

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Hector Hinojosa
At Uptown Café, Hillsboro, Oregon
March 15, 2001

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M: its March 15, I guess, 2001, and I'm beginning an interview today with Hector Hinojosa. Today's interview is taking place in Hillsboro, in Uptown Café, or some place up there. Hector, I'd like to start your story at the beginning, can you start telling me when and where you were born?

H: I was born in Mexico, in 1952, in a town called Matamoros, and the state is Tamaulipas. And that province is located right on the **gulf?** of Mexico, right across the border from Texas.

M: How long were you there?

H: I was two years old, and went across the border and settled in a town in Texas right on the same location, in Harlingen, Texas.

M: You say you crossed the border; did you have legal status then?

H: We did, and papers to come across **????** ... expired when I was the age of 14 and I didn't even know it. We had permanent residence at that time.

M: Residence, well you said, **grown-up** residence, it expired?

H: At the age of 14, I didn't know you had to renew it. I didn't find that out until I was 21 years old.

M: [laughs] Well that sounds like a **????** story in itself.

H: It is, in a **minute**, they'll send you back where you came from.

M: So what did your parents do in Matamoros?

H: My dad was a mechanic, and mom was a housewife. Two older brothers and myself.

M: Do you remember much of those first two years? Probably not.

H: I do remember the non-English speaker, and knowing just enough English to get myself in trouble. I remember going to the first and second grade at a Catholic school and learning English.

M: Okay so this was when you were in Harlingen. You didn't speak much English at that point, then?

H: No, not yet.

M: And when you said your dad was a mechanic, was that in Harlingen?

H: Yes, it was. In Mexico, he was a truck driver for a fishing [???] that brought fresh fish into town.

M: You said you had two older brothers. How much separated at an age were they?

H: Two years apart.

M: So your brothers were [???] school and you were a little bit challenged because you didn't have too much English, is that right? What was the school like?

H: Typical Catholic grade school run by nuns as instructors and we were very active in the church, so it was easy for me to know them from my community [???] as well as my education institution. It was pretty easy; it was good for me.

M: After you got a little more English, how did you find school? Was it okay?

H: Well it wasn't okay, after the second day, we began the, we joined the migrant [???] instead of moving, so we left. And so my education changed course and it wasn't quite the same anymore.

M: When you say you joined the migrant **mainstream**? that means you were traveling around the crops?

H: We began traveling around in [???] one of the louder and colder was one of the US Air Force and that shut down, and the fact that almost 50% of the business... [indistinct] so we headed up to Washington State seeking employment in the fields, harvest and pruning, irrigation. Probably 15 different crops from Texas all the way to Washington.

M: You traveled a lot.

H: Traveled a lot. I ended up in my third grade in San Joaquin Valley, California in a town by the name of [???], California, and did my third grade there.

M: How did you like life on the road as a kid?

H: It was exciting, that part of it was exciting, going to different places, but it's totally different when we don't have a home base anymore and the people that you meet and the friends you make are only for two or three months at a time and then you're gone again,

so and then the same thing with schools, the [???] acclimated to it, to a school or to a teacher because you're on the road in two or three months. So it was very difficult.

M: So it had its pluses and minuses, then.

H: [emphatically] Yes.

M: Where did you live when you were temporarily in a place?

H: Most of the time, we were able to rent a home in the town we were in and share with another family. On some occasions, we ended up in migrant camps, depending on how long we were going to be in the area.

M: That's where we get the meeting in the Café, we get to listen to expressive [???] being made.

H: Yeah, it's certainly the noisiest thing that's happened so far etc etc

M: How many years was your family on the road?

H: Well, it was about 3 years, back and forth. I guess it was [???] and then back to Harlingen, Texas. It would have been in 1959, '60 and '61. Then we finally settled here in Washington County at a migrant camp out here in Farmington. Maybe it's called Scholls, I'm not sure which. And so I was there... I'm going to say 1961, that was the first winter that we spent here within a migrant camp which ended up burning down that winter which convinced Mom to stay one all year. So we did, and I believe in '62 and '63, we stayed the winter and the Columbus Bay Storm hit and there hadn't been a storm in Oregon since 15 years before that, it was one of the reasons we wanted to leave Texas: the hurricanes. So the second winter was the hurricane, the third winter was the earthquake. We were still working in the fields, my parents, my two older brothers and myself found full-time work in Beaverton at a car wash, Beaverton Speedy Car Wash. Some of those people, the owners of the car wash were Esther and Erwin **Sable**, we were able to purchase a home and I don't remember [indistinct] how we did it but through them we were able to purchase a home in town. We moved into town which would have been '62 or '64, something like that.

M: And prior to going to work in the car wash, you yourself worked in the fields?

H: Yes. I remember cotton, picking flowers from cotton, oranges, grapes, eggs, plums, strawberries, blackberries, blackcaps, cucumbers, cherries, tomatoes, potatoes, beans, walnuts and even the **[not quite sure here]**. I think that's about all of them, but it's quite a list.

M: [chuckles] You said that you settled here at first at that camp in Scholls. Had you been to Washington County previous to that?

H: Yes, two or three years.

M: Okay, so you'd been up here before, you just decided to stay at that point. Any reason in particular why Oregon as opposed to Washington or some of the other places you've visited?

H: My two older brothers and myself just fell in love with Oregon and just did not want to go back. We managed to get Dad on our side, and Mom was the last one to hold out.

M: She wanted to go back to Texas?

H: We wanted to go back to Texas, her family was still back there and so was my dad's, we were here alone without any family. It was difficult but we loved it and all those **brothers** are still living here, we haven't gone back.

M: When you started working with the car wash, the family's economic future looked up a little bit?

H: Oh yes, we were really living high on the [???] for \$1.25 an hour. I guess we were able to save enough money to purchase a home. And, this would've been around 1964, '63, something like that, and we settled here in Hillsboro.

M: The labor camp burned down?

H: Yes, that was the first one.

M: Were you residents at the time?

H: We were. We were the residents of the migrant camp; we were the only ones there and then we decided to stay for the winter, all of us at the [???] after the season in the fall. And we stayed, and we were homeless. Luckily, the [???] had another home there on the same property, and then [???] so we were saved... for that winter, anyway.

M: Did the fire come when you were at home?

H: It was in the middle of the night, and we were sleeping.

M: So you had to evacuate quickly!

H: Yes, and that didn't help getting Mom's [???] to staying in Oregon at the time.

M: [laughs] It was a sign.

H: [chuckles] Yes, it was a sign to go back home.

M: And when you remember about that specific incident, were you woken up in the middle of the night by your parents, or...

H: Again, I only remember standing outside and watching the flames. So how they got me out there or walking or carrying me out, I don't remember. I remember that, and then trying to find housing for [???]. And that's about all I can remember, I remember the whole thing burned down to the ground. Only thing that was left was a concrete [???] on the floor.

M: And again, you said they gave your family another place to stay. Were they okay with some **players**?

H: Yes, they [????] they were very supportive of [???] and took care of us, so we appreciated that and we still appreciate them to this day.

M: Was that a typical experience you had when you were working as migrant laborers, that you had a pretty good [???] for?

H: Not at all, in fact, it was completely the opposite for [???] and that kind of stuff. So that's why one of the things we enjoyed about Oregon was the relationships we were able to establish [???] and you know, free to go wherever we wanted to go without a labor contract [???]. It was probably one of the things we enjoyed most from Oregon.

M: [???] Were you treated fairly most of the time?

H: Most of the time, we would, coming from a minority group in a dominant culture, you build up a total different resistance to conditions that help you to survive above and beyond what is even imaginable and now that I've learned what I've learned and realized, you know, that I spend more time... my survival is based on how well I can associate with you, yet your survival doesn't necessarily depend on how well you can relate to me. You get used to that real life and I'm going off on another tangent here, you shouldn't have taken me down that road [chuckles]. But yes, a relationship would get [???], you know, compared to what? It's a migrant camp, often times you have shared private facilities for showers and toilets and so on, and you learn to live like that. It's eventually the norm, you know, for terrible conditions. That comes with that way of life.

M: So, you said that, [???] you worked at the car wash for how many years?

H: Oh, it was five years.

M: At the same time your family continued to work in the fields?

H: We did, we continued to work in the fields, whenever the crops came in and when we weren't working at the fields we worked at the car wash. We worked on weekends, during the school year, so somebody wanted us, two or three of us, or all four of us would be working at the car wash at some time.

M: Since you were stable again once you got here in Washington County that you started attending school again?

H: My fourth grade was spent out here at Farmington View Grade School. I ended up getting ill with the whooping cough. And I was in the hospital for many weeks. I ended up having to repeat the fourth grade there at Farmington View and then the fifth grade was here in town at Peter Boscow Grade School and things started looking up a little bit because I was able to complete the fifth, sixth grade and then I went into J.W. Poynter for my junior high, seventh grade and [?] and it really wasn't until the ninth grade that I really started getting [??] education. Up until that point it was just a survival thing. It was a totally different world for me where my mindset was in a community other than my family.

M: So you would **tolerate** school more?

H: Oh, yes.

M: But you said that changed in the ninth grade?

H: That changed and, up to that point, there still weren't that many Hispanic or Mexican-American families in the area – just a handful of us. I remember in the ninth grade meeting a gentleman who came, José Garcia, who was an instructor, and taught math. When I came in, I was just excited, not only that he could speak Spanish but because he spoke Tex-Mex as I did and came from Harlingen, Texas to [?]. I had no idea that I loved math as much as I did after sitting in his class, and all of a sudden things began to look up and I started to relate my education with at least a role model, who later became a mentor to me, but at least I had a role model that made sense. Up to that point, I accepted a [??] as complex as being different than [sic] my schoolmates. My family was different than my schoolmates' families. I guess the best example I'd give you of that was... I remember [?] would do is every fall when we'd go back to school, the first assignment was to write an essay about your summer vacation. I hated that every year because we worked, and only worked in the fields. Every year I had to listen to my schoolmates talk about all the places they went to go visit and their summer vacations and their families went camping to you-name-it. So one year I decided to make up a lie and tell them that my family went to Yellowstone Park for our summer vacation. To this day I regret it and I feel like I still have to go to Yellowstone just to cover up that lie, but that is an example of how school didn't relate to me, because all of my schoolmates were talking about these wonderful things as a family vacation for the summer, and all I had was strawberry stains on my fingers to show for what I did over the summer. So, it wasn't until I met José Garcia that things began to change for me in terms of a role model.

M: Vying to get close, sort of, in the society?

H: Yes, that I, too, could excel, and whatever, because here is a man that I could relate to; who not only could relate to me [??] farmer, and a Hispanic Mexican-American, a Chi-

cano, but in all aspects. So I began to realize that I, too, could excel as he did, and have in impact on other people. And at that time, [??] talking about three or four Mexicanos going to school with me in junior high. Just... two or three of us, and that was it. Up to that point, we had been [??] and discouraged from even speaking Spanish in school. So now we had an instructor who was bilingual and bicultural, and I just thought that was so neat! I loved it!

M: [?] that the two of you had a good vibe of a relationship than you'd had with any prior teacher.

H: Oh, absolutely, he, to this day, is a member of our family. The Mexican culture – we have what is called an extended family and we then... for example, he's now my godfather [?]. My first marriage, my parents baptized some of his children, and some First Communion and so on, so they'd become part of our extended family. We still stay in touch even up to this day.

M: You said that as a result of this experience and meeting José Garcia you were beginning to change your mind about things and finding education more interesting than previously. I also have here that, maybe it was just a year or so later, you dropped out of high school?

H: I did, after the 9th grade, my grades went up and went into my sophomore year at [Hillsboro] High, which is... I don't even know what the name of it is, it's the school that [?] in town on sixth street, that used to be the high school that... gosh, I don't even remember the year now, but in my sophomore year, my grades were up – I think my lowest grade was probably a C in biology – and my attendance was... well I think I missed twelve days in the first quarter, and the [?] officer who was the vice principal called me in and changed all my grades to F's. My first quarter was shot, and my high school at that time, quarters were very important, so, something happened my second quarter. I improved my attendance by two days, but I still missed ten days, and so he did the same thing again. So I'm now fifteen and a half years old and so I decided to drop out of school and [??] so I could get my GD(?). I did, and I left.

M: Did you think it was fair?

H: Oh, absolutely not. There was no concept of the truancy policy and the needs of my home. My parents were limiting [????] so Dad had a [??] for meeting with his boss and my mother had a [??] and I had a [??] and translate and [??]. Even though my other two brothers helped, but they too suffered in their attendance and so on. Somebody always had to be there to help out at home, and that just didn't coincide with the truancy policy that the school had. He stuck to his guns and he changed my grades and I just found that be unfair because I was not going to have enough credits to graduate, so I left. I decided to seek some other alternative educational [?]. Still turned on to education and recognizing the need, hungry now for learning, we now had more Hispanics in the community and I was involved with the community. Different social aspects from immigration issues to housing, emergency, assistance, we began to develop a network with them

ourselves, and recognizing:

1. The need for me to play a leadership role, and...
2. That I needed to educate myself in the process.

Unfortunately, I couldn't do it through a traditional system so I had to find some alternative ways to do that.

M: And José Garcia couldn't help you then with respect to this problem?

H: He didn't, he obviously stayed and [???], and this was at Hill. High, so I only had one year with him there.

M: What did you do after you dropped out? I'm assuming you sought some alternative education, what was that?

H: Well, I left there at fifteen and a half and became a manager at a co-op we had built, [??] Service Station. Right where the new post office is now located, there used to be an **Exxon** Station there. So at fifteen and a half, I was the manager and learned all the bookkeeping and inventory and purchasing and banking, and all of that. I was able to self-teach, or whatever you're going to call it, with some assistance from some of the Vista volunteers that we used to have, who had formed this co-op for Hispanics, until I was 16 and a half, which was the eligibility for going into job corps center. A gentleman there by the name of **Lupe Ruscas** who used to be the director for Viva was now working at the [???] division, who did the recruiting for the job corps center. There was a brand new job corps center built in [???], Oregon, called a Portland Job Corps Center. I went there at the age of 16 and a half, which was a residential program. I was able to get my GED and vocational training and [???] fabrication.

M: You mentioned that your family was just one of very few in the area at the time. So was the Centro Cultural...?

H: Oh, yeah, that came later. We were able to develop the network amongst ourselves from – like I mentioned – Viva, Valley Migrant League, Sonny [???] was the director of that one. José Garcia went on to become the Washington County director for migrant ed. During that period of time, we were able to begin to develop a community, to be more Hispanic-friendly, and assisting with housing, and we now had services in Church in Spanish, and a priest that spoke Spanish, we began to develop a small community. It was mostly centered around Cornelius, because the Hispanic families we were dealing with were from Gaston, Forest Grove, North Plains, out here in Scholls, little bit in the Beaverton area and then here in Hillsboro so the center of the hub for us was in Cornelius, for the center that is now Centro Cultural. We had a senior citizen center [???] who was named after one of our local citizens here and then in 1975, the Virginia Garcia Memorial House Center. Migrant ed took off, we began doing parent training for how to serve on school boards, get involved in the community for their education. Bilingual ed came into the picture. Oregon Legal Services helped us a lot in **house(?)** and discrimination. Community action, [???] is still there, the executive director, she's been a part of every [???] and establishment of the community. From outreach to legal services.

M: But in those first days, you mentioned that the two organizations are [???] around a program [?????], I guess. What sorts of things did they do and how effective were the [??] in helping the community?

H: I worked for them as well, for the migrant league. The kinds of things that I was involved with was more with the youth. I developed an organization called Mayo, which is a Mexican-American youth organization. In **more** fellowship, social functions, some of the [??] was my area of responsibility. Some of the **other(?)** areas were housing, emergency assistance, everything from utilities to finding housing, emergency services from clothing to transportation, getting them to **translating?** services for [??] assistance or employment, we had a job developer. I'm going, going on -

[pause from 33:29 to 33:46)

H: ...either migrant season or farmer -

[pause from 33: 50 to 34:13]

H: ...that's how we [??] in social [??]

M: And what years were you working with the [??] migrant league, then?

H: That would have been probably in 60... mid '60s? I always lied about my age in order to gain employment. [??] the child labor laws that exist today. I was able to get a regular [??].

M: So you were actually an employee of the migrant league?

H: Yes, even during the time when I was the manager of the co-op, that was one of the [??] that [??] the migrant league. Organizing the community to form a co-op, to enjoy discount prices at a service station. For gasoline and oil, [??], we had a mechanic shop and a service stall. As a member, we were able to utilize those services at discount rates. I was one of many of the **offsprings?** so, another [??] that I remember was a partnership with **KUIK** radio station. For two hours on Sunday morning, from 6 AM to 8 AM, the Hispanic radio. We were also part of that, and going every Sunday morning to play music and make dedications to our community. Those were all offsprings of some of these programs that began to form in the community support system.

M: Were you there at the time when Lorenzo Rubio was the [??]?

H: Yes. We had the program before him and then there was another individual, [??], that also had a [??] he was married. And then Lorenzo and Andy took over after that, and managed to still keep it alive to today!

M: It's still 6:00 to 8:00?

H: Well I think they do different hours and longer hours now, and different days of the week which is wonderful. But, back then, that's all we had; two hours a week. No TV in Spanish, just a radio station for two hours a week.

M: And this co-op gas station; could anybody stop and buy gas there?

H: They did, and they could-

M: But members had a discount.

H: Members received discounts.

M: Did the station have a special name?

H: It was just the Exxon co-op gas station. My father worked across the street at the Chapman Texaco station. We were competing against each other [chuckles]. It was friendly family competition.

M: What was the job at the gas station?

H: I was the manager of the gas station, my dad was a mechanic at the Texaco gas station. Auto-Empire store, something like that.

M: Did you and your dad joke about that?

H: Yes.

M: This was all before the job corps?

H: Before the job corps, yes.

M: Then, you actually went to [???] for job corps, then?

H: I did, I completed my studies early. In the state of Oregon at that time, you had to be 17 and a half to qualify to be eligible to take the GED exam, the general equivalency diploma exam. So, I finished early, so they hired me to stay on and work as a resident advisor. [???] working at that time, I had received training, the leadership training, and so I went on ahead and stayed on and they paid for bills and tuition at Oregon State University. So I continued my studies there, until I was able to take my GED test. I think that was in 1971, when I was finally able to do that. I worked there for four years.

M: And then, you went to PSU?

H: I did. I did, in total, about probably two years, because I was doing part-time, probably nine hours per quarter or something like that. I was working full time at the job corps

center at nights. In between there, I got married at the age of 19.

M: How'd you meet your wife?

H: She had been a schoolmate, in high school, junior high and high school. I had met her through one of the summer daycare centers for migrants that we had, and we both worked there, and then we became schoolmates after that. A couple years later, we ended up getting together again and got married.

M: Is she Hispanic as well?

H: No, she wasn't, she was an American. Wild Anglo-Saxon Protestant, freckled face, red hair, Irish, I think.

M: You said you went to PSU for a couple of years...

H: I did.

M: And, what did you do again after that?

H: At that time, I guess my major study was in guidance and counseling. I had been at the job corps center now for about four years. An opportunity came up at Forest Grove School District, for a position as a counselor there. I decided I'd vie for it, and I got it before I was able to finish my studies at PSU. José Garcia then came back into the picture, and he was instrumental in getting a grant funded through federal government, to help prevent high school dropouts. In the Hispanic community, we were an economically disadvantaged, cultural disadvantage, and academically disadvantaged population. It was funded through four of the Forest Grove School District. I came to work for Forest Grove High School, and was able to get a special teaching credential – emergency credential – from the Department of Education. With José Garcia, I worked there for four years.

M: And you said he came back into the picture so you were now in contact with him...?

H: He'd been part of the process, but when I went to job corps, I left this area. I was off on my own doing the job corps for the state thing. Then, when I came back to the community, he's still here and very instrumental, like I said, in getting grant moneys to hire a counselor to work at the high school.

M: I guess it was maybe during roughly the same period that Centro Cultural opened its doors.

H: That's when we were starting, absolutely.

M: Now, were you involved in that?

H: Yes, and so were my parents; actively involved, from fundraising to literally going out

and looking for the property and we didn't participate in the grant writing or the proposal that was [??] in the fundraising, and the development, including sitting on the board, first board of directors. It was a very exciting time for us.

M: Were you on the board, or were your parents?

H: Both, I was, and my parents were, and somebody was always representing the family, things like all the way up to probably the last four or five years. One of us has always been involved; when I wasn't, Mom and Dad were, somebody was always involved.

M: That must have been some exciting times to see so much happen here in the community back then.

H: Absolutely, it sure was. For me, it was the only place to receive any kind of cultural enrichment of my culture. [??] Mexican-American, I had to [??] certainly wasn't getting that in school, not even at PSU. With a place to go and learn and appreciate our culture, because we had a small resource center, but we had a resource center with books, films, tapes, videotapes as well as audiotapes of presentations for **mother(?)**. Organizations throughout the United States, colleges, and so on. They literally bring people in with information on financial aid to go to school, recruiters, etc. It was very exciting.

M: Sounds like it. Now, how did the program to help high school dropouts work out? [??]

H: Really well, we ended expanding a little bit more than just, well, everybody thought it was going to be the Chicano counselor, to solve all these problems, which was greatly needed. But, what we ended up doing was greatly expanding it so that not only were Chicano students helped with home visits, tutoring, working with their instructors, so anybody that was borderline, failing with a D or below, I actively got involved in their whole education from visiting the home, the parents, to the instructors in the classroom, providing tutoring. It ended up expanding a little bit to include other academically disadvantaged students also. By the fourth year, my list of students had grown from not just Hispanic surnames, but including academically disadvantaged students, anybody who was failing; it included socially, economically disadvantaged students that were from low income as well as the cultural disadvantage which was the Hispanic group. To me, it was a great success, four years that we were able to make a big difference in the dropout rate, for one, but most importantly, it's to help redefine what our obligations as educators were to the students. It wasn't so much that everyone was going to receive a high school diploma when they walked out that door in their 12th year, but they'd actually be employable as well, so I spent a lot of time in that area, developing work experience programs in the community, to actually developing programs that provided credit for working outside while they were in school. We were able to do a lot of placements from the nursing homes and hospital to some of the community service programs and serve as a liaison; it was quite a success story.

M: Sounds like it.

H: Lots of success stories that came out of there, a lot of students that are successful today.

M: And then you went on to do some of your work in Eugene, is that right? Is that what came next?

H: Yes, after the four years I went to... I now got a divorce, and so I left and went to work for University of Oregon in Eugene as the social director of the HEP program – H - E - P, High School Equivalency Program – and that one was equally important because what I was doing is literally going out to the Pacific Northwest recruiting, and Northern and Central California, Utah, Idaho, Washington state, and Oregon to find high school dropouts in the communities who were low income. Majority of them were Mexican American, not all of them, but the majority. Bringing them in to University of Oregon and putting them through a fast track GED (general equivalency diploma) program within 90 days, and assist them with financial aid and [??] right back into the [??] put them right back into the system, and then enroll them at U of O. That was also exciting, I enjoyed that very much.

M: You were living in Eugene at the time, I assume?

H: Yes.

M: Did you get back up here whenever you could?

H: I did, because my family was still here and my parents, and my son from my first marriage. I got up here as often as I could, almost every weekend.

M: You were down there for three years?

H: Yeah.

M: Next was [????] Cesar Chavez, is that right?

H: [????] Chavez, about a year, and I was [????]. We were looking for accomplishers to literally develop the next step from Centro Cultural concept, or really, want to establish a university, a credited educational institution for undergraduate work for Hispanic studies and education, to history, literature, you name it. We worked pretty hard while trying to develop that, I came in and provided some recruitment resources. Unfortunately, in the long run, it wasn't successful, but certainly not because of lack of effort or concept or dream, because it was all there. The funding and the resources just weren't there.

M: And I actually forgot to ask you, but the story about the immigration problem, must have happened slightly [????] ago. Did you have a problem then?

H: I did, I was married at the age of 19, and we went on vacation to Los Angeles, so I de-

cided to proudly take my wife down to Tijuana, my [??] was to try to give her an impression on Mexico. We went over there, and on my way back to the United States, there was a sign up there that said, "If you have a Green Card, you must show it," and so I thought, *Hey, great, I finally get to use this crazy thing that I've been required by law to carry every day of my life with [??]*! so I pulled it out and probably flashed and the immigration officer says, "Pull it over." I thought, oh my goodness, and he says, "This thing expired when you were thirteen years old. I'm afraid we can't let you go back to the United States." I said, "But, how about my wife? She's an American, doesn't she count?" and he says, "No, I'm sorry." So, luckily, I had done a lot of community work with the immigration officer in Portland, assisting other documented and undocumented workers in the area. So at least they knew me and so they convinced the immigration department [??] call the Portland office, and so they vouched for me and they gave me a 30-day visa to come with an appointment to appear at the [??] office before they issued any kind of deportation order, so that kept my eligibility up.

M: In the meantime, did you have to spend some time in Tijuana?

H: No, they let us go [??] in one day. So thank god for knowing the right people in the right place.

M: No kidding, that was pretty upsetting.

H: So, we came back here and of course, we came back and I forgot all about it, for at least a year, and then I remembered that I had to take care of this little item. I show up at the Portland Immigration Office, and of course, now they say there's a deportation out and they said I'm not eligible anymore. After some arguing back and forth, they gave me another 30 days visa. Well, I forgot all about it again. So, another year went by, and they refused to give me another extension, and they said, "We're going to take you, you're being deported and that's it." Luckily, they then spoke with the judge in the back room and he came back and said, "Are you interested in becoming a U.S. citizen?" I said, "Yes, sir! That's my ultimate goal, I just haven't gotten around to it." [He said], "So, why don't you take the test right now? Are you ready?" and I said, "I'm ready!" He took me in the back room and gave me my examination for becoming a U.S. citizen and I passed the test and then about 30 days later I showed up for the swearing in and became a U.S. citizen.

M: Well, that sounds like a much better outcome than so many others. [chuckles]

H: Yes, I had to pay some two thousand or three thousand dollars for help on the [??] never gets you anywhere. When was that? It was... September 17, 1976.

M: Both times, you went to the court, you just showed up there on your own [??] right?

H: Yes. Knowing me, I thought could just walk right in that front office and tell them I was here and [??] my papers. [chuckles]

M: I wonder, we talked a little bit about your feelings of separateness when you were a young kid. During your high school and young adult years, well, even up to the present, have you experienced much in the way of discrimination from the [??] population?

H: I have, fortunately, I guess, for me, as you can see, I'm light skinned and blue eyed so I was able to get [??] a lot more. But, still, suffered a lot of discrimination, everything from subtle to some major work-related discrimination. Some of us [??] from the [??] you introduce yourself by name as, "What kind of name is that?" to employment discrimination in regards to emotions. In some cases it was pretty dramatic because in one hand you've developed a [????] complex already, and you are different, everybody's telling you you're different, you feel different. It's like the summer vacation thing that I was telling you about. In school, you already have that forming inside of you as a young boy with this **inferiority(?)** complex that you *are* different than [sic] the dominant culture, and everybody's telling you [that] you are. I had to go on and compete at the same level with everybody else, and then that's very difficult to do. And then, to **boot (?)**, you're struggling within yourself to counteract this [??] complex, but then you're constantly faced with this discrimination, racism, bigotry, or whatever you want to call it, that is constantly reinforcing your [??] complex that says, "No, you can't!" and I don't know if it's [????] with the Chicano movement [??] that says, "Sí, su puede," meaning, "Yes, it can be done." And that was a big psychological boost in the Chicano movement is to convince the young people that, "Yes, it *can* be done! Don't let people tell you, 'No.' Don't let people tell you, 'No.'" I was told more and more often that I was encouraged to say "Yes, it can be done." That's why the closest thing that came to that was José Garcia saying "Yes, it *can* be done!" So, yes, it can be done. I've done it, and so can you. So the role models that were lacking up to the point that I met José Garcia. Even today, here in Hillsboro, you walk on the street and it's difficult to find a doctor's office that has a Spanish surname. We now have a judge, at least, so our youth are lacking those role models, that counteracts that [??] complex that says that it's only for the dominant culture. So, yeah, I've experienced a lot of [?] and probably one of the worst ones, I guess, was after this work history that we talked about after [??] Chavez, that's when Reagan was elected and he was cutting funds left and right with the Reaganomics package, and so I decided to go under private industry, and left public service. I was able to get a job here in Salem, at the **Gold Mushroom?** [????]. We had an immigration [??], we were one of the largest employers in the area – 450 people – and immigration decided to come in and raid, and they must have arrested over 110-120 people on site [??] probably 70 or 75 were finally deported.

M: These are people that didn't have Green Cards at the time?

H: At the time, yes. I don't know how many in the end were determined to be, in fact, illegal, but that was a scary, scary experience to literally come in, immigration comes in and ceases the whole operation from your security officer with a gun, so you don't pick up the phone, you don't go anywhere, you don't call anybody, you just sit there, shut up and don't move. Going through that experience was...

M: What was your position then?

H: At that time I was the personal safety administrator, so I was in charge of the resource side of the business, and I'll tell you, that was quite an experience to go through and see the other side of immigration that often had been told to me and never really experienced firsthand.

M: Did you try to talk to these folks when they came?

H: I did, and they were very cooperative and again, because of the relationship I had at the Portland office, I was able to literally come down and join them at the Portland office, and I knew each one of the people that had been arrested. I found out what their home address was, any other family members, phone numbers, where to send the last paycheck to, etc., [??] a lot of employees don't have that opportunity. So I was able to penetrate this system because I knew this system already from the community service standpoint. We were able to successfully go through that, through that whole raid, which made the news, you can imagine, so it was quite the experience and that whole discrimination area, from housing to employment, and even [??], kind of compliance stuff as well.

M: Commercial profiling [??] part of the police at this time?

H: Very much so, again, being light-skinned and blue eyed I was able to escape a lot of that, [??] my friends, or even riding in their cars with them to be [??] questioned. I remember the first time that I had a friend who was Caucasian and we went to working in the area down in San Diego so we had to cross over into Tijuana and then came back, and he's the passenger and on the way back they have checkpoints there in San Diego, and the immigration officer goes to his side of the window and he says, "Where are you from?" and he was just offended, like, "How dare him? What's his business? Why are you asking me?" and he started getting belligerent and that kind of thing telling him he had no idea who he was messing with, but we were treated like that all the time. When you're asked by a police officer or immigration officer where you're from, and show your ID, and question you, interrogate you, that that was a way of life. For him, he just was so offended by it, "What right do you have to ask me where I'm from, where I was born and where do I live? By what authority do you ask me all this?" He was just offended and I'm trying to explain to him that that's just a way of life, you cooperate, you're going to be questioned and interrogated. He had a hard time accepting that as a [??], that our citizens are actually being treated this way.

M: Eye opener for him, right?

H: Yes! It sure was!

M: Did his attitude get in the way of you crossing the border? [chuckles]

H: Well, I was afraid that we were going to get our heads busted right there but he didn't understand that either.

M: I guess you're [??] at the plant – was it Gold Plains? – in Salem. That led to bigger and better things for you, though.

H: It did, one of the things I did is, we had a [??] contract for the labor force, the mushroom plant. Senator Aubrey Day was the Secretary Treasurer. We had the opportunity to learn a lot from him, as well as I [??] people at San Francisco, because we were owned by **Castle and Quick(?)**, we were a multi-international employer, with operations all over the world, and learned a lot about the labor relation side of human resource management. They offered an opportunity to go to the corporate office to work for the labor relations department in San Francisco, and I took a month on it, and I had a great time, I learned a lot, and we dealt with probably 24 different union contracts, or 24 different unions with about 37+ different contracts. So I had the opportunity to deal with everything from union elections and campaigns to contract administration, arbitrations, **decertifications(?)**, organizing, you name it. I loved it. It was great.

M: So it was an exciting time for you.

H: It was, because I also had the opportunity to literally slow down and negotiate a contract several times with Cesar Chavez, the president founder of United Farmworkers' Union, [???], and-

[pause from 1:07:12 to 1:07:29] **Part one ends here**

[loops back to beginning of recording, same playback as earlier in the recording until 1:07:54 where it pauses into silence again]

[silence from 1:07:54 to 1:08:25]

H: Yep.

M: Continuation of the interview with Hector Hinojosa, March 15. So you're having a good time.

H: I did, I loved it.

M: Did you mind being a management representative when you were, or were you?

H: No, I actually didn't, because (I loved it)... because one of the things that management was missing [was] the community base, that public service side of citizenship to be with. You've heard the term called corporate citizenship, well, that's really one-sided. I was able to bring my previous background from dealing with disadvantage and handicap and how to quickly assess a student's needs in the matter of a thirty minute interview and find what resources they need and get them to the right people for assistance or whatever. All those skills and guidance and counseling to bring to the table and incorporate that into the labor relations side of the business where I have been a former migrant seasonal farm worker and now I'm representing the [??] in negotiating union contracts for terms and