

THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES

Oral History Office

SUBJECT:

INTERVIEW WITH: Manuela Solis Sager (2 Tapes)

DATE: 11 August 1992

PLACE: At the home of Ms. De Sanchez Galvan

INTERVIEWER: Dedra McDonald, Phyllis McKenzie &  
Sarah Massey

TAPE DSM92-7b, Side 1.

M: Since both McKenzie and Dedra McDonald interviewing Manuela Solis Sager, San Antonio, Texas, August 11, 1992.

[mixed conversation]

P: You were telling us about the bread lines. What time period was this? What time period? Was this is the 1930s? ...[talking about?]

M: This was... Oh, no. The period I was talking about is the latter part of '37 and '38, at the time of the pecan shellers strike. Before that, you know, mainly I want to talk about this very much because this is on the oppression of the ...[inaudible]. It started here around 1936, I think.

D: This is the Worker's Alliance...?

M: I'm not very accurate on dates.

D: Uh-huh. This is the Worker's Alliance that you're talking about.

M: Worker's Alliance. And my husband - can I say this?

D: Yes, please talk about your husband.

M: Yeah. My husband came here for the...[inaudible].

D: This is the microphone.

.: This is where you want to talk.

M: Oh.

D: Okay.

M: ...[Spanish]. I can't hear.

D: Maybe I should move closer to you. Would that help? How about I move. Will this help?

M: Yes.

D: Okay. And you were talking about...[inaudible] and your...

M: Oh my goodness.

D: Okay.

M: See what I caused.

D: No, I caused. No problem. Just food on the floor. Go ahead.

M: So my husband came here around 19.. - more or less 1932.

D: And where did he come from?

M: Well he had been in other places...[inaudible].

D: Okay.

M: ...Banana strike of the...Central and South America.

D: Okay.

M: He was teaching over there, English, and at the same time he was working for the banana strikers.

D: Okay.

M: He was in favor of the banana strikers. And he came in

M: about 19 -, more or less 1932, to Texas. At that time I was very involved with the Roosevelt Administration election in Laredo.

D: And how old were you, at that time?

M: I can't think of ages, but in 1933 - you can figure yourself - I was born in 1911. By then I had been working before.

D: Uh-huh.

M: A long time before, in other things. And I had just returned from Mexico, from school, because a member of the family passed away.

D: Uh-huh.

M: And so I wasn't even prepared. What's that? Sweets?

G: A cookie.

D: Oh, thank you.

M: Thank you. So he came down here because he had been deported for the participation in the banana strike over there in Central and South America. And so I met him in my Daddy's home. My daddy was a very good miner, which gave his blood and everything to this country. He came when he was about six years old.

D: Came from where?

M: From Mexico, from...

P: What state?

M: Hildago. Hildago, Coahuila, right near the border.

D: Uh-huh.

M: They used to make tobacco cigarettes, my Grandma, to be able

M: to support the kids. And she used to let them swim the river and to the mines to sell the cigarillo rojo - which is a corn shuck, you know. And so he came about - started coming down this country - he was born in 19 -, in 1882 - and he came when he was only six. By the time he got twelve they stuck him in the mine, working for the mine. This coal mine - to put a child in the coal mines - it was horrible.

D: Where were the mines?

M: The mines are in Dolores, Texas, which now they put the bridge there, name it Columbia. I mean they name it Laredo Bridge and I was ready to explode, you know, but I was in a meeting in Laredo, the Women...[inaudible] - Arts and Science.

D: Science - social science.

M: Social science. So we had a meeting of more importance; we were going to go into the maquiladoras - and this is coming to now, you know - I'm getting stories all mixed up. But anyways, I ...my father was a good organizer, became a good organizer the hard way, because he learned it the hard way, you know. And... but I got involved during the time that the mines started...about ready to close in the '20s.

D: Uh-huh.

M: And the mines started...this was the starting of the Great Depression - the '20s - so I got involved at that time.

D: Were you still in school?

M: I was going to school but I was very alert. As a matter of fact, I came to my Mother and my Daddy, 'cause they taught me

M: Spanish first - my mother was a teacher from Mexico.

D: Uh-huh.

M: And she was only...when she came to this country she was fifteen and she was already teaching, you know. And she was an orphan.

P: Really?

M: And raised by somebody else. That's why my name is a mile long - Manuela...Maria Manuela Solis - now Sager.

P: How many children did your mother have?

M: Only one.

P: Only one.

M: And I really forced myself to having that one because I didn't want to be alone without a child, you know. You know, my mother instinct, I guess. So I went through...even knowing that I was risking my neck.

P: You had one child?

M: Uh?

P: You had one child?

M: ...[inaudible].

P: Your mother had how many? How many children did your mother have? Your mother had how many children?

M: My mother had...well, seven alive ones that she left when I was only thirteen, and two that died. And one of them died at childbirth and the other died... She was like me - I shouldn't have had any kids; I should have had surgery. But at that time there was only one doctor in the country and a lot of midwives,

M: and they really put you through horrible experiences. I remember that...my Mother going through every time that she had one. So at that time there was...one of the things that comes to my mind is the election of Coolidge...came to power. And my father being...[calls out - conversation: okay, that square one is stop; I don't know where pause is. We're ready.]

M: Okay. ...came the election of the Coolidge Administration, and they wanted to force the workers that were Mexican-born to vote. And my father resented very much, you know. And I say, "Don't do it; don't do it; you're not a citizen, ...[Inaudible], you know. I was already at that time, as I was saying, you know my mother taught me Spanish so I went to pre-primer, which was at that time first and second in one year, third and fourth in one year - I got a little stuck on my grammar on the fifth grade, but I didn't get behind - I just passed the grade but didn't make two grades in one. And I went through the tenth grade in the mines, and the teachers were supposed to have two years of college over there. And they were usually the daughters of the superintendent of the mines. And I used to play with the youngest - was my age, you know, and the doll house - as a matter of fact, she had a doll house; I didn't, you know, and a rake fell right on here on me and it bled a lot, you know, but I don't know. I guess it didn't get to my brain, evidently. So the idea is that I resented a lot the fact that Papa... They wanted to take Papa in the army - this was for World War - no, this was the Spanish War It wasn't...I think it was when the Army of the United States was

M: right at the bridge.

.: ...[inaudible].

D: How old were you?

M: How old was I? Well, I was born in 1911 - you can figure that out.

D: Well, how old were you when your dad...

M: Uh?

D: How old were you when your dad was in the Army?

M: Oh, I must have been about...my Mother died when I was thirteen only, so I figure that 19.. - before 1920, around the '20s. It was a special...

D: This is the first World War?

M: Yeah. It wasn't the second; the first World War - the second either. So it was...they were guarding the river because they didn't want the...

D: The Rio Grande.

P: Uh-huh.

M: ...the people to come over here. And it was a revolution ...

P: ...[inaudible].

M: And so it was bad at that time. This was previous to the Coolidge Administration, you know.

D: Uh-huh.

M: So what happened at that time, Poppa was going to be murdered by the soldiers on this side. He...we didn't have meat ...they don't have...we didn't have meat, we didn't have...

M: Everything was in one store, one company store, and Poppa used to go and hunt for a deer, for - not deer - for rabbits, rabbit meat, you know, that's the kind of meat we could eat. And so he was with a gun and if it hadn't been for the black man that used to bring those scraps from the...what the soldiers left, you know, to the house and he's the one that saved his life, 'cause he said, "This is a good man; he don't have food. I take him whatever scraps I can get here for them and you don't kill him." So he stuck...this black man stuck his neck for my daddy and I went and fought for him, too. I told the superintendent, "what kind of superintendent are you? You're not helping your workers; you know good and well that they are Mexicans; hundred percent Mexican. They all were brought up from, as far back as Zapotecs, as you know. They brought all their traditions, and that's where my culture and traditions come from."

D: Uh-huh.

M: You know, as a matter of fact, I was in the pastorella, which is...do you know what that is?

D: ...[inaudible]

M: In the pastorella, I used to be...[Spanish word]. And matachinas, which these traditions come from Mexico. I was ...[Malinche -Cortez's wife?]....

D: ...[inaudible].

M: And I also was a Virgin Mary in...[Spanish]. So all this traditions...that's why I can, you know...my...I am very Catholic myself, from birth. I mean I was born like that. To me, that's



M: culture - that's part of my culture. I cannot renounce to it. But at the same time I...it's just like I told some guy, some smarty, down here, I told him, "My ideals and my religion has nothing to do with...[inaudible]." Oh, he told me, "Oh, so you are an Indian now?" Cause I had an Indian relic here, you know, that had been given to my son, and my sister had it and she told me to give it back to him and I had it on. And he says, "So you're..." - this was in an Easter Sunday, yeah, on Good Friday - and he insult me. He says, Now you're Indian and you're Catholic." I said, "I've always been Catholic; I was baptized, confirmed - I even grabbed my husband to get me married by the church. I wouldn't have married him if he hadn't married by the church." So I said, but..."And my baby was baptized, confirmed ...[inaudible]. I say, but that's...I lost out with the church long time. And I told this guy from...[inaudible]. The reason ...is this going out of the line?

D: No, no, this is great.

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[Manuela continued: first section on Dedra's computer in Madison]

M: The reason I did resent a lot the church at one time was... The first reason was that I had a cousin of mine going with a little girlfriend, and she used to mop floors and houses and clean all day and all night. Made two dollars a week and then she used to give it to this priest. And we were all Hijas de Maria, you know, Daughters of Mary, and when we ask him...because she was insulted in church. She started with vomiting and blood, which is

M: tuberculosis, and we understand all that because we were going to school, you know. But the idea that he had to wait until that happened to insult her, to throw her out, because she was contaminating the group. And so I asked...[inaudible]. At that time I was already an organizer. I got out to the girls and said, "Are you gonna stay? And suffer?" We asked him for the money from the club and he didn't want to give us money for the club. He says we had to raise money. And I say, "Well, I'm not gonna stay. You can have your club and you can have your church." And so I resented a lot that part, and I also resented during the, como le dicen, la inquisición, de los que vinieron y abusaron de los indians, of the Indian people and they're still abusing all of them, you know. Recently I found out about the story of a Panamanian parents of a girl, you know, and they're still stealing the land from us, you know. And of course you don't blame the Spaniard. You blame the Anglo; you blame everybody else that you can blame, except you. And so the main thing is that I had already resented that, because my daddy had already learned me to that. And then this thing happened in church, and so I dropped the church. Until recently I have become more Catholic, seeing the sisters that go over Central and South America, the way Peter is going and Beth over there and expose themselves. They're supposed to be martyred, too, you know, because it has happened. It has happened. Those four sisters that got murdered. Well, that attracted me back into not - and I'd better not even say it for God's sake - not the Catholic Church, but for the people that

M: are working for it, you know. And there's a lot of good. As a matter of fact, my sister dispute me this. I say, "Heck, that Father in certain and certain church; he sounds like one of me!" You know. One of us, you know.

Phyllis: Manuela, tell me more, a bit more, about your mother. I'm very interested in mothers and daughters and women's history in general. Was your mother a religious woman? And what part of Mexico did she come from?

M: Yes. That's where my religion comes from, my mother. My father's family, there's been some member of the family was a bishop, and Padre Montezeoca was a relative of my uncle in Mexico City. And the godfather to my son was a priest. He quit the priesthood and got married to a young girl, 16, and had nine kids with her. But on Father's side they were very religious, on both sides. But my father resented a lot of things, you know. He resented the way Grandma used to kneel us on the hill, on a hill full of rocks every night, to pray the rosary. And my father just resented. He say, "You ain't gonna put my children because I'll bend your arm."

P: How did your mother feel?

M: Uh?

P: How did your mother feel about it?

M: My mother? She wasn't that far out like my father's family.

This is a great-grandmother of mine that died at 115, and she was a midwife.

P: Good for her.

M: That's how my mother had her kids, with a midwife, you know. Except two or three that the doctor attended her. And I used to be the interpreter for her, because she didn't speak English. And I also was going to school with the daughter and the son of Dr. Cook, at Laredo. He was pretty liberal but not that liberal. And so that's on my mother's side, and on my father's side too, with the exception that Papa resented the fact that they put us to pray. And we couldn't go without praying every night, you know, and all this kind of stuff. And he resented a lot. And being already, you know, in the mines, my daddy helped organize the people that build the church. As a matter of fact, even the kids helped out there, you know, carry the lumber, carry the...carry whatever.

P: He must have been quite an organizer.

M: Yeah, we had, I don't know, I'd like to go back there because you can go now. And I'd like to see what they did with the church because it wasn't theirs, it was the mine workers'. And also the fact that they didn't, you know, they didn't give us warning about this. In 1920, the mines started already closing, and we moved to Laredo. So I got a sister that was born in the mines - was only a baby - that is living here in San Antonio, and I have a brother that was born in Laredo during that time. My father in the meantime he was doing - bricklayer, carpenter, you name it - and he was doing it because we had to live; we had to. And we had a ...we used to live on San Jorge Avenue near Matamoros Street. As a matter of fact, I told a lady the other day, "Heck, I kept the

M: Salvation Army over there. How come they don't give me an apartment or something or help me at all?" I been helping everybody since I was a young kid and nobody seems to be able to help me at all - not even give me a ride to the hospital." And I resent little things like that, you know, because you feel like you've given so much of your life. You don't have nothing except sickness. And then when you're sickness, you're a burden. Like a piece of trash, you know.

P: Did any of your brothers and sisters become involved in labor organizing?

M: No one. I'm the only one. See, I was the oldest and they all resent me, too, don't worry about that, on account of one that spills the beans to them, you know. They were too little. You know, I have...when my mother passed on [Aside: She's under there, be careful. Careful baby!] So what has...that strikes me. What was I saying? I'm sorry.

P: We were talking about your brothers and sisters didn't become involved the way you did.

M: Oh, yeah. You know, they don't resent me. They really...as a matter of fact, some of them...but there's one that was working for the government here and, naturally, they went to her.

P: Was your father proud of your involvement in labor organizing?

M: Oh no. My father was a hundred percent with me, and several uncles. In Laredo they got the Onion strike on. As matter of fact, I have one uncle that, I guess, he's dead in...he's not blood relative. And he went to Chicago with his family, but not

M: right away. He, when he went down to Chicago was the time that a German man, or a Belgian, man came to Laredo with seeds of broccoli - for the first time broccoli was brought into this country. It must have been about 19.. on the early '30s, maybe. This man came and plant the seed, and he made so much money that he went crazy. And so my uncle took him over there, to some relatives that he had over there, and we lost him here in Texas as an organizer. But the thing is that he was good at organizing. Everybody in Laredo says that he sold out the strike, but I don't believe it. I don't believe he would have done that, because that's some of my own, on my father's side, you know. The uncle says, "Yeah, he sold the strike." Nobody sold it. They got the National Guard. We couldn't stop the workers on the highway during the onion strike. We did turn the truck...

Dedra: So this was an Onion strike?

M: This was an Onion strike.

D: In the 1920s or early 1930s?

M: No, this was around, I would say at the latest, '20s.

D: And then was this your first strike to be involved with?

M: No, I wouldn't say that, because I was trying...the church and all this kind of thing, it was all going on.

D: It was all building up?

M: Involvements, involvements. Little by little I got more involved in organizing. As a matter of fact, I was the first one that organized the Ladies' Garment Workers Union in Laredo. And that's why sometimes I resent people who say, "I organized here; I

M: organized there." And I'm not gonna mention names, but I know who's done it. And I resent that, because my husband, when he come here, he came with the Finck Cigar Company. He came to get the Fincks Cigar organized. And I have a friend, that is still living right now, that used to be a purera, you know, used to make cigars. And my husband, she remembers my husband as an organizer. Not anybody else. I have a picture some place in the house where at the Alianza Obrera, my father and my uncle were there. And they're from Laredo, but you know, we used to come here. We used to come here because we picked cotton in Lubbock and San Marcos and all over. And that's how they - they were here; they were interested in whatever was going on here. And, of course, my husband participated in organizing the Finck Cigar. And then he started with the Alianza Obrera. And I got very involved with the Alianza Obrera during the time I came, because I ...

P: Was this a group with women and men workers?

M: Ma'am?

P: Did you have women and men workers?

M: Yes, yes. Women and men workers.

P: How did the women respond when you tried to organize them? Were they eager to organize or were they frightened?

M: They were pretty eager, except certain places. And I just resent a lot of facts that they've been honoring people that don't deserve it. They don't deserve it, you know. They were some of the owners of the factories. And I think I mentioned in that

M: meeting... There was a lady, hija de...what was his name? Rodriguez? I can't think of his first name, you see.

D: But she claimed to be an organizer?

M: No, she claim and said her father did this and her father did that, in that meeting. She was there.

D: Okay, I remember now.

M: Magdeleno Rodriguez. So you remember that real good. Well, I practically told her off down there.

D: I remember that, too.

M: I say, "You're just taking..." She, I don't know how old she was, but Magdeleno Rodriguez was her father, and she said - she came bragging, you know. Here they honor the people that shouldn't be honored. And I don't give a hoot who knows it. I resent it a lot. And here is a lady, I don't know how old she is. I'd like to go and question her. "How old were you when this happened?" Do you get to talk to her at all?

D: No, that was the only time I've ever seen her.

M: Okay. Well that's when the Pecan Shellers strike started. I was already on the verge of getting pregnant, here in San Antonio. And I got on the table that day, myself, not Emma Tenayuca, not anybody else. I went and got on top of the table and I say, "Well are you women gonna go on strike or not?" You let them take the pecan pieces home in the big sacks, and you pay them half a cent, and the poor people don't live with that, tell them to that five cents a week between her and fifteen kids, you know. And work all week for 75 cents. And so there's another lady who's very,



M: probably famous because of her son-in-law, you know. And I guess, you can guess, don't even make me mention it. But here she is honoring. She used to have a pecan shellers factory right there, at El Paso Street and Frio City Road. I think that's where it was. And she, they believe her, you know. The big factories, the big suppliers of pecans used to supply her with...and then she gave the little pieces - sacks of pieces - to the workers, already broken. They had to look through the whole sack of shells in order to be doing that. And here this woman is being honored too, you know. And I really felt like falling back that day. I said, "What am I doing here? I shouldn't be in this group." Here they went and collected women that, one that has also a sweatshop down here, making piñatas and all that. Women that don't know hill of beans of organizing or anything. And they've been honored. And here I am among them, and they won't let you talk; they won't let you say anything. They just honor us with a picture they put on the wall, and I resent that a lot, I don't care if they know it.

P: Manuela, that's part of the reason that we wanted to talk to you today is we do want the version that you remember to be recorded.

M: Okay.

P: So... And I'm very interested in hearing about La Alianza.

M: Obrera?

P: About the Workers' Alliance. La Alianza?

M: Well, the Workers' Alliance, we organize the Workers' Alliance and that was when my husband came. Now I was, at that time, as I

M: say, in 1932 I was in Mexico going to school. And no thanks to this country.

P: What were you studying in Mexico?

M: Well, a lot of things, including law. Derecho obrero preperacion sindical, you name it.

D: Where did you go to school?

M: Part of the university was a workers' university in Mexico.

D: At UNAM in Mexico City?

M: This was a part of UNAM, yes. At that time...[Name inaudible] was the director, and Fidel Velazquez was one of the sponsors for me to go, on account of me being a Mexican, of Mexican parents. That's how I got the scholarship. And so is somebody else that went down there that don't want to say that she did it. See, it's friction. Though I love her and everything else, but I resent a lot that she says things, and she don't want to say things that she did. And I think she ought to be proud of whatever little bit she did. Whatever we do in life, we shouldn't be ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of any of my experiences. With my father saving a lot of workers down there, I really resent the fact that here they build an orchestra - though it wasn't a professional - and my father was the godfather of the whole mining community and the plantations and everybody else. When they show the picture of the godfather it reminds me so much of my daddy, because every time that somebody was getting married, Papa was the first padrino, and he was the one that was getting chickens fed, cabritos fed, pigs fed for the boda. And we had to help, you know. That's one of

M: the things that, you know, that it hurts that they don't acknowledge nothing of this kind of things. My father always paid the musicians. We used to bring...by the way, we did build a hall, and we started the silent movies in Dolores, run by an uncle of mine. He brought the film and show it, but it was silent movies. Charlie Chaplin and all the old timers, you know. And... but we did build that hall, and that was the hall where the marriages took place and all that. So the workers build the church, build the hall, build an orchestra, and the superintendent of the mines says, "We have, we have." They don't have nothing. I don't know what happened to the hall. Evidently, they...the schools were built by the workers. As a matter of fact, my uncle Domingo, Domingo Flores, was the one that built the whole mining community. He was a good carpenter and they brought him from Mexico to build it. And he also not only build the houses, his wife and my mother and my aunts that were half-sisters because they raise her. After 15 years when she came, they took hold of her, you know, and enslave her, too, because they used to cook for the whole workers. After working, they had to wash the pantalones de pachera - you know, blue jeans or whatever - I don't know what they call them when you...

D: Overalls.

M: Uh?

D: Overalls.

M: Overalls and the llampas - it's a jacket that they use. And they did all the washing, all the ironing, all the things, and

M:     didn't get a penny for it either. And that is more resentful than anything, being a woman, you know. I tell you a lot of anger over things, and, of course, I know this because my father became very, very allergic to my mother's family. But my mother's family disappear very quick, you know. My mother died at around 38, 39 years and left seven kids alive and two dead ones, you know. And, naturally, you know what woman could resist having that many under the conditions she was on, you know. She was a very small, equal que yo, just the same as me. I...the doctor told me not to have one, so you can imagine what she went through with nine. But in the long run I'm very thankful, and I usually thank the good old Lord for having me - the strength to survive all these things, you know, 'cause my mother died on my arms and we were picking cotton in Corpus, in Taft. And she died, the same thing as a lot of people. I knew...

P:   What did she die from?

M:   At birth.

P:   In childbirth.

M:   At childbirth. And, you know, she was suffering a lot before that. I was telling the kids, and they don't even want to listen to me - my brothers and sisters.

D:   You're the oldest?

M:   Well, I have one that was eight and one that was five. They should know a little bit, because if I remember my first speech, my first patriotic speech that I did at three years, I think they ought to use their brains for something, you know. But evidently

M: the resentment of hers that I got married and left and she was only in the tenth grade or eleventh grade, she finally graduated with her G.E.D. and she resented that. But she was already 17. I was at 13 with that many kids and didn't marry very young either, you know.

P: How old were you when you married?

M: 23.

P: 23?

M: But even then you know, 23, I didn't have Jimmy because they didn't want me to have Jimmy. Lucky that I did because he's very, very, very liberal like me, I'm glad, and like his daddy. I would have turned his neck if he had turned out different. But right now, as a matter of fact, he's really, on account of me, he's been injured a lot. I don't want to say that in here. Yeah, he's been ...they send me a copy, the students. And those teachers that come from Mexico, instead of doing something for him, they're all doctors now. All those people that I've been helping and my husband been helping. Jesus, I wonder why I help them. Well, it was nice that they do get it down, you know, but...

P: Manuela, you were involved in labor organizing first with your father, later by yourself, or was it...

M: By myself.

P: Or was it with your husband, too?

M: Yeah.

P: ...[inaudible].

M: I was the one that organized the Ladies' Garment Workers

M: Union, and I resented very much that this lady Taylor...

D: Rebecca Taylor?

M: Rebecca Taylor. On one of my last meetings I resented a lot because my husband - we were married but we were not living together, and so what happened was that... See, I needed to entertain myself more and he needed to do his own activities himself. So what happened was that - what was the train of thought? I'm sorry.

D: You were talking about organizing the Ladies' Garment Workers.

M: Organizing. Okay, in this meeting of ILGWU, there's one lady that goes to church in San Fernando yet, and I know she's alive, and she was the one that became president. I became chairman of the union, and I was helped a lot by Tomas Molina who was a railroad man. He was the one that pushed me a lot. John Jacobs, another Assyrian with a good background, too, you know. And they encouraged me and my father, too, and my uncles, too. Well, one of my uncles was not the type to encourage, but my daddy did. And another uncle on my mother's side, being a very religious man and very Catholic, you know. I was really surprised when he said he wanted to go to one of my meetings. And so he just said you can be whatever you want and it's a good union, good organizing, and this and that and the other - after I had to open his eyes. The others, no, they were already opened; they opened their eyes, but one of them was a little too jealous, one of my uncles. He was afraid, you know, and afraid is right. Imagine if he was living right now, with the things that are going on in this country, you

M: know. So I organized the ILGWU.

D: In Laredo or in San Antonio?

M: In Laredo. And here I participated, too.

D: Here. Okay.

M: So don't let them...

P: How did you go about organizing? Would you talk to the workers and then call a meeting? Could you do that openly?

M: No, no. There was a lady from Philippine Islands that was Mrs. Quanta. And I hope you'll record this because to me...

Would you give me a copy of that?

D: Sure.

M: Because I may forget later on in life, you know. Mrs. Quanta was a Mexican woman married to a Filipino. And they were pretty wise in organizing. They right away listen to me, what I had to say, and to help. They help me a lot, they encourage me, you know. Like...[name inaudible] with the railroad unions and all that. And so I just went and talked to them. I say, "What are we doing? Working for 15 cents a dozen, baby dresses. Our eyes are ruined on account of that and what are we doing?" And then a lawyer who had led us in laborado cajones - he used to build shacks out of boxes, you know. And my uncle used to work for him. And so he encouraged me to quit the factories that were paying us 15 cents a dozen, five dollars, it was three flowers that you had to baste in paper, three big flowers here and two in the back. And you had to baste them and then you had to put the faggoting on it. Faggoting is like the stitch - what do you call it? -

M: backstitch, between the pieces of tape, between the edges that you put on dresses, you know. I don't know what you call it.

D: The hems?

M: Binding, binding. So we used to make the flowers of that. And, you know, they pay us five dollars a dozen and it took us a month.

END OF TAPE DSM92-7b - Tape 1, Side 1

SIDE 2.

D: The conditions that you worked under.

M: Okay, I worked under...I worked for Mrs. Treviño, for Mrs. Barela, a woman from Mexico that came and exploited, a woman that came and explotaron a los trabajadores - exploit the workers. Mrs. Treviño used to pay us two cents - two cents and three cents a dozen collars, just little collars for baby dresses. And it has to be done by hand, you know. And Mrs. Barela - the same thing. You name them, they're all... it's just like these guys here that are being honored here in San Antonio. They have no business honoring them. How can you honor a woman that exploit the workers? Is that what we are doing? Helping them being honored?

P: When you began to organize, what kind of reprisals were there from the employers and from the government?

M: I was trying to say this, but I'm trying to have a drink and a bite. The main thing is that I resented a lot, my husband sent me a letter to the union, not to me. He didn't mention me in the letter. But he sent it to ILGWU, inviting us to go to St. Louis, Missouri, for, what did they call that conference? It's a



M: conference to organize, to organize the unemployed and the workers. I can't - what is the name of the organization?

D: What year was this?

M: Uh?

D: Do you remember what year this was? The mid-'30s, or...?

M: Yeah, or the early...[inaudible]. And so what happened was that he sent this letter. I have documents; I have little things that I have, but don't ask for them because when they break in, they don't break in just to take a television and a few other things. They steal documents.

D: You've had all these documents stolen from you?

M: Certainly. So what has happened, the top of the house got wet and everything, and I throw a lot of things, but I look through. And everything is in a mess all over the house, and that's why I didn't want even for anybody to come in. Right now everything from the back came to the front, papers and stuff just stacked around and clothes stacked around. And so the fact is that, on the subject please remind me because I get out of hand.

D: You were talking about St. Louis. You said you went to a conference.

M: Yeah, it was a big conference of Southwest Workers, and this was a meeting where Rebecca Taylor was. She came to visit us. She didn't organize a damn thing, neither there nor here. It was we that did the organizing. And so, we first had a strike over there before they ever mentioned a strike here, ILGWU. And I participated in one...[inaudible] here. So what happened was that

M: I got up, as chairman, and I say, "Well, I have a letter that was sent here by this union, and we'd like to answer it."

...[inaudible]. And she got up and she says, "Oh no. We don't want those guys around here trying to organize or help organize. They're Communists."

D: What guys were these?

M: She was talking about my husband, mainly. You know, the one that was trying to organize. And I resented a lot. I told her, "It's none of your damn business if he's helping." My husband used to be a AF of L member. He did work in the tobacco fields when he was young. He had experience. As a matter of fact, he did run for agricultural representative in Texas. That was part of our keeping our marriage secret, you know. And he run in the name of the Communist Party, at that time. The Communist Party was free. We didn't have to get signatures like we did during the Angela Davis.

D: Right.

M: And I guess you've heard these stories. And we had to collect so many signatures to be able - and we still didn't, didn't... We had to sign off and those people in the courthouse trained the people so good at it that they train them to do the wrong thing, you know. They shouldn't do those things.

D: You had to sign party rosters? Was this part of the movement to free Angela Davis when she was in jail?

M: Yeah, the movement to free Angela Davis.

D: 1978.

M: And also during the Kennedy Administration, you know. And during every effort that we do to get somebody that is good. Right now, look how they're smearing this guy. The wife this, the wife that, the wife the other... Heck!

D: Are you talking about Bill Clinton?

M: Yeah, I'm working for him. I'm not going to...I've been a Democrat all my life. How could I be different, you know. I've been voting since the Roosevelt administration. I was the one that...I've got a rock on my head from the top of a truck making a speech.

P: Were you ever frightened because of...?

M: Ma'am?

P: Were you ever frightened because of this?

M: No, I tell you I'm pretty strong, you know. I've been... Look right now - pains, pains, pains - and here I am. You know.

P: You've survived it all.

M: Yeah, I shouldn't have been here. I should have been resting, because tomorrow I have a big deal with the doctors. But, you know, something or other gives me the strength. And I tell everybody - the people in the church, the people I go to church - the only thing alive in me is my spirit.

P: I'd say it's very alive [laughs].

M: My spirit and my ideals are keeping me the way I am. Because here I have no fans - my fan broke and I don't get anybody to come and help me and nobody brings me a fan. Nobody gives a hoot, you know. You sometimes feel so doggone depressed, and the only thing

M: that is keeping me alive is my spirit. The spirit that God gave me, for some reason or another. He might tell you, "Go and be a priest or priestess." And you may be something else. I'm gonna help you accomplish, you're gonna get your doctorate. But the idea is that you have to have the strength. As a matter of fact, this darn doctor... Now I have a new doctor at the hospital that torture me so much that I can hardly touch my muscles now. But you keep on struggling towards your goals, you know. And my goals have been always...[inaudible]. As a matter of fact, in '83 I had...I made a, well, University of Texas honor us. And I guess you heard the stories, or don't you?

D: No, I didn't hear these.

M: Okay, the University of Texas honor Emma Tenayuca and myself as the oldest Texas women that were participating in the union movement, you know. And I keep on myself laughing, you know, inside. This person, they give us fifteen minutes; they made a movie of my husband, with my husband's picture. They took pictures, they took a lot of literature, a whole story that I had written and that somebody else had written and mistreated everything. Misquoted everything, and this is what I have been resentful for, because they come in and do a lot of schooling... And I told them, "I'm sick," - at that time I was already sick in a different sickness, but I was sick. These two young men came from - one from California and the other, I think, he's in Houston now - and are you ready? And Emma pushing me, too, you know. And I had told them, if she's gonna smoke, I don't want to go with

M: you. And she smokes like a candle.

D: She sure does.

M: She smokes like a candle. And she says, "You don't mind it, do you?" She knows that I've been resenting it since my baby was coming. On account of that I think that my son has asthma and my grandchildren has asthma, and I have asthma now. And they came and pick me up, rush me to get papers and get pictures and get all this. They already printed all that thing the way they wanted, and they also said they were gonna do...send me something and I'm glad that a good writer will do it. Because I myself, I scribble a lot and believe me after I scribble it, without my eyes I can't read what I did. But I put it down, don't you worry. Papers are written right now.

D: I'd like to see them if I could.

M: I'll probably throw them in the trash, you know, before you come back. The idea is that these things that have been done are not going to be undone anymore. The damage is done. The damage is done to me, to my son, to my family, and to everybody else. And this was since '83 and that was the time that they were pestering me on the phone that I told you about, you know. Here's a guy from Zacatecas, Mexico, coming down here and trying to question me and ask me questions. That is terrible for me. And you know, there's a lot of people like that. One day I went with a red shirt and black shorts, or something like that, to the Guadalupe and this young man from Salvador came to me and, "Ah, so you're the Red!" You know, - a little punk that probably

M: doesn't know any better. I feel that here I'm helping them  
[Aside: "Hi sugar! You gonna swim?"] So you know these things,  
the damage has been done. As a matter of fact, somebody from  
Wisconsin...I hope you're...it's a young guy with a tale, came  
with a horse tale. He came one day to the house recently with  
Larry. They came, they were supposed to come and help me. His  
friend, one of them sprayed the ants in front. Look, look how  
I've been bitten. And they're really those bad ants. You know  
the first thing I thought is, Papa used to put matches - kitchen  
matches... So I rubbed it, and then I got baking soda and wet it  
and put it on. Then I find mud. Somebody told me about the mud,  
I didn't know that. So I put mud. Well it look like it's...but  
it shows the spots. "They bit me here, they bit me here, they bit  
me in the legs." And so he did a little bit of that. He started  
saying, "Where's all your papers?" Here the house had been wet  
with the roof - the roof cave in. All my papers are wet. And I  
said they could look for them, but I couldn't look through wet  
papers and read those things. And he says he wanted to write  
something for - I think he said Wisconsin. Several people have  
been wanting to write about me at Wisconsin, and I'm glad that  
you're getting it now. And you can tell them all off.

D: That's right. [laughs]

M: ...And for me. But I was the one that... [Aside: "Do you  
have it on?"]

D: I just turned it on. Do you want it on?

M: No.

D: Do you want me to turn it off again?

M: Uh-huh.

D: Maybe you could tell me people...if the other people who were involved with the Workers' Alliance when you were?

M: Mira Rendón was another one.

D: Mira Rendon?

M: Uh-huh.

D: Yeah?

M: Mira Rendón came into town with the strike.

D: With who?

M: I understand they went to California.

D: They came to town with the strike?

M: This was the Pecan strike.

D: With the Pecan strike. And they were organizers?

M: Huila García and Minnie.

D: What's Minnie's last name?

M: He's dead, too. Came after we left. They took us out of the strike.

D: Maybe we should back up and you could tell me what happened before the Pecan Shellers strike. I know the Workers' Alliance was working with the Works Progress Administration for a few years before the Pecan Shellers strike. Is that right?

M: It was; around here it was. First it was the Workers' Alliance, then the strike. It happened...I already told you about the strike - the Magdeleno Rodriguez factory and about the other people.

D: Yes. Well, you were involved in the Workers' Alliance, right? And what did you do with that group?

M: At that time the Workers' Alliance was at that time...we had a lot of union halls here. Salon de la Unión was one of them that we made. There was another hall that I can't think of the name. Salon de Unión. There's one that used to be where Santa Rosa Hospital is, el Salon de la Unión. Allí está la Workers' Alliance. Right there was the Workers' Alliance.

D: Okay. And you had your own building. The Workers' Alliance had its own building.

M: We had our own building...

D: Okay.

M: ...next to a marketplace. ...[inaudible] Lamar Wheeler, the one that was running the meat market, and we were next to it. And that's when they broke the Workers' Alliance, when they broke in.

D: When the cops came in.

M: Where the cops came in and broke the piano, took our records, did everything that they could. But they...

D: What made them do that?

M: Huh?

D: What made the police do that?

M: Well, naturally, you see. Emma was active in it, and she was secretary of the Communist Party [whispers].

D: Okay. I'm sure it didn't pick that up. That's pretty widely known though.

M: Huh?



D: That's widely known.

M: It's pretty well known, huh?

D: Yeah, everyone knows it.

M: Okay, everybody knows it, okay. So then we were gonna get the hall for Mother Bloor, an old timer from New York City, was going to come and speak to us.

D: Mother Bloor?

M: Mother Bloor. And Mother Bloor was going to come and speak and both my husband and her tried to get the auditorium, you see. And I guess you know all that story, don't you? When they broke the...

D: In the auditorium in 1939?

M: Uh huh. The auditorium, yeah.

D: But what happened in 1937, when the police tore up the headquarters of the Workers' Alliance?

M: Oh, the Workers' Alliance.

D: In 1937 I know the police came in to the headquarters, and they ripped up everything.

M: Yes, they just wiped everything...

D: I just wondered, did some event happen that they were responding to, or what?

M: They were not responding to anything.

D: They just came because they felt like it.

M: They were just looking. They were looking for problems that didn't even exist. What we were trying to do, was help the people - that unemployment, which is the most powerful thing to do when

you...to organize, you know. Right now it's ripe for it. Right now, because of the necessity. You see, they make us...they make what we are. And the reason they make us is because, here it is. Look at the people living under the bridges. People living, passing by the house begging for a cup of coffee or a drink of water. The time is right to organize right now. Organize against what? At least against our system that we have here. The way that things are being run by the Republican Party. I don't care. They've grown old for it. The Coolidge administration. All the...we never have had any peace of mind during the Republican, except during the Lincoln, and Lincoln was the only one that liberated the slaves. And so what? They're still slaves. We've not only been the black slaves - the Indian people were wiped out, we are wiped out. They would like to wipe us out. They come in like nobody's business, you know. During the Vietnam War we had a lot of things, you know. We used to...people from Houston for peace, and we had a peace group here. And we went to the Johnson's ranch and protested. This was not too far gone. And we went and protested in front of the Johnson's ranch. And, by the way, you know, I...my sister had asked me to get 30 dozen tamales and I got 30 dozen for myself for Christmas, you know. And here we are and my sister refused to take the tamales and pay me for. They used to be fifteen dollars, 30 dozen for fifteen dollars. You try to buy - one dozen is probably five dollars.

D: It is five dollars.

M: So you get about three dozen today with the amount that we

M: got. And they even rent us a can for one dollar - they gave us the dollar back when we return. And if you get them raw, the raw tamales - and this was Tasco, very near my house, but they used to be on St. Mary's, on North St. Mary's near a little Catholic church where one of my cousins got married, on North St. Mary's around where the Josephine Theater is. So the lady used to, this lady from Tasco used to sell us 30 dozen tamales for \$2.50, and she asked us for two dollars and two-fifty and we cooked them in the house. And she rent us a can and when we return the can we get our dollar back. See, it's \$2.50 that we paid, \$2.50 more or less. And so I said, "What am I going to do with all of these tamales? I don't have enough friends, you know, that come for Christmas." A lot of them come for Christmas and I have done a lot of partying around on Main Avenue and around and also... But that time I made the tamales, and also my sister helped me, you know. The idea is, they're not the same as when you buy them as when you make them your own self, you know. And I'm not an expert, because I hated to make them but at home - in my home in Laredo, my aunt used to raise pigs, calves, she had a little farm. And we used to have a pig ready - now, not for weddings, but for our family, you know. And my aunt used to enslave us making tamales, and I used to hate it because I couldn't even eat one by the time I got through. It's too much work. And so, more or less, I had an idea how to mix - also make chorizo. The cheese and cottage cheese I don't remember too much. My mother died when I was too young. I was thirteen. She used to

M: make cheese, all kinds of cheeses. And because we always had a couple of cows and they made us take care of the cows. We had to feed them and go to the farm. Papa used to have a little farm right below the church. The church was in a field and our farm was below it. And he raised watermelons, cantaloupes, beans, green beans, everything that you could farm, for eating. Corn, we always had corn, fresh corn. We'd eat fresh corn - we had corn. But the idea is that all these things, you know, to most people they're not interesting, you know. They'll listen to what you have to tell your stories about your own life, but I tell you it's been a hassle and a struggle but I'm glad that that's what has made me what I am, you know. Really. So, I don't want to get out of line too much. You can...where did I get off?

D: We were talking about the Workers' Alliance. Maybe you could tell me...

M: Well, I was telling you about the Vietnam War.

D: That's right.

M: Okay, so the Vietnam War. Here went...a group from Houston, a group from Corpus, a group from Austin, they all came over - different peace groups. And so what happened is they came at the right time when I had the tamales and all that, and they called my husband and myself and I said, "Sure, we'll go." Here we were in front of the Johnson's ranch. The lady had a big coffee pot that we could make coffee on, more than, I guess, twenty or thirty cups, I don't know. And she had coffee and she had, I can't think, but we had the tamales, which was a feast in itself.

M: Tamales and coffee when it's cold weather, you know. So what happened? Here we are with...facing the sun, our group was facing the sun in front of the Johnson's ranch. And I have mentioned it to everybody, and nobody has mentioned it yet. It's true Mrs. Johnson is head of the library, or whatever. So here we were facing the sunshine. And I didn't have a hat on, so I had a box of Kleenex like this. And in front of us, khaki pants, short pants, short khaki sleeves with a swastika on it, in front of us.

D: At the ranch?

M: At the ranch. They were in the field, and you could hear the music - Nazi music. And down here, here was the press. Our wonderful country's press, and you name it, I guess they were there. And they all wanted comments. So when they asked me for if I had pictures, or if I had this or that, I put them in their place. "Get that camera away."

D: You got them [laughs].

M: "What the hell are you asking out of me? I don't give nothing because you didn't give me nothing." But here they come and they snap pictures, under the Kleenex box. They came with the camera right here and took pictures of us. And we didn't even have a camera to take pictures. And I don't know whether anybody in our group had a camera. But they took plenty of pictures of the people that were there with us, of the people that were protesting the Vietnam war. Nobody was there. So its kind of very, very... it leaves you with a taste of, here we are. How many revolutions have we had since the Vietnam War? The Korean War? The Persian

M: Gulf war? Again we're going into the Persian Gulf right now, again we're going into and mess up the whole countries over there. Into Yugoslavia, into...our darling President is debating whether he should or he shouldn't. And the people that have been at it, protesting, they don't...I don't...I haven't seen anything in San Antonio, but I bet you there have been some.

D: There have been.

M: There've been some protests, and I bet you they've been in jail too. I don't know.

D: They were taking pictures again, during the Persian Gulf.

M: And believe me, when I see a little something going on like the candles, how can I go along stairs and march with the peace group which I love?

D: Uh-huh.

M: You know.

D: Oh, the thing they had last week...

M: Huh?

D: A few weeks ago? Are you talking about the peace candles?

M: Yeah. The Peace Vigil. Recently. I don't miss one. This is the first one that I probably missed. But to me this is my life; this is my hope. I don't mind if they know it. They know it anyway. They take pictures. They take everything. They have everything. What the heck do they want now?

D: I think most of the people who would listen to this tape would be very sympathetic to the peace movements.

M: I know it. Here we are again, at it again. We've been

M: tortured, you know. And I can repeat it again and again; they know it. During the first time that the our ex-President Reagan... You know my husband and I were telling all those young kids ahead of time - kids that we met with our own son's life, "You vote for him, you're gonna be doomed for four years. Then come again, four years later?" And I helped. I didn't only help, I put money out to get a thousand votes at a dollar a piece. And me and my husband did it. And we were supposed to sell them for two dollars, for some good organization, you know. What happened is we lost money, because people started begging and those that started begging for the book, were most of them were Republicans. I turned a lot of them down, I could tell you. By the way, Father David that is in Africa, Bill Davis, he asked me for one and I had already given the last one. And I didn't keep one for myself, which I should have had. I should have kept at least one because it was a thousand reasons why you shouldn't vote for Mr. Reagan. What happened? I went with the voter registration in '84, no?

D: When he got re-elected in '84?

M: Yes, I think it was.

D: The first time that he was elected it was '80.

M: I went with...could it be '83? In '83, I think, I went. I have a tapings also some place in the house if they haven't stolen - clippings from a McAllen, Texas. I went with a boss, a young lady from Austin organized there, and I got one Christmas card from her afterwards. Never again, she wrote or said what she's doing or anything. But I went with the bus company. With a bus

M: they went - it was not the bus company - it was a bus that we rented. And we went on voter registration in Ft. Worth, Waco, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, from here we went to Laredo. In Laredo I told my people that I was there and the purpose and they didn't - I don't think they even registered to vote, to tell you the truth. Some of them, two or three of my brothers even voted for Reagan. They don't know any better. They don't have any schooling. Because of picking cotton and doing this, and doing that when in their infancy, we used to take them and they would make little bunches of cotton down the row. And working all their lives. They never had a chance. They were migrant workers. They don't teach them over there. They don't want them in school here when they come back. Consequently, second grade, and they quit. They're disgusted and they go quit. They're smart, my goodness. They're really smart. One of them became a mechanic just the hard way, the every one of us did. And he was working for the ... (inaudible) ... Chevrolet, he was working for the Cadillac company. He got injured, he didn't even get paid for it. He didn't even get a darn thing, you know. And how can you be just a person that don't care when you see those things happening to you.

I don't understand it. As a matter of fact, my brother says, they're union members mind you, union members over there, union members with, what's the name of the organization that organizes the ....

D: The migrant workers?

M: No, the truck drivers.



D: Oh, the Teamsters.

M: The Teamsters. They belonged to the Teamsters. What happened to the Teamsters union they used to belong? Where is the union? That guy Schaefer [unsure of name] that I was thinking of, he was the head of the union. Okay, when my brother see what happened, the owner of the company, he says, "I sold the company. You're out of work." They throw them out without...they stole the union dues, they stole everything, all their rights. Nobody to do a thing for them, you see. One of my brothers that is very bad and sick right now, one of the youngest, too, you know. He's got an injured back, injured everything. He's still working, he's still driving because he don't get a pension. Mind you, a veteran of the Second World War, veteran of the Second World War, Navy man. Finally one of my sisters is trying to get him into the hospital here. And they're probably messing him more up than what they're doing for him. But, you know, the company close. He says, "Well, you're out of a job." The union dues probably were stolen. I don't know what happened to the union dues. I told him, "Well, the first thing, I'll take you to a lawyer here." Well, I took him to a lawyer here then the old man says, "I'll call on this guy Jim." I don't think he did any darn thing for him, evidently. If I had been talking for him, it would have been different.

D: I imagine.

M: But you know what? He got a lawyer from Dallas - a lawyer from Dallas. Didn't know Spanish, didn't know... my brother hardly speaks English. They messed him up, you know, but good.

M: He's of age to be retired and all that, he's still had to work because they don't have any help at all. In Laredo, Laredo's a bad place. As a matter of fact, I'm ashamed of myself for not staying in Laredo.

D: Why is that?

M: Because I could have done a lot over there instead of coming here. But then the other people wouldn't have benefited from it. The people in the Valley wouldn't have benefited. Me and my husband organized the whole Valley, starting from Brownsville. As a matter of fact, in the bus company that I told you about, the bus company...I keep on saying the bus company - the voter registration bus. I spoke in Brownsville, Texas, to a senior citizens' eating room.

D: Great.

M: And in Laredo I didn't speak to any union members. As a matter of fact, Zaffarini - the one that is in Austin now...

D: Judith Zaffarini?

M: She was the one that accept us. I even had a fight with her brother because of an eye that my nephew was going to be operated on. I didn't have a fight, I just told him, "Don't you think I should get a second opinion?" He says, "Okay, I'm not gonna operate on him." This is a child of a veteran. And how did he lose his eye? By sweeping the grounds where they used to - my aunt used to burn the cactus for the cows. And he was sweeping there and a piece of thorn got in his eye.

D: Oh, how horrible.

M: And that's how he lost his eye. And I took him to Monterrey. I told the doctor. Well, when you work you think you have it all, you know. And I figure that he was making sixteen...well, at that time he was making \$25 a week, and he's got thirteen kids. The one that I raised from eight days old, he's the one that had the most. And he didn't have money to operate it, so they were going to the organization for the blind or something like that in Laredo, which they didn't do a darn thing about it. And a very good doctor from Ft. Sam, in the army, and a guy from...what was the name of the doctor? Well, I'll have to think about it. Dr. Carmino, I think, from - it's a country in the...around the islands.

D: In the Caribbean?

M: Yes, in the Caribbean. I can't think of the name of the place. But anyways, he was from over there, and they were working and they didn't want to go. They were protestors of the Vietnam War. So they did me a favor and examined him and everything else during the Vietnam War. So anyways, they disillusioned me. They said that his retina was completely messed up. By the way, a doctor in Laredo had operated on him and ruined him more than what he did. So I took him to Monterrey, I took him to...I brought him here and they finally got him operated on. But Zaffarini is a doctor of the eyes, and he didn't want me to get another opinion, mind you. So when Zaffarini's sister got this, I say "Well, let's hope for the best, being that she's a Democrat, you know." And I don't know how much she's doing now, to tell you the truth - not

M: very much. But the idea is that all this goes on, you know, all the time. And I may feel real upset when I talk about these things because of the feelings that I've got. So I spoke at Brownsville. I spoke here in San Antonio, in a day care center. I spoke here, there, and then I went with the bus and we went to Laredo and I spoke to that group. Right in the...what do you call it? - supermarket or what do you call those places?

D: The mall?

M: On the mall. That's where I spoke. Then I went from there to ...from there we went to several places. But we went to Brownsville and start coming this way, and in Brownsville I was very lucky to talk to the senior citizens, because when I got down there, I can't remember names so don't even... I know it; I have the address some place in the house if they didn't steal it. But the idea is that, they usually look for addresses, you know, but the main thing is that when this was happening, I spoke about that you should register. They didn't want us to register them. I mean the senior citizens wanted. The head-man, the city man, didn't want them. "You can't register people." I said, "Well, we're not going to register. We're going to pass the cards." So I went on and passed cards. And this man says, "Don't I know you?" He and his wife were real senior citizens. I was young at that time, and he was already a union member of the carpenter's union. I said, "Well, it looks like it, Compañero, but I don't know. I can't think," I say. But I did speak, and I did build a union here in a carpenter's union. We had my first speech; my M:

husband used to laugh at it because I say, "How many of you do eat grapefruit?" Well, they were lucky they had a tree. Otherwise, they couldn't go to Manhattan Cafe and have a grapefruit juice. I couldn't even afford it, either, if it hadn't been for the union, you know, that I was making... How much were they paying me then? Peanuts, you know. And my husband was getting \$40 a week. And from those \$40 he was giving me \$10 a week for keeping the office and the records and all that. That's the busting [?] of the offices there. And then he paid...we tried to pay two organizers more to help us. They were not organizers. They were just workers. And they would work, instead of for us, they were working against us.

D: But you thought they were working for you?

M: Yeah, they acted like...they were taking money from us and...

D: They were spies?

M: ...and turning us.

D: Oh, they stole your money.

M: Well, my husband was getting \$10, I was getting \$10 and those two were getting \$10, and they wouldn't do the job. But me and my husband used to do this [makes hitchhike signal] to get from one town to the other at that time.

D: Hitchhike?

M: That's the only way we could do it. Either that...my husband didn't like it. We did hire a guy, Charlie, with a little old 1932 model and didn't have a roof or anything. He used to take us; we'd put gas on him and he'd take us around. And this man

M: remembers me, and he says, "Aren't you Compañera Mela?" And I told him, "Yes." And it's a miracle that he recognized me, you know. And he says, "Cómo está el Compañero Jaime?" And I told him; he started on tears, 'cause he remind how my husband had passed away. And I told him, and I say "I'm so tickled to see that somebody remembers me and acknowledges me for what I've done." And I told my son, and my son wrote him a letter of thanks for thinking about me. So the seeds of the whole workers...Chávez didn't do the organizing. We did it ahead of him. Years before. Cesar Chávez came to the thing that was already...seeds were planted.

D: Right.

M: So we organize Brownsville. We organize San Benito. We always had beautiful people to help us. There was a school-teacher that teaches Spanish to the kids. She was a great help in San Benito, Texas. Then we organize...Harlingen was the main office. And the worst experience I had in my life was...

END OF TAPE I, DSM92-7b, Side 2.

TAPE II, DSM92-7a, Side 1.

[Conversation]

D: We're all set. Now what happened in Harlingen that made you hate it?

M: From San Benito we came to...well, when I got home from Mexico City - this was in the latest part of '36...

D: Before you came to San Antonio?

M: Oh much, much, much sooner, yeah. This was around 1936 that

M: we...my husband was already trying to organize the Valley. But it used to be an AF of L, but then it became a CIO, and you know the reasons why. CIO started organizing, helping to organize the workers and this was at that time that everybody...Roosevelt was saying you have to organize this and then the other, you know. Cómo le dicen, what was it that they quoted him the other day? "There's nothing to be afraid but..."

D: Fear itself.

M: But fear itself. And so we were there. Now my husband had an office at the Robert E. Lee Hotel, and I hope it doesn't go in. I guess that hotel may be not even in existence now. Robert E. Lee Hotel.

D: I never heard of it.

M: Never heard of it? It's in Harlingen right downtown, near Manhattan Cafe. I remember because my husband used to encourage me... [Aside: Somebody's bringing Dede, I guess, I don't know. Is she?]

D: Yes, she has someone with her. Maybe they drove her back here and then they're going to take the car.

M: So what happens there is that here I was in Mexico. I had to come and try to help organize the workers. For the second year I was there, so, what we did is that my husband brought... He went to wait for me at the bus station in Laredo, and then he was to be here working in the Valley. So I had a Mexican blouse and I had a skirt 'cause it was so hot over there that when we came in, in the middle of the way I had to buy something lighter because it was so

M: hot down here, you know, that I had to change. So what happens is that I got to the hotel and the hotel man...the lady that was the receptionist says, "We're sorry, but we don't have any more place for you." And I say, "What?" [Aside: We're still at it]

D: So she wouldn't let you into the hotel?

M: When I got to the hotel, they told my husband...

[noise]

D: You were telling me about Harlingen and they wouldn't let you into the hotel.

M: Yeah. You got it on?

D: Uh-huh.

M: Oh my goodness. I didn't know it was on. When did you put it on?

D: Oh, just now. I just turned it on.

M: Okay. When I got to Harlingen, they told us that they had vacated our apartment...I mean our office - my husband's office - and he had a bath, I mean a room in which he was bringing me as a bride because I never had been with him, you know. In Laredo I think I visit my daddy but didn't sleep there or anything. And so the girl said that she had...that we didn't have any place there. And my husband, he didn't want pressure or anything. And I said, "Well look, you've been paid six months in advance." [Aside: That's pretty Gracie.]

M: So what happened in Harlingen was that they told us that we didn't have any more office space. And so I told her that...I



M: asked her, "We have six...my husband has six months in advance."

D: Uh-huh. Reservations.

M: "And you have to either do that or we're going to sue you." And she says, "Now wait a minute, let me call the manager." So she called the manager and when she called the manager, the manager says, "Well," he says, "Your things are in their place but when we saw your wife...". They figure I was Mrs. Sager, not Manuela Solis Sager, you know. They say, "She's Mexican."

[Conversation]

D: You said you told them you were going to sue them.

M: I said that and then "Let me call the manager." She called the manager and he says, "Well, if we let your wife in, the whole tourists will leave the hotel." And I myself was pretty - at that time I was pretty fancy, well made. I said, "Well, I hope I never get rich in this country. If I do I'm gonna go out and build...I just came from Mexico, which is a hospitable place. All I had to do was help out with the dishes or help out with serving the table or something light and everybody made me happy over there.

Everybody made me welcome. All the Anglos that I met from New York or Canada and all over were very glad that they were there. But me, if I ever open, if I ever have enough money and own a hotel over there, I'm gonna put 'dogs and Anglos not admitted.'" And I was so defensive and so ashamed afterwards. But you know, why should I be ashamed for them? They should feel ashamed themselves.

D: That's their problem, not yours.

M: So then they throw us out of there, and we didn't get a penny either. We didn't get money refunded either. But there was a Mexican man who had a hotel. He was from Monterrey, Mexico. His name was Romulo. I can't think right now what his last name. And Luz was his wife, and they had a little baby girl. And so they said, "Manuela, don't worry. You come and stay with us. We'll rent you an office and we'll rent you a room. And you'll be happy there." So we moved into their hotel. And we were there quite a while - not over a year. But one day I went to deliver the charter to the shrimpers in Ingleside, and when I came back I found out that my husband had been taken in. They didn't know who it was that took him, and he was not any place that I could find him. Immediately, I got real upset and I went to the police department. They said, "No, we don't know your husband." I went to the sheriff's office - "We don't know your husband." They had one-fourth of this was the jailhouse, one-fourth of this - like from here to there - was the jailhouse, one room on top of the other. That was the jailhouse. So I went to the jailhouse and I started shouting, "James, Jaime are you in there?" He says, "Get the hell out of here before they put you in, too." And, you know, the occasion was that the Teamsters - not the Teamsters - the typographical people were having a strike and they accused us of it. We didn't even have a darn thing to do; we didn't even know the typographical workers. But they took him, they broke our mimeograph, they broke the typewriters, they stole all the records

M: of the workers. And we had records from all over, all over the Valley, starting from Brownsville, adding from Brownsville, San Benito, Harlingen, Mercedes, Weslaco, Mission, McAllen, La Feria, Santa Rosa. We had an office in every one of them. We had already opened offices in every place. We rented a little shack - very cheap, you know.

D: Uh-huh. And you were operating under the CIO?

M: Yes. This was the CIO that started organizing and paying, as I said, peanuts, 'because it was peanuts to the organizer, who was my husband, and what we got, it was less than peanuts. But anyway, those ten dollars went for good help for Daddy because Daddy still didn't have a job. Still didn't have any decent means of supporting the kids. And after two semesters in Mexico City I felt that I should help him, at least with whatever I could - five dollars, or... I didn't buy hardly anything for myself because I had to help the family. But we were much happier at Luz's. But then they came and broke the machines and everything else, too, and stole those things. So what I did is, immediately I started calling New York. Donald Henderson was the head of the union and that guy was the one that jerked us out on account of this. That was red-baiting. They were red-baiting us.

D: He was the one who took you out of the Pecan strike?

M: Of the Pecan strike - not the Pecan strike. He took us out of the organizing.

D: Oh, in the Valley.

M: And then he put us over here.

D: He took you to San Antonio.

M: Yes.

D: And that's why you came to San Antonio.

M: That's why we came here. But we came for other reasons too, you know. I was going to have the baby. And I got pregnant on the way on the Houston meeting. We went to the Houston meeting. And I start already with the...well, I started vomiting and bleeding from the nose. That was terrible, because every time you vomited, you throw up blood out of your nose, and we didn't see a doctor in Houston. We were in a meeting in Houston where that happened. And I must have been about less than a month, not even a month pregnant when that happened. Right away I noticed. I remember I got pregnant on the 2nd of November. And right away, you know. We got to the Valley and my husband looked for an old doctor. And he right away told us that we had to leave for a place where they had good doctors, and I was gonna need surgery. They had already told me all this; that I needed a lot of attention - medical attention. So we were jerked here right on time to come and see a doctor here, and fortunately we found a Doctor Blum, who was very able. He was the doctor for the police department, the sheriff department, and all of them, you know - for the union, the union people. So he took care of me, and in the meantime we didn't have the money, and he was charging us not too much, but he was charging, you know. So then I went and I had my childcare at the Robert B. Green, at the old Robert B. Green. And Dr. Bates was, also, he was the one that examined me also. He

M: was working as a physician already, as a trainer to the doctors here. And that's where I had my baby, and I was very sick for two, almost three months in the hospital. And I wanted to adopt another one that they wanted to give me - a little girl that I'd been looking for all over. She was born...Jimmy was born on the sixth and she was born on a Saturday. And I think the baby - this baby - I know what they name her. And they looked like twins and all the time I told my husband, "I hope I didn't have twins and they didn't want to give me the little girl." It was one of those things that got on my mind, you know. But they wanted to give it to us because the lady died, you know. The lady died. She was, I think, 37 or 39.

D: But they didn't give you the baby?

M: She died, and the old man wanted to give it away because his mother was blind and her mother was - what you call it when you get old and you lose your...

D: Senile?

M: I guess Alzheimer's Disease, we can call that now. But at that time they said she was insane. She wasn't insane. She had just lost her memory. And my husband used to say, "Well, if we adopt her...", because they wanted to give her to us. A lot of people were wanting to adopt me and the baby too, you know - that other baby. But I wouldn't give it up. I say I didn't go to hell just to give my baby away, you know. No way. But I was pretty sick, three - well two months and 23 days in the hospital with him. And then I went out and had to be doing something about...

M: That's why my breasts are all messed up because they used to put olive oil and massage them, and I always had problems with this. I had an...[inaudible], like this. And so the doctor had told me to use a thimble to build it up and it never came out. So I had problems with it. Then the baby, probably eating, did something to it. So anyways, I got out on a Wednesday, I think, and I was back in the hospital on Tuesday and I stayed three more weeks. And then I had to have a nurse at the house, and I was very lucky that the people who had rented us an office, they not only were renting us an office, they were very...this was a Jewish family. They were very sympathetic. And as a matter of fact, the lady just died the other day, of 109 or 108. And when my son and I...my son visit her in, I think it was '89. I took him to see her because they used to call her Grandma. Dr. Blum used to say, "Come on, Grandma, bring the baby." And she used to give me a ride to the hospital and back and forth. And there was a very good nurse - I think her name was French - working with the city. And she help me a lot. As a matter of fact, do you know Rosita Fernandez?

D: No, I sure don't.

M: She's a good singer, an old-fashioned singer. As a matter of fact, I think she already crossed into the...I see her advertising a lot for the Guardian Plan and Humana Plan and now it's Horizons, Horizon Plan. And the man, too, you know. But his sister used to be a dance teacher. And the clinic where I took my baby, that lady used to teach and that's where Rosita Fernandez came out.

M: She was a young girl. Now...but she's a great singer, great, very well known. And so what happened is that there's so many memories. I don't believe Rosita remembers a thing about the strike. Maybe her husband - maybe, but I doubt it. But they're...she's alive, he's alive. But they came much later, much younger people. But there is a lot of people that I casually meet and tell me that they know something. I usually talk to them, but believe me, they give me names. And then they forget about me and I write down names and all that and then I don't know what name is to what. I do, when I come to think about it, or I call them and tell them, you know. But people treat you like in the Valley. I was amazed at that man.

D: That he remembered you?

M: Yeah, remembered me, and he remembered the speech I made. That's another thing. You know what I...I based the speech on who could have a drink of grape juice, of grapefruit juice. When you go to Manhattan Cafe, they would charge us - at that time, they used to charge us 75 cents for a juice, and I didn't like coffee. I hate coffee myself and I didn't drink that much coffee. See, we were raised in a place where we had a cow and we would drink milk. But the main thing is, that happened in Harlingen in 1937, mind you - 1937 around November.

D: The speech?

M: Yeah, the breaking of the offices and all of that. But then again, you know, I go in '84 - in '83 - with the bus and what happened, we had a ride. We had, in advance, asked for the park.

M: And they gave us a park. And when we got down there, Kroger stores and H.E.B. were playing ball. And I went...I mean the lady that was head of us went and asked them for...that we had permit to use the park. And you know what he told her? He said, "You better get the hell out of here before we call the Sheriff's office and complain." And I said, "For what?" I said, "For getting your workers to register to vote?" Harlingen is the same Harlingen - as bad as it was then.

D: In 1937?

M: In 1937 and this is '83, when Reagan was running for the fourth time...for the second time.

D: Second time.

M: So when I got to Corpus, I had very good response too. I spoke on television there. And also in Brownsville, I think. Yeah, they put the television camera. But the main exciting thing is about meeting that man and his wife. He says, "We are registered but our daughters are not. Give us some cards to take home." And I gave him the cards. I said, "How many daughters you have?" And he says five. But it was so amazing to run into a union man. And in McAllen, I had a very good response from the press. I have a taping also in an envelope in the house some place. I know that I do have that because I came across. And of course, they did published a book in Austin.

D: Which book is that?

M: Well there's two books that mention me already, and there's another one coming on the 9th. The one on the 9th I haven't seen.



M: They haven't sent me. But there's one from Tucson that wrote something and sent me the book. I have that book.

D: What's that book called, do you know?

M: I can't, right now - Chicanos, Border Women is one of them.

D: Okay, I know that book.

M: You know that book? Okay, I think they mention me and Emma on it. That's the second book. The first one was...as a matter of fact, somebody bought a book in Mexico City and gave it to me. I think that's how I got that, Border Women and the other, too.

Then there's one on the mines that they never sent me and they didn't mention anything about the mines I spoke. They mention the mines in Rosita in Mexico and here, and I'm familiar with that, too. Of course I have an autograph book, but I don't have it here. I took it to California and left it over there. That book was written by a man who is congressman in Mexico City. A congressman. He wrote a book, and at that time he wrote the book he was already congressman. But he used to be very involved with mining over there. As a matter of fact, I participated in a strike, which I forgot to tell you, in Mexico City. Yeah, in Mexico City - I right away make friends easy, you know. And I make friends with Radio Tecnico people, which one of them became my boyfriend and the other one became my boyfriend first and then the other one. You know, just casual acquaintances I could say. Well, one of them wanted to marry me and I wasn't about to marry anybody from anyplace else, because I was already married. I didn't want to tell him that. But the idea is that he wanted and

M: he asked for my hand from my uncle. My uncle wouldn't give it to him. He said, "You have to go and ask her daddy." And I'm glad he said that. He saved me. But the idea is that all these things, you know... They had a strike porcholata [?] you know, from the Coca-Cola Company, they had a strike of those that make the little caps. And I participated in the strike and it was an all night procession. They wanted me to take coffee with a spike and I wouldn't do it, because I never liked - I'm kind of allergic to all kinds of things like that, all my life. The only thing I was doing at that time was smoking, and it was the smoking medicated cigarettes that the doctor in Laredo had given me. I had always had problems with the respiration. And I got worse when I got pregnant with child, that's when I got worse - and because of the smoke. See, I'm allergic to smoke.

D: Me, too.

M: Oh, dear Lord, it's really makes me feel terrible. So what happened is that here we are in Corpus - in Corpus I had a very good reception. McAllen, too, most of the towns. As a matter of fact, I met one that said he had danced with me - from La FERIA, or was it La FERIA? Santa Rosa. We went to a dance, my husband and I both. Of course, they didn't know I was married. And so we went to a dance and this guy said, "Can I ask your brother if he'd let you dance with me?" So I says okay. So he asks my husband if I could dance and my husband says sure. He didn't like much dancing anyways. So he says, sure. And I danced with Charlie, which they thought was my boyfriend, which was not my boyfriend.

M: He was just a friend of us, you know, the one that was giving us rides.

D: I'm afraid I'm wearing you out. Maybe we should wrap it up.

M: No, no. Whatever you want. If you want to wrap it up, that's fine.

D: Well, maybe I should ask you a final question. What would you want visitors to the The Institute of Texan Cultures to know about you, about your life. What the most important thing that you did or...

M: I have said...well, the main thing is the participation in the union...

D: Actually, what you think is, or what you feel is...

M: About what?

D: ...about your own life. About - what is the most important thing to you and what matters the most to you, about what you've done.

M: To me, if it does any good for the world to know, that's fine.

D: ...about your labor organizing?

M: Certainly. I'm not ashamed.

D: You shouldn't be.

M: No, I shouldn't be. Why should I be about organizing? But you know, the fact is that I do resent a lot, like I said, for Donald Henderson to come and jerk us out. Oh, locally. You want to know something about local organizing here?

D: Sure, yes.

M: Okay. I help organize fur and leather. As a matter of fact,

M: they gave me an autographed book. I loaned it...my husband loaned it to somebody and the book is lost. Somebody bought it for me. But it's a book on fur and leather strikers and all that, and I helped organized fur and leather here. And while we were already...somebody by the name of...from North Carolina or South Carolina came and organized the fur and leather. He was Greek. He didn't know how to speak Spanish, very little English at that. And he helped me learn a lot about cooking, and I helped him organizing. I talked to the workers. And this was here around where the slaughterhouse is, more or less, and on the South Side. Most of the workers are around the...what's the name of that small ...it's in front of east Kelly Field, which is South San, around East Kelly, South San, around there. That neighborhood, a lot of the workers that work in the slaughterhouse, in the porerías, the porerías - the ones that work on the sheep and, you know, the sheep and goat skins and all that, you know. And they were here and they were unorganized and I organized them because I can say Manuel didn't do the organizing. Manuel came and inspired me.

D: What year was this?

M: This must have been about - Ay ay ay, this memory! It must have been...

D: Was this after the Pecan Shellers?

M: Oh God yes, this was recently. I mean, not real recent but ... Do you know anybody that organized the meatcutters union? He died too. What's his name? I met him in Austin in one of those things, what's it - a wheelchair. I had to call on people and ask

M: them their name. He used to be here with another lady and he and her used to run the meatcutter's union on the South Side. And he got a visit to the Soviet Union, and brought a lot of records and a lot of things from over there. And when I met him the last time he said, "Those things are going to be yours." But evidently his secretary kept them, somebody kept them. But this was musical things that he brought and also that he wanted me to have. And also about the unions, 'cause he know that I struggle all this time. I organize that fur and leather, and what happened? It was a guy by the name of Gonzalez organizing the meatcutters union and he took it over after I organized it. See they all...

D: Did you want him to take it over? You didn't want him to take it over.

M: No. Why should I? All the work I did, they took over. They just come and steal it from me. But anyways Manuel knew, and the guy that is the head of the fur and leather union, Rosenstein or something like that. I have the name and everything else because I had an autographed book given to me. So when this young lady from town that brags about her past, I laugh on her because I told her, we tried to get her to come in again and try to help us. I tried my best, my husband, too. We had a couple of friends by the name of Grace and Harry Kroger, and those guys were organizers from way back - not as back as me and James, but you know, they organize this Texas. As a matter of...I have a book of poems written by Don [?] West, and it was dedicated to us. It used to be, I don't know whether he's alive yet. I'm sure he is. I don't

M: know. Do you know Don West?

D: Don West? No, I don't.

M: And he had dedicated that book to Grace and Harry, and he gave it to us with an autograph. And somebody tried to borrow it the other day, and I didn't let them because I say, "Look, this was something that was given to me." I hate for some stranger to just ...they get hold of my books and they don't return them. And it makes me sick, you know. Yeah, it makes me sick because to me it's memories until I die. Then they can do whatever they darn please, you know. But before I die I don't want things to - sentimental things, you know.

D: Maybe all the papers that you have that your son is looking at can go into a university collection or something. That way they're protected and you can put restrictions on them, you know.

M: Yeah, but for a while I thought, well, maybe it should be... Well, a lot of people are interested but I'm not interested too much now on what's going on right now - what's happening in the Soviet Union, what's happening all over Europe, what are we doing to those people, the way they're messed up. They had employment for everybody. Nobody was unemployed. They wanted workers to go there and work. They get free schooling for their kids. They gave a lot of aid to people that didn't have anything. And now to be in the mess they're in. I don't know. How did they brainwash them? What did we do to them? I think we're as guilty.

D: Oh, I'm sure we are.

M: I feel guilty. I feel guilty for seeing the way things are

M: now. I think everybody...there's a lot of nice men from this country that went over there. As a matter of fact, I remember at that time of 1937, '35, '34, there was a young man, a black man, that came to our home. But we didn't have a home, and asked us for help to go over there. He couldn't find a way to get... because he's black and he wanted to go there and help the people with the agriculture, which was a very important thing for over there. And somebody also - there was a pilot - he didn't get a chance here. And look at Radcliffe [?], the guy that went and made good over there, too. You know who he is, don't you?

D: Sounds familiar.

M: A musician that didn't do any good here until he went over there. And, believe me, all those things, gone - the people starving, the people...according to how they paint it. And the way they're slandering a lot of people. And here we have people from Mexico, people from Cuba, people from - and you know it all from the news - people from the Soviet Union, going under the flag of the U.S.A. And I say, golly, I would have never done it. I don't think...as a matter of fact - I've told this to a lot of guys from Central and South America - if I had been much younger, I would have never left El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala. I know there's torture over there, I know there's plenty of hell over there. But why come to a country that you don't know? Why come to a place...I think I'm talking out of line here, but the idea is, this is worrying me, you know, that young people come. I hope some of them go back.

D: I hope so, too.

M: And I hope they do like these guys that were taking food for refugees. I admire them. As a matter of fact, I get letters from all over for helping. And here I am, I need help myself, out of the little miserable check I get. I try to help. As I say, sometimes I don't have groceries in the house except for one egg or two, and when I see people at the door... You know, a man came the other day with a package. He says, "What are you doing cutting the yard? You don't have no business cutting the yard. Let us do it for you." 'Course they want money and that's why I can't do it, you know. I can't very well afford to even rent the place. The other day a guy came; he rented the machine for \$10. He says, "Well if you give me the \$10 that I pay for the machine, I'll do your yard. But you have to rake the grass." Here I am, with this. How can I rake? It's hard to see the people unemployed, in misery. "Oh", this man says, "You ought to be in San Pedro where there's a spring coming up. That's where you should be bathing." He sees me with a walking cane trying to rake the yard. And I say, "That would be nice, but I have other things that are more important right now to do." And to me, my times that I can be quiet and with peace, I want to do some...a little bit of scribbling here and there, or whatever, you know. And I love music, I love a lot of culture, you know, and it really irks me that I cannot go to these places because it's not a single person that thinks about me, about coming and taking me. Sometimes I do, you know. As a matter of fact, every time my M:



sister makes me mad, that's when I get the guts to go, you know. Because I think that it's horrible that she should be criticizing me every time. And now sometimes she talks like she's sympathetic; she knows what I've been doing and all that. But then she goes and tells things to my son, you know. That kind of ...she doesn't make an impression like she's sincere, you know. But the idea is that I had told all of them, all my family, you're not supporting me, you have your doors open whenever you want to come in if you want to see me. I'm here for you all. And some of them are pretty understanding, you know. Like a nephew that went to Texas University, where my sister was a student, the way I'm doing and putting them all in shame and all this kind of thing. You know my nephew says, "Well I heard Tía Mela at the University at Austin. And she made a very short but very powerful speech. And she did a good speech." But you know what? I call him; he talked to me; not long ago he came to visit. And I talked to him for...I don't think my sister let me talk to him; I think I talk to his wife or somebody. Oh, I talk to him for five seconds. I say, "Did you register to vote?" "For what?" This is a guy that went to University of Austin. He's an orphan at twelve. My sister trained herself to... He got a scholarship, that's how he went. A couple of years at Texas University - he's supposed to be an engineer. He's doing math and things for...now he's unemployed and he still thinks that... So what has happened, the idea is how can he think like this? Don't register to vote for what. Well, you know I'm glad that he is doing whatever he can, you

M: know, whatever he can is nothing because his mother is in bad need and he's the youngest. The one that was born after my father passed away. She got pregnant then. And she has this young man and he passed away in 1953, something like he was born around 1955, '56 something like that. Papa died in 1955, just the day after his anniversary. And you know what he did? A nephew of his used to run a beer joint near the house, and he used go there to help him. And he had a player - one of those record players, those big ones. And so he asked us to play for him on the day that he died. Mama and he were married on June the tenth and Mama died on June the fourteenth and he died on June the fourteenth. And on the tenth he made us play a record that he - a waltz by Corentino Rosas [?]. He had an old record that he let us play it for him. He died with cancer of the toe. Smoked a lot. And that's what he died from. It bled, instead of inside it bled outside, and I had to work there all around. I had to go and take care of him. I had to leave my job here to go and take care of him because the others all were...the one in Monterrey. This one didn't have any money, her husband didn't give her any money. I had to help support them while they were in Laredo and all that. But you know my father and my mother...I think I have it where I want to go and have it done. One day when you all are going down I'd like to go because the church has a record of the whole family. I like to take a picture of it.

D: Okay, I'll tell Phyllis, the next time they go to Laredo...

M: Yeah, because there is a picture - they let us...

P: ...turn this off.

END OF TAPE II DSM92-7a, Side 1.

TAPE II, Side 2 - Blank