

INTERVIEW WITH MARIA ROMERO, 29 JAN 2000

SIDE A

- 005 Born in state of Tamaulipas, Mexico
- 008 Moved to Rio Grande Valley of Texas when 6 years old, went to school there (for 3 grades only – from Marinna Guetteriz, daughter-in-law)
- 012 Arrived in Oregon on 26 Jan 1966 when she was 31
- 014 Became a US citizen in 1998
- 018 Maria's mother was a US citizen, so Maria was also until her mother died which happened at an early age
- 025 Maria obtained her Green Card at age 21
- 029 Change in Immigration laws in mid-1990s meant Social Security benefits would not be paid to non-citizens, so Maria studied, took citizenship test & passed
- 038 She was born in 1934
- 042 She had 10 children when they moved here in 1966; her last child (the 12th) was born in Nov 1966 in Portland
- 049 They lived with a brother-in-law for a little while, she took a job in a day care center in Canby and took her children there
- 060 She had a 6 week old baby when they came to Oregon
- 066 She worked while pregnant & took care of all the children; when asked how she managed all of this, her answer was "I have no idea."
- 069 She bought a car, a 1957 Ford, in Portland for \$149 (from her wages); soon thereafter Fernando (oldest son) wrecked the car while learning to drive; this happened while they were living in Canby
- 075 Family moved to Gaston & Maria started working at Birdseye Cannery in 1967 in frozen food division trimming broccoli; did this as a seasonal employee until plant closed
- 087 Employee had to make 5 boxes/hour, were given 3 days to learn how to do this
- 093 After 6 or 7 years, she was also hired to work a few weeks when the strawberry crop came in

- 101 She worked 6-7 months each year at Birdseye for all this time; considered a steady job because company wanted her back next year; received unemployment benefits for the other months
- 107 Worked as a matron for 2 years – cleaning the offices, giving workers their supplies, etc.; this was upstairs work; did this until plant closed in 1975
- 115 Then took a series of other jobs – babysitting, working at Flavorland in Forest Grove (with frozen corn) for 5 years, then kitchen work at Forest Grove (#15) schools, work in another cannery (all berries for 5 years) near where she lives now, more babysitting, kitchen work in an assisted living facility, then house-keeping work at the assisted living place because the pay was better, then back to Forest Grove schools
- 138 Quits working in 1998 because arthritis has gotten so bad
- 143 Her husband worked in the fields, not as picker but as a boss – getting the pickers, checking their boxes, Mr. Sano???
- 153 She worked nights, sleeping during the day, taking care of the children; she was young and work didn't seem too hard; "I just do it."
- 161 Her husband did not work in the winter; they got by on her unemployment and food stamps, but were able to buy an old house in Forest Grove (renters did not want to rent to a family with so many kids)
- 176 In 1973, her 18 year old son was killed in an auto accident; there were too many memories associated with him and that house, she wanted to move
- 182 In 1977, they moved into current residence in Cornelius
- 189 When the family arrived in Oregon, they lived briefly in a migrant camp bungalow that had no heat; Maria did not know how to make a fire (didn't need it in Texas), it was very cold; husband working (Jan & Feb) tying up berry canes
- 212 VIVA was a group similar to Centro Cultural, had lots of volunteers, was a big house in Hillsboro, husband went there and got help to find the house in Forest Grove
- 222 The family came to Oregon (2 adults, 10 kids) all in one car with just a little bit of clothing for each one
- 227 Family moved back to Canby briefly, then back to WC, Maria bought another car because it isn't easy to get about without a car

- 241 It was her husband's idea to come to Oregon in Jan; he had worked here when he was younger; Maria agreed to come, liked Oregon, no complaints about the weather
- 259 Husband wanted to go back to Texas; the kids didn't want to, neither did Maria, she said she would stay here
- 270 Fernando was 15 when they came, Arno was 13; they are full brothers; these two and Ida (half-sister) worked in the fields during the summer
- 280 Maria would begin working at cannery about 6 –7 pm, kids worked in the fields because father was there and Maria was sleeping during the day
- 296 Field pickers earned 60c a flat which was 12 small (pint) boxes; Maria never really worked in the fields, picking berries
- 318 There were not many migrant labor families here when they came – maybe a dozen, ie, Fernandez, Garza, Trevino
- 326 Not a lot of Mexicans here; husband is an American citizen
- 344 Martin worked in the fields during the summer and had many odd jobs during rest of the year: furniture company, bakery, VA hospital, made camera parts, gas station, landscaping company – nothing steady
- 368 Maria did not complain of poverty – there was enough to eat and live, some kids did not finish high school
- 379 It was better here than in Texas where she worked in a tomato cannery and a frozen fish plant; people were nice and friendly here
- 409 End of side A

SIDE B

- 01 Maria bought a brand new car, a 1971 wagon for \$3,500, on credit
- 010 Worked about 7 months of the year, usually stopped after Thanksgiving, but would work when called, maybe spent four months working on broccoli
- 028 Her beginning salary was \$1.97; \$3.68 when plant closed
- 039 Her kids had new and second-hand clothes; always has a new outfit when school started, bought on a lay-away-plan; she knew how to stretch her money

- 050 Kids had one good outfit for church
- 056 Kids did not expect Mom home all the time; she is sorry now that she couldn't have stayed home but she had to work so they could eat
- 066 She had no association with Centro Cultural, her husband went there
- 073 Her husband was not one of the founders of Centro Cultural
- 078 She recently went to Centro to help out daughter-in-law, Marina
- 084 A church in Forest Grove was the only private source she went to for help (clothes), now she donates clothes there
- 095 Maria goes to a Pentecostal, Spanish-speaking church since 1972; kids grew up in an English Christian church
- 102 Children went to public schools; Fernando graduated from Gaston HS, Martin and Ida from Forest Grove HS, Arno got a GED, other kids dropped out of high school
- 114 Ida worked with kids in a Manpower program; one son learned auto mechanics; another son learned auto body work; Arno works for Bonneville Power Authority in engineering area after he finished stint in Navy; none of the kids want to work in the fields
- 160 Photos and birth certificates burned in a house they rented
- 182 Her children have 1-2 children; none of them wanted the number she had
- 190 The children and their families come to Maria's house for Christmas and Thanksgiving; she makes tamales, they eat, exchange presents; they do not celebrate Mexican holidays – they didn't do it in Texas; they are Americans, not Mexicans
- 225 Her kids did not grow up with many Mexican friends, maybe 1 or 2; girls did not have a big 15th birthday celebration
- 248 The children do not go to Pentecostal church, but English speaking churches
- 265 Maria described how Marina joined the family; Fernando left home after finishing high school, moved to Hawaii, met Marina, Maria visited them in Hawaii, they sold house in Hawaii and built one in Forest Grove; their two children were born in Hawaii

- 310 Maria is not an Indian, she is Mexican, some reference to blood; mother was from USA; Chicano if you are from USA of Mexican ethnicity
- 333 She doesn't think kids had problems in school because of their Spanish name; they don't speak Spanish and that's OK with Maria; they need to speak English, but she thinks there are more people here now who do speak Spanish
- 370 She takes friends who don't speak English to appointments, acting as interpreter
- 410 End of side B

Off the tape – her husband left about two years ago, she is better off without him