

10-23-1975

## Interview no. 210

Manuel Lujan, Jr.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Manuel Luján, Jr. (1920- )  
INTERVIEWER: Oscar J. Martínez  
PROJECT: Bicentennial  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: October 23, 1975  
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted  
  
TAPE NO.: 210  
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 210  
TRANSCRIBER: Rhonda Hartman  
DATE TRANSCRIBED: March 10, 1976

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

U. S. Congressman from New Mexico.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biography; political career; Mexican American achievement; United States-Latin American relations; Raza Unida Party; bracero program; the Chicano Movement; attitudes toward the Bicentennial.

1 1/4 hours.  
29 pages.

## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

CONGRESSMAN MANUEL LUJAN, JR.  
First District. New Mexico

### PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

Born May 12, 1928, on a small farm near the San Ildefonso Pueblo in northern New Mexico. Both parents were school teachers. His father, a life-long Republican, served three elected terms as Mayor of Santa Fe before running for the governorship of New Mexico.

Graduated from St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe, attended St. Mary's College in California and graduated from the College of Santa Fe with a B.A. in business administration.

Entered the family's insurance and real estate business in Santa Fe, expanded it to Albuquerque and became a leader in the business communities of both cities.

Married the former Jean Couchman, of Santa Fe, and has four children: Terra, Barbara, Jeff and Jay, and one grandchild. Maintains family residence in both Albuquerque and Washington.

Elected to Congress in 1968, the first Republican to be elected to the House of Representatives from New Mexico in 46 years. Re-elected in 1970, 1972 and 1974.

### COMMITTEES

INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS (1969 to date)

Ranking: 5th (minority)

Subcommittees:

Water and Power Resources  
(ranking minority member)  
Energy and Environment  
(4th ranking minority)

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ATOMIC ENERGY (1973 to date)

Ranking: 2nd (minority)

Subcommittees:

Raw Materials  
Security  
Energy

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES  
(Elected to executive committee by committee members in 1969)

MAJOR LEGISLATIVE INTEREST

1. ECONOMY IN GOVERNMENT

Awarded "Watchdog of the Treasury" gold bulldog award for three consecutive terms by the National Alliance of Businessmen in recognition of efforts to hold national spending within income, reduce taxes, balance budget and reduce national debt. Prime sponsor of legislation to force Congress to reform its budgeting methods. Believes the first "must" in fighting inflation is to reduce federal spending.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGY-PROTECTION

Sponsored the seven major environmental protection bills of 1969-1970, including Clean Air Act of 1970 and the Clean Water Act of 1970, both now law. Major proponent of setting aside Wilderness areas for future generations. Introduced or sponsored more than 80 bills for the protection of wildlife and their habitats, recreation and public land use.

3. CREATION OF JOBS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

Believes that the only effective and lasting solution to poverty is expansion of job opportunities, and that government should work with private enterprise to develop these opportunities where they do not exist today. Introduced Rural Job Opportunity Act to encourage industry to expand into non-urban areas. As member of House Select Committee on Small Business, successfully insisted that more government contracts be set aside for small and medium size firms. Measures all social legislation against yardstick of "how will this bill allow the head of the family to earn a better living and improve the quality of life for his family?"

4. EDUCATION

Introduced legislation permitting parents a tax credit for tuition fees. Sponsored new legislation expanding student loan and work-study programs. Worked with New Mexico state treasurer and State Investment Council to develop the New Mexico student loan program that has become a model for other states. Supports

federal assistance to non-public schools. Supports bi-lingual education programs. Strong advocate of education block grants to states rather than fragmented categorical grants. Believes that neither the Congress nor the Office of Education should sit as a "national school board" and that local school boards should be given more decision-making powers in budgetary matters.

5. POWER AND ENERGY

As a member of House Task Force on Power and Energy and of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, has consistently worked for speedup in federal initiatives to develop new and non-polluting sources of energy to supplement and hopefully replace America's reliance on fossil fuels.

ELECTIONS

- 1968 -- Defeated incumbent Rep. Tom Morris (D-N.M. at large) in New Mexico's first election in which representatives were elected from specified districts. Margin of victory: 51-49.
- 1970 -- Congressman Lujan defeated Fabian Chavez, well known state level Democrat, 53 - 47.
- 1972 -- Congressman Lujan defeated Eugene Gallegos by a margin of 54 - 46.
- ✓ 1974 -- Congressman Lujan defeated state's Lt. Governor Robert Mondragon by a margin of 56 - 44. This was particularly noteworthy as Democrats swept nearly all other offices of state and national level in New Mexico including voernorship. In a year of such big Democrat gains, Rep. Lujan scored his largest margin of victory.

MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS

Past president of New Mexico Independent Insurance Agents Association, Coronado Kiwanis Club, College of Santa Fe Alumni Association, Santa Fe Community Council and Past Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus. Member of the B.P.O.E. and the Fraternal Order of Eagles.



Meeting  
with  
General Lee

## BICENTENNIAL

M: This is an Oral History interview with Congressman Manuel Luján, Jr. of the First District in New Mexico; Washington, D.C., the 23rd of October, 1975. Conducting the interview is Oscar Martínez from the University of Texas at El Paso.

First, Congressman, could you tell me where and when you were born, sir?

L: I was born May 12, 1928 in a little farm near the Indian pueblo of San Ildefonso in New Mexico; it's in Santa Fe County just about 20 miles north of Santa Fe.

M: Could you give me a little bit of background on your parents and your grandparents?

L: Yes. My grandfather's name was Martín Luján; my grandmother was Zenaida Sánchez Luján. My grandfather was always a farmer, but at the farm he had a little grocery store and mill [where] he would grind up products for the neighboring farmers. I always think of him as a very intelligent type of person, especially with numbers and that sort of thing. I mention that because that's really my bag--the numbers business--budgets, and that sort of thing. If you want to trace that sort of thing. My mother was very much that way. My father's name, of course, is Manuel Luján and my mother was Lorenzita Romero Luján. Both [were] born and raised in the same general area--my father in the same farm where I was born in San Ildefonso; my mother in Santa Fe. They were both school teachers. My father was school superintendent and mayor of the town; [he] started his

LUJAN

own insurance business years later. My mother was a school teacher in her early days when they were first married. She later ran for County Clerk in Santa Fe County and was elected. [She] served a couple of terms. The whole family has always been in the business community and in the political community. My father, for example, in addition to the elective offices he held, ran for the Governor of the state of New Mexico in 1948 and lost. [He] had run for Congress in 1944 and lost. [He] was Commissioner of the Bureau of Revenue which is responsible for collecting all the state taxes. My brothers-in-law have served in City Councils and that sort of thing. Do you want schooling and all of that, as far as that is concerned?

M: Go ahead, yes.

L: I attended, as did all the male members of the family, St. Michaels High School and graduated from St. Michaels College, so that the first 7 years of my schooling were with the nuns in Our Lady of Guadalupe School. From then on my entire high school and college career was with the Christian Brothers. I then entered the insurance business with my father and was in the insurance business until I ran for Congress, and still am.

M: I'm curious if your family dates back to the original settlers of New Mexico?

L: I would imagine so. As a matter of fact, Father Angélico Chávez, a Franciscan friar, has done that sort of thing. We've never been too concerned with that. I do know that my great-grandfather, whose name was Pedro Luján, was farming in Los Alamos. The reason I happen to know that is because while building the road up to Los Alamos, a boulder fell on him and killed him, and it's a story in the family.



I've never taken the trouble, nor has anyone in the family, to really research it. It hasn't been that important to my life.

M: Some New Mexicans are quite concerned about tracing their lineage back then, and they are very proud of that. There is in New Mexico a tendency on the part of some to stress that they are Spanish Americans rather than Mexican Americans. Do you have any feelings about that?

L: Yes. That's very typical to the northern part of the state. The northern part remained very isolated from the rest of the world for centuries, as a matter of fact. From a political standpoint, as a matter of fact, the terminology that you use is "Spanish American." There is that same distinction drawn, although we were all from México because we were under Mexican rule for a long time. But there is a blending sort of thing in northern New Mexico that you really don't find anywhere else--really a true blending of different cultures: the Indian, the Anglo, and the Spanish. Politically, you know, we don't use the word "Chicano." That's bad. As a matter of fact, to myself it's a little offensive because they used to call us "chicas patas" or something like that as something of a put-down. I consider that, although in recent years the word has come into common usage. But when I was growing up, it wasn't. It was not complimentary.

M: Then you did hear it used when you were growing up?

L: Oh yes, but "no seas chicano."

M: What did that mean?

L: Well, they'd use that word, and "chicas patas" also, meaning a small person, probably in stature or something like that. And maybe at that time it meant "Act like a man, don't act like a tonto"--it would be the same usage of the word. I think that's probably why

it's resented in New Mexico. The other thing I was going to tell you is that the blending of the culture that we keep talking about, I can probably best illustrate it by using an example of what happened in a Santa Fe City election one time. It's kind of custom. If you'll see our Congressional delegation, there's usually a Montoya in the House, a Luján, and then Runnels. So it's always been a 50-50 sort of deal and kind of left alone. That kind of rule was violated one time in the Santa Fe City election, where a lady by the name of Grace Gutiérrez was running on the Republican ticket and Ramón Arias [was running] on the Democratic ticket. There were two Anglos running against them. So Mrs. Gutiérrez and Mr. Arias were both elected on different parties. The next election, the anti-muscle was felt and the Spanish candidates were defeated. So we kind of leave things alone and work it out.

M: I'm curious to know what influences you remember that your parents had on you during your youth.

L: My father and mother were both very religious. My father just died in June, but even in May when I went to see him, I'd get the normal moral lecture about wine, women and song, money gotten by illicit means, or whatever. That has a lot to do [with it]. I do remember one instance (really looking back) [that was] really a great influence. I had just gotten out of college; I was making \$235 a month draw on the insurance. I was beginning in the insurance business at that time. And the time came for my wife to have the first baby. I took her to the hospital, not knowing how much it was going to cost [and] not having any money, obviously. So a man by the name of Filemón Martínez came in one time and he said, "You've always been in the

automobile and fire insurance business; let's go out and train you in the life insurance business." So we went out. I provided the leads and he did the talking. The upshot of the whole thing is that under normal circumstances, you sell a policy, you send the money into the company, the company then sends you a check for your commission at the end of the month. But he said, "Well, I'll advance you your half of the commission and I'll wait for mine." So he gave me \$139. That was my half of the commission for that policy that we had sold. I walked into the hospital after I'd left him to go get my wife, and the bill was \$139. That has molded me to the point where I'm not uptight about whether I win an election or lose an election. It gives me a certain independence, and in my business also--I know that something is coming, something will happen; and there's a Greater Hand guiding us. I think that probably has had the biggest influence as far as I'm concerned--just that one happening.

M: I'm curious here if those \$139--are you saying that that was coincidental or did this man know beforehand?

L: No, he didn't know, because I didn't know. What I'm saying is that it could be a coincidence; but I choose to think that somehow this man was directed to come to Santa Fe, to come to me, and go out and sell, and this [other] guy to buy. Too many things had to fall in place; and that \$139 was there. I suppose it translates itself into "You do the best you can all the way along, but God will be there to lend you a helping hand and make it come out."

M: I see. This is what I wanted to clarify in my mind as opposed to the moral training--to separate it from this particular incident involving some kind of a bribe on the part of this individual. That

has nothing to do with it?

L: Oh no. It was work, you know. I had to go out and find the customers.

But things broke; and too many things had to break in the right way, which I had no control over but which I had to pursue. And once I pursued them, why then, God was lending a helping hand.

M: It was extraordinary that it was the exact amount that you needed.

Sir, can you remember what you wanted to become when you grew up; when you were a youth?

L: Well, I always knew that I would go into the insurance business.

My father had a small agency, and when I was in the 8th grade I would work in his office after school to go collect bills or deliver policies. So, I knew. I never thought of anything. At one time I thought that I might want to be a lawyer; but then it was in my junior year of college that I got married and finally finished, got my BA degree, and had to attend to the business of providing for my family. So that the law degree just went flying elsewhere. In the back of my mind I still wonder sometimes whether I would have been a lot better off to have gone into law. I'd have probably made more money in the final analysis. But I stayed with the insurance business and it's provided a very comfortable living for us.

M: Can you recall any other authority figures who had an influence on you, aside from your immediate family?

L: Probably as a group, it was the Christian Brothers, who were tough.

I consider myself quite conservative. I'm sympathetic to people who cannot do things for themselves; but by and large, if you can, then go ahead and do it. I also think that's reflected in the kind of work that I do, because people come to me with problems of this kind or another; and I look at my job as opening a door for someone who

can't open the door themselves. But after that it's up to them to move. Again, I think these Brothers, at the time that I was going to school, were tough Frenchmen and made you knuckle down to some extent. I think as a group they were probably very instrumental in molding me. Also, the other side of it, where I find it a responsibility to open that door, was probably the neighborhood where we grew up in--some of whom could open their own doors, but some of whom, because they dropped out of school in the sixth grade and started digging a ditch, so to speak, never were able to advance. Things are different today. People can advance a little easier today, I think than you could then with a little boost. I'm fortunate I'm in a position where I can do that sort of thing. So probably the neighborhood itself was another influence.

M: In that neighborhood in which you grew up, what did you consider yourself in terms of class--middle-class? Where did you perceive yourself to fit in?

L: It never occurred to me at the time; but looking back, we weren't rich. I knew at that time that my father was making \$150 a month in the insurance business. There were 11 kids, and so I knew we weren't rich. Our house was no different than anybody else's. We weren't poor either, because we ate all right. We had a little farm as most everybody around the neighborhood did. I suppose middle-- I considered myself just like anybody else.

M: Within that setting there was a middle class.

L: But even within school. I never had a class conscious feeling. But I think that's typical of kids growing up. Maybe today [it's] not, because of what you hear on television and radio and all of that. But in those days, we were an average family in Santa Fe. It now

happens to be the Model City's neighborhood. We look back and say, "Well, we didn't realize that we were really [bad off]." As a matter of fact, during the 30's, the government took what they called some marginal lands in order to give them to the Indian tribes. One of those happened to be our little farm near the San Ildefonso pueblo. And not more than two months ago, one of the members on the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs was describing the type of people that used to live and own these marginal lands as just barely scratching for a living and under dire circumstances; and the government really did them a favor by buying this land for the Indians and so on. But I never considered myself [to be that way]. I could hardly recognize ourselves, or the people that I knew, in that kind of a description.

M: Sir, could you tell me what events or incidents stand out in your mind from your elementary through high school years particularly?

L: No, not really. I do remember [some] days it was so cold that walking to school I wasn't sure whether I would make it home. But that was no different than anybody else. Our diet consisted mainly of beans because we used to grow them on the farm. I remember getting terrific stomach aches sometimes--it was probably gas, but I didn't know.

M: Pinto beans?

L: Yes. Things like that. I don't really remember any real, real outstanding events when I was growing up.

M: Any recollections of ethnic related experiences in school?

L: No. None at all. There never was any trace or hint of any type of discrimination. [There was] only one time in all of my life that I ever considered a discrimination sort of thing, and I was really well into the insurance

business. I approached a man about his insurance account. I was handling a competitor who was bigger than he was in that type of business. As a matter of fact, the man had been brought up in South America. So when I went to solicit his insurance account, I knew that I could do a better job than the guy who had it, but [I] never could land it until much, much later on when I became more friendly with that individual. I asked him one time, "For years I've been after you on your insurance account and never was able to. Why? It's a puzzle to me." And he said, "I didn't think you were capable enough to handle it." Now, he didn't really tell me that it was an ethnic sort of thing, but I gathered that it was; or maybe [it was] in my own mind. But that's the only time that I have ever felt that because of background or name or whatever, that someone might have had some reservations. But by that time I was already a grown man.

M: When did you become a politically aware person, Congressman Luján?

L: Well, awareness in politics is a growing thing. All my life I've been interested in any kind of politics. As I told you, my father was a candidate for Governor. I was 18 years old then. When he ran for Congress, I was probably 12 or 14 years old; and during those days my mother was running for County Clerk. I was 14 when my dad was elected Mayor of Santa Fe, but prior to that he had been County School Superintendent.

M: Who was his successor?

L: A Republican. So all my life I've had an interest in it. I always thought that I would never run for an office, though. I never imagined myself leaving Santa Fe. I thought that I would always be there in the insurance business. But in 1966 I left Santa Fe. My brother

and I, two brothers-in-law, my sister and my dad [were] all in Santa Fe, a town of about 30,000 at that time. I always figured, "Well, why don't we open an office in Albuquerque?" because Albuquerque was a town of a quarter of a million then, thinking there's more opportunities there. Well, nobody ever wanted to. Finally in 1965 they said, "OK. When are you going?" Well, I never intended it that way, but I went. I had made a race one time for State Senator in Santa Fe County, and I lost; but it was no big deal. Although, as it gets closer to election you think you might win; but Santa Fe is totally Democratic and you have no chance of winning. The only reason that I ran was because at 5:00 I was at the Court House, and they needed somebody to run for the Senate and somebody to run for the House. Another guy was standing there and says, "If you file for the Senate, I'll file for the House just so you don't leave the ticket blank." It cost only \$10 to file, so that's what we did. Then I moved to Albuquerque and I became the Republican State Vice-Chairman--the previous Vice-Chairman resigned. Then I was talked into running for the Congress. It kind of became a challenge, even though I was only two years in the business in Albuquerque and needed to increase it; but I ran. And here I am.

M: You were the first Republican to be elected to the House of Representatives for New Mexico in 46 years. How do you account for your election as a Republican?

L: Well, a lot of things happened. I happened to be the square peg that fit into the square hole or the round peg that fit into the round hole. Several factors: One, it was the first time that the districts were divided. It used to be a state-wide race. So it was divided



where the northern part of Santa Fe was District 1 and the southern part was District 2. I was in the insurance business in Santa Fe, and born and raised there; so with that I would travel around the immediate area there which happened to be Los Alamos and Española and Santa Fe, in my business. We did radio advertising. I also had my business in Albuquerque by that time. Fortunately I moved into the Northeast Heights in Albuquerque which is the most populous area, not thinking anything of politics--it just happened. So we had an office in Albuquerque and one in Santa Fe. We did radio and television advertising; my father had been very active in politics--the name "Manuel Luján" was well known. The political complexion in the northern part, other than Albuquerque, is Spanish-speaking, and my father had a very good reputation all his life as [being] very honest and that sort of thing. So that helped me in the northern part amongst the Spanish people who are primarily Democrat. Being a Republican, the Northeast Heights of Albuquerque is basically Republican, so I could gather that support. So all of these things combined are really the thing that elected me. It has nothing to do with Manuel Luján, Jr. as an individual, other than I had to work for it. I went house to house and this sort of thing. But all of these things were in my background [and] happened to fit, without even knowing the District was made for it.

M: What is the composition of your constituency in ethnic and in party registration terms?

L: Party registration is about 2 1/2 to 1 Democrat over Republican. Ethnic is about 40% Spanish-speaking, about 10% Indian, and about 50% Anglo. One other thing that comes to mind as an influence now that I've mentioned ethnic composition [is that] my wife is

not Spanish--her name was Couchman. We've been married 27 years now. By the time I ran, I had been married 20 years. So I couldn't take the Mexican flag and run with it, if you know what I mean by that, because there'd be conflicts in the family. I feel like a friend of mine, Ben Ortega. When somebody was talking to him, he said, "Oh those gringos." And Ben said, "Now wait a minute. You're talking about my wife and my children." So that kind of tends to balance the thing off. Also, in the sales business, you don't intentionally offend anyone because tomorrow [that person] may buy a car and [he] may be in the market for insurance. I think all of those things kind of go to mold you.

M: During your youth, Congressman, what did you feel you needed to do in order to succeed in the goals that you had set for yourself? What ingredients did you consider important in order to achieve those goals?

L: It never occurred to me. As a matter of fact, all of the time that I was going to school my main preoccupation [was] that I make grades good enough so that I wouldn't get hell when I got home. That was basically the thing. I was never a particularly good student--C's and B's and D's; that was fine as far as I was concerned. I never strived for an A in anything. But I made sure that I didn't get an F and didn't particularly want a D. But, I took things pretty much as they came I guess.

M: In looking back at the record of accomplishment among people of the Spanish American or Mexican American heritage in New Mexico, what are your feelings about the level of achievement throughout the society in the various institutions of New Mexico?

L: Well, looking at who's where in New Mexico--we have Joe Montoya as a Senator and we've always had Dennis Chávez and Octaviano Larasolo. In the present situation we have Senator Montoya, myself as Congressman,

Jerry Apodaca as the Governor. Even Roberto Sánchez is the Archbishop. Sam Montoya has been on the Supreme Court, David Chávez has been Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The State Land Commissioner is Phil Lucero--just all the way down the line. I think that the way to describe it is the assimilation of the various cultures, where individual ability is recognized. Although I will say this: whether we like it or not, there is probably in every individual a certain feeling of prejudice against someone else for whatever the reason may be. I think it's mostly kind of the "Buddy System"; when you think of an appointment or something that needs to be made, you'd think about the people that you know. And so, in New Mexico, I think that the reason that we have been able to achieve those positions is because perhaps those barriers do not exist to allow you to move forward. I'll also tell you something else that I find that usually is quite offensive to people from Texas or California. You go into these offices or businesses, and when you find a Spanish-speaking person at the head of the thing you can usually trace that they were born and raised in New Mexico--their families or something like that. Maybe it's the example that exists there; that you can make it, that it is possible, contrary to what it might be in Los Angeles or in South Texas where there is the extreme prejudice. I think that that mental attitude perhaps has much to do with it.

M: You're implying, then, that outside of New Mexico--and you mentioned Los Angeles and Texas--the attitudes of discrimination are more prevalent.

L: Oh by far. I personally think that the attitude in South Texas and Los Angeles, for example, is that if you educate a Mexican you ruin a good farmhand. I think that that's kind of the prevalent attitude there.

M: Would you consider that as the primary factor why there has been a

higher record of achievement in the state of New Mexico?

L: Yes, I really do. I will also tell you this: In Albuquerque there is a little area close to town called Martínez Town. The proportion of professionals coming from Martínez Town is much higher than the other neighborhoods. Martínez Town is close to downtown; and I think that just going into the downtown area, going into the big stores and having to deal with the inter-relationship with people, has a big thing to do with why the proportion is bigger there. I don't know what the word "assimilation" means to each one of us, but to me it means working together without recognizing the differences.

M: How do you feel about retaining the Spanish language, Spanish American/Mexican heritage, and how do you apply these attitudes in your own family?

L: I do probably more for myself, for my personal style of life and enjoyment of life and those things. What I mean is that I enjoy going up into northern New Mexico; I enjoy the rancheras--the songs. I think that having had that heritage just adds another dimension to my own life, just because I can speak Spanish. Because I'm the only Spanish-speaking Republican in the House of Representatives, I have had the opportunity to visit, on behalf of the President at that time for the House of Representatives, Latin American countries. I remember very well one economic meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, that to me is a personal accomplishment on behalf of the United States. We had been in meetings on Monday and Tuesday. Tuesday evening there was a cocktail party and buffet and that sort of thing. We were visiting there, and the guy from Ecuador came up and during the conversation he said, "Este Luján, éste, sí, es uno de nosotros." So I said, "Yes, but I don't want to mislead you." I was leading towards something that I wanted to say. I said, "But I don't want you to forget that although we have the same customs, the same language, all of this sort of thing, I am

here to represent the interests of the United States, just like you're a representative of the interests of Ecuador." So he said, "Well, what interests are you talking about?" I said, "Well, one of the things, I'll be very honest with you (and we're talking in Spanish all this time), is that I sit there and you keep talking about the things that the United States ought to do. I sit back there and I wonder when we're going to get to talking about what the interests of the United States are, not just todo para acá." He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, for example, the national security of the United States is very important as far as Latin America is concerned. We want good friends and all of that so that we're more secure. We need to do business back and forth. I can understand that if we have an open community of all of the western hemisphere, we'll be too big and overtake the thing; I think more exchange--tourists--encourage that. If you guys want to travel, why go to Europe? Go to the United States." Anyway, we got talking about those things. The next morning the meeting opens up and this guy gets up and he says in Spanish, "Mr. President, we've been sitting here for two days and we've been talking about what may be some of the responsibilities of the United States towards Latin America. Might we this morning devote the morning to the discussion of the United States' interests as far as Latin America is concerned?" And that was the subject for that morning. I think that [came about] because I was able to speak the language, because of the commonness of language and heritage. I don't think that somebody else could have been able to really get that across to this guy, therefore this guy discussed it in the meeting.

M: I find that very interesting and significant. I'd like to ask you a related question about U.S. policy toward Latin America and what Latin Americans themselves perceive the United States to have in mind in

those relations. One always hears frequent attacks towards U.S. imperialism and the actions of organizations like the C.I.A. in undermining governments there, and in pursuing policies that they perceive to be exploitative through the multi-national corporations, etc. What are your opinions on these matters?

L: I think most of those things that you hear publicly are political in nature. The political leaders have to say something against the big neighbor. You know, it's not very popular. I remember when I lived in Santa Fe, we didn't like Albuquerque because it was the big city and so on. You take the rivalries--San Francisco and Los Angeles. I think there's that tendency, even as individuals. The big rich guy that lives on the hill is not a very popular guy in town. So, it's all right to attack him. Or we say, "Texas is so big, and here's New Mexico [so] small," and all kinds of jokes are made about it--"Flush the toilet, Texas needs the water"; "The Texans come over here and buy up all the good land." There's a sticker that says, "If God wanted Texans to ski (because a lot of Texans come into New Mexico to ski) He'd have given them a mountain"--that sort of thing, because the size of Texas is big compared to New Mexico. But I would think that the real fear or the resentment in Latin America is an economic sort of thing. It's poca envidia, first of all, from the individual, that perhaps somebody else has more. That's not a very popular thing to say, and I wouldn't dwell too much on that. But the fear [is] that U.S. business interests [will] come in and control South America. And that's a legitimate gripe, because we all feel that we don't want outsiders to come in and take over our business. I feel that I probably go further in what our relations ought to be with Latin American than most

people do. Except for the fear that we would be so big and gobble up everything in South America, I think we ought to have a policy of trade for the whole western hemisphere almost the same as between the states here. Forget about the whole tariff business and all of this--just have a big communal trade. I don't think that's possible because of the hugeness of the United States, but I would like to get as close to that as possible.

M: You mentioned, in your previous comments, about the security interests of the United States. How do you see the Panama question?

L: I, again, think that for Panama [it's] very important--they want the sovereignty. And I don't blame them. If some big power was in my country I would want it back. But the rest of the South American countries--again, I think it's political. It's like the President of the Philippines, when we left Vietnam, said, "We may have to look elsewhere for alliances." But where's he going to go? He was talking politically; but in the final analysis, his best alliance is to the United States. He's not going to go to China or anyone else for an alliance. And I think that what the Latin American leaders are saying is that that is the most important question in all of Latin America; or else all of Latin America's going to turn against us. I really think that that's moral support for Panama and not really that the governing bodies of these other Latin American countries are so concerned about it. As far as the relationship between the United States and Panama, I think we have to modify it. I think we have to keep control of it though. I think it's very important to us to keep the control, that you don't have another foreign take-over of the Panama Canal or foreign influences (by that I mean the Russians) that can

stop us at any time that they want to. But I also think that we ought to remove those fences that exist there at the boundary. I have never been there, but it is my understanding you can tell exactly where the American zone starts and ends because of the lushness on the one part. That's exaggerated, but I'm sure there's a definite line there. Panamanians [should] have more access into it and that sort of thing--more of a working relationship than the military mind controlling the Panama Canal.

M: Do you have any feelings about how the United States came to work out a treaty with the Panamanian government? That is, they always emphasize that the U.S. utilized strong-arm tactics to get those concessions there in perpetuity. Since there's that suspicion of hanky-panky from the very beginning, they claim that the treaty ought to be changed because the concession was not obtained in a fair manner. Do you have any comments on that?

L: Yeah. We went in and invested large sums of money. And, of course, it was a capitalistic view of it. I find no fault with it in the United States insisting at the time, "If we're going to complete this canal then we must have the control of it." And I find nothing wrong with that.

M: I want to get back to New Mexico and your representation of part of that state, specifically in terms of the Spanish-speaking community there. Have you found it difficult to represent the interests of Spanish-speaking people, given your split constituency and the fact that you're in the minority here in Congress as a Spanish-speaking Republican and as a Representative period?

L: No, not at all, because there are issues that are peculiar to a given region--jobs being one of them. So you try to bring industry into a



given area. One group is not going to oppose you bringing in a plant or something like that because everybody's going to benefit from it. I look at it from that standpoint rather than from an ethnic standpoint. If you live in Mora, for example, which is one of the poorest counties in the whole United States, it doesn't make any difference if your name is Luján or Smith or Biguey, which is an Indian name. You're in pretty bad circumstances, and an effort has to be made as far as the area's concerned. Water is another very important area. But that affects all groups. There are really no issues that I can think of where there can be that kind of a split, except in what you might consider radical issues either to the left or to the right. But those don't appeal to me politically any way, and I wouldn't be involved in it.

M: How do you view the Raza Unida Party, Congressman?

L: I look at it as extreme. I would take a look at any of their proposals at any time. If they fit, they fit; and if they don't, they don't. One example, probably, is on immigration. What are we going to do about the illegal alien? I feel quite a bit of sympathy for the guy that has to come over from México and work here, tough work; and his family is back in México. I also feel that so many coming over deprives the citizens of employment. I also feel [we shouldn't] get at the employer; because what we're saying is that the United States government, the Justice Department, has not been able to enforce a law that we have where you can only come in under certain circumstances. So now they're admitting that and they're saying, "Well, what we're really going to do is shift that responsibility onto you, the employer; and if you don't police it well then you're liable to go to jail for it or suffer a fine or whatever." I really believe that one of the things that we can do is [have] the bracero program that we used to have; to contract, to bring them over

and do some of the work where you can't find American people to do it. There's a lot of areas where it's necessary. It's a difficult question to resolve, but this gives you the philosophy that I have.

M: Do you think La Raza Unida Party serves a purpose in the political arena?

L: Yes. I think that radical groups serve a purpose. I'll give you the example of the Tijerina movement in New Mexico, when they shot up the Court House in Tierra Amarilla. Although I totally disagree with going in and taking over a Court House and shooting it up and this sort of thing, it did point out the dire circumstances in which northern New Mexico found itself. The stories that then came out--the unemployment problem and all of this--opened the door, in a way, to those of us who would work within the system and try to provide the jobs, for some recognition of that problem. While I didn't agree with the action itself, it did in the final analysis focus [on] a problem that existed. I suppose [in] Crystal City, La Raza Unida was the most active of any place. The anti-discriminationists and their efforts point a need to do something about it. While I wouldn't go to extreme means to correct the situation, [I feel] it did become something that was readily apparent, where it might not have been otherwise.

M: How would one reconcile the need to expose these issues and the manner in which some of them have been brought to the attention of the public? For example, the Tijerina issue. On the one hand you don't agree with the tactics. But on the other hand, if they hadn't done that, how else could you have brought it to the attention?

L: Well, in that case it's very simple, because Tijerina's group never took any of those land grant claims to court. Had they taken them to court, then perhaps that way we would have exposed them. There isn't the

usual problem that you have--[the lack of] money to bring it up-- because there were several lawyers amongst the group. But they were choosing not to bring them to court. And that would have been the way to expose them.

M: What about in the Chicano Movement? There have been many demonstrations, and some riots have occurred, even in the state of New Mexico--in Albuquerque a few years ago.

L: But that was not a racial riot of any kind. The whole thing started [with] some smoking of marijuana and drugs in a particular park; and that had nothing to do with any racial issue or anything like that. When it started growing and getting bigger and bigger and bigger, then is when some of the leaders of all of these movements came in and took credit for it. Now that was bad, because I got a lot of letters. These guys went in and took credit--that it was a Chicano Movement and all that stuff. After that riot I got a lot of real nasty hate letters about, "I will never hire a Spanish-speaking person again because of this type of activity."

M: Well, other big demonstrations have occurred such as in Los Angeles in 1970 for example, when Ruben Salazar was killed. They were mostly politically instigated. How would you view those kinds of demonstrations?

L: I wouldn't support them.

M: That one was against the war--moratoriums against the war. Do you feel that they served a purpose? Would they serve a purpose now?

L: The climate then was different. I think a lot of these groups are used in order to promote whatever interests you want to promote. In that particular case, if it was an anti-war demonstration (as we had many here in Washington, the assembling of 100,000 people or 200,000 people to point out an anti-war feeling) it is perfectly all right as

long as there's not damage to property or somebody killed or anything like that. I think those demonstrations very definitely did lead to our disengagement in Vietnam. So I don't think there's anything wrong with that so long as there's no destruction of property or killing or hurting people.

M: What do you consider to have been your big successes and setbacks up to this time?

L: I don't feel any great success or any big loss of any kind. I have been moderately successful in business and moderately successful in politics, I feel. But that's life. My holding a seat in Congress is like any other job. I just happened to be the one selected to hold this one. I do battle for those interests in my district. Last week I was in Los Alamos for a hearing; they're part of the Energy Research and Development Administration on needs of that community. The next day I was in Española on totally different types of needs. That happened to be water for the little town of Belarde and also for the San Juan Indian Reservation. I think of myself more as a nuts and bolts type of individual rather than trying to push some federal program with far-reaching effects.

M: Has your ideology changed over time, Congressman?

L: I think so. I think you get more practical. You look at how the system works and how you can do your thing within the system. There are some things that require different methods. My very basic political philosophy has been that the most important thing that I can do for this country is to somehow provide a job for each head of the household. If it's just a single person, then he's the head of his own household. If we're able to do that, then all of the problems that we speak about,

and all of the social problems--the health needs of this family, the housing needs, the recreational needs, you take the whole spectrum--can [be] better provided if [the head of a household] has got a meaningful income. My voting record will illustrate what I mean. For example, generally I support the President on most of his vetoes, because normally it's because of the amounts of money involved and that sort of thing. I voted to override him on what is called the Jobs Bill, to provide money for public service employment. Today we will have the Railroad Betterment Employment Act of 1975. I normally don't vote for the subsidies for the railroads, and so when I first took a look at the bill I thought, "Well, here's one, a 'no' vote." Then I start reviewing the thing and what it actually is is to provide jobs for people in fixing up different track beds and that sort of thing. That alone changed my mind, and so I will vote for it. Like I said, that is the very, very basic philosophy that I operate under; [it's] probably a very conservative philosophy--to give somebody the opportunity to work and then go work.

M: This question of work intrigues me. I'd like to ask you a question related to that. We have many stereotypes in the United States regarding the Mexican value system. The Spanish American value system in New Mexico is associated with that in the public image, in the literature that we read. Many people have a simplistic notion that Mexicans are lazy, that something in the Mexican character impedes the development of progressive attitudes and positive feelings about the work ethic. What are your thoughts on this?

L: Well, I think that's just the opposite. I really, really do. There is the side of life, or the soul so to speak, that I think is very

much part of our heritage--the sympathy for people, the lifestyle and all of that. But I also think that that sort of thing is the thing that you do after work. I really think that's very typical. Most people have the general idea that Latins in general--not just the Spanish--are very liberal in the sense of welfare and that sort of thing. I don't run into that very much amongst my constituency. I run into the, "I would rather work, but the work isn't there and so I'm forced into this welfare existence." So I think that when they talk about the Protestant work ethic, it's so much stronger in the Latin community; maybe it ought to be called the "Latin work ethic." When I was growing up as a young boy in our neighborhood, a guy had a mortgage on his house. Of course, in those days things were different, too. Today everybody's got a mortgage, but in those days, we thought he was on his last leg. My goodness! He had to mortgage his house! It was almost una desgracia that he had a mortgage on his house. You worked hard to have your home and then it's threatened by the bank; because of unfortunate circumstances, you had to go borrow money. I think that the work ethic is very, very strong.

M: A psychologist by the name of David McClelland has developed a theory that's connected with economic development and how groups and nations achieve economic progress. He has traced achievement to the need to achieve that some people develop--particularly entrepreneurs--but just people in all fields who develop a need to work hard, a need to succeed. Did you feel that need when you were a youth?

L: No, I never, never did. I think that the thing that I felt most in terms of a need was respect in all sorts of areas. Maybe the whole machismo theory comes from this, I don't know--that there's a respect for you as an individual. I don't relate machismo to being a brute

man, but one who can handle a situation well; but with the proper consideration for other people. In other words, don't walk over them. I think that's very foreign to our culture--you will not achieve something at the expense of somebody else.

M: Who have been your heroes or the persons you would have liked to emulate, both during your youth and your adult life?

L: Nobody really stands out. You admire people for all sorts of different things, but I think the important thing to me is really being your own man--that you do what you think is proper to do. [There's] no one in particular that I would like to model my life after.

M: Do you have any feelings about Anglo American historical figures--the founding fathers and other Presidents or high-ranking individuals--that we've had in history? Is there anybody in particular that stands tall in your mind?

L: No, because I always kind of feel that you do the thing that needs to be done at the time. Each one of those individuals was placed in a particular situation and he did what he thought he ought to do. No hero particularly stands out for any reason.

M: What feelings do you have about the Bicentennial celebration, especially from the viewpoint of the Spanish-speaking heritage?

L: Only that it ought to be intertwined with everything else. As a matter of fact, I look at the whole Bicentennial thing differently than a lot of people look at it. It's one of the few [things] that I consider frivolous appropriations that I have voted for, because it's a birthday party. But I voted for it so that we can bring out a lot of things in order to unite us more, to give us a sense of pride of being Americans. I felt that having gone through the 60's and the 70's with the United States being chopped down on almost every front, it was time that we

just kind of get hold of ourselves and say, "Look, we exist for these purposes: We exist so that people will have an opportunity, so that the opportunity can be presented to them and have them take advantage of it. This is still the best system of government that we can possibly have. The United States offers to the individual what the individual should have." So I felt that we could develop this pride through these Bicentennial celebrations. That's one of the main contributions, that that could happen. I think it probably relates back to what we were talking about in New Mexico before, that there's a feeling amongst our youth that "If you can do it, so can I." It's no big deal, really, to even be the Governor of the state, because it depends on what kind of a campaign I run, what kind of a job I can do; but it's within my reach.

M: How much opportunity do you perceive to exist in the United States for a Spanish-speaking American?

L: Because of the economic situation among Spanish Americans, there isn't that great opportunity. But I think mostly that it's an economic barrier. I even look at discrimination in terms of economics. I don't know what the magic figure is now, but it used to be \$10,000; if you made \$10,000 a year you had arrived. Let's use that same figure; it's probably higher now, I don't know. If a man was making \$10,000 a year, then all of a sudden he was Mr. Martínez or Mr. Luján. That's probably one of the reasons I think some of the best programs that we have are things like Small Business Administration, the Aid Aid contracts, and that sort of thing, to help the people get ahead; because I think very much that discrimination has a lot to do with economics.

M: As you have made many acquaintances among Spanish-speaking individuals-- particularly of Mexican and Spanish origin--who have gone on to achieve important positions in our society, have you ever perceived there to



be a correlation between success and skin complexion?

L: Very much, even amongst Blacks. The lighter, the more chance of success.

M: Have you thought about this? Is this something you've noticed?

L: Yes, very definitely. Very, very definitely. I think there's a very, very definite correlation. Again, it goes back to this whole assimilation thing that I'm talking about. You can assimilate or identify a little closer (if we put it in terms of Blacks) with that Black guy [who's] not jet-black. And I think he's given the better opportunity.

M: One final question, Congressman. This regards México, since we have an attachment to México because of our background. I'm curious about what opinion you might hold regarding the political, social, and economic system of México as it has existed in the 20th century, particularly in recent years.

L: México's social security system (if you want to call it that)--the health benefits and that sort of thing--is related to the guy who goes to work. As long as you're working, you have those social security benefits. It's the reverse of what our system is. I think that tells us something about that work ethic that we were talking about a little while ago. I'm not pleased at all with Echeverría's pronouncement. I think they're very much to the left. A recent example, for example: In Spain they shot these terrorists. Echeverría pulls everyone out of Spain, breaks diplomatic relations because they killed these terrorists. I think it's a leftist political movement. You know, he didn't take into consideration that these terrorists had killed people and had caused damage and had killed policemen and that sort of thing. Yet, on the other hand, he's leading the fight--who kills more people than the Castro regime in Cuba? Yet he's their big proponent. Who supports the whole Allende thing in Chile more than Echeverría? Hardly anyone.

And so I think that the leadership that Echeverría has provided for México has been extremely leftist and designed politically for his benefit, where he had visions of being the Secretary General of the United Nations. Of course, that's gone now, but he was vying for that support. So I don't look at the policies of México all that kindly. They don't agree with my political philosophy.

M: What about the system itself that they have down there? Politically, economically.

L: Well, they really don't have a political system as we know it. Sure, they have the PAN and the PRI, but for all practical purposes, they have one party. They have already determined who's going to be the next President. Echeverría determined that. Díaz Ordaz determined that Echeverría was going to be the President. So they really don't have a free election system such as we have. I give Echeverría credit for this: he has taken to heart and has tried to help the people economically. I think that part of his policies are very good--to get industry going and this sort of thing. So with that part of his philosophy I do agree.

M: This question just occurred to me. Have you kept a diary, records? Has your own role in history been part of your makeup to record events that affect directly your life?

L: No, I never have. As a matter of fact, I'm very bad about that. I work to get my work done; whatever I have to do, get it done. I don't consider myself unusual. This is my job and I'll do it. I don't anticipate that anybody will ever write "The Life and Times of Manuel Luján"--it's not that interesting. I just get my work done and consider it just like any other job.

M: Is there something else that you might want to add to the interview, Congressman?

L: No, but that's typical. I've enjoyed it, I really have. As a matter of fact, it makes me think what some of the things that I stand for really are. I was very surprised, when I got to the Congress, that I would either be labeled a conservative or a liberal, or to right of center--those things never occurred to me. You are what you are. If somebody wants to put a label on you, that's their business.

M: What label has been attached to you?

L: Well, I think people consider me more conservative than I really am; and that's because I'm always looking at expenditures. I'm very concerned about the excessive spending and all that sort of thing. But I will vote for a program that will cost more than the budget provides for if it's related to job producing opportunities; and maybe that in itself is conservative. I don't know.

M: Among other Representatives of Spanish-speaking background here, how do they view you, and do you have contact with them?

L: Oh yes. Pretty much the same. I think that my thinking is pretty much in tune, with the exception of Herman Badillo, who is from New York. But again, that comes from the big city influence as versus those of us from the West. I would say that Westerners by nature tend to be more conservative than New Yorkers, for example, or New Englanders. But I don't think that has anything to do with ethnic background at all.

M: Congressman Luján, I want to thank you very much for this very stimulating and interesting interview.

L: Thank you. It's been a real pleasure for me, too, because I get an opportunity to explore, within my own mind, what some of the things are that make each one of us tick.

M: Muchas gracias.