

**Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Sister Ina Marie Nosack
At Sisters of the Valley Convent
May 9, 2013**

Informant: Sister Ina Marie Nosack

Interviewers: Luke Sprunger

Transcriber: Luke Sprunger

IN = Ina Marie Nosack

LS = Luke Sprunger

LS: All right, so it is May 9th, 2013. We are at the Sister of St. Mary Convent in Beaverton, Oregon. I'm Luke Sprunger, I'm a graduate student at Portland State, and I'll be interviewing Sister Ina Marie Nosack about her background and her work with the Mexican and Mexican American community in the area. So, Sister, I'm wondering if you could start out telling me a little bit about where you grew up, in Gervais, Oregon and your family farm.

IN: Well, I'm the fifth of seven children and we had a very small farm out of—about three and a half miles out of Gervais, actually that same distance from Woodburn. I went to the Catholic school and grade school there in Gervais—Sacred Heart—and then I went to Gervais high school for—the public school for the first three years. In my last year I was asked if I wanted to come here to the St. Mary of the Valley, and so I transferred in my senior year to come here. But I grew up on the farm, and we raised a lot of animals. I did a lot of summer work just like the Mexicans did—picked the berries and hops, and green beans and worked in onion fields and kinda grew up as a farmer's daughter, really enjoyed the summer work with the kids, we were still able to work in the fields at that time and we always had a good time doing it.

LS: You were born in 1926, correct?

IN: Mhm, Yes.

LS: So you would have been in your teens when the Bracero Program—Bracero Program began here.

IN: Right. I was a sophomore in 1942 and I saw my first group of Mexicans come in. They were on an open truck and there was a whole lot of young guys and I remember going home from school and telling my folks that I saw a lot of Mexican guys on a—on a truck and it looked like they were going to Woodburn. And my dad said "You leave those guys alone." [both laugh] I think he was afraid that I would go looking for them, which I wasn't, but it was a surprise for me to see—'cuz that's the first time I had seen any Mexicans in the area and it was then they started to come in and stay here for the summer.

LS: So you mentioned you thought they were going down to Woodburn.

IN: Yes.

LS: Do you know if—were there any closer to your community or was that...

IN: Um, no. Woodburn and Gervais are actually very close together and the farmers from one place hire the same people. So it was—I knew that Woodburn had—they were starting to have camps, Gervais didn't have them at that time. But they were coming to settle more in the Woodburn area and I think that's one of the first places that they settled. Then a little later they came up to the Hillsboro area, I think.

[2:00]

LS: Okay, so back—

IN: That was in 1942 [laughs]

LS: Okay. Let's maybe go back to your personal history a little bit. How did you decide to become a nun? Was that because of your year here, or was that—

IN: No, I—in grade school we had the sisters from here and I—they were always so happy and I loved having them as teachers. And I was really, I was really very close to a couple of them. I had one sister, the same sister for four years. From third, third grade through sixth grade. And it was she who wrote to me—she kept track of me when I was in high school. And I used to walk up to the grade school during my noon hour at high school, my two girlfriends and I. We were called the three musketeers. And every noon hour I'd walk up to the Gervais grade school to—Sacred Heart—to see my little brother, who was just starting first grade, and I was very attached to him. And I always wanted to be sure he was doing okay. So when he started school I just started taking my noon hours to go up. That kept me in contact with the sisters even later. So my first years in high school I still saw a great deal of the sisters, and I admired them and my—my whole life I had kind of—had a desire to be a missionary. I wanted to really give my life helping people. And when I talked to the sister who I had had as teacher for a long time, I had told her that I would really like be a sister and be a missionary I didn't know if I wanted to join the Sisters of St. Mary of Beaverton 'cuz I wanted to—to go someplace foreign and be a missionary. And so that was—it was through her that I came. She invited me my junior year, after my junior year that summer she wrote me a letter and invited me to come here for my senior year. She said, "You know, you haven't had any Catholic education in high school, so wouldn't it be nice to have your senior year here at the valley before you go off?" Because at that time nobody went on to college. We were—I was the first in my family to go to high school cuz it wasn't considered important. Girls didn't need an education and my father certainly didn't want me going to school.

[5:00]

[Removes coughdrop]

[6:05]

And so, I just—I just took for granted that, um, if I went to high school that would be the end of it, you know. You just either got a, a secretary job or you worked in the fields or got married. And I just wasn't ready to do any of those things, I wanted to go on to school, and so, uh, when I got sister's letter I was all excited about it and my mom said "Well, if you want to go why don't we go up and look at it, see what—see what it would be like." And that meant I'd have to because Gervais was too far away from here. And they had residents, girls at that time. So, when I did come, I really fell in love with the place right away and I knew that's what I wanted to do. In my mind I wasn't coming here just to go to school, I was coming to enter the convent. I didn't say that to my mom at the time, but I think she knew. And so that's after we came, then I talked to the superior general here and told her that I really wanted to be a missionary. And she said "Oh well we hope to take a mission, we've been asked to take one in Alaska. And I really didn't care where we went, it just was something to go

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out and do mission work. So that's how I came to—I came here for my senior year and then after I was here, by Thanksgiving, we only went home once a month because it was war time, Second World War was on and my brothers were in the service. Anyway my—gas was rationed so my mother couldn't come up and get me. I'd have to take the bus back and forth. So we went home once a month and when I went home for Thanksgiving I asked if I could enter the convent. And, oh, my father was furious. He just "no way, you don't—you're too young, you don't know what you're... what life is all about yet." And so my mom just kinda winked at me and said, you know ", just let it go." So then she said "I'll talk to him," she said, "if you want to," she said; "you go ahead and inquire what you'd have to do." Then when I came home for Christmas that was to be my last time home. And by that time my dad had agreed that if that was gonna make me happy, I could come, so [laughs].

LS: So what was it, do you think, that made you particularly interested in missionary work?

IN: I wanted to go where people needed us the most, you know, I was always attracted to the poor, and I had come from a family that—we were really poor only I didn't know it, I didn't realize it when I was really younger. We had, because we were on a farm we had everything we needed to eat, and I can remember mom figuring out who needed shoes the most and who was going to get a new pair of shoes when dad's check came in. And, you know, we didn't have money to spend and my mom made many sacrifices when she needed things to get shoes for the kids cuz we walked four miles to school, to and from, and our shoes were always wearing out. And I knew that we didn't have a lot of money, but we had enough to eat and it—so I never considered us poor until I got older and really realized you know, we didn't have a lot of things other kids had but it didn't seem to matter. We were very happy. We played a lot of ball and all the neighborhood came to play at our house. We were a really happy family. And—I don't know, I just—working for the poor, I just thought that—going a place where people have not heard about God, I just wanted to go and be able to teach them about it and bring more people into our Catholic faith. So that missionary yearning was there [since I was] really little. We used to save our money to rescue pagan babies, I don't know if you've ever heard of that but...

LS: No.

IN: They used to, the missionary sister who were in really poor areas would write letters back and ask that we send money to help rescue the—when they took in babies that were left at their doorstep they had to have money to support them. And they would tell us, like, I don't remember now what it was, but I'll just say that five dollars would maybe take care of the child for a couple months. And so we as children saved our pennies for these pagan babies and then once or twice a year the sisters would send this money into the orphanages and we would, what we would call rescue a pagan baby. And so that was done early on and when I was in second grade and third grade I remembered saving my pennies to put in the piggy bank at school for

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that [laughs]. And just—just wanting to be able to help people who were worse off than we were.

LS: I see.

IN: Mhm. So.

LS: So after some time at the convent when you were also teaching, you had the opportunity to go to Peru and—

IN: Yes, but not for twenty-five years [laughs].

LS: Right, not for quite a while.

IN: I taught for a long time, and then we actually were going to take a mission in the jungle of Peru and our superior general at the time told us that nobody would be sent unless they volunteered. And so when they put the box out for us to drop our names in I was the first to get my name in the box as a volunteer. I understand there were about eighteen who volunteered to go. And then the leadership team looked at those names. They didn't draw names out to see who would go but they looked at the group and tried to figure out who would have the skills and the health necessary to do something like that. They chose three of us who they thought could live that kind of a life. And then the sis—the sister who was our superior general was the fourth one to go, she wanted to go and so they only appointed three to go and then she asked to be the fourth one so she went with us then to Peru.

LS: Okay.

IN: Mhm.

LS: So could you maybe just describe the impact of your whole time there in the late sixties, early seventies on your life and your worldview.

IN: Oh yes. It was at a time that, well first of all when we went we were going to start a high school in the area that had never had it. And we were—Iquitos is the last city that boats can go upriver. You can't go farther than that. So we were still thirty-five miles more upriver. We had to take small boats, so rowboat, little speedboats, to go to our mission of Tamshiyacu. And Tamshiyacu was the largest mission on the river, on the—of the mission out there. And there were eighteen different missions and they were all—they had priests and sisters from Canada and they all spoke French. So we were the only English-speaking people. So even when we got together with the sisters and priests from the other missions, we had to speak Spanish because we didn't know each other's language. And we, um, the priest who was there was one that was at our boys' home, Father Kennard. And he started the mission down there—no he didn't start it. He was the one who was there who wanted to start a high school.

So when we got down there I remember getting out of the plane and I thought, Oh, my goodness, it was so hot it almost took your breath away. And I thought, why this is what hell must be like [both laugh]. It was so tremendously hot and then I realized after we were there a while, you couldn't put a thermometer out because it would just send it right off. It was more than 140 every day.

LS: Wow.

IN: And there were no seasons, it was that way all year long [laughs]. So it was quite—it was quite an adjustment for us to get used to that hot climate. But, one thing, the people were just so wonderful and they were so glad to be able to go on to high school. This was their first chance, and the young boys would come who were eighteen, nineteen, some of them twenty. They'd come at night to talk to us to see if they were too old to come to start school. And we'd say no, because there's never been one here before, so anybody can come you're not too old if you can—if you can come. Well for many of them it was a real sacrifice because they had to work so hard just to get the food you needed for the day. You could not get food ready for a couple days ahead because ants ate everything. You just—you had to hang things up to keep it away from the ants.

[16:00]

So by day they would go out to their little farm. They lived in town, we had about 4,000 people in our pueblo. And the people would live in the town area and along the river, but then they'd walk about a mile to go out to where their little farm was. Every day they'd have to go out and get enough yucca and enough bananas or pineapple, whatever it was they raised, so that they would have food for the day. The school there was from seven o'clock in the morning until twelve. Then we had a siesta until three. And that for us meant a time to rest because we would—in the heat you just had to rest. We went back to school at three o'clock 'til five o'clock. So our days were very long, from seven to twelve and three to five, and six days a week. We had class Saturday until noon. And so, um, it was very difficult to get used to, but the children were so anxious to come. And the first year we had forty-two in the high school, just the first year. Each year we added one year. And the kids who came were ages from twelve to twenty-two. And they, of those forty-two, I think sixteen stayed with us through the five years and graduated. Others had to go back to their work and help support the family. So it was, it was quite an adjustment for us and really wonderful to be able to give them the opportunity for high school. So...

LS: I know when we spoke earlier you talked about some of your challenges when you came back to the United States. How different it was to be in an affluent society again. So I wonder if that and then maybe—you also spoke about the difficulties being in Peru, being so far away from home.

IN: Mhm.

[18:43]

LS: When you eventually began to work with the Mexican community, the Mexican American community, do you think maybe some of your experiences having lived in different places helped you to maybe better understand some of their difficulties?

IN: Oh yes, yes. The people who came here as migrants...they were so mistreated that it was just, it was wonderful to be able to do anything you could to help them. And, they came expecting so much and were told that they'd have housing and, and work and instead they were just dumped off at the corner of Cornelius there and left to find their own place. I remember my first day working there, I was working at St. Alexander's in Cornelius at that parish with Father Dave Zeger. And my first day there Father Dave asked—he said "I have a family for you to go meet," he said, "they just arrived. It's a woman with six children and no husband, and they just came across the border. And I think that we can get an apartment in the apartments right across from church." So he said, "Would you go see if she's in—" he gave me the number of the apartment that the manager was going to let them have. So I went over to meet this lady and her children, and it was such a pitiful story. She had a husband who beat her. He was, he didn't work, he was a drinker and he was so mean to her and he was beginning to beat up on the oldest little girl. She just couldn't feed her children there. And she heard of group of men who were going to be coming to the United States—men she knew. She went to them and said that she and her children wanted to come with them. And they said, "Are you crazy? You can't take all those children." She said, "Well, if I can't go with you I'll go by myself," she said, "I've got to get them where I can feed them." And when they saw that she really was going to do it they said "Well, yes we'll take you but we can't promise that we can take care of you all the way. We'll, we'll do our best." So she went with the guys and they—when they got near the border that was going to be the dangerous time and so they had made an agreement with them that, I think there were six men in her group that she came with and they were all people that knew her and knew her family. Two or three of them had been here before and had work, and they knew that they had work promised when they got there. So they said "If immigration guys come after us, we'll go one way and you take the kids and hide some place and go another way and we'll try to keep them off your track."

So sure enough they had, I don't know, four, five immigrant guys coming after them. The men—there was a deep ditch, for watering I guess or something. They told her "Go, go in that ditch, get your kids down under there and we'll run this way, but we may not be able to meet back up with you." They told her which way to go. So sure enough the guys ran after them but the last guy saw her. And he came and looked down and saw her. She had—the little boy was two or a little more—and she stuffed her hankie in his mouth so he wouldn't cry out. The man saw them and he said, "My God, woman, what do you think you're doing?" She said, "I'm trying to go where I can feed my children. We're gonna starve in Mexico." And he said "God be with you," and he left them alone and ran after the guys. So she was able to—they escaped that group of immigration men. Then she headed toward the border and the guys backtracked and met up with her again. She was able to cross over and come. So that

was the little family I was gonna try to help.”

LS: Wow.

[24:30]

IN: So, her name was Josefina. And her baby was Pablo, and Pablo was so traumatized from coming that he wouldn't talk. He knew how to talk, but he wouldn't. I called—Mr. Hertel was a man that, he has two sist—two daughters here in the convent. He started the St. Vincent de Paul at Hillsboro, and he started—took his barn and put furniture—people, he got furniture from people to give to the migrants. So we always had beds and chairs and tables. So I called him right away and told him about Josefina and this little family. I said, “They don't have a thing in the apartment but they did get into an apartment.” He said, “I'll see you tomorrow, sister. I'll see what I can get.” So the next day he brought a table and two chairs and I think one mattress. And then he said he would be back the next day. He knew where he could get some more stuff. So they started out with that. And Josefina, the second day that she was there, went with these men and got a job immediately that first day—second day here. And she had told her children, they were so afraid of the immigration, she had told her children that they should not open the blinds. This was like July and August when it was so hot, and they were in that little apartment with the blinds closed and she said “Don't you open the door for anybody cuz the immigration will be watching for you.” So the kids were scared to death. And I went the next day and no way would they open the door. I talked to the little—oldest little girl and she said “Mama said no.” I said “Okay, I'll come see mama tonight.”

So I went that evening and told the mother that I'd like to stop over and see the kids, and open the door so that they got some fresh air during the day. And I'd take them oranges or milk or juice or something to help them. And I always had wrapped candy in my pocket and I gave them a piece of candy. And so after the first couple days, Pablo would not talk. I said, “Pablo, I know that you can talk.” I said, “You don't need to be afraid anymore. The immigration are not going to come. They don't come to apartments, but mommy wants you to keep the door closed so somebody else doesn't come in. She doesn't want them to steal you so that's why she said lock the door. I tried to take the fear away from them, but...so I said “I can't give you candy tomorrow if you don't say hello or talk to me.” And he just hung his head. So the next day I came. No way was he gonna talk. I gave a piece to all the brothers and sisters, and they opened it and started eating their candy. Pretty soon he said, “Hola, sister.” [both laugh] He talked so I gave him a piece of candy, but that was just one of the cases where, they're so traumatized when they come. Then she did very well, she got the children—she had twin boys—and I think she had two that were school age and the twins could go to head start. So we got the four oldest into school right away and we found a lady who would take care of the two little ones. But she got a job and was able to take care of her children. So that was one of the stories. That was my first family [laughs].

[26:50]

LS: Quite the story.

IN: Yeah.

LS: Do you remember what type of job she got?

IN: It was in the—yes—in the nursery.

LS: Oh, okay.

IN: She was, they were pla—taking little trees and putting them in pots I think is what she was doing. But she was working in one of the nurseries there. And that's where most of the guys got their jobs, too.

LS: Oh, okay.

IN: It was—it was too late for berries. The strawberries were already finished, otherwise they would have been picking berries. But after the berries then the nurseries would hire the guys. And many times at five o'clock in the morning I would take a group of men out to one of the nurseries where I knew they needed help. I would call ahead and ask if they were hiring and say "I've got some good workers for you." [laughs] They all knew me. And after, after that one I'd go to any of the nurseries during the day I would sometimes go out to—oh, maybe I'd be getting flowers or I'd be taking something out to someone and the guys would all say "Ahhh, there's la madre," and they'd all wave [laughs]. They all knew who I was. So I had a lot of chances to get work for people.

LS: So you mentioned already that you were at St. Alexander Parish.

IN: Mhm.

LS: Could maybe just say for, for the recording what your job was there and...

IN: Yes...when I cam back from Peru I went to Staten to be principal at St. Mary's School out there. And while I was there, a Hispanic family came to an evening mass. And I wanted to talk Spanish. I hadn't talked Spanish for so long. So I went and talked to the mother in Spanish and she said "Ooooh, madre you speak Spanish." I said, "Yes, I was in Peru in the Amazon." She said "I have five children and they've not been prepared for the sacraments. And I don't know who can do that." She said "Would you help them?" Well they were living there in Stayton and so the only free time I had was Sunday evening, so they came all the rest of that year on Sunday evening and I instructed the children and they got to make their first communion and take part in the liturgies then. So it dawned on me then that there was nobody teaching the Hispanics, and I knew that Woodburn and Hillsboro—they had so many kids in the schools. I thought, you know, what's happening to them? So I had been at Stayton for seven years as principal and I really felt that I'd given it everything I had and it was

time to move on. And so I asked my community if I could work with the Hispanics and they said, "Well, we need you this—we need you for a job now but after that you can go." So they asked me to come home here and be superior at the mother house. So I was that for four years and then I got to go work at Cornelius. And I think I was the first one in the area to start religious ed. with the children. And so when I got the job at St. Alexander's it was to be director of religious ed. both in English and in Spanish. That meant teaching all the grade school and high school kids religion if they hadn't had it or been prepared for the sacraments. So that's how I got my job.

LS: Okay.

IN: [laughs]

LS: Now your work going to the migrant camps

IN: Yeah.

LS: Was that—the work camps—was that part of your official duties at St. Alexander?

IN: Yes.

[30:47]

LS: Okay.

IN: St. Alexander's had charge of twenty...there were forty camps in the area and we had twenty of them. And father had asked—he had a lady, Madeline Taylor who was working there before me. When he hired me, he told Madeline that I would be taking her place but before she left, would she take me around and show me the camps and the apartments where the people lived so I would know some of the people? So for one week that's all we did was to—she took me around to where the different camps were and I got to know them. Because he said that if you had free time it would be good to go out to the camps a little bit, too. And I could only teach the children after school hours, so my day was free until, you know, three o'clock when I could get the kids for religion. So I did census taking for the church, try to get the names and address of our families, and make a directory because you didn't have anything like that at St. Alexander's. So when Madeline showed me where a lot of the apartment houses were, I would go in the morning starting, oh maybe around ten o'clock or nine-thirty, and I would just go visit all the places and ask if they were Catholic and told them who I was. So many of them were, so I would go visit these houses and the women would be so glad to see me because what they did—one lady would take care of maybe two or three families' children. She'd keep—she'd maybe have eight or ten little kids under four. The rest then would all be able to go to work. And so she was so glad to see come, it was like bringing church to her. They loved to have me come and visit with them. So that's what I did in the mornings and afternoons. Then in the afternoon, later, afternoon and evenings, I would teach religion classes. And going to the migrant camps was a summer project. We wouldn't take the school kids during

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the summer but I would go to the migrant camps and teach the kids and sing with them and just have fun and let them know that we cared about them and so that's...and then we had food from the government that was passed out. So I did that, too.

LS: Would you often go by yourself, or...

IN: I didn't at the beginning, but later on I did. Usually I needed someone to help lift the boxes, so I usually had somebody go. But I certainly wasn't afraid to go. When I first started and I took the men out to go looking for work, I worried a little and my community did too, whether it was safe for me to do that. And I said, you know, they respect me so much I'm sure I don't need to worry about it. And they were, they were so good I just, I never ever felt afraid, you know. They respected me. But going to camp I usually did have someone go with me because you had, we'd have these big cases of rice and beans and they had to be opened and it was heavy to lift.

LS: Right.

IN: Mhm.

LS: Okay.

IN: So I did that.

LS: What years were that, do you remember, that you worked at St. Alexander?

IN: Yes, from '84 to '96.

LS: Okay.

IN: And '88 was the year that, that was the last year that people could get papers to be here officially. So that year Father Dave hired a college graduate who wanted to do some volunteer work and she came then to work at our place just on doing the paperwork for the immigration office. And I helped during what free time I would have, I'd go in and help her. And people would line up in the morning and they'd be there late at night. We'd be there until almost ten o'clock sometimes doing this paperwork for them. They had to have the letters from the people who they worked and they had to prove it was true and all that. Then during that year we did over 3,000 applicants for residency here.

LS: Wow.

IN: And all of them were accepted. She did a fine job. So many made mistakes in filling them out but she was a real smart cookie and she did a great job of getting the right answers from them. It was wonderful. She married, she married a Mexican. Has two

children, she's very happily married. Right now she's a PA, a physician's assistant.

LS: Oh, okay.

IN: Yeah, so...she worked with the free clinic. I worked the—in fact it's a clinic they just closed, which I feel so bad about. Hillsboro had a free clinic two nights a week for anybody that couldn't—didn't have insurance, and I worked there for two years. The last year she came to volunteer. She was a physician's assistant. I was so glad seeing that.

LS: Excellent. You mentioned that you felt very respected when you went out to the camps and just by the community in general. Could you maybe talk a little bit more about that or if, if everybody sort of knew who you were, or of you?

[37:20]

IN: Well they found out very fast who I was. And you know at the migrant camps you always had new people coming in. So, one week they might have two, three new families. So when I'd go they wouldn't know who I was. But the kids would all say "Ah, es la madre." They said "Quién es?" And they'd say "She comes and brings food and, and clothes" I used to take clothing out, too. And, so people soon learned who I was. I would often—Centro Cultural—which is the place in Cornelius—they still get bread and sweets from many of the grocery stores and from the food bank. People can come and get that. I used to go to the food bank and they'd load my car, I had a, I always had a little, like a Subaru, and the back end would just be filled with—I'd go to the food bank and they'd load it with bread and with sweets, donuts and whatnot. All I needed to do was to go to the one apartment house and honk my horn and the little kids who'd be outside would know and they'd run in and tell their mom "Sister's here, sister's here." That meant bring a plate or a bag out if you want to get something to eat and so my car would empty in fifteen minutes [laughs] and then I'd go back for another load. So I did that a lot and...everybody knew who I was. I mean even the, the Vietnamese who were—there were some of those living in among the Mexican people at some of the apartment houses in Hillsboro. Though they couldn't, most of them couldn't speak English, sometimes the little children could speak to each other in almost sign language and they would tell the Vietnamese that "You didn't have to pay for it, Sister gives it. Tell your mommy to come. And so they would come, too, and get.

[39:00]

Sometimes there were our Anglo people who didn't approve of what I did, and they'd let me know it, but, they were very few and far between. One time I went to a—a lady called me but I must say that I found out afterward she was a little mental and I didn't realize that. She had called me to come get some apples that she wanted to donate. And I had a little fourth-grade Hispanic girl with me. Her family had all gone to Mexico but she couldn't go because her paperwork didn't come. So they left her with me for two weeks while they went to visit. His mother was dying, so they took the family and she stayed with me and I had the little girl in the car. And when this lady saw me drive in she gave me the apples and then she turned to me and she said "Don't you ever come on this place again with one of them in your car." And I'm so taken

back, I'm just, I just felt so bad. And so I went home and told father and he said "Oh," he said "Oh, sister, this is a bad day for her." He said, "She gets spells when she's really crazy and the, the husband knows it and usually tries to stay with her." And father felt real bad that happened, and he told the husband. And he said, "There really isn't anything you can do about it. She, she just gets those spells and when she does she says what she thinks." So you met people like that sometimes. But mostly people would, they would give me donations or they would give me things to take to the camp.

[42:30]

We started, one thing that we did that was so neat. We started a program of adopting a camp. We got the different churches, not just Catholic but any churches that wanted to take part because we often met once a month with...oh, the, the place in Hillsboro that takes care of giving money for electricity and help paying bills. I can't think of the name of it right now but—Community Action—the Community Action people would meet once a month and they often talked about our migrant camps and how they could help. And so we did this adopt a camp and let them know that any churches that wanted to adopt a camp, we would arrange that for them. And to this day many of them still go out to the camps. Families go and the kids play with the kids and the adults, during the summer time they have, maybe twice during the summer, they'll have a big barbecue with all of the people out there. They'll furnish the hamburgers and the hotdogs and whatnot. And just getting to know the people, and that's been a real good thing. That...I think that still goes on. So, and then another, the parish over here, Pious the Tenth, it was Father Bert Griffith. He was a priest who really saw ahead he was—he's dead now, but he was a great guy. He called me one day and he said, "I have women here in the parish who want to do something with the Hispanics." He said, "Would you come over and meet with them and maybe we could see how we could help?" So I went over and had a meeting with them and they wanted to know what's best way—how could they best get to know them and how, so we talked about adopting a camp. And then they called, they started what they called the circle of Guadalupe. They met once a week, a group of women from the parish, and they would decide what it was they would try to do for their adopted camp. Then they would get the parish to get behind whatever they were doing, whether they were going to collect food or clothing, or, just go out and...they built a, they built a basketball court in one of them, it was really nice.

IN: [coughs] I need this [referring to cough drop].

LS: Okay. No problem. So, overall from your experience, how would you—could you generally describe relations between the Anglo and Hispanic communities?

IN: Mm, you know, there were so many, especially at the little church of St. Alexander's, it's very small. They don't have a very big Anglo community at all. But the ones that were there wanted so much to welcome the Hispanics and to be, have them be a part of the community. There were a few who hung back, but for the most part they really wanted to join. My brother was in that parish and his children, his

daughter taught with me. She was high school, and she helped with the religion classes, both the Spanish and the others. And she's still doing it to this day.

LS: Wow.

IN: She's married and has kids and all her kids help in the church. They're really good. But, the, they did...little things where they sold things after mass. They'd get the Mexicans to make the tamales and the, they'd have them after mass to sell and that helped the Hispanic community. And the Anglo community really enjoyed having the Hispanic food. And then they—when there were feast days they would ask the Hispanics to help them decorate the church and they'd work together. So they really tried very hard to, to meld together and become a community. Now because so many of the first ones coming in who can't speak English go to that church, when they once can speak English they'll often go off to one of the other parishes. But that still remains the Hispanic parish. And so, I think you'll always have the Hispanic group, but the Americans that are there are very intertwined with the Hispanics. So I think it's, it's helped a lot. They work together to decorate the church, to fix things up when they need it. When the young people have a...doings, it's both groups and...that's really been good.

LS: So to go back to the labor camps. Do you know what group was in charge of the other camps?

IN: Yes...can't think of her name. When you go to Hillsboro from here, you go down, down that hill. There's a, kind of a real lowland, a hill.

LS: Okay.

IN: When you come up, on the right side they have a sign that says...they give help. What is her name? They, they, have a little, a little office there and they'll help people to fill out for food stamps or to know how to get a driver's license or...things like that. And she was the one who took care of the other camps. And I don't know for sure if it was through a church or if it was done through the community and her. I'm not sure.

[47:30]

LS: Okay, but she had other people

IN: Yeah

LS: Helping her out.

IN: Mhm.

LS: Okay.

IN: Yes.

LS: And then did you, did you work with Centro directly when you were...

IN: No, but we did a lot of things together.

LS: Okay.

IN: I, I didn't...we had a lot of our celebrations over there and...Tencha and Emilio were my best friends. They were—she was the cook over there and he did the runaround. He was her gopher [laughs].

LS: Okay [laughs].

IN: He went and got the bread and picked up the chicken and whatever. They were wonderful people. In fact they're in this book.

LS: Oh, okay.

[Sister pulls out folder and points to pictures inside]

IN: This is my brother and his wife. And this, these are the people. Oh, they were, they were some of the first—some of the first ones to come with the Bracero Program.

LS: Very good.

IN: Mhm.

LS: Thank you.

[48:47]

IN: Yeah.

LS: How were the conditions at the labor camps when you were going out, helping out...

IN: [laughs] You have to remember that I lived in Peru and so I was used to...

LS: Right.

IN: ...very rough things. And I also studied in Mexico so I knew what they were coming from. And when you see how they live in Mexico, the way they lived here wasn't all that bad at all, you know. But people are used to running water and, oh, you know, I don't know. There's, there's such a difference in how people live some time, but there were a couple camps where it was really bad. They might have the toilets broken and they wouldn't get fixed. And, the, the showers were in a general room. If one didn't work. So that kind of thing always happened, but for the most part they

were kept up. And they had, you had to go outside and shower but, you know, that was not anything. At least they had showers. And their homes were just one room—the cabin was one room and they had double beds above and below like bunk beds, you know, but they were double. Very small place to cook, it was, what do you call them, oh a little electric plate you know. And they'd have to cook on that. I don't know, they, they weren't, they weren't good. But what I'd say was worse than—it wasn't, it wasn't so much the cabins being bad as the one who ran the cabin. They treated them terribly sometimes. And often, often the owner of the camp wouldn't realize how...because what very often happened, the owner, let's say a Mr. Brown owned the camp. Well he would hire Poncho and somebody else to run the camp. These people would not be from Mexico, they'd be from Texas. So right away they disliked the Mexicans. They just—the two do not mix. And so these, whoever was in charge of the whole camp was the one that would take advantage of them terribly. To mail a letter they would charge them five dollars sometimes. Just to take a letter in to mail and buy a stamp for it. And if they got, if they got groceries for them, everything, everything was overcharged and put on their bill at the end of the month.

So at the end of the month when they got their paycheck, half of it already went to the, the guy that, that was doing these things for them. And when we'd take food out, often they would take all of the cheese out, they would—inside the homes in a couple places—they went inside their cabin in a couple places and took all the cheese out instead of leaving it for the people. If they tried to leave the camp at night, they would beat them up, they, they kept them locked up practically. There was one, there was one place—they went to jail for it, for a whole year, but there was one place where they had a tin roof building that was like to work on tractors and whatnot in. Well they had the people in this building and closed up at night so they couldn't get out. And it would be stifling hot in there. If they tried to leave, two men tried to leave. One night they had a car up there and they tried to get out and they were stopped by the two guys that owned the camp and they were beaten to a pulp. Well Father Dave went to their rescue and reported it, and that's when the guy went to jail. But, see, the owner didn't even know what those guys, how he would—he, they don't check on them to know how they're treating them, and that they're mistreating. So there was, there was a lot of that and...

[53:30]

LS: Would you say that the most of the individuals in charge of the facilities were Mexican American from Texas or somewhere else in the U.S.?

IN: I think a lot of them were, yeah.

LS: More so than Anglo?

IN: Yeah, oh yeah.

LS: Okay.

IN: Uh-huh.

LS: So was—was that generally if you went to the camps, um, people who were from—who were Mexican American from, from the U.S., they were in those positions of authority?

IN: They were the ones in charge, yeah.

LS: Okay.

IN: Cuz, see they had English already and so they could talk English to the owner and to the cannery people and anybody they needed to, to speak English with where the others couldn't. So...let's see, what else...

LS: So do you think when, when the farm owners found out, or the—whatever the business was, they would usually try and get better conditions or?

IN: Yeah, or hire different people, or—I don't know. Some of them, the one went to—the one that went to jail I think knew about it but didn't—and I think that's why he got what he did because he knew what was happening and didn't do anything. But you know for the most part, like Roy Malinsky had wonderful camps. He even put air-conditioning in. He built new cabins and—some of them were wonderful, uh, overlords and really took care of the camps. For the most part, for the most part I'd say the camps weren't all that bad. There were a few that really needed—Blue Camp was always the real bad one. And everybody knew it, but that was the one that took anybody in, you know, if they didn't have a place to stay they doubled up and slept in their car and whatnot. But for the most part they—and especially at the beginning, at the beginning when they first came it was a lot different. I think they had a decent cabin and they had a place to cook, but as more people came there was just too many.

LS: I see.

IN: Mhm.

LS: So you mentioned that there was obviously some, some tension between Mexican Americans and then Mexican-born families and individuals. Do you remember maybe some times where they interacted better or more favorably together?

IN: Well, those two older people that I told you worked at Centro Cultural, the cook. They were from Texas, they weren't from Mexico. And they probably were some of the really good go-betweens for both groups. They were some of the first people to come here. Their younger kids got an education; their daughter became a lawyer and then a teacher. And...you know they had, they had a big family but all of them took care of themselves, and at Centro Cultural they did a lot to help the people who first got here to know what to do and what not to do. Like they would tell, they would tell

the guys that you couldn't sleep in the parks during the night, or, you know, to try to find somebody's porch or someone who would let you sleep there but don't go to the park cuz they'll, the police will arrest you. They were good about telling them to come in there and get one meal a day if they didn't have a place to cook. And Centro did that all the time, they had a noon meal where everybody would be free to come, and they, they invited the business people to also come and they had a jar there that you could put a donation in for having your meal there. And tried to get the people of the town to mix with the others. That was a really good thing; they did a lot that way. I'd say that they were two people who, who really tried. They're the first ones to try to get a senior center going. First it was just in a little house and then they were responsible, I think, for getting this, the Centro Cultural, the grant for that so...

LS: Excellent.

IN: Mhm.

LS: Do you remember, individuals who came from Mexico—if they came from certain regions, more prevalent, or?

IN: Lots of people from Michoacan and Oaxaca.

LS: Okay.

IN: Those are the two really big ones. And then there were people who came from Jalisco and Guadalajara. Those were all a better class of people, I'd say. The ones who came from Oaxaca were so poor, didn't even have schooling. Many times hadn't gone to school at all. And I don't know Oaxaca myself but I understand it's very rocky and very poor soil. [Car horn starts going off in the background] And the good soil that they had they, they raised vegetables, had vegetable gardens. When I studied in Mexico one summer I lived with a group of sister and they told me some of the things in Oaxaca. The government came and told the people that had these wonderful gardens going. They were raising lots of vegetables, and they told them that they were relocating them. That the government needed this land. And so they were going to relocate them to rocky hill land where they wouldn't have been able to make a living. The people, a couple of the men said that, you know, they, they couldn't do that. That this land had been their family's. And they had a right to it. And they took those two men and hung them up on a tree, and they didn't have shoes on. With machetes they cut the bottom of their feet and told the rest of the people who were around, "We'll be here with trucks tomorrow. You be ready with your things; you're going to be relocated." The government took over that farmland. You know, things like that. So the people from Oaxaca streamed here. One of the ladies told me that it's so sad because there are no men left in Oaxaca except the real old ones that couldn't come here to work. And she said some of them come and faithfully send their money back to support their families, but others come and start another family here and never go back. She said, you know, it's, it's really a sad country. So, now that's hearsay. I've

[1:00:00]

never been in Oaxaca. I've been in a lot of parts of Mexico, but I never went there, so...

LS: Okay.

IN: They all have stories [laughs].

LS: So you mentioned a little bit with the one little girl whose family went back to Mexico and you, you took care of her for a couple weeks.

IN: Uh-huh.

LS: Could you talk about some other ways you helped out some families beyond your formal duties?

IN: Ah, yes, did I tell you about the triplets?

LS: I don't think so.

IN: [Laughs] Well one day I got a call from a social worker at OSHU and she said, "You're Sister Ina Marie." I said yes. She said, "I understand you work with Hispanic women." I said "Yes, I do." And she said, "Well we have one here that's really gonna need your help. She has a four-year old boy at home and we just delivered triplets cesarean and she's not gonna be able to take care of them by herself. We wondered if you could help her." So she gave me the name and number, and I didn't know the family at all. But it was a young little family. I went to visit them and they were in a terrible apartment house. It was moldy and damp and I thought, oh, to bring babies into a place like this would be awful. So I knew a realtor and immediately I tried to, I talked to the husband and said, "You have to get out of this place, you have to get into something better." And he said, "I know," he said, "I didn't know we were going to have this many babies." He said, "I've got some money saved," but he said, "I'd like to get my own house, not just get an apartment." And I said, "Well, how much do you have?" And I think he had a couple thousand. He was just a worker, he was a foreman though. But here's another injustice: he was a foreman at one of the biggest nurseries in Forest Grove. He worked there eight years and he got five dollars an hour. The American man that worked there got eleven dollars an hour. Same job.

LS: Mhm.

IN: So I call the owner, [laughs] I was so mad. I got the mother—the wife. And I said you have a man working for you for eight years and he's a foreman. And he's—I understand he's getting five dollars an hour." I said, "can you explain to me why?" She said, "Well who are you?" [Both laugh] And so I told her who I was and I said "They were just delivered with triplets, and caesarean." And I said, "They're living in a horrible place. They have to get a—into a home. And he needs more wages." And she said, "Well isn't it interesting that you call me right now?" She said, "I happen to have

his folder in my hand right now." I had told her the name. And she said, "I see down at the bottom here," she said, "We're, we're picking out the ones that should get a raise. And it says down at the bottom 'babies.'" And she said, "I just figured he had twins." I said, "No, it's triplets." So she said, "Well we'll do something about it." Well you know what they did? It was almost Christmas. They were born in August, I think, or September. And for Christmas they gave him fifty dollars for each triplet. Wasn't that nice? [Sarcastic laugh] No raise in his salary, just five—

LS: Just a little Christmas—

IN: Five cent raise in his salary. I was so angry. So anyway I, I went to the, to the realtor and talked to him and said, "See if you can find something. It doesn't have to be fancy but it needs to have more room." And so he was gonna look right away, and I had a couple of other people looking. I had talked to my community here and I said, "You know, they need help but I don't know where it's gonna come from." But I said, "I'm gonna go every morning and help her with the babies for a few hours so she can get some work done." And first I was—she wanted a lady to come in and be with her. Well I could get Anglo people but she couldn't speak a word of English. And so that didn't work. A couple went, and when I went to see her she said, "Oh I can't have those ladies come in. I don't know if they're washing the bottles clean." And she was a super clean mom.

LS: Mhm.

IN: And so she had like twenty-eight bottle a night to be washed, they had to be fed every two hours. They were so little. And she nursed one. She took turns nursing, but it was just more than she could do. So I decided the best would be for me to go every morning. So I would go about eight-thirty, nine o'clock and give her two—three hours in the morning when she could do something else and I'd watch the babies. And that was so much fun [laughs]. I just really enjoyed that. So for two years they grew up with me [both laugh] taking care of them. They called me their grandma here, nana. And they're sophomores now [laughs].

LS: Oh, okay.

IN: But, um...

LS: Do you stay in touch with them at all?

IN: Yeah, I do. I—not very often. I was just saying the other day I've got to go visit them. I, I want to—I'm not even sure if they're sophomores or juniors. I don't know. They grow so fast, but anyway that was a wonderful experience for me and I had a, in fact I've got a picture. I had the Hillsboro Argus do an article on, on um...here...triplets need help [laughs, shows paper copy of article with photo].

LS: Oh, okay.

IN: And, here they are. This is when they're a little older. That's a darling picture. Except momma closed her eyes.

LS: [laughs]

IN: But...they—I let people know that we needed diapers and things. And I was given enough diapers that I think the father only had to buy diapers twice as long as his children needed them. Cuz I could keep him supplied from the post offices.

LS: Wow.

IN: You know they send out sample diapers.

LS: Mhm.

IN: And they don't, very often don't send them to the people. And so they just toss them all in a big bin for me. And a man would bring them to me [laughs].

LS: And you knew what to do with them.

IN: [laughs] I sure did. [Brings up another photo] And this is me at a migrant camp passing out toys to the kids.

LS: Okay. [Takes a look] yeah.

IN: Yeah. And this was a family who I helped get a home, too. And that was another, another story. She came pregnant with this one and couldn't get an apartment. Did I tell you that story?

LS: I don't think so.

IN: Oh, well that's...okay see, I guess I finished the triplets. The Hillsboro—no, Forest Grove has a set of apartments that's just for farm workers. And this man had come two summers to work here and went back to Mexico. And so he had made arrangements before he left to have an apartment the following year, and he was bringing his family to stay. And so they got here at ten after four on a Friday and the, the manager of that apartment wouldn't see him because it was after four o'clock. I was passing out bread, I was there with my car. And the mother came over to me—she was five months pregnant with the little one you see there. They had five children. And she said, "I have to..." she said, "Are you selling that bread?" I said, "No, I'm giving it. Do you want some?" She said, "We just got here from Mexico. We've been on the road for three days." And she said, "The lady won't let us in our apartment." I said, "You have an apartment?" She said, "Yes, my husband made arrangements, but we got

here ten minutes late." I said, "I'll go talk to her, she'll let you in." I went over; oh, no way would she change. She said, "If I, if I take—change for him I'd have to do it for everybody. I'd be here late at night." So she wouldn't do it. I told them they could go down to Echo Shaw, they have a lovely park there and they have a lavatory, and they have a place to wash, they have tables to eat. I said, "You can be there for the day during the weekend, but you can't be there at night." So I said, "Do you know where...that lake...Hagg Lake." I said, "Do you know where Hagg Lake—" "Yeah," he said, "I've been fishing up there." I said, "Why don't you go up there for the night," and I said, "if you go to the park, the police will come," and I said, "if you go there I think they won't say anything to you. Then come down here for the, for the day." So that's what they did until they could get into the apartment. Then when they got into the apartment they weren't even there one month. And the little—the fourth child is retarded. A little girl. And she peed on the grass instead of in the house, you know. And so the kids ran right away and told their moms and the moms reported them to, to the manager. So she told them, "If she did it again you have to move out. We can't have that here." And she did it again. The kids tried to watch her but—so they were told they had to get out by...in two days. They had no place to go. So we went down to the trailer court and asked the manager there if there was any trailer empty. Well there was one that people didn't want, it was so bad. They were just leaving it. So we went and looked at it. It was big enough at least for them to sleep in and had three bedrooms. So it wasn't very nice but it was something they could go to. I think they had to pay two hundred dollars to have it for the month. He had a job, he was a welder, he had a job and she had a job—no she didn't, he did. And the kids were all in school. So they, they lived there for a while and then they saved their money and he wanted to get into a house. And then that's another one I went to the realtor that helped me and they found a, a really nice house—older house. And he was real handy; he could do plumbing and everything. So he could fix it up. So anyway, I found some place where they could borrow three thousand dollars and then he'd have enough to get into a house and first down payment. And he had three years to pay that back. He paid it within the first year.

LS: Wow.

IN: And, and now he has, he's bought his third house. They've sold one and went to another. Now he's in a duplex, and...he's not able to work. He's crippled [coughs]. So, those are some of my stories [laughs].

LS: Okay [laughs]. Are you okay to keep going with the interview, or do you want to take a little break?

IN: I need to get water.

LS: Sure, okay we're just going to pause the tape, then.

[1:12:41]

Second
Audio File

Audio File 2

LS: All right, so we are back with the interview with Sister Ina Marie. All right, so let me move on to a few different types of questions. I was wondering about how people in this community—if you saw them express their culture or pride in their Mexican heritage?

IN: Oh, yes. I think so. For the most part, they're very proud to be from Mexico. Or Guatemala, too. Guatemalans are very proud of their country. We have two of them in our ESL class now and they always bring their country into whatever it is we're talking about. Yes, I think...even though Cinco de Mayo is not something they celebrate there at all, they're always happy to take part and celebrate here because it is part of their culture. But religious-wise, I would say that, you know, they hold on to their values and their family customs are very important to them. They don't like it if their kids get too Americanized too soon. They really want them to keep with their own traditions and that's, that's hard when they get to be teenagers and are very immersed in our own culture. But...

LS: Do you remember if people would sing traditional songs or anything like that?

[2:00]

IN: Oh yes, oh yeah. And it all has to do with the, with the church, you know, for the most part. Like their nine days before Christmas, they have a song they sing. They go house to house. And it's—they form two groups. One group is inside, and one group is outside and they're asking to come in. It's, it's kind of honoring Joseph and Mary going, trying to find a place to stay. And that's the *posadas*. They always want to take part in that. And then those end usually by—they go to maybe two or three houses—and then the—the third house receives them in. They always have something to eat and to drink and stay and visit. That's important to them.

And then the Feast of Guadalupe is one where they really are willing to make sacrifices. They get up at five in the morning or four and come to church for the *mañanitas*. Then after that they have something to eat and the men all eat first so they can go to work right after. The women and children eat later. We always had that at St. Alexander's—they still do, I'm sure. So those things are really important to the—and in contrast, this is going back to Peru, but in Peru they don't do a thing. It's just a—we were just shocked at a...there's not gifts. They have no trees. All they celebrate is going to church and the mass. And after that they go home and go to sleep. There's no gift-giving or anything, it's just a spiritual celebration. That was very different. But, let's see, what else to do the Mexican people...oh, their *desfiles*, their parades that they have on independence day. Those are all very important. Their flag.

LS: Okay. So you mentioned Guatemalans. Is there a considerable portion of the Hispanic population here that's from Guatemala?

IN: Yes, uh-huh, and, and they kept them separate in camps. Pretty much all the Guatemalans were in Camp Barbie, and that was a really big camp. Now whether they always do that I'm not sure, but I know that we had two different camps where the people were pretty much from Guatemala, and they tend to stay together.

LS: Okay, but were there, were there Guatemalans at—coming to St. Alexander for worship?

IN: Oh yes, oh yes, uh-huh.

LS: So they weren't segregated there for the church.

IN: No, no.

LS: Okay.

[5:05]

IN: In fact that was—oh no, I guess they were Mexican. I was just thinking one day I got a call, this would never happen today, but I got a call from a school and said that a little three—third-grader had fallen on the jungle gym and hurt his shoulder. They called the mother and she had no transportation and told them to call me and have me take him to the hospital. So I did—she didn't want me to come get her because it would be quite a ways to go, so she said, "just take him to the hospital and then bring him home." So I did. He had, he had broken—what had happened, he had a cyst growing. And it was good thing it happened, because it was impairing his bone growth. He had a big cyst that broke when he fell, and anyway they took care of it and he was okay.

LS: Okay. Do you remember people talking about some of their hopes or desires for themselves when they were working, or for their families?

IN: Yes. Mostly for their kids, you know. Not—I would say that. In fact this family that I helped buy a house, the father was starved as a child and he was a welder but his back was so bad he had to give up welding. He was really crippled. And I thought something could be done so I took him to the doctor. I said, "Rogelio, we're going to go see a doctor. Surely they can do something for your back," and he said, "In Mexico they told me no." And so we went. After they did x-rays and tests, the doctor called me in to his office by myself and he said, "Do you know this man very well?" I said, "Well, I've known him for a couple years now." He said, "There's nothing we can do." They said, "He was starved as a child and his backbone never developed like it should have. And so he has..." Um they called it a splintered back or something. I don't know, but it wasn't—there was nothing they could do. They said surgery wouldn't help him. And so when I went, when I went out I felt terrible and I said, "Rogelio, did the doctor tell you why your back is this way?" And he said, "Yeah, I didn't have enough to eat." I said, "Why not?" He said, "I had a brother older than me and there were seven below me." And he said, "We never had enough food. And I knew that if I ate my food my

[9:00]

mother would have nothing.” He said, “I tried to save for her. But my brother always ate my food and his too.” He said, “No matter what I did I couldn’t keep it for mama,” he said, “I was hungry all the time.” I just thought, what a way to grow up. So he was not—he couldn’t keep the welding job he had. I think he had it for six, five or six years and he was making such good money which was really helping. And his kids were in high school then. And so when they got out of high school, they all—one wanted to be a dentist. He would go in as a high school kid in a dentist’s office. The dentist told him to come in and he’d familiarize him with the different things, you know, and explain some things to him. Well then he went to Iraq instead, he went to the war. And when he came home he decided that it would be better for him to be a lawyer. He had started classes already in the service. So he’s a lawyer today and got—passed his bar. I’m just so happy for him.

LS: Wow.

IN: And the oldest boy went to Forest Grove high school. They taught Japanese, and he took Japanese. There were only five kids in the class. He was the top one. He got a wonderful job because of knowing Japanese. Married a Japanese girl and they have a little child. The third boy is a, had two tours over in Iraq and he’s out now and has a child. It’s just so good to see them do so well, but the father, the father can’t do much. He raises a little garden at home and can work on it a little at a time.

LS: Mhm.

IN: But the mother is working, so, yeah, sad stories.

LS: So it sounds like of a lot of—well especially with that family, but parents making big sacrifices for their children.

IN: Oh yes. Oh that’s right, you were asking. Yes. And I think the big thing is that they want them to be able to have things they didn’t have. Not so much that they’re wealthy, but that they’ll have a good job and be able to support a family. You just hear that all the time, and they want them to go to school. And...like the triplet family, the older boy is a, he’s out of high school probably three years now, maybe. I asked him the last time I saw him—couple years ago now, I guess—I asked what he was doing, and he said he went to community college to take a course in mechanics. He loves to work on cars and he’s good at it. So with a two-year thing there he’ll have a license to, to I guess work in a garage or whatever. So that’s what he wants to do. A number of the kids who didn’t want to go through a four-year college also went and took landscaping, and there’s good money in that. And they’re very good at that because they know how to take care of plants and weed and spade. And that kind of thing is kind of second nature to many of them. So it’s really good to see them. What I get concerned about is when the girls get so girl crazy already at Sophomore and don’t want to finish school and get pregnant and there goes there life and...

LS: Mhm.

IN: Yeah, it's, it's a hard battle. But I think for the most part, they're willing to make any kind of sacrifice to give their kids an education, and that's good to see.

LS: Yeah. Well not too many more questions, if you don't mind [IN laughs] we keep going. I was kind of curious about families moving back and forth and relocation. During your work were a lot of families moving back—

IN: Oh, constantly.

LS: Okay.

IN: Constantly. That's why it was so hard to try to keep a census for the church. Cuz they'd be here a while and then move to Dayton or move to Woodburn—they'd hear of a good job. I would have kids prepared and ready to make their first communion on a Sunday, and Saturday they found out their job ended but they found out there was a job in Washington. So Saturday night they pick up and go and they're not there for Sunday, you know. That, that just happens a lot. And once they, and that's with the people who just move in, and until they really get settled they move many times. It's always where the work is, you know, where they can find a job, or a better job or whatever. So there is a lot of, a lot of moving.

LS: It sounds like the families that you got to know eventually—did they start to settle, or—

IN: Yes, uh-huh. I'd say a lot of them did, though not all. Many, many moved on, but the ones I probably was closest to were people who stayed here. Like out in Farmington road there's Heikes farm out there and there were five brothers. They, they all lived, they all had families and I got very close to that group. I went out for every fiesta they had and every time someone had a birthday all of the families would get together out on the farm. They'd have a barbecue—roast a goat or pig or whatever—and have a big celebration. So I was real close to those families. The oldest one was—the only one who didn't work on the farm, he worked on the road. He had a very good job in construction. He drove one of those big graders that they have tearing up the cement, and that's a very high-paying job and so...but the other four were all on the farm. But none of them are there now...they've changed the way they farm and so they're not raising the berries. They're raising garlic and it's just completely changed. But each one of them have their own home now.

LS: Wow.

IN: After working out there for probably twenty years. They have their own home. One's in North Plains, two are in Cornelius, and one in Hillsboro, yeah.

[15:00]

LS: You worked more with mothers and children, but do you remember a lot of workers in the camps that were here that had their families back in Mexico, or they were working by themselves?

IN: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah, uh-huh. One man named Francisco. I was able to get him a job at Teufel's. That's the big nursery, or was the big nursery at Hillsboro. And Mrs. Teufel was a good friend of mine, Margaret. She was the—her son is running it now—but, that's a place I would take people for work. And when Francisco came he was an older man. I think he was probably forty, forty-five when he came. And it was his first time here. He was staying with a family that I used to go visit a lot and he needed a job, so I said, "You be ready tomorrow at five and I'll come pick you up. I think the Teufel's need help." So I took him out there and Mrs. Teufel afterwards thanked me and thanked me. She said, "He is one of most polite men that's every worked for us, and so responsible." And he had six, five daughters back in Mexico and his wife. He has no sons but he had all these girls. And he said, I guess he told her that if he could get a little bit more pay, he would have enough to send material back. His wife sewed and they could all have new dresses for Christmas. [laughs] And so they gave him a job sweeping up after he did his eight hours. He swept up and did all the clean up for them. So after that they changed his hours so that the clean up was part of his work and he wouldn't have to have the overtime cuz they weren't supposed to get too much overtime.

LS: Mhm.

IN: Anyway he got me one day and said, "I need some help." I said, "What can I do for you?" "Go to the—take me to a store where they sell nice material for women's dresses." I said, "Okay, we'll go to JoAnn's." So we went. He said, "I want to buy material so my wife can make two dresses for all five of my girls and for herself. I said, "Do you have any idea of how much that would take?" He said, "Well, I'll send extra so there'll be sure there'll be enough." So we went to that store and he had more fun picking out material [laughs]. We sent box—two boxes I think about like this about to Mexico for he couldn't go himself. It would take too much money.

LS: Mhm.

IN: So he wrote and told her—talked to her on the telephone I guess and said he wouldn't come for Christmas but he was sending this early so she could make them a Christmas gift. And so I helped do that. And you know, he was still working there. I went about three, four years ago. I used to always say hello to him. When I went this last time the girl told me, the Teufel girl that now works there. She's the granddaughter. Told me that he went back to Mexico to stay. That he—it was getting too hard. He was over sixty. So he was going to go back, but she said, "He'll have a nice little social security check for him coming in back there," and they have a little place. So she said he was just so happy to be able to back home.

LS: Mhm.

IN: So that was nice.

LS: Wow.

IN: Yeah. And many of them were very, very faithful about sending money back. They almost all, if their families were there—well I shouldn't say all, but lots of them went home for Christmas. They would get the time off cuz nurseries didn't work during the January, February.

LS: Mhm.

IN: And so they would go home maybe in the end of November and not come back 'til the first of March and then they'd find jobs again, so...

LS: I'm going to ask a question that goes back to one of your earlier stories. You were talking about—I think his name was Pablo that was traumatized by the crossing experience and you, you coaxed him into talking a little bit with the candy.

IN: Yeah.

LS: Was he able to speak more normally and regularly after that?

IN: Oh yes. And he went to school, uh-huh. He was two-and-a-half I think when he came. And so he was with a baby sitter for a couple years and then it was time for him to go to school. And about that time—they only stayed there I think maybe three years. And then she moved to Dayton. By that time she had found a man who wanted to—I don't know that they married but anyway they lived together. She said, "He was really good with my kids or I would never have gone to live with him." And he had a house in Dayton so they went and moved in with him so...

LS: Excellent.

IN: I haven't seen her since she went there, but she was a sweet little lady and had gone through so much with her first husband.

LS: It certainly must take a lot of courage to bring your, your children over for a new life here.

IN: Oh yes, yeah. It's so hard. They have to walk so far. You know that coming here is just a, a real hard thing to do. And at that time I think it was safer. Now they have to be so careful. They kill them and take their cards, their money, their—oh there's just such...real scary to try to cross unless they're with a big group.

[21:00]

LS: Mhm.

IN: So, now they put them in vans and cover them over with stuff and bring them over that way.

LS: Mhm.

IN: I wonder if they'll ever, ever open the border. I don't know.

LS: Yeah, certainly something that doesn't, doesn't look like it's going to be resolved soon or easily.

IN: No, hmm-mm. It's been on the plate for so long.

LS: Mhm. Okay well I have just one last question and then I'll, I'll stop pestering you.

IN: [laughs] Okay.

LS: So you served, you know, as a religious educator. You helped out these families personally. I'm wondering, maybe—is there a way you could just summarize your role and your relationship with the community?

IN: Well I'd say I was...I was a teacher for probably thirty years, social worker for another twenty years [laughs]. I've done a little bit of everything. My greatest pleasure and the thing that I've enjoyed the most, I have to say, it was not the teaching but the working with the poor. That's just always been my drawing card. And it's so wonderful to—I think now in my, I'm going to be eighty-seven next month, and I think now that what continues to thrill me is when I get a letter from one of the past children I've taught or whatever and they remind me of the things I did for them and how it helped them. We had a boarding school here that I had charge of and I got two letters this past—at Easter from two of the girls that were here. And it's just always so nice to know that they appreciated what I did and...makes you feel good about your life. I just feel that my life has really been spent for God and, and helping his people wherever there is a need. And that's been a real pleasure to do. You're not working for money but you're working to help the least of his brethren. And I guess that's, that's been my life [laughs].

[24:00]

LS: Well it sounds like you've, you've done quite a bit of good work. That's wonderful.

IN: It's been a very happy life, I must say. I have enjoyed everything I've done, even the things I thought were going to be horrible and hard turned out to be really blessed by God. I just really...I remember one school. I was going to go be principal and I thought, oh that priest is so strict, I don't know if I'll ever get along with him. And the funny part is we turned out to be wonderful friends. He just—he wasn't a

gruff and—he was more shy than anything but put on a gruff exterior, you know. But we got along very well. So it's been a wonderful life [laughs].

LS: Wonderful.

IN: [laughs]

LS: Well is there anything else you want to add before we wrap up?

IN: No, I don't think so.

LS: Okay, well I guess we'll, we'll finish it [IN laughs] so, again this is—it's May 9th, 2013 at the Sisters of St. Mary Convent in Beaverton, Oregon. I'm Luke Sprunger, graduate student, and I've been interviewing Sister Ina Marie Nosack. Thank you, Sister.

IN: You're welcome.

[25:16]