A: Yeah we worked. Right, we worked every summer after high school. I mean, when we were in high school, we were working summers in the field.

B: And did you have any problems with Zeigler in terms of getting the right pay for the right number of hours?

A: Um... that was the man who had the misunderstanding of the calendars.

B: Oh.

A: Yeah. But, no, after that he was great! He respected us a lot because he valued our work and we were honest.

B: Now somewhere I heard the statement that it was a big family. Was it a benefit for the Garzas to have a father and four sons who could go out there and work the field?

A: Given that we were a big family, yes.

B: Yeah. So you have- there are five brothers and two sisters. And Margaret was too young to work?

A: I have three brothers and three sisters. So there's four boys and three girls.

B: Okay.

A: And Margaret, Rita was young. They were starting. They were working. They were helping.

B: They worked in the fields? Okay. Now let me go back to something you said, that you didn't have any plumbing in this one place...

A: In the labor camp, yes.

B: What did you do for water for cooking, for cleaning, for laundry?

A: We had to go and get a pail of water. We had to go outside- there was a main faucet, a central faucet system where you walk outside and bring it back in a container.

B: And that's what you would use for cooking?

A: Right. Oh, there were showers but they were not within the... they were outside away from the cabin.

B: Alright, so there was a place for bathing purposes but what about for laundry?

A: Yes, there was but I don't remember too much about that- my mom did that. Mom was the hardest working person that I ever knew. Because she had to get up early to make lunch, to make breakfast and send us off to work and then she would come join us at work- she work with us throughout the day and then we would get home but she would have to do our clothes, get our clothes ready and then cook dinner for us so her day wasn't over until really late.

B: You said she cried a lot.

A: She had it real tough. She didn't like it there. She was always... she was very loyal to my dad.

B: Now how about growing up here? I mean, you obviously came here as a teenager but you still had some growing years before you were an adult and could do what you wanted to do.

A: Right.

B: Um, what was it like in the community? Um, you said that there are a lot of white kids here in the community. So how did they treat you? How did you fit in?

A: Well, in my high school years, the three years that I was here I got in three fights. Due to racial tension.

B: Was that good or bad? I mean, to have only three fights? Was that good or was that bad?

A: Um, I guess I wasn't just afraid to fight because I was a wrestler in high school.

B: [laughs] Oh, well then they were kind of dumb to take you on!

A: No, they weren't bad but they were hitting me. I mean, you know there was, we knew there was racial tension in Texas and here it was more of a hitting thing. It was surprising to hear some one to call you, "Dirty Mexican".

B: For no reason?

A: For no reason other than... yeah.

B: So, I mean, do you have any idea why you were picked at? Just because you were different? Were there a lot of other students around that were Mexican?

A: No, there were Japanese that I remember. Asians.

B: Yeah well they were treated badly too. The Chinese were treated badly, the Irish were treated badly. The blacks weren't allowed. [Laughs]

A: Um, yeah there was no blacks. I think in my graduating class there was three Spanish kids.

B: Three. So you were really in the minority. There weren't too many other-

A: There was no blacks.

B: No. Yeah.

A: But even in an education setting... um, there was still racism. Kind of... How do you say, from the teaching, from the teachers themselves.

B: Tell me a little more about that.

A: Well, I was in my sophomore class in Physical Science and... We had started school in- [break in tape] and in my physical science class, I always enjoyed science. I was a biologist for the state of Texas in '97- [another break in tape] and we had to maintain above a 90 average for the nine weeks or six weeks... however long the break was. And uh, at the end of the nine weeks period, we were... we would go before the teacher and they would tell us what kind of grade we were going to receive for that period. And, but we were like lab partners, we had partners and I remember my partner was Steve Fowls and he told me to go up there and get my grade and so I went up there and my teacher was Mr. Hubert and he said, "Fred, you really done really well to maintain above a 90 and you should get an A but I don't think it's fair to the other students if I give you an A since you were late coming to class for almost a month so I'm going to give you a B." And so I went, I was like... and so I went back and sat down and Steve said, "Did you get you're A?" And I said, "No, I got a B." And he said, "Why? Why?" And he got upset, you know, after I told him. Well I was upset too but our parents always told us that we were not supposed to complain about school. They didn't want to hear problems about school so I just kept it within myself. It really... I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to react to that.

B: Yeah, it's hard when you're 15 or 16 or something like that.

A: Yeah. See, I had the opposite thing happened to me in Texas. Mr. Davis was the name of my teacher, history teacher in the 8th grade when I returned and it was a month getting back in the fall when we were coming and going. And uh, on one of my exams I had got a C but I had just been there a week and so he gave me a B and he said, "Well, I'm giving"- he told to whole class, "Well, I'm giving Fred a B because he has only been here a week and you guys, you know, have been here a whole month and you still aren't doing very well."

B: Wow. So did this kind of thing happen more often in schools here?

C: No, that was probably the only thing that happened to me. I had other circumstances where... one of my math teachers... I couldn't make... I was in physical- I don't know how to say this, I was in, I mean, um... in wrestling so I had to go do the morning schedule. I had to go early and I couldn't make the morning runs because I had no one to take me. I meet the bus- usually the bus would pick you up since we live on the farm right, by the house but if you had morning activities after school you had to meet the bus wherever, uh, it was a central point where it picked up kids and it was about three miles and I couldn't make it, it was impossible because my dad was working and I didn't drive and... I told that to one of my teachers and he said, "Just try to make it whenever you can and, I know you can do the work, I've seen your work"-

B: And this is for your math class?

A: For my math class. And he said, uh, "As long as you get a passing grade I'll pass you, whatever grade you get. Just try and make it." And I didn't, but he passed me anyway. I wasn't able to make most of my classes. And so, there was good teachers too. They were supportive.

B: And aside those fights with three kids, how did the other students react to...?

A: There was curiosity. I remember going to groups after school, meeting somewhere at a party or whatever; they'd ask questions, the same things we are talking about here, like what brought me to Oregon and stuff like that. And they would sit there and listen and they would be real, how do you say... interested.

B: Accepting.

A: Yes. They were curious. It was curiosity.

B: I've heard different things from different people. And one of them has to do with dating... so, how did the girls treat- how did the gringo girls treat the Chicano boys?

A: [laughs] I was too shy. I didn't know how I was supposed to.... My girlfriend in Texas was Spanish... I guess I didn't know how to react to them. You know. I was to shy. I think they liked me. They were friendly for me.

B: Right. So now, you have got older brothers. What were their reactions? Did you talk to them about it? Get advice? Or did they take a different approach from you? Were not so shy?

A: We were basically about the same. We, you know, we never really exchanged... we were kind of, we kept our... we were kinda private about who we're dating.

B: Within your family?

A: Yeah.

B: So I'm going to have to talk to several of you- of your siblings to get a full picture.
[Laughs]

A: Right. I think we mostly looked for Spanish girlfriends because that was what we were used to. We didn't know the cross-culture thing [coughs].

B: Were there many others? People in your school and where you lived who were Hispanic or Latino background?

A: There was several families. I wouldn't say a lot. There was several families that we knew.

B: And when did this big push come to start central cultural... were you any way involved in that?

A: I was indirectly involved through my parents. Through my mom and dad. They were involved through the church.

B: And this was after they moved-

A: I guess I was directly involved, not indirectly [laughs]. I was part of the family.

B: Was this after they moved into their own house?

A: Yes, I think it was about that time.

B: Okay, because you said they moved to Cornelius...

A: Right. Right. It was after we moved to Cornelius.

B: So what was your role in this?

A: I'd just help them when they... let me see- when it originated, I remember that... there was Father Beacher, there was a church, he was organizing the family. And we would have dinners at the churches to fundraise for this group of people... um... because there was also a group of people, a club called, Los Amigos, and a lot of the family had to do with this club and the Priest was organizing this. And so I would help with dinners. Help them with whatever they needed. And they would have dinners at different churches; I know they had them at Hillsboro, and, uh, Forest Grove and I think they had them in Beaverton... and they were trying to raise money so they could get a place to start the center group.

B: So you were not one of the movers, you were one of the helpers.

A: Yeah. And, uh, I became involved in a project back home in Texas where they were getting products from tectonics and training young kids to work in uh, youth training for jobs, future jobs.

B: They still have something like that don't they?

A: Oh, I'm not sure.

B: When did you leave Oregon and move back to Texas?

A: Oh, in '83 but I was, I became more and more involved, that was in '74 when I did that, and then uh... in '75 I went away to college in Eugene and I was coming back to work the summers and the Oregon, the Center group, the people had more of an organized group and had bought a building by that time; an old house and a loft. And then, there was a medical need... there was medical services but the people with migrant education... didn't feel that there was... that their medical needs were being met by the Spanish community. Because there was an incident where one of the young girl died that was in one of the camps with me, named Virginia Garcia-

B: [whispers] Just a little bit louder.

A: Virginia Garcia was a child that died from a... a kind of a bacterial disease. So that prompted the Spanish Community Center for migrant education to try and create a facility for migrants, or Spanish could receive better healthcare. Outreach as it were. So they organized- I wasn't here at the time, but they organized a food colony fund. There was meetings, and then there was meetings also that involved Catholic charities, uh, what's that called...

B: That's good work, with Catholic charities.

A: Yeah. And they decided to fund... a clinic for migrants and that was I think in the year '74... '75, I think. And then... when I came back to work in the summer that was already organized and they needed an outreach person to work as the liaison between school, between the schools or the migrant camps to migrant education in order to be able to better serve the migrants. The children and then the adults that needed the healthcare. And that's where I came in. I had worked, oh, I got to go back now, in '74, I did work in migrant education for a few months in doing the home consulting. That's where you organize healthcare for, with federal money that is allocated for healthcare, for migrant workers. And I was the outreach person. I would go to the camps and, uh, we would register people for the money program. Kids. And then they would receive educational assistance and also health, um... doctor and dental care. So my job was to go out there and register the kids. So I did that. And then I went to college and then I came back in the summer and got involved again in the summer doing that. But I was given a bigger task: to provide the people- the Catholic charities were saying, "Well you need to- you are using this money for healthcare and we're giving you plenty for the building but we need you to provide numbers for us. How many people are out there really need healthcare? Kids? Adults?" So my boss said, "That it's your job to go out there and bring these people in." So I said, "Okay." That was Joe Garcia. And so I would go to all the camps that we registered to, and talk to... mostly the mothers of families and ask them about health needs.

B: Now, this is all in Washington County?

A: This is all in Washington County. It all started through Central Group.

B: And how many camps were there, that you had to go to? About how many?

A: There was 10 or 12.

B: And how many people might be in a camp?

A: There was some camps that had over 100 people and there was some that had only 8 or 12 people.

B: What were the old rural conditions like in camps? This is 10 years after you folks came here.

A: They were basically the same. Some were worse. Some were in real bad shape. Unclean.

B: Was anybody around to make the farmer or the owner or the person who managed the site provide better care and facilities for the migrant workers?

A: Sure there was. There was the Health Department.

B: Yeah, but was it real enforced?

A: I don't know. Who was... Terry Camp was the director of the Health Department when I was working for Migrant Education and since I was working with medical needs, there was some children who were sick and had diarrhea and I didn't know if it was the water or just a viral thing. So I inquired about, if the water had been checked, if the drinking water had been checked for some kind of contaminant. I was just inquiring. So I took it upon myself to call the director of the... the Health Department. Well he didn't like that so he called my boss and told him that they had done all that and why was I calling him about this. So needless to say, I didn't talk to him ever again. But I did volunteer also at- I volunteered working with the Health Department because they were also assisting with meeting the medical needs. So I was running- I was bringing people to the clinic during the day. I was taking people to the St. Vincent's hospital, the adults that needed care in a Volkswagen. So I was all over the place but I was getting paid for 8 hours. Anything after 8 hours was volunteering. Uh, I remember a lot of families would work and the only time that we could take them... I remember a lot of ladies and there was also men too that had hernias the size of baseballs that needed surgery and different kinds of ailments that if the need would have been met early on they wouldn't have suffered like they probably had.

B: Can I go back and ask a question?

A: Yes.

B: When you wanted to find out if the water was contaminated, was there ever any answer to your question?

A: That the water was contaminated.

B: Was it?

A: I'd assume so. [laughs] I wasn't supposed to ask questions!

B: Okay, so you really don't know. You were just told it was okay.

A: Yeah. We also had a family that was checked positive for TB and there was a big scare, and everybody was scared, they didn't know how to handle it! But it never scared me. They were normal people. And, uh, it turns out that it was just that they tested positive for shingles. Um, but different- so the clinic- so (56:25) had a board and they organized the clinic and we proved to the Catholic Charity that there was a need here and so they funded us and continued to fund us. I also became member of the board and the Virginia Garcia clinic for several years. How I loved it. It was really excellent.

B: So what made you go up to college? There was obviously some time between finishing high school and going to college.

A: Um... I had a good job after high school, but I was not challenged enough by what I was doing at my job...and, uh... I just, for my personal- I needed to, I wanted to be challenged. I was curious.

B: Were you the first in your family to go off to college?

A: No, my oldest sister was. She went to nurses... uh, what's it called, nursing school. She wanted to be a, uh, (58:06). She went for one year of training to be a ____.

B: She didn't like the strawberry fields either?

A: Right. [Laughs] We wanted to get away from that kind of labor work.

B: Yeah. And then there are still two brothers that are older than you, right?

A: Right. They were, they were... they went in the military and that was the Vietnam era. So my two oldest brothers were in Vietnam. And then when they got back, they had taken some kind of training... one had trained as an air- uh, a mechanic and the other one as a, uh, radar specialist. So they got some formal training in the service.

B: Yeah. Do they work in agricultural fields?

A: Nope. They work for electronic companies.

B: Okay. So, nobody from your family is back in the fields. You've moved from the fields and out of the fields in one generation.

A: Well... yeah, we broke away in the last generation but the generation previous to ours were all in the fields.

B: Yeah, but I mean when you came here, you were migrant laborers and you worked in the fields. That's how you earned your money.

A: Right.

B: And, and, your generation, none of them work there now. They're all out in a different kind of business.

A: Right. Right. And the youngest is 14; going to be 14. We all ended up with good jobs. Oregon is very, very good to us.

B: [laughs] Mostly.

A: Mostly.

B: Mostly. Alright, more particular involved in civil rights; was that the um, was that the work with the church and getting the clinic going and that? Was that the civil rights part or was it something else?

A: Civil rights?

B: That's what she said.

A: Hmm... We had, I didn't- I left before I... I think what she's talking about was treatment of the police with Hispanic people.

B: Oh, talk about that please.

A: Well, it seemed like there was... a lot of Hispanics that were being pulled over. It seemed like... they were Spanish.

B: You mean diving?

A: Driving, yeah. And then there were... and then they were charged with drunk driving or whatever. And... the Justice Department got a hold of that information. And so they came here to Hillsboro in Washington County to review and see what was going on. Why, why were there more Hispanics given that the population is predominantly Anglo? Why were there more Hispanics that were being charged with driving under the influence or what have you? But I went to a couple of their meetings but I, I didn't completely... I didn't get the end results. It was a long time ago.

B: So, was there justification for what the police did?

A: Yes. I mean, was there justification for what the Justice Department did?

B: Well, what the police did in terms of pulling Hispanic drivers over or pulling people over?

A: I got pulled over for drunk driving but I never, I never went through their... the police that pulled me over was lying. He was fabricating, he was saying things that I was telling him things in my language to him about... I was telling him things and he put on the thing, it says what race and he put 'Mexican' on there. And I went to the Chief of Police and I talked to him about it. And he said, "Were you drinking?" and I said, "I was drinking."

"Were you drunk?" And I said no.

"Well, why do you think he stopped you?" and I said that there was no reason for that man to stop me. He was... he pulls me over for no reason. The light was green, I wasn't speeding. He pulls me over at like 1 in the morning. And then, he claims that I was avoiding him and I was weaving and that he had followed me for 2-3 miles back. He was behind me and watching me. Then I go, "I don't remember them giving me my rights." And when I tried to find a lawyer, they said, well, if they didn't beat you up then you don't have a chance. If you didn't get physically harmed, then you don't have a chance because we go before the, we go before- and I told them, this guy was fabricating. He lied about his report. So I couldn't find anybody so I just didn't...

B: So you had it on your record, in other words? Your driving record?

A: I had it on my... it was, they were trying out the probationary period. It was going to go on my record... for a year and then it was going to be dropped off if I didn't commit any other... relating crimes.

B: Or run across a similar cop.

A: Right. Well, I ran into him when I was with my girlfriend in a bar, one of the McMenamens pubs. And I was so mad because... I was mad because he was a liar. And Margaret knows about them- she worked in the police department and they're all liars. Rapists. She heard them. She worked there.

B: No, she didn't tell me that. You can read the papers nowadays and you know they do the same things in other parts of the country.

A: Yeah.

B: If you're black and driving a car, a nice looking car on a New Jersey turnpike, you get pulled over. [Laughs]

A: Yeah. But hopefully it's gotten better here. I don't think so.

B: Well, it's clear that there is still a fair amount of prejudice.

A: Mhmm.

B: And, it's sort of non-accepting. How do you feel about it?

A: I feel... I don't like to think about it but I feel that I can defend myself, or try to in a, how do you say, in a political matter if not a physical one.

B: Okay. In other words, you can talk your way through something. Or you try to?

A: I try to.

B: Um, are you and your brothers and sisters exceptions to the extent that you've gone on to other education?

A: Yeah. I think because of my dad and my mom.

B: What did they do, when you say because of them? What did they do?

A: They had a strong, uh... they wanted us to finish high school. They had a big push for education. They always have.

B: So you all finished high school but then some of you went on for more school. Were you pushed to do that or was that-

A: I became a pusher just like my dad.

B: Oh.

A: Once I was in college, I encouraged my younger sisters to go to college. And my brothers. And I would help my brother, my older brother, and I remember telling him, because he did go to college for a few courses, and I just remember encouraging my brother. My youngest sister, Margaret, I remember serving as a counselor for her and I told her, "Margaret, if you're gonna... if you want to well in school you have to do well now, in high school and you have to take all these classes. So I was preparing her with her math- take as much math as you can. Take your sciences like chemistry and you have to take biology and all that. [Laughs]

B: And did she like you for that?

A: [laughs] She had a good head so she never complained. She worked hard. And it paid off. She ended up going to Lewis and Clark and um, she did well for herself. She did well in high school.

B: Um, so- (9:31)

* I'm not sure if that is the correct name and/or spelling of the name Garza said.