

3-9-1984

## **Interview no. 677**

Esperanza Moreno

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### **Recommended Citation**

Interview with Esperanza Moreno by Rebecca Craver, 1984, "Interview no. 677," 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:	Esperanza Moreno
INTERVIEWER:	Rebecca Craver
PROJECT:	History of the University
DATE OF INTERVIEW:	March 9, 1984
TERMS OF USE:	Unrestricted
TAPE NO.:	677
TRANSCRIPT NO.:	677

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Student at Texas Western College, 1951-1954; librarian for the UTEP College of Nursing and Allied Health at the present.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

How she became a librarian; how she came to work at the College of Nursing and Allied Health; recollections of students, faculty, and personal activities while at TWC; her activities while in school; her activities in the Catholic Church; how she met her husband; the CAYOPE Club (Catholic Young People's Organization).

Length of interview: 1 hour      Length of transcript: 39 pages

Esperanza Moreno  
By Rebecca Craver  
March 9, 1984

C: Let's start out, Esperanza, and just tell me what years you attended. Was it Texas Western College?

M: I attended Texas Western College between January of 1951 and May of 1954. It changed names at a later date. It became the University of Texas at El Paso. Now at that time, the public schools were allowing students to enter in January and to complete their studies in January, so there were the January classes and the May classes. Now, if you happen to be born at the wrong time of the year, you lose a year before you can start classes. I graduated in January and went right into the University that same spring.

C: And did you live at home?

M: I lived at home. I had gone in as an education major. I wanted to be a teacher, I wanted to be a high school teacher. And I took the education courses and I had a very good course with Mrs. Bertha Reynolds, who just died about two years ago. Then I took some more courses and they were not what I had expected. I still wanted to be a teacher but I couldn't see taking that many hours of education courses that were required and stay in education, as much as I wanted to teach. I switched majors my junior year and I lost a lot of credits. I ended up graduating with like 20 or 40 additional hours to what I needed, mostly because I had changed majors and I had to use some of those education courses as electives when I changed my major.

C: And so what was your major?

M: My major was Spanish, and I minored in English. What happened is that that Spring I was aiming to get a job in the El Paso Public Library. I got interested in libraries; and, the more I thought about it the more I decided I really wanted to be a librarian. When I changed my majors, there were no library courses as such at the University. The University does not have a library school, but the library schools in the country accept a major in something else as long as your credits or your grades are acceptable. So I switched majors and went ahead with it, took my Spanish major with a minor in English, and then I took off to library school.

C: Where did you go to library school?

M: I went to a school at the University of Illinois in Urbana.

C: Were you glad to get back to El Paso when you finished?

M: Well, no, I didn't come back to El Paso when I finished, because El Paso did at the time--and unfortunately still is true--has the lowest pay scale. And when we were in library school there was, at that time, a large demand for librarians. Cornell and all the other universities would go out to recruit at the library schools. Some of our classmates, we were flown to Utica or wherever else they were being sought. In fact, there was a librarian from New York that came to interview us and there was a librarian from Ohio that came to interview us. I considered both; and, New York sort of scared me. It was a big city and

I thought, "No, I don't think I can handle it." But the one in Ohio seemed to be more apropos. It was more or less the same size community [as El Paso.] And the lady that came to interview me, Jane Darrah, who was head of the children's department, said that they had a number of Puerto Rican children who couldn't speak English and they needed someone who could speak Spanish to work with the children. So I was hired as a general assistant, holding my first assignment at the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, which is still in existence. It is still one of the best public libraries that I have come in contact with.

At that time I was hired, I was hired as general assistant. My first assignment was as children's Librarian at a branch and it was very interesting. I had taken one course in children's literature and I wasn't that familiar with it, but I'd learned it. At that time, the public library there had a six weeks in-service training course which was very interesting. We went to every department and learned how the whole library worked before we actually took our position. That was one of the best library jobs I ever had. They gave us 28 working days vacation plus all the holidays that I called Yankee holidays. They'd give you Lincoln's birthday, Washington's birthday and so on, which the state of Texas does not observe. We had that time plus very ample sick leave

and all kinds of fringe benefits that most libraries do not provide. We had an outstanding director, Mr. James Foutts, who has since died. His wife is still working there. And I still keep in touch with those librarians.

I stayed in Ohio about two and a half years. I worked in the children's department, I worked on the bookmobile, and I worked in the reference department. Since I was hired as a general assistant I worked in the different parts of the library. But I got very homesick and then I decided, "Well, I'll come back to El Paso." And so when I'd come for vacation or something I'd apply all over the place, talk to all librarians, but there was nothing available. So I went back to Ohio and I stayed through about May (1958) and then I said, "Well, I don't care, I'm going to go on home whether I have a job or not." I came back to El Paso and in the mail was a letter offering me a job in El Paso. A librarian at a special library at Fort Bliss knew she was looking for a replacement for herself. And she walked into Mr. Polk's office at Texas Western College, he was a librarian there, and said, "Do you know of a librarian who would like a job? I'm leaving, I need a replacement." He had my letter of application on his desk and gave it to her, and she wrote to me to Youngstown (Ohio) offering me the job. And so they returned the letter to me, the

post office forwarded it to me here in El Paso. I applied on a Friday and went to work on Monday. (Chuckles) I worked at that special library for about six years.

It was a special library. We worked with psychologists and engineers doing research for the Army. It was human engineering type of research. They were also in education. The Army was spending a large amount of money teaching recruits. They were still drafting young men and they'd spend two years training them in electronics so that they could learn how to operate the radar. And it was turning out that they were spending all this money and then the fellow completed his time, he was out, and they had to start again. And so they were trying to cut the time of training for these young men. It was the Human Resources Research office with a contract that was working out of George Washington University (in Washington). They worked out a way of teaching these young men in shorter periods, and, in addition, they also did psychological studies. Most of them were Ph.D. psychologists.

It was a very fascinating job, I learned a lot. It was a special library so I was on my own. When I started out I had to write a two-page memo to get a typewriter, would you believe? A manual typewriter? A special librarian has things to take care of that are not usual in the university setting or in a public library. In a public library everybody is concerned about the library, but in a

special library you're out on your own. And at one time I was under the director of research and another time I was under the man who is in charge of statistics. It was just one of those contract situations. Whoever's in charge changes it, and it's like having a new administration every time there's a new director. But it was interesting, I learned a lot. I worked with a very interesting group of scientists and it was good training for me; so I learned, although I had learned a lot in my job at Youngstown. There, the first year, although I had worked in a library and I had gone to library school was a year of learning. Each library has its own way of doing things, and so by the time you learned the way they do it, it's almost a year--at least that's the way it seemed to work with me. After that, they got their money's worth out of me, although I had been there all that time.

And Youngstown, at that time, was still a steel city. It was a fascinating place. I met people from all parts of the world there. One of our librarians was Lithuanian Orthodox and she got married and we went to her wedding. It was one of those things that you see once in a lifetime. They wore olive leaves on their heads and it was straight a capella. The church didn't allow a musical instrument in the church, and it was a gorgeous, beautiful wedding. The other librarians there were from different places. Youngstown had a lot of Catholics, but at the time that I went, the people that worked



in the library were not very religiously minded. But it was interesting that they always made sure that I ate my fish on Friday and my roommates always made sure that I ate my fish on Fridays. If I wasn't out of the house and at mass by 9 o'clock on Sunday morning they were wondering what was wrong with me. (Laughter)  
(They thought I was sick.)

C: You were sick.

M: Yes. The rules for meatless Fridays were still in effect.

C: Did you ever work for Baxter Polk?

M: No. Baxter Polk was the university librarian when I was a student.

C: Yes, you didn't work out there.

M: I did not work at the university library, no. I worked at the El Paso Public Library and then I worked in Youngstown. When I came back to El Paso, I worked in the special library for six years. Then, there was an opening at Hotel Dieu School of Nursing, which later became the University of Texas System School of Nursing, which later became a part of the University of Texas at El Paso. Never in my wildest dreams had I ever thought that I would be working for the University. This was one of those things that just happens, because when I was working for Hotel Dieu School of Nursing, we worked with the Daughters of Charity. They built the hospital, they built the school, they were here for 50 years and trained a large number of nurses.

Most of the nurses that worked in El Paso at that time had been trained at Hotel Dieu. And it was a diploma-type school of nursing, which is a three-year, non-University type of training.

Well, I sort of learned about nursing through the diploma school. When I became the librarian for the School of Nursing, Sister Aloysius, who is now the Director of Continuing Education of Nursing, was the Director of the School of Nursing. She was very library-minded and I was very lucky in that respect, because she felt that the library was a very important part of the school and she let me participate in the planning. She just turned me loose. She said, "What do you need for the library?" And I wrote up my specifications and she and Miss Bonds, who was then the Associate Director, went to Chicago and they went to the Library Mart and looked at the furniture and the different things that I had specified. They got this beautiful library furniture. This is solid walnut furniture, made in Kenosha, Wisconsin. What they paid for it at that time could not be replaced now, mostly because of inflation.

I had asked for these straight, wooden back chairs and so on, and Sister said, "No, they're going to use the library, they should be comfortable," and she had them all upholstered, she wanted upholstered chairs. This was the first library in El Paso, as far as I know, that was carpeted. Prior to that, it was a big noisy place because every time

you'd move a chair or walk someplace, there's a big klunk, klunk on the floor. When we had this carpet it just made a big difference as to the noise, and actually it's cheaper maintenance-wise. When you have an asphalt tile floor or any other kind of non-carpeted surface, it has to be washed and scrubbed and waxed and then buffed, so there's four steps of work that have to be done by whoever's taking care of it. Whereas, when it's carpeted you just run the sweeper through and you've done it. You shampoo it once in a while, but other than that, that's what it is. The carpeting that was put in 14 years ago is still in use and is still acceptable. It was a good quality type.

Sister Aloysius has a flair for decoration, she planned this whole building, down to the last doorknob. If you walk in this building and compare it to any other building on the campus, you can tell the difference. She made sure that the drapes had the same colors that the chairs had, and if they were different colors, that they had the same colors in the carpeting. The rest of the building (I don't know if you've seen the rest of the building), is well planned. There's a fountain at the entrance. Because there was a dormitory, there was a sitting room for the fathers and boyfriends when the students were living in the dormitory. Of course in a private school the rules are quite different from the ones at the University,

especially a secular university. The students were not allowed to wander around in shorts and in hair curlers and all the other things that you see nowadays anywhere.

The discipline was, I think, one of the assets of the students that were graduates of the diploma school. And I always think of the students who graduated from the diploma program and go into the baccalaureate program as having the best of two worlds. They have the commitment to nursing and they have the discipline that the diploma school gave them, plus they also had the clinical practice. The baccalaureate students also get discipline, because they have to have the discipline to do the theory, and they know the theory, but when you get a combination of the two you've got a fantastic nurse. I've seen them come and go. I enjoy working with student nurses. I tell them that they're my favorite people; next to God and my family, they come next, and I enjoy working with them.

C: I want to move you back now to the fifties and to UTEP. Who were your favorite professors over there?

M: Dr. John Sharp and Dr. Anton Berkman, who was a zoology teacher. Dr. Sonnichsen was very good. Dr. Porter, who just died about three or four years ago, well maybe longer than that, was history professor. He knew his material, and he made it fascinating. It was just one of those things that you could hardly wait to go back the next

day, like a mystery story. And Dr. Berkman was such a scientist, and he was such a disciplined gentleman. He had such a dedication to his teaching profession in his field. He was a zoologist and he knew exactly how the whole thing went.

C: Did you have a lab with him?

M: I think they had teaching assistants at that time. Well, he was the lecturer, and we had the lectures in the morning, I think, and they had the labs in the afternoon.

C: Somebody told me one time they were running experiments milking rattlesnakes in the zoology labs. Do you remember anything about that?

M: No. (Chuckles) I think somehow or other the University had some areas in which it could have expanded. We had dissected frogs in high school, in Biology class in high school, and we dissected them again at the University. Now, the pre-med students used to dissect cats, and this is before they bought them, so we'd run all over the alleys chasing cats for dissection classes. (Chuckles) The only reason I knew was because I knew a pre-med student that did it. (Laughter) I think they purchase all of them now and I don't know how they get away with it, since The Humane Society seems to be conscience for animal protection.

Before I changed my majors I had been in the Choir with Dr. Thormodsgaard, who was the head of the Music Department, a fantastic musician. Dr. Olaf Eidbo at that time had just

started, he had just come in from Minnesota, St. Olaf's Choir, a very gifted teacher. I thought he was a teacher more than a musician. He was also a musician, but I thought of him more as a teacher. We did all kinds of programs. We did "Il Trovatore" at Magoffin, and this was one of the first, probably the first of the operas that they did there. Adela Semon was a student at the time, [ ] and [ ] Dr. Hugh Cardon was a student, and they sang ("Il Trovatore"). He was Mario and she was the leading soprano. She still has a beautiful voice. When I was in Ohio, we would drive to Cleveland to hear the Metropolitan Opera because they would go on the road once in the Spring. We would drive from Youngstown on the turnpike (that was the biggest thing to do at that time to get on the turnpike and go to Cleveland). It was an 80 mile drive. I went to the Met and listened to Renata Tibaldi, but she didn't have the beautiful sound, the beautiful voice that Adela has. Renata has a beautiful voice but she had a range in a different area. But I always compare singers to Adela because she was the one that I was first familiar with, and I can still remember some of the choruses that we did. We did "Faust." I was one of the chorus persons.

C: Were you in the summer musicals?

M: Yes. We did, what was it? "Of Thee I sing," and we did "Finnegan's Rainbow." I did not consider myself a singer.

I just liked to sing because it was fun and I always enjoyed music, I've always liked music. And the choir met at noontime when I didn't have to go to all my other classes. We had a lot of rehearsals, and just the activity was a lot of fun.

C: What other activities were you in besides the choir?

M: Before they started wearing very, very short skirts, I was a Golddigger. We were in the Golddiggers and we wore culottes down to our knees and we wore cowboy hats and cowboy boots that were handmade. We marched in the New Year's parade and we went to all the football games. I still enjoy watching football. I can watch, because to me, football is fun. Then we'd do all the yelling. The football team wasn't a winning team at that time. It hasn't changed too much, even with all the things that have happened. You know the main purpose of the school wasn't football, but anyway, it was a lot of fun. I was in the choir and I was in Golddiggers. We also had the Newman Club, which was a group for Catholic students, at the time. There was no chapel on the campus, Dr. Haskell Monroe has made sure there is one now. It's out on Robinson Street but it's still there. There was no chaplain on campus, so we had to meet wherever we could and we'd go to mass at the different churches in town. We'd go out to. . . Our Lady of Assumption, which had just started, it was out in the

boonies, then. We'd go to St. Patrick's and to other churches as a group.

I was also in the Sigma Delta Pi, which is the honorary Spanish fraternity. You really have to learn Spanish to learn about Cervantes and de la Vega. We used to learn about Shakespeare and the Canterbury Tales and all those things in English. People always questioned you because, "Well, why would you major in Spanish?" and this sort of thing. But the same student that I mentioned earlier (the pre-med) had flunked Spanish, and I always thought, "How could you flunk Spanish?" (Laughs) It's a beautiful language and I still enjoy it. I still read it and listen to it and I enjoy watching it on television. Channel 2 has some very beautiful programs. They have the soap operas in Spanish which are two or three months long, and I like them because they're short, and then you can always tell who the "goodies" and who the "baddies" are. They usually have a moral of some type, and the Spanish is beautiful. There's usually a theme of some kind that you can sort of follow. Our soap operas in English leave much to be desired. It's one adulterous event after another, and they last 20 to 30 years, and the same people who do the same kind of bad things they're not supposed to do--like jumping in and out of bed with anybody that they get a hand on. To me it's immoral, and it was unfortunate that some of



our young people grew up with it and still grow up with it. I mentioned this to one of the younger ladies the other day and she said, "But that's the way life is, one adulturous. . ." And I said, "No, it is not!" But she grew up watching our English soap operas, thinking that this is the way life is, and unfortunately this is the way a lot of young people think, which is not true.

C: Your social life then sort of revolved around the Newman Club back then?

M: Well, it revolved around the Newman Club and around choir.

C: Was there any social organization for Mexican Americans?

M: No. Mexican Americans and Jewish people (and Blacks were of course not even allowed in the school, let alone joining anything), were not allowed into the fraternities at that time. The Panhellenic Council was strictly a W.A.S.P. type. Of course we somehow survived. I don't know if you've read Alexander Astin's Minorities in American Higher Education, published by Jossey Bass, 1982.

C: No, I haven't.

M: He did a whole study of Hispanics, Blacks, and Indians in higher education. He tells where a student commitment was, student activities, the number of percentages of students that attended or are attending universities. It's appalling to see the statistics, because there are something like out of 100 Mexican American students that start the first grade, only about 55 percent finish high

school, and out of those only 25 percent of those attend college. Only 7 percent complete a Bachelor's degree. And of those who go to graduate schools, 4 enter and only 2 get their degrees. It's really sort of discouraging. And I thought, "Well, I didn't know I was such a rare bird." (Chuckles) But somehow or other it never occurred to me that this was an obstacle or that I couldn't do it.

Way back when I was in the fifth grade, I had a teacher, Mrs. Margaret Roslyn. We were talking about what we were going to do when we grew up. And I unthinkingly said something about being a cashier. And she tore into me and she said, "You will be using your brains and doing something with them. Anybody can be a cashier but you have to use your brains and do something about it." And so I decided at that point that I was going to go to college. I didn't know what I was going to go to college for or what I was going to do, but I definitely was going to go to college and that was all there was to it.

C: Were you the first in your family to go to college?

M: No, I was not the first in my family. My older sister had attended college. Anyway, Mrs. Roslyn was also the one that started my membership in the Community Concerts Association way back. This was before we had so much vandalism and wildness and what have you. I could take the streetcar (they still had streetcars) and go to the concert.

They used to have them at Liberty Hall before they built all the other places. I liked to listen to Risa Stevens and some of the other musicians that were outstanding. The concert would be over at 10 or 11 pm, and I'd get back on the streetcar without anything happening to me. Here I was, in the sixth, seventh, eighth grade and on into high school and I could do that (go downtown alone at night). I still like music, I still enjoy it. In fact, I still belong to the Community Concerts Association and I still go whenever I can. But it was this one teacher that did this. She did me a favor.

I had decided to go to college and then I was lucky that my parents were supportive. My mother had always told us that she would send us to school as long as we wanted to go to school. So my sister and I were the two that decided that we wanted to go to college and we both went. She was a year older than I and she went on to college. This was before work study and grants and all of this, and so you had to work your way through, in whatever you could. She ran out of money one year, so she had to stay out a year to save money to continue. So we graduated together, because I caught up with her while she had to stay out to save enough money to go back to school. The tuition was a lot lower and the books were less expensive. Would you believe, on \$50 I could pay my tuition, pay my student association fee, and buy second-

hand books? I wasn't making that much at the El Paso Library, I was only working 20 hours a week. My mother was very spendthrift and sewed our clothes ( I still have some things she made) so we were able to go with her help and our jobs. We wanted to go and we made up our minds that we were going to go, and it never occurred to us that this was anything unusual or that we were anything different. And now when I talk to some of these newer students, "Well, the statistics show" and all this, I think, "So what? If you want to go you'll go."

I felt that I wanted to go and that I was going to go whatever came. Then when I decided to go to library school, I just told my mother, "There's no library school here so I'll have to go someplace else." Because of the discrimination practices that are still prevalent, unfortunately, in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, I decided I was not going to go to library school in any of those states. I wrote to several universities and applied, and I was going to go with another young lady but she got married on me. (Chuckles) And so I had to go by myself. But that was the way it was, and she decided to get married in December and so she didn't go to school that year. She graduated from college with us but she didn't go to library school with me.

My daddy worked for the railroad. He was railroad man for 46 years and so we had a pass on the train. And so part of my being able to go to library school was the fact that I

had a pass on the train and I didn't have to pay transportation. I'd hop on the train and I had a little shoe box with fried chicken and boiled eggs ( and for years I couldn't eat them). It was a 22 to 24 hour ride on the train. And it was kind of scary, but I had traveled alone before so I wasn't afraid.

C: Your mother wasn't afraid for you to go on the train by yourself?

M: No. I had already gone on the train by myself to Colorado when I was in Y-teens, in high school. They had a Y-teen convention in Colorado Springs, and I had been in Y-teens in high school, and they selected me to be the representative for that camp. I took the train to Colorado all by myself and that was a very exciting experience, because on the passes you're only allowed to ride certain trains. Well, somehow or other, the people that gave me the information for going to Colorado put me on the wrong train. I got to Dalhart, Texas and the train conductor said, "Could I see your ticket," and I pulled out my pass [ and ] he said, "This is a pass, and you're not allowed to ride on this train." And at midnight, he puts me off at Dalhart, Texas. There was a one-story building, it was the Post Office, hotel, train station, everything in one building, and there I was.

[ PAUSE ]

Anyway, I got off and the people at the hotel there realized what had happened, the man kept saying, "Well, you can go up to one of the rooms." And I was scared to death, I wasn't about to go up to a hotel room by myself. So I sat in the lobby in this big wide chair that they had and I slept on the thing. Then one of the trainmen got some breakfast for me in the morning. And wouldn't you know it, that was the weekend that the trains went on strike, and there were no more trains coming through. There was a little gas station across the street and I had to hitch a ride the rest of the way to Colorado Springs. It turned out that there was a couple, an elderly man and his wife who were driving from one end of Colorado to the other end where their daughter lived, and they gave me a ride as far as Colorado Springs.

Well, by this time the people at the camp were wondering what had happened to me. They had called my mother, my mother said, "I put her on the train," and they couldn't find me. And so I went to the Y there in Colorado Springs and I told them who I was, and so they came from the camp and she took me back to the camp. She was a very polite, you know, these people work for the YWCA. Would you believe, and they're supposed to be for all races, colors, and so on. Well, she wasn't quite there, and would you believe, I had to sit in the back seat. She wouldn't allow anybody to sit in the front seat with her.

Would you believe? And she worked for the YWCA.

But anyway, I got to the camp, had a fantastic time. We had cabins with bunks and we lived in the forest and there was all kinds of trees. Those mountains were so strange because they had trees on them and our mountains were bare, beautiful, and purple mountains. We get up there and all these funny trees all over the mountains. (Laughter) But it was a beautiful thing. And one of the students there, one of the Y-teens had a beautiful soprano voice, and I'll just never forget. It was an evening program and we were all sitting there in the dark, and there's all these pine trees and this gorgeous evening, and she sang, "Ave Maria." And it was just one of those things that happens. When you remember it, it makes you get goose pimples. And I think another time that I got goose pimples was when we were practicing for the Golddiggers, you know we had to perform at all the games, and Gene Lewis was the trumpeteer for the band, and he played one of the bull fight songs on the trumpet out in the desert while we were practicing. Music had always been one of my favorite activities.

C: Where did the Golddiggers practice most of the time?

M: At old Kidd Field.

C: At Kidd Field.

M: At Kidd Field. That's where all the games were. We practiced out there. We practiced like at 1 o'clock in the

afternoon and we'd practice an hour, and I usually had lab at 2 o'clock and so I had to go.

C: How many Golddiggers were there at that time?

M: Oh, I don't suppose there were more than 50 or not even 100 at the time. We did have to practice every day and practice for the games and be at all the games, and be in uniform. It was a lot of fun.

C: Did you have several uniforms or just the one?

M: No, it was just the one. It was the culottes, we had the white cowboy shirt with mother of pearl buttons on the cuffs and on the front. The shirt was a white one and then we had white cowboy boots that were handmade for each of us, and the white Stetson hat. I kept it for a long time, I don't have it anymore. But it was a lot of fun and we enjoyed doing it. And then of course we went to out-of-town games, to Lubbock and Midland.

C: On the bus?

M: We would go on the bus. We went to Albuquerque, and I think it was Lubbock and Midland for some of the other games. We didn't get to do anything with the basketball team, I think the cheerleaders took care of that, but we did get to go to the football games in one or two out-of-town football games. That was a lot of fun.

And the University used to have a Twirp Dance every December, and back in the older days, the girls didn't ask the boys to a dance. It was supposed to be the other way



around, and you just didn't do things like that. But anyway, the Twirp Dance was your one golden opportunity to invite a boy to the dance, and you had little dance cards and the boys would sign up as to who had the first dance and the second dance, I still have my little card. I've got it in my papers at home someplace, of all the people that were my dancing partners. I had the whole thing booked, and I had a ball.

C: Who did you ask to go?

M: It was an engineering student. (Chuckles) And, you know, the engineers were the kings of the jungle, and to get to go to the dance with an engineering student, you had really made it. (Laughter) As it turned out he dropped out of school and I sort of lost track of him. It just was one of those things. Then another time I had invited someone else. I went to at least two of them.

C: Were they formals?

M: They were formals, oh, yes. You got all dolled up in your long dresses and you had corsages and the boys got all decked out in their tuxedos, and girls looked like girls and boys looked like boys. And we had a tremendous time. It was in the old Student Union Building when the ballroom was still there, and we danced up a storm. Of course they always had dances after the football games. I usually didn't stay for those because we were in uniform and I didn't really, didn't have a reason to go.

C: Where would those dances be, in the Union as well?

M: In the Union building, yes. You know, things used to happen at the school. And of course, we also had plays and of course the operas and musical programs that were presented, and there were always speakers, and there were a lot of activities if you took advantage of it. I think there's still a lot of activities that people can take advantage of. I think what happened now is that so many of our students are also working or only going to school part time. Or, they're already married and they have to go home and fix dinner and so on, so they don't have time to be galavanting all over town doing all these things. But we were single.

C: But you were working.

M: But I was working, so that meant that my social life was rather restricted.

C: But you still took advantage?

M: Well, I had to go to the dances. I mean I loved to dance. We went to a lot of activities. Some of the things we could go to, some things we couldn't. Of course, in my junior year I finally bought a car, and you'd be surprised how many friends you make after you buy a car. People that hadn't spoken to you before all of a sudden turn up. But I mean, well, people like that are just everywhere, I suppose. But I was able to buy a car and go to more things and do more things, but that was a lot of fun. We enjoyed it. I enjoyed

being a student. Like I said, I didn't get into all the other activities, like the Panhellenic Council in those days, because they were closed to Hispanics, Mexican Americans.

C: What other kind of prejudice did you feel besides that social exclusion, if any?

M: Well, I took a Sociology course, and this was way back before people were aware of Hispanics or wanted to even think about Hispanics. Some people still don't, unfortunately. But we were in Sociology class and we were explaining certain things of certain customs and so on, and I said something about tamales and how we make them and so on. And the teacher, I don't think she did it maliciously, but she said, "Oh, she's going to teach us how to do it," and I was showing with my hands. And she made that sort of remark that really was uncalled for. And like I said, I don't think she did it maliciously, just probably did what she had grown up with. Some people grow up with prejudice and they die and still carry it with them, they never outgrow it. It's one of those things that people do. First of all, they're taught that prejudice, because you're not born with it. It's really an insecurity type of thing. Gordon Allport, who is one of the outstanding psychologists, has done a classic called The Nature of Prejudice, and you've probably read it, there's copies in the library. He analyzed prejudice, he dissected it, you could almost say,

In all ways, any way you slice it, it's a sense of insecurity, because you're trying to lord it over somebody else. This is basically where it starts. Because if you know who you are, you don't have to be pushing anyone around.

C: Would you feel comfortable speaking Spanish on the campus in the early fifties?

M: We did it all the time. It didn't bother me at all.

(Chuckles) Now, although in the schools they had always all kinds of funny, I call them funny rules, about not speaking Spanish in the schools. We spoke Spanish all the time, it didn't bother us, because we were able to speak Spanish. Besides, I was a Spanish major. (Chuckles) So, I mean, aside from that, Spanish is a beautiful language and there was no reason for us not to speak it. There was a group of us that (you know how it is even in grade school), that got along. You fall in with a certain group. And my sister and I fell in with a certain group and we were always doing things together and going places.

C: Well, I'd heard about those funny rules at the schools, and I wondered if it carried over to the college.

M: I don't know. If there were such a rule, I didn't know about it; and, if I knew about it, well, it didn't occur to me that I was supposed to speak strictly English. Although I must say I was an English minor. I had learned English in my early, early years and this was not a problem.

C: Did any of your Hispanic friends in the early fifties, that went to this school and they graduated, have trouble getting a professional job here in town?

M: I was offered a job when I finished my library training, but I didn't want to come back and work for peanuts when I could make more money someplace else. And I was a little footloose and fance free, you might say. But I don't know. I think that at that time, and I don't know how true it is now, most of the Hispanic students that I was in school with were in Education, and there was a large shortage of teachers, and so as far as I know, getting a job was not difficult. Now, some of the engineering students started working with some of the larger companies and have now since established their own companies.

C: Hector Holguin was in school.

M: Well, I don't think he was in my class. But, engineers you couldn't miss, because at that time, this was before computers, they all had their slide rule hanging off their belt and you could spot them a mile off. That's the way the engineers were--I mean, they loaded the place. And St. Patrick's Day was a big bash. Everybody grew a beard, and the longest and bushiest beard got a prize at the Hard Luck Dance for St. Patrick's Day. And the engineers always made a big old commotion about it.

C: Did you ever go to the Hard Luck Dance?

M: No, no, I didn't. I knew some of the engineers, talked to

them, but I didn't really date them except for this one fellow that I invited to a dance. But I didn't really do much dating in college. I was going to school, and when I wasn't going to school I was studying or I was working and it was rather limited. I think maybe I went to two movies or something like that the whole time, and went bowling three or four times. Then of course we were still in the CYO, which is Catholic Youth Organization, and that was still quite active and we were still part of it. It was a rather mixed group, some high school and some college students. They had another group, and I can't remember the name of it. They had dances out in the upper valley where there was a big hall. And we went out there and I remember we did the bunny hop for Easter. And everybody danced and it was the sort of thing to do. We'd go to weddings or quinceañeras or we'd go to all kinds of activities. And there'd be big dances at the Coliseum. Fats Domino came later, in the late fifties, when I came back to El Paso.

C: Was he at the Coliseum?

M: He was at the Coliseum, and I wanted so badly to hear him, and I did get to go. I like classical music and I like some jazz and some popular music. We'd do a lot of different things like that. And I had things to do at home, because we had to help around the house, we weren't just sitting pretty there. We had to help clean, wash and cook and

take our turns, and so it wasn't as if we were just Little Lord Fauntleroy's sitting around waiting for somebody to wait on us. We had to take our share of doing things at the house, as well as getting our work done at school, and so on. But we weren't pampered in the sense that, you know, just because you're going to school you don't have to wash the dishes. That didn't work. You know, you went to school, you came and then you washed the dishes (laughs), and then you went to bed. It was that type of thing.

As a matter of fact, there were six of us at home growing up, and television had just come to El Paso and if the t.v. wasn't on the radio was on. There was always some activity going on so I couldn't really study, so I learned at one time to go to bed early and sleep, and then I could wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning and get a lot done between 5 and 7 a.m. My daddy and I would be the only ones up, but everybody else was sleeping and I'd get a lot of studying done, and it worked. Till this day I still like to get up early. But people are that way, they're either nocturnal or diurnal, and I happen to be a diurnal. I do better early in the morning, and some people do their best thinking late in the evening. It's just that everybody's different.

I had learned to do that because, before I had a car and summer classes were at 7 o'clock in the morning, I had

to be at the bus stop at 5:15 am, to get downtown to transfer to the college bus in order to be there by 7 o'clock classes.

C: Well, where was your home?

M: At Five Points. And this was a nice area because there were a lot of busses going by and so we were lucky in that sense. So I'd get up real early and run up and catch that 5:15 bus so I could transfer downtown and then go on to the 7 o'clock classes. This was before any air conditioning. You were glad to get a 7 o'clock class because if you got anything later you would probably melt before it was over, and some people did, I suppose. So, we managed that way. And like I said, my daddy would get up early and I'd get up early, and I did a lot of studying in the early morning. After I got the car it wasn't so bad. I mean, I didn't have to get up quite that early, so I'd pack all my books in the car and ride off to the park and sit and study in the park because I couldn't study at home. There was too much commotion.

But somehow or other I managed. I even made the Dean's List my last semester, just because I enjoyed it. Dr. Roth was another one of my favorite teachers. He was a true scholar. There are not very many. Dr. Roth had died in the middle of our semester of philosophy classes and then Dr. Floyd Fierman took over in the middle of the semester and he was also an excellent teacher. I think he's since retired and he's written



the history of the Jewish Community in El Paso. But Mr. Polk was the librarian at the time, and Frances Clayton, who has been ill in the last few years, was one of the librarians there.

C: When they dedicate the new library on the campus, Baxter Polk is going to be there.

M: Is he going to? How exciting! I'd like to see him again.

C: And I don't know how old he is, but he must be up in his eighties.

M: Well, I don't really know. You know, he also used to be a radio commentator for classical music on the radio. They used to have a program, I can't remember what night it was, when they played classical music. He knew music up and down, I suppose, and he could tell something about the composer and then something about this particular piece. He had a sonorous voice, a very deep voice, and he came across beautifully on the radio. I don't know when he stopped doing that. See, when I took off to library school I sort of lost track of all the things that were going on, and I was really surprised when I came back in 1958 that the people that I had gone to school with were either married or had moved away. Socially I had to start from scratch. I couldn't believe it. I went to that Fats Domino dance at the Coliseum and there was thousands of people there and I think I knew about five or six, and I said, "This can't be my hometown. I don't know anybody." But this was the way it was. I had lost touch with them, so I started from scratch

socially because the people that I had grown up with were married or had moved away.

Back in 1955 while I was gone, Father Gerald McDonald, who died about two years ago, was at the Immaculate Conception Church, the priests heard all these stories about the problems of marriage. The couples get into difficulties and they don't know what to do. So the more couples he saw the more he realized that the reason they were having problems was because there were mixed marriages. The Catholic Church categorized mixed marriage as people where the Catholics marry non-Catholics. So he decided to prevent that. And so he started a Catholic Young People's organization, called CAYOPE. The group was for single Catholics to meet other single Catholics, so that you wouldn't marry non-Catholics. A religion that is so different from your own may mean that your marriage wouldn't work. Sometimes even with the same religious background it doesn't work. But you're already making it difficult in a mixed marriage. The Catholic Church used to have stricter rules about mixed marriages at the time. They put in every obstacle that they could think of to keep you from doing that, and I think it was a wise thing because although they have removed the obstacles, the problems are still there. For the child who is born, it's going to be baptized in which church? And on Sunday, what church are you going to go to, or even a burial, what's going to happen? So, although, like I said,

the obstacles have been removed, the problems are the same when you have different faiths.

He started the club, Catholic Young People's Organization, that was called CAYOPE. He started it at the Immaculate Conception and then he moved over to St. Joseph's Church, which is really not my parish, but this was the only church that had it. I went to the CAYOPE a long time. I didn't get in till about 1958. They had elections. They had something going every weekend. We went on hayrides; we had dances. Of course Monsignor Buchanan was the Pastor at St. Joseph's then and he didn't allow liquor on the premises. We had dances and we'd raise funds. We had Valentine dances. They used to have all these things at what is now the gym of the school, before the new sanctuary was built. One Valentine's dance we had a stag line. The whole wall was all these handsome young men dressed up in tuxedos and we were on the other side. The men would come to ask us to dance with them.

C: Did you meet your husband there?

M: No. Well, no, let me tell you, it's one of those strange things that happened. I met my husband at the Post Office. We were playing post office. (Laughter) Not really. But anyway this CAYOPE club always had a spring dance, so we had to sell tickets to the dance so we could pay for the orchestra. I had already met my husband. I mean, I had met Jose, but I wasn't dating him, but I tried to sell him

a ticket to the dance. So I sold him the ticket to the dance. He was dating somebody else and I was dating somebody else, and he was busy in his world and I was busy in mine. He didn't go to the dance, but he bought the ticket. And he had my address and so he'd send me a Christmas card, "Your friend, Jose." And I'd send him a Christmas card, "Your friend." And he kept going his way and I kept going my way.

Well, I have about a 45-piece Nativity set that I set up every year because Christmas is very important. So I always set it up and it takes up the whole wall of the living room or wherever I put it up. And I knew that he was religiously inclined or thought more about God than most men do. When you're single you really shop around. You can really get a lot of different ideas about what's there, because there were a lot of men that didn't even know what a rosary was, let alone how to pray it. And Jose was one that knew what a rosary was and he prayed it (chuckles), and we still do as a matter of fact.

But anyway on the Christmas card I said, "Why don't you stop by to see my Nativity set?" I told Father McDonald about that and he said, "Well, I've heard of everything, but this is the first time I've heard a Nativity set." But Jose did go over to see my Nativity set and then he said, "I'll call you." Well, this was like in December. Well, came January, February and I said, "Well, one of those fellows

that says I'm going to call you and never does." Well, March came around, he did call and then he called every weekend, and I thought, "Well, this is nice." He was my telephone boyfriend. He'd call me and we'd have a nice little chat and he said, "I'll call you next weekend." He'd call me again next week. And from about March to July I thought he was never going to ask me out. Well, he finally did. He finally asked me out in July and he said, "Well, we'll go out this one time and maybe we'll go out next month." I said, "What?" You know. So we went out that one time, and we hadn't stopped dating since. (Chuckles)

C: Isn't that something!

M: It just worked out that way. He was worth waiting for because I had dated a few people and he had dated a few people and had even been engaged and broken the engagement and so on. But a lot of the young ladies and young men did meet [through CAYOPE] at that time. I don't know if you saw my letter to the editor in the El Paso Times, but I wrote it in June (1983), telling about the things that this club did. I think there were close to I would say from 50 to 100 marriages that resulted as meeting with this [club]. It was fun, clean fun. We'd go on hayrides; we'd go to parades together; we'd play ping pong together; we'd go to movies together. It was always a group activity, and when we started pairing off it wasn't

there. But a lot of people did meet there and it was just a lot of fun. And the people that were into drunken orgies or misbehavior would go and then, you know, they'd say, "These are squares," and they'd drop out on their own because they didn't fit in. Their intents were different. But when you have the same goals in marriage, that you really want it to work, that you want children, that you want it to be, it's not a make-believe, the, "I'll try it now, if doesn't work I'll shed it," type of attitude toward marriage--is false. Marriage is not a toy. If you both have the same attitude you have a better chance of success in marriage.

And so, of the marriages that came from that organization about 99 percent are still intact. In fact, we've lost some of our members by death and some of our members' children are now graduating from high school and now getting married. It's because we had those same principles of marriage being a sacred thing that you go into seriously you don't just go, "Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Moe," and this is it. And in that club, that CAYOPE club that Father McDonald started, you had an opportunity to meet the different types of people and we sort of sized each other up. I used to grade the fellows by the way they drove, because if they were inconsiderate in running red lights and so on, this was the way they ran their lives. Some of this was actually true, and some of course get behind the wheel and they become

monsters and then when they're not behind the wheel they're all right. But it worked out pretty good. I mean, I could tell pretty much by their driving habits.

The club, at the time that I joined it, started out with a rosary at the church, at St. Joseph's Church. We had a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe that Ramon Rocha had carved, he has since died. She used to be a pilgrim statue, going from home to home. I don't even know who kept her, because one of the girls would get to take her home and she would stay in that girl's home until the next week. And then she would take it to the meeting and then somebody else would get to take the statue home. We'd start with a rosary at the church and then we would go to the auditorium for our meeting. Actually most of the meeting consisted of planning some kind of social--a hayride or going to Cristo Rey. We made several trips up there. We went up to White Sands and we'd go up to Elephant Butte. We used to take the little girls from San Juan orphanage to different things and take them up to Elephant Butte. San Juan used to be an orphanage, and at that time it was like a boarding school for little girls that either had broken homes or had no homes, they lived there.

C: Where was this?

M: San Juan, where the San Juan Day Care Center (on Glenwood) is now. It used to be an orphanage and little girls were there

and they had no place to go, and they'd be there all week and then all weekend. So the people from CAYOPE would go on Saturdays and weekends to see them. Well, actually the Knights of Columbus started the work. They would show the movies on Saturday afternoon, and then the people from CAYOPE would go out there. Some of the girls were teachers and they would play games with them. The boys would build a play house. So they had some kind of recreation that was different from being in school and being in a boarding school the whole week. They closed the orphanage. There was some decision made about it and it's now a day care center. The new building is beautiful, but the old adobe things that they had before that were what CAYOPE used to work with. And we'd go out there on a Saturday afternoon. This was one of our activities. I guess you could call it our outside activities. And we'd go out there and take the girls to the park or wherever. And that was one of the things we did besides going to Cristo Rey or other places.

Of course we always went to mass together the first Sunday of the month, and we always went to breakfast together after mass. And that was a meeting, it was another social. Going to mass is a social because it's a big party with Christ, but then afterwards we'd go someplace. We'd always make reservations and we'd go out to Heinz or Ramada Inn or someplace and just have a good old time. This was the time when my parents were both still alive and I'd come in



one door and go out the other practically. Like for one New Year's Eve, there was a new Year's Eve dance the night before in somebody's house, and then the next day we went to the parade, and after that we went to play Scrabble or something at somebody's house, then we went bowling or to a movie. There was always something going on.

C: Is there anything like that for your children?

M: No. Well, the CYO club, Catholic Youth Organization, are still active. Now, CAYOPE as an organization sort of dissolved after about 1968 - 69 or something like that, because first of all, they started to eliminate the religious practices. They stopped praying to the rosary. The club was open to Catholics and they started accepting non-Catholics. Non-Catholics are nice people, except that the whole point of the organization was for Catholics to meet Catholics. And then the leadership sort of waned. There were not that many that were actively interested. I had dropped out because my mother had passed away and I spent more time with my father. Actually we met a few times after that, but they stopped having activities and I sort of just dropped away from it because I was busy taking care of the house and caring for my dad and doing things. Of course I was taking night classes and in choir and doing other things. [It] wasn't my whole life. I spent a lot of time with it and I enjoyed it, but there were other things for me to do so I dropped out.