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Interview no. 311

Arturo O. Pena

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Arturo O. Peña (1926-)
INTERVIEWER: José A. Peña
PROJECT: Class project--Chicano History
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 30, 1977
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TRANSCRIBER: José Pena
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

(Civil Service employee at White Sands Missile Range) Born in Las Cruces, New Mexico; prominent leader in his community; member of LULAC and has held every position in the organization.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biography; school experiences; dating patterns among peers; employment experiences; the Depression; involvement in LULAC; the word "Chicano"; illegal aliens.

45 minutes; 20 pages

I am about to interview Mr. Arturo Ontiveros Peña in his office at White Sands Missile Range. My name is José Arturo Peña, Jr.

JP: Mr. Peña, can you tell me your date and place of birth?

AP: I was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico on February 19, 1926.

JP: Mr. Peña, can you tell me any interesting facts about your parents' background?

AP: My father was born in Las Cruces in 1903. My mother was born in Guadalupe Victoria, Municipio de Mioqui, Chihuahua, México in 1904. She immigrated into the United States in 1909. My grandfather, Manuel Ontiveros, brought them over. At that time all they had to do was write their names in a book when they came across--that they were going to stay in the United States. They settled in Mesilla at the Ohara Farms which is outside of Las Cruces. My grandfather and grandmother worked there until they died. In fact, it wasn't until after they were dead that their children left them--when they were grown, about 30. On my father's side, his father came over in the late 1880's. He was the man who brought all the goats to Las Cruces. He had a big goat farm there where it's practically downtown Las Cruces now. It was called "Chiva Town." Now that the town is grown so much, it is not there any more. They've built houses. I can remember going to milk the goats from my house when I was about 12. My grandfather wasn't alive anymore; he died in 1929 when I was only 3 years old, but my step-grandmother kept the goats for many years after that.

JP: Have you spent all your life in Las Cruces?

AP: I've only been out of Las Cruces for a year and a half. When I graduated from high school in May 1944 I left Las Cruces. I went to California and worked at a Navy Base there for _____ Engineers. Then in December of 1945, I came back to Las Cruces and stayed there.

I went to elementary school at Grandview, which is now Bradley School. Then I attended the fifth and sixth grade at what is now the administrative

offices for the Las Cruces schools on the corner of Amador and Edith. I attended the seventh and eighth at Central School. I finally went to high school at Alameda which is now Alameda Junior High School. I went there four years--my 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. I was in the last class that went four years to high school.

JP: Do you remember any significant or interesting events that happened to you throughout your school life? For example, how many Mexican American teachers did you have?

AP: All through school, I can only remember one--Josephine Lucero. She was in high school. She's the only one I can remember that was Mexican American. By name though--you couldn't tell it any other way. She was very light-complexioned and very upper class. You have to realize that she came from a very prominent family in Las Cruces--one brother was the sheriff in Doña Ana County for one term, then the next brother--they were the sheriff for about 20 years in Doña Ana County. They were pretty well off. I would imagine that's why Miss Lucero was teaching.

JP: Did you see any segregation in the schools at that time?

AP: Oh, yeah. When we went to grade school in 1932, all the Mexicans stayed on one side of the school and all the Anglos on the other side. We were separated. It was enforced to a certain degree. I think that we were just beginning to start. I think that we did it automatically, actually. Perhaps it wasn't forced on us. We were just told. Our generation was that type. Whatever the Anglo said, that was it. To me, we were obedient to teachers. We thought they were "it." The only way we were ever going to get ahead was to pay attention to them. If they said anything to do, the majority of us did it.

JP: Do you remember any other significant or interesting events that happened to you in school?

AP: Well, one thing that always has been with me is the time I went to high school and I wanted to take public speaking. I put in for it in my freshman year, but I didn't get it. I didn't say much. I thought I'd try to get it in my sophomore year. The teacher, Mrs. Sutteler, told me she couldn't take me because I just didn't have enough vocabulary to be in a public speaking class. I again let it go in my sophomore year. By the time I got to be a junior, I thought I knew what was going on, so I applied again in my junior year. This time I didn't take the teacher's word for it, so I went to the principal, Mr. Gill. He said the same thing--that I just did not have enough vocabulary. He said he would try to get me in next year. I remember telling him that if I didn't get it in my senior year, I wasn't going to get it, right? I did apply in my senior year and I was declined, so I went to him again and I told him that he had promised me more or less and that if he wasn't going to do it that I might go to the School Board or somebody because I didn't think he should have the final say-so on it, because I had been trying now for 3 years. I was going to go to the Superintendent of schools about it. He let it go a day and I told him to get me an appointment with the Superintendent, but somehow or the other I got into the class the next day. There were about 40 students in the class and I was the only Mexican American, I think. I came out pretty good--I came out about second or third out of 40. I thought I had the vocabulary. The teacher said she was surprised at me. That's about the only other thing that was real significant. Many, many things happened, even in playing football. I didn't get a letter until my senior year and I had played four years. Of course, the first year they didn't take me on trips, but the second year when I was a sophomore I'd go on trips. I'd go in sometime when a guy needed rest, but I didn't get a letter till my senior year. I just feel that I was maybe held back. Maybe I wasn't; I don't know. Maybe I really

wasn't as good as I thought I was--let's put it that way.

JP: Can you remember any specific dating patterns that your generation had back then? Was there a lot of Anglos dating Mexican Americans or vice versa, or anything like that?

AP: As far as dating, we stuck pretty much to ourselves. The Mexican American boys very rarely would date any Anglo girls. It was the other way around. The Anglo boys dated a lot of Spanish girls. There may have been one or two exceptions. The only one I can remember was Raymond Apodaca--he used to date an Anglo girl. So did his older brother; he used to date an Anglo girl. In fact, he married her, but they're divorced now. That was about the only one I can remember. Of course, he was light complected and could pass for an Anglo.

JP: Can you remember how you would spend a typical Saturday or Sunday afternoon?

AP: Normally, I was pretty much of a loner. I was the only child. I had no brothers or sisters. I did have lots of friends. My mother and father thought a lot of me. Even to this day, my mother doesn't speak a word of English. My father only went to the third grade, as far as I can tell. My Saturday would possibly involve going to an early movie, getting in early, and studying. Sundays I would go to church with my mother and probably chop wood Sunday afternoons, and study at night. I read and read and read the books because I was slightly at a disadvantage. I could not ask anybody at home for any educational help. There was no way they could help me so I had to read and read and read so that I could understand what was happening in school. It took me a long time to really realize what education was. Once in a while, I would go to a dance, and just stay there, loaf around. I was normally home before 12:00.

JP: The next area I would like to talk about is employment. You're a GS 12 here at White Sands Missile Range. You have several job titles and you're pretty well "up there." How did you get here, say from your first job to GS 12?

AP: Let's start from my first job. I was still in Central (7th and 8th grades there) and I had a paper route, and I do remember that I felt discrimination. All the good routes normally went to Anglo boys. We didn't get a chance at them. My route was Old Mesilla Park. I had to walk and I had a hell of a time collecting. It was a bad route. I never did get a chance to get a route in town at all. I stayed on a couple of years. Back then, the paper was called the Las Cruces Sun and not the Sun News. After that, during the summers when I was going to high school, I used to work at New Mexico State University at grounds keeping and maintenance--cutting grass. I was given just mediocre jobs. A lot of the professors' kids used to work there, helping the painters, the carpenters, something like that. Most of us kids were cutting grass or picking up garbage.]

All the time I went to high school, I used to play a lot of pool. I used to go to the pool hall every afternoon. I used to practice at least two hours a day. About a week after I got out of high school (May, 1944) I remember getting in a pool game with a guy and I won \$300.00. I used that money to go to California. I told my mom and dad I was going to California.

You might backtrack here. You are probably wondering why I didn't go to the war. Let me clarify that. I was 18 when I was in high school and a senior (February, 1944). They told us that before I could go to college, I had to pass a test. I passed the test as a senior. I was taken to Dallas to take a physical. I failed my physical--this was in the Air Force--I was going to be, hopefully, a Navigator on an airplane. But I failed my physical. When I got out of high school I had already been drafted, between February and May, so I went to Ft. Bliss for a physical to be drafted into the Army. I failed that also. The funny thing is I was never told why and I didn't have sense enough to find out why. I was happy I was going to go to college to be what I wanted to be. I didn't want to serve. It was my mother praying

too much so I didn't pass the physical. I got out of high school and got the \$300 I had won. My dad took me to El Paso and I took the train to San Diego. When I got to San Diego, I went to the employment office. They sent me to China Lake because they said that that was the place where they were hiring. In those days in California, they were hiring everybody and anybody. So I took the bus to China Lake. I had to join the teamsters union. I only had about \$30.00 left when I got there. Everything was pretty expensive. You know, I worked for the Navy here at White Sands. There they had a job and they hired me. First they tried me as a rigger, but I didn't make it. I was put in the motor pool as a checker. From there on I went into dispatcher, and I was made chief dispatcher. One thing that helped me get ahead was that the superintendent we had there, Patton Murray, never spent any time there, but we had to follow Navy regulations on the vehicle ordered. So I started reading the Navy book and I would fill out all the forms, so the contractor never had any trouble in getting his money.

When I came back to Las Cruces, I went to work at Hildebrand Lumber Company. I was in charge of the yard outside, sales. I used to work like hell there. I loaded cement and that sort of stuff. I was working there when I got married. The people at Hildebrand liked me because I used to sell about \$1,500.00 a day, and that was in 1946. They were building like mad in Las Cruces. A man there, Mr. Saunders, wanted to open another lumber yard in Canutillo and he wanted me to run it for him. But it never materialized.

In the meantime, I heard about a job as a dispatcher at White Sands. I had been a dispatcher in the Navy in California, so I came out and filled out a form. There was one opening in the Army and one in the Navy. Since I knew Navy forms, I told them that I wanted the Navy job. It was real easy to get into White Sands--of course, this was in 1948. All you had to do was

fill out a form. You didn't have to go and get Civil Service Status like you do now. Well, they were really hurting for people. I got interviewed by a fellow by the name of Connors. Let me tell you what he asked me in the interview. He asked me just one question. He said, "I see in your form that you've been a dispatcher and you know all about Navy instructions. I just have one question--What is your ambition if you get this job?" I answered, "I want your job before I leave here." He said, "You're hired." So he took me over to the dispatcher's office--he had a guy over there and he told him, "This guy knows all about it. He's going to run it." He didn't tell me what to do. He just left me there. I started again studying Navy manuals because this guy wasn't very bright. I'd try to tell him how to run the place and I helped him. He really realized I was really trying to help him. He would come over to the office at the motor pool and I would tell him that the book said this or that and how he should get new vehicles. He really liked me. He let me do a lot of his paper work. Then he got into a mess with some other people. He was a pusher, he was never a leader. They got rid of him and I got appointed to his job. About 13 months after I got appointed, I got his job. I remember the last day he was here, he said, "By golly, you did get my job, didn't you?" From there on, I just studied how you did every book that concerned transportation. I started teaching Traffic Safety because nobody else did. We did have a safety man but he didn't do anything. He always sat with his feet on his desk. So I started doing a lot of things; I started volunteering all the time. If the public works officer or anyone wanted anything, I volunteered. And I'm still volunteering till this day. Finally I got to be made a leader-man and quarterman. I went through a lot of steps--I got changed to a General Foreman. I've gotten seven outstanding performance ratings from seven different officers. I've worked for about 17 public works officers and now I'm working

for the Second Captain. I've been nominated for the outstanding civilian service award of the Navy. Of course, there are only ten people in the whole government who are selected. The first time I was nominated I was selected as one of two representatives of the Naval Sea Systems command which has about 1,100,000 employees. I was one of two that was selected to be nominated for the award by the Department of the Navy. Neither one of us got the award. The second time I was nominated, I was nominated as the sole representative of the Naval Sea Systems. I had a lot of this happen. You said, "How did you get up there?" For instance, let me tell you this. When we had a command inspection here, it was recommended that I be made a quarterman. There were three leadermen--two Anglos and myself. But they wouldn't make me a quarterman unless they made them quartermen. They couldn't have me be a quarterman without them being, so all three of us got to be quartermen. Naturally, this ethnic background, I feel that I have played it by sight. I knew that out of three quartermen (we had fifty per cent Mexican Americans on the work force) there had to be one Mexican American. So I never worried about getting it. I knew I would get it. To start with, I beat everybody on their test. I made a 97 while the closest score was a 79. I studied for it. I found out the Civil Service does have some books for the exam and the other guys didn't know it. They were studying just any old thing, but I was studying actual Civil Service tests. I was looking in books to see if I could get information. When the OSHA Act was passed in 1970, again we had a commanding inspection. By this time the safety officer (the civilian kind) had left in 1964, and I volunteered for the job. As long as I was doing better than half the work, I thought I might as well have the job. But I still didn't want to leave transportation. So I got the job. There were no assistants, no leaders. I'm not lying to you. We had a man in the machine shop and he

had less people than I had (he was a General Foreman and so was I.) He had three foremen under him and I didn't have a single one. But I knew I would get---just sit tight and not despair. And I did get it. I ended up with two foremen under me. Then it was easy. Then I could do the safety job. Then again we had another GAO audit that said we should consolidate more with the Army. So I was seeing the end of Transportation as we had it, and the shop. They also recommended that the General Foreman and the Safety Officer jobs be separated--be held by two men instead of one, instead of consolidated like I had it. So, again, I feel I used my ethnic background on this. There were about eleven of us that applied for this Safety Officer job. When I applied for it, I knew the Captain (this is a staff position) and the Captain didn't have any Mexican Americans on his staff. So I was sure I was going to be selected. In fact, I didn't even put everything down on my application. He had to have a Mexican American on his staff to make him look good and I was the only one applying for the job. I'm sure he wouldn't have selected me unless he knew I could do the job well, don't get me wrong. I could do the job, I was eligible, and I was Mexican American. And that's what happened and here I am. A year or two later, we wrote my job description. I knew it would be 12 because it was what we call "Journeyman level." So, I had no problem getting there. I had a little problem with the CPO saying if you get a promotion you have to advertise it, and he refused to have it advertised. I sent to the Captain and talked to him, and they wrote and they found out they didn't even need a waiver. I was already in the job--the job belonged to me, it couldn't be advertised for somebody else. But again the CPO was trying to advertise my job. It makes you feel funny--is it really discrimination or is he trying to do his job? I don't know. You can't pin it down. Discrimination is real...I think that a class action suit is the only way to pinpoint it.

I'm a Safety Officer, Fire Marshall, EEO Counselor, and I take care of all occupational hazard examinations, compensation suits or cases. I have more or less 19 different jobs.

JP: You said "EEO Officer." Could you tell me a little bit more about this particular job you have?

AP: I probably used the wrong word. I'm actually an EEO Counselor. Our work force is made up of forty per cent Mexican Americans. In this job, what I do is that if anybody has a complaint, they bring it to me and I try to find out what's going on. The major one that I was never able to stop from the informal states-- a man from the _____ applied for a job here and thought he was being discriminated against. I made a complete investigation--I looked to see who was on the Board, how they were ranked, to see if everything was properly documented. I did find out that in the particular case there was nothing documented. It didn't go too far because the man did get another job.

I know everybody, even the sailors. Everybody comes through my office. They check in and they check out. There isn't a single one I don't know. In the civilian sector I know everybody--whenever they have a problem they come to me and we talk. In other words, I handle most of it as an informal conflict. We go talk to the supervisor. I'll give you a good example. We have a supervisor here who called his Spanish speaking workers "Mexicans." "Come on, Mexican, do this or do that." I don't think he really meant it because he had one Polish guy that he called "Polack." Anyway, one guy didn't like that--that he called him Mexican, so he came to me. He said he didn't want to make a formal complaint or anything. In fact, he didn't want to be identified. He wanted to know if I would do something about it. So I went to talk with the Supervisor and told him that one guy didn't like it. I said, "If one guy doesn't like it, you can't do it to the rest of them." Of course, he wanted to know who the guy was but I wouldn't tell him--he wanted to remain anonymous. We had a good discussion. He

got a little mad. But he stopped it; he didn't call them Mexicans any more. He didn't call the Polish man "Polack" any more--he stopped the whole thing. He doesn't seem to be very happy since then. He still has a chip on his shoulder. He claims he doesn't mean it--he wasn't saying it as a derogatory statement or anything like that. But people don't like it; they won't stand for it. They complain to me. There are plenty of situations that you can actually call discrimination. But the way jobs are--people around here are not going to say anything; they're going to keep quiet unless it's some guy who has a lot of status--he's already got it made or he's going to retire. As a matter of fact, the man who told me about this Mexican thing was a man who was going to retire. This happened about three or four months ago. That's the only time they say anything; otherwise, they just take it. Why, I don't know because we have a very liberal minded Captain--Captain Peterson.

This is the first time we have ever put on a "Spanish Heritage Week" in the Navy itself--we always go along with the Army. But now we're putting it on our own. And we're looking forward to putting one on for black people, too. In fact, I'm going to try to get Mayor Johnson of Las Cruces to come and talk to us. By the way, do you know that out of all the Navy at White Sands we do not have one single black in the civilian force? We only have two sailors that are black out of all the whites. So it would be interesting for Mayor Johnson to get up and talk to an all white audience. Well, we'll see what happens.

JP: The next thing I want to talk to you about is the historical events in your life. Once you told me something about the Mexican Revolution. What was all that?

AP: Actually, how it affects me--I remember my mother talking about it, the fact that my grandfather had a farm there at Guadalupe Victoria. (It's right outside of Mioqui, Chihuahua.) The story goes, one day Villa's troops came by and took all their cattle and all their horses except two he had out plowing. This happened early in the morning at about eight or nine. After he saw this, he went to the

house, put the two horses on the wagon and picked up his family and left; he left Mexico. That's why I'm here; I guess you could say that.

But, you know, my grandfather was pretty smart. He had four of his kids and he also brought six of his nephews. When he crossed the bridge (because I've gone to the bridge and I've seen the book they have because my mother's name is in there) and he passed them all, wrote them all down there as being his sons. They were all Ontiveros like he was, and they're all in the States--their families and everybody is here legally. I thought that was pretty smart, to bring some other people with him. That's about all I can remember about that.

JP: Why did he come to the United States?

AP: My understanding is that it was pretty plush up here; you could get work. The Anglos were taking away the farms and they were hiring people right and left to get in the crops. So just to get a job, to make a living--not a real high living, but at least you could live. Down there he was busting his back and he could barely make it.

JP: Do you remember any other time or event in your life? Did the Depression ever have any effect on you or your family?

AP: We lived in a one room house. We didn't even have a ceiling. We had a dirt floor. I remember my father worked at _____. We did have meat once on Saturdays. We generally had hamburger patties. The rest of the week all we ate was beans and potatoes. I also remember that they used to give us food. I remember going to a place on North Mesquite Street. I used to take a gunny sack and they would give us a can of meat, something like corn beef, margarine. Once in a while we'd get Jello. We only had Jello during the winter. We made it and put it outside for it to gel. We never had gelatin in the summer because we didn't have a refrigerator. That's about all I can remember. I remember I used to come home and mother and father would both be picking cotton. I would chop wood and wait outside until they got home, probably after dark. We had

one room. They wanted me to come in there and make a fire.

JP: Do you think your father was worried about being deported, being sent back to México?

AP: No, he was a citizen, remember?

JP: How about grandmother?

AP: In those days, politics were a little bit dirty. My mother votes and she is not a citizen. What happened was that when I was born, the midwife made a mistake on my birth certificate. She put down that it was my mother that was born in Las Cruces and it was my father that was born in México. So when they went to register, my father had his birth certificate saying that he was born in the United States. So he was registered to vote. I guess they were trying to get votes, because they took my mother down there and showed my birth certificate where it said that she was born here and she votes now. They never questioned it.

JP: So she's a citizen?

AP: No, she's not a citizen, but she has a voting slip and she's registered to vote.

JP: I know you were (or are) involved in LULAC. Can you tell me anything about LULACs--who they are, what they do? Why "Latin American" citizens? Why not "Mexican American" citizens is one of my questions.

AP: I joined LULAC in 1964 and I'm still a member of it. I have held all the offices that they have--from delegate to president, back and forth. I'm with you. I would like to have it called Mexican American in lieu of Latin American, but this has not been so because although our part of the country is predominantly Mexican American, you have to realize that other parts, like New York City, have a lot of Puerto Ricans. There are a lot of Latin American citizens that belong to this organization, so nationwide it would not be kosher to call it the Mexican American League, so that's why it stayed Latin American.

JP: What do they do?

AP: It was originally originated in 1929 for the purpose of education, to provide funds for the Mexican American child to go on to a higher form of education. To this day they are still giving scholarships right and left. In my personal opinion, I think they should be more involved in community affairs and civil rights. They should use all that money to hire lawyers to fight discrimination cases and things like that. That's my opinion.

In Las Cruces, most of the members are old members like myself and they just don't think the way I do. I think the government has opened up scholarships and I don't think that private organizations should need to give out scholarships any more--there are so many foundations and government grants and all this stuff. I think LULAC should get out of that business--use that money for something else that's directly involved. To date I haven't been able to get the LULAC conference in Las Cruces to do that.

JP: What other organization do you belong to?

AP: I've been involved in the SER Program quite a bit. In fact, I first incorporated SER in Las Cruces. As a matter of fact, I paid for the coporation papers out of my own pocket and I paid the dues for two or three years before it really came to Las Cruces. You've probably been reading in the paper about the problems with this thing now. I got out of SER last July; I resigned because of personal problems at home. SER itself--you might be familiar with what they do. They take the under privileged and show them how to fill out applications and show them English as a Second Language stuff. They show kids how to work. For instance, they give grants and they hire a guy who knows how to work to try to teach the young adults how to work. By "how to work" I'm not saying that the young adult doesn't know. It's that the young adult a lot of times has the tendency to hurry up and get a job done. A good, skilled man can teach a young adult to take his pace and get the maximum work out of the day and do a better job. Things like

that--fill out applications, how to conduct himself in interviews, how to twist things around. For instance, if a guy just pumps gas in a service station, he doesn't know it, but he's actually a salesman. If he's applying for a sales job, he can put it down because he's selling gas and he's selling oil and he's selling this and that. A lot of people don't know to fit your experience to the form. That's the main thing to me. They've done a lot of good. LULAC and GI Forum sponsor them.

I'm also chief delegate for the community development program, which is revenue sharing community involvement. Especially I'm in the _____ School District. The year before last (in fact it's still going on) we were able to get about \$152,000 worth of pavement. What you do on that, you get people together, schools, then you elect delegates, from which I was elected the chief delegate. Then you get your priorities. You get all the school districts together and then you try to get your priorities in, which are then recommended to the City Council, then the City Council makes a determination. We've been very successful on that. In our area, _____, we got three bike sidewalks, paving that didn't cost the people a penny. It took a lot of doing because the first year it wasn't _____ participating in this program. Some guy by the name of Leo talked to all the people and got them all involved--that they were going to have to pay later. But when I got in, the fact was that I had been PTA President several years back and I had been all involved in PTA at the school, and I think the people listened to me, and we did get the program across to the people, and they now have some pavement. It's still going on. In fact, a man just called me this morning about starting meetings next year in January to see what else we can get through to help the school district. Those were about the main things that I got involved in.

If you want to talk politics, in my life I have been approached several times to run for the School Board, City Commissioner. I don't think I have the formal

education. I really don't know enough about it. I think if I go in there it's going to take me a year to find out really what's going on, and by that time you won't have a chance to get anything done and probably you would never get re-elected. Any way, I'm not interested in politics at all.

JP: Why do you think that Mexican Americans have had such little representation in politics?

AP: The main thing is that the Mexican American is not a united people. They're not like the blacks who get united together. The Mexican Americans have too many organizations and they really don't get together. Why, I don't know. I think the fact is the Mexican American comes from a lot of different levels of life. In Mexico, for instance, you have rich, poor and very few medium salaried people. That's one of the reasons. I think they come from very different countries. I think we're an envious people. We hate to see our own get up there. Why, I don't know. I don't. I like to see people get ahead, especially our people. The main thing is that we have not had the right opportunity in education. We need to educate. The parents need to get involved with the teachers. This is the main thing--to have the child go to school. The main thing is, they're not learning the basics. Therefore, when they're getting up into higher education, they can't make it. There's no way they can make it. The first thing they say is, "It's too hard for me. I can't make it through college." It really is the fact that they're not prepared. That's why they think they're not college material. I just don't believe that. They say that they didn't get the basics when they should have. And our school systems are passing them whether they make it or not. They're passing them--they want to get them out. That's my personal opinion; maybe it isn't true.

JP: I guess throughout your life here you have seen the Mexican American rise to what may be called the "Chicano Movement." Can you tell me when was the first time you heard the word Chicano?

AP: I really don't remember exactly when, but I remember when I heard it first I didn't think I liked it. I studied it in my mind. Now I think it is a very appropriate term. I love it. Although, right now in LULAC half of the guys don't want it and half of the guys don't care one way or the other. I'm strictly for it because I think it identifies us a little bit better. Some people say it comes from the word "cochino" which means "pig." That's where the word came from. I love the term. I like to use it, although just last September I tried to use it in the Navy plan of the day bulletin at White Sands Missile Range. But the Captain would not let me use it because it is not in the dictionary--at least he's got the Rockford Book of Words which is the latest English language /dictionary/ and the word is not listed in the book. So we didn't use it. We used Hispanic. That is about all I can tell you about it.

JP: What does the word really mean to you?

AP: "Chicano," to me, means that the Mexican American is different from the Latin American. In other words, I would call a Chicano the Mexican American to separate him from the Puerto Rican Latin American or the South American Latin American. To me "Chicano" means your Mexican American--that's what it means to me.

JP: What is your opinion of the Chicano movement where the people are uniting? Do you think this is really good?

AP: I think it is good, but I think we have a long ways to go. We have a whole generation to go before we can see the Mexican American or the Chicano getting united. The only way we're going to do it is to get the people educated. They've got to go to college; they've got to go to the university. They've got to learn to think for themselves, and once we get that done... It is going to take 100 years. It will. I'll never see the Chicano united. You might; I won't. I don't think they will, never.

JP: What is your opinion on all these illegal aliens? For example, what are your views on the Carter Amnesty Program?

AP: I have given this a lot of thought. I don't believe anybody has a clear cut answer, but I do believe that those people that have lived here and have started families here, and the families may have gotten as far as starting school, and have been paying taxes and can prove they have been paying them, although they are illegal, should be allowed to stay under this amnesty program of Carter's. I'm under the opinion, though, that everybody else is not...should not be granted amnesty. I think they should be deported. My reasoning is that if you do this for everybody, you're just opening the doors for more people to come and right now you can't stop them. You're never going to stop them unless you stationed the Army from Brownsville to Tijuana, you're not going to stop them. The Ku Klux Klan isn't going to stop them either--that's my opinion.

The ones who have been here ten years should be allowed to stay. Anybody under that, no. I think, though, that they should be treated on an individual basis. Somebody could have been here for five years and should be allowed to stay. Another guy may have been here eight years and should not be allowed to stay. It should be on an individual basis. If they have formed a home here and have been accepted into the (like a common law marriage)...if their peers have accepted them into the society, I see no reason why they should be deported. But the ones who are just here--hide-n-seek people, I think they should go back. The answer is, of course, that someday or the other México has got to get money to employ these people. I was reading the paper just yesterday and it said 50% unemployment in México. You can see why the people are coming--inflation down there is out of this world; the devaluation of the peso. Just think, I have a friend in Guadalajara. He took all his life to save 65,000 pesos. He had them in a bank. So when they devaluated the peso, what does he have now? 30,000 maybe. See what I mean? What he could have bought with 65,000, instead of buying 65,000

worth, he can only buy 30,000 worth. It really hurt him--all his life's savings. This would have hurt people like that. It didn't hurt the others. I was reading where the devaluation of the peso, all it did... I believe it said just before the devaluation, 4 billion pesos were taken out of México--4 billion dollars worth of pesos were taken out of México. That's a lot of money. Billions I'm talking about--I'm not talking about millions. So that's about the way I feel about the undocumented aliens.

JP: Do you think they're taking American jobs?

AP: No. I think they are taking some of them, but not the majority. They do most of the work that our people don't want to do--farm work mainly, or dirty work, or gardeners; agricultural work and jobs of that sort. People here don't want to do that work because as much as /the illegal alien gets paid/, they could make on unemployment. So why work if you can get unemployment? They'll work. They are taking some, but I don't think they are hurting the economy as much as they say. Now if more keep coming... I think the figure for illegal aliens is around six million right now. If that figure ever gets up into twice that amount, I feel they're bound to take more jobs away from us. But most of them are people that are not educated. So if we have an educated society, then we should not be worried about them taking any of our jobs because we can compete with them in anything--in anything we want to, because we're a more sophisticated society. So therefore, they're really not a threat to any of the jobs that we would have normally, if we had the education. By "we" I'm talking about the Americans, not just the Mexican American. The competition is not keen because of the difference in education. So all they're doing is the mediocre jobs and below--the majority of them. There are a few guys who come over who are pretty sharp and they could take your job or my job and do a better job. And they're willing to work. I don't think the American people put in 8 hours' work for 8 hours' pay. I know we don't. Just here at the Base--to start with, we know

they get a 15 minute break in the morning and a 15 minute break in the afternoon. So right now it's 7 1/2 hours' work for 8 hours' pay if you worked the 7 1/2 hours. And we don't, and if you do, everybody looks at you and thinks you're odd because you're working all the time. That's about the way I see it.

JP: I want to thank you for allowing me to interview you. You've given me a lot of insight, and a lot of help, just me personally, so I want to thank you.

AP: You're sure welcome. If I can ever do anything more for you let me know-- it's my job!