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Rosa Guerrero

May 3, 1983

Interviewed by: Paulina Aldrete

at Rosa Guerrero Dance Studio, El Paso, TX.

RG: My name is Rosa Guerrero and I will tell you a little bit about my family background. I was born in El Paso, TX, and my parents came from México. I remember my grandparents, my mother's side only; I never met my father's parents. My grandfather, my mother's father, was from Jalapa, Veracruz, and my grandmother from Toluca, México. They were beautiful people. They were divorced or separated a long time because my grandmother followed Pancho Villa during the Revolution. She wanted to really follow the footsteps of what he believed in, and she was a cook for him. Later on, she evolved to be the cook for the president, Manuel Avila Camacho. My grandfather was more a conservative man, hardworking man. He had a *sombrerería*, a hat factory in *Jalapa, Veracruz*. He's buried over there. My grandmother is buried in México City now. That's all I can remember. I remember visiting them all the time, every summer. Since my father worked for the railroad, we would go to México and be with the family over there. It was a very beautiful treat to go to México City and be with my grandmother, and go to Jalapa, Veracruz and be with my grandfather. Both of them were hard, hardworking people. I remember my grandmother getting up at five in the morning and watering the patio and the *hierbas* and all the *plantas* and starting her soups and *frijolitos* and tortillas and the *comal* being ready by six. Everything on the table was ready. Such beautiful people we don't have anymore. Everybody seems to be very lazy nowadays compared to the old days that I can remember my grandmother. My grandfather, the same way, his philosophy was different from my grandmother. I feel this was around the '30's. I was born in '34, so it must have been about '36, '38

when this evolved. My mother says I was about night moths old when she first took me to México, so that was about 1935, 36. Every year from then on till current, 1983, I've gone to México and immersed very much *en la cultura* and the lives of the people. My relatives still live in México City and Veracruz and Aguascalientes and Torreon, where my husband's parents are now. Now, in my childhood, I remember my mother telling me all these stories. Since we didn't have enough books, the only magazines we had were the Continental, the Fronterizo, the papers from México: La Prensa, the Editorial, and things like El Diario, El Pepin, El Chamaco. That was kind of an educational experience because we did learn English and Spanish at home and read it. One thing about my mother was when she used to get our *piojitos* out, *espulgarnos*, which is part of the culture too, whether we like it or not. She used to tell us stories about *La Llorona* and *cuentos de Juan Birulero*, *y las historias de diferentes fantasias romanticas* like Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, the Seven dwarfs, the beautiful Snow White, *la Blancanieves*. You immediately start stereotyping as white being very beautiful _____, and you wanted to be white as *Americanas* and like Snow White and then you had *Piojitos*. So I remember Snow White not having *Piojitos*. She was too beautiful to have *Piojitos*. But I remember that my mother used to tell us stories, especially about my grandmother. Then my grandmother would come from México and continue the same thing. If I had a question, it was nothing but oral history that was taught to us. She was telling us every experience about the ghosts to us and the haunted places and the different types of witches and *creencias* and *tradiciones* and customs that were happening in México. To be it was such a beautiful story, because I didn't have to go and open a history book, it was told to me at home. I thought that was so _____, I thought I had very poor parents, but very exciting parents. That was a kind of beautiful pride because the school system would teach us

everything about American History and the colonist and all of that. I would think, I said, "My gosh, and all this time I said ancestry was what? I would do a comparison in my mind of where my grandparents came from, what they were to do, how was I to be evolved and educated? But from their foundation, my grandmother gave us so much, especially during the revolution and how she suffered and how they died and how they came about to come to Juarez, and then eventually to El Paso. Later on, my mother had to work as domestic help because she didn't know English and she didn't have an education such. That was not bad, because at least we were educated, the seven of us were educated. She met my father her in El Paso and married him. Consequently, all of us are here. There's only five left, two have passed away. My childhood was very exciting because we would get to México and immerse immediately in the culture every summer. Even sometimes she would take me out of school during Lent... I remember my mother taking us out to school during the *Pascuas* because in Aguascalientes were the "Ferias de las flores", and we had to go to "Ferias de las Flores" the heck with school, you know. Ours was an education that was different. It was important as much as the school and academia. My grandmother was born in San Juan, near Jalisco, and she worked as a little girl, always worked. As she can remember, she worked very, very much as a young woman and as an adult and as a *viejita*. Her household responsibilities were unlimited she just went on and on. I never saw her sick until I found out that she was dead. She used to cure herself like my mother does, with *hierbas*. That was home remedies, never seeing a doctor, never in her life stepping into a beauty shop, never seeing that part of what we call "civilization" because she was very, very much an Indian at heart and very traditional; her *rebozo de bolitos*, I have it. She had it with Pancho Villa and her *metate* and her *molcajete* were the heirlooms. Like the colonists, they have their beautiful

type of earth-and-ware or maybe household goods or furniture, we also had out things and think this is very sacred to me. But I learned that as a little and also as an adult I've begun to know that these are beautiful things she had: the *molinillo* to make the chocolate. The mole that my grandmother made was the most authentic mole I have ever tasted because she used to get on her hands and knees and start from scratch. There was no Doña Maria, no jars at the time. There as the *ajonjolí*, and different types of *chiles*, *chile chipotle*, *chile Colorado* and *chile de esto y el otro* and *cacahuate*, chocolate: mix it all up. I remember doing it. When I tried, I used to smash my fingers with the *metate*, but what a beautiful experience. I wanted to follow her. I remember wanting to make *tortillas de maiz* and they used to come out crazy, longer or fatter, funny or whatever. But at least I said, "*Yo quiero aprender, abuelita, yo quiero aprender*"; I always wanted to learn. Whether it was the kitchen or whether it was history or whether it was the language or whatever, it was I always wanting to learn; more than anybody in my family. I am still seeking that, I think it never ends. I think it's something very unique. She also worked outside the home as far as working in restaurants. Since she was such a good cook, she would work in restaurants, and that's how she evolved and elevated to be the cook for *presidente* Avila Camacho in the '40's. What I liked to do with my mother was, well, the thing was "fiesta"; always, always, always. I can't remember the home not going to Juárez every Sunday. I don't remember going to a restaurant in El Paso. Juárez was our life. Ciudad Juárez was our life. We would go to the bullfights. I remember seeing the greatest of toreros. I saw Manolete, I saw Silverio Pérez, I saw David Luciano, I saw Carlos Arruza, the beautiful Carlos Arruza; on and on and on. I even saw Cantinflas about three or four times. I saw Conchita Contrón, la Regionadora, beautiful bullfighter on horse _____ kill the bull, I would turn

remember the home not going to Juárez every Sunday. I don't remember going to a restaurant in El Paso. Juárez was our life. Ciudad Juárez was our life. We would go to the bullfights. I remember seeing the greatest of toreros. I saw Manolete, I saw Silverio Pérez, I saw David Luciano, I saw Carlos Arruza, the beautiful Carlos Arruza; on and on and on. I even saw Cantinflas about three or four times. I saw Conchita Contrón, la Regionadora, beautiful bullfighter on horse _____ kill the bull, I would turn around. But I would _____ the art. And the olé, and the music, and the *tara ta tan*, when the *clarín* would come out and announce that the bull was going to be dedicated to the mayor or whoever. That was exciting; I thought that was the greatest thing. That's when I was starting to get confused inside 'cause I didn't know if I was Spanish or I was Indian or I was Mexican, because I liked all types of music. The Indian would come out when the *Matachines* would dance, the Spanish would come out when the *pasos dobles* would play, and the Mexican would come out when the *Jarabe* would play. So I was confused, I said "What am I?". And here I was in the United States, a Pocha; Lord have mercy; confusion and schizophrenia. But I love the music and the dance and nobody was going to tell me what was right or wrong. I just enjoyed it and thought it was something unique. I loved going with my mother and father to "*La fiesta Taurina*". From there we would go out and eat. I remember my father eating the *huachinango*, *un pescadote riquísimo*. He would just leave the skeleton. I thought that was an art of itself, eating a *pescado* in such a beautiful way. There's even a way to eat a *pescado*. From the restaurant we used to go to the Lobby, to the Tivoli of the Casanova. The Casanova was one of the most elegant places in Juárez. These were exclusives nightclubs. And they would take the family, especially me, because I loved the dancing because at that time Juárez was very cultural known. They

would bring the greatest musicians and concert pianists and opera singers, and *zarzuelas and operetas*. They would bring flamenco dancers. I saw the greatest flamenco dancer in the world, Carmen Amaya; I loved her. She danced with all the glory. I wanted to be right with her and at her, you know. I started to see the evolution of dance then. I saw Veloz and Yolanda do the beautiful ballroom dancing and on and on and on. The great Triana who lives in El Paso, Antonio Tirana. I saw him dance with Carmen Amaya. He was amazed that I remembered. I was just a little girl in the '30's. In the '40's we continued. The Second World War and the transition was different because my brothers were taken to war and our whole lifestyle changed. Juárez was kind of very, very full of *soldados*. We followed the *Sardos*, the *Sardinas*, the military people all downtown, the whole transitions. But we continued to give shows for them. When we were little children, the Red Cross would invite us to give *Danza Folklorica* and Regional because they said, "Well, El Paso is so close to México, so the culture should be there". I remember that was so unique and my mother being very much a *fiestera*. Oh, to this day, she's going to be 81 on March the 19th, next Saturday, and she is so alive. She's like an eighteen year old. She feels like one, and she acts like one. She is amazing' she's India, *pata rajada*; that would never change. I adore her for it and I think that the more years that pass, the more I adore her. My father was unique. All my lifestyle of the culture, of the dance, of the music, of the traditions, of the folklore, of the language (*el Castellano, el Español* was my father). The upbringing he gave me at home; the *escuelita* he gave me. We would sit and conjugate verbs in Spanish, just for the _____ of it. We would go over Geography, we would go over History, we would go over dances, we would go over opera. We would go over waltzes; just a beautiful Socratic man. He would just ask me and I loved it. None of my family was like me. It was just a different experience and I

loved relating with my dad because I thought he was the smartest man in the world. Everybody does. You think your father and your mother are God or godlike. Even though my dad drank a lot, I didn't judge him for that, I loved him. When you loved somebody, you don't judge. You love and you forget and you forgive. Later on in life, my mother had been a *hierbera* and a *curandera* and a *cartomanciana*. A *cartomarciana* is a fortuneteller, she's a fortuneteller. I was very confused with that because being brought up a Catholic as a faith, I walway thought that was a no-no, and that was a devil's doing. I talked to a priest several years back at a retreat and he said: "You do not judge your mother, you let her be." So I'm letting her be. She's a beautiful person, she has a different gift from God, to psychoanalyze people, to question them, and through her cards and her way she helps them. That's what she has been doing for a long time. She brought us up and she gave us good from that. I cannot judge and I cannot condemn. She is my mother and she is a very gifted lady, very gifted. She worked outside the home; yes, she worked very much. For a dollar a week I remember she used to work and scrub by hand, ash all the linen and boil them. The sacrifices of our women were tremendous, I think, in the years that were behind us. Nowadays we have automation, everything is machine and machine and machine and yet we are not happy. We are not fulfilling the glory of the manual skills and the labor that we should sweat. Sweating is something good from the brow. I think it's something that the Lord wants us to do, *que sudemos en el labor* or *en el trabajo*. I feel that these women did it, and the men too. They really had a hard life. They set all the standard for us, all the values that we had when we were growing up. After she got married, she continued working, because the Depression came, and then my dad didn't have a job. She was the one that worked and my father stayed at home. He was the one that made us *sopita* and *frijolitos* and *arrocito*, and gave us beautiful

capirotada, and played *El Papalote con nosotros*. Nos enlazaba; sacaba la soga de Aguascalientes, the lazo y nos enlazaba como si fuéramos los animalitos en el rancho, las canicas, el Juan Pirulero, a todos los jueguitos. Pero, ¡que padre!, tan hermoso. Nos bañaba because he had to take the part of a woman 'cause there were no jobs, it was during the Depression and I was a post-depression child. Everybody in the neighborhood wore these relief-type of overalls, everybody. It looked like the whole prison was there.

PA: Excuse me. What Area of El Paso did you live in?

RG: O.K. I lived at 620 N. Santa Fe. We lived there twenty years. Right in front of the old Providence Memorial Hospital. It's about three blocks from the Civic Center. That was home to me. We used to walk downtown, it's right there, the library downtown, the Colon theatre. We went to the movies. I don't remember how many times we went to the movies, but that was fun. There was no television, so the movies gave us the things, the movies taught me how to dance, the movies taught me to sneak, to communicate, to learn, to guide; the good and the bad, 'cause we saw some filthy movies. But we grew with these movies, and I didn't know the difference. We saw some very funny movies. Cantinflas was the idol, Tin-Tan; we had the beautiful movie stars of the past. That was our growing up time. The Colon Theatre, on Saturdays and Sundays used to have *variedades*. They used to bring musicians and they used to bring actors and dancers and singers, a beautiful cultural program; Saturdays and Sundays. And they had three shows, at 3:00 o'clock, at 6:00 o'clock and at 9:00 o'clock. And we had to go see one of the shows. And it was an upbringing thing that was unique. The prices were very, very good because the movies were part of the culture that we were being brought up with.

PA: ¿Donde trabajo su mamá?

RG: Mi mamá trabajo con una viejita que se llamaba Elizabeth Lee Griswald, who was my nanny, she was my godmother. Elizabeth Lee Griswald was a very wealthy woman that lived in Subset Heights, one of the old colonial homes on Uspson. My grandmother learned everything of social amenities; how to serve the table, the different types of ways to dress, the entire fashion. And eventhough she was a domestic, working with her, she was treated as part of the family. Mrs. Griswald was related to General Robert E. Lee. She was a southerner. She was a southerner from Kentucky. Shed had lost all her plantation home with the slaves in years back, in her great-grandparent and grandparent's years in the Civil War. And then she came over to Texas, and then her husband lost everything in the Depression, everything. They were very wealthy and they lost a lot of things. I still have heirlooms of the linen things and also the crystal and the china that she brought from the Sixteen something and Seventeen something, which is something to go... This is very early American, but it goes very well with the *metate* and my *molcajete*; very traditional and very beautiful. She learned so much with granny Griswald, and to this day, she still communicates with the sons and the grandsons of the lady. They love my mother, Josefina, they call her her, Josefina. She used to live in an apartment in the basement on Upson. Later on they moved to north El Paso street and then I was born, on 630 N. Santa Fe. Everybody was born at home.

PA: ? Como se llamaba esa área?

RG: *Se llamaba Sunsets Heights. It was the end of Subset Heights. Todo eso era Sunset Heights. Upson and Prospect, Porfirio Díaz. Porfirio Díaz es la única calle en Los Estados Unidos llamada por el dictador Porfirio Díaz, lo que mucha gente no puede comprender. Pero muchos que vinieron de México eran Profirio Diistas; eran contra Pancho Villa y todo lo que era él. Mi papá y mi abuelita se peleaban tremendamente porque mi papá no quería a Pancho Villa. Mi abuelita*

adoraba a Doroteo Arango; era el nombre de Pancho Villa. Entonces había pleitos de la política allí; por ese sentido. Mi papá decía que no era educado, que no tenía cultura, que no era intelectual, comparado a Emiliano Zapata. Que era otro hombre que estaba peleando en el sur de México durante la Revolución. Pero esto es una cosa tremenda, porque mis abuelitos me enseñaron bastante. Lástima que no pude estar tanto con mi abuelito como mi abuelita. Como mi abuelita nos venia a visitar; mi abuelito _____ a los Estados Unidos. Odiaba a los Americanos, odiaba todo lo que era el Anglosajón. Dice que eran una bola de pendejos los Americanos. Todo les caía en chiste; que se reían de ellos mismos. Entonces, era él, y nunca pudimos... Eran diferentes criterios entonces, ni modo, según él. Pero tenía él su casa hermosa, su sombrerería. Tenía también neverías; una nieve riquísima que tenemos la receta de la nieve que hacia mi abuelito, de fruta natural. Una nieve de limón que hace mi mamá, que agua se me esta haciendo la boca; riquísima. Lástima que no pude, pero si íbamos a visitarlos bastante en Jalapa, Veracruz (mistake on the tape) Aprendí yo la música Jarocha, las bambas, las contrabambas, la media bamba, el zapateado, los danzones. Mi Tío Rufino, hijo de mi abuelito y hermano de mi mamá, era el campeón de danzon del estado de Veracruz. Una gente muy culta, los Veracruzanos, los Jarochos. Todos saben tocar instrumento, a cantar, a tocar la guitarra, una gente que es muy culta; diferente a comparación de Oaxaca o a México o a Aguascalientes, una gente muy diferente. En Aguascalientes también aprendí mucho con mis tías. Mi tía chita, Felisa, era directora de escuela. Entonces yo tenia que prepararme en español lo mejor porque ella me iba a poner un examen allí, y evaluar mi Castellano. Gracias a Dios que mi padre me dio todo eso para poder prepararme ambos, en los Estados Unidos como en México. Los deseos de mis padres para mi eran muy liberales. Mi madre quería que fuera bailarina. Uy, ella creía que me iba a ver en el teatro y de bailarina como Carmen Amaya, como Mapi Cortez, como Maria Antonieta Pons. Para ella era una cosa tremenda que iba a ir a España, iba a ir a México, iba a ir a España y yo iba _____ concepto hasta que llegue a tercero _____ que dije

yo, "Yo quiero ser profesora". Y se me quedo eso desde entonces. Mi vida nomás es terminar la primaria y la secundaria y el colegio para ir de profesora. Yo pensaba que, ay, de profesora y ya sabiendo los dos idiomas, decía yo, pues uno va a valer por dos. No hay nadie que traducir, uno lo traduce sola, y vale uno mas. Entonces en hacerse valer se empieza desde chico.

PA: What schools did you go to?

RG: I went to the old Vilas School, it's still there in Sunset Heights. And I remember being punished for speaking Spanish. Nos daban unos coscorriones, pero coscorriones, o nos daban unas zuribandas con un board. Tenían un borrador of education por hablar español. Yo no entendía lo que me decían ji jota, ni jota. Por eso estoy tan cercana, y mi corazón y mi espíritu al programa _____ que yo sufrí unas cosas horribles. Yo no fui la única: fueron miles de gentes que sufrieron en Arizona, en Colorado, en Nuevo México, en Texas, en California; que nos estereotipaban horriblemente... "Don't you speak that ugly language, you are an American now, you mexican child". They degraded us horrible, but uno se hacia valer. Y gracias a Dios que no entendía lo que nos estaba diciendo porque si hubiera entendido, se me hace que le hubiera dado patadas a la señora; pero no entendía lo que me estaba diciendo. Pero yo se que nos hacían comer chile enfrente de la clase, no daban detention hall, nos daban demerol, nos daban swatts, The Ysleta School System used to fine us for certain things. A mi si me daban mis coscorriones y les decía, "se me olvido", pues otro coscorrón porque se me olvido. Pero ni modo, así era la vida, y mi padre me decía "hágase valer hija, no se deje, hágase valer, y adelante. Aprenda el ingles, 'pa que los gueros no me la pisen, y aprenda el español para que los Mexicanos tampoco no me la pisen". Entonces agarre de los dos conceptos, y por eso estoy aquí.

PA: Después de Vilas, ¿a que High School fue?

RG: De la Vilas nos cambiamos a la calle Rio Grande. Ya era otro sistema, otra aculturación diferente; no asimilación, pero aculturización, diferente en el sentido

del ambiente, hablar mas ingles; las profesoras y los muchachos mas americanos. Los veía ya medios raros, “estos americanos ¿de donde vinieron?”. Lo mismo ellos a mi ... Fui a la Morehead School, the old Morehead School que esta en la calle Arizona donde esta el School of Nursing right now. Y ahí gradué en 1948. Me gustaba mucho la música, mucho. Y me acuerdo que nos ponían la música de Peter and the Wolf, y los instrumentos y todo eso. Pues a mi me entraba todo esto porque mi padre ya me había dado todo eso. Íbamos a los conciertos de la sinfónica andando, cuando costaba 18c por ir al concierto y era una cosa hermosa. Andábamos toda la escuela, los que querían ir pues. Empecé la banda y la música; tocar tambor desde tercer o cuarto año, y le seguí, le seguí. Fui a la secundaria en El Paso High, y ahí empecé a brotar y me pararon. La danza y la musica y la cultura en la identificación de mi sangre y de mi cultura fue inspirada por mi padre, mi madre también, pero mas mi padre, porque el me decía “ No se deje, mire esto y andele esto, y andele ‘pa adelante”. Y mi madre como siempre estaba la pobrecita tan ocupada, no podía darnos esa inspiración. Entonces mi padre, todo, todo lo que se es por mi padre. En secundaria en el Paso High empecé desde el 6th grade a bailarles a la asamblea, a la audiencia de la secundaria; programas culturales, Panamerican Club, Spanish Honor Society, lo que sea Variety Show, Talent Show, Easter Show, whatever it was. Andaba yo bailando y mi popularidad creció como de noche por mañana. Salí en los cuatro años, desde el noveno hasta el doceavo cualquier honor o cualquier posición que corría, sacaba. Cualquier ... lo sacaba. Todos tenían miedo correr contra mí. No era porque era inteligente, es porque mi personalidad era muy alegre, llena de entusiasmo. Yo me hacia valer en ese sentido, porque tenia que tener competencia con unas personas tan inteligentes, como los Judíos, y todos los Americanos que íbamos a El Paso High; iban a El Paso High. Y nosotros los mexicanos, pues teníamos que hacernos valer en otro sentido. Yo me hacia valer con la boca y la alegría, y con entusiasmo, y con la danza, y la cultura. Cualquier posición que entrara... Fui la primer México-Americana para dirigir la banda en el '52, '53

representar la escuela en Girl's State in Austin, Texas, en muchas cosas fui la primer Mexicana.

PA: *¿Era comun eso en la escuela El Paso High?*

RG: *No era, no era tanto. Se apoyaban todos los Mexicanos conmigo, y muchos Ameicanos. Se juntaban muchos para la candidata, "Rosa, por rosa", y porron, y se ponían todos y porron y porron, sonsacaba todo. Y sacaba todo... iba a correr para vice-presidenta del Student Body, y dos chamacos... I remember Conrey Bryson, que esta en Colorado como profesor de música, y Freddy Crossman, es doctor. They didn't want to run against me, "If you run, we won't run". I said "I don't think is fair of me, (you _____) to take the office of these people, they're more intelligent than me; they're boys too". At that time there was no Women's Lib or something; forget it! dije, " Son hombres, hay que dejarlos los pobres". Y gano Freddy Crossman, me acuerdo que gano Freddy Crossman. Me tenían miedo correr. Pero oia muchas cosas de discriminación y todo, pero uno se disimulaba. No nos dejaban hablar español, nada. Pero cuando nos juntábamos en pandilla, pues hablábamos y nomás pasaba la profesora y cambiábamos. Era como farsa entonces. Pero de todos modos queríamos ser aculturados, queríamos ser popular, queríamos ser el ambiente; ser como los Americanos, vestirnos como ellos y todo; copiarles porque era parte de la tradición. Pero era imposible, porque ellos tenían bastante dinero, los recursos, la enciclopedias, los thesauruses, los diccionarios, los viajes a Europa, el museo. Era una cosa hermosa el ambiente de ellos, pero también nosotros teníamos cosa hermosa porque nuestra vida, aunque no era igual, no teníamos criadas, no teníamos gente que fueran sirvientas para nosotros, ni butlers; bueno, no podíamos comparar. En 1983 esta pandado lo mismo, y esta hasta ahora peor la cosa porque tenemos Federal Housing que estos chamacos "cholos" están comparándose con la gente que son hijos de presidentes u de corporaciones y todo y esta más fea la cosa. Pero siquiera nosotros en el nivel de '50 todos nos apreciábamos y el prejuicio existía, pero mas, muy diferente a hoy. Eran contados los que sacaban honores de los Americanos, eran contados. Por eso empecé yo a brotar y no me dejaba de nadie, de nadie, de nadie, de nadie. Empecé desde el año, desde el noveno a enseñar a la profesoras y a las otras chamacas a bailar. Me pusieron. Me pusieron de Physical Educator en el 8th grade, que fui la única Mexicana en Educación Física. Teníamos una profesora que se llamaba Jane Rush. Era muy estricta, pero yo la quería mucho. I thought she was very fair with me, she gave me a chance, she gave me an opportunity, and I felt goof as a leader. I felt tremendously great among all the lily-white people. I felt gorgeous and beautiful, brilliant and very rich, filthy rich. And I said, "Well, hay que hacerme valer". So I started opening doors for my people. I started being a model for my raza in the 30's there. I was kind of proud of my own self, because my mother and my father were very proud of me. I would come home ... I wouldn't even tell them that I was running for this. I would come home and tell them, "I got his and I got that, and I was president of the P.E. leaders, I was President of National Rifle Association, I was president of the Courtesy Club, I was the president of the Panamerican Club..." And everything, I was president.*

I had a very outgoing personality. My own kids call me the social climber of the '50's, but I don't know what it was. I just had to prove myself. I wanted to graduate from high school so badly. And I wanted to start college and evolve into that. Thank God I met the most beautiful man in the world, Sergio Guerrero. We were friends since grammar school and we started going around together in our junior year in high school. In our senior year we were very lovey-lovey. In my Freshman year I went to Texas Woman's University, it was the Texas Tech College for Woman then; *me dieron beca de danza*; I got a dance scholarship, very small, but at least it was an opening for me. My husband, who was my boyfriend at the time, Sergio, supported me tremendously, financially and morally, because I wanted to come back. There was no Mexican food in Denton, there was no Mexican music except for _____. I would listen to the *corridos* and *las canciones mexicanas*, and I would cry; 500 or so miles away from home. My father wasn't there, my mother wasn't... It was horrible! It was an eye-opener for me, but it was good too. I saw all types of prejudices; I mean racism that is horrible. But that's good though, sometimes. You have to learn that the people... you're not going to be born for people to like you. I wanted people to like me just because of myself, and that's not the way it is. Some people don't like you because you're black, or you're white, or you're brown, or you're oriental, or whatever, and we can't help it. If the Lord made us that way, we cannot turn ourselves into lily-whites. I can change my name Rose Guerri from Rosa Guerrero, and dye my hair, but that's not going to prove anything, I'm just kidding myself, and I'm just cheating myself. I had many friends as a child, but would you believe that in grammar school I used to pay kids to play with me? "*Cinco centavos*", *les decia yo*, "would you play with me today, for a nickel?" And I would tell them in Spanish, "*Te doy cinco centavos si juegas conmigo*", and they would play with me, they would play with me during recess hour, and then, that was it, then they wouldn't talk to me. And that's sad; you have to kind of buy your own friends. And that was very sad because there were Mexican-American friends. I remember two of them, one of the Calderon girls, and one the Alba girls. And they don't remember me from _____ those things, these things that hit _____ little boy used to tell me... Fernando, I used to call him Fernando; something was wrong with this fool. And Fernie used to tell me, "Rosa, you don't have to pay me." And I thought that was kind of funny. But you see, he couldn't understand why I had to pay to have friends. You know, what was in grammar school, probably 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade, and then when we moved to Morehead, I just started developing my own friends, and my relationship with my parents was beautiful; my brothers and my sisters; yes, and my happy sisters. My eldest sister, Enedina, and my beautiful younger sister, may she rest in peace, Hazel. And Hazel was the favorite of everybody. I was the favorite of my father, but she was the favorite of the whole family, including myself. And she taught at Bowie High School, down in South El Paso. And she died about 15 years ago, and she was just gorgeous and beautiful. *Pues*

si nos peleabamos, but we had a beautiful relationship. I used to go Juarez on the streetcar, and on the bus and take her as a friend and also as a companion. *Tenia que ir conmigo como de chaperone*. Then I took my niece Martha; Martha, Hazel and I were very, very close. My favorite; I have a favorite brother, yes, my brother Daniel; but all of them are my favorite. As you grew in years, you even learn to love them more, and you learn to appreciate whatever God has put into you. And I think that in the family, in the Mexican culture, *la cultura hispana*, the family, the immediate family, the extended family, the greatest contribution that we can have of mankind, because it is important, it's very important to be sure of that beautiful cultural heritage of *la familia*. My sister was the first, beautiful Nadine, my sister, my oldest sister, because she was called "*la gallina*", not because she laughed like a chicken, but she also kind of guided everybody. She was *la gallina de todos los pollitos*, we were the *pollitos*. There were seven of us. I don't remember really having a lot of chores as a child, because I was my father's favorite. My brother Bill and my brother Gorge used to wash the dishes and used to do this, and used to do that. I remember then, that I used to kind of help them, but I loved to clean. I've always loved to clean and get things organized and all of that. So to me, I loved to volunteer in doing things. To this day, I love to help people, that's just a natural instinct that God gives you, not everybody's born with it, it's just something good. I love to please people; please my students, please my educators, my colleagues, please my parents, please my friends. And sometimes it's not good to please, because I think that my brother had an easier time than I at all, because the were also given more responsibilities that I, 'cause I was the first child, girl, before my sister _____ was born, after my four brothers, and I was kind of *la consentida de mi papa y de mis hermanos*. And I learned how to play

_____ and everybody was constipated. I think _____ we added it to our house. That's the first time in my life I had a bathroom close to my bedroom. So I guess I just don't take it for granted. I just thank the Lord for my bathroom, I thank the Lord for hot water, I thanks the Lord for detergents to wash the dished. I don't mind washing them, because I remember not even having soap; or hot water, what a luxury; and a shower, ah Lord have mercy, to have a shower and tile is like a movie star. So I think I'm very rich, rich in many, many things, because I never have these wonderful things that I thought were really for *gente rica*, rich people. I did daydream, and my daydreams were to become a dancer and a teacher. And a teacher, thank God that that goal was together; up that dancing and the teaching is the great _____ thing that I grew up to be, because that's what I dreamed about. I had the dancing and I had the teaching, and then I grew up as a dance teacher, and my gosh, I haven't stopped. I go all over the United States, Lecturing to universities, or to parents, or to the *viejitos*, or to schools. I

just tell them my life is music and dance. I just relate to them in a very sincere way, “*Que no se dejen mis hijos, que sigan adelante, que si se puede.*” especially now. My God, they’ve got more opportunities *les digo, “Seguro que se puede mis hijos. Si a nosotros nos daban _____ a ustedes ya no les dan; ustedes tienen toda la oportunidad, hay que seguir, mis hijos adelante.”* They have all these fellowships for minorities now, especially from the Civil Rights that came about. We had tremendous opportunities for minorities, but I know they’re kind of going out now, _____ people still have a tremendous chance. Religion was very important for me as a child, yes, very important, because we grew up with *Las Posadas*, we grew up with *levantar al Nino el 6 de enero*, the feast of the Epiphany, we grew up with all *la religion, a los velorios*, the mass, and all that. We grew up as Catholics by name, sometimes only. And later on..... but I didn’t, I wanted to learn more, I went to the Catechism. My mother used to get mad at me. “Pa que te metes tanto a la iglesia?”, she use to call me a holy hypocrite. I said, “*Yo quiero aprender mas de la iglesia mama, mas de por que estamos aqui y todo.*” And I thought that was very important. To this day, it’s very important because one of my sons was in the Seminary and when he was fourteen he says, “Mom, the only most important thing in life is God, NOTHING else is important. The only Essence of humanity is God.” And he was telling me this as a fourteen year old, and I took it very serious. And he made me really think to love the Lord more. Then Archbishop Flores from San Antonio, Archbishop Patricio Flores, also had a tremendous influence in my life, he really did, and my dear friend Ann Stevenson, who took me to my first Retreat at the Mesilla Park. This is when I really discovered myself, and God, and saying, not a born-again Christian, because I was always a Christian, and I was growing up to loving God, but I learned to love him more. And this is what has kept me going. More and more, my faith has kept me going. Everything that I do, I offer it to the Lord. Everything that I do and I want to is something because of him that I’m doing this. I think he sent me these beautiful vibrations, _____ positive vibrations of love and unity and confidence to carry on. _____ Like a good news of missionary work through dance and music that he’s given me. And I love doing it, as long as he lets me I will do it. Yeah, there were arguments in the family, I think it was financial, and especially when my father drank, there was arguments with my mother and my dad. I used to take care of my father when he was drunk, *pobrecito*. I used to sing to him and take care of him. And I was the only one who could guide him. And she would get mad with him because he would spend the whole check, which is a very sad feeling in the cultura Mexicana, that the “machismo” element is there, so evident en la *borrachera*, which I hated the most with a passion. I can still see it in the 80’s que todavia esta pasando esto. And the cycle of poverty, the cycle of borracheras, the cycle of “machismo” is still there. And that’s terrible, but it’s still there. This is the irony, it’s still there. Yeah, my family was different from my neighbors, very much so because my mother was a fortuneteller and people used to look at her.

And so my home was not a regular home, it used to be like Grand Central Station, everybody visiting my mother. And all her friend, all her patients, they call 'em, all her *clientas*, the clients; to see her. And it was never really a home that I could see, you know, just a.... I never had my own room, never, never, until I got married, really, because I had to wait until the *clientas* left, and then the sofa was made into a bed. It was kind of sad because we didn't have the right studying facilities and the right methodologies to study or anything like that. How we made it, I don't know; by the grace of the Lord. But we haven't even made it _____ it's still working hard, very hard every day. I felt that one time, one of my friends, Carmen Rodriguez, said to me "my mother doesn't want me to play with you." And I said "why not?" "Because she says your mother's a witch, she's a fortuneteller and a witch!" And I said, "No my mother's not a witch, and if she's a witch, she's a good witch, she's a beautiful lady, and she's my mother, and she won't hurt you, she's my mother." So that was kind of ... I remember those little things that people would say. My favorite childhood memory, of course, is my father, dancing with him, getting on his feet, dancing the *corridos*, dancing the *pasos dobles*, dancing the _____, the *vargovianas*. I used to get on his feet and dance, and I thought I was tremendously great. And then seeing my mother and father dance, that was such a joy. I loved school, I loved school. At the very beginning I didn't. I was kind of fearful of it. My favorite subjects, of course, were music. We didn't have any Spanish at all. I would have loved Spanish if we would have had it. I didn't have it until my Freshman or Sophomore year in high school. But I loved music, and I loved Social Studies, and I liked Reading, even though I knew I had an accent, my "eh's" were horrible. I think till the last twenty years ago, I started trying to get a better articulation of my English language, but it was horrible. There were many, many teachers that I liked. Miss Robinson, the Art teacher was gorgeous, and wonderful, and funny. And Miss Hignett; my gosh, I learned English with that beautiful Mary Hignett in my homeroom class in the 6th and 7th grade; my gosh, what a teacher! She used to teach every part of speech in English; she was just drilling it to us. And that's why I learned good English grammar, because of her, you know. Some of the teachers, Miss Cason, I didn't like her. She used to hit me with a ruler for speaking Spanish, and hide me behind the closet, or whatever. And I know she hated Mexicans 'cause I use to see her talking to Miss Hanna and other teachers, "These typical Mexican girls; they stink, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." You know, we couldn't say anything because whatever the teacher said was right, whatever it was. It was wrong to her; to us it was right; and even if we didn't understand the language; whatever went, it was the right proper way because you just dared not answer back, at all. It's not like that now. Nowadays, the kids don't have any respect, they don't have any discipline, they don't have any type of consciousness, of feelings and respect for each other; for themselves either. And that's hard for me, that's hard for me as an educator. My family thought school was alright; they wanted high

school, that was just about the average, you know. But I wanted to graduate; I was the first one to graduate from the family, from college. My sister graduated after me; she's the one that died about fifteen years ago, but those were the only ones that graduated. My brother went up to about the junior year. But he has the best job of all. He's second in command in San Antonio with Blue Cross Blue Shield. No, there was no ideas for boys and for girls as far as the schooling was concerned. I think my brothers they had the opportunity to go too, especially after the Second World War, when they had all these V.A. programs and these ___ programs going back to school, and whatever. But I didn't have any opportunities as such; I just said, _____ it, I want to do it; by golly, I'm going to do it." And I just wanted to prove it to myself and to my family, and to mankind; but the most important is to yourself, to prove to yourself that you can do it. Let me see, yeah, some of my classmates had the same background as me. Unfortunately, I don't see them anymore. A lot of them became immediately assimilated, too assimilated in the American way. They don't dare speak Spanish anymore. Some of them changed their names, many are Anglo and Black; some of them... we just don't have any values, any ideas, anything in common anymore. It's very sad because they're very materialistic and I don't care for materialism. I'm a very down-to-earth person. I thank the Lord for myself and the blessings of life. To me, I'm very mundane, as such. But then, some of my friends have changed too much, and there's nothing in common that I have with them. Some have moved away from here, to California or wherever. I never have stopped going to school, I want to go back and I want to study this, and I want to study that, I want to take languages, and I want to take...you know, I don't just stagnate myself, I want to go farther. I always wanted to get my doctoral degree, but I never wanted to be more educated than my husband. I don't think...I don't know, I just don't want this. There's also trying to sacrifice so much. What for? I just say. I just thank God that I have a Master's degree. And, I told him one day, "I don't want to be...". My husband is a very beautiful man; very intelligent. He could have gotten anything _____ I'm sure. But he was never guided into that, and he's one of these opportunities' guys. He's a very beautiful man, a teacher, and a coach _____ respectable guy. Yeah, after-school activities I was involved in from Student Council up; every club that you ever think of, and every band and stuff. But in college, no, except for my Freshman year in Denton, yes. I was very active in the dance group. We toured Louisiana, Mississippi, East Texas, and it was an awakening experience with me. But as far as the rest, Sophomore, Junior and Senior year; I got married in '54 and continued my years at the university till I graduated in '57. Then I got pregnant in my Senior year and I had to practice-teach, and nurse my baby, and go back to school, and even referee basketball and play basketball while I was pregnant and nursing the baby. It was very hard, it was kind of hard. I don't want to go through that again. I don't want to remember some of those bad experiences. But they are good; they taught me a

lot. I think that to sacrifice and to suffer a little bit, you appreciate life more. No, I didn't belong to any religious, social or political groups as a girl. I think there was only one, the Newman Club, in high school. But we were not really that active. We went because it was much more of the social thing. We learned about religion, but not that deep. I wish it could have been a little bit more profound, I wish it would have been more profound. And later in life, no, I never really ... social stuff, I don't care for that; political, I'm a Democrat all the way, and I supported that. But I've never been really involved in all of that. Now, the religious, yes. The religious; the last ten years I have gotten so deep in religion, that I am now in the Board of Directors of the Mexican-American Cultural Center in San Antonio with Archbishop _____, the Bishop O'Brien, from Phoenix, _____ the bishop from Galveston, and the bishop from Ft. Worth, Texas. And I'm very lucky to have been chosen. It's that I love their ways at the Mexican-American Cultural Center, what I was doing all my life. And they are feeling, as far as nourishing the *Mexicano*, the Hispano, and the Anglo, to the needs of the *Mexicano*. They are doing exactly what I've been doing all my life, except, I didn't know there was a group of people doing it; you know, as a training center. They're training lay theologians, they're training nuns, they're training priests that are going to identify in the Barrio. We don't need these "Tio Taco" priests that don't identify. We don't need these people that can't deal with the oppressor, the dirty, filthy, drunkard people, they call 'em, and whatever. We don't want people like that; we need the people that can deal with the down-to-earth reality of life, like Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ was to come now, in 1983, I think he would go to the "*cholos*" and tell them, "Look, *mis hijos*, look, this is what it's all about". He wouldn't turn his back on them. Or to the Blacks, "Look brother, here I am." I think God would really come down and say, "Here people, Let me help you your way." And he would lead us, he would lead us with all the truth and sincerity; instead of hypocrisy, instead of the pseudo-naturalism that I have seen. But my political views have always been democratic. I wanted to study more about the Republicans because Elizabeth _____ was Republican, and I want to know why she was, and all these things. But than later on, I just found the difference of it, and I wanted to know that the Democrats were a little more down-to-earth and nitty-gritty, exactly like I was. But president Kennedy, also; what a beautiful man, had a heck of a lot to do with that theory. My first job ... I was just a ... well, I was teaching dancing with the children. And a lot of them I didn't ... I mean, I've been doing ... all my life I think I've been teaching. All my life; ever since I was ten or eleven years old. I've never gotten paid for it; It's still not really getting paid for it, because I don't make the money; and my dance studio, as a dance educator ... I've been getting paid or it as a Consultant now and stuff But all my life I've been teaching, as far as that. And then I got one job; I got \$10.00 dollars a week, after school with Dr. Hartrick; he had a little grocery store. That was really my first job. I've never

worked at any other thing. I wanted to, but my mother said, "No, you have to do things at home, and I think helping me at home is more important than getting a job you don't need it." So I never did ... it was never expected of me. I did want it 'cause I wanted to dress nice, be like the other girls, and all that, but I never did. Babysitting, yes. I guess everybody wants to babysit. But I did keep that job for about a year or so. I did teach dancing. But \$10.00 dollars a week was a lot of money. And you know what I would do with that money? I would buy my own peanut butter; I love peanut butter; and I would buy my own, you know, personal things. Shampoo to me was a luxury; I had to buy shampoo so I wouldn't have to wash my hair with the old dirty Oxydol or something. I used to wash my hair with the soap for the clothes. So to me shampoo was great! So I did that. And then, the rest of the money I gave it to my mother. I bought food for the family. I wanted to help my family. It wasn't just for me. I've always wanted to help other people. My working conditions was just; oh, I _____ was just by myself and all of that, so I never did get any other jobs outside the house and all of that. I spoke English and Spanish; so whoever came to the store, it was very easy for me to treat 'em, guide 'em, and help 'em. That job was just kind of temporary. I also worked as a ... would you believe I cleaned houses when I was about ten or eleven years old? I didn't mind it. I said, "After school I'll go clean for Mrs. Collette; this lady, friend of mine. And on Saturdays; and I used to get 50 cents for the whole day. I remember going in at 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning and cleaning five bathrooms, and getting on my hands and knees, and scrubbing, and putting wax, and polishing, and all that. And there was no machines, as such, as polishing machines or anything like that. But it was a joy; those 50 cents were mine. And you know, if I earned 50 cents right now, I wouldn't mind. Compared to what I'm earning; if I get \$100 dollars a day as a Consultant, or \$100 dollars an hour as a Consultant, or ... to me, I'm still the same person. It hasn't changed me. I'm just thankful to the Lord for getting me the things that I have, and I have had. I did have plans for future jobs. As a little girl I said, "I want to be a teacher and I even talked to my boyfriend Sergio who is now my husband." I said "I always want to be a teacher." He said "That's fine, we'll both go to school, we'll both study, and we'll both be teachers." So I have just continued, I have never stopped working, never. I have been married nearly twenty-nine (29) years, and I've been going to school. We got married and we continued school, and we haven't stopped teaching, and consulting, and all of that. The worst job... I can't say that working with my hands is a ... working a menial job as a cleaning person when I was a little girl, was my worst one. No, I think I enjoyed it in a way, and also, I'm thankful that I could do it. And, of course, I have not stopped working. Just the only time I stopped working was to have my children. And right after I had my *dieta*, my 40 days of resting and whatever, and my examination, after that, then I went back to work. And I have never stopped. And my husband gets very upset with me because he says I work too hard; and I'm always doing something and I'm always building

something and I have so many dreams, and I have so many goals. And that's me, I have many dreams. And every day is a new horizon, and every day is a new dream; and I just look to the future for maintenance. And there's no day that's boring for me because I don't have time to be bored. When I came home from school or from work, or whatever, I used to just dance all the time, all the time. I remember taking care of my homework, or whatever it was, to get it out of the way, so I could start dancing. All during the summer months I dance and danced and danced. I remember that my *profesora* used to charge me 50 cents for the lesson. But then I could stay the whole day, because I could teach the other little children so that was a treat for me to stay all day long with my *profesora* Rosita and then later on *profesor* Aguilar. It was just such a challenge, because I was a little girl, and I was teaching others. And that's what I'm doing with my own students. I'm trying to develop their potential as teachers, and as future teachers. They could be a leader, in their own way. And if they're not leaders they could be beautiful followers or whatever they want to do. I've been developing this potential with my students. And I hope that someday they will disseminate all over El Paso, or wherever they go, the art of the dance and the music and the folklore, and what I have given them, because I think it's a big thrill to have the students that I have. I think that it's wonderful for them to disseminate what my philosophy of life is, as far as the culture is concerned. My husband doesn't care about me working a lot; he always kind of supported me, and we all helped each other. We've helped each other to this day. But he never said, "No you can't work, and all that stuff." He knew that we had to, we just had to. There was just the two of us, and we could do it, so we did it, and we haven't stopped. The most beautiful thing is that I had a lady from Juarez; Alejandra, beautiful lady; she stayed with me about eleven years, while my kids all were growing up. Finally she got a better job, which I think is wonderful; for Social Security reasons and all of that. She had a good working passport and I paid her pretty good; I didn't take advantage of them. I think it's very sad that on the border, many people take advantage of these domestic help from Mexico, and I think it's very sad because they work very hard, and I think we should pay them a good salary, because they earned it. And, of course, she raised my three little ones while we were going to school. And it was nice teaching, because I could come back from school, while they came back from school and we could be with them, and we could play, and we could read, and we could do homework, and whatever. I think it's a great profession for a man and a woman. I think it's an excellent profession. It doesn't have all the money in the world, but it was very satisfying. To this day, it's very satisfying, to this day. I love teaching. I think the kids are the ones that inspired me; their smiles, their hugs, even their little faces that are sad, that want some counseling and some love. All they need is just a little bit of attention. I don't think I have ever been sexually harassed on the job, or if I had, I didn't even notice it, because I'd just go about my business and go on and on and on. But I know that there's sometimes...some of the men,

I guess, that thought of me as a woman, or was very stupid, especially a Mexican girl, you know, Mexican woman, Mexican teacher. But I don't care what people say, I just go about my business and I try to get along with people and all of that. But I know that there were people like that. Or I have seen, also, the opposite on the *Chicano* males, where they feel very threatened when a female has an education. I saw that in South El Paso, when I taught Bilingual Education in Aoy school. There was a conference that I had one time with a man and a woman, and this man was a musician. His little boy was beautiful; he sang so beautifully. He used to sing to me "*La Mochila Azul*", and I talked to the father and mother of putting him on television and whatever. The man had a *Conjunto Norteno*. But he felt very threatened at the way I spoke Spanish and the way I really was trying to get my thoughts together. But you see, this type of male in our society, the very ignorant male, I'm sorry to say, don't like women to overshadow them in anything, even if it's linguistics, or anything. They just don't want to be put down. And I wasn't putting the man down, because he just didn't trust me. And that's very interesting because the man...I tried talking to him, telling him that his little beautiful child was gifted and talented and I wanted to see if I could open many doors for the little boy, as far as the *cultura* is concerned. And the man never answered back. He was supposed to go to Albuquerque and play; and unfortunately, I don't know what happened to them, but I was kind of threatened. The woman, his wife, was kind of ... I think the Mexican woman, many times, if she's not educated enough, as I have seen; but if a *Chicana* woman, or a *Mexican*, or *Hispana*; many times she goes under the shadow of the male, and anything the male says, she will jump to. If he says, "jump" she'll say "how high?". The obedience is tremendous, oh my goodness gracious, there is no such a thing as Women's Lib in that type of an instance that I have seen. But I saw that in South El Paso with that man, unfortunately. If I had a choice of all the jobs in the world, I would still be a teacher. And if I was born again, I would still be a teacher. I would love to be a nun and a teacher. If any thing were to happen to my husband, I would join a convent, and do all my stuff like that. And I would like to write; I _____ to write a lot. I want to learn how to read and write well. I don't have that gift yet. I want to go back to school and study more writing, 'cause I think it's one word that is written is worth a thousand spoken words. And I want people to read what my thoughts are. I can dance it all the way, I can jump it all the way, I can sing it all the way, but if I write, then it stays in the world. It's something that people will say, "Hey, Rosa Guerrero wrote this, let's read it ... " Whether it's a poem, or it's a drama, or it's a dance, or it's a choreography, or it's a thought, or some beautiful thing that maybe God gives us. And if I write it, it would be so tremendously more important, I think now. No, I never belonged to a union just the association for teachers and stuff. But I support them, I think they are very important; AFL and all these unions like Cesar Chavez. I love Cesar Chavez; I've always admired him. I think he's like Ghandi, and I think he's like Martin Luther King Jr., and I think he's been a person

who had led the Raza, and our philosophies of equality in the migrant fields. So tremendously important are his thoughts, that I feel that Cesar Chavez has been on of the great leaders. His union with the AFL-CIO has been great with *La Raza Unida*. I believe in those types of things. I have never been active in that because as a teacher we just were limited to our own little world , our own resources. And we kind of stagnated, you know. And maybe we found out from the school systems, not to get involved in all of that. But I never had the opportunity. Someday, I hope to meet Cesar Chavez; I idolize him; I think he's beautiful and I pray for him. When he used to go into those horrible fasting periods, I used to pray for his health and everything because I think he is a martyr. I think there is a lot of martyrs in the world right now, and saints that a lot of people don't know about; and they'll never know about. It could be a *viejito* next door to us, or in the Barrio; a *viejita*; it could be Black, White or Brown; it could be a suffering of children. And their martyrs in their own way. My husband has been always beautiful. I met him when we were in grammar school. And all through high school we were dating. I was the one that asked him for the first date. The thing about it, he didn't think I was serious enough; but I was. I said, "*Sergio, vamos al baile; yo te llevo al Baile de Febrero, porque las chamacas, las ninas, las senoritas tienen que preguntarle a los muchachos.*" The boys could not let us call them "twirps". All the reversal of the boys had to be given to the girls; and the girls had to ask the boys for a date, carry their books, pay for everything! So that is how I met him. I met him even before, when he came from Mexico. He used to go to the Posadas. But as far as sharing the household and the childcare responsibilities, he has always been supportive, especially the last fifteen years; my gosh both he and I have really learned to control our temper, ourselves, out entire philosophies. We've learned to love each other more than we've ever loved each other. He is such a beautiful man. When he sees me working so hard, he washes clothes; he's just beautiful that way. I never had to rely on him to change the baby's diapers and get up and all. No, I thought that was my job and responsibility, and I never expected him to do it. I think that's my responsibility. The playing with the kids, _____ he used to definitely, especially my eldest, the one that's going to be twenty-seven. When I was practice-teaching at Austin High School, my goodness gracious, I was finishing my senior year at U.T.E.P., it was Texas Western College then, and my husband used to work night shifts, and go to school in the morning, and take care of Bombi. He slept about one or two hours in the twenty-four hours. Talk about sacrifice; I don't know, I would never have gotten my degree without my husband Sergio. I would never have gotten any type of support from anybody. I know my parents couldn't do it financially. So we had to stay with each other, and take care of each other. And like I said, we had to in order to say, "Hey God, *muchas gracias*; thank you for what we have." I have three kids in my family; Ana, my beautiful daughter, is twenty-five my baby is twenty-three, he's the Youth Director at St. Raphael's church, the beautiful child of the Lord. And then my eldest boy is going to be twenty-seven.

They all live with me. This is a Mexican home, my children, my husband, and my animals... and our food; we eat all types of food. Sometimes my son makes Chinese food, and my daughter, on Thursday, when she cooks, she tries to have new recipe for us. But there's always beans, there's tortillas, there's mole, there's *chile* all the time; there's always *guisaditos*, and *sopitas*, and *calditos* always, always, always. I was taught always to cook well and to cook from scratch. I thought maybe opening a can was sacrilegious. I think it's something very, very sad that I was brought up with that philosophy. I never use anything frozen, you know, frozen meals and stuff; unless I cook before and I freeze tacos or something like that. I cook them myself or maybe I cook meatloaf, and I want to save a half, then I can freeze it. But as far as frozen meals, a la *carrera*, I don't know, I just don't believe in that, it's just not my thing. I used to buy them once in a while, when I used to go on trips and have 'em in case the kids were hungry, but I don't do that anymore. I found out that preservatives in the foods, and all of that was not very healthy and not nutritious. So I always have *cilantro* growing in my yard, and *chilitos*, and *tomatos*, and *verduras*, and all of these things. And I always have *caldo* once or twice a week; beans everyday, everyday – all types of beans: *frijoles charros*, *frijoles rancheros*, *frijoles borrachos*, *frijoles guisados y reteguisados* y refried beans, and all these things, because with the beans you can do so much; with *taquitos* the same way. My husband is a teacher and a coach. As a matter of fact, this year he is quitting coaching; he's coached the last twenty-three years, about ten or eleven years at Coronado High School, a very difficult school, but it's been, nevertheless, a school he learned to cope with and to endure because of the situation there. The *Chicanitos* there really need a lot of help, a lot of help. They need role models; they need an identity; to have *Chicano* teachers and coaches. He was put there, I think because he was coaching over at El Paso, and _____ implementation was similar, _____ . But I feel that now they no longer need him, _____ to be _____. He wants to teach in the elementary school. He's a tremendous competent teacher. He could teach Social Studies or Mathematics, _____ going to know that teaching is the greatest thing. He doesn't have to coach anymore. It's been very hard for him _____ you have to kind of keep up the entire competition of being number one, number one, number one; especially when the very rich and affluent kids of Coronado and their families kind of demand this from you. They want to be number one in everything, and sometimes you can't so he's just quitting because there's just too much pressure. He doesn't get involved at all in community politics; nothing, nothing. He's just very much to himself, he takes care of the home, he's just involved with his teaching; he's a coach at a lot of athletics in the environment. He does go to church; a beautiful, faithful Catholic; one of those Catholics that still goes and pays *las mandas*, he goes and pay the promises that he makes to *San Lorenzo* or la *Virgen*, or whatever. He puts his candles every, every Sunday to the *Virgen de Guadalupe*; promises and asks, promises for this

and that, and then the petitions... He walks a manda and says, "Here I am God. Thank you for the year, thank you for my health, thank you for my family ..."

He's a tremendously faithful human being; a beautiful respectable man. I'm just lucky to have met him and been married to him, because we still, to this day, we have a lot or respect for each other, and I just could not do without him. All the things that I've done, as a woman, and as a *Chicana en la cultura*, _____ la Danza, en el folklore, it's because he's encouraged me; he's known that I've had to work very hard for it, and he encourages me. I think that Archbishop Flores from San Antonio had so much to do in telling him, "Sergio Guerrero, your wife Rosa has a _____ certain gift that God has given her. Not too many people are given this gift. Let her travel, let her share the gifts of talent, of love, of unity, of dance, of culture to people that don't have the opportunity. Let her go away from the house to travel. He just believed in me, and he asked my husband, and my husband kind of thought about it ... He knows that people write me beautiful letters from everywhere. They say it is a gift from the Lord, and I kind of awaken in them the gift of love, the gift of faith, the gift of identity, the gift of themselves. I make them proud of themselves, and proud of being a human being; a male, or a female, or a child, or whatever; or a *viejito*, 'cause I love to reach all. I think my presentation is to reach all cultures, and all people, and all ages, and I just kind of blend it to wherever I am reaching. And I love it 'cause it's a shot in the arm for me. What it is, is that it injects the beautiful potential of humanity in me when I see these smiles of these kids when I reach them. So, I could not have done it without my husband. I thank God for him and I thank God for Archbishop Flores to convince my husband of what I am doing. Of course, I probably get cut down from other men and women in society for saying, how can I travel so much, and blah, blah, blah. I really don't care what people say, I really don't. I believe in myself, and I believe in the Lord, and I believe in my husband, and I'm a faithful, very faithful human being. I think that traveling also is good for me, and the writing; what I want to do. The only thing that was conflicting me and my family life was when I was very ... getting involved with the *Chicano* movement, and all that with MAPA and MECHA and MAYA and in 19____ ... the late '60's and '70's here in El Paso, I wanted these kids to understand that my message of love, and *la cultura*, and *Chicanismo* was very different from theirs. Mine was not to my "*tonteria*", and to say all these "*fregaderas*", and the cuss words they used continuously. I think cussing is a _____ really, whether it's in English or in Spanish. *Todas sus _____ y todas sus tonterias, _____ dicen malas rezones, en veces sale porque no estan _____ espanol*; the adequacy is limited, *estan limitados en la linguistica en ambos - ingles y en espanol*. *Entonces echan todas sus "madres" y todas*, you know frustration. And I just tell them, "I don't dig that, I never have." I think that, yes, it's a form of expression. I think that if they want to do it, that's their own bag, but it's not my bag. I guess because I grew up in an environment when my father, when he drank, that's all I heard. I swore to the Lord and to myself, I said I would never,

never... *no que me quiera hacer la gran cosa, nunca, nunca sere la gran cosa* but I think there is morals and values, and I wanted my family to know that I loved them and respected them, and their environment here is very important. And so, we don't have to go down like that. And also, I used to tell them that I don't put down "*calo*", or *Mex-Tex*, or "*pachuquismo*", or all of that. I tell, it's a form of linguistics, it's a sub-cultural linguistics of the Barrio, that's fine. *Si lo quieren hablar, entonces eso esta bien; pero cuando van a agarrar un trabajo, cuando van a hacer aplicacion, tienen que agarrar lo major del espanol y lo major del ingles. Si no, yo se que estamos criticados constantemente; especialmente viviendo aqui en la frontera bilingue. Y el Mexicano nos critica por ser "pochos" y Chicanos y que no salimos ni fu ni fa y todo eso. Porque yo fui criticada y quiero que estos ninos aprendan lo major del ingles y lo major del espanol. Y si van a hablar "pachuquismo"; que _____ ahi en su ambiente, porque tienen que sobrevivir, they have to survive also. They have to know what "ruca" is, and "ranfla", and all of the words that go into their linguistics of the Barrio, that's fine. Pero yo les digo, "Mis hijos, hay un lugar ... there is a way, there is a time, like the Bible says, there is a time for everything; a time for dance, a time for love, a time to cry, a time to sleep, a time to work. There is a time for pachuquismo, there's a time for pochismo, there is a time ... if they want to speak it, why yes. Para ellos, pero cada quien ... cada chango en su columpio, y cada harina en su costal. Oh, if I was sixteen years old again, I would just live my life with so much. First of all, I would take care of my legs, like I've never taken care of 'em. I never took care of them; I didn't warm-up right, I didn't wear leg ends, I danced on cement, I, you know, all that formal training in the dancing and in the physical conditioning. I didn't have the right, proper things. I would take care of myself, I would take care of my legs, I would eat well, and I would drink milk; calcium, a lot of calcium, which I never did. My mother says *que a mi nunca, nunca me gusto la leche*. So, this is the consequences of my arthritis. If I was sixteen years old again, I would start studying every language there was. I would learn every instrument there was. I would major in Anthropology and in Linguistics, and I would just reach that potential. I just have so much in my heart, to learn more, and more, and more. But I don't to ... like I said, I'll never have a Ph.D. because I don't want to be more educated than my husband. I don't want that Ph.D. thing to have like a stigma. You know he is very smart _____ could have a Ph.D. very easily, he just doesn't seem to have it. A lot of the Ph.D. people, I admire them, I love them; especially the *Chicanos*, the *Hispanos*. I think that's tremendous! We need more scholars. We need more role models of Latinos and all that. But, If that's going to prove our intelligence, to have a Ph.D fine. I think that's great, if people want to pursue it. But I'm just not the type. If my husband was a different type of a human being, like Jose Tinajero and her husband, oh, what a beautiful couple, that he encouraged her and all of that, I think that's great. But I've already done my thing, my way; maybe if I got an Honorary Doctoral, fine, that will be great. I will probably seek one for the things that I've done, the things that I've written the films that Ive made, the*

cassettes that I've made. I probably will seek a Ph.D, one of those ones that you can get from a university where you have done a lot of life-experienced education. And maybe if there's such a school in the world, or in the United States, I would love to get a Ph.D. through that, but not as far as going and leaving my family and studying. I just couldn't do it anymore. I'm very tired now; physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically. I'm very tired. But once I rest a little bit, I start that potential of going over and over and over again, and really try to see if I can do the best that day, *porque, pues* there's no tomorrow. And to Paulina Alderete, *que cosa tan hermosa de chamaca que me pregunto que habrara, y discutiera, y dijera todo. Con todo gusto, para ti, mi hija, te dedica esta historia, __ ha sido ella familia mia.* Paulina, you were a beautiful student _____ in Austin High School, *y lo sigues ahora de profesora.* You are an influence to the children, like maybe I was an influence to you, and that's what life is all about. If we are good influences, good models, good people, as far as being beautiful type of human beings, to give to others from ourselves, and to demonstrate of ourselves in the best form and way. I think that's what God wants us to do. And we are spreading the good news, not only in religion, but in being ourselves; as teachers, and as musicians, and as artists, or whatever our gift is. And I think everybody has a gift in life. Everybody has something to offer. And everybody should be taught identity. Everybody should be taught about themselves. Everybody should have some background and historical-type of analysis, to say, "I came from here, I'm going here." and all of that. Everybody should be given a chance. And I think we need to really raise that potential and challenge our *Chicanito* and our "*cholos*" that are just destroying themselves by not wanting to learn, not wanting to continue. *Y yo les digo, "Mis hijos, aqui en los Estados Unidos, qué oportunidad tan tremenda, tan tremenda tienen para estudiar. No dejen de estudiar, nunca, no dejen de ser lo mejor y progresar; ayudarse uno al otro, no pisarse, no pisar al prójimo."* And I tell them that last year in Juárez, thirty-six thousand children were left without school because of the fact they didn't have enough schools, enough teachers, enough facilities, enough desks. My goodness gracious, and here you have everything, *y los niños no quieren estudiar. Yo no sé cómo los padres no les ponen interés a las criaturas. El padre es el primer profesor, y el padre debe de saber que él tiene la potencia; no importa que no tenga educación, que no sepa hablar inglés ni nada; tiene la potencia de ayudar a su criatura, a hallarlo, a darle mayor ejemplo, a darle la mayor moral, urbanidad, en ese sentido. Yo no lo tuve mucho en ese sentido con mis padres porque cuando mi papa se emborrachaba, entonces, ahí se acababa toda la decencia, todo lo que era la moral y urbanidad. Pero cuando andaba bien en su juicio, qué cosa tan Hermosa de padre. Era prácticamente otro hombre, edcadísimo, tremendo. Lástima que el alcohol provoca lo peor de una persona. Lástima que no tenía bastante fuerza. Yo quisiera que mi padre estuviera aquí conmigo para poder platicar y discutir todo, porque era un hombre tan sabio, que yo sé que en su debilidad, como humano, tomaba ne sé por qué; nunca supe. No sé por qué nunca pudo domar el inglés, nunca pudo domar estar en los Estados Unidos; nunca supe por qué agarró eso. Pero de todos*

modos fue un padre de corazón; los mismo me madre, y mi abuelita, y mi esposo, y mis hijos, mis hermanos. Qué familia tan hermos he tenido! Y si hubiera vivido otra vez, otra vez le daga gas a todo lo que le estoy dando, y con más sabiduría, porque si tuviera diesiseis años otra vez, y con mis piernas jovencitas, llenas de vida...el corazón nunca se arruga, la piel se arruga, pero el corazón nunca. Y siempre tendrá el espíritu; par mi nunca acabará el espíritu. Gracia. Rosa Ramirez de Guerrero, 3815 Savannah, El Paso, Texas, (915) 566-5084, profesora de danza, música, cultura, y también profesora de mi folklórico – Rosa Guerrero Folklórico Internacional. Gracias