

11-3-1977

Interview no. 555

Sergio Gonzales, Jr.

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Interview with Sergio Gonzales, Jr. by Oscar Martinez, 1977, "Interview no. 555," 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: Sergio González, Jr. (1904 -)
INTERVIEWER: Oscar Martínez
PROJECT: _____
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 3, 1977
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO.: 555
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 555
TRANSCRIBER: _____
DATE TRANSCRIBED: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Born in Del Rio, Texas on the 8th. of September 1904. Attended Guadalupe School. Was member of the LULAC. Became County Judge of Del Rio, Texas.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Talks about his childhood in Del Rio, Texas; how he became County Judge; about the LULAC; the Ku Klux Klan; the years of the Depression; and relations between Anglos and Mexican Americans.

Length of Interview: 1 hour Length of Transcript: 28 pages

Sergio González, Jr.
By Oscar Bartínez
November 3, 1977
Del Rio, Texas

M: First of all, Judge, I'd like to get a few basic biographical details.
Could you tell me where and when you were born?

G: I was born the 8th of September, 1904, Del Rio, Texas.

M: And did you grow up in Del Rio?

G: Yes.

M: You've lived here all your life?

G: Oh, yes.

M: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents and what they did?

G: My father came from Monte Morelos, Nuevo Leon, México. My mother came from Zaragoza, Coahuila. And in México he and his father worked cattle and he migrated to Texas, to Pleasanton, Texas, in the 1800s. And from there he moved to Del Rio and he went to work for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. And he worked there in 1900 until he retired in the '30s.

M: You went to school in Del Rio?

G: Yes, sir.

M: Could you tell me what stands out in your mind from your school days, let's say elementary school days, here in Del Rio? Any particular incidents that stand out in your mind? Experiences in the classroom? Teachers, authority figures, people who had an influence on you?

G: When I was going to school, I never did go to school with girls.

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M: Oh, really?

G: They were separated--boys in different schools and girls in different classrooms. And I think that although there's been a lot of progress made in schools, our teachers were more strict with boys and girls. I think now they have more freedom, and I don't believe they study as much as we did. We were in school one year, we were in school one year. We didn't have what we have now, so much going on, like sports and everything else, you know. Which I believe in sports myself. But I think all in all, schools are better, in a lot of things that we didn't have when I was going to school. Especially all the help that the boys and girls get nowadays, there's no reason for any dropouts at all because anybody can go to college now if he wants to. In our days, it was hard even to go to high school.

M: I understand that the Anglo students went to school separately from the Mexican students for a long time. Schools were fairly segregated in this area.

G: Well, they were not in high school.

M: Not in high school.

G: No, not here. No. Of course, I'm sure you are aware that in our days we went to school, the closest school, see, not like it is now.

M: Right.

G: Say that I went to Guadalupe School, parochial school, and everybody could go there. What you call the neighborhood schools. But when they got into high school, well, everybody was together.

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M: Was there only one high school when you were going to school?

G: Yes, only one high school. We used to have the common school district, and then we had the Sacred Heart Academy. My sisters, the oldest sisters, they went to Sacred Heart Academy. And, of course, everybody was together there. Everybody wanted to go there.

M: Well, at the high school was there any mingling between the Mexican American students and the Anglo American students?

G: Yes, we had, after my day, E.I. Calderón, who was Dr. Fermín Calderón's father. He was superintendent, afterwards of San Felipe Independent School District. But he graduated from Del Rio High School. Gilberto Cerda was another one. He graduated from Del Rio High School and he was superintendent for a while in San Felipe School District. Then he went on to Lady of the Lake to teach there. Two of my sisters, they graduated from Sacred Heart Academy, the older sisters. And there was probably some, say, in the lower grades, not many went to the north high school and like that, because very few Mexican people lived up there. We were all down here in my section of town, and also in San Felipe. Surely they wasn't gonna come across to go to school here. At that time they had the common school district in San Felipe, which my oldest sister, Juanita, was one of the teachers there. And then it became the San Felipe Independent School District. Then we had two high schools, San Felipe and Del Rio.

M: San Felipe, mostly Mexican American?

G: Yes.

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M: And then the other one mostly Anglo American?

G: Yes. They had some people, some Anglos lived over there. Some of them went to San Felipe, others came to Del Rio.

M: When were the two districts established?

G: Well, Del Rio School District was established long before San Felipe. San Felipe became an independent school district, I believe in 1929. And up until say six, seven years ago they consolidated, see. They'd never been consolidated. You see, it was a common school district before. Then the San Felipe Independent School District was created. And up until I'd say six, seven years ago, they consolidated San Felipe and Del Rio, so we only have one now.

M: Why was San Felipe School District created?

G: Because the people in that part of town thought that they could have better schools by having the independent school district and not the common school district. See, the common school district, they only had elementary. So, they created the district and they they had all grades up to high school.

M: Was it a move on the part of the Mexican American parents to create that district?

G: Yes sir. Yes, Mr. Santos Garza was the initiator of that district. And, of course, he had a lot of people helping him. I was one of them. And for a while it did pretty good, but then the district didn't have enough income, ad valorem tax income, so it just couldn't succeed financially. That was the main reason for consolidating. Which I think it was a good thing for everybody, I really do

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now, that consolidation has helped both peoples. The first year of consolidation, of course, San Felipe was pulling for San Felipe and Del Rio was pulling for Del Rio. Even the boys and girls, you know. They didn't want to lose their football team name, things like that. But after that, everybody get along fine.

M: Was there any resistance to consolidation?

G: Well, yes, on the part of the San Felipe School District.

M: Not on the part of Del Rio schools?

G: No. Of course, Del Rio assumed all the indebtedness of the San Felipe district. They had to pay for it to go.

M: Why were they willing to do that?

G: Well, I think that they didn't think there was any other solution. Whoever took over had to take all indebtedness. And just like I say, it has been a success--especially for our people, for our boys and girls.

M: How was it growing up here in Del Rio when you were growing up? As a young boy, was it a happy environment to live in, to grow up in, in this area? You have happy memories?

G: Yes, I'd say. It was different from today. They talk about boys being mean now. I don't think we have any mean boys at all. Our days, I think were worst.

M: Can you give me some examples?

G: Well, we used to fight, each of us. Anglo see me on the street, and he want to pick up a fight, well, he had a fight. And that was

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every day, it was everyday life. Then we got together and play ball and play marbles.

M: You had a lot of fights with Anglos?

G: Oh, yeah.

M: What usually started them?

G: Well, because probably he didn't like me, and I didn't like him. And that was it.

M: Was there a natural rivalry between Mexicans and Anglos?

G: I wouldn't say that, because we were always mingling together. The Fourth of July, Dieciséis de Septiembre, the Cinco de Mayo. We were all together. We were in many fights, fist fights, but we were together.

M: As you were going to high school, let's say, as you were growing up, did you sense that Anglo Americans felt superior to Mexican Americans?

G: Maybe a few, maybe a few, just like today. But the majority, no. People say that the ranchmen...well, I was raised with the ranch people and they treat their help just like they would one of their own people and they do it now. I think it's just the way a person sees things. As I say, I grew up with them, I was raised with them, and I got along with them.

I went to work for the railroad company in 1919, and there was a lot of friction there, because there were Blacks, Anglos and Mexicans.

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There were a lot of disagreements sometimes, but we got along, we all worked together.

M: Do you remember any conflicts that happened? Any incidents on the job?

G: Well, some Anglo didn't like the Black, didn't like us, and we didn't like him. Sometimes we got into a fist fight, but that's all.

M: One thing that interests me is the feelings of students of the past generations as they were learning about Texas history and the way Texas history was taught in the schools. Do you remember having any feelings about Texas history and how it was taught to you? Santa Ana, the Alamo, things like that?

G: We taught just according to the history the way it happened.

M: Of course, history comes out the way the author writes it.

G: But we had a man here at one time, Dr. Carlos Castañeda, who was a very, very intelligent man and he was /an/ historian. And he didn't make any bones about bringing out history just like he thought it was. I myself thought the world of him, and everybody like him here.

M: Well, he was quite a figure.

G: Everybody liked him. The Anglo people had him lecture in every club in town, I guess. They just loved the man. Just like I say, he was very clear when he made a talk.

M: He had a national reputation.

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G: Oh, yes. And we were fortunate to have him here for a while. Not too long, but he was here. But just like I say, in my younger days, the little trouble that we had, maybe understanding or getting along together, I don't see that the whole Anglo people was against the Mexican people. There may be a few; and I know that there were a few. But we were the same way. Somebody didn't like me, well, I didn't like him, and I didn't care.

I guess, I don't know, I may be wrong, that's one of the reasons that I see things the way I do. Because when they bring a boy to me in juvenile court or wherever, and the newspaper says how mean they are, I don't think they're mean at all. They only have other means to get along and move faster than we did. But as far as being mean, I don't say we don't have any, but very few, the percentage is very low. But we did have mean people in our days.

M: When you were a boy, did you do much swimming in the river?

G: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, sir. We liked for the river to be up where we could swim across. Yes, very much. We went to...we called it Las Vacas in those days, not /Ciudad/ Acuña, see. We were over there. Del Rio and Acuña had always gotten along, always. Of course, we have the Good Neighbor committee now, but we didn't have it then, but I think we were more sincere in our friendship. Now, it's commercialized, it's business. In our days, it was just sincere friendship. We'd go over there, they'd come over here. They didn't need anything, they didn't need any passport, no papers to come across and go back, they could come and go as they pleased. Now, I can't go over there without having to say who I am.

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Sometimes they make me produce the ID. In our days we didn't have that.

And even during the Revolution days. One of my uncles, he was gib chief over there in México. When Pancho Villa was there, well, we had to go along with Pancho Villa. Carrancistas come in and they took over. I remember one time, very friendly, about 15 of those Carrancistas came over because the Villa people came in and they caught 'em by surprise, I guess, and they had no way to go but to cross the river. And one of them had to be my mother's cousin, in the group, 15, and they came over there with their rifles and horses and ammunition, everything.

M: To your house?

G: Stayed there for two days and went back.

M: How did that strike you? What did you think about all that?

G: Oh, we were happy to see him. We were glad to see all those people with all those 30-30's rifles then, you know, and all the ammunition. I knew a lot of those people during the Revolution days. Dolores Torres, who was a colonel in México, but his family lived here in Del Rio. To me it was great days.

M: What other experiences like that you remember about the Revolution?

G: Well, at one time, when Villa had split the Carranza troops up there in Chihuahua, he just ha 'em split, and there was no way that they could get to him. That's when President Wilson, who was our president then, he permitted the Carranza groops to cross

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in trainloads, and they pass 'em through Del Rio up to Chihuahua. Otherwise they would've never beat Villa. Of course we have in Acuña, General Quiñónez. He's retired. He's probably about, he's close to 90 I guess. But he gets around yet. Oh, he was a big Villa man. And every time we get together, I remind him about it, he just looks like his blood boils, because he says, "We had 'em whipped. If it hadn't been for Wilson!" And many things like that.

M: You saw those troops coming through here?

G: Oh, yeah, going up by train.

M: Did you go out there and talk to any of them or wave to them?

G: Oh, yeah, everybody. Whole town went wild.

Of course, in those days...people talk about the devaluation of the peso now, but I tell a lot of these merchants that during those days, the peso was worth one penny. One penny, 100 pesos for a dollar. That's when they had what they called the bilimbique. See, every one of those coined his own money. Villa would coin his, and Carranza would coin his money. So whenever the Carrancistas were in Acuña, just like any other town, their money was the one in circulation. And then if Villa would take over, then his money would be in circulation. So the money wasn't worth anything.

M: Well, how could people make it over there? Things were pretty tough, huh?

G: Pretty tough. They were pretty tough. A lot of people would come across. They wasn't gonna go hungry. They'd take their

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goat, their sheep or cattle, whatever they could, take it back with 'em.

M: There was raiding over here?

G: Oh, yeah. They wasn't gonna go hungry. And over there the same way. Some of my relatives, uncles, they had, not many, but they had a few cattle. Anytime somebody needed something, the troops, why they'd come in and say, "We want so many head." And they just took 'em.

M: Didn't pay him?

G: No. And just like I say, we've always got along--both sides, always.

M: Were there any battles here during the Revolution?

G: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we could hear /the bullets/. (chuckles) Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

M: About how many battles were there here?

G: Well, I don't remember too many, but at least four or five. Oh, yes. And some of our people joined the Carranza troops, from Del Rio.

M: You know some people who joined Carranza?

G: Well, one that I knew very well, Onésimo Galindo. He joined Carranza troops. And General Neida. For a while, he was considered a pretty tough man in all the Carranza troops in all the northern part of Coahuila. And one of the reasons why is because he and a very close friend of his, Encarnación Cerda, they knew the country. They knew where they were all the time. Naturally that's what

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some of those generals in México wanted, somebody that knew the country.

M: Every time a battle took place here, did a lot of people from Acuña cross the river to seek refuge over here?

G: Oh, yes.

M: Did you get people coming to your home to stay for a while?

G: Well, yes. My mother, she was, I guess, glad to see 'em come, especially the ones that she knew. And Del Rio being a ranch town, we might say, well, we were glad to see those people come in. I don't know why, but that's all we had here in those days, nothing but horses and wagons, people ridin' horseback, a bunch of cowboys. We felt like those soldiers from Acuña was cowboys, also. And that's all we'd see in moving pictures those days--the great California train robbery by cowboys, and that's all, nothing else.

But I think Del Rio has come a long ways in the way of progress and getting along together. One of the facts that I'm here, in this office. And I'm not here, I venture to say, not only by the Mexican people but the Anglo people. I never thought I would serve in public office. I just wouldn't have anything to do with a public office, although I've been in politics for over 50 years. But I didn't want to hold an office. When I was appointed a Justice of the Peace, I was appointed by Anglos.

Our schools right now, I guess 60 percent are Spanish speaking teachers. At least 60 percent. I have a son-in-law who's a teacher. He's been there I guess over 20 years. I have three

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grandchildren teaching, and one daughter teaching. Two or three others don't want to teach. they're doing something else. But our principals, I guess 90 percent of the principals are Spanish speaking, local boys and girls born and raised here. And they're doing a terrific job. They're well thought of by the Anglo people and that's why they have their jobs.

M: Tell me about your political career. How did you start in politics?

G: Well, I started politics the day I was twenty-one. In those days we had to pay a poll tax to vote. And I was a great believer in paying poll tax. I was against the abolishing of the poll tax.

M: Why is that?

G: Well, see, I was one of the organizers of LULAC, and they started the thing to abolish it. I says, "I think we're making a mistake." "Oh, it's going to increase our vote." I never did believe it, and don't believe it yet. It hasn't produced. When we paid a poll tax, we went out to vote. Now people don't have the poll tax, they don't care about voting, and you still have to go out and drag them out and take them to vote. And I don't believe in that. I think that if any citizen doesn't take the time to go out and vote, whether he's against or for, I don't think he should vote. I don't think we should go out and hire people and spend money to go out to get them to vote. They abolished the poll tax. The schools lost a lot of money because they would get most of their money from the poll tax.

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M: That money would go to the schools?

G: Oh, yes. One dollar would go to the school. Say, the county got 25 cents and 50 cents went to...I don't remember now, but I think it went to the Highway Department, something like that. So, the schools have lost millions of dollars. And what the people that finally put it over was trying to accomplish it hasn't done either. Our voting strength is the same. Because if we don't go out and get our people to get out and vote, they won't vote. But a certain percentage, a certain percentage always votes, they always vote.

I started in politics when Jimmy Alridge first run for office. We had a man here, Dr. Joe R. Sanders, who was a very close friend of Jimmy Alridge. They had gone to school together, they were toommates and everything else. So Jimmy announced for office, he announced here in Del Rio, and we went out. And I supported him all the time [for] Attorney General, then Governor. And I haven't quit since. But I never believed, I didn't want to hold a public office. I didn't think I would every hold a public office. I wanted to be free.

M: When did you first hold public office?

G: About 15 years ago, 14 years ago. I hold many appointive office, you know, city and county. But I never did run for an office.

M: What was that first office that you were elected to?

G: Well, I was appointed Justice of the Pieace first, then I was elected three times Justice of the Peace. Then I run for the

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County Judge's office.

M: When were yo elected County Judge?

G: 1970.

M: And you've been County Judge ever since?

G: [Yes.]

M: Are you the first county judge of Mexican descent?

G: Yes. We had a judge here, Jim Lindsey was ahead of me. He was here 12 years, and the one day he called me, he says:

---"I'm not gonna run any more."

I said:

---"Why?"

He says:

--"Oh, I wanna get out."

So Roger Thurman was our District Judge then, father of our present District Judge. So I went up to Roger and I says:

---"Judge, Jim Lindey's not gonna run for County Judge anymore."

He said:

---"Don't believe him, don't believe him."

I says:

---"No, he said he's not gonna run."

He said:

---"Well, you tell him to put it in writing."

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I came down and said:

---"Jim, will you put that in writing, that you're not gonna run."

He said:

---"Yeah, sure."

And I went upstairs and said:

---"Roger, here it is."

I used to call him Roger, we was about the same age and were raised together. And I says:

---"Well, Judge, how about getting one of the young attorneys to run for the office?"

He said:

---"No, no, no, no. You gonna run."

That's how come I ran. I says:

---"Okay. I'm going to talk to Judge Montague."

District Judge that had been the District Judge before Thurman.

I went ahead and told him what had happened. He says:

---"Yeah, you go ahead and run."

From there, I went to my brother's office, Arturo González. He's a lawyer here, been practicing law here for 43 years. I said:

---"Well, I'm going to run for County Judge."

He said:

---"You're gonna run against Jim?"

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I said:

---"No. Jim's not gonna run."

Well, I've been very active in politics for the last 60 years.

Active. I mean active, real active. When Jimmy first run, I even went to El Paso. I covered El Paso, Fort Stockton--all those places up there--San Angelo, to help him. And one thing that we have done here, we have financed our campaign. We don't let outside money come in, finance our campaign. We do the work. If we win, okay; if not...

And to me, politics is just like a sport, just like a game. I have managed, fortunately, not to make enemies. I may disagree with people, but I agree with them. And I have friends all over the state, I made friends. Although a lot of our judges in our association don't see eye to eye each other in politics, but we get along fine.

M: What was the margin of victory, by how many votes did you win when you got elected County Judge?

G: Twelve hundred votes the first time. The second time, no opposition.

M: No opposition? You serve a six-year term?

G: Four year. And I've been very close to high officials in the state, attorney generals, and secretary of state, and governors. And still...I just, I don't see why, I just couldn't quit.

M: It's in the blood.

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- G: Just like I say, I like it. And if you handle it right...a lot of people say it's crooked. Nobody, I wouldn't call anybody that, because most people that are in public office, they're trying to do the best they can. And like I say, I know a lot of them. I know a lot of them. I've made trips, well, constantly going to Austin, sometimes to Washington, talk with the big guys up there, a few that I know. I don't get what I want to all the time, but I try. It's a great game to me, politics. Great game.
- M: Judge González, what other offices have you held? You told me you have several appointive offices. What were they?
- G: Well, in LULAC I was the first Vice-President General under the Ramón Ugoria administration. Ramón Ugoria was an attorney from Harlingen, but up in El Paso. At that time I think J. C. Machuca was President General, then Ramón took over. And I was very active in LULAC for several years, until after the second war then the GI Forum come in. And they say it was the same. I don't think it's the same, never will be the same. In our days LULAC held a very high position amongst everybody. We saw that politics didn't get into it as an organization. And, of course, the reason for that was that LULAC was founded after many, many meetings that were had by most of the Spanish speaking organizations in the state that got together in different places. Although I didn't attend the first two or maybe some of the others, but they were getting together to find how we could better ourselves and our people, how we could better ourselves socially and economically. And when they reached the conclusion that the only solution was to form one group

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of all the other organizations then there was the trouble there what to name it. Everybody had a name, but finally they agreed on League of United Latin American Citizens. And they put in the word Latin because, well, they said:

---"We're part Latin."

And they agreed on that.

All right. Then our aims and purposes. That was stressed very strongly. Our aims and purposes was to find out means of how to educate our people so they could become better and loyal American citizens. The only way we saw was to educate our people and work. And we did that. And I guess today, and I have said this many times in Corpus Christi and all over the valley, I know every town I guess in Texas that we went to. We didn't go on anybody's money. We had to pay our own expenses. In those days there was nobody to help us. So we thought that the only way that we could better ourselves socially was to educate our people some way or another. We had to sacrifice. And that's what we did.

We sent our children to school, those that didn't have the means, we found the ways, we helped them. And right today, a lot of these people that brags about the GI Forum, this and that, they owe it to LULAC. Because [if it] hadn't been for LULAC, a lot of our people, they just couldn't go to school, I mean, to college. They couldn't go to a school of higher learning because there was no one to help them. There were no grants, nothing. And I know in my own family, I couldn't ever send my children to school. How I did

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it, I still don't know. Fortunately, one of my boys graduated from St. Mary's Law School and he practiced law here in Del Rio. He died [at] a very young age. But others went to Lady of the Lake, Incarnate Word College, everywhere. Got nurses, teachers. And how, I don't know. Because I had to work.

M: What has been your main occupation?

G: Printer. I published a Spanish newspaper here for nearly 30 years.

M: What was the name of it?

G: Novedades.

M: Is it still being published?

G: No. I quit two years after I took this office. I just couldn't devote any time to it. I still have the old press and linotype machines, and I still have, I guess, six, seven thousand dollars worth of newsprint there. I hated to stop it, but I just couldn't.

M: Did you have a complete collection of the whole newspaper?

G: Should have.

M: When did it start?

G: 1935.

M: Was there a Spanish language newspaper before then, locally?

G: Yes. The man that I bought the first equipment from, Mr. Amado Gutiérrez, we called him Don Amado Gutiérrez, he was a terrific newspaperman in Spanish. And he had print way back in the 1900s

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a newspaper, here and in the Valley. He was one of those fighting guys.

M: What did you do before you got into the newspaper business?

G: Railroad company.

M: The railroad company.

G: Yes. When the Depression started to hit...that's something you people never, I hope you'll never go through.

M: Tell me about the Depression.

G: When the Depression started to hit, they moved me to El Paso, they transferred me from here to El Paso to work. And the only reason they did it, because the master mechanic and my father were real close friends. But I had been cut off. So, I worked in El Paso for a while and my father was here, my wife was here. I told Mr. Harris, John Harris, the master mechanic, I said:

---"Mr. Harris, I'm going back home."

He says:

---"Oh, don't go. There's no way you can get a job."

I said:

---"Well, I'm going back."

He says:

---"No, I'm gonna give you a leave of absence for six months.

Six months, if you want to come back you come back, if not we'll renew."

....

I said:

---"All right."

A cam back. There was nothing to do. People had been laid off everywhere, businesses was closing, and there was jut no way you could make a living. So I went to work. I got a job. Raymond Crosby, he was the dealer for the Texas Company here saw me down Main Street one day and says:

---"What are you doing?"

I say:

---"Oh, I'm looking for a job."

He said:

---"Well, I can give you a job, but I can't pay you what the railroad company pays."

I said:

---"Well, that's all right, just give me something."

So he said:

---"Well, a certain place is gonna go broke. I wish you'd take it over and run it, see what you can do with it."

I said:

---"Well, I'll do anything."

I was making two dollars a day. And you could find a lot of people that would do it for one dollar a day. They would gladly get it.

M: What was the actual job?

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G: I was supposed to run a service station. The man that owned it, the man that owned the place was in the hole, he couldn't get out, he get into debt. So, I took it over and I worked there about a year and a half. Paid all his debts. And then I told him:

---"Look, I'm ready to get out of here."

So he gave me a job running a trailer truck, putting in gasoline tanks here in Del Rio, Comstock, Langtry, and Sampson. Fifteen dollars a week, puttin' in long hours. And the Depression hit and also a drought. It looked like everything was just coming at one time. I hope I'll never see it, I hope nobody ever sees something like that. And the government come in buying cattle from the ranch people, and goats, because they were dying because of the drought. So, they was killing the cattle and just giving it to the people, go around and take a full load with meat, giving it away.

M: Why did you want to come back to Del Rio when you had a job in El Paso?

G: I was too attached to my daddy. I just couldn't see me being... although he could go, he could go and see me because he had a railroad pass. He'd been retired and he could, and he did. But I still, I wanted to be close.

And before the Depression, I was traveling, I was working for the railroad company. One of the reasons I got the job, because I was a ball player, baseball player. So, in 1926 and '25, and part of '27, I was playing ball. I was on the payroll for the railroad

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company, but I was playing ball. At that time, we travelled by train. And I was playing with a team from San Antonio. And we won the championship in our division. We beat El Paso, and we come back and beat Houston for the championship in Texas. We played Seguin, Austin, Victoria, Yoakum, played a bunch of towns. But we beat Houston for the championship in Texas, then we went into Louisiana in 1925 and beat them there for the championship in Texas and Louisiana. That was in 1925. We won the championship. I worked until they move me up to El Paso. And in 1925 I was offered a chance to play in the Tri-I League up in Erie, Pennsylvania. But I turned it down just for the same reason, I didn't want to leave my dad. His name was Sergio González also. I turned it down, I didn't go.

But all my grandchildren, even the girls are strong in sports, most of them football. My boy, the one who made it in law school, before he graduated from high school, he was taken in the service. He went into Europe, finally come back. Went back to school to get his diploma, then he went to St. Mary's.

M: Were you in the military?

G: No, sir. They were getting ready to take me in during the first war. We were all in green, no uniform or anything, about two blocks from here. And I didn't go.

M: Well, you were pretty young then.

G: Young man.

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M: To be in the military that soon.

G: Everybody wanted to go in these days, not like they do now.
Everybody wanted to fight. (Laugh)

M: One thing that interests me a lot about the border is the period of Prohibition. I'm curious as to how things were here during Prohibition.

G: It was pretty rough, pretty rough. Because in those days the bootleggers, we called them bootleggers, you know, the bootleggers, you'd have the Texas Rangers fighting bootleggers. In those days, the people that were in that kind of business, they would never permit themselves to be caught alive. Never. They had to put up a fight to catch 'em. They were all armed and ready to fight. Nowadays it's different. The boys that are smuggling, whatever they are, whatever they're doing, the moment they see an officer come, they don't put up a fight. It's easy for the officer to catch them now. But not in the Prohibition days.

M: You remember any gun battles around here?

G: Yes, a few. Knew a lot of the Rangers that were here--Captain Barr, Haimer, Al Lee, Malone, a lot of those. They were just as tough...the Rangers were tough, and not afraid either.

M: Any interesting stories about that that you remember? Particular gun battles that are interesting?

G: Well, many times we could hear the shooting. We knew what that was, and most of them got away.

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M: Did a lot of people from Del Rio go across to drink over there, to have a good time when they couldn't do it over here?

G: Oh, yes, yes. Like they do now. Now, we the old timers, we always considered Acuña part of Del Rio. And that's the truth. That river, to me it doesn't mean anything. Because we do consider Acuña as part of Del Rio. And I guess some of them are still there that think of Del Rio and Acuña are the same town.

M: What's your view of the problems that we're having right now on the border, the Ku Klux Klan and immigration?

G: Well, I think most of that has been blown up too much by the news media. I don't agree with them at all. We had Ku Klux Klan there in the 30s, and they had their meeting place here. They never caused any trouble. Here, there's nothing they can do, if they were to come here and the other groups that are trying to come in here, what can they do? They don't have any right to enforce any law. I think we got a good law enforcement agency here that will take care of anything that comes up. And we're fortunate, just like I say, because we have the Border Patrol, we have a good sheriff's department and good police department, we have Texas Rangers, we have the Highway Patrol. So if it's needed, we got all the help we can get. Besides the Air Force here. Del Rio has also always been a military town because we had a military camp here during the first war, we had it during the second war, we got it now. I don't say they would get into any fights, but if Del Rio needs anything in the way of airplanes or trucks, whatever. Always have. During the first war we had the 14th. Cavalry,

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we had the 3rd Infantry here. We've had it in Ft. Clark. Everybody knew General Wainwright, and some of the other people.

But this Ku Klux Klan and the illegal, they talk about the illegal alien. Well, they've been coming over always. I've seen 'em come over all the time. And they don't come to take my job away from me, or anybody else. And I have told this to our new immigration chief. Most of those aliens are coming over here to do the work that our people don't want to do. Because I know that in my own family alone--I have 28 grandchildren and about 14 great-grandchildren--well, none of those boys and girls are gonna go to work in a ranch or in a farm. Most of those people from México are coming over to do the work that our people don't want to do. They don't take anybody's job away from the. Ranch work, sheep shearing work. Del Rio used to be the wool capital of the world. We won't have any sheep shearers to shear our ship. And our boys and girls, our boys, or men, don't want to go.

And I'm a union man, I want you to know that. I'm a union man. I was the organizer in Texas for the Sheep Shearers Union years back. And we had to get them from México. I convinced the Union, I says, "We don't have enough here." As long as they charge what we charge, and they're legal, of course, they had to be legal, they had to, no illegal, legally, which there are many. A lot of people in México was born in the United States, you know. Because way back there, their people migrated here during the Revolution, they stayed here. Just like I say, in those days they didn't need any papers. But there are some things that our ranch people, our farming industry

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and the sheep shearer industry, we just don't have here people to cut our wool and do the farm work. During the first war, during the second war, México contributed a lot by letting their people come and do the work while our men were doing the fighting. During the second war, and the first war, they said:

---"Come. Everybody come. We need you."

Now:

---"We don't need 'em, we don't want 'em."

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

I, SERGIO GONZALEZ JR., hereby grant and donate the following tape recordings for such research and educational purposes as the Institute of Oral History may determine.

Yo, _____, por la presente, dono las siguientes cintas de grabación para aquellos propósitos de investigación y de educación que el Instituto de Historia Oral determine.

Tapes:
Cintas:

One - Side one

Interviewee:
Entrevistado:

Sergio Gonzalez Jr

(Signature/Firma)

COUNTY COURTHOUSE

(Address/Dirección)

DEL RIO, Texas

(Tel.)

(Date/Fecha)

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Sergio Gonzalez Jr

(Signature/Firma)

Nov. 3, 1977

(Date/Fecha)