

11-18-1977

Interview no. 321

Juanita Gastello

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Interview with Juanita Gastello by Perlista E. Glasgow, 1977, "Interview no. 321," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Juanita Gastello
INTERVIEWER: Perlita E. Glasgow
PROJECT: Class Project
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 18, 1977
TERMS OF USE: None

TAPE NO.: 321
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 321
TRANSCRIBER: Lupe Gaspar
DATE TRANSCRIBED: December 17, 1977

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Juanita is a student at The University of Texas at El Paso and a member of the Yaqui Indian tribe from Arizona.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Childhood and school experiences in Guadalupe, Arizona; Yaqui religious and social customs; thoughts on illegal aliens and the word "Chicano"; Yaqui history.

1 Hr.; 30 pages
(A second tape with the last few minutes of the interview is not available.)

This interview is conducted at the address of Juanita Gastello,
200 Wellington Dr., El Paso, on November 18, 1977.

P: Where is your place of birth?

J: I was born in Mesa, Arizona.

P: What are your parents' names and their background? Could you tell me something about that?

J: My mother's name is Amalia Gloria González and she was born in Arizona. My father's name is Amado López Gastello and he was also born in Arizona in a little town named Guadalupe, which my grandfather at one time owned. My father's parents--my grandmother, Dolores, was born in México in Magdalena, Sonora. My grandfather, on the other hand, was also from México, but he was born in Sonora in a place called El Río Yaqui, where he is a member of the tribe. On my mother's side, my grandfather was born in Zacatecas, México, and his name is Juan González. My mother's mother was born here in the United States and her name was Jesús Gloria.

P: How did your grandparents get to the United States?

J: My grandmother often tells me the story that she arrived to the United States because she was so poor, and her family was also poor, that at times her father couldn't afford to buy them shoes and he would make them shoes out of cardboard. So since my grandmother was the oldest she decided that she was going to bring her whole family to the United States, and she did. Here she met my grandfather named Juan Gastello and she stayed and she lived where what is now Guadalupe. My grandfather used to own all that land, so she was well off. She was the only one that stayed in Arizona. And the rest of her family, since they loved México so much like they say they did, they went back; but my grandmother did remain here.

P: Did she come by legally?

J: No, she came by illegally. She crossed and she came. She did have a permit, but she was only admitted for a certain amount of time. But then once she got married to my grandfather and since he was here before her, she got to stay.

P: Did she ever tell you about what happened to her crossing, being an illegal alien here in the United States?

J: No. See, she used to tell us that the border wasn't that strict. Everybody could come and go as they pleased. But now since they started the alien problems, illegal aliens, it's hard to cross. But during those times it took them quite a long time to get to where we are now, but they did cross.

P: Did your mother grow up here or in México?

J: No, my mother grew up here and she was born here in the United States. My father was also born in the United States.

P: So, that means you were born here, too?

J: Yes.

P: Could you tell me a little bit about your childhood, the schools you attended?

J: One of the schools that I attended was Guadalupe School. That's the first school that we had in our community. In that school 100 percent of the population was either Mexican American or Chicano (whatever you want to call it), or they were from the Yaqui tribe. That school was very low in standards. We didn't have good facilities; our teachers were really bad and so a lot of us just got up to the eighth grade. Of the ones that graduated, since that was the grade that they should've gone to, many of them dropped out and a lot of them didn't even want to continue high school.

P: There was a high school in that area?

J: There wasn't a high school. They were bused. They were bused for about 10 miles just to attend a high school. That was the first high school, which was Tempe High School, and then after that they built a new high school called McKintuck High School. So, they were bused there. There were problems because they didn't like us--I guess because of the color of our skin, because we didn't know how to speak in English right, or they were just aggravating us, putting us to the side. So we were bused again to Tempe High School. And finally there was a new school that was built. This went on for a long period of time. We were just bused back and forth from these two high schools. About four years ago there was a new high school built and it was called Marcos de Niza, which was named after Friar Marcos de Niza who was a missionary. Since the school was named Marcos de Niza, all of us got to be shipped again. We attended that school and ever since then we stayed there at that new school. Last year there was another school that was opened, que se llama Corona del Sol, and they wanted to bus all of us from the community there to the new school, but the parents got together and they decided they were tired of having their kids bused back and forth and back and forth, so they stayed there.

P: In the beginning did the parents get angry or do anything, go to the government to help the situation?

J: In the beginning, you know, the parents were usually from México and so they really didn't have a say-so. Many of them were illegally here so they didn't want anybody to know they were here. So they really didn't have a choice that way. And yet again, that was the closest high school they could attend.

P: I see. Was there any significant or interesting event or incident that occurred during the time you were in school?

J: Interesting event? Well, I don't consider them very interesting, but I can tell you some of the things that happened. Like we were forbidden to talk in Spanish, and any time we did, we were either hit on the head or thrown out of school for a long time, or we had to pay like five cents for every Spanish word that was spoken.

P: You had to pay?

J: Pay like a nickel or something, so it was kind of forcing us to learn. I could understand that we were supposed to learn English because it was the language used here, but I don't consider that it was right since our language we knew at home was either Spanish or the Yaqui dialect called "Cajita." So many of us had a lot of trouble because we were learning our third language, and some were only learning their second language.

P: What did they do if you didn't have the money to pay?

J: Usually we had to stay after school and help the teacher around, which was to me a whole bunch of nonsense because the only time I spoke English was at school and when I got home I'd go back to the language which I usually know.

P: What did the parents think of that?

J: There were a lot of parents that didn't like it, but yet they were afraid to say, "I'm going to go see what I can do about this." And like my mother, who is a reading specialist, didn't like that because she didn't think it was right. She knew that we had to talk in English to find ourselves, but yet she didn't see why we had to be punished for something that we ourselves knew from the beginning.

P: Was there any other incident that kind of stands out in your mind?

J: Only things like this: Like our school--the little school we went to didn't have good facilities. Our playgrounds...like we used to play out in the street. That was something big for us. We had one teeter-totter or three swings for the whole population at the school, which I'm not really sure how many there were. It was ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade at the time. And so during the busing they started busing Anglo kids into the Guadalupe area, and as soon as they got there, they got their facilities, they got new buildings, they got better teachers, they got a new principal; and to me that's just being prejudiced because we never got what we wanted even though some of the parents would speak. And as soon as Anglo children came in, they got everything new. They've been getting real good facilities even up to this date. A year doesn't pass by when they /don't/ get something new for their playground, or they get new reading materials, or things of this sort.

P: In the school where you attended, did they have any Mexican or Spanish surnamed teachers?

J: As far as I remember, it's kind of sad, I only remember about two.

P: How were they to the children?

J: They were very what you call Americanized. They were from a higher class than us and so they really looked down at us. They weren't willing to help us out so we could get a better education. There was only one teacher that I recall, and she's the one up to this date who is still fighting, trying to tell everybody--all the Chicanos especially--that they should attend school so they can become better or better themselves in the school system.

P: Has she succeeded?

- J: She has succeeded up to this date. Without her I don't think I could've gotten as far as I have. She always told me that I should go on to school so I can go home and then help those that can't help themselves out.
- P: Then she was really a great help to you.
- J: Yes, she was.
- P: That's good. Were you involved in many social activities in school? If so, describe them.
- J: Social activities at school.... Well, my parents were really involved in school. There are seven of us in our family, but they've always wanted the best in education for us. So they were always involved in PTA, school activities, and fiestas or things to raise money for us and for the school. I would always participate in helping them out just so we could get things for ourselves and the schools. Like something we really enjoyed doing was getting money together so we could buy things to play with.
- P: Can you tell me more or less when you became fluent in the English language?
- J: I don't think I am. /Laughter/ I still have a lot of trouble to tell you the truth. It's because at home we spoke three languages. I speak very cut. I speak half English, half Spanish and half of the dialect. I don't think I know English that well.
- P: Could you tell me about the dating patterns among the peers in your community?
- J: Dating paterns.... Oh, my parents are very strict and I didn't start dating till I was almost nineteen. And it's very different because at eighteen everybody says, "You can do what you want." To me, it's not right because I still live under my parents' roof and I still have to accept what they say. And if I don't like it, well, I'll move out of there. But, up to this date, I don't think they are very strict with me. Whenever I wanted

to go out, whoever I was going to date had to come over to my house a few times so my father could speak to him to see if he was a good boy. Usually he didn't want me to go out but he would let me go out just so I wouldn't say, "Well, Dad, I don't see why I can't go out; I'm old enough." But my parents, to this day, still tell me who I should marry. To me it's very old fashioned because I want to finish school and be on my own. I'm already 20 and a lot of my friends get married when they're 15, 16. And everybody thinks I am going to become an old maid, because they choose who you are going to marry.

P: This is common among the tribe?

J: Where I live, yes. They still say, "You are going to marry so and so."

P: What do the girls say about that?

J: They really don't have any choice. They have to accept whoever they are going to marry or their family kind of keeps them away if they decide not to marry. My parents haven't chosen somebody for me yet and if they didn't I know I would.

P: Did they choose your sister's? Is your sister married?

J: Yes, she's married but they didn't choose him. They what you call "eloped." So my parents didn't have any say-so.

P: Did they accept this?

J: They didn't accept it for a long time but after they realized what had happened...now they don't think this is right. My grandmother is the one that worries a lot about me. She's always calling me to her house. "Come over here. I want you to meet so and so because he's here and he's real nice for you, and I know you're going to enjoy your life with him." But no, I don't think I'm going to marry him.

P: How did you spend a typical weekend?

- J: Weekends? I lived in a small community. Of course, everybody's always getting married, everybody's having babies, and for any little occasion everybody would make a big party. I didn't have to go out of my town to enjoy myself. My time would be spent there at the party or with my family and friends during the day.
- P: Could you name some of the social, cultural, recreational activities you attended there?
- J: Oh, yes. We have quinceañeras, of course. That's very common especially in the Mexican household.
- P: Do they celebrate it the same way they do here?
- J: Yes, more or less. You start out, of course, going to church, a reception following it and then a big dance. Where I live they really don't send invitations out because everybody's invited. It's more or less open to the public. We would attend religious ceremonies which would be like the Virgen de Guadalupe, which is our patron saint, and our church is named after her.
- P: What day is a big day over there?
- J: The big day over there is Easter, the starting of Easter, Lent. We practice the passion of Christ and what the missionaries taught us. We make kind of like our own version.
- P: The missionaries, were they Americans?
- J: Yes. The first Franciscan priest that was there was Father Lucías and he started to build a church, and it was named La Virgen de Guadalupe. It was built around 1904.
- P: Is it very much attended there?
- J: Yes. We have the big church and we have what we call the Yaqui Temple. That is usually used for special ceremonies, and the church--Our Lady of Guadalupe--is used for mass every week.

P: When you say special ceremonies, what does that include? Marriages?

J: No, just religious ceremonies, like our Easter ceremonies, our Christmas ceremonies.

P: Could you describe some of the ceremonies?

J: Yes. It's lengthy but I'll try to describe it to you because it's rather difficult to understand if you've never seen it. We start off when Lent starts and we start on Ash Wednesday. From there on, every Friday different people from the community gather and the men dress up as what we call chapayecas. They dress up, and they have blankets over their bodies with a mask over their head. They represent evil forces, of course. All this takes place.....like when the missionaries wanted the people to know something, they told them about it and the Yaqui people came to the point where they liked what they were listening to, especially the story about Christ, His crucifixion and His resurrection.

P: So, they tell these men that wear the masks all of it, and then they act it out?

J: Yes, see, they act it out. It's something that they handed down. There's no written record about it and everything that they know is what they remember from the past year. So, they take the story about Christ, when He was born. During this time, Christ is in three stages: as an infant, as a young man, and as an old man. He's represented throughout this time and He takes the same place with Christ being crucified on the cross and Pontius Pilate goes out and finds Him.

P: So in other words, they just re-enact the whole thing?

J: Yes, they re-enact, but they speak only in the Yaqui dialect or in Latin, since what was taught to them was in Latin. That is all they know.

P: How would you say "He is risen" in Yaqui dialect?

J: Let me just tell you some of the things. I'll give you some of the...like "how are you," stuff like this. Everytime you see somebody you say, "Dios em chianíawo," which means "God be with you on this day." And the reply would be, "Dios em chocue," which would be, "God, thank you very much."** The Cajita language was spoken by different tribes, but since they were conquered they came to speak the Mexican, the Spanish.

P: Who were they conquered by?

J: By the Spaniards. But, the Yaquis and the Mayas were the only ones that kept their language and up to this date the Yaquis are practically the only ones who do speak it.

P: Have you ever worked?

J: Have I ever worked?

P: Yes, other than in the house. And what's the custom--how do the men and women in the community feel about the young girl or the mother working away from home?

J: They still have this...they even go back into the Mexican culture about machismo. They really don't feel that the women should work, but since times are changing and the circumstances, they have to go out in the field and work because the families are usually very large. And since many of the people don't have education, the wife has to go out and seek for a job in order to help support the family. My mother works and my father works, but if it was for my father, my father probably wouldn't have let her because we were so many. But then after we grew up, my mother had to go out to help support the family.

P: About yourself, did you work anywhere?

J: Oh, yes. I've gotten a lot of jobs since I attended college at Arizona and graduated from high school. I was offered jobs, especially in school--

**Transcription of Yaqui phrases may be incorrect.

tutoring. I tutored children who didn't understand the English language or they needed help in math, in reading especially, and in just striving along with their classes.

P: Have you experienced discrimination when you were interviewed for a job?

J: Oh, yes, of course. I'm part Indian and part Mexican. Of course, my color tells that I'm not white. I would have a hard time finding a job, and if I would go up to somebody and say, "I'm a Chicana," they wouldn't like that because they would think I'd be radical, so I would have to tell them that I'm a Mexican American. That they accept--"Chicana" they don't accept. I would have a hard time. Even at work sometimes in different jobs that I had, I always knew I was getting the wrong end of the stick. I was being paid maybe less than what an Anglo girl would be getting paid and we would be doing the same job.

P: What do you yourself feel about the word "Chicano" and someone calling you Chicano?

J: Oh, it doesn't bother me; as a matter of fact, I really like it. But my grandmother doesn't like it at all. She says it sounds like "a bunch of little pigs." That's what the word means to her.

P: That's what it means?

J: Yes.

P: And your mother?

J: My mother does and accepts it. She does for the fact that I have told her and kept in mind that we are here from the United States but yet we can't forget where we came from, our heritage, and our folklore and things like this. "Chicano," to her, is just a word of pride because she accepts both cultures living here in America, but then we still eat and speak the same as we would do in México.

P: Would you say you and your family identify more with the Mexican culture or the American culture?

J: I should say Mexican culture. Because the American culture...we're here but we usually just go to school to get ourselves a better job, but everything that we do at home is from the Mexican culture. We still eat with the tortilla, we still speak in Spanish, we still attend ceremonies that a lot of American culture wouldn't accept. I don't think there's really an American culture because everybody's just brought into one big ball and everybody just does their own thing. Living here in the Southwest, we're so close to México that to me I don't think there is really a borderline, because we can just come and go when we want to with relatives that we have in México.

P: What do you think about this new bilingual-bicultural program that they have now in the schools?

J: I think it's great. Everybody says that we're in America--everybody should talk in English. But to me it's what fits into your own place. If you want to learn better English or better Spanish, bilingual-bicultural is good because you'll be getting it from both ends. The school that I came from has a trilingual-tricultural program. Trilingual-tricultural here is English classes, E.S.L., which is English as a Second Language; the Spanish, to learn it better; and the Yaqui language. But the Yaqui language, since many of them do know it, mostly they strive to keep their traditions and the way of life.

P: Like to prolong tradition?

J: Yes.

P: What is your major?

J: I'm majoring in Sociology and minoring in Chicano Studies.

P: Why did you want to attend college?

J: I want to continue going to school so I can become a lawyer, because where I come from a lot of people can't afford lawyers. Everytime they get into a bind, trouble with the police, they have to pay the consequences and there is nobody to represent them. I'll be graduating from UTEP real soon and I'm planning to go back to where I came from to Arizona, to attend law school. I am planning to go back to the barrio where I came from to help the people.

P: Why did you leave the college in Arizona and come to UTEP?

J: Everybody asks me that. The reason I did come is because I thought that with a school being so close to the border that Chicano people here would be more united, and since I've gotten here I've seen everything the reverse. I see some Chicanos that don't call themselves Chicanos, they call themselves Mexican Americans. I'm kind of depressed because of what I came to see. Because to me, living far from the border in the Phoenix metropolitan area, our people are more united. We get things done that people here, I guess, they don't care or because they are so close to the border that many of the Mexicans from México take their jobs. So in a way I was disappointed when I got here, but I think I'm going to stay here for a while just to see what it's like.

P: To really view the whole issue?

J: Yes, because I lived in California and worked with César Chávez, and there are some political organizations for the betterment of the Chicanos. But here I come to Texas and everything seems (I don't know, maybe I'm not that involved here), but everything seems to be so different and they have negative views about the Chicano. You know, they don't call themselves Chicanos, they call themselves Mexican Americans. I found that out.

P: What do you think about the Raza Unida Party?

J: The Raza Unida is like any political party--it has its ups and downs.

The Raza Unida, I'm not really for it or against it, but it's because it would be just like a third party in the American society. Maybe one of these days it will be something because the Mexicans or Chicanos here will be the second largest population in the United States by the year 2000, /and/ maybe then something is going to be done.

P: Are you and your parents presently registered voters?

J: Yes.

P: When was the first time you voted?

J: The first time I voted was June 4, I even remember the date; let me tell you why. June 4, 1974, and it was because during this time the little town that I lived in was going to be part of Tempe, which is a city close to us or a part of the Phoenix metropolitan area. And during this time our people got together, and they decided that they didn't want to become either a part of Tempe or Phoenix for the reason that we would not practice what we practice now. We would have to abide by laws; I mean, we abide by laws, but we didn't have curfews like the cities do and we wouldn't be getting the mañanitas at one in the morning, and things like this. So, we decided to make our own town, Guadalupe Incorporated, and it did incorporate. So, we have our own little government and do our own thing.

P: So, you can say that the people in your area do get involved?

J: Yes, they do get involved when something like this is going to happen. Guadalupe....the first time that it went up to vote, there are always some people that are going to be against it because they want to become part of the metropolitan area. But about seven percent of the people /tape was turned over and some of interview was lost/...go out and vote and we did win, and our city did become incorporated.

P: Why do you think the Mexican Americans have such little representation in politics?

J: It all depends where you are from. In Arizona there are congressmen that are Mexican and the people do get represented; but it all depends where you are from. If you want to make something work, it's going to work and you are going to be represented if you go out and speak. But if you really don't care about it, nothing is going to happen.

P: Are you suggesting then that in the different areas the people don't go out and vote?

J: Yes, a lot of people. At first when I started to vote I said to myself, "Oh, what am I going to vote for? My vote isn't going to count." But then I realized that if you and other people get together something is going to be done.

P: Do you know any Mexican American leaders that are now currently in the area or were in the past?

J: Where I am from Lalo García is involved with this organization called the Guadalupe Organization. What he does there is help the people. They can go there to pick up mail, pay their bills, because a lot of people don't have transportation to the post office. It helps them legally if they can't afford a lawyer. They have legal advisement, and they have transportation; if you have to go somewhere and you don't have a way, they'll take you. They find jobs for you. This is one of the organizations and Lalo García is the head of it. Also Jerry D.?? López, he's a representative from the district that also helps a lot. And in the school system we have a lot of Chicanos that do help the educational system for the mexicanos. Rosa Martínez, who is in the educational school, the primary schools; Priscilla Chávez, who's in the high school, and she helps the kids out through school, whatever they need in the high school just so they can

graduate. Then there is Tony Chávez at the college, who also helps the Chicanos out and manages for them to continue their education. Since they've gotten that far, he encourages them. Then in California, we had César Chávez, who I worked under, and he, too, is a leader. He's the first one that started off that the Mexican American should go out and be united in the union.

P: Did many of the men in your tribe or community serve in World War I?

J: Yes, they served in World War I and II, the Korean War, and Vietnam War, and a lot of them died. The way they're honored in the community, there is a white pyramid that stands between the street, and it has the Mexican flag and it has the American flag on both sides. Every Veterans' Day it's decorated with flowers and a prayer is written on it in English, Spanish and Yaqui. In the front of the pyramid there is a deer dancer, dancing el venado which it's called. Everybody goes every now and then and repaints it to make it look nice. But they are honored.

P: They are very patriotic.

J: Yes.

P: That's good. What was your first impression of Juárez and El Paso?

J: When I moved here? I liked it. Most of my time is spent in Juárez to tell you the truth. El Paso...I live up in North Mesa. Where I live, I am always involved doing this, going to parties within my people and everything. Everybody's close. They all go work together to do something, and here, where I live, everybody does their own thing. They don't bother to go see their next-door neighbor. To tell you the truth, I don't know who my next-door neighbor is.

P: They're not very friendly?

J: I'm friendly; they're not friendly. They keep away, as much as they can. One time I said "Hi" to a girl and she shut the door on me. I don't know...maybe the way I looked--I was getting up so early in the morning. I don't really understand why they're like this.

P: Could you describe the process of settling down to live and work here--describe how you went about settling down?

J: It's hard for me. I guess because I'm so used to home that now that I've moved I'm not in contact with my family. I call them but it's not the same as if I would be there. It's very hard for me. I'm not homesick yet; I guess because I go to Juárez so much to enjoy myself. But before the year's over, I know I will. It is very hard for me because there is really nobody I can talk to except for friends here at school. I work and the people are very friendly and I get along with them, but it's still not the same like if I would be at my hometown.

P: Could you elaborate on your experiences of the illegal aliens that live in your community?

J: There are a lot of illegal aliens that live there, but since they're part of our people we accept them, we try to help them out. We're not going to push them to the side just because they want to take over our jobs. We do try to help them. There are families that come in whole groups. The church helps them and the people themselves help them. We don't turn our face from them. We always try to help them and sometimes they do have a good job and sometimes they have more than the people originally had.

P: All around, then, everyone looks out for each other?

J: Yes, they do.

P: What is the name of the language spoken among the Yaqui tribe?

J: It's an Indian dialect and it is called Cajita. This has been spoken for many years, and the Yaquis are really the only ones that speak it now because the other Cajitan-speaking tribes were Sinaloas, the Tiojuecos, Saukees, Ajobes, and Mayas. Since they were under Spanish domination since 1609, a lot of it they forgot or they just didn't speak it at all. And the Yaquis, to tell you the truth, are practically the only ones who speak it now.

P: Could you tell anything about your grandparents, your grandmother--anything that you think would be interesting? Could you tell me about her?

J: My grandfather is a very interesting man; my grandmother is too, I guess.

P: Does everyone still take her advice?

J: Yes. She's very old, about 80, but everybody still respects her and they still go to her for advice and even for cures if something is wrong with them. But my grandmother is the only one I have. Both of my grandfathers and my other grandmother passed away. So, my father's mother is the only one that we have, so everybody still turns to her. Since she is by herself, one of my cousin's family or one of mine is always there to take care of her.

P: Does she tell you of anything from way back in her time?

J: Yes, she tells us stories relating to how she came to the United States, and she would rather go back. She's always telling me she is going to go back to die where she came from. But I don't think she will because my grandfather is buried here in Arizona. She says she wants to be buried next to him. She is very respected because of her age and she is one of the oldest people living there. A lot of the other people still turn to her for advice.

P: Could you explain the way of life of the Yaqui tribe? First maybe their customs, religion, things like that.

J: There are four major settlements of the Yaqui Indians, and all of them are in Arizona. There is Guadalupe, where I am from, and it is near Phoenix. And in Tucson, it is called Pascua, the Pascua Village. Then there is San Javier, where the Pima Indians are, which is called the Pascua Nueva. Then there is another little barrio south of Tucson called Barrio Libre. The Yaquis have a high degree of social invisibility, but they are not really a part of the Mexican community. They had contact with the Spanish culture and the Christian religion since 1533 and they are Spanish speaking, but they still speak their Cajita language. They came to the United States because they came as political refugees from México since the defeat of the Emperor Maximilian. The Yaquis are one of the two major tribes who maintained their identities throughout the conquest of Sonora, which is where they are from--The Río Yaqui. Since they resisted armed intrusion in their territory, they were successful and able to say their own terms for the missionaries to come in. They did allow Christianity to be brought among them by the Jesuit priests. Eight missions were built in México around the Yaqui valley, and the eight communities are Vicam, Potam, Torim, Bacum, Cocorit, Rahum, Huirivis, and Belen. Those are the main communities that are in Sonora, México. The ones I mentioned before are in Arizona. They settled around these places and they became excellent farmers. For over two generations they were very peaceful and they had their own Spanish and Yaqui culture, which they identified themselves with.

P: They still identify more strongly with the Yaqui culture than with the Mexican culture?

J: Yes. But they are not part of the Mexican /culture/. Well, they are and they are not; it's very hard to explain. They have their own way of life,

and yet they do speak Spanish and eat Mexican food and things like this. By 1730 the Spanish came and they wanted to take the land away, and this is when the trouble began.

P: Did your grandmother tell you this part?

J: Yes. They were very shrewd hunters. They could have meat on their table and they could do all this. But since the Spaniards came and they saw all this being done, they themselves wanted to take over the land. Let me tell you some of the things that happened around that area when the Spaniards came. My grandmother always told me about this. To her it's very dear, because she knows how they were treated and the things that happened. To her it's history--things that she saw happen to her friends and to her family. So it's very dear to her. Since México was under the Spanish rule for 100 years, it was only for the betterment of Spain. The Mexicans or the Indians were never allowed to make goods for themselves. They had to pay heavy taxes and they were also forbidden to grow fruits, vegetables, or to produce quick silver. As a result of this, a small number of people had privileges and they were usually passed down from father to son. Like if you had a big business, you know, your son would always get it. The Mexican society during that time was made up of many classes of people and each class was supported by another class. The real burden was placed on the peasants, and the Indian that did all the hard work didn't have any rights. My grandmother remembers how the Yaqui people were treated. She told me that from the beginning of time they were farmers who worked long and hard at what they loved best, and this was farming. The Yaquis were also shrewd hunters who were able to put meat on their table by tracking and killing their hunt. They just lived by what they could grow or what they themselves had killed. And according to my grandmother, this

tribe from the eight colonies of Sonora was first persecuted and the families were slaughtered by the Spaniards, and by the orders of the Mexican government. The object of all this persecution was to obtain the rich and fertile land. Even after innumerable battles, they were never dominated. Never had the Indians been treated more inhumanly than this time. And never had the Yaquis fought more fiercely to preserve their land and protect their lives.

P: Did your grandfather fight them, or she didn't know him then?

J: No, she didn't know him then. Around 1900-1910, many of the Yaquis came to Fort Nollins, Arizona because they wanted to retain their language, their culture, and everything they had fought for.

P: That was when your grandmother came here?

J: Yes. This group remained in Tucson and in Guadalupe, but no nation yet has ever managed to conquer the Yaqui tribe despite the persecution and suffering. Up to this date, the Yaquis still hold their head up high because they have been through so many things and they still feel like, "We've gone this far. Why should we turn and forget everything and the past?" Where they live now is in Guadalupe, but they lived in this place called The Forty Acres which was given to them by President Woodrow Wilson. It wasn't until June 1963 that the land had been deeded to the families living on it. It's more or less like a small reservation because the Yaquis really aren't considered American Indians. Even though they were refugees from México and they came and settled here, they are still not considered American Indians. The plaza of the community where the Yaqui Temple and the Catholic Church are located is still under general jurisdiction of the people under trusteeship of the judge, so a lot of people

still don't have deeds to that land that they live on up to this day.

P: They don't try to get it?

J: They have been fighting for it. They live on what is called Ben Colony, another trust company that had it and they are barely getting their deeds after all this time.

P: What do they have to do to get it?

J: They have to go through the courts and see how much land is going to be given to them. It's hard because they've been fighting since I can remember. They've been living on it for so long, they can't see why the government or the trust company can't give it to them. Another thing, where the church is located, there was a Bishop in Phoenix who wanted to take the land away. It was only because he wanted to make money off of it or something, because that land was just up for grabs. But the people turned around and they did turn against the Bishop, even if he is a religious man and he has the power to do this or do that. I don't think it is right either, that he was going to take their land. The only thing that would have been left would have been the church and the temple.

P: What did they do to him? Did they put him out?

J: Yes. He is not there in the Diocese any more. I remember he came up once to where we lived. He was respected, but after what he tried to do to the people everybody turned against him. To me he is just another man; he makes mistakes and everything, but he came up and kissed this lady on the cheek and the lady turned around and said, "Oh, it's the kiss of Judas." You know, when he betrayed Jesus, and that's what they remember. There in our community they lost respect for him.

P: And he still lives there?

J: No, he got a transfer out of the state. Even up to this day they still fight for what they think is theirs, or what they know is theirs.

P: Do they have representation helping them obtain their land?

J: Oh, they do. This one that I was telling you about, The Guadalupe Organization, they are the ones that started off to help the people so they could get their land back and so they could stay on, and nobody could come and take their land away.

P: Do you have any more things you would like to tell us that you remember, that your grandmother or mother mentioned to you about the Yaquis?

J: Let me tell you, Guadalupe wasn't located where it's located now. The community of Guadalupe was founded on the Highland Canal, which was by a canal that they could /use for/ their land. This made this land valuable because of the water, and they were getting everything they wanted. And so around the 1800's, the original location was moved because they were moved to higher ground. Since they had already /made that land fertile/, the Anglo people moved them up to higher ground, so they had to start all over again. During that time they couldn't say much because of the land they were living on. They got it fixed and everything and after they got it fixed to where they could grow everything, they were moved again.

P: Again?

J: Again.

P: And this time by the Anglos?

J: Yes.

P: Did they fight back?

J: They did, but either way they lost. That's the only time that I know that they did have to move. And since they moved to higher ground, they had to

start all over again--finding a canal so they could irrigate their land, and they did and that is where they stayed.

P: So that is the area they are right now?

J: Yes, but the time before where they were--before Guadalupe (it was still called Guadalupe) our cemetery is located there. The cemetery is just for the people. They can dig their graves there, but they don't have to pay.

P: Your community pays for this?

J: The land already belongs to us, so if somebody dies they just go and bury him there; they don't have to pay.

P: Who takes care of the upkeep?

J: The same people from the community. Like once a month they'll go on a Sunday to keep it clean.

P: Everybody takes a turn?

J: Yes, especially like November 2, the Día de los Muertos, everybody goes. To me, that cemetery is something very beautiful. Everybody is afraid to go, but everybody goes and cleans it up and decorates it and it's very nice. We don't have cement and grass. It's just dirt, but it's decorated so nice that it really looks very beautiful.

P: Do you think that your grandmother or mother would like to come to El Paso to live?

J: No. (Laughter)

P: Did your mother ever come?

J: Yes, my mother came to see me this past Thanksgiving. She's going to come to see me this Thanksgiving and she's been here before. She likes it...it's different, but she would never move away. Everybody always tells me, "Why did you move away, don't you like it?" And I do, but it's just that I wanted to see what the other part of the world is like.

P: What do you think of the school here and the professors?

J: I do enjoy it, but I don't think I spend as much time in school as I should.
I guess because the standards here are easier for me.

P: Easy?

J: Yes. I don't study as much as I should, I know, but I'm keeping up with my grades. I guess most of my time is spent in Juárez.

P: What do you do over there?

J: I go and dance 'til four in the morning. I just go and have a good time.
I guess I feel more comfortable there because some places I remember where I lived where people really don't have money, so I feel a lot more comfortable /there/.

P: Are the Mexicans in Juárez friendlier than the ones over here?

J: I can't tell the difference between an illegal or a Mexican. To me they all look alike. Everywhere I go, I try to enjoy myself.

P: And your sister?

J: No, she doesn't go anywhere. She's afraid that something is going to happen to her. Her husband is in the Army and she is just waiting to go back home. And me, I just take life as it is, I guess like any other Mexican--just live that day, and if you live that day, live 'til tomorrow.

P: Is there anything else that you would like to tell us that was passed on to you, that you remember?

J: The Yaquis still believe in folktales and in myths and in legends. This is only one of the ways that they learn more about their culture, because nothing is written down. You have to pass it around from mouth to mouth. To me, the Yaqui is still going to fight to keep his culture and tradition, because a lot of people don't really know about it or don't understand what's going on. To me, the Yaqui is the unconquerable Indian because he

did not give in. He still does what he did four hundred years ago.

P: In other words, they believe in what their ancestors handed down and they keep it as a law?

J: Yes.

P: Doesn't the law in that state conflict with the Yaqui law at times?

J: The rules we have in our town are mostly based around what we ourselves want to do. We can have the mañanitas at twelve at midnight, which if you go to a city it's against the law because you would be disturbing the peace. I guess the only problem that we have is during Easter when we have our ceremony. To us work and school are out. All we base our life on during those 8 weeks of Lent is the church and our ceremonies, so we don't care if we get kicked out of school. Many of the kids participate, and work and school are of no importance to us. We just continue with what we feel is right for us. When we have processions of the cross, we stop the traffic, and the sheriff has to come in to stop and everything, but they are only abiding to what we say.

P: Do you have a lot of police brutality that is evident here?

J: No.

P: You do have police support if you need it?

J: Yes, we do have police support, but I really haven't seen any police brutality where we live. I guess it's because it's a small town and the sheriff knows everybody and they get along.

P: Is the sheriff Yaqui, too?

J: No, he's an Anglo.

P: He is?

J: He is, but somehow he's very nice and he gets along with everybody, which to me is a surprise, because...

P: Is his family there, too?

J: No, just him. He comes from the Phoenix metropolitan area. He just patrols all day, all night.

P: Just one?

J: There are two or three. If something really happens, they call the Tempe police department or the Phoenix /one/. But usually our town, if something does happen it's usually somebody out of the town that comes in and makes trouble.

P: What do you do? You call them in?

J: Yes. The sheriff, we usually call in that he needs backup because somebody is causing trouble. But it's not within our own people that we cause trouble. If we do, it's usually family arguments, which you find everywhere. But there are, sometimes, people who come in and cause trouble for us.

P: Do they believe in divorces?

J: In divorces? No! You know, there are some that have divorces but not very many. Our way is still the Yaqui way. And even in marriage, when a young lady is going to get married, first she has to live with whomever she is going to marry, have a baby, and if they think it's right they'll go get married in a church--white dress and everything.

P: You live together first?

J: You live together with whomever you are going to marry and if your luck is good you'll have a baby. If you feel that you are going to make it, you go get married by the church in a white dress--with everything: the reception and party, everything.

P: What if you feel it won't work out?

J: If you feel that it doesn't, just go on and see if you can find somebody else. Or if your parents have another say-so, "Here's George, over here. Go try him out." I don't think I'd ever do it, but it does happen. If you are married and have a family and if one day you decide you're not happy, you can go find somebody else. You see, this is accepted.

P: Would this be bigamy, or do they divorce and then remarry?

J: To tell you the truth, a lot of people aren't married and they just live together until they think that they are ready, or that somebody is going to come their way to give them a really happy life. I know this lady that has gone through I don't know how many husbands until she stayed finally with one. The guy she was with before, they go on to see if they can find somebody else.

P: Nobody gets mad?

J: No, they're friends. Like I could be married to George over here, and George's wife could've been my husband's ex, and nothing.

P: What about the children?

J: The mother usually stays with them. They accept the other lady, too.

P: As brothers and sisters?

J: Yes, as half brothers and sisters.

P: That's good. That's a good way.

J: I don't think I could ever do it, though.

P: You think you would be sure the first time?

J: Yes. I want to be sure the first time; I don't want to go through it all.

P: What does your mother say?

J: Well, my mother, she's been happy with my father since she got married and I haven't had mothers all over the place.

P: What I meant it, does she still believe in the Yaqui way?

J: No, not in that way. She thinks it's ridiculous, having so many wives and living with them. She doesn't think it's right.

PAUSE

P: Are you familiar with the pesos?

J: Oh, yes. But where I live we use American money, we don't use any pesos.

P: You wouldn't know anything about the devaluation of the peso?

J: No.

P: How do you manage when you go to Juárez? What do you do?

J: I use American money.

P: Do you understand the exchange?

J: Oh, I understand the exchange. I guess because I go over there a lot, I can keep up with it. Or if I don't understand, I usually take a friend of mine from Juárez to make sure that I do it right.

P: I know we spoke about the word "Chicano"--what it means to you and your family, and also the movement of the Raza. But do they have any names like "Chicano" in your community?

J: Yes, they have this word called "Chicaíndio"--like half Chicano and the other part Indio. They combine those words and we're called Chicaíndios because some of us are like me, half Mexican and half Yaqui, /and/ we can relate to both cultures. To me it's something very special because I have both of them. So they do call us Chicaíndios and it doesn't bother me. But it's just a word to label you so other people can know that you're half and half.

P: Do other people take offense?

J: No, nobody takes offense; they all accept it. Some people say that the word

"Yaqui" is a dirty word because they relate it to "yucky," but it has no /relation/.

P: No bad connotation?

J: No.

P: Juanita, we really had a good evening. I really think this was fun.

J: Oh, I do, too. Thank you.

P: And I want to thank you a lot for the interview and for sharing what your grandmother and parents have shared with you, and also for sharing about the life of the Yaqui Indians. It's the first time I've heard about it.

J: Yes, there's a lot of people that don't understand here. I guess it's because Sonora is where they came from and that's like in the Arizona region. What's the closest Indian tribe in Juárez?

P: I forget; a lot of them talk about that one related with Montezuma.

J: I'm not sure, /except for/ the one I'm really familiarized /with/. And a lot of people don't understand or they never heard of it or the language. But I am very familiar with it because it's where I'm from.

P: You've gone into the center of México, right?

J: Yes.

P: Did you like Mexico City?

J: Mexico city, yes. I have an aunt and uncle that live there. In fact, my uncle is Arabian.

P: Do you think they'll come here to live?

J: No, it's just like me--they prefer where they are and they like it.

P: Well, thanks again.

J: You're welcome.