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Dennis Marquez Bixler

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Dennis Bixler-Marquez
INTERVIEWER: Randy Scott Hedrick
PROJECT: Class Project/History of the University
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 27, 1984
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TRANSCRIPT NO.: 713

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Curriculum and Instruction professor at U.T. El Paso

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biographical information; coming to the U.S. from Mexico in 1959 and early experiences here; experiences in the Army, including Vietnam; experiences as a student at UTEP, including student concerns, anti-war sentiment, and the takeover of the Administration Building by MEChA and its results; outstanding professors; changes in the university.

Length of interview: 50 minutes Length of transcript: 26 pages

Dennis Bixler-Marquez
By Randy Scott Hedrick
November 27, 1984

H: Dr. Bixler-Marquez, I'd like to ask you where you were born and when.

B: I was born in Mexico City in 1945.

H: Were your parents of Mexican background?

B: My father was American, he's deceased now. My mother is Mexican, she's still alive, she's from Torreon, Mexico. My father was born in the Four Corners area of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado, and he lived most of his early life along the border [because] his father worked for the railroad. When he was 16 or so he went to Mexico and joined the Mexican Revolution, and he never came back.

H: This was in 1916?

B: Somewhere around that time. I really don't have the precise date.

H: Did he ever tell stories about his experiences from the Revolution?

B: He told me quite a number of stories. I do not remember most of them now, but he certainly told a lot of stories regarding the Revolution. Since he was with Obregon, they had dealings with Pancho Villa, some of the assassination attempts and things you go through.

H: He was with Pancho Villa?

B: He was with Obregon. That was one faction, it's the faction that won, so that's why he stayed in Mexico. (Chuckles)

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H: When did you come to the United States?

B: I came to the United States in 1959. I did all my own _____ in school, most of it in an American type school, in Mexico City. And then I came here where I started school in a Special English program at Father Yermo School, and then transferred on to a regular academic program here.

H: What was Father Yermo School?

B: Father Yermo is a private Catholic school that is now exclusively for girls at the secondary level and partly mixed at the elementary. At that time it had a special program for people who did not know English, that you would go through in one year. That was very similar to public school programs at the time, and they called the program Special English. By that time you would acquire English, and then according to your grade level, then you would transfer on to the public schools, or private schools if you desired.

H: Was it a boarding school type of arrangement?

B: No, not at all. The only thing that was different from other schools was that, in terms of ability grouping, we were all in the same boat. I was not placed, let's say, in a seventh grade class where everyone spoke English and I didn't. That was the initial thing that happened to me at Houston School, [where] of course I couldn't handle the curriculum because I couldn't understand a thing they were saying. Therefore they then switched me to Douglas [School]. That's a public school. However, the principal in that school, since I was a recent arrival, said I didn't qualify as a resident. Therefore I had

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to pay tuition, at that time \$25 dollars a month which was a lot of money. And Father Yermo charged you according to the means of your family, which in my case meant I only had to pay \$5 dollars a month, and that made a difference.

H: Were there very many children from Mexico attending Father Yermo School?

B: Most of the students, a very large percentage--people who were just in their regular school--a lot of them come from Mexico. There are certainly a lot of people from the El Paso area. But that and other private institutions in El Paso have a very large percentage of Mexican students. I don't know if they had a boarding school set up like Loretto or Radford, but most of the students that were in class with me lived and resided across the border in Juarez rather than in El Paso.

H: Did very many of the students at Father Yermo have ambitions to go on to college?

B: I don't quite recall. I take it for granted because for them it was an expensive program, and their parents went out of their way to insure that they learned English so that eventually they could be mainstreamed into a program conducive to university training.

H: Here in the United States?

B: Yeah, more than likely UTEP. Sort of like Lydia Patterson [Institute] operates. A lot of those children are being trained so they can come to UTEP.

H: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

B: I have two stepbrothers and two stepsisters, and then my sister

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who immigrated with me. She still lives here in El Paso.

H: So both of you are in El Paso now?

B: Yeah.

H: Your other brothers and sisters, where do they reside now?

B: I have a sister who is living in Miami, and my other brother and sister reside in Mexico City.

H: Did you spend most of your early years in Mexico City?

B: [Yes,] that's right.

H: Did you find El Paso maybe, or the United States, to be strikingly different from Mexico City when you came here as a youngster?

B: Well, it was quite a shock for me, because first of all I had developed a vision of what the United States should look like based on your basal readers--your Dick and Jane--and movies and that sort of thing,, so that I expected some type of New York-like metropolis [with] policemen on corners. And I actually expected to find machines on every corner where you could buy ice cream and pies and toys, and that sort of thing. Then coming from Mexico City, which is a huge metropolitan area, for all practical purposes El Paso appeared to me very rural. While people here made distinctions between Juarez and El Paso, that was a difficult distinction for me to make. (Chuckles) When you first cross over to the United States on the downtown bridge, you find things like adobe houses and poverty. That was totally against the image that I had formed of the United States. I just didn't expect certainly to find poverty. I expected to find Dick and Jane, which is what I had in the

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American school.

H: So you were surprised when you came to El Paso as a youngster by what you found?

B: Yeah. My initial surprise was that. Of course at that age the biggest positive influence I think that I had was going downtown in the stores, like Kress and what have you, that had all these inexpensive toys. I think for the first year I was always trying to go downtown just to look around.

H: What do you remember most about your childhood?

B: Probably, the school experiences, the friendships that I had formed, which, after coming to the United States, I left behind. I remember sports experiences, all the different places that my family used to visit on weekends. Again, in a large metropolis, you have so much you can do. So since I missed a lot of those things, they have stayed in my mind.

H: Did you participate in any type of sports there at Father Yermo?

B: No. The only time I participated in sports was in Mexico City. We had American football and soccer. In fact, I was very up-to-date about the pros and football leagues here in the United States. Because that was an American school, that was emphasized. But I didn't do any of that after I came here. Of course when I came here I certainly didn't have the size to be playing football. (Chuckles)

H: At what age did you begin to date?

B: Probably around the age of fourteen, fifteen.

H: What would you do when you went out on a date? Where would you

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go?

B: Well, without money, _____. (Chuckles) We didn't have cars until later on. It was primarily like going to the movies that were downtown. At that point there were no suburban movie houses. In fact the theater at Five Points was the suburb, so to speak, as far as going to another movie. But normal _____ going to the movies, meeting the girls at some of the parks, baseball games. Once you go into high school, then you have all the regular activities, like the dances and primarily school-sponsored activities. Now once I acquired a car, later on as a junior in high school, than I had more options of places that I could go to. But initially there were not really that many places to go. Later on, what was very popular was going to the drive-ins, and there was on about a block from my house.

H: What area did you live in in El Paso?

B: Five Points.

H: Did most of the other youngsters at your high school have cars?

B: Yeah. Of course it's hard for me to give you a percentage figure, but I would say certainly no more than 25 or 30 percent of the school. I went to a vocational high school [El Paso Technical School], so a lot of people had mechanical interests and so forth. So owning a car was important. I myself took body repair in high school, so I was very attracted to automobiles. Instead of playing sports, I spent most of my time working on cars. So I was more into hot rods than sports.

H: Was there very much of what you might call a hot rod type of

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culture among the youngsters here in El Paso when you were growing up?

B: Yeah. In fact, even though my high school was about 98, 99 percent Mexican-American, the low-rider phenomenon which existed prior to the time that I went to high school, as far as I know, was gone. You know, there's a resurgence now, [or was] in the '70s. But a lot of people cared about the cars. They would paint them and that sort of thing. The orientation was for hot rods. When people talked about painting a car, they were talking about painting a sports car such colors as Competition Orange, Canary Yellow. There were drag races. Again, most of my circle of acquaintances were people whose interests of course coincided with mine, students who were taking auto mechanics, auto body repair.

H: What fads were popular when you were a teenager at your high school?

B: Well, I don't think they do that much in high schools now, but we had, I guess, a concept left over from the '50s, a Tea Dance, which is a 5 o'clock type of affair. So on Fridays, an hour or so after class, there would be a dance which was very popular with most of the students.

H: Do you see a change in the type of dress among high school students then and now?

B: Yeah, some of fashions have kind of gone the full circle. For example, for Mexican-Americans the dress style resembles very much some of the dress styles that are coming back in style now, for example the gray or khaki starch pants and shirts

buttoned all the way to the top. But I was sort of like in the transition period as well. Along with the European musical invasion came a dress change. You had several trends. First the blue jeans were very popular, so some people used both types of clothes. And then you have a change that begins to take place with the music and so forth, so all of a sudden you have different fabrics, polyester, things that were available. So you began to see more variation toward the end of my high school years.

H: What year did you graduate from high school?

B: 1964.

H: You mentioned British rock music. What type of music was popular with the youngsters here in El Paso then?

B: Well, that depends on the ethnic group. I think that with the Mexican Americans and blacks you have a combination of soul music. But also you have to say [whether it was] music for listening or music for dancing. If you talk about dancing, it's primarily what later evolved as soul music. People didn't necessarily call it that because you have different groups who are not black who are also producing the same type of music. And that's pretty much what prevailed at the time. And then with the British rock groups, there were a lot of songs that were playing for Mexican-Americans to listen to, but most of them would not dance to them.

H: Was there any radio station that was particularly well liked by the students?

B: Well, there was a television station, and there was a show by

the Outstanding Ex of last year, Rudy Tellez. He had something called "4:30 Hop," which was like Dick Clark's [show]. That was a local thing. A lot of the rock programs came from Mexican stations. And you have to understand that, at the same time that rock is developing here, rock is developing in Mexico. And I used to go spend about a month or two every summer with my father in Mexico City, so I was exposed to all the translations, because mostly they were in Spanish. I would listen to radio stations on both sides of the border. But KELP I think is the radio station that is the most popular. The guy's still around. Steve Crosno was the disc jockey, and he sponsored a lot of dances and things of that nature in shopping malls to attract people, and that was very popular at the time.

H: When did you leave home?

B: In '68 when I got married. I mean, I had left home for the Army for two years after high school. Prior to high school I worked a with a paper route, and I worked at a filling station for a while in the summers. And then when I was going to school I worked in a bowling alley as a mechanic on the weekends at nights, and during the day I handled the grill. Then not really at nights but from 12 o'clock at night till 8 o'clock in the morning, seven days a week, I cleaned the bowling alley.

So when I graduated from high school, we had the draft. If you were 1-A, nobody would touch you, because it meant that you could be called after they trained you or whatever. So I worked in Alamogordo as a bowling alley mechanic. I went also

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to the General Motors training school during the summer, so that gave me more automotive skills. Then I came back and worked in the automotive parts business for about a year and a half or two. Then I was drafted. And I came back and enrolled in UTEP and was married in 1968.

H: You were drafted in 1967?

B: I was drafted January 4th of '66. Then I spent all of '66 and all of '67 in the Army. I was released a couple of days before Christmas in '67. Well, they asked me where I wanted to go for basic training. I put down Fort Bliss and they gave me Fort Bliss. I was in the very first unit that trained here. Then I asked a Cuban friend of mine, who worked where they prepare the orders to ship people overseas, if there was the possibility of going somewhere where it might be nice. I was sent over to Hawaii for eight months. Then I got tired of being in Hawaii, mostly field duty. The unit I was in eventually was the unit involved in the My Lai incident in Vietnam, [the incident with] all the news coverage of the atrocities committed. But I left way before they did.

Then I volunteered for service in Vietnam just to see what it was like. Then I got tired of Vietnam and I told them I wanted to go back to the States, and they said, "Too bad!" (Laughs) So actually I had two years [of service] divided into three chunks. I spent eight months basic training here, working as a mechanic. Then I was sent to Hawaii as a truck and tank mechanic. Then I was assigned to an infantry unit as a mechanic in Vietnam.

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H: What was your most memorable experience in Vietnam?

B: Well, I could name two or three, but the most was probably going out on a daylight patrol, and I was the point man. And the sergeant yelled from the back, "Look out!" So the first thing I thought is, "I've had it!" So I turned to shoot. There was a child right in front of me which came very close to getting blown up because all I heard was the movement. And then fortunately I was able to see the child, because if all I had seen [was] movement, I would have shot anyway and asked questions later. So when [I] realize how close I came to killing an innocent child. In essence the mother and children saw soldiers, they panicked, they didn't want to make a noise. The child ran out. It could have been something very difficult to live with later on, no matter how justifiable you want to make it in terms of what goes on during war.

H: After you were discharged from the Army, you decided to attend U.T. El Paso?

B: Right. And then they sent me a letter telling me that I should live in the dorm so I could get the experience of being away from home. They sent me the letter to Vietnam. (Chuckles)

H: What was the name of the university then?

B: Well, it was University of Texas at El Paso the very semester I started. I think the previous year or two it was Texas Western College. They had just changed it. The name was probably a year old or a semester old, because I remember it was a big controversial thing when I was stationed at Fort Bliss--you know, what the new name was going to be.

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H: Did they use the nickname UTEP back then?

B: I think so, but I'm not sure. [I've] been here so long now that you get used to it.

H: You started attending UTEP in 1968?

B: [Yes,] the spring.

H: When did you complete your degree here at UTEP?

B: Well, I completed a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Spanish in 1971, and I just crossed the street from Liberal Arts and enrolled in a special Master's program in Education, so I kept on. I was enrolled at UTEP from '68 through May of '73, and in that time I got the B. A. in Liberal Arts and a Master's in Education.

H: Why did you choose to attend UTEP?

B: Well, convenience was one. Certainly tuition was a big factor, compared to other schools. And the biggest convenience was the fact that you could live at home [with no] additional living expenses such as housing. I lived at home that first nine months or so. Then I go married and still lived at home, but with my wife. But we never lived in university housing for married students or anything like that.

H: In 1984 here at UTEP there are many students that come from many different parts of the United States and the world. What was the situation then?

B: I think that it was similar to what we have now, except at the time we probably did not have as many Arab students as we did later on. But [we] still had a sizeable international component.

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Now when I first came, there were a lot of people who had gone to the service and were using the G. I. Bill to come back, so the university grew by leaps and bounds during the time I was here as an undergraduate. [There were] people who were trying to avoid the draft or get some type of a college deferment, and there were a lot of veterans that were coming back. And given the percentage of Mexican-Americans that are veterans, you could see a tremendous increase of them coming into school--which is an interesting phenomenon, because you're talking about people who are coming back to school more mature. Most of the students from my high school, probably as far as the males are concerned, finished college after having gone through the service. Few of those came straight through after high school. They would be very, very much in the minority. They were most likely to go to school and a lot of them bit the dust, initially. And I think that the people who were coming with me were more sure of what they wanted to do.

H: You're referring to the veterans and the older students?

B: Yeah, and that's a pattern that you still see to the present day in my students. In many ways they have more time. Sometimes people who are not receiving the G.I. Bill don't have any [time]. They hold a part-time job and that sort of thing. I worked when I was in college. Even though I had the G.I. Bill, I had a part-time job, again as an auto mechanic.

But there was a definite shift in the composition of the university because of the Vietnam War. Certainly the university was polarized like the rest of the nation in terms

of the groups pro and against the war.

H: Could you say that there were basically two groups on the campus in that you had your older students, and then you had your more traditional 18 to 19-year-old students?

B: Yeah. You had for example Chi Gamma Iota, the veteran's fraternity, and they tended to be older. This is also in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement. For example, the black group was very vocal and active, and so was the Mexican-American group. And we had the beginning of the Feminist Movement here on campus, which has been very late in blossoming. Certainly while most other institutions established ethnic studies programs in that period of time, Women's Studies was instituted here about two years ago, so that gives you an idea. Certainly there were feminists around, but they didn't have the clout or the following in this traditional university as opposed to let's say West Coast universities.

I often compare what I went through with what colleagues of mine went through at Berkeley, where they were highly politicized. And that reflects very, very strongly in what and how they teach. It was very different. And because I came back as a veteran, perhaps with more conservative values, it took me quite a while to accept the movements and that sort of thing.

H: Was UTEP radicalized, was it politicized, was there a strong counter culture element on campus when you were here?

B: Very much so, but again nothing approaching the magnitude of a

San Francisco State, or Columbia, or Berkeley, or a People's Park. You do have the ethnic renaissance movement growing tremendously. I was involved with the Mexican American Political Association, MAPA. There were several Mexican-American groups. I was also involved with other groups such as the Society for the Advancement of Education, where we were trying to bring about change through educational means. We were identifying kids in high school who wanted to go to college, and we would give them the SAT sample test early. And we were hoping, then, to attract these people into college preparatory courses so they could succeed. At the same time through MAPA I was involved in things like voter registration drives. And at the very first year of my graduate program, we had MEChA taking over the Administration Building. And as a result of that, we have Chicano Studies.

H: What year was that, that MEChA took over the Administration Building?

B: 1971 or 1972.

H: Was it a very large organization here at UTEP then?

B: Very large.

H: More than a hundred students?

B: Well, they have never defined their membership as to the rules that we have now, [with] a name and an address and so forth. MEChA also operated under the concept of the university belonging to the people of the city. If you are a potential college student or an adult and you are not necessarily enrolled in UTEP, that would not preclude you from being in

MEChA. What you have to understand is that MEChA and other organizations are also re-defining whether bonafide university organizations should be exclusively made up of students or should be broadly based in the community, which was something [then], and to the present day, not palatable to the administration.

H: What were the motives for MEChA taking over the Administration Building?

B: Well, what was wanted at the time were changes in the curriculum of the university to reflect the ethnic composition of the area, and that is the establishment primarily of a Chicano Studies major, just like you have Black Studies or Urban Studies in other universities. Though MEChA certainly took the initiative and certainly paid the price [because some members were] incarcerated, what the Chicano Movement was trying to bring about was the legitimization of our cultural values and traditions and heritage by mainstreaming that into the body of knowledge that we transmit, [the] valid body of knowledge for someone to be educated. And naturally when you're talking about that, you're rocking the educational establishment, and two, you're talking about shifting economic resources. Who's going to pay for it--hiring the faculty and all those things? Will those faculty members be treated like others? Should it be a totally separate program, or should it be diffused in other academic [areas]? That's still a very controversial issue with any type of program that's interdisciplinary in nature--does it fit? But they wanted to

bring about change.

Along with that, MEChA and other organizations were saying "We're not servicing students who are linguistically different." One of the things that MEChA brought about which had not been done, (and they wanted it not just for Mexican-Americans but for every other group that needed it) was a tutorial center. And they wrote up a proposal and obtained some monies to provide things like remedial English, mathematics, plus tutors that would help. This is something the university had not acted upon and felt no need to do, felt that it was not the role of a university, even though most major universities had such programs in operation. The resources simply had not flowed in that direction. It was not managed terribly well, so the university eventually took over the program, but the precedence [was] established. And to the present day, that is a very important academic service that's provided to all students who need it, regardless of ethnic background.

H: What was the composition of U.T. EL Paso then?

B: I don't recall the actual percentages to be honest with you, but had to be probably when I first started 25 percent Mexican-American. There were a lot more blacks than there are enrolled now. In fact, [the] Black Studies [Program] no longer exists because of the lack of [interest]. We had a lot of black students not just from the city but of the nation, not only because of athletics but in academic programs.

And you can see the changes in many things that perhaps a

cross-sectional view will not reveal. For example, the type of music that's in the jukebox. When I came in, one of the things that MEChA and other organizations said, "Well, we should have as much right to decide what kind of records are going to be in the jukebox." Now everybody takes it for granted. The type of food that's served. Now you have a roman numeral one that says American Food, and under that you have Swedish meatballs and Spaghetti and all the other ethnic foods that are not big enough to merit their own roman numeral because there's not enough Swedes at UTEP. And then there's this whole other area that says Mexican Food. You have a great deal of crossover. So the average non-Hispanic at UTEP is very much exposed to various aspects of Hispanic culture, whether it be food, music, or cultural entertainment.

H: Was there a very large number of Mexican national students on campus, particularly from Juarez?

B: Yeah, very much so. Several of my friends were coming here to be educated but with every intent of going back to work and reside in Mexico. By that time, if I'm not mistaken, we already had a Special English sequence of courses for non-native speakers that was really primarily [for them]. And in addition to that, there was the offering of some of your freshman and sophomore level courses in Spanish, so that while those people acquired English, instead of waiting a year or two before they got into Poli Sci or History, they could take those course in Spanish. And that exists today in an even more expanded form.

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H: Was there very much intermingling between the Mexican American and Mexican national students there?

B: Well, certainly through classes there is a great deal of intermingling. However, if you go to the cafeteria today, you see the same patterns. You see Mexican nationals congregate at certain tables because of the commonality. Now that's very different as opposed to when people set up study groups where a lot of ethnic and racial barriers are broken. You see a lot more crossover perhaps with people who are maybe from the interior or from Latin America have that greater access or need for Mexican Americans.

H: In general what were typical student concerns??

B: Well, at the time I was a Student Association Senator, the Vietnam War was a big, overriding concern and throughout my whole stay as [an] undergraduate and as a graduate, since it lasted at least that long. The draft. Should we have ROTC or not? The first time I tried for the Senate I was not elected because I took the position that we should have ROTC. I felt that we didn't lack the ideology that was being presented at the average officer candidate school, [but] that putting future officers through a different type of academic and social atmosphere may produce individuals who were more enlightened in the sense that they were [exposed to] other ideologies [and to people] who were perhaps a little bit less indoctrinated.

H: Was there an ROTC unit on campus?

B: Yeah.

H: And you would say that it was unpopular with maybe most of the

students?

B: Not necessarily most of them, but people who were generally opposed to the war were opposed to the ROTC. And while I had mixed feelings about both, I felt that in the national interest it was better to have the military leaders trained in a variety of settings rather than one. But a lot of people just felt in essence that we were training for the war, because that was the unfortunate reality.

H: What were some memorable events for you as a student here at UTEP?

B: As an undergraduate, it was participating in the activities of organizations like MAPA. Certainly sports, football games and that sort of thing, as a student at that time meant a lot. We used to win in those days. (Chuckles) In fact when I first came in I think the university had just gone to the Sun Bowl a couple of times. There was a great deal of school pride associated with sport. We were looking forward to the next game and that sort of thing.

Certainly the memorable event is the takeover of the Administration [Building]. Since I was [in] my Master's program, I was working in the school, so when that happened we were working. We found out about it really after the whole thing was over. That was also a very political experience for me, because we worked with the communities and we talked when we came back for courses at night. We were required to work 20 hours a week in the community, and we ran into some [problems with] school systems. We had confrontations over curriculum

and so forth, and those had a tremendous impact in the views I developed toward what education should be and who should control education.

H: Who was the president of the university then when the Administration Building was taken over by MEChA?

B: Smiley, I believe. But we went through about three or four. When I started there was a prominent El Pasoan, Judson Williams. But we went through two or three individuals. A period of great turmoil for the university as well.

H: In the administration takeover, the police were called in?

B: Yeah. To the best of my recollection, that is the case. They were given an opportunity to vacate the premises, and the students didn't do it. I don't think charges were pressed. I think some people were incarcerated. I don't know the actual outcome of individual cases, if there were charges dropped. But certainly changes were brought about.

H: They did accomplish some of their objectives?

B: Yeah. Not to the extent that they desired, but some of the demands were eventually met though the allocation of funds.

[PAUSE]

H: We were discussing some of the things that MEChA had achieved with their demonstration. One thing mentioned was the Tutorial Services.

B: Yeah, the Tutorial Services, and the fact that most departments began to offer (because they were popular and because there was that type of pressure) courses dealing with various facets of ethnic studies. So Sociology, Political Science, History,

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Education, Philosophy made adjustments to the curriculum. And a Chicano Studies major was eventually approved.

H: Were there any professors that stand out in your mind from your years as a student here?

B: Oh, indeed. Certainly still teaching here in the Mathematics Department is Jesus Provencio, who went out of his way to develop courses and special seminars for people who had difficulties in mathematics, especially if you had difficulties with the language. He was the advisor of the Society for the Advancement of Education that I was affiliated with, so I got to know him well, and I still very much appreciate his interest and commitment to students. You always tend to remember some of the very good teachers you had. Prof. _____, who teaches Astronomy, was always very professional in his presentation. Professor de Navar, who was in Spanish, was very helpful. I took a course under a very good friend and colleague of mine, Dr. Marie Barker, called The Education of the Mexican-American, and that eventually influenced me to go into the field of bilingual education, which was a novelty. I mean, at this university we were still eight years away from establishing such a program. And then certainly at the Master's level, I had Dr. Tomas Arciniega, who is now the president of Cal State Bakersfield. [He] was very influential, and several of the faculty that were here in the Department of Education. But from the undergraduate days, the other individuals I mentioned were the ones who stand out.

H: What about fellow students?

B: Oh, gosh, several of them. Unlike a high school setup where graduation is usually not that meaningful 'cause you're not with the same group of people, for my Master's program there was a group of about 27 of us who went through a two-year program, worked together, studied together, argued. So still I'm in touch with a lot those individuals. The ones that live out of town usually stop by when they're here; we meet at conferences, that sort of thing. And those were certainly individuals who I will always be closely affiliated with.

That program has been very helpful to me in getting into a doctoral program at Stanford in education, because a lot of the work was in the field, with the community. So when I went to Stanford, I was able to get a job over people who had been there a year or two, providing assistance nationwide, because of the credentials that I acquired in the program at UTEP, which most people did not have coming from a traditional master's program or undergraduate program. So at that time they were looking for people who had that type of experience, a very innovative program. And again, it's a matter of being in the right place at the right time. So the experiences I had at UTEP very much contributed to my success later on in a doctoral program and also in securing employment so I could afford to be in a doctoral program. Stanford is very expensive. If you don't have some type financial aid, you've had it. (Chuckles)

H: You have personally witnessed a lot striking changes on this campus. Which change is the most striking to you?

B: I would say greater access to the school by non-traditional

groups--not just Mexican-Americans--but particularly women who are coming back to school as older students, who have been divorced or their children are going to school or they just simply want to continue their education. The social change is getting into the fabric of the school. People have a different way of looking at the universe, different experiences, as opposed to the average 18 year old. [Another change is] the cultural and socio-economic composition of the school.

In very broad terms, that's what's impressed me the most from the very first days that I came. Like anybody going to college for the first time, it was a very new and exciting experience. You're wondering, "Can I make it?" In your first courses, you don't know if you are going to be college material or not. It's not such an elitist concept [anymore]. Unfortunately there is a [backlash] at the present to move toward some type of elitist nature that we had before. But I think that it will never go back to the way it was when it was very much the exclusive domain of the middle class. Regardless of ethnic background, you have people now who are able to pursue an education regardless of their [parents' earnings]. The university has always been a socio-economic escalator, but it's become more accessible to a broader percentage of the population, especially people who, because of their ethnic or sex or socio-economic background, had been tracked away or locked out of that social escalator almost from the first day they hit the public schools.

That is the thing that impresses me the most because it

means that the university is responding increasingly. Perhaps not at the rate which everyone desires, but nevertheless [it] has made some changes to meet some of the needs of the community. The composition of the student body has changed. It's not that anyone has been supplanted; it's not [that] one group came at the expense of another, but rather that we [have added] to the diversity of the school. And that to me was something very healthy and very desirable, because this represents precisely some of the things we were working for in the late '60s and early '70s. And when you see them closer to realization 14 years later, you do get a good level of satisfaction. You don't feel that it was all done in vain.

There certainly are still frustrations, things we felt should have changed, because along with the university you see changes in the economy and the political scene in El Paso. So in many ways the university has reflected that. However, the university has played a crucial role, because now I see the leaders in the community were the former leaders of the '60 and '70s. And when I see that physicians and attorneys and other professionals are still willing to hit the street [over] an issue, to provide economic resources for the disadvantaged as well as form political associations that make a difference, then I think what was done in that period of time that I was associated with all that action, was very well worth it. It didn't go to waste. It may not be exactly what everybody wants, but I think change came. And the university--even if it was by default, not by design--contributed to the political and

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economic transformation that El Paso has gone through.

H: Thank you.