

11-15-1976

## Interview no. 267

El Pasoan

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Anonymous (1927- )  
INTERVIEWER: Emma A. Cano  
PROJECT: Class Project  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 15, 1976  
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted  
  
TAPE NO.: 267  
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DATE TRANSCRIBED: \_\_\_\_\_

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Following his discharge from the army after World War II, the interviewee, a native of El Paso, Texas, studied sculpture in the studio of the late Urbici Soler, then painting in New York. After a year in Mexico, three in New Mexico and three in Spain, he returned to his birthplace where he is presently employed.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biography; discrimination; the word "Chicano"; the Chicano Movement; the Depression; World War II; illegal aliens.

Length of Interview: 1 hour, 5 minutes Length of Transcript: 26 pages

(This is an interview by Emma Cano at the University of Texas at El Paso Library on November 15, 1976.)

C: When and where were you born?

N: I was born in El Paso, Texas, on October 4, 1927.

C: What is your ethnic background?

N: I don't know, Emma. That's a terrible question, really. My ethnic background is mostly Polish, mostly Anglo, and Mexican.

C: Can you tell me something about your parents?

N: Yeah. My father was a doctor, an M.D., and my mother was a registered nurse. They were both born about the year 1888. My father was an El Paso boy and my mother was from Western Tennessee, right there in the Ozark Mountains, I suppose. I've never been to Tennessee. She was Anglo. My father was more Mexican. All the Mexican blood came out in him, if that's what you'd call it. My father had an office down at 3710 Alameda St. next to Cecilio Arredondo's San Pedro Pharmacy No. 1. There were several San Pedro Pharmacies. He set up different people in business, like his brother, Tommy. I think Leonard Buchowski had a San Pedro Pharmacy. Later on he set up his son, Cecilio Jr., with a pharmacy, and then Kiko Hernandez had a No. 3 San Pedro Pharmacy maybe about the 5200 block of Alameda St. next to Jefferson High School. But anyway, all my father's time was spent as a typical general practitioner, except he did surgery back in the old days. He had an operating room in the back of his office with a great big autoclave for sterilizing his instruments. My dad had this office down there on Alameda St. and he had one of the largest practices in El Paso, with so many people. God, they were all Mexican people. That's the only place he ever felt at home, I think. My mother stayed in the house during my years of growing up. She never worked as a nurse except when my dad would take somebody's tonsils out or something, and then she would come

down and help him in the operation. They used to have me, since I was a very little child, holding a tube. Just to keep me quiet, they'd hand me a tube there in the operating room while they were all dressed in there with white masks, white rubber gloves and white gowns, pulling out pieces of tonsils. They would give them the anesthetic then. It was all a nice background for growing up to be a doctor; except I never became a doctor.

C: And how about your mother?

N: Well, my mother was a typical housewife as far as I can see. I don't know how other housewives were. She wasn't much of a society lady. She came from a large family. She was one of twelve children. There were six boys and six girls. During the Depression some of these were out of work, so we always had a relative or two of my mother's staying with us. We were always taking care of them, it seemed like to me, for one reason or the other. Compared to everybody else my father was well off, but my mother was very close to her sisters and to her brothers, I suppose. We never saw much of her brothers, but to all her sisters she was always very close. [She] didn't seem to feel the need for being a joiner, to belong to the Women's Club or any of that other crap that women belonged to.

C: But did she work as a nurse here in El Paso?

N: She was a registered nurse. She went to the Old Providence School of Nursing, and I think she graduated from there about 1912. She first came to El Paso in 1908. That school of nursing was owned by the Schusters. I always remember her talking about Old Doctor Schuster and Mrs. Schuster and how strict Mrs. Schuster was with the nurses. But it was there she

met my father. He got out of medical school in Galveston in 1912. Well, I know they were married in about 1912 or 1914. He spent a year in New York City as an intern; then he came back here, married my mother, and they went down to Dolores, México where he was a doctor for a mining company. My mother was a nurse in those days for a mining company too. They got run out of there during the Villa Revolution. My mother told us all these stories about seeing people hanging from telephone poles, and how they had murdered a bunch of Americans on a train or something. Of course that was long before I was born. So later on, about 1916 or 1917, my dad went to the First World War as a doctor on a medical train that evacuated people from the front lines in France over in Europe. I suppose [he was] about a year in France, as a doctor. I remember reading some old love letters of my mother to my father. She was talking about the big flu epidemic they had here in 1918, and how everybody was sick and dying; but apparently she got through it. I think she did have the flu. She caught typhoid fever down in México and for some reason that ruined one of her kidneys, and so she was never too strong.

Then he got back from the First World War and they took off for a mining company down in Santiago de Chile or near there. They were down there about a year. I think my mother came back first. They went with my Aunt Francis who was principal of Effie Eddington's School for Girls. That was to make the little heathen Mexican girls Methodists down there on San Antonio Street. It think it was at 1215 San Antonio Street. Now it's a project, a home for the old folks. But my Aunt Francis Montague was the first one to come out here. She came out here about 1898 and started the Mexican Day School. This was to convert little Mexican children to the true religion, which is Methodism, according to her.

Then later on she became head of this Effie Eddington's School for Girls. So all my mother's brothers and sisters came out here at one time or another to be with Aunt Francis, who wasn't well off. She didn't make much money, but at the school for girls they had all kinds of extra rooms where people could stay for free. Anyway, my mother was teaching school there about 1920. My father got back from Chile. He opened up a practice down on Alameda St. I think in the 3700 block, first where he lived, there near Banks Funeral Home. Then he moved up on Pershing Drive where I was born in 1927.

C: Is that where you lived?

N: Well, I lived at 3101 Pershing from the time I was born till 1932. In 1932 we moved up to 2618 Louisville Street, which is up near the mountains, and really that's where I grew up. I have many memories though of that first house, 3101 Pershing. It's still there. Sometimes I go drive by there because I remember how a big dog frightened me when I was about two years old. I remember when I almost died. I was eighteen months old when I started hemorrhaging from diverticulums in my intestine. My dad brought in Old Dr. Rawlings, who was a child specialist. I can remember him sticking his hand through my crib and tickling my feet.

C: How about any school experiences that you can remember?

N: I can remember kindergarten. I didn't really go to kindergarten. I started off in Junior Primary, which was the second semester of kindergarten, what you went to before you went to the first grade. I can remember the teacher we had then. She seemed so pretty. She used to make us sing "When it's Springtime in the Rockies," and "She'll be Comin' 'Round the Mountain When She Comes." That was about 1932, '33, when I was five or six years old. Then I remember Mrs. Denny. I could read long before

I went to school because my mother had been a school teacher down there in Effie Eddington's. She taught us to read and write since we were very little. I remember once I read slow in class for some reason, and Mrs. Denny, who was our teacher in the first grade, shook me. She grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me and made me cry. Then I remember old Mrs. Gribble who taught us in the second grade. Really some of those teachers seemed like monsters to us when we were such small children, and now I realize they were really doing the best they could. They were very patient ladies and probably not as old as they seemed to us. They all seemed to me like the witch in Hanzel and Gretel. They were terrible old ladies that used to teach us.

C: Mr. Newman, did you ever talk Spanish in class?

N: No, Spanish was strictly prohibited in school. I couldn't speak Spanish. I didn't learn Spanish till I was 21 years old, but you couldn't talk Spanish in school. If you spoke Spanish, that was against the law; I mean prohibited. I remember in high school they used to come around and write up a report that you were speaking Spanish, which always seemed ridiculous to me.

C: How about at home with your father, since he was bilingual?

N: No. Both my parents were bilingual. Both of them spoke Spanish, but they never spoke it to us children. They just spoke English to us. My father spoke perfect Spanish. His mother, Jesusita, better known as Jessie, was Mexican. He grew up on Fourth and St. Vrain Street and he lived all his life [there]. Even now our maid Natalia, who is like a mother to me, tells me my father spoke better Spanish than I do now, which is not surprising because he grew up speaking it. My mother, of course, learned it after she came to El Paso and was in Mexico and Chile, but she knew how to speak Spanish. She always answered the maid in English, but the maid always talked to her in Spanish. The only time I'd hear my mother

speak Spanish is when one of my father's patients would call on the telephone and then she'd have to talk Spanish. Even the maid Natalia, I asked her once why she didn't teach us Spanish, and she said she only had a second grade education and she didn't want to teach us wrong. I wish now we'd learned it wrong instead of learned it late. I learned Spanish in Mexico much later. Oh, you know words in Spanish, you know. When I was growing up, I could sing all those songs "La Cucaracha," "Allá en el Rancho Grande," and things like that that Natalia would sing to us.

C: When you were going to school, in your relationships with the other kids, do you think there was any division between the Mexican American kids and the Anglo kids?

N: Well, really, there weren't many Mexican kids in school. The only Mexican kids I knew were the Arredondo kids or the kids down there on Alameda, down by my father's office. They always treated me all right and I think I always treated them all right. I mean, what the hell, we were kids. We never thought of anything. I used to play where there was a community of Mexican people up there by Guadalupe Church on Alabama St. There was a little community of Mexican people there, and they were poor in those years. These were guys who came out and cut your grass or things like that. We used to play with them over at Newman Park or up on the mountain. We were always playing on the mountain. I never thought anything of it. I'm sure they never thought anything of it. There was no division. Maybe they were jealous of me. They never said so. I was jealous of them because some of them had burros and I didn't. [Laughter] I used to tell my father, "Why don't you buy me a burro?" He thought I was crazy. A good burro only cost at that time \$8.00, I remember, because one kid

was always wanting to sell me his burro. The McKee kids, who lived right next to us, had Shetland ponies and everything a human could wish for, it seemed to me. Old man McKee, he had eight children. On their 14th birthday, he would always buy them a brand new car. My father never bought me a car. He bought me a bicycle once, and then they wouldn't let me ride it to school because they were afraid I'd get killed. I used to have to sneak off on my bike or leave my bike down the block in my friend's house so [that] the next morning when I got up my family wouldn't see me ride [it] to school. I had overprotective parents in some ways.

C: By what you've told me you were happy at home, right?

N: Well, I was happy at times and [at] times I was unhappy. I can remember as much unhappiness as happiness. My dad built a house in back for Natalia. Natalia had one daughter and a sobrino who lived with her; he was just like a son. It was Roman and Regina. So dad had this little rock house built in the back yard. It must have cost a pretty penny [because it had] bathrooms and closets. It was a very nice place. And he thought [Natalia] would want to live there. I guess he built it without ever consulting her, because when the chips were down and the time came for her to move in, she told him she wasn't going to move in there. She preferred her house down on Frutas Street, and so dad never got a slave. Then I asked if I could move in this little house--I was about 10 years old--and he said sure. I went out there with all my clothes. I lived an independent life from that time on. Really I just came in the house to play or eat. They used to say, "Well, it's bedtime, go to bed." I'd do out there and listen to the radio until the wee hours of the morning, spent all night reading, and couldn't get up [to] go to school

the next morning 'cause I had read till 4:00 a.m. It was kind of a funny thing. My brother stayed in the house. My sister stayed in the house. We had a great big house that had about nineteen rooms in all, but Chihuahua! It was [a] split-level thing and the basement was full of bedrooms, playrooms, dens, the washroom and bathrooms and everything. Upstairs there was bedrooms and all that. But I always preferred that little rock house in the back. It gave me lots of liberty, really. When I got to be about 14 and 15 and started running around with friends, I could say goodnight to the family after supper and go to bed out there and then wait till the whole family was asleep and then get up and get dressed again and go out on the town with my friends--they never even missed me. I don't recommend that for disciplined living.

C: You said there weren't too many Mexican [kids in school].

N: No. I went to Crockett School and there were maybe five or six Mexican kids in school. I remember Domingo Placencia and his sister, and there was another boy who had his arm shot off. Well, it wasn't shot off, I think he had been playing with a World War I cannon shell or something and the thing exploded and blew off his arm. He and his sister went to school. There was Orville Cook who was half Mexican, but he was muy prieto, muy prieto. He looked very Mexican. He was killed in World War II. He joined the Marines when he was very, very young. His mother signed the papers and then he went over there and got killed on the first island they invaded. In the first wave, they just shot him right down and killed him. His mother's been living ever since as a gold star mother, and she belongs to all these veterans' organizations. It afforded her a little of [the] glory she never would have had probably. There weren't many Mexican kids in Crockett School. There were more in Alta

Vista and possibly a few more in Houston School. Of course, I didn't go to them so I don't know; but it seems to me [that] most of the Mexican kids, at least at that time, all went to Aoy or Lincoln or one of those South El Paso schools.

C: As a teenager, did you ever go down to South El Paso?

N: Oh, yeah. I was down in South El Paso all the time with my father.

There were lots of days, I suppose mostly [in] the summertime, that I used to spend hanging around the office. He'd take me down there and he gave me his laboratory as an office. It had a roll top desk and all those medical journals stacked on top of it, and I used to always be fooling around with his microscope. He taught me to run urine analysis for diabetes and look through the microscope and identify certain microbes and bacteria and things like that. I always felt that was my office.

I remember once I wanted to put up a sign that said "KEEP OUT," but my dad said not to do it because it would make everybody want to come in. He didn't want people in that laboratory. He used to take me on his home calls, which he made many, many, many [times]. They would all be in South or East El Paso. At that time, East El Paso was considered from Alameda Street down to about where La Fonda Motel is, which is about the 5500 block of Alameda, about where Del Camino is. Well, Del Camino was the city limits, and between there and Piedras Street, that was East El Paso. All the rest was South El Paso, for my father's area for doctoring people. He had an awful lot of patients. I remember learning all the names of all the streets by just going with him to all these calls. We'd go down on ABC alley and places like that, down to Fifth and Tays. There was that Newark Maternity Clinic down there and he used to deliver babies. Of course I was never allowed in where they'd deliver

babies. I had a general idea of what was going on. Not really, because I didn't find out how babies are born until I was 14.

C: Did you ever feel inferior to the Anglo kids when you were in school?

N: No, because I felt that I was an Anglo kid (for all I knew), because I don't think I ever distinguished. I never have felt really a part of any group. I always felt like an outsider in any group, whether it was Anglo or Mexican. I don't know, some people are just born outsiders and that was me. But Anglo, I never stopped to think about that, until once a Mexican lady, who I hadn't seen in a long time, came to our house. I kissed her on the mouth. My mother said to me later, "Never kiss a Mexican, son, not on the mouth. You're liable to get syphilis." I realize now that my mother was very prejudiced. I don't know why she married my father. Maybe it was just the general feeling at the time. I remember this one book we have here in Special Collections, I can't remember [the title], it was by some ex-governor of Alaska who was also a physician. I remember reading it; he spent a long time in Mexico and wrote about Mexico. He said that about 90 percent of all Mexicans had syphilis. And I think, well, that's kind of an unfair statement to make about a people. He didn't test all those people and I don't even think he could even get such figures from a poll. But I can see that at the time possibly people thought that way. The Anglos thought that way.

My mother was a typical Anglo woman. She never talked about my father's relatives. It wasn't till later on that both of them had been dead [that I met them]. I had Aunt Mamie, and Margarita, my cousin. And Margarita used to always be saying, "Well, we're part Mexican," and it never occurred to me either to believe or disbelieve her. I just took

it. But then later on she introduced me to relatives up in Doña Ana County; these were all Chicanos and Chicanas as you would call them today: Mrs. Martínez, Mrs. Provencio, Miss González. Chihuahua! I got about ten million relatives! I never knew them. My father would talk about Tía Carolina up there and my mother would always sort of frown, but we never thought too much about it at the time. My father never tried to hide what he was. I'm sure he was only happy in the Mexican ambiente, like when he was down in his office with Cecilio Arredondo. They used to always have such great fun together, it seemed to me, playing the pinball machine there in the drugstore, talking and joking and all that. But at home, because home was dominated by my mother, there was Anglo [influence] except for the influence of Natalia. Natalia had tremendous influence on me because, even though she didn't talk Spanish to me, she talked about how her father had been killed during the Revolution. And she was from Torreón. No, we didn't think about those things. I think it was the kids who were suffering, who were [the ones] being discriminated against.

C: Did you ever see any discrimination first hand?

N: If you had money... We certainly had more money than a lot of people. I remember Leo Schuster, Jr. hitting me in the face with a rake over at my house when I was about five or six years old and my nose started bleeding. He said he did that because we were rich. Leo Schuster is the Director of about two different banks today, and owns a big insurance agency that his father left him. He has more money than I ever thought to have, but he hit me in the nose because I was rich. Yeah, I felt discriminated against, by Leo Schuster anyway, but we weren't rich. My father had much less money than other doctors in the neighborhood. They

all belonged to the Country Club set, like the Varners, the Cunninghams, the Greens, and the Rheinheimers. My dad was just the doctor of the poor Mexican people.

C: Did the other doctors ever [resent this]?

N: Well, I don't know. My father was a respected medical person. They called on him for consultations and diagnoses. He had a certain reputation built up as a great diagnostician. Certainly he was called in to assist in operations. And he was President of the El Paso County Medical Association several times. But socially, he didn't mix with the other doctors; they had their own thing going.

C: I meant because he hardly charged his patients.

N: He hardly charged people, and that's the thing. All these other doctors were at the Bassett Tower or in the Roberts Banner Building. At that time, they didn't have this Medical Center built up here in Arizona Street. So the rich doctors were all in the Bassett Tower or Roberts Banner Building or the old First National Bank Building. They had good things going, and I know they were making money even in those days. But my dad never charged very much. He'd charge fifty cents for an office visit and a dollar for a house call, and he hardly ever got that. He never collected. He must have collected some, because he bought a house that cost \$10,000; that was in 1932. In 1941, I have a little card that shows how he upped his prices. He raised the prices to about \$1.00 for an office visit and \$2.00 for a house call, but it was during the 1940s that he gave up house calls. He was a very sick person, my father; he died of heart trouble. During his last few years, he had active tuberculosis which he had had as a boy. It was arrested and then it came on again. I don't know how he survived. At least he didn't make house

calls after 9:00 p.m. He was always available for patients. It's not like now where the doctor takes off and goes golfing on Wednesday afternoon while your wife is lying hemorrhaging, like my wife did once. I couldn't reach a doctor for anything because he was out on the golf course. When I finally reached him he said, "Oh, it's nothing." I had to get another doctor yet to get hold of our doctor. This was Dr. Victor Blanco (so nobody will misunderstand which Doctor I'm talking about) and the S.O.B. wouldn't come to take care of my wife.

C: You mentioned the word "Chicano." Was that the first time you had heard it?

N: I didn't hear that word till 1957. I don't know, I never liked the sound of that word; I still don't like it. I still cringe when I hear that word. I just don't like that word. I can't explain why I don't like it. It just sounds to me like a slang word. I have nothing against slang. I would certainly use it. I know it denotes Mexican people who were born and raised in El Paso, but to me you're either Mexican or you're Anglo. If they're Mexican, I like them; if they're Anglo, I don't like them.

C: Do you think there's any median between them?

N: Yeah, that's what you're trying to say. I think there is, as far as Spanish goes, as far as the language goes. When I'm in Juárez, I understand people much better and they understand me much better because I learned Spanish in México and in Spain. When I try to talk to the Chicano kids here in college, they don't know what I'm talking about half the time. I just had a big fight this afternoon with one because I used a word which is used in Spain as a very common word. I used it and it turned out it was a bad word here and the girl wouldn't speak to me for

two hours. I won't mention what the word was, [but] it starts with a C and ends with an O.

C: Do you think that the meaning of it has changed across the years?

N: I think so. Back in '57 I don't recall there was much of a Chicano Movement. I heard it in this context: I had been out to see some woman about insurance. I was talking to another agent who was a Mexican guy. He asked me if the lady I had been talking [to] was Chicana. I said, "What's a Chicana?" And he said, "Mexicana." I said, "Yeah she was a mexicana." But that was the first time I ever heard that word used, and it seems to me...I don't know, there was a pejorative connotation to it. It was almost like a put down. I never have liked it to this day. I know a million Spanish slang words and I know a million Spanish bad words, but why this word sticks in my mind... I don't like it. I don't like to hear about Chicano [Services] in the library or Chicano Studies over here. I don't know why, Emma, but I don't. I realize there's a difference. People of Mexican descent who are raised on this side really are considered as Americans in Mexico and in the U.S. they're called Mexicans. So they feel like all of us do, I suppose, people without identity, and they want identity. But I wish they could have chosen a better word. It's a stupid prejudice that I have against the word, and it has no reasonable basis.

C: What do you think about the Chicano Movement?

N: Well, I think it's great, really. I just wish they would call it something else. Mexican people have been stepped on too long, especially in this town, which rightfully belongs to them. I mean not only historically, but by the very fact that so many Mexican people live in El Paso, have always lived in El Paso, and probably [will] always live here because of

its proximity to Mexico. And yet, they've always gotten the short end of the stick in this town. It wasn't until Raymond Telles became Mayor that we ever had a Mexican Mayor on this side. They had no voice in politics. Of course, this is partly their own fault, partly due to their disassociation with the Anglo Community. They don't feel part of it, so they don't go vote; they don't do that. But any time people of Mexican descent in this town want to do anything, all they have to do is go out and vote it in. I don't believe in some of these radical movements--La Raza Unida and things like that. I think these are a bunch of upstart politicians who are not educated in the first place. I don't blame them; I think any time you oppress a people you have to have a reaction from them. And [the] people in La Raza Unida are certainly reacting. But I think, like all extremists, they're not showing good sense. But it's a necessary part of what I suppose you would call evolution. It's beengoin on since the beginning of time. Every time you oppress people, there's a counter feeling; they react, like during the French Revolution (where they cut off all the heads and then they started off all over again). It really accomplishes nothing. Maybe it does, ultimately; it makes the oppressors silent. I mean, it shuts them up. What do I know about these things? Very little. But you have to treat people with respect.

C: What has been your involvement in community organizations?

N: I'm thinking of joining the LULACs. I like the LULACs. They're a nice moderate organization. They think like I think. This would probably upset your Dr. Martínez because I think he's a little bit more extreme than LULACs; but of what I've seen of the LULACs they suit me fine. Right now I belong to largely Anglo-dominated things. I'm a Director of the El Paso

County Historical Society. Well, I'm not a Director, I'm an officer; I have been a Director in the past. I'm editor of their newsletter. This year I'm Sheriff of the El Paso Corral of Westerners; that's like being President. But both of these have been dominated by rednecks. I don't mind saying it. I think they need people like me. To them I'm a radical, or at least I could be a radical if they could see my true thoughts. Perhaps I'm a hypocrite. But I need these organizations for work. And they're nice people, really, if they don't get off on the subject of race or politics; they're not bad people. They all remind me of my mother.

C: Going back to your job, could you trace how you've come up to this particular job?

N: Well, I've had all types of jobs in the past. Well, let's go ahead and be honest. Listen, if you're going to tape me, let's be honest, let's tell it like it is. It won't help my career [for people] to know this. I trust Dr. Martínez and Sarah John and everybody over there will respect my wishes [about] this tape, which is not very important anyway because I'm not a very important person; so they won't go broadcasting all they know to the entire campus. I don't have an education in the ordinary sense of the word. I dropped out of high school. Well, as far as that, I know a professor of political science here who didn't go to high school either, but he ended up with a Ph.D. I never have ended up even with a B.A. I didn't go to high school because I couldn't do Algebra; that was at the beginning of World War II. All my friends in school, it seemed, joined the Navy or were drafted or were taken off into the Marine Corps or the Air Force. My cousin joined the Air Force and became a Lieutenant. And there I was, a little bit younger than all of them. I was 14 and I

couldn't do any of these things. So my father sent me to a high school out in San Diego, California, a military academy. I got so fouled up in that place after six weeks that I went down the fire escape one night with \$1.20 in my pocket, caught a freight train and went up to Tracy, California, and hitchhiked to Oakland. I never really went much back to school. I fell in love with a girl when I was about 16 and tried high school again, and it didn't work. Another time I went down to El Paso Tech, and I was really very bored with it all so I never did much in the way of high school. I worked at all kinds of jobs. I worked for the National Biscuit Company, unloading box carts. I ate so many fig newtons they're still coming out of my ears and I hope I never see another one. I worked for National Automotive Fibers, a factory out in Oakland. I worked for a roofing company putting roofs on tall buildings. I can't even count the number of jobs I've had. I worked 14 months at the Post Office as a mail clerk. About three months of that was as a mail carrier. I've done every kind of job from milking cows to caring for pigs. I've worked very hard in my life.

They finally drafted me at the end of World War II. I never got out of Ft. Bliss. When I left the Army, I had some G.I. Bill of Rights, so I took a bunch of tests--G.E.D. tests. I took them and they said I had developed well enough to go to college. So I started going to college here in about 1947 and I failed everything. In about 1949, after having come back from New York and studying art and fooling around, I went to a Trapis Monastery where I spent three years. They thought I was going blind so they kicked me out. I went to a Benedictian Monastery where I spent a year. From there I went to the Cartusians, which are the strictest of all orders; they live like hermits. But all these orders are contemplative

orders, so you spend a lot of time studying; I learned quite a bit then. I spent a year in México and three years in Spain, and in all that time I learned a few things.

So the way I ended up here was, when I got back from Spain [I] tried selling insurance, working in a supermarket, and working for Austin Engineering for a while, which did sheet metal work. (I've done a lot of things!) I ended up as manager of that company. I had to find a trade, so I learned a trade. I learned locksmithing from Manny Muñoz, who had been one of my father's patients. He remembered how my father had helped him during the Depression, so he said he would teach me. So Manny and Tino Muñoz taught me locksmithing. They were two of the best locksmiths in El Paso so I earned my living for eight years as a locksmith. During that period, about 1959, I tried to come back to college and major in engineering. I took one Algebra course and one English course and failed them both. While I was in the key shop, I started studying history. I've always liked history--Regional History and Southwestern History. I started publishing papers in the New Mexico Historical Review and in the Password of the El Paso County Historical Society. Pretty soon one of the ladies at the El Paso Public Library asked me to go down there and work as archivist, because by then they had hired Leon Metz up here as University Archivist. So the Public Library, feeling the need for competition or something, decided they needed an archivist, so they hired me. They knew they could get me cheap. Working as a locksmith, it's hard work; you never get much time off and you never make much money. So I went down there, and I lasted about six months. I'd never worked in any place like that. So I quit there, and went immediately back to the key shop. Then in March of 1969, Baxter Polk brought me up here to be

Assistant Archivist. This goes because I've known so many people in El Paso in one way or another. I have an old family background. Whether or not I'm qualified for the job is something else again, but I've taken many History courses and many English courses since I've been here, a few Philosophy and other courses. Eventually I'll learn something. I'll probably never be Department Head because of my lack of formal education. The thing is, you can learn very much on your own, but it counts for very little in the eyes of the world. So don't bother to learn it on your own--learn it the formal way, Emma. I recommend it.

C: I'm going to mention a few historical events and I'd like for you to tell me what impact they had on your life. The first one is the Depression.

N: The Depression had very little impact on my life other than at this time I realize how they exploited the Mexicans during that period, possibly because the Mexicans were second class citizens (the ones in El Paso). I'm talking about what you would now call Chicanos, or what they would call Chicanos. Most of these people were cutting grass or working in the round-offs down towards the railroads, or the women were working as maids. This is apart from the rural aspect where they were all out picking cotton. I've picked cotton too and I know what back-breaking work that is, and I've chopped cotton. Now they're paying the price, the Anglos are, in that they're all complaining because the Mexicans are getting all these programs like Work Study, for example. They object to that. And they get food stamps and that's good. And when you have groups like La Raza Unida and others that I consider extremist groups, it's just the other side of the coin because whenever you oppress the people, the day of reckoning will come along. Then the Depression did influence me

in that respect as I look back, but only as hindsight. Really I didn't know there was a depression going on--kids don't think really, kids just accepted life the way it was. We always had plenty of food on the table, plenty of clothes to wear, and a warm place to stay. It just seems to me, I remember many beggars at that time--people who would come around to the house asking for a piece of cake or a piece of food, or people like Natalia who worked for \$7.00 a week for my father, or her brother, Ramón, who cut our grass and my father used to pay him \$0.25 an hour. That was \$2.00 a day. They weren't really bad wages according to the standards at the time, but you can't call them good wages either. People never could live luxuriously.

C: What about World War II?

N: This influenced me greatly, because as I said, so many of my friends went to war and I was too young. [I] didn't get in till the tail end and then never where the fighting was. I never got out of Ft. Bliss or William Beaumont. I was in the Medical Corps there. It was kind of ridiculous. It had an influence on my education because I would rather have been off becoming a big war hero than going to school. School seemed ridiculous to me at the time. Why couldn't I be where my friends were? Then there was all this propaganda going on at the time. Every movie you would see, all these movies you would see would be about wars and things like that. It did influence me greatly--probably messed up my whole life.

C: It didn't involve any personal suffering, any deprivations?

N: Yeah, there was rationing going on. We didn't get as much meat or as much gasoline. I didn't drive, so it didn't affect me. My father got all the gasoline he wanted because he was a doctor. My mother didn't

get as much gasoline for her car, but then that didn't really affect me 'cause I always walked or took the bus. They didn't deliver me back and forth like kids are delivered now.

C: How about the Chicano Movement?

N: Well, OK, the Chicano Movement is a good thing. I think when the LULACs came in... I really don't remember when they were organized, but it was a growing organization when I returned from Spain in 1957. I remember somebody asking me what I knew about the LULACs. I said, "I never had heard of them." They said they thought it was a Communist movement. Anything that would liberate people or bring up their standard of living or organize them together that was outside the Anglo sphere of influence was considered a Communist movement. This was Senator Joe McCarthy's influence. Of course, he was dead by 1957. The Chicano Movement, César Chávez, and people like that have done wonderful things for Mexicans. Of course, he's brought up the extremist. Extremes are never any good, but Chicanos were treated extremely bad by the Anglos all these years. You know, you can't believe how badly they were [treated]. You read Frank Doby's book, Tombstone, and it talks about Curly Bill. Curly Bill was a big pistolero out there in Arizona and they said, "Curly, how many men have you killed?" He said, "Do you want me to count Mexicans?" You see, that's the way they thought, even my mother thought that way. I remember when I was little, not about Mexicans but about Indians. I [said to her], "There's Buffalo Bill," I was reading some comic book probably, "He killed so many Indians, and the Ten Commandments say, 'Thou shall not kill.'" My mother answered me, "Indians don't count." And so it seems to me a terrible frame of mind.

But if there's any racist people... And I don't mean to criticize my mother because I love my mother to this day. My mother's been dead

since I was 19 years old, but I love her and respect her memory, and she was a good mother. She had her shortcomings. But the Anglo—Saxon race (and this, as far as I'm concerned, includes Germans and all these Northern [people],) as Hitler would have called them, Arian people, is false to begin with, since every race is mixed up with every other race. But the Teutonic way of thinking is that they're a superior race, the Anglos think they are superior, and the Germans think they are superior. The only way they're superior as far as I can see, is in the perversions. Hitler killed six million Jews. What could be more terrible than that? Nobody has every reached such a "superior" low point in history as Hitler. So any race that thinks they're superior, maybe by even making that kind of statement, I'm saying that Mexicans are superior to Anglos. They're not superior, but neither are they inferior. They're certainly more patient, more understanding, and more tolerant. Anglos have no tolerance or very little tolerance. Look at what's happening in South Africa today (all those Dutch people and English people down there), how they've oppressed the black in Rhodesia. And look what's already happened in the Congo, in Kenya, and in Tanganyika. The white race is being made to pay for the oppression of other people. I don't know if Spaniards were any better. Spaniards are a pretty proud people. They came over to México and exploited the people. They put Indians to work as slaves in the mines, but they didn't wipe them out. The Indian population at one time in México was reduced to about two million,[but]since then it's grown. At least the Spaniards married the Indians, had children by them, and created a whole new country of people; whereas the Anglos came over here, took the Indians, and killed them. I have Col. Baylor's letter in there saying, "Let's bring in all the Indians undercover

of a treaty of peace, and then we'll kill them. We'll slaughter them-- man, woman, and child." I have that written down. So that's not a very "gentle" way of dealing with a people. It tells me a few things, anyway.

C: Were your feelings toward both groups reflected in your dating patterns?

N: My dating patterns? I didn't date very much like ordinary guys date, Emma, because I wasn't in high school. I wasn't going to junior proms, I wasn't going to senior proms, I wasn't going to [the] high school dances that they used to hold in all the gymnasiums. Once I went to one of those, maybe twice. Mostly I was running around with girls who worked. I had several girlfriends. I guess you would call [it] going steady, except they didn't call it that at the time. As far as I remember, they were all Anglo girls. I fell in love with Dr. Rodarte's daughter; I don't even remember her name. It was in high school, during that brief period that I was going to high school. At the same time, I was running around with a bunch of high school dropouts and things like that. At first we hit it off. I never actually took her out, but we used to hang around together in the hall. One day she said she didn't want to have anything more [to do] with me 'cause I ran around with the wrong kind of people, and she didn't consider me a nice boy. That was kind of a funny discrimination. But mostly they were Anglo girls that I went with then. I would stick with one for a whole year, and then I would go about a year with no girlfriend, then I would find another one and go with her for about a year. I didn't really go to dances much. Mostly we'd go to the movies together or sit in the park and neck, which was popular at the time.

C: You never wanted to date any Mexican girls?

N: Well, yeah, but the Mexican girls that I knew were not the kind of Mexican girls you would marry in any case. These were the girls we met in the Calle Mariscal in Juárez and things like that. I've always been attracted more to Mexican girls than I have to Anglo girls. Anglo girls are funny things anyway. To me they seem more masculine. There's something--they lack a feminine quality. When I found myself in Spain, I ended up marrying a girl in Spain. I've been married 22 years to her, by the skin of my teeth and her teeth. Latin girls--I think it's because they're Catholic girls, and Catholic girls are always more feminine, even if they're callejeras--they're more feminine than Anglo girls.

C: What's your opinion about illegal aliens?

N: I've got big opinions about that, but I'm afraid they conform with very few other people. I use an illegal alien in my own home. We have a maid; we pay her about \$8.00 to come here on Saturdays. She works from 11:00 to 4:00 which is more or less \$2.00 an hour. Anyway, she said that's how much she wanted. Every Saturday when it doesn't snow, she comes to our house and cleans for us. She's worked for us on two or three occasions; I mean, she worked for a period of years and then she quit. [She] went into business for herself selling used clothes, then she came back to us. She's liked working for us. She does what she wants around the house more or less. She knows what to do. I think it's an opportunity for them to earn a little money. On the other hand, we are exploiting them by not giving them all the privileges that the law requires [by] saying that you have to pay Social Security, Income Tax, and all this red tape stuff, rights to which they're entitled. I don't think there should be any border. In fact, if there has to be a border, I think this should be a free zone--El Paso and Juárez, which is really

one city. Just this morning as I was coming across the Córdova bridge, I saw Customs grab some guy who was trying to come in illegally. They arrested the poor fellow.

C: Do you think there's any truth [in what is said] that we are competing for jobs?

N: I don't think there should be. One, I don't believe in competition. And I believe people should have the right to come and go as they please. When I'm near the bridge, I think of the Berlin Wall. I remember what a big scream came out of the Americans when Khrushchev built the wall in Berlin to keep people from going out of East Germany into West Germany. There was a big scream from the Americans who said that this was a terrible thing, and yet we build a wall so people won't come in here. I don't think there should be any competition. I think things would work out naturally. This is perhaps laissez-faire type attitude, but certainly if all the Mexicans come up here and we were allowed to go down there everything would balance out. People have a natural right to immigrate wherever they want. We complain about Russia not letting the Jews out; yet, we don't want Mexicans coming in here. I'm willing to compete in a job market with Mexicans. And if the U.S. is as rich as it is and with all the free money and arms and everything it gives to people all over the world, certainly we can absorb these people who come to us from México. We're taking a burden off of México, it's true. The President down there and the cortes and Parliament don't have to face the problem in México of making more jobs, as long as they have the safety valve here at the border where people can come across; and yet, as far as I'm concerned, you could throw open the gates and let them come

in as they want and you would be able to cross merchandise or anything you want. I just don't believe in Customs, and Immigration and Naturalization. It took me three years to bring my wife into this country, three years. I was an American citizen, and yet they discriminated against my wife because she was a Spaniard. There was all this quota system, and for all I know, this system still exists where they give [you] preference if you're from England or Germany or Switzerland or one of the Northern countries. They don't want the poor Italians coming over; they don't want the Spaniards coming over; they don't want Mexicans coming over; and they absolutely excluded the Chinese for many years. I don't believe in this, Emma, because great migrations of people have taken place since the beginning of time--the Huns, the Celts, all these different people invading, going into countries. This is what mixes the world all up and makes us one race in the last analysis. To me, this is something I've argued with a friend of mine who works on the border down there. I say, "How can you be party to this? How can you stand there in that uniform and say, 'You can't come over?'" He thinks he's doing the right thing. So all right; but nobody can convince me that's the right thing. I think it's a terrible thing that we tell the Mexican people [that] they don't have the right to cross the river. There's such a thing as human right, and human rights say you can go any damn place you want in this world. There should not be governments trying to exclude you.

C: Thank you very much for the interview.

N: You're welcome, Emma. It's been nice talking to you.