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Interview no. 283

Paul Berry

Sonny Yates

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Mr. Paul Berry and Mr. Sonny Yates
INTERVIEWER: Oscar J. Martinez and Rhonda L. Hartman
PROJECT: _____
DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 29, 1976
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Members of the Sun Carnival Association.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Historical aspects of the Sun Carnival; its economic impact on El Paso; lack of Mexican American participation from its origin to the present; workings of the Sun Carnival Association.

1 3/4 hours; 29 pages.

Interview with Mr. Paul Berry and Mr. Sonny Yates of the Sun Carnival Association. Interviewing are Oscar Martinez and Rhonda Hartman of the Institute of Oral History at U. T. El Paso. January 29, 1976.

M: Mr. Berry, how long have you been associated with the Sun Carnival?

B: Since 1948.

M: How did you get involved?

B: Well, a friend of mine by the name of Pappy Hoyt was the parade coordinator. I had known him for years. I went to him one day and asked if I could help and if he could find a job for me; so he put me to work and I have been with him ever since.

M: Was that a full time job back then?

B: No, it was kind of a hobby, like it is now; volunteer work.

M: When did the Sun Carnival begin the practice of having a full time office?

B: I believe when it was first organized, about 40 years ago.

M: You've always had a full time office, then?

Y: Yes. It was one director and a secretary for about 28 years and then it expanded to its present status of one full time director and three full time back up people I believe in 1963; '63 or '64. Now of course, Mr. Berry isn't with our office; he is just one of the volunteers.

M: Oh, you're not working full time now?

B: Sometimes my office thinks I am, but...(laughter).

M: Did you ever work full time?

B: No.

M: You have always been a volunteer?

B: Yes, sir.

M: In what capacities have you been involved during these years that you have volunteered?

- B: I've been around for about 27 years. The first 18 years I was involved with handling the bands on the day of the parade. I was kind of a leader, getting the bands in their position at the parade. Then about ten years ago I became a parade coordinator. I took over the job from Pappy Hoyt at that time. He had been the parade coordinator from its inception in 1937, I believe.
- M: Were you here when the parade first started?
- B: Yes, I am a native El Pasoan.
- M: Do you remember the parade in those days?
- B: Sure. I used to go New Year's day like most everybody else did, when I was a kid. Of course, I missed it in '41 to '45 because of the war. I believe they still had the parades even during the war years.
- M: What do you remember about the parade in those years, compared to what we have today?
- B: I think it was made up pretty much the same as it is today, by floats and bands and marching units; it hasn't changed much in the years. The only thing is that the floats have gotten bigger and prettier. There are more bands from out of town; bigger bands; the marching units are bigger and better dressed and better drilled in school. It's not because I have anything to do with it, but it's a better parade today (in the form of beauty and size) than it was, let's say, 30 years ago. We used to have bands that came from out of town that might have had 20, 25 members. Now, we try to hold it to bands that have 100 members or more, just to add to the spectacle of the thing.
- M: In the early days, about how long would it take the parade to pass any given point on the parade route, and how long does it take now?

- B: In the early years that I was working on it, it would take somewhere in the neighborhood of an hour and a half to two hours for the parade to pass any given point. That's pretty much what we try to hold to now. But in those days we had automobiles that were under the floats that they just cut the bodies off of. We had clutch problems, heating problems on the engine; mechanical problems were with us every year. We had gotten down to the point where we would put in certain rules and regulations about what could be in the parade. Equipment-wise, we check it better than we did in those days. This last New Year's parade went by in about an hour and 45 minutes. It had 117 units in it and we didn't have one break down; we didn't put a wrecker on one float this year, in spite of the weather and everything else. I can remember back in the "good old days" when sometimes we had eight or ten floats on wreckers. This would always slow up the parade, but people don't seem to leave; people like parades.
- M: Two years ago (New Year's '74) there was a serious accident on the parade route. A motorcycle team from Juárez was involved in this and a child was killed. I remember reading about the threat of a suit. I left town and I never knew what happened.
- B: We've had law suits, and to my knowledge none of them have been settled. What the outcome of it will be, we will have to wait to see. At this point the verdict is not in. It was a serious accident. We'd just as soon go back and re-do that one, but unfortunately we can't.
- M: Was there any change in policy regarding motorcycles in the parade or tricks of that sort?

- B: There was no change in policy because the policy that we had was good; but somewhere there was a slip up. But we did not change our safety regulations any at all, because they were good for 35 years and we had not had any serious accidents.
- Y: Let me interrupt you. I was up in St. Louis, Missouri, two weeks ago for the annual meeting of all the festivals and bowls, during which time the discussion about parades and their safety came up. I was quizzed very heavily by other festival parades, even the Rose Parade; and that gave me a lot of satisfaction, to be able to supply some answers. Of course I wasn't here two years ago, but I was informed on it. I realized that all parades have the same problems and you do the best you can. As they said, we had been through an experience that most of them had not; but yet they could not do anything more than they are already doing to prevent it.
- B: Everything that goes into the parade are volunteers. It's like Sonny says, at this point there is Sonny and three girls; and they are the only paid people in this whole organization, of some 900 to a thousand people.
- M: Who finances the operation of this office?
- Y: It's through its events, plus a membership in the Sons of the Sun, which you might have heard about. It's a non-profit organization and its annual report is open to the public. We're just coming up on the annual report for this past year. The financing comes from the events from the Sons of the Sun membership. It's really not a donation like the Heart Fund or whatever, but it keeps the Sun Carnival on a certain level. They do get benefits from becoming members of Sons of the Sun;

it's not like a direct donation. So, through its events, through interest and bank payments, investments, that is how the Sun Carnival is financed. (For example), the Sun Bowl football game, the basketball tournament, the coronation and to a degree a golf tournament, together with the Sons of the Sun, are the main financial parts of the association. In the football game, this year we made the highest gross receipts ever in history of the Sun Bowl in 41 years; around \$370,000. But about \$341,000 of that went to direct expense for the game itself: the payment of the teams, the officials, the half time, and so forth. That's the way it should be. If there is any left over, then it's to make the event bigger and better for the city, because that's where we get our recognition from.

B: The sale of programs, advertising in programs, that all brings in money.

M: Looking at it historically, has the Sun Carnival been an operation that comes out usually in the black?

B: We are in the black now, but over the years it's give-and-take. Some years you lose some, next year you make a little bit. Overall, we've made some. That has been put back into a fund to underwrite any of the events that are completely wiped out.

Y: For example, if a football team's airplane crashed (heaven forbid) en route to the Sun Bowl and you couldn't have the game, you'd still have to meet your guarantee payments to those universities, even though you didn't have a bowl game.

B: You might not sell any tickets. Let's say that it snowed for ten

straight days and the teams come in here and nobody goes out to the game; we'd lose \$40,000, \$50,000. So we have a fund that would cover that. Basically, what every President tries to do is to break even; that's his goal: not to make anything and not to go in the hole. It looks like last year they lost \$850.

Y: We have a new report. We've got some interest on some bank notes, and it looks like it might make up about \$600.

B: We consider that a success, a tremendous success.

M: I wonder if you can give me an estimate of how many people have watched the parade over the years, and how has it changed going back to the beginnings ?

B: It's pretty hard to say. Let's take an average year when the weather is good and it's on the right day. We've probably run from a low in the last eight or nine years of say 50,000 people up to almost 200,000 people on the parade route. Now, I would say that we probably now are averaging somewhere in the neighborhood of 140,000 people. How we arrive at that is that last New Year's Day we drove down that parade route and we took a representative block. We count the people deep; we total up the number of people in the line and we multiply by six or ten (according to the number of people deep). Then we know how many parade blocks there are in the parade, and we multiply that; and we come up with an estimate. It's real hard to come up with an accurate one because there are so many houses on Montana Street. If you really stop and get out and look, you see nothing but faces in the windows when it's cold. Last year we said there were 100,000 people; some of the newspapers said 80,000. These people have made this a ritual. They open up their houses for New Year's parties and

just have people come in, and they have coffee and maybe cocktails, and they view the parade from the front porch or even from their windows; maybe from up on the balconies.

- Y: So one time a year the property along Montana Street becomes valuable.
- M: Could you tell us what the difference is between the Executive Committee of the Sun Carnival Association and the Directors?
- B: Under the old system, the Executive Committee was a President, Executive Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, and the Director. That was the inner circle. Under that we had various numbers (as high as 18) of Vice-Presidents, and each Vice-President had one of the Sun Carnival events under him. Then under that we had the Directors. Each service club was allowed I believe a Vice-President and four Directors. But that has been changed, and now we are under a new system.
- M: How long was that system in operation?
- B: 37 years.
- M: When was it changed?
- B: Just this past October.
- H: According to the programs where they have pictures and the Executive Committee is listed, before 1970 there were about 17 on the Committee every year, and then there were less after 1970.
- B: It was probably just a failure to list them. There were 17 last year. You see, you have the Vice-Presidents and they were not really on the Executive Committee. The final decisions were made by these five people. They ruled on what those Vice-Presidents were doing. The whole board didn't vote on everything; they could never have gotten them together for a vote. So they had the Executive Committee.

- Y: You mean there was just a total absence from 1969 to 1970? Somebody wasn't doing their program right.
- H: Since 1970 there have only been three or four pictures.
- B: Well, the pictures appear wherever the event is listed. They're not pictured on the same page, but they are listed. It has always been the same up until this year.
- Y: Let me give you a little background on the Sun Carnival. We can only go back to '61-'62 with this which is 16 years. We lost \$8,185 in '61-'62, which means December of '61. We profitted \$1,376 in '62-'63. We lost \$23,589 in '63-'64. In '65-'66 we profitted \$19,479; in '66-'67 a profit of \$8,425; in '67-'68 a profit of \$12,184. In '68-'69 we lost \$122. In '69-'70 a loss of \$7,778; in '70-'71 a profit of \$33,328; in '71-'72 a profit of \$14, 603; in '72-'73 a profit of \$30,702; in '73-'74 a profit of \$6,293; in '74-'75 a loss of \$6,357. But what is not reflected in this is that in the last two years we have gone up in guarantee payments to the football teams a total of \$100,000. We have to do that to be in competition with other bowl games.
- M: What is the impact of the Sun Carnival activities and the Sun Bowl on El Paso economically?
- B: We like to talk about that. We really have three reasons for being here. One is for the enjoyment of the people of El Paso. Number two is the impact that we make on the economy of El Paso and the nationwide publicity that we get from it. The image that we project to people across the country is the third. Now, let's take this year, for instance. From Kansas and Pittsburgh, we had roughly 5,000 people that came down here and stayed anywhere from one to five days. The football teams came in on Saturday and left on the following Sunday,

so they were here eight or nine days. The television audience was probably 30 to 35 million people across the United States. We got a real good plug from the TV announcers on this.

Y: If the Tourism Convention Center had bought that tourism spot at the beginning (of the Sun Bowl game) about the County of El Paso, it would have cost close to \$275,000 for that 70-second spot.

M: What was the spot about?

Y: It was about the attractions. It showed, of course, San Elizario. Last year it showed Old Mesilla, which is actually in New Mexico, and that made some of the El Paso people a little upset. But nonetheless it showed a little of Fort Bliss, it showed an aerial shot of the city and Juárez, the border; it showed the Rio Grande. If they had bought this, they would have been out a lot of money; but yet because we had a Sun Bowl game here, El Paso got a national tourism spot that went out to 287 television stations.

B: Another thing is that the parade is not a total loss, either. It's the only really major function in the Sun Carnival that is free.

Y: That's right.

B: It's free to everybody. This year we brought in about 1,450 band members, and they stayed anywhere from one to three days. We've calculated that they spent somewhere in the neighborhood of about \$100,000 here. If you take this and turn it eight times, it generated some \$800,000 worth of business in El Paso and Juárez. It's normally a dead time; between Christmas and New Year's, the economy (the tourist business) is nil. Our restaurants are slow, our motels and hotels are slow, the tourist business into Juárez is slow. We pick it back up with the people in here, so this is the real plus asset of the Sun Carnival.

- M: Juárez benefits a great deal from this, too. All the tourists wind up over there. That's one of the big attractions for people from out of town. What do they put into the Sun Carnival to help out?
- B: If I can, let me go back a little bit to what I remember of the Sun Parade. For instance, years ago this started out as a civic venture. They went to civic clubs (for help), and it's still that way today. If it wasn't for civic clubs, we wouldn't be able to put on the Sun Carnival, because basically they supply manpower. When you're an all-volunteer organization, you've got to get the manpower from someplace, and it comes from these civic clubs. In the old days, the Chinese community here in El Paso, for instance, would have a big float. The Japanese community had a big float; the Lions Clubs, the Rotary Clubs, the Kiwanis Clubs had floats. Juárez had a float in those days. The Mexican or Spanish community had a float. Some of them were commercially built, some of them were built by themselves or through their own organization. During the world war, the Chinese and the Japanese fell by the way side. In the old days, the Hilton Hotel, the Cortez Hotel, The White House, The Popular, people like that had floats; they were small but they were well done. Juárez had a float until about 1955, and then it dropped by the way side. I've spent about five years in Juárez trying to get them to come back and put another float in the parade, but I've not been successful. I have had access to the Mayor in Juárez and I couldn't have been treated better. He's even appointed people and we've met with those people and we say: "This guy is going to get it done." But it has just never come through. I don't know why; I can't answer why they don't.

- M: Do you have any impression of what the problem is?
- B: No, I don't. I really don't. As I said, I've been over there and couldn't have been treated nicer. I've been in the Mayor's office and talked to the Mayor; we have gone out to dinner in the evening and I have been promised that we are going to get it done. One year he appointed a lawyer over there and said, "This guy is a real go-getter, and he'll get the job done. All I've got to do is tell him to do it. He'll go to the right people. The money will be forthcoming. You're going to get a float." We haven't seen it yet.
- M: I'm puzzled why they couldn't come through with one float.
- Y: I know. I'm going to make an attempt this year through State National Bank to go over there and have a series of meetings and see what we can do; not only for that. Last year, one thing surfaced outside of the parade area. Concerning our Golf Tournament, there has been an overture made that they'd like to get the College All-Stars that we bring in from all over the nation and take them over to Juárez for a one-day exhibition at the Juárez Country Club. We made the arrangements through Mr. Jordan at the State National Bank. Well, then we came up on a rule by the NCAA the National Collegiate Athletic Association in Kansas City, which, by the way, governs all the sports activities in the Sun Carnival. (They said that) we couldn't take the All-Stars outside the country, even though El Paso and Juárez are very close. They couldn't play an official, sanctioned event outside of the country. However, in December it was changed. They voted and they allowed a delegation of eight players and two coaches to go to Japan for the first time ever in international competition among golfers.

There have been baseball and football exhibition games played in Japan, China, and so forth; but those have been under sponsorships in the off-season; no regular scheduled events. Now that they have made that breakthrough, we are going back to go over it again. If they would like, we are going to try to hold a one-day 18-hole exhibition over there, now that our problems have been solved by the national organization.

- B: For years and years we've always tried (and I think we've been successful in most instances) to have a marching unit or a band from México, because of our relationship with México. They're a crowd pleaser. The people really like them. They get a good hand; they are well received. We never had trouble on that issue. This year we had the band from the Tecnológica in Juárez. We've had them from Chihuahua. We had a visiting queen this year from Parral; she was here for the coronation and the parade. The two cities are closely tied together, and in my opinion it's a shame that we don't get more from Juárez; but I sure don't know how to do it.
- M: Is it a problem of lack of coordination of the government and private business down there? It doesn't seem that big of a deal to put a float together.
- B: I don't know. It's unbelievable what has happened.
- M: I'd like to get into the area of Rhonda's research now. She emphasized Mexican American participation in the Sun Carnival, and she came up with various tables. For example, during the 35 years before the change of procedure in selecting the Sun Queen in 1970, no Mexican Americans were chosen as Sun Queen; but in the last six years since the change, there have been two. What was the reason for the absence

of Mexican American queens before 1970?

B: Basically, I think it was money. Prior to the change, the Sun Queens' parents had to finance everything. It would cost them (and I only get this from hearsay) somewhere in the neighborhood of \$15,000 for their daughter to be queen. I'm not referring to any one of the queens because I'd be stepping on somebodys' toes, but we didn't always have a representative person. But it was money. It was a case of where the Directors would take names, and they would talk to the people and frankly say, "Do you have the money if your daughter is chosen?" And if they said, "No, we can't afford it," or "We are not going to put up \$15,000," then her name was dropped.

Y: It's hard for me to believe, but he's right. I've done some investigating in that area and he's right.

M: Would these people write out a check for \$15,000, or would they pay in other forms?

Y: They didn't make the money out to the Sun Carnival, but they had to host a ball at the Country Club, and they paid for it. They paid for all of her gowns, all of her pictures, all of her transportation, representing the city; everything.

Y: We pay for all the queen's trips and so forth out of our account now.

M: Since 1970?

B: Yes. At that time it was changed, and each women's organization sponsors one girl. That costs them \$325. Then that money is taken from 18 girls, and that's what puts on these things. So, now anybody could (be nominated).

M: Did the Sun Carnival Association receive criticism for the absence of

Mexican American queens during all those years, that you can recall?

B: If they did, I was not aware of it. I've been around it for a long time. I'm sure that there probably was some.

M: In talking to members of LULAC (and I am not a member of any organization in town, but I have met some), I noticed that feelings run deep about this issue when they think back on what they interpret to be exclusion of Mexican Americans in the participation of this event. I wonder if these feelings have been kept among themselves, or if they have been aired to the organization in the past?

Y: I've been here not even two years, and I haven't received any. Of course, Debbie Finger was queen the year I came in, and then came Marta Salas-Porras; so I haven't heard any at all. The LULACs, the women's committee, is one of the sponsoring groups of the princesses.

B: You have to keep in mind one thing: this is a volunteer organization. In my 27 years (with the Sun Carnival Association), I do not know of anybody that has been excluded that wanted to work. If a person came up and said he wanted to work, he was given a job someplace. Now, I think I can talk a little bit about the LULACs. I've been down that road, and they've had their problems just like everybody else has. I've been in many meetings with Mrs. Acosta, in a committee that wanted to do things. You can go talk to Mrs. Acosta, and again when it came down to them doing their end of it, nothing was forthcoming. Now, we didn't exclude them because they didn't; they had problems. This organization can't afford to exclude anybody. We take it with a grain of salt and go on to the next year and try again. I'll tell you a story about the LULACs and the Charro organizations, talking

about cooperation from government agencies, for instance. Mrs. Acosta was connected with one of the Charro organizations, and their horses were in Juárez. There is a quarantine on livestock coming into the United States; that's a federal law. They have to be put into quarantine for three days. I personally made the call to a doctor friend of mine from the Department of Agriculture who was at Presidio and said, "Look, they can't have their horses in quarantine for three days. What can we do?" He said, "Well, not much. That's a time of the year when it costs us overtime." I said, "We've got a parade to put on, and it's going to be exciting because of the men and women and the costumes and the horses. We really need them." He said, "I'll tell you what. I'll talk to some of the people and I'll call you back." He called back and said, "They won't have to put them in quarantine. We'll come to El Paso and we'll check the horses, watch them, and then they can cross the border that morning." That morning, the horses weren't there. The man came from Presidio, had his health inspectors here; they were ready to look at them. They were in the program, but they weren't in the parade. I still have no hard feelings. Maybe they had some problems that I don't know about. When these things start cropping up, there are lots of things that have not been told on both sides of the fence. Maybe we are at fault for not going and asking them, but I am a volunteer. I've got all I can do to make a living and come here and spend some time, so I can't go and ask for this and then drive them. For instance, when I was parade coordinator I guess I had 60 or 70 leaders under me that did something in the parade, who were actually responsible, and they had people under them.

This thing worked down to where we had about 400 people working on the parade, in one of the parades, and some 4000 people out there. These people volunteered year after year, and they searched me out, I don't go look for them. I've gone to service clubs, I have gone to Lions' clubs that are predominantly Mexican American and said, "If you want to work, come see us. We'll take you. There's lots of jobs open; you can do anything." I don't know where the fault is.

M: Some people have the feeling that the method of queen selection before 1970 was a conscious or unconscious attempt to a significant degree on the part of someone to eliminate participation of Mexican American girls. Some people do have that feeling. Do you have any comments about that?

Y: Well, we were talking about the cost involved.

M: Yes. Charging money, knowing that there is very little money in the Mexican American community.

Y: But see, at that time the Sun Carnival was not in a financial position to have taken over a coronation as we do today. Even though we still charge the women's organizations for their participation in sending a girl, there was no involvement with the Sun Carnival picking up the tab, so to speak; for taking the burden. It had to come from the individual. Now I've only been here two years but that's the course of history that has happened up till now. It's just the fact that before you run you have to crawl a little bit. I think that's what the coronation had to do; and because of that fact, that was where the exclusion took place. I'm in a position probably better than anybody else, ten years from now, to judge what's happened while I'm

here. I've only been here twenty months or so now, but I can say without any reservation that if there is going to be a better queen per se, or representative for the city of El Paso and the Southwest than Marta Salas-Porras was last year, I don't know when we'll have one. She was fantastic in every category that we could possibly measure from. You'll get that comment from anybody you talk to who has been around the activities. She chose to remain in the city, to be available to us at any time. I'm going to fight for this until I die. We're going to get it changed to where the queen, if she is chosen, cannot attend another college the year she is queen; she has to remain in El Paso, either attend UTEP or drop out of school. It's not fair to her, she doesn't get anything out of it; and it's not fair to the city to have a queen that's not available. Marta was here all the time. She knows more about what happened; we've benefited greatly from having her. I know I'm in for a fight there, but that's too important not to have that happen.

- B: Let me go back and talk on the first one. When we made this change, Dolores Pellicano was the queen. Dolores Pellicano was not chosen queen because she was a Mexican American. She was one of the most gracious persons for her age that I've ever met. In my opinion, of all of them that were there she was the logical choice to be queen. If it had been under the old system, she would have not been queen because of money; not because she was Mexican American. Her family did not have the money. Now this girl went out into the community. I took her around and we made speeches before many service clubs and civic clubs in this community. She was an excellent representative.

The Sun Carnival could not have asked for anybody better.

Y: You're going to take Dolores and I'll take Marta. (Chuckle)

B: I know Dolores. I called her many times at 6:00 o'clock at night and said, "There's a meeting at 7:30 and the program has fallen through. The Sun Carnival office wants to know if you'll go." She said, "Yes, sir, I will." But she was not chosen because she was a Mexican American. But she would not have been queen under the old system because her folks didn't have \$15,000. The reason I know that is because they live within a block from me.

Y: I know who you can get some comments from--the one man that was responsible for changing the method of selecting the queen. It was Jimmy Rogers, Jr. You can find him at Rogers and Belding. I've heard him say bits and pieces about it. He's known in the community. He was the President the year of the big change. It might be worth your time to see if you can catch him in between real estate calls, because he has some good information.

B: If you really want to answer this question, one of the things that you would have to pursue is that the queen selection under the old system was a very hush-hush thing. In other words, they didn't want to embarrass anybody. They made sure that the ducks were all in order before a name was put into the hat, and that one of the Directors chose that name. Nobody knew who had the name, and he had to go talk to her. You can understand that, because if they had 14 names in the hat and 13 said that they couldn't do it because they were poor, that would have been pretty bad, wouldn't it? So you had to pretty well know that the folks had the means to do this. How are you going to

dig out how many Mexican Americans were on the list and how many were excluded because of the money aspect, not because they were Mexican American?

Y: I think that would be very hard to do, because this organization has very few records, because people don't have time to put it down in writing. I don't have time to put down in writing what I did or didn't do last year. It's just a continuing thing and I try to rectify things as I go along. There is no written word, there is no written record of this. I am sure that there would be no record of who was on the "look list" first.

M: You understand that we don't come here as critics of anything.

Y: You can get good answers from Paul. I didn't realize one thing about the money aspect. Everybody tries to put it on a basis that she wasn't picked because of her family. Well, really what he is saying is true; she wasn't picked because of her family's finances.

B: And that's the reason it was changed.

M: We bring up these significant questions because they are in the minds of people who are interested in historical aspects of this activity. Personally, I don't take any position. I just ask the questions.

B: It's that way with me. I just tell you the way I see it.

M: Again in the statistics that were compiled by Rhonda, from 1934 through 1974 there were only two Mexican American members of the Executive Committee out of 247. That is, there were two Spanish surnames, and whether they were Mexican American or not we don't know. Also, there were 29 Mexican American Directors out of 1,359. Do you have any ideas as to why there has been such a small percentage of

Mexican American leaders?

- B: Let's go back again into my recollection of the city of El Paso for the last 40 years. The Southwestern Sun Carnival is run by service and civic clubs. Let's take the service clubs that comprise the Southwestern Sun Carnival Association: the Lions Club, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc. There were very few Mexican Americans in those organizations, and this is where the manpower comes from. Now, let's talk about my Lions Club. We have 178 members in that Lions Club. It's predominately Anglo; but of the Mexican Americans that are in there, there probably is only one that wants to work on the Sun Carnival Committee. They have other interests. We have many committees in the Lions Club, and their interests are in some other areas. One of the greatest Mexican Americans in El Paso, in my opinion, is Modesto Gomez. He's been in our club for 35 years. He's a pillar of our club. But his interests are not in the Sun Carnival. They were in the canned goods party that the Lions Club sponsored, and he was big in this--putting on the show at the Plaza Theatre before Christmas, collecting thousands of cans of food and distributing them amongst the poor. I think the problem has been that there have not been as many Mexican Americans involved in service and civic clubs up until this time, and that's where our manpower comes from.
- Y: The service clubs are still the foundation of the Sun Carnival, but it isn't as constricted, service club-wise, as they used to be. With the new by-laws, anyone can participate now. You couldn't get into one of those directors' slots unless you were a member of service club before this year. I'll give you a copy of the old and new by-

laws; that would be good to put in with this interview.

M: Yes, it would be.

B: Then you could see where the people who comprise the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors all came from. It was the civic clubs, and there should be a list of civic clubs there.

M: Do you have any idea, Mr. Berry, why there have been so few Mexican American members of those civic clubs, historically?

B: I have no facts or figures to back it up, but I'll give you my opinion. I don't believe that the Mexican American community emerged in El Paso until after the war. They are now coming into their own. Let's go back and look at business. Prior to 1960, you saw very few Mexican Americans in responsible positions, in my opinion. I think the war changed that. I think the fellows went off to the service and they came back, and under the GI Bill of Rights went back to school. They became doctors, lawyers, dentists, doctors of history, business managers. They've gone back into our business community here and they had to overcome a lot of prejudices that had been prior to the war. They've overcome them and now they are coming into their own and are being well accepted. Prior to that they weren't.

M: What do you mean by prejudices? What kinds of prejudices?

B: I think that maybe they were thought of as laboring people. I don't think there's anything wrong with laboring people, because I work with my hands. Thirty years ago I went to South El Paso to work. Everybody wore black shawls, black stockings, and black clothes. Now look at the youth. They've taken the black off. They've come out with the colors, and they've got the fancy hair do's. It's a

completely different community than what I knew 30 years ago. Back in the old days, they pretty much lived in this section of town, and now they're everywhere. That was not true in my youth. I hate to say that; but I can't go back and change it.

- Y: It's embarrassing to look into the past of anything and see some very glaring weaknesses in certain areas, such as the lack of participation of certain groups. It's embarrassing for me. However, I feel that since I have been here, I know that I have made the effort. When you come into a new community, you make your friends and your acquaintances and your contacts not from past experience or history; you make it from what you see is best. I have no way of knowing if there was what you call prejudice, because I only live "right now," and of course I have none. There are people that we are now trying to involve in certain chairman roles under the new by-laws in the Sun Carnival, so I can't really say that it's a drawback and a lack of anything other than it just hasn't happened while I've been here. There again I speak from different viewpoint than Paul or any of the other past people in the Sun Carnival speak from, because I do not have the personal background to offer. I insure each event and its success. I'm going to get the very best person I can, recruit him and encourage him, give him the confidence and make certain he gets in there; then once he gets there, to do the job. It's embarrassing to talk of this, because this report does point it out.
- B: Let me go back and review. We are talking about the service/civic clubs, the backbone of the Southwestern Sun Carnival. Let's go back 20 years. Twenty years ago, I think there was one Lions Club; there

was one Rotary Club; there was one Kiwanis Club. They all met downtown and they were all businessmen. The average working man could not take off from work to go downtown and take an hour and a half lunch; he was working with his hands and he could not go down Friday afternoon because he was working and his boss wasn't going to let him off. Well, that was a roadblock to many Mexican Americans because they worked in the area where they could not get off. Maybe they were a minority as far as owners of businesses were concerned. As I said, Modesto Gomez is a good example in our Lions Club. He owned a wholesale grocery outfit and he could take time off and he could come down and participate; he could take an hour and a half for lunch on Friday afternoon. He was a very active man. Since that time, this has changed. There are now 16 Lions Clubs within the County of El Paso. They meet Monday nights, Wednesday nights, Saturday mornings. This has been changed to take in what I'll call the "laboring community," and I don't mean that as a menial sort of thing. It gives people an opportunity, a time, to devote to civic endeavors, if they want to. Rotary has done the same. They are not separated clubs, they are satellites off of the main one. We used to think we had to have 150 members in a club, but some clubs are functioning very well with 20 or 25 people. But they are dedicated and hard-working people. So now you can get people into these clubs that have jobs from 8 to 5, who have to punch a time card. Now he can get into them at, say, 7:30 at night; or if that doesn't work, he can get in one of the early morning programs. Our black community was pretty much the same way. We now have two Lions Clubs that are predominantly black. One meets at

night at the Rodeway, called the Sun City Lions, and there is the Mountain Lions Club that meets in Northeast. They have a Saturday morning breakfast. So this allows them to come in. But prior to 20 years ago, they could not get off.

M: Regarding the percentage of Mexican Americans in the Sons of the Sun Booster Club, Rhonda came up with a percentage of 3.2 of the total membership. Do you think that's a product of lack of interest in that organization, or lack of finances to get those \$10.00 required to join?

B: I think if we had the answer to that question, we could do a better job as far as the Sun Carnival is concerned. I think I can speak on the subject because over the last five years I've made lots of talks before civic and service clubs. One of the things we stress to them is that for \$10.00 you can be part of this organization. Joe Sitters and I went to one of the service clubs, which is predominantly Mexican American, and we said, "Put your 10 bucks out. Become part of the organization. Under the new by-laws, any person in El Paso who puts up \$10.00 can become President of the Southwestern Sun Carnival. So all you have to do is have a Sons of the Sun membership and an interest to work in the Sun Carnival, and you can be president." I've gone to Las Cruces to the Lions Club and the Rotary Clubs and said the same thing. We are not limited to El Paso any more. Somebody in Alamogordo or Van Horn can be President.

M: Is the president elected by the Sons of the Sun membership?

B: No, but that is the prerequisite to become the President. He's got to have faith in the organization to put up \$10.00 bucks, minimum.

The other thing, under the new by-laws, is that he's got to serve as one of the Vice Presidents for at least two years and he's got to be Executive Vice President for one year. This gives him an insight into the workings of the organization, and now he can become President. If he gets in to this thing and says, "That's where I want to work," he can work up; and I've never seen anybody that wanted to work that was held down in this thing. I asked this one particular club to become a 100% club, to get all of their club members in. At that time, if you were, then you moved up a notch in the organization. Well, I got my ears burned. "We are not going to be a 100% club." One guy says, "I'm not going to put up \$10.00. I don't think the organization is worth it." Well, I might not like it, but in the Lions Club they took a vote and the majority said, "We're going to be assessed." I get assessed \$1.00 a month for 10 months, and we're a 100% club. If you read the by-laws, we are one of the favored few in the organization.

M: Why didn't that club respond?

B: A lot of misinformation. Just like what you are seeing is not what you've been told; like, "Mexican Americans have been kept from becoming queen." That's not really true. There may be some people talking about it, but in actual fact it's not true.

M: Well, given all these things, the developments in the last five years with the change of by-laws and so forth, what do you see as a future role of Mexican Americans in the Sun Carnival?

B: I don't mean to be facetious, but I think the role is anything they want (it to be), anything they care for it to be. It's not an easy

road, and I think you'll understand that anybody coming into this organization is not going to be made President, I don't care who he is, unless the guy or lady.... Now we can have ladies as President.

M: Before you couldn't have a lady President?

B: No.

M: Was that in the by-laws?

B: No, it didn't say that you couldn't, but they were just not in organizations that had ladies in them, so they could not come up. We had nothing against ladies. Now for the first time we've got two of them, Jane Thornton and Susan Mayfield.

M: How was the President chosen, before the new by-laws?

B: He had to be a member of one of the service clubs. The nominating committee, which was comprised of the past presidents, would look around the community and say, "Here's a pretty nice guy. He's the head of a business and can afford to take a year off and devote it at no pay to the Southwestern Sun Carnival." It became, again, finances. Was the man capable of taking a year's leave of absence from his business? That's how it worked. The nominating committee would put up the names and then they would go through the normal procedure of accepting nominations from the floor.

M: This was in the Board of Directors?

B: Yes; and then the Board of Directors would vote on it. The members of the service clubs were voted on. In my years down here, I don't believe anybody was ever recommended from the floor, because there again you had to research him. Here again it's my opinion that in the last 27 years it was a bad policy because we got some duds. He

didn't spend the required time here and really he didn't know what the Sun Carnival was about. We got in trouble, because he didn't understand all the workings of this organization. I don't know if anybody does.

Y: It's absolutely disorganized.

B: If you come down here and look at it, it's disorganized, but in an organized sort of way.

M: It works. If anybody knows about these things, it's you.

B: I think that this organization is no different than a business. You asked what the role of the Mexican American in the Sun Carnival is, and I gave you a kind of short answer. I've lived in El Paso 52 years, and I've seen a marked change in El Paso. In my opinion, it's a good change; I think that we're a better community for it. One of the greatest things that happened to El Paso was the clothing industry, and I see Mexican Americans in all levels of clothing industry that you wouldn't have seen 30 years ago. (The same in) any business. I think they are still getting to where they're at because of ability; not because of who they are, but because of their ability. I think it's pretty much the same way in the Southwestern Sun Carnival. If a person would come down and volunteer and throw his ability into this thing.... You get your feelings hurt once in a while, but you've got to come on back and get over. If they'll just get into it and understand its workings, there's no limit to what they can do. As far as anybody in this organization seeing that they are kept out or specifically picking one and making him President, I don't think it'll ever happen. (If they have the) ability and the desire to work in the community, then there is no limit to what they can do. If I thought

that there was some reason that somebody that has the ability and had a Mexican surname was not allowed to be President, I'd get out. I think that I probably speak for at least 99 out of every 100 that's involved in the Sun Carnival, because I have them on the Parade Committee. I have the Sun City Lions Club, which is black, doing a tremendous job; but they came and asked for a job. Every year they get more heaped onto them. In some areas, they can be very helpful. Did you ever stop and think that you bring in 200 football players and maybe 90 of them are black? Where do they get a date in El Paso? What do you do with them for nine days? The Sun City Lions Club came forward this year through Joe Sitters and the black girl who works for him. I was working from the Lions Club angle and we both came together at the same time and said, "Hey let's go to the Sun City Lions Club and see if they want to take on this project." It's a supervised thing; we aren't hustling (I don't mean to be crude); that's not our role down here. But we have our supervised dances. We want people to have a choice. I don't care what the choice is. It can be black to black or white to black, I don't care; but they ought to have that choice. You see, we didn't think of this 28 years ago, mainly because we didn't have a Sun City Lions Club. We didn't have anybody that would take that project on. I say the same thing to the LULACs or any other organization. I think they can do anything they want.

M: Mr. Berry, I want to thank you very much for your time. We certainly have enjoyed talking with you and Mr. Yates. It's been very stimulating and we've learned a lot. Thanks again.

B: Well, thank you for asking us. If there is anything that comes up in

the future that you want to clarify, we'll be glad to try. Being in the position that you are, from time to time you might run across people that have a desire to work in the Sun Carnival. All you have to do is tell them to come down here and offer their services.

M: I'll send them over to you.

B: We'll be looking for them.

M: Thank you.