

9-2-1976

## Interview no. 421

Laura Calamia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utep.edu/interviews>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Interview with Laura Calamia by Sarah E. John, 1976, "Interview no. 421," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute of Oral History at ScholarWorks@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Combined Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UTEP. For more information, please contact [lweber@utep.edu](mailto:lweber@utep.edu).

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Laura Calamia (1898- )  
INTERVIEWER: Sarah E. John  
PROJECT: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 2, 1976  
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted  
  
TAPE NO.: 421  
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 421  
TRANSCRIBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE TRANSCRIBED: \_\_\_\_\_

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Longtime El Paso resident.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biographical data; Anglo/Mexican relations; Diaz-Taft meeting; the Mexican Revolution; the Depression; entertainment and social life in early El Paso; Prohibition; tuberculars who came to El Paso to improve their health.

Length of Interview: 1 1/2 hours      Length of Transcript: 39 pages

Interviewee: Mrs. Laura Calamia

Born: July 5, 1898

Attended Alamo school and Sacred Heart Church.

Mrs. Calamia's mother was Beatrice Amity. Mrs. Calamia's mother died on October, 1909. (She was living in the barrio, then.)

Husband's name: Joe Calamia. They were married here in El Paso in 1919.

Summary:

1. Brief history of grandparents and their siblings on her mother and father's side.
2. Life in the barrio, close to St. Vrain Street when she was a child.
  - a. The streets and their conditions.
  - b. Her neighbors, for example, the Newmans.
3. Her experience in being present in the historical event of the Diaz-Taft meeting in September, 1909 that took place at the plaza downtown.
4. Mexican Revolution - The Revolution of 1911 in Juárez and here experience seeing Villa, and how El Paso sympathized with him.
  - a. Personally saw Villa at a barber shop on Stanton Street.
  - b. People in El Paso and how they sympathized with Villa.
  - c. How El Pasoans helped Villa and his followers.
5. Anglo/Mexican Relations in El Paso when she was a school-aged child, and how nobody noticed racial differences.
  - a. Race relations as a teenager at dances.
  - b. Race relations in school.
6. What El Paso and Juárez were like when she was young.
  - a. No big department stores in El Paso then.
  - b. People would shop in Juárez.
    1. Cheaper items, and no taxes.
  - c. El Paso then:
    1. Saw Mills Building being built.
    2. El Paso shootings
    3. Personal experiences seeing shootings during Prohibition between officers and smugglers.
    4. Entertainment in El Paso (when she was young)-dances and ice-cream parlors.
7. What she was doing during the Depression.
  - a. Left El Paso because her husband was offered a job to start a meter shop for the Gas Company in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon.
    1. Her arriving to Nuevo Leon.
    2. Mrs. Calamia put her son, Joe, in the México Franco School for boys.
    3. Stayed in Nuevo Leon for four years and had to come back because Mrs. Calamia got "the chills and fever," what was called paludismo.

8. Hospitals for the tuberculars in El Paso. (1908?).
  - a. Hotel Dieu
  - b. Dr. Long's Hospital--old St. Joseph's Hospital.
  - c. Hospital on Sacramento Street near Alabama Street.
9. Entertainment in El Paso during her time.
  - a. Picture shows (theaters)
  - b. Operas
  - c. Dancing
  - d. Ice-cream parlors
  - e. Baseball games
10. The Typhoid Fever Epidemic in El Paso (Segundo Barrio).
11. The flooding of the Rio Grande River.

Mrs. Laura Calamia  
by Sarah John  
September 2, 1976

- J: To begin the interview, Mrs. Calamia, could you please tell us when and where you were born?
- C: El Paso, Texas.
- J: Do you wish to give the date of your birth?
- C: Yes. July the 5th, 1898.
- J: Can you tell us a little bit about your grandparents, please?
- C: Well, my [grandfather] on my mother's side was a Frenchman, and he was in the Mexican and French army. Then later on, when they lost that war, he came over to the United States, which was Paso del [Norte] at that time, or Franklin. And after a certain time that he lived here, he became an American citizen, and even joined the United States Army. And he had the post of a marshall. I can't prove it, I have no writings; only one letter [in which] a party had asked him to give him information about a certain city slicker that was coming to El Paso, that he was a gambler and to watch out for him, that he was coming from New Mexico. So, he caught up with him, according to a letter that he answered. And what they used to do is tell them to leave the town; they weren't welcome. And that's how they used to do it.
- J: What was your grandfather's name?
- C: His name was Henry Amity. And he married a woman, her name was Tomasa. I never did get the true nationality of hers. Some say she was Spanish, some said she was part Mexican and Spanish, because of the Spanish at that time that came through here. Do you want to know about my other grandfather?
- J: Sure. If you're going to tell us about both sides, that's fine.
- C: My grandfather on my father's side was named James Miller. That is, he was my stepgrandfather, James Miller, because his real father had died around

the time of the Civil War, and he was only 20 days old. So, after a year, my grandmother, being a widow, she married Mr. Henry Miller, and naturally, he adopted the children of the widow as his own. And there was two other children born in the family, which was Henry Miller and Minerva. And the previous children from the first marriage was Ana Francis and James Hosey; their real name was Hosey. But we followed the name of my stepgrandfather, Henry Miller. That's on my father's side. They came from the East somewhere, and I think they stopped in Colorado. And they came here in a covered wagon, and they established themselves here.

My father was only 14 years old when he was appointed to drive a four-mule team, 'cause the man that was driving it before had gotten sick and died, and they buried him wherever he took sick on the road. And then he was the only man or boy available to drive this four-mule team, and so they gave him the job. And when he got to El Paso, at that time I guess it was already El Paso, all these menfolks had \_\_\_\_\_ themselves like they used to do, going into the saloons. They weren't bars at that time, they were saloons. And they tried to get him to drink. He says, "Come on boy. Have a drink." He says, "No, my mother won't let me." "You're a man. If you drove that team like the way you did, you're a man, you're not a kid anymore." So, they wanted him to take a drink of that corn whiskey. (Laughter)

So, anyway, they established themselves here too. Well, my father was here, and then his sister; and Ana Francis married Mr. Murray, and he was a miner. And he went into Mexico with another group for mining. And he took sick, pneumonia, and he died and was buried there, and the widow was left with five boys, Murrays. So, my mother and her sister were the only ones left on my mother's side. And they both were orphans once their father, which was

my grandfather, had gone to San Antonio to [check out] stakes of a property that was between New Mexico and El Paso. And some of the ladies that knew my parents at that time said that he never came back, that Indians or outlaws had attacked them in Sierra Blanca, and that he was buried there along with the others that got killed. And how they found out was because some of the survivors came to Fabens and they gave that report. So my grandmother could never prove that he was killed or what happened to him to the government. She tried to apply for assistance, a pension from the government, but the government denied her. And I have a letter that says there that they could not trace the death of Mr. Amity, so therefore they couldn't give her a substance, you know, or any part of the money that was supposed to be given to a widow.

So, she didn't last very long, broken hearted at that time; women didn't work, you know. So she passed away and left these two girls, which was my mother, Beatrice, and my aunt Ana. And Mr. and Mrs. Gaskey took the girls over to their home. He was a big cattleman. He was married to a little Indian girl from Fabens, Texas. I remember her very well; she lived to be 97, 98 years old. Her only surviving daughter took care of her till she died. They were very good people. And it was a big family. And the Gaskeys were very prominent at the time because of the father being a cattleman. [They] were a very good looking family. And the sons were connected with the city here. There was policemen, sheriffs and what have you, as my father was. After my father was here, in, say, 1907, my father was a policeman too, and he was a mounted police. In 1908 he was driving a wagonette and a hack at that time. So my mother died in 1909. And we were living at that time, which was the only and the nicest place to live, [in what we] used to call

the barrio.

J: What was your address at that time?

C: At that time, when she died, [it] was Ochoa Street, between Fourth and Third. The Rogers lived on one corner, we lived in the middle, and across the street the Gay family lived. And the Mateos lived there, too. All very nice families that lived around in there, which a lot of the prominent people of El Paso lived around in that area, even as far down as on Sixth Street.

J: What was the neighborhood like in those days?

C: Well, we all grew up there; we all went to the Alamo School. The Newmans lived on Fourth and Fifth, they had the whole block there. And I remember Mrs. Newman. She used to be on her bicycle, all dressed in black. And she would ride the streets; she'd go here and go there. And Mr. Newman would always stay put. (Chuckles) And we'd go by the house and it looked so mysterious all the time. They had so many trees and they had a big fence all around the place, you know. And everybody, and the kids especially, were always curious. And some kids used to throw rocks in there, just to get the old man out. (Chuckles) But Mrs. Newman was very funny. She was wearing a black dress with a veil over her hat, a black veil, and black high shoes. And she would ride that bicycle all over town. It was really something. And of course, it was a big kick to see her on the streets.

And the streets were all nothing but dirt. None of the streets were paved--none of them. The only paved street I remember, especially the first one was, I think, San Antonio. At that time when they started paving the streets my father was a foreman of the Ditheletic (?) Company, and I have a picture where he's a foreman of all that crew. And they paved Texas Street.



But you can say that was in 1912, 1914, somewhere around there. So I guess I'm getting ahead of myself. (Chuckles) Well, that's what I remember. And of course the Revolution, you know. My mother died in 1909, October.

J: Was the Diaz-Taft meeting before?

C: No. My mother died in 1909. And why I remember so well about our President Taft of the United States and about President Porfirio Diaz from Mexico, because my mother passed away in October, and they came in September. And all the children from the school were out, marching the streets, with flags and banners and what have you, and the bands all over. And it was a beautiful colorful affair. And those beautiful buggies, open buggies, or hacks--they were hacks really, open, you know, and they were sitting there. And Mr. Porfirio Diaz with all that gold fringe around his shoulders and that big high hat, you know, I thought he looked just like a king. At that time, we said, "My goodness, they're dressed like kings." And Mr. Taft was stocky, with a cigar, with a high black hat; I remember that very well. He looked very distinguished. And it took place right there in the square of the plaza, where the Mills Building is, because if I recall, he was there at the [St. Regis Hotel]. And of course, it was one of the nicest hotels at that time. That's what I remember. And then after that, in 1910, right after that parade, everybody was talking about a Revolution. And sure enough, in 1911, the first one we [had] contact with was over here in Juarez when Villa come up with this Revolution, and the bullets were flying all over here to El Paso.

J: Did you actually see any of that going on?

C: Yes, I did; I sure did.

J: What do you recall about that?

C: Well, I recall especially... (Laughter) I saw Villa when he won that incident there, the first time he came, he came across the bridge here, on that bridge on Stanton Street. And when I saw him, I couldn't believe [it]. Some of children says, "Guess who's here?" I says, "Who?" "Pancho Villa, Pancho Villa! He's in that barber shop." And that was on Stanton Street. Of course we had to walk back and forth to Stanton Street from my house to the stores downtown. It was nothing to walk 15-20 blocks to go to a store at that time; everybody walked then. And sure enough, we peeked through the window and there he was, sitting on one of those high chairs. And it was a Mexican barber, he was cutting his hair. And he had a paper in front of him, but he couldn't read. (Chuckles) But he did have a paper in front of him. Anyway, everybody, the people here in El Paso, especially, they all sympathized with Villa. They were all for Villa.

J: He was well liked here, then.

C: Oh, they were all for Villa! Everybody was for Villa, because they all figured that he was fighting for a good cause. He wasn't a bandido like they expressed themselves about him later, you know. He was fighting for the good cause, for the poor people. And all the rich people--I [had] contact [with them] a year later or two--were a lot of people from Chihuahua, Parral, and different places in Mexico coming here. And I even had the opportunity to rent them some apartments; I loaned some chairs. I felt sorry for them, not because they were poor, because they just had what they had on to get away from the Revolution, 'cause they were after them. I don't know if they would kill them or what, but I remember that those people, they really suffered a lot, because they were accustomed to have what they were brought up with, nice things and business and all that, and Villa just tore everything apart.

And a lot of them came over here without anything, but only what they had on.

And we helped them out, we all tried. Even a lot of families that had an extra room would rent them a room or give them something to feed them till somebody would bring them some money or see what they could bring from Mexico. While the revolutionaries went into the interior of Mexico, then they could send somebody to bring in something. And that's how they got along. And today, there's families still living here in El Paso, that I can name them, that went through all that, and I know who they are. They raised their families, they bought homes here, they educated their families here, and they're very happy. And they stayed here.

J: What did they think about the Mexican community that was here in El Paso?

C: They were surprised how we treated them, that we were all alike. That was an open country--everybody, their children were brought up as we had, and we all went to school together. It was easy to talk Spanish, switch from Spanish to English, from English to Spanish. The only difficulty we had in my house, we really had to talk English, because my father never could understand Spanish. (Chuckles) He said, "You all talk too fast." But otherwise, we just picked it up. Everybody that ever met me, they always thought that I went to Mexican School, [because of] how well I speak Spanish. I don't know if you think I do or not, since I'm talking to you. But I have learned by myself, because we picked it up and we were amongst the Mexican children. Of course, the Mexican language here in El Paso was very, well, crude, you know; never talked like it was supposed to be talked. But when I went into Mexico at one time--in 1929 my husband was over there in charge of the gas company, and we lived there four years--I

saw the difference; completely different. And they'd hear me talk Spanish over there, they never dreamed that I was from the border; they always thought I was from the interior somewhere. When I told them I was from El Paso, they said, "How can you be from El Paso when you're talking Spanish like you're talking?" It was so different, you know.

And my husband told me, "The only way you can correct yourself is just listen to the radio, listen to the radio and read all those pamphlets that they bring at the door." And then at night he would correct me. I was ashamed to talk Spanish to some of the people. And I liked the culture, they have beautiful culture; their art. They're very industrious people in Monterrey, Mexico--very much so. But over here at the border it's a different life, completely. But we got along with the Mexican children very well, and the families and everybody. I remember, a lot of the American people--the Anglos we say today--they would be what they call [a sponsor for a child]. When a child would be born, he says, "Will you be the sponsor for my child?" We didn't stop to think, "Well, she's Mexican, we can't get her to be our sponsor." Or, "She's Anglo, no. How can we do it?" No. They didn't think like that.

J: So, the relations were very good between the two groups?

C: Very nice and very sincere, let's put it that way--very sincere. Wherever we lived, they loved my father. Then my father couldn't see anybody in need or nothing like that. He didn't care who they were. He never stopped to say, "Well, don't you go around with them. You know who they are." Or this or that. No, never.

So, there we are. And like I say, up till today I have lovely Mexican friends. I've had them all my life. And I got along real nice when I was

young, and I started working in the stores. I belonged to what they used to call the Boton Rojo\* Was a nice affair on Sunday afternoons. We'd have like a dance. All the girls and boys would get together. Liquor never [was] served. It was punch, ice cream, cake--something like that. And we'd have just those dancing sessions.

J: Were those the most popular social events?

C: Yes, they were the most popular. Yes ma'am. There were a bunch of girls from 15 to 18, 20 years old. And they were all working girls. Some of them didn't work, they would stay home and go to school. But we that worked mingled with them. They invited us. Oh, you wouldn't go unless you were invited, naturally. You just wouldn't go in just to dance like a dance hall. They weren't called dance halls. They were just certain clubs. So I got to know a lot of nice people from Mexico that belonged to the club that mingled with us, and Anglos. And everybody was the same. Even Jewish boys used to go with us there. Yes, yes -- the Jewish boys used to go with us, and dance with us. And of course, we knew they would never be serious with any of the girls and we wouldn't either, you know. But, there was no difference. No hard feelings.

J: So, everyone just had a good time together, then?

C: Yes, that's right. And you know, when I was going to school in Alamo School, we had some nice...let's put it this way, some rich families' children going to Alamo School, where the very poorest of us would go there, too. But there was no distinction. We all had the same classes, the same teachers, the same books, the same everything.

J: That's interesting. What are your first childhood recollections of El Paso

---

\* Social Club in Cd. Juarez.

and Juarez in those days? What were the two cities like?

C: When I was real young, it was nothing for my mother to say, "Listen, go get me something from Juarez." And I was around nine or 10 years old at that time, I guess. And she needed lace or ribbon or velveteen or something like that. You would think we would shop here. But if I remember, we didn't have any stores here. We did have [some] stores. There was a Beehive Store on Oregon Street that was owned by Goodmans, Jewish people. They were very good and kind to my mother and my father, very nice people. And there was a bakery next door that belonged to the Kraus. They had a wonderful pastry [shop].

But we would go over there to Juarez and buy laces. She would give me samples and say, "Now, you get me this because I bought it there." And I think their names were Oppenheimer. Yes, one was Oppenheimer, and the [others], I can't recollect the name--the ones that came back to own The White House here in El Paso. They were four people, four Jewish people that owned The White House in El Paso, but they first started in Juarez. And it was La Casa Blanca in Juarez. And a lot of those Jewish people at that time intermarried with Mexican girls over there. Yeah. And that was very, very rare for them, when after the Revolution they came over here and they had Mexican daughter-in-laws, nieces, you know. Of course, they were all high aristocratic people. They all had money at that time. They were all money people, you know. But there were a few Jewish people that intermarried with Mexican girls over there, and very nice families. I got to see that. And I admired them very much.

And I was told later in years--of course, I was too young to understand anything like that at that time--[that] they used to shop in Juarez because

they'd get a lot of that stuff from France. And they didn't have to pay duties, according to what they used to tell me. So you got it awfully cheap, you know. You'd get some of it here--you'd get laces from Switzerland, from England, from Italy. A lot of those homes were decorated with stuff that they brought in from Mexico. But they brought it through Mexico, yes; but the imports weren't very much. So, therefore, you didn't even pay taxes at that time. You just went across and bought what you wanted, bring it, and nobody even bothered you. But you got what you [didn't] have [here].

You know what a lot of families did? Juarez and [El Paso were] so close that [when a] child was born it didn't matter [where] you took that child to be baptized.

J: Oh, really?

C: Yes, believe it or not. Or take it to Fabens or take it to Las Cruces. One of my cousins, we couldn't find her birth certificate all over El Paso. We even went to Juarez. Of course Juarez was burned, you know, a couple of times, the Guadalupe Church over there. And so, finally I said, "Well, the last resource is Las Cruces." 'Cause I remember that our parents used to go to Las Cruces a lot. In fact, my mother owned property in Las Cruces. See, they had a lot of communications. That's why I don't know about my grandmother on my mother's side. I think she belonged to New Mexico, because they were going back and forth, and we used to go on a wagon or something, I don't remember--that was way back. But afterwards [when there was the] railroad, then we would go back and forth on the train. Oh, it was a big thrill [to go on] the train. And then it'd stop at midnight and pick us up. The train always stopped at midnight in Las Cruces. I don't know why it came out so late, but anyway, that's how it was. And I looked

for this baptism certificate for my cousin, and sure enough, there it was in Las Cruces. One of the trips that they made over there, they took the baby and they baptized him over there. You know what I mean?

J: Yeah.

C: I was baptized in the Sacred Heart Church here in El Paso on South Oregon Street. Everybody went there, that was the mother church. Now, my first grade that I went to school was there in Sacred Heart. Up to my second grade I think I went there. And, of course, at that time, everybody paid for their books, you know, and paid for whatever...everything was paid by your parents. There wasn't such a thing as the city giving you anything, like today. But like I tell you, there's some birth certificates you'd find in Fabens, you'd find in Ysleta and Clint, any of those old churches. And you know, we used to go...I remember that the families used to get together and go to Fabens or Clint for the San Lorenzo [festival]. The other day when I saw it in the paper, that they're making a big fiesta for San Lorenzo. Well, I remember way back when we used to go there. It would be a whole day. You'd get up early in the morning to get there about two hours later.

J: Sure, it took a long time to travel on those roads.

C: And we stayed there all day. And I'll never forget that they drank tesguino. It's some kind of a wine or refreshment that's made out of the corn, I guess, because it does ferment. That's what the grown folks were drinking, the tesguino.

J: You can recall the name. That's something.

C: I don't know how you spell it, believe me.

J: Well, but you remember it.



C: Yeah, I remember tesguino. And that was a big thrill going back and forth, like I said. So the relationship with the Mexican people at that time, well, I would say it was beautiful. In fact, with me it was, and us. We were quite a family here, my aunts and uncles and cousins. So even up till today, why we see it the same. And we wonder why, [there's] so much commotion today and so much [talk] about not having equal rights and all that sort of stuff. We never dreamed of anything like that before. And everybody was happy. We all worked together, we all helped one another. When there was a death in the family, my goodness, you'd be surprised what the people used to do. They'd go over there and help; no matter if they were strangers, they'd try to help and do what they could for you, especially when they were very poor.

A friend of mine told me, "I won't ever forget your mother and my mother." They used to go and dress up a corpse. If she didn't have anything to wear for her funeral, they'd go and get in the wardrobe and pick up a dress from somebody, and dress her up and clean her up. But they had to bury them right away, because they didn't embalm them at that time, you know. And she says, "I'll never forget that your mother got so sick." She was vomiting and vomiting; she got so sick because the smell around that place was awfully bad and she got nauseated. And she couldn't control herself. So, they were awfully scared for her. And they took her away, you know, I guess because the lady that died had been there sick for a long time. I don't know. They had no cleanliness or nothing, you know. But this lady, that's what she told me, you know. She says, "I'll never forget it. But no, your mother and my mother were awfully brave. They'd go all over the place, especially when they were our church members and all that." Yeah, it was

a nice life. We had a nice life, I thought.

J: What did El Paso look like in those days? What buildings were here?

C: Well...the buildings? Well, more or less, like [the] Mills Building, for instance, I saw that building coming up. I can recollect the vision of when they first built it. And I saw it redecorated about four times. This is the last time I saw it change hands, you know. I've been very proud of my city here, believe it or not, because I saw it grow from nothing. I saw sidewalks made out of lumber. And I saw saloons. Of course, we wouldn't dare pass by a saloon, we'd go across the street. And those doors would swing back and forth. I think the Coney Island was very famous at that time.

J: Oh yes, I think that was one of the most popular saloons at that time.

C: Yeah, and that's where all the killings were going on. [An] outlaw was coming from Las Cruces [one time]. Now, this was told to me, not that I remember that. But my father told me, he said, "This outlaw was coming from Las Cruces, and the other one was over here waiting for him. And this outlaw came after him. He was coming to kill him. So, he no more opened the door and he was killed." Yeah. And that other shooting that happened on El Paso Street, Santa Fe, that catty-corner there. Four men got killed there, a shoot-out. One accidentally got killed, but three of them, I think, got killed while shooting it out. Well, I saw many men with their guns on their hips. Yes, I did. And you didn't have to have a permit at that time, I don't think.

J: Oh, no. I think everybody carried a gun at that time. Do you happen to remember an incident that happened in 1916, when the Anglos here in town took revenge on the Mexican community in South El Paso, because some American engineers had been killed by some Villistas in Santa Isabel, Chihuahua?

Do you remember that incident at all? That was in 1916.

C: Was that Felipe Angeles?

J: No. It was some Villistas who had killed these engineers. The Anglos came down, they were going to take revenge here in South El Paso against the people who lived down there, because these engineers had been killed in Mexico and their bodies had been sent back here. It had caused a lot of bitterness.

C: The engineers were Anglos?

J: Yes, they were from here.

C: And then they were waiting for them to come by here?

J: Well, from what I understand, the Anglo community was very much up in arms.

C: Oh, yes.

J: And they wanted to take revenge out on someone, and the closest people were the Mexican people of South El Paso.

C: In South El Paso? No, I don't think so. No, I don't believe that. Because if it was anything like it, it is because somebody lived around there--they knew about it, or was mixed up in it. And that's because they used to hide them, you know. That's for sure. They used to harbor them, especially the revolucionarios, they used to call them. They'd come across, you know, hiding, and they'd take them in and hide them, you see. So, you wouldn't know really if they were here or not. The only thing I remember about that incident--I think it was that time--is that they did go down there in South El Paso, and they were going into a lot of the homes. See, where they were looking for them. But I can't recollect if they ever found them or not, if they finally got away. You know, they went back to Mexico.

J: Right.

C: So, I don't know.

J: How did you meet your husband? Was he from El Paso, originally?

C: Yes. He was here. He was working with the gas company. And he was from Italy.

J: Oh.

C: He came over, his family brought him over when he was only 18 months old. And they couldn't come to the United States right away. You know, at that time they had a quota; they still have. And they came through Mexico. And they had to live in Mexico two years before they could come to the United States. So what they did, they came through Mexico, through Veracruz, I think. [The reason] they came to Juarez was because his grandfather and grandmother were already living in Juarez. And they're the ones that enticed them to come over--that America was very rich--and, "Come to America. Don't be there, don't stay there." Little by little the family came over. And they were the last ones to come. The Avocatos were already here, and that was a brother of my mother-in-law. And he was a big cattleman in Chihuahua. He came in a hurry when Villa hit Chihuahua.

J: I bet.

C: Yes, he had a lot of money here in the State National Bank. Yeah. But that's how I met my husband. Oh, after they stayed there two years in Juarez--they had never worked for anybody--right away they opened a business. They had a general store and a big yard, and they even bought the place right away instead of paying rent. So, at that time, you know, Ochoa was one of the richest and wealthiest men in the state of Chihuahua, and he was living in Juarez. And they got acquainted with him and he even baptized one of my husband's brothers that was born in Juarez. But at that time, there was a law that he was an Italian subject, so he was never a Mexican citizen--that is, my brother-

in-law, Leonard. His name was Leonard. But my husband was already at that time, when [Leonard] was born, my husband was already four years old or three and a half years old. So, finally, when their time was up in Juarez, then they came over to El Paso and they bought a piece of property on Fifth Street. They built a two story tenement house, and they had a big store down in the front part of this building. And by that time, he was going to school, and he finished school. He went to school in Juarez for a time, a couple of years. Joe was very intelligent. He had really a mind. And then he finished high school here. At that time, where was high school? Oh, it was there on Magoffin Street. What do you call that school?

J: The ones that are there now?

C: The one that's on Magoffin, on Myrtle Avenue.

J: San Jacinto? Saint Mary's?

C: No, no. It's a public school.

J: I can't recall right now.

C: What's the name of that school? But anyway, that's where he finished. And he went to work for the gas company when he was only 18 years old, and he worked for the gas company 48 years. I met him after four years that he worked for the gas company. But at the age of 21 he became an American citizen.

J: So, when were you married?

C: Here in El Paso, 1919.

J: 1919?

C: Yes.

J: I guess you were here in El Paso during the 1920s, is that correct?

C: Oh, yes.

J: Do you remember anything about Prohibition at all?

C: Do I? (Laughter) Boy, the bullets started coming just like if it was a revolution.

J: Oh, no!

C: Yes! See, my in-laws owned this property over there, and we lived there, too, on that property. And so we would know all the traffic about the Prohibition. I'm telling you, it was a racket. And I remember two of the customs officers, I can't even recall their names, they were so \_\_\_\_\_. They'd just go up there and sit there and wait for them like if they were pigeons, waiting for them to come. And sometimes they'd get them and sometimes the other side would get them, see. I don't know what you would call it today, but it was awful, I thought. But they did get a lot of people from over there on this smuggling of the liquor. And they used to bring their very best liquor. They had the very best. (Laughter) And many times they went to the store to sell my father-in-law liquor. Yeah, sell it real cheap. And believe it or not, sometimes he would buy it. Yeah, he would buy it for our own use, because that was really the only way that you could get it. And if you really wanted good whiskey and you needed it because of a cold or pneumonia at that time...the doctor would subscribe, "Well, get a good shot of whiskey." So, they would go and buy it at a drug store. Of course, you would pay a big price for it. But that's why there was so much bootlegging.

You know, you can't force people to do something that they're already accustomed to. And I think that was bad. First, I was very happy that they had that law, the prohibition of liquor, because there were so many drunks that I saw when I was young, and I just couldn't stand to see drunks, you know. And I said, "Well, at least they quit drinking." No, it was worse. It turned out to be worse, because then is when the bootlegging started and

then there really were "alkies". Then a lot of them turned into "alkies". And various nice families, I've got to see some young boys that they were real nice and going to school, and all of a sudden they turned to "alkies" because they started drinking, especially in the parties where they had it on the...well, on the hiding parts, you know, where nobody would know. But you would see that they were getting something somewhere, and that's how they got started. A lot of the people were worse off, really, they were worse off afterwards. There were a lot of "alkies" afterwards. Which I never remember seeing "alkies" before when it was wide open, let's say.

And then, you never saw anybody...only in saloons you could go, and who would go in saloons? Only men. Of course, we wouldn't dare. A boy wouldn't take you to a bar at that time; there wasn't such a thing as that. We had beautiful ice cream parlors here in El Paso. Some of your aunts and grandparents and your mother and father got to go to these nice places where we had...right where Grant's used to be, where McCrory's is today, we had a beautiful ice cream parlor there. Oh, you'd sit down in those nice little tables, they'd come and wait on you, all kinds of nice refreshments. See, at that time nobody thought about a bar. And then they had another one on South El Paso [Street] that my husband and I used to go to that Syrians owned. It was the Grand Central Hotel on the corner at one time, and about the middle of the block between Overland and say, Second Street, it was at that time. It was all a nice neighborhood there. Anybody could go and come into a parlor and eat ice cream or buy something there. There were all kinds of stores like there are today, but I wouldn't dare walk those streets today. But at that time, anybody could go down there and be respected. A bunch of girls [could come in] together and sit down and eat a dish of ice cream or [have a] soda.

Right there across the street from The Popular, catty-corner, was a beautiful social ice cream parlor. And there was another one also where the Natural Gas building is, right across from the Bassett Building, there, [on] that corner there was another ice cream social there. And real nice, too.

J: So that was the most popular thing? The dances and going there?

C: Yeah.

J: You mentioned the other day that you weren't in El Paso during the Depression. Why did you leave?

C: Oh, because when the Depression was coming, and was already hitting pretty hard, my husband was a foreman at the gas company, at the Southern Union Gas Company. And he was in the meter department; he was a foreman. And he had about 14 to 18 men under him. And little by little they were laying them off, till finally he was the only one left. So he was repairing some of the meters, because there was no help; they didn't have any more money to pay them. And each department was coming down to nothing, of the gas company. The electric company and all the companies, as far as that goes.

But just then, he was about ready to give up, because he was getting very bored by himself there, and no help and everyone was so sad and all that. And then a friend of somebody connected with the gas company--Mr. Black--he called this man here at this company and asked him if he had anybody that was willing to go to Mexico, to Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, that they were just wanting to train some people over there for the natural gas that was coming in from Chicago. It was coming in through that area, from San Antonio, Laredo. See, it was coming through there. But they needed a man, somebody, or an engineer. So then he says, "Well, business is awfully bad here in El Paso, but there is one man that I could recommend very much, but



I'll let you know, because I don't know if he is willing to [go], he's got a family here. I don't know if he wants to move. So, I'll call you."

So, sure enough, he went over to my husband, and he says, "Joe, you know what? I just got a call from a Mr. Black. He is a big man over there, connected with Monterrey, and they need a man to start a regular meter shop like this here. Would you consider it?" "Oh," he says, "I don't know." He said, "Joe, if I were you, I'd take it, because this is going to close down. Then, what are you going to do?" He says, "They'll pay all your expenses, and they'll pay you in dollars. They didn't say how much right now, but that's what they said. 'Tell him that it is a good proposition. If you can get him to come, we'll pay all his household expenses and the passes for his family, any transaction that's got to be taken care of, we'll be responsible for--passports and what have you.'" So, he came home that night and told me about this. I said, "Well, I think we ought to consider it." So, sure enough, it took us a week to make up our minds, and we got connected with the people over there and everything. And there was no time. Then we got the money coming in. He was being paid even more than what he was making here in American dollars, and at that time the American dollar was only five to one.

So, my husband says, "Well, let's take all our furniture if they're going to pay for it. What are we going to do over there without furniture?" I said, "Well, let's do it then." So, stove and everything we took. And they paid for all the expenses. And the passports, we had to go to the Consul here, and I don't know what all we did, I don't remember very well. But I've got the passports as a souvenir. And when we got to Laredo, it was 12 o'clock that night, and we said, "Let's go to a hotel." And then the

immigration officer says, "No, I'll tell you what. Before you go anywhere, I'll get the Vista Buena"--that's the head man of the immigration--"and put an OK on this, so you can go through." And sure enough, he came down, he already had orders, see, saying that we were coming, naturally. So, at 12 o'clock at night with the flashlight, he signed those things. I'll never forget that.

And those people there were so kind. Like I said, I have nothing against Mexican people, because every Mexican that I've had contacts with from my childhood till today... He was connected with the immigration there, or the aduanas, or whatever you want to call it. And he knew that we hadn't eaten, you know, and that we wanted to go to a hotel. His wife came out and said, "Tell these nice people to come in. I have everything ready for them to eat." "Oh, my goodness," I says, "is this a restaurant, I wonder, or what?" "No," says the man, "the lady is inviting you to eat." I says, "My goodness, it's so late." We never enjoyed a meal so much in that humble home, like we did that night at midnight. You ought to see how beautiful...they had that dried meat, you know, over the red coals. They had beans, they had eggs, they had chile, they had those good tortillas. And we sat there and we talked and my husband and those two men drank, I think, two or three beers. And the ladies and their children--there were two of them, I remember--and my son, they drank sodas. And I did have a beer with them, with our dinner, I remember. And it was so good and so nice, honest to goodness. And it was only a two hour drive from there to Nuevo Leon, to Monterrey. But, we stayed overnight there.

But by the time we got to Monterrey, our stuff was already there. And as soon as I got there, I'll never forget it. I was so shocked one time.

My husband went in there to this place where he was supposed to meet these people that hired him through telephone and through mail, and I stayed in the car, because we took our car. We drove up there, that's how we did it. And this Mr. Black--I found out he was Mr. Black that came to the car--my husband had parked the car on one side of the street. Anyway, about 15 minutes later this Anglo came by and he asked if I was Mrs. Calamia, and I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, I'm so and so." And I looked at him, but he was talking to me in Spanish. Mr. Black was talking to me in Spanish. Because he said, "Es Ud. la Señora Calamia?" "Sí, señor." And you know what he said? He said so beautiful, he says, "Voy a mover su [coche] porque está estacionado mal; no debe estar estacionado en esta calle." Oh, first time I heard "estacionado"--parked. Over here they would say, "Está 'parqueado' mal." So, I just looked at him, and I said, "Well, he's Anglo like I am. Why is he talking to me in Spanish?"

J: Or, "What does he mean?"

C: But anyway, they're so used to, you know... Then Joe came afterwards, and I said, "You know, he used beautiful Spanish." I said, "But, he's an American like we are. How come?" He said, "That's the way he met me at the door. But after a while we talked. He's got a son, here, going to the school here." And the textbooks of the school were from Texas. All the American Anglos that were there teaching the Mexican people for the industrious things, you know, they all had their school there. It was a Texas school, affiliated with the Texas system. So, nothing but people that had money had their children there, because it was costing quite a bit. So, right away we made arrangements. But Mr. Black told us, he says, "I have a son about [your son's] age, maybe a year or two older. And I got him in that school. So, there, I guess,

would be a good place. We'll talk about that later." So, sure enough we put Joe in the school and he stayed there about two months, and he wasn't getting anywhere. All he [did was draw] planes, and I said, "What kind of a school [is it]?"

Anyway, my husband took it up with Mr. Black and some other big shot there, [who] were from different parts of the United States. He says, "Well, that's just a playboy school." He says, "I took my kid out of there and put him in the Franco Mexico School. Nothing but Spanish they teach there, but boy, they'll use the discipline and they come and show you their grades, what they're doing." He says, "That's what I tell you that I did with mine, so it's up to you." So, sure enough, we took Joe out of that school and put him into the Mexico Franco School. And there, you see, at one time they were priests, brothers--what they call brothers, you know. But they were dressed just like any civilians; you wouldn't know that they were brothers. And it was just for boys. But those boys wouldn't go to that school without their shoes shined, their necktie and their little white shirt and a suit. Of course, I always had my son dressed; I didn't care who didn't dress who, but I always dressed my son right. Anyway, I was very happy that he went to that school, because he was really progressing then. But he had the difficulty of the Spanish, because everything was in English for him before, you know. But since my husband knew Spanish very well, and he did go to school and learn Spanish...and like I said, he had a very brilliant mind. And the same way in English; he would remember dates from way back, no matter what, you know, and books and stuff like that. So, he would help him out with his homework. So, that made it a little easier for him.

And we were there four years, and [the reason] we had to come back was because I got that chills and fever that they call paludismo. Oh, I was sick all the time. I had to take quinine, I don't know how many milligrams a day. And I was sick all the time. And the boy was doing awfully good in school. And Joe was making better money. By that time he already had built him a nice meter shop. And he had 12 men working under him, and they picked up fast. They really learned the trade right now. Because, you know, Mexican people are very, very intelligent--in mathematics, they're very good. And they learn fast. And of course, the companies hire nothing but good people; they were the middle class people--not the real poorest kind or not the others, you know. And they paid them well; they paid them well, they wanted to progress.

And that's what I'm saying about Nuevo Leon, especially Monterrey. They used to call it the Little Detroit when we were there, because I never saw so many [industries], and the people so ambitious and industrious. After they found out we were making dollars, and that I had a pretty good position, then we had some friends. I didn't know anybody, and they didn't know whether to associate with us or not until they found out who we were. And then I had invitations from very nice people, from the high class people. And they invited us to their card parties or card games and to outings and las meriendas, which were like little socials about four or five o'clock in the evening. And then they'd ask you for dinner, and it would be at 10 o'clock at night. So, we enjoyed it very much. And we had a nice home. Well, a home like that, that we had over there, you know, it would have cost us at least \$500 a month of rent. And I had two maids. Oh, I went beautiful over there.

J: So, then during the Depression you had it easier over there than if you had stayed here?

C: Yeah. And then when we came over here to visit, we were so sad to see everybody so poor. Our family was just barely getting along. My mother-in-law still had that big tenement, and from \$25 she had to bring it down to \$10 for rent. And then she had to beg them to pay her, because they didn't have it. And there was a family there that she never did charge. She said, "My goodness, they have five kids to feed, I didn't have the nerve to go and ask them for the rent. One day when the times come good, they'll pay me." My mother-in-law and father-in-law were very charitable too; they were very good people. And they didn't press anybody, you know. So, there was one family there with five or six kids, and they said, "No, we can't press them for the rent. They can hardly make it for food, for those kids. So, whenever they work and the money is coming in, I'm sure they'll pay me. And if not, well, God knows best." That's the way they used to look at it.

And that's the way we used to look at it. Not like over here, dollar to dollar, dog to dog, you know--see who's making a dollar more. It was different, it was different. People were more compassionate, more thoughtful, more kind, [there was] more togetherness, I don't know. And that's what you miss at my old age. Now I see so different, I don't see it like it used to be. And it's because the city had grown to what it is today. And of course, there's all kinds of people here from all over the world. At that time, we had a lot of people from the east and from the north.

My father, for instance, when he was driving the wagon and the hack, he was working for Pomeroy at that time. And guess what? He would bring in people on stretchers.

[PAUSE]

C: Now, where was I?

J: You were talking about your father, about the tuberculosis?

C: Oh, we were talking about that we were kind to one another, and had a lot of compassion towards one another? Anybody that was suffering or had something, it was nothing to go and give him a hand, which I know it's [different] today. Nobody wants to get involved. Nobody wants to get involved. They're afraid to call the policemen, because they're afraid that maybe something might happen to them. Well, I don't have that attitude. If I see something going wrong with my neighbor, I'll call the police, and I'll give them my name if I have to. What am I for? But today, a lot of people don't want to get involved. But at that time everybody got involved, because they were more sympathetic, especially when you needed help.

Now, when my father was driving a wagon at that time, which I think it was the year of 1907-8, Hotel Dieu was just a small place. I remember the verandas around the building. But it was so dignified. We thought that was so good for us to have that beautiful hospital--and the nuns walking down the street; there was so much respect, beautiful. But anyway, these trains, when they'd come in, they would stop in the middle of Oregon. The tracks used to be on the streets. And at that time I think the street was named Main; yeah, Main and Oregon. And they used to pick up the passengers from the train right there and put them in the wagon and take them to the hotels or wherever they were destined to go. And some of them went to Hotel Dieu.

And one particular patient, he was a dying man. My father, I remember saying, "Oh, we brought a lot of sick people in tonight. One man especially--he's young, but he sure is in a bad way. He is a tubercular. So we dropped

him off at Hotel Dieu." And when Hotel Dieu got so full of these people, they began to expand and there was another building on Arizona. I think it still stands there, if I'm not mistaken. Yeah, it's still there on the hill, you know, on Arizona. The nuns had that place, too, and there were tuberculars there. And then [there was] Dr. Long's hospital, which was the old Saint Joseph's. And Hotel Dieu was connected with it. And this other place on Arizona Street was a house with about eight rooms, but there were nuns there that took care of sick people. Then it got so bad, and so many tuberculars started to come in that they built tents up in the Highland Park area. Many tents I saw; when we would ride in the buggy of my Aunt Stewart, we would go up the hill there. There was nothing over there but sticks and weeds and rocks--no paved streets, no nothing. But we would see the tents all scattered--white tents, they were all white. And that's what they were--tuberculosis patients living there. And then they opened up another hospital which is... the building still stands there. It's on Sacramento and I don't know what that other street is; [it's] a block below Alabama on Sacramento Street. There's a [brick] building there, three or four stories. And that was a hospital. They built that way afterwards, to get rid of the tents.

And then you'd see a lot of little houses with what they used to call screen porches. There was a house with maybe two or three rooms, but all around the house was the porch and they were screened. And they had canvas that they could roll up for shade, you know. And they were all tuberculars--all right there on Sacramento Street, and well, all of that area on Cotton. On, what is it? North Piedras. All in those hills right there, that's all it was, tubercular area. And we were scared. I remember the people would be scared of the tuberculosis, because actually at that time I don't think they



had anything to...it was so contagious, you know. And to prevent you [from] catching it, the only way they used to do...I remember people talking, not because it happened to us, thank God for that, but I remember people talking. They had to separate her--put her all to herself, or put him all to himself. Dishes and everything were just for them--never put them together. And if they went in their rooms where they were, you'd put a mask on your nose. That's how strict they were. Because naturally, all these people bringing tuberculosis over here, everybody would have gotten tuberculosis. And a lot of the poor people, especially the Mexican poor people, at one time, I remember they found a lot of tuberculosis among a lot of poor Mexican people. But right now, and then, by that time, they knew how to attack it, see. We were safe then, because we knew that it was already taken care of.

And then another incident that I remember about an epidemic coming over here was the polio, infantile paralysis. My little sister Flora, she was attacked before my mother died, but they called it at that time infantile paralysis. They didn't know what to do. They just laid there until it worked out of their system, and they would stay there crippled. My sister's been a cripple ever since. And then they had the other one that came afterwards, her daughter, five years old, had it. And that was the epidemic that hit here. I guess you remember that.

J: Yeah.

C: And that was what? About 30 years ago? It was hit awfully hard. Dr. Brack was just beginning. Oh, God bless him. He was just beginning and he took Rosalie over and he said, "Well, if you trust me, this is going to be my first case of polio. If you trust me, I'll do all I can for [her]." And he did. And look what he is today. But it was a miracle that Rosalie got to walk.

We had novenas there at the cathedral. And they had meetings with the doctors. And doctors said, "You publish it in your books and your literature, in your Catholic [literature]. But don't mention us." We got the books and it went all over the world, and Rosalie's got books from all over the world-- little novenas, and notes and letters, because it was a miracle that she got out of that wheel chair because she was hit from her hips down. And she's walking. She's a teacher today. She drives her car, she dances waltzes, she goes on conventions, she's a club woman, she is a regent of the Catholic Daughters. So she's a very active person. And that was that epidemic at that time.

And then another one, when I was...let's see, when we still had that store...no, we had given up the store on Fifth and Florence. That's where my mother- and father-in-law's property was. We had that place vacant; we didn't know what to do with it. They thought we'd buy a piece of property up on the north side. We used to call it the north side, across the tracks. At that time everybody lived on the other side of the tracks. There was no distinction then. And the very best of families--which became very prominent in El Paso--lived around there. For instance, the Caples. When that building started up, I remember it, and I knew the Caples.

And I knew a lot of the people that are very wealthy today and prominent. I remember the Mathias, the Schwartz, the Goldbergs--all those Jewish people. They were very poor; they weren't rich at that time. But they made themselves. All that family of the Schwartz, they were just like you and I. But they were business people. They all had business heads. And they had it made because they took advantage of the progressing of El Paso. They knew what El Paso was going to be. So those boys were born in the store, you can say.

Lupita de Aguirre a cashier there when she was only 16 years old. And she saw when those boys were born and then they helped her even do the wrappings and everything there, like a big family. And that's the way the people used to look at you, the employees--they used to look at you like one of the family. That was the pretty part of it. And you went with a lot of gusto to work, let's put it that way. You'd eat together. You'd joke and even dance. when I was working for Mr. Stolaroff, I was just a kid, and he took a liking to me, and he wanted to take me to New York on his buying trips. He said, "What are you doing over here? A beautiful girl like you, you ought to be in New York. You could get you a rich man or something like that." I said, "Who wants a rich man? I'm happy like I am." (Chuckles) But he was so cute; he was so nice. I don't know, they were different. You know what I mean?--the feelings toward another person. And he gave us a beautiful party at the Paso del Norte [Hotel], on the roof. And I didn't know how to dance the one-two step. He said, "why aren't you dancing, Miss Miller?" I said, "I don't know how to dance that dance, that piece." "Well, come on, I'll show you." And he was the big boss at the store, mind you. So, sure enough, I got up there and danced with him, and oh, my goodness, we got a lot of applause. Why, I don't know. (Chuckles) But it was so nice.

That's what I mean, that was our entertainment, and the picture shows. Oh, we had to go to see a picture show every Sunday. And believe me, the picture shows at that time were really good. They were comical pictures, there were musical pictures. And then we had operas. We had operas too, when I was growing up and married; go to the opera all the time--there at the Estrella. They had the Mexican companies coming from different places.

They would have the best companies coming in there. And the Alhambra Theater, and the Crawford Theater-- why, a lot of those companies used to come to those theaters. But they were clean pictures. I mean, they wouldn't tell you, "No, you don't go to that show. Don't go to that show. We don't want you to go to that show." We never heard that. They never told us never to go to a show, because it wasn't a good show or something like that. There wasn't such a thing. That was another entertainment that we really had and enjoyed so much.

And when the burlesque show...(chuckle), that was the thing. "Show girls" that they used to call them, you know. There was a theater right there across the street from the Paso del Norte. And I'll never forget when a lot of us girls got together and we sneaked in in the afternoon when they were rehearsing. We wouldn't dare go at night, you know, to those shows. But we had a friend that said that they rehearsed, and they would let us go in and see. So, we went there to see. And well, dancing, kicking and all that, you know. But that's how we used to get around. [There was] nothing but dancing and ice cream socials and parties at home. "Oh, so and so's birthday. They're having a party and we're invited." But you never went anywhere without being invited. You wouldn't just break in or walk in. There wasn't such a thing as that. If you weren't invited, you weren't invited, and that's the way it was. That's right.

So, this other epidemic that came, too, was the typhoid. And we had our place vacant on Fifth Street and Florence. So, Dr. McAmitt, may his soul rest in peace, he came along there with Rosita Martin. She was a midwife and a nurse, very competent. And she always worked with him, and another nurse. I don't remember her name, she was an Anglo. And Martin was a Mexican girl--

woman, I should say. She already was married. And she came from Mexico when the Revolution [started]. But she was already starting over there as a nurse in some hospital. And she did take care of a lot of the wounded over there. And then she came over here, and she got in with Dr. McAmitt instead of getting into a hospital, because she knew a lot about midwifing, you know. And in Mexico, that's what they had, only midwives. So, he took interest in her because she had some schooling, and he could trust her. And so, whenever he went to families where they had their children at home, their babies at home, she would go with him, or he would tell her to go and see how that patient was and then she would report to him. That's what happened to me with her, yeah. So, everybody loved Rosita. She was beautiful.

So, then, when this epidemic came, the typhoid fever that was scattered around, somebody brought it from Mexico, and then the poor people began to get sick. Some of their friends or relatives that came from Mexico, they brought it. And it started to extend right there in el barrio, the Segundo Barrio. So, since I knew Dr. McAmitt, he was a ball fan--my husband was a ball player. He was a captain and a coach for the El Paso club. He really was a good ball player. He was the manager and the coach, I guess. Anyway, he was a very famous ball player. There's still two of them living who were on his team--Modesto Gomez and Pete Leyva. And they're way up in their 80's, close to 90's. And they were on Joe's team. And they were invited to be in the big teams in the East. My husband never wanted to leave El Paso, but Pete Leyva did. But he didn't last very long, he didn't like the way they... Once you live on the border, they don't like to go over there, especially at that time, you know, at that time. So, Dr. McAmitt says, "Who owns this place?" I said, "Well, my father-in-law does." "Oh," he says, "I wonder

if he wants to rent it. The city will pay him for it." I said, "Well, sure, we want to rent it." You know, I didn't even go ask him. I said sure, because I was supposed to be the one that knew about business and do business things in the family, you know, something like that. I'm not bragging, but my mother-in-law used to rely on me to do things like that. And so I said, "Sure, we want to rent it." I says, "What will the city pay us?" He said, "Well, I guess whatever you want to ask for it; we need it. I'm going from house to house to get these children vaccinated. You want to help us?" I said, "I sure do."

So I volunteered. And we went around the neighborhoods, you know, and asked the mothers to bring in their children to that place there where we were. And he had three nurses and a doctor besides him. And they were vaccinating everybody, and injecting everybody if they needed it or didn't need it. They had to do it. And in three weeks that thing was down--no more epidemic. They closed everything. I think they gave us \$100 for the three weeks that they were there with us, which was very good. I didn't put any prices. I let the city send me the check. And that's what they did. They sent us \$100, which was very good at that time. Yeah, it was very nice. Dr. McAmitt was a big fan. He used to like my husband a lot because he was a ball player. Well, that was another diversion that we had at that time here--the baseball; it was a big thing. It is today, you know, but I mean, the boys, the young boys, that's all they were doing, playing baseball or boxing. Boxing and playing ball. And the teams used to get together from here to Juarez and Juarez to here.

J: That's interesting, too.

C: Well, you know what we forgot [to talk about]? About Villa, when I was

almost shot. Do you want to put that in?

J: Yeah, tell us about that incident that happened to you.

C: Can I just put it in?

J: Yeah, go ahead and bring it in now.

C: You know, I just remember about that Revolution of Villa. I want to tell you two incidents, because we were going to school at that time and the families were afraid for us to keep on going to school because the bullets were flying all over when they were hitting. Now, I think Villa hit Juarez three or four times. But the last time, the third time...oh, no, they hit Juarez more than that. When I was just about 11 years old, this happened in 1911, of course...no, I was 12, because I was born in 1898. So, I was twelve. My stepgrandfather asked me to take care of a pot of soup while he went to town, and he was filling his pipe with some tobacco. That's what he used to smoke. And he had put on his big Stetson hat, because that's what they used to wear. My father wore the Stetson hats, too. They thought they were dressed up when they wore those big Stetson hats, and they were expensive at that time, and today they're more. So, as long as they had their shoes shined and their shave, and their clean hair cut... They used to say [that] a man should have a clean neck, shave, and a haircut and shoes shined and a hat on, and he was a man. And believe it or not, that's what those men used to do, and they were really "he-men".

And he had on his big Stetson hat and he was filling his pipe, and I was almost elbow to elbow with him, when he was telling me about taking care of that soup. He was kidding me. He said, "I'm afraid you're going to let that burn." I said, "No, I know how to do it." So, just then, a shot came in, that I don't even remember hearing it. But it went through my

stepgrandfather's hat, and he put his hand over my head and squat me down on the floor right quick in a hurry. I didn't know what happened. I said, "What?" He said, "Keep down there! Don't you get up!" All I could hear him saying [was], "All the time I was in the Confederacy I never got a hat shot, but I did have [to have] a damn Mexican to come and shoot it. It ruined my hat!, (laughs), and it was Villa's bullets." Yeah.

Anyway, two or three days later, I guess it was--it couldn't have been that very day, because we went to school as usual--one of the girls that was in my class didn't show up. And the teacher inquired about her. And somebody got up and said, "Well, she was shot last night." And the teacher said, "What do you mean she was shot?" "Yeah, Villa was over last night, and a bullet hit her in the head." And a little Mexican boy got up and said that. I don't remember that girl's name, but anyway, she's still living and she's still living here in El Paso. And she raised a family here. Yes, she was grazed on her head; she was laying just below a window, her bed was. And that bullet came right there and just grazed her head. She was lucky that she wasn't killed. So, naturally she was very shocked and excited, so she couldn't go to school. And they took her to the hospital right away and they doctored her up. So, that's what happened to that girl that I know, because she happened to be in our class.

And a lot of people were wounded. At nights people would get their mattresses, or whatever they could, to cover up their windows that were facing south. And they would sleep on the bare floors, but at least they were safe from the bullets.

J: Right.

C: They got so close to the river. Do you believe me that I remember seeing



that river overflowing?

J: Oh, my!

C: It was a flood! Yeah!

J: It was before all the dams up the river.

C: Yes, I'm telling you! I saw that water come as low as on Seventh Street. It just absolutely overflowed. It rained awful hard that time. I remember my mother was going... She always had somebody in the buggy. I'll never forget that. Everytime I remember my mother, she was having a baby in the buggy. Well, it was common then, you know.

J: Sure.

C: The families were from four, to six, eight, 10 children, my gosh. If she would have lived longer, I guess I'd had a dozen brothers and sisters, bless her heart. Anyway, I remember...I think it was Jimmy--my brother that died recently, you know--that we were rolling, had him in the buggy, because I'm sure Flora wasn't born yet. And it must have been him. And we all went over there to see it. And I'll never forget it. It looked so mysterious. I was scared. I remember I was scared. I was holding the skirts of my mother. I said, "Let's go home! Let's go home!" Because it was so cloudy and so mysterious that everybody, you know, from way back, you'd see couples, a lot of people coming to the river to see it. [There were] a lot of drownings on the other side. On this side I don't remember, but over here where the smelter is, it was all over. Of course, I don't remember seeing that. What I saw, we went straight down on Fifth Street. No, I mean down south; it must have been Florence or Campbell Street, right straight down. Or further down, I think it was on Virginia and Seventh.

J: Yeah, that's pretty far down.

C: That's why when they built that street...have you noticed how high the side-walks are on that side? That's when they built up high because of the river--the water would go there. And I saw that river. It was scary, believe me, it was scary.

J: And now there's nothing there anymore.

C: No, you only see a trickle. (Laughter) Once in a while you see it when they turn loose the gates, and they you see the water coming down. But at that time there was no control. No, no dam at all. And boy, that's when they started building it.

And this Chamizal--about the bridge, about the lease of the government, about the signing the treaty over here about Juarez and El Paso, about the land, that we owed them so much land of Chamizal and all that sort of stuff--you know, I saw that thing I don't know how many times, and every 20 years they'd bring it up, and they'd never settle it. Finally I got to see it. But every time they'd bring it up, they'd bring in Canada. Why would they bring Canada? Because, I guess the laws at that time, or the treaties or the divisions of the lands and waters of one country from another, they had something to do with it. And they were always fighting that bridge--that that belonged to Mexico, and that belonged to Mexico. I said, "Why don't they give it to them and forget about it?" At one time they said that even from San Antonio Street was from Mexico, which I think is true. Because when you figure it out, coming from Doniphan, the river curves like this; well they made it go like that instead of coming like it used to come like this. And it would have passed on San Antonio Street. It did pass on San Antonio Street. That's way back history. But, I got to see it there on Seventh Street. Which they eventually did, instead of giving them all

this part here, they gave it down in the valley. But they did give it to them. Let's see, they gave them Tenth Street and Ninth Street. That's why they built that bridge there. But I finally saw it settled. But every 20 years they'd bring it up until I finally saw it settled.

Let's see how many presidents I've seen. You know, that's another thing. I saw Teddy Roosevelt come here. I think that was in 1911. I remember he was on the train, on the back of the train, standing on the back of the train. And I saw Porfirio Diaz and Taft. I saw...I didn't see Franklin D. Roosevelt because he didn't get off the train; he just stayed there in the train. It was so difficult for him to get off, you know. And then after that I saw...I didn't see him, I just heard about him, Harding came through here. And when he died, it was such a commotion. And when Madero died, and when Huerta died. Huerta was buried over here in the Concordia [Cemetery]. All those big guys of the Revolution, they were nothing but... they were all for treason. Carranza, he was buried here and finally they took him out, I think, and they took him back to Mexico. Pero Huerta todavía está aquí. Huerta is still here. Nobody claimed him.

J: I guess not! Well, I don't have any more questions to ask.

C: Well, I guess we've talked enough.

J: OK. Thank you very much for the interview.