

4-8-1978

Interview no. 724

Anonymous

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Anonymous

INTERVIEWER: Wendy S. Thomason

PROJECT: Class project

DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 8, 1978

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO.: 724

TRANSCRIPT NO.: 724

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

He grew up in south El Paso and Los Angeles. He fought in the zoot suit riots in L.A. in the early 1940s. He settled in El Paso and worked his way in an international company from janitor to foreman.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

He describes zoot suits; tells what life was like in south El Paso in the 1930s and 1940s; talks about gang fights, local jails, and boxing in the Golden Gloves.

Length of interview: 1 hr., 15 mins. Length of transcript: 55 pages

Anonymous
By Wendy S. Thomason
April 8, 1978

T: Where were you born?

A: In El Paso.

T: When?

A: I was born June 21, 1928.

T: Where did you grow up?

A: I grew up in the south side of El Paso. That's known as the Second Ward.

T: What was South El Paso like when you were a child?

A: Well, I'll tell you what. South El Paso, the Second Ward, it's not the same thing like it is today. It used to be real peaceful; not peaceful, but enjoyable. People were poor. They didn't have to worry too much about many things like how they got today and all that sort of stuff. You were happy. Not like today they got so many of that, what do you call them, immigrants? People who come over here, just for the interest of living here and thinking that they can milk the government and just get out here. It's totally different from years back.

T: Can you describe the Chinese section for me?

A: The Chinese section. Let me see. The Chinese section used to be on Second Street, between Second, Third and part of Overland street, between Oregon and Mesa. That used to be the Chinese section here in El Paso. Of course, there were a few other little grocery stores run by the Chinese. But the Chinese people were the only people that could serve the colored people.

There were only two hotels here in El Paso for colored people. One of them I think still is over in Oregon between Paisano (Which used to be Second Street) and Third Street. The other one is on 200 or 300 S. Mesa, which was the Merry Hotel. Those were the only two colored people hotels.

And the colored people couldn't go downtown or anything like that, but they used to hang around with the Chinese people. I'll tell you why. When it was Friday, Saturday, and part of Sunday, the Chinese people had restaurants, they had some gambling, which is known as the lottery or whatever you call it, but it was always written down in Chinese. You used to buy the little piece of paper for 15¢ then at that time, until they raised it to 50¢. The more money you bet on it, the more money you win. And they were punched in with holes. And you go and compare them to what the Chinese had on the walls, and if you win, a hundred or fifty dollars. At that time it was good money then. There was a Chinese section all around there run by Chinese people. Not only that, of course they had a couple of hotels there by the Chinese people, too, at which they had the go-go girls, or whatever you call them now--prostitutes or hookers, whatever they are, for the colored people. At that time a lot of Chinese were here. They didn't have the kind of papers and all that sort of thing. They had them living at the hotels but they worked at the restaurants.

And then, the colored people couldn't go downtown to go to a big hotel like they do nowadays. They used to go to the south side and part of it in Juarez. Now, mind you, there was another place, too. That was back in 1935. There used to be the red light zone. As you follow south of Oregon and Mesa until you hit Eleventh and Tenth Street, that used to be the red light zone over there, for everybody. They used to have colored people, they had all kinds of girls. All they would have great races and everything at the time. The price of that was a dollar and a half to go over there. That's how come they used to have the red light zone in Chinese, 'cause there was discrimination, let's put it that way. If you notice now that most of the old colored people, the older people that were raised here and the kids that were raised here, now those people don't hang around with some of these colored people that come in from out of town, 'cause they're peaceful people. There's a total difference. At that time, you'd see a lot of Mexican people married to colored people, but they were different, total different kind of people.

T: You told me before about smuggling booze across the border during Prohibition.

A: Years back, people used to make their own beer. If you were a kid, you used to go down the alleys and streets and pick up bottles, all kinds, especially the red bottles, which was good to make your own beer. My father used to make his own

beer at home, but he didn't sell it. He used to make it for his personal use. I remember we used to go and pick bottles, wash them down, and have them cleaned out for Saturday night. That's when we used to make our own beer. Put it in the garage for thirty days, and you could hear the bottles popping after thirty days. That meant that the beer was good. Now, there was a place on Campbell run by a man, Panchito. He used to have a little grocery store. But it was just a front store. A lot of these guys used to go had alcohol with a little bit of canela, which is coke or soda. It was 25¢ a shot. That man, he made quite a bit of money.

The way they smuggled the alcohol, if you remember, you've seen those five gallon cans, square ones. No, I think it's a 50-gallon can. Well, it's a square one, anyway. At that time, they used to smuggle alcohol through Peyton Packing Company when it was way down on the south side. That's where it used to be. At that time, they used to smuggle alcohol, bring it in, and sell it here. Now, if you remember before they made the Chamizal, it used to be the Cordovan Island, and there used to be the Darbyshire there. Well, a lot of people that was working there used to smuggle the bottles through there, too--alcohol. Passed it through there, which is right close to the canal. So that's where all the smuggling came in. Come in to El Paso, sell it to the people who used to sell the alcohol. There were

places between Sixth and Fifth Street on S. Mesa, which was Nachita. Natalia was the name of the woman there, her and her old man. They'd go up to this house and sell them a shot and so forth. Oh, there was a lot of smuggling at that time, but it wasn't bad. You could easy get across At that time, whoever thought that they'd have tell the law enforcement of firearms and tobacco and liquor control, at that time there was nothing. I mean, you could do whatever you wanted to.

The same thing with marijuana. Marijuana is known as Mary Jane and Juanita. Well, people used to have beautiful gardens in the south side. Everybody had a beautiful garden with flowers and all that. People used to grow that. And you still see some of the old houses before they're torn down that people use it not only for smoking. Smoking at that time, you didn't think about smoking it. You used it, you let it grow, you dried it, and you saved it. And every time people got sick with rheumatism and all that, well, marijuana is known as a cure for that. I've seen it. Not only that, when I was a young kid, I had an aunt that used to put that thing and boil it and then put it in a big pot, put their feet in and rub it in. You know, like you were taking a bath with it. That's what they used it for. But somebody came out with the idea of smoking it. Now, whoever thought that they were going to make it illegal? It's against the law. A lot of people used to smoke it. Old people still

do, some older people that I know that still smoke it. But, I mean, they don't use it as a habit of being all hooked up, hopped up, or whatever you call it. They smoke it like it's just for their nerves or whatever it is, and things like that. If you can control it, I guess. I mean I've seen it. I've seen guys that used to hang around, but I never thought about it. I never did smoke it, because I didn't smoke at that time. I was still a young kid.

T: Where did you go to school?

A: School, let's see. I started school at the elementary school which is now on Seventh Street and Campbell and Kansas. They used to call it the Aoy School. Most of them were Mexican or Spanish people that were there. That's where I went to school. From there I went into high school, for about a year and a half. Then, after I got out of school, the first year I didn't want to go anymore. I was beginning to grow up. I was 15 years old then.

I remember one day, my father belonged to the Mason, or the Lions, some sort of club that he owns for the Masons. It was one Saturday. He was working and he came in late from work. It happened that I was wearing his shoes. I put them on because man, I could kick that ball real good, a football. At that time, you couldn't afford a pair of shoes because people didn't make any money then. It was pretty hard. The only time you wore your shoes was a

Saturday, or a Birthday party, or anything like that, on Sunday. That's the only time you could wear your shoes. The rest of the week you were barefooted to go to school. So one day I took my dad's shoes and I put them on with a double pair of socks so they'd fit me so I could kick the ball. One day he came in, and boy, he was mad. He gave me a whipping. He really put me to bed for fifteen days. That's when I had whatever you call it, pneumonia, wherever you got sick and you start growing at the same time and all that kind of stuff. Well anyway, that was about the month of June, right after school. He gave me a good beating, boy, and I'll never forget it. I haven't got anything against him because he was really showing me something. That things that don't belong to you, don't use them. You ask for them.

Well, anyway, it was on a Saturday night, and we were about three or four guys together. We were young kids. They said, "Hey, let's go to California." And I said, "No, man, we can't go." They said "Yeah, let's go." At that time the railroad before they made the underpass through downtown used to go over the Main Street. So I said, "Ok, let's go. But let me go and get some money from my mother. I know where she's got some money hidden." So I took \$10 from her, I remember that day. My mom went out to buy some groceries, my father was at the lounge. It was on a Saturday and he had to go to a meeting. Well,

anyway, I got everything ready. I had a pair of boots, a clean shirt and a pair of khaki pants, and whatever I was wearing. It was about 10 o'clock when the train started passing by. There used to be a place known as the Coney Island. So we got into it, hooked up and took off to L.A.

At that time, while we were riding the train, immigration or the border patrol was at check points and all of that, at that time the brakeman or whatever you call them. At Lordsburg the Border Patrol took us out of there and beat the hell out of us. We got slapped and everything 'cause what the heck were we doing in a train and all of that. We told them we were going to California, and then they wanted to know where we were from, if we were wetbacks, and all of that, They didn't control it as much as they. . .well, they still haven't controlled it, let's put it that way. People at the time of those years, just get with their wives, hop a train, and go to California. That's all. If it was all right, you'll make it. If not, well that's it. Nobody could afford to go in luxury in a train, only the people that had money.

Well anyway, I took off to California, but just before I left to California I used to be a paperboy. I used to have my own route, sell papers, spend the night away from home. Most of the time that I didn't go home my mother said "Well, he's probably selling papers. He'll be in this afternoon." But that day I never did go back, after that Saturday.

Then my mother said "Well, he's probably in jail."

'Cause every Saturday or Friday I used to spend the night in jail for the weekend. I'll tell you why. At that time there was a curfew. Ten o'clock, everybody got to be off the street on the south side. There was really a curfew at 10 o'clock. Anybody being on a corner, or being out late, if you ain't out with your parents or anything like that they used to pick you up and take you over to the courthouse.

T: Only for kids?

A: Only for kids, as long as you were not 21 years old. I can verify it. I'll show you some pictures later on. But every Friday and Saturday I was in jail. But I used to get out because at that time I was still a school student, so they had to let you out. There was a lady that was in charge of the boys that were not in school and all that. They used to send them to reform school. But I never did go over there to reform school because I were lucky, I guess. I was still going to school, so they had to let me out the next day, or Monday morning. I used to get out. Her name was Eloisa. Boy, she was a mean woman. Every time she used to see me there on Monday morning she used to come pull my ears, pinch my arms, and say "I'm going to send you to reform school." No way, Baby. At that time, you didn't know your rights or nothing. Nobody used to tell you. You just got arrested and that's it. You ain't got no rights.

There used to be a detective by the name of Rascon; and another one, Baeza, which was the head; Luz, and Chivo. There was a whole bunch of detectives real mean that used to go along the south side. They used to pick you up just for being late at night, even if you were not doing nothing, even if you were sitting right beside your house at the curb. They used to come and say "Ok, let's get in there." If your mother wasn't there sitting outside with you or nothing, boy, they took you in. You can verify that cause I've got a beaucoup list over there, juvenile delinquent. Not being, you know, not stealing or nothing like that, it's just being out late at night. Well, anyway, I took to California after the Border Patrol beat the hell out of us and everything.

T: How did you get to California after that?

A: We still caught the train. How we got back to the train was that an old man that lived in Lordsburg, I think his house is still there. . . I haven't been through there for I don't know how long, but I'm pretty sure if I went back I could find his house. Those people, after they saw us, I asked if we could wash in their backyard. So they gave us soap and a towel and we washed our faces. They said, "Come in, boys." And they fed us some tacos. Boy, they gave us a whole bunch of tacos. If you remember I told you I had \$10 that I stole from my mother so we could eat on the road. At that time when I ran away from home it was 1942. At that time you remember they started rationing

the food. Meat you couldn't buy unless you had some kind of red token to buy meat. That was because of the war.

Anyway, we stopped, and then the old men that fed us that day told us how to get to California, what time the train would leave from the yard, and he gave us a whole bag full of tacos. I offered to give him a dollar and he said "No, you save it." Well, we waited until about 9:30. I think that was the time the train started pulling out. We got into it, with our tacos and everything, and we took off. Of course, we got the wrong train. It took us all the way down to Phoenix, Indio. Man, it was hot. We had nothing to drink. The only thing we used to do was get as far as you can through the boxcars and then the box cars used to have ice. Now they're refrigerators and all that. They used to put ice. So we used to get a cup and get water. But the water was salty, man, so you had to drink it. Anyway, we finally got just outside of California. We stopped in San Diego. We got off there and we hitchhiked from San Diego all the way to L.A. At that time, it was during the war. There was a whole lot of sailors and everything. There were jobs open everywhere. Of course you couldn't get a job because you were not of age.

So we got to California. A guy gave us a ride. He took us all the way down to San Pedro and First Street. That's where he dropped us off. We got there and made a

couple of friends. They told us where to go so we could have something to eat and all that. Of course, at that time the guys that were already there were working in restaurants where they'd feed you and give you something to eat, at that time. So we got there, they fed us and helped us out a little bit and so forth. Of course, we didn't have a place to stay. The movies were open 24 hours. If you couldn't get any place to sleep, you'd go and pay your 35c, you go in, and you'd spend the night at the movies, you'd sleep there. But it was a funny thing about L.A. At that time, you couldn't even trust anybody sitting next to you.

T: They'd steal your money?

A: They'd rob you, steal your money. Or there was some queer right next to you, sitting down, trying to make it up with you. Of course, at that time, you'd go get away from those people. Anyway, this goes for a couple of days. We were going up and down and going over to these buddies that were working in the restaurant. We finally got hold of some money. I started making applications to go to work in San Pedro Yards. That's scraping boats and all that. I remember my first pay check I got from there. I'd say, "Well, I 'm going to buy me clothes," and all that, and get rid of what I had. Of course, there were some guys that'd give you clothes, or they'd let you borrow clothes. It was a Saturday night. We went to this dance hall. Of course, you couldn't get

in unless you had a draft card. You were 18 years old and then you had to register to the draft board. Well, I had a friend over there name of Colún. That's a nickname, Colún. He got hold of some papers, raised a typewriter, and got hold and put our names and he sold us a draft card for \$5. So we could be of age and could go into a place and have something to drink or something.

Well, anyway, we were at this dance hall and that's where the war started between the zoot suiters and the sailors and Marines. There were actually the sailors and the Marines between the zoot suiters. What caused it? It was in a dance hall. I don't remember the dance hall. But anyway, it was on First and Third Street. It was a big dance hall and there was an orchestra playing jitterbug and all that sort of stuff. There were a whole bunch of Marines and sailors. Some of the girls, at that time they were dressed up with the big pompadours. These sailors got mad because the girls didn't want to dance with them. They wanted to dance with the jitterbug guys, you know, the zootsuiters--nice fancy clothes and everything. That's what actually started it between the Marines and the zoot suiters. Well, it was a big riot over there. Cops came in and boy, some of them got caught and some of them. . . Well anyway, the zoot suiters beat the Marines up, and the sailors, they got beaten. They closed the dance hall and made it out of limits and everything.

So, from there on, as soon as the Marines came out, they started getting some more out. Any zoot suiter, or any guy that was going down town dressed up like zoot suiters, they used to beat him up, tear his clothes and everything. Then the zoot suiters, or whatever gang started going, that's how they started. Sailors go that were stationed in San Diego, that were stationed in San Pedro, the yard there, there was a streetcar that used to take all those sailors. And they used to block it, block the streetcar, get into the streetcar and get every sailor and Marine they had there. That's the way they started--on account of a couple of Sailors and girls that didn't want to dance with them. You've seen pictures and movies of how they used to wear pompadours and all that sort of thing.

From there on, in L.A. it used to be different kind of gangs. They were war gangs, or whatever you call it, between the neighborhoods. Well they got together, Ducktown, Alto, Palo Verde, and so forth, different kind of areas. Mostly the gangs were between their own among themselves, and people from El Paso, and them most of the people from El Paso fighting against Ducktown, or fighting Palo Verdes, and so forth like that. Well, they got together and they made sort of a peace conference. Now there was a gang, I think it was Hillside, I don't remember the name of it. This gang didn't want to mix up either with

Ducktown or the other gangs of El Paso to fight them out, because regardless people from there which is known as the Pochos, they were still getting beat by sailors and Marines. I got a friend of mine that was there at the time that I was over there and he got caught right there, downtown. They stripped him out of his clothes. His name is Paddy. Paddy Gilbert, I think that's his name. He got beat up. From there on, he started going out on his own. Started beating sailors, and rolling them, and everything.

Well, Hilltop was another gang that didn't want to mix up. At that time, they beat one guy from El Paso 'cause he didn't want to join in fighting against the sailors. They got together, and it was the first time I've ever seen gangs, El Paso, compared to about two to three hundred people, not people, but young kids from El Paso. I feel sorry for them kids that got hurt, because they were wanted to go and round up this gang of Hilltop. Why they didn't want to join with us, or join with the other ones to fight against the sailors and Marines? So, there was this young kid with his girlfriend in his car, I remember, and somebody took him out and everything. He told him where he lives and got him, and I don't know, I think he got killed. We never did find out for sure exactly what happened to him. They beat up his car, tore it up, and there were some guys I think they were going to

rape the girl, but they never did, I don't think they did. But they really put hands on her and everything. The guy got real beat up.

From there on, then the war started between El Paso and that gang. At that time, if you were standing on a corner where most of the El Paso people used to hang around, they used to hang around a chain at the post of your door at the car, a big twelve-footer chain or whatever length it was. You were still at the corner. They'd just throw the chain like that across to the sidewalk and the chain would wrap around your legs, and they'd drag you for a while. Then they'd drop you off, but you were all skinned, bruised and everything. Well, anyway, that's how they did it until one day, one of them did that and he got caught between a telephone pole, and the chain got wrapped around, tore both doors out of the car and the three guys that were in the car, they flipped over, the car flipped over. At that time, you had your car souped up. You know how they stand them up like that. They used to have sandbags so they looked fancy. There was no adaptors so you could put your car down. Used to put sandbags, so your car could go real fancy down.

Well, anyway, that's how the zootsuiter war started. And of course, every zoot suiter that was downtown, even if the kid was just dressed up, he wasn't doing anything bad or nothing, he got picked up by the cops in L.A. and arrested. At that time, well I mean you didn't have no

problems with the cops. As long as you were wearing your levis, a little sweater and your loafers they didn't bother you.

But there was a guy from San Antonio his name was El Chico. Most of the guys he had was from San Antonio, and then he had a couple of guys from L.A. I guess from San Antonio too, but they were already in L.A. That's the only guy that gave the boys from El Paso a lot of trouble. Why? I'll tell you why. He got picked up for vagrancy or something like that. They put him in jail. While he was in jail there was a couple of other guys there, and they raped him and so forth in jail. He blamed the El Paso boys did that to him. So after he got out he was dressed up, a real pachuco type, you know, a real zoot suiter. Had a big hat, a black shirt, black trousers, and everything. He always carried two straight razors on both hands. Not only that, but I remember one night, I was eating in a restaurant. He came in. Boy, you never seen me run so fast through that kitchen--pots and pans and everything through that restaurant. But he used to cut you. He was real mad because the guys at the jail, what they did to him. Of course, he never forgot.

Well anyway, I remember that night. It was still 9 or 10 o'clock in L.A., and he came into that restaurant. I remember 'cause he cut a couple of girls there that were with a couple of guys. Why he cut the girls? 'Cause they

were from El Paso. But he was at war with anybody that was from El Paso. He cut a couple of guys from El Paso right there at the place where we used to hang around. That was at Figueroa and Grant and Temple Street. That's where most of the El Paso people used to hang around--Temple, Figueroa, Grant all around that area. Mostly there were hotels, apartment buildings and so forth.

Ok, this guy Chico, I remember one night, it was in a dance hall, He went over there, He was going to get some El Paso guys. We had a whole bunch of guys from El Paso. We used to go and pick up some guys and he used to do what he used to say. I mean, you do this and that's it. Otherwise, he'll turn against you and cut you. Well, anyway, we got to this dance hall that I remember that day. He came over and he caught a couple of guys from El Paso. He cut part of one guy's stomach, the other the arm. But a whole bunch of guys that were in the dance hall came out and they jumped on him. He was swinging like mad but somebody hit him with a piece of board, a 2 by 4 or something. Hit him right over the head. Knocked him down, and he went flat on his face. Somebody took one of his knives and just split both his ass, right across. He swept down, and all he did was just went like that, right across right here, make four pieces out of that. So, cops come out, and they called the ambulance and took

him to the hospital. That was for about a month, two months. I never heard of him, so I figured that, you know,

Ok, this was for a while, Chico didn't show up or nothing. One day, I was at the dance hall, right there on Temple. They used to call it Community Center. And that son of a bitch showed up one day. Well, there was a fight there going and I got cut, right there. Some guy pulled a knife and he thought I was from some other place, but found out later that he made a mistake and he was sorry what he did to me. Well anyway, we chased this guy all the way down, this fellow from Chico's gang, 'cause he didn't cut anybody there, but my friend one of the friends that was with us, when they told a mistake. Well anyway, I was mad, and I didn't know what to do. I was real furious. So we chased a couple of people that he had, a couple of his gang buddies. I remember I had a damn piece of pipe. We got hold of this guy, one of them. Well the guy had a big 12 inch knife hiding under his shirt. He was one of Chico's gang. When I found out that he was one of them, I just let him have it across right between his mouth and nose. Poom! I remember, 'cause the blood just dripped down and I didn't want to hit him anymore. Found out later that the ambulance came over and front teeth, his nose was broken and everything. But I never heard from him anymore,

and I guess the guy probably got real bad hurt and all that.

Ok, then one day, it was on a Monday night. I remember I didn't went to work that day; it was my day off, that's for sure. There was this guy by the name of Mike Garcia from El Paso and another guy. Well Mike Garcia, Chico had already chased him once before. But he got him right there downtown, and he saw him, jumped on him, hit him and everything before he could pull out any knife or anything. Knocked him down, pulled out his knife, and cut both of his wrists, right in here. Cut 'em both like that, and then we took off. And then I didn't touch the guy that time. I didn't want to hit him because he already knocked him down and everything and then I saw what they did to him. So we took off running, and nobody bothered you or nothing then. So, ambulance came, I think he went to the hospital, they took him towards hospital. As far as I remember now, what I heard, after years and so forth, his hands, from the wrist down, are turned like that, on account of the nerve that was cut in here. So why they did that? So he'll never use a knife again.

Ok, now let me go back to the zoot suiters and the gang that turned out, the sailors. Now this was going on for quite a while, and all that sort of stuff. It finally came out in the paper showing that not all of the zoot suiters

were bad. They were just a fashion show of the people, how they used to dress and all that. But now a lot of people condemn most of the zoot suiters that they were bad. Any guy that was dressed in a zoot suit, he was just a plain hoodlum, which is wrong. You know that's wrong. You can't judge one person, say that all of them are like that. Ok, this stays here for a couple of months I guess, fighting and everything. And finally they settled down, and they had sort of an explanation, told them what the score was. They start cutting leaves to the Marines. Marines couldn't go to downtown or if you go, you go on your own. This was during the war, the time of the zoot suiters. Well anyway, they finally start calming down, you know, no more gang fights, everybody was dressed up with the levis, loafers, white socks, tee shirts, so they won't bother you. And they never did bother you as long as you were dressed like that. I mean, of course, Marines regardless of it, even if you were dressed up, they figured you were a 4F or something like that. You were nice dressed up, but you were still a young kid, now mind you, you were still a young kid then.

Well anyway, this went on for quite a while and so forth. Then I remember how I did my living. I was standing one day at the corner of San Pedro and First Street. And for sure somebody came right behind me and got me by the neck. They say, "Ok, let's go home." And I turn around,

try to look around, and he just pulled me away from where the boys were, the gang; but not the gang, but the people that was hanging around the boys over there. So, I say well I tried to look back, to who it was, who had my neck, real stiff, going in like that, say, "Well, let's go." And I say, "Oh, oh. God Almighty, I'm in trouble." Well I found out that my dad had called these people, friends of people, and of course, you know, relatives, and be on the lookout for me. That's how they got me, picked me up.

And after I got picked up from there, they took me home. I washed up and everything, and they got me a job. That's the way I started living right, this and that. Well, I came back to El Paso, just before my 18 years Birthday I came back to El Paso. Came over here and I say, well, just before my draft picks me up and register my draft board and so forth. There was a war going here.

T: In El Paso?

A: In El Paso. Who was the war between? It was between south El Paso and the Puerto Ricans. Now the Puerto Ricans were an outfit stationed here at Ft. Bliss. Then you go back, and you look some of the records in the newspaper about that time. There were a lot of Puerto Ricans got killed. Why? 'Cause you know how they talk and all this and the girls and so forth. You know, they all did that. Well at that that time, there was a lot of Puerto

Ricans trying to go make it up with some of the girls, that were just looking for whatever you say, a piece of ass, whatever you call it, you know. There was a war going on between every Puerto Rican you see downtown or anyplace. They were down below Second Street and he got robbed, beat up and everything. This was going for quite a while, you know, they didn't like Puerto Ricans then at that time. So, they pulled that outfit out of here, they moved it out. I don't think it stayed here less than two months.

Well, at that time I got back from L.A. Of course, I had clothes and everything, a zoot suiter, big double soled shoes and everything like that. And we started getting together. We find out that, you know, most of the guys around the neighborhood were mad because of Puerto Ricans were bothering their sisters and all that sort of stuff. Of course, there were some girls that were in the pitch money, you know, making it up. Pitch money which means they go with the GI's; sell, you know.

Prostitutes, let's put it that way. Well, regardless of it, most of those girls that were in that kind of business, well some of the guys didn't care about it. All they want to do is just get even with some of Puerto Ricans. Even if it didn't bother but some of them guys were mad at them.

So I had a gang, about fifteen guys. We were the Campbell Street, Fifth and Campbell. Of course, there

was another gang from the Ninth Street, there was a gang from Park Street, there was a gang from Barrio Del Diablo, which was known as the neighborhood of the devil. There was the Chihuahua gang, the Charles gang, and they had the Mesa gang, which is from Mesa Street, and most of them was southside people. Anyway you couldn't go and see a girlfriend on Park Street or any other street, 'cause if they knew you were from another neighborhood they used to jump you. The only thing you had to do is just run, get away from them, and say, "Well, I'll be back." So at that time, you started getting your own gang.

I had a lot of friends that they had chains, and also carried under their collar, or sweater, or coat, under it, some of them had a knife. But actually, you didn't use your knife as often as they do now, like they do it now. They use a gun here. At that time, you say, "Well, who's your leader?" Then you fistfight them. You take your leader with you. Of course, if somebody jumps you you're beating the leader, or even his brother was the leader, the brother was just part of the gang. You see, if his brother's got beaten up, you jump; then the other guy jumps' then everybody starts jumping. And that's how they used to fight the gang wars. But actually you start out with the leader--leader and leader.

Oh, I had a couple of big fights, pretty good ones sometimes, sometimes I came even, sometimes. Well as far

as I can tell you, I never did lost one. We make it up, until we had a pretty good fight. We shake hands, we were buddies, and everything. And everybody was all right. From there on, you were in trouble with another gang, you would call your buddy, your other buddy gang, Florence or wherever it was, say, "We need your help, we need your support." So we get together and there were not only 15, but there begin to get 30 or 40 people, 40 guys. Now some of them, not all of them, was real bad. Some of them just wanted to fight, you know, fistfight. Not any chain, or pull a knife or nothing like that.

I remember one incident. There was this guy by the name of Freddy, and the other was Nick. Oh, they thought they were real hot--big guys, you know, real fancy guys--'cause they had a big beautiful car, paint maroon, his father was a mechanic so he could afford a car. Well one day they beat his friend of mine, which belongs to the other gang. And they called on us. We said, "Ok, let's go over. We'll know where it is, where we can go help." So, we were walking down the street, part of that on one side, part on the other, and we saw them with their brand new cars. Muy fancy sitting down, big wheels because they own a car, and they had just beaten this other guy, named Panch, his name is Francisco. And they beat him up. So he asked for help, from the leader, and came over to see me. And so "Ok, we'll go over there and take a look at it."

So we went over there and got hold of the guy. I remember, the first one I did, his name was Freddy, that guy. Oh, he came out a real bully. But he came out "Aahh," he was trying to scare because there were a whole bunch of us. The first thing I did, I just, Whum! Hit him with a piece of chain on his face. Knocked him down, and as he fell down I was going to hit him on the face with the chain. I don't know, /something happened/ a miracle or something, whatever you might call it. My hand got stiff. I couldn't hit him in the face. So I just got up and I just kick him. I couldn't hit him in the face with the chain.

So the guy, Nick, which was the owner of the car, started the car. So I look where he started running to his car, started it up, ready to get away to bring the cops, I guess. First thing I did, drop a big brick and as he was passing right through me, trying to pull the car right on top of me, I just let him have it, through the windshield. I couldn't stop him. So he took off. And this accident happened on Third and Campbell Street. At that time the jail was on First Street and Campbell, was the old jail, small city jail. So, we took off, we left the guy there bleeding and everything, and so forth. And finally, we took off. Everybody went home. Both gangs disappeared, didn't show up anymore. Well, the cops going around the neighborhood like mad.

Now things stayed quiet for about a week or so. Then one Saturday, we were right in front of the house, my house, on Fifth and Campbell. It was about 8 o'clock at night, that's for sure. Here comes about ten cars full of cops, immigration--boy, all the cars you can name on it. Even the MPs, 'cause it was still, you know. . . And they arrested everybody out there. They pick 'em up. At that time, I wasn't working then. I wasn't even going to school or nothing. So they pick me up and I say, "Boy, oh boy. I'm not even 18, and that's for sure I'm going to go over to the reform school." So, some of them with their parents went over there and fight and all that. Of course, my mother went over there, try to get me out of jail, and they couldn't do nothing. You know, "You can't see your son," and all that sort of stuff and so forth. Nobody knew, they had no rights at all at that time.

So I spent jail there until Monday morning. My mother came over and she was fighting that we were all sitting close to the curb of the house, that we were doing nothing, all they did was came over and they book us. So, we had to get out. They fined us \$5, which I wasn't working. I just got back from California and all that sort of stuff. Well, this goes for most of the guys were going into the Army, being drafted, and some of them were on leave, and a few guys going to

high school, getting ready to go into the Army.

Of course, there was another gang fight between Oregon and Campbell. Now that was on account of one guy, went to see a girlfriend on Oregon Street. And they beat him and somebody cut him up and so forth. Well the guy that cut him up, he took off for L.A. Now this guy that got cut up knew who it was, who cut him up, and everything. Of course we went over there looking for that gang, couldn't find anybody. Mostly what we found is young kids. We couldn't find anybody, nobody knew where it was and so forth. So the guy that was cut went to California and I think he met the guy over there. There, I tell you I don't know what happened, but I know he got hold of him and he split his face with another knife. He got even. He cut him right here on the face. That's what, you know, most of the guys say, I never saw it happen. It was in California at that month.

Another thing that happened was that we were at war with guys from Juarez. At that time, a lot of guys were going into the Army, and their girlfriends here, and some of these guys from Juarez used to come over here and dance, and take your girlfriend away from you and so forth. Of course I didn't have a girlfriend at that time yet. I used to go date girls, but I never had a steady girl. I remember one day it was this guy named Chino. He was a

friend of mine. We were about seven of us. So we used to wait for these guys from Juarez. Let 'em come over here, and start beating them up. We didn't want 'em around here, or taking the jobs of some of the other guys, 'cause there was lot of jobs openings here. Course, they didn't pay too much. So, we were in war with them.

Now everytime you used to go to a dance hall in Juarez you had to go over with five or six other guys to go over there and dance, 'cause the girls used to go to a tardeada you call it, you know, afternoon dances. Like we had a tardeada and so forth. So, this goes on for about a month or so, until everything was settled. I remember one time we got one guy on El Paso Street. Now this friend of mine, Chino, went through his pockets, took his wallet, got his passport or card, whatever they had on him, tore it up, burn it and everything. Beat the hell out of him, run him all the way down El Paso going towards Juarez.

I remember we stopped at one restaurant, Mexican restaurant on Second Street before it was Paisano. But he had a couple of guys working there from Juarez. You know, the same thing was going on about illegal workers and so forth. We went into the restaurant. Now Chino was a guy he had already been to reform school. His name was Chino Castillo, I remember his last name. And,

man, that guy went all the way down to the kitchen of that restaurant, throw all the pots and pans, and even the lady of the restaurant was calling the police crying because he was making a riot in there. Course, we were there and had to wait for him, and I remember he went and dumped all the menudo on the floor and beat those two guys up, and they ran out to the back door and we chased them. One of them got away, the other one slipped down and fell down and we hit him and everthing. Course we didn't cut him or anything, just beat the hell out of him just for the hell of it because he was from Juarez, you know. And this goes on between gangs here in El Paso. At that time they didn't use guns or nothing like that. There was just a fist fight between leaders.

T: Getting back to L.A. again, do you remember a murder? I've heard it called the Sleepy Lagoon case, but I think it's also called the Echo Park Lake.

A: Ok, now I don't know what year you would be talking about, but the year, the time, that I was there from '42, '43, '44, the three years I lived in California there was a place they called it the Echo Park Lake, which was a place for lovers' lane. Now, that place was known for, a lot of young kids would go and mooch it with their girlfriends and so forth. Of course at the same time it wasn't safe not only for the kids,

but the other gang that were there somebody with their girlfriends they'd come over and probably rape your girl and beat the hell out of you and commit a crime or something. Now this was done mostly by guys that were already in gang wars with different sections of the town of L.A. There was one I remember, one time I was reading it in the paper that the girl was with this boyfriend 'cause the kid didn't know, I think it was the date of a young boy, he was eighteen years old. He was with his girlfriend and they beat him up. They raped the girl, and after she was raped and hit and beat up, they threw her in the lake, but she didn't drown she didn't drown or nothing. Actually she died of the blows that the guys gave her after they raped her. Now not only one guy, there were several guys that took advantage of her.

But Sleepy Lagoon probably came back later, years later probably '47 or '48, something like that, those kind of years they used to call it. Of course now years there's still probably gangs over there, but the gangs are now just a total different people. Now the people from L.A. that you're used to calling Pochos, why was Pochos? Because half of them don't know how to talk Spanish. They were mostly raised in an English Language. Pachuco was a guy from El Paso, that's why they call him Pachuco. But the people start twisting everything into

Pachuco and a zoot suiter, which a zoot suiter, that's a guy that's dressed up like a puppy and you can move him with a string. Move him anywhere you want and dance him like a titere they call it in Spanish. Now Pachuco is a guy that's born in El Paso and is raised in California. That's known as Pachuco because he's from El Paso. Now you take a guy from Juarez, that he's from Juarez, comes over here, he's known as Tee Jay, he's a Juareleno guy from Juarez.

Now if you notice that now these are the years here, that this year, most of the people from the south side they're all scattered out, now those are the people, originally from the south side, you get going to any other section of town, you probably see people from the south side living in Coronado, Northgate, Eastwood, and so. Now those were the original people from the south side. They got out of there. What you've got now is people from Juarez, guys that came over there. Once one family gets across then the rest of them smuggle in here and they live here and so. Now that is no Pachuco. during the war was like, you know a zoot suiter, they go "Oh, he's a Pachuco." Right away they thought it was a Pachuco. Pachuco is a total different word, Now, there's no such thing as a, like a Chicano. What's a Chicano? A lot of them say he's a Mexican or because he's Spanish and so. That's just a slang word that was picked up, you know.

The same thing in California during the war. During the war, they didn't care what race you were as long as you can build, productions, 'cause I used to work in a factory I had even if I had false age, you know, so I can work like that. I told them that I was eighteen and I was a 4F, and so I can work. That's the only way that you could do it, by lying, 'cause at that time you had to go to school. You go to school four days, four hours on a Friday you go to school. You were allowed to go to school for four days but the rest of the week you worked. That was during the war back in L.A. Of course there was a lot of people that didn't work because there were hardly anybody over there. No men, there was a lot of young kids. The young kids lived with the girls, and so forth. And that's how come L.A., it's so corruption now compared the years I mean. You know, a lot of guys got killed, came back, but the old lady or the girlfriend was already living with somebody else, but it was a young boy. Things like that happened and so forth.

Now there's no such thing as a Chicano or what. Now I myself the way I feel, that a Mexican American, it's a guy that comes in from Mexico and becomes an American citizen. I figure that's known as American, Mexican American. Now you take an American. I don't call myself. . . I myself don't qualify as a Mexican

American, I call myself as an American. Why? I'll tell you why. I remember one day, we were eating all together, my father was sitting at the table. And it was just right there in 1941 when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and so. It was about that year. And I was making a remark about Mexico. I say, "Hey, Mexico's gonna go to war. They can't fly, Daddy, because their planes are made out of clay. They go up too high and little rain will melt them and come down." And he slapped my face across, knocked me out of the table, and said to keep my mouth shut. He says, "Look, you fight for the country you were born in. You, yourself, the time will come when you go. You're going to fight for America, 'cause you're an American citizen now," And that's why I always been against Mexican American people that make all this protest and so forth. Why they don't make it in their country, why they come over here? 'Cause Mexico doesn't tolerate with that kind of people. And over here we're too lenient on them.

Now going back to that years, after all my experience on gang fights and so forth. It was this young man. At that time it was Florence and Seventh Street, used to be a gymnasium called the Goodwill Boys' Club. Actually, it wasn't support by the Goodwill or the United Fund and so forth like that. Even if it was, we never seen any money to fix that gymnasium or whatever you call it. All I know

is the years they used to fix up toys for the people, and so forth. Well, this old man, well he's old now, he's retired, but he's still a good friend of mine. One day he got ahold of me and told me, "Oh, you're pretty mean" and so, and "Why don't you join the Golden Gloves?" I say "Nah." "Yes. We'll know how good you are," and all that. So, he got me convinced talk to my mother about how I can get away from the streets, being in jail every Saturday and Sunday. He got me interested in boxing. And I start going to the gym, he bought me shoes, he bought me clothes--I mean not clothes but gymnasium stuff. So, I started getting interested in boxing. I started boxing for him and so forth. And that's how come I started getting away from all those gang fights.

Well after I fought a couple of times here, the Army got ahold of me, I went into the service, and that's how I got involved in boxing. So, I really enjoyed it, man, 'cause after he taught me how to box and so forth I had a team of boxing. Well after I got out of the Army I still boxed for a couple of years. And he was still training me. I was a lot better than when I first started, 'cause I had some bouts over at the Army, and I did pretty good at the Army boxing. And he himself, after so many years, until I got out of the service, until I retire from boxing from the Golden Gloves, it was in '48. I quit

boxing in '48, until I met my wife. And then about 10 years later on I built a team. And I met him again, we got together and everything, and I built a boxing team, showing some of these kids the difference between the bad and right.

You know I had experience with a lot of the boxing clubs, guys that been hook up on dope, and so forth. And they did pretty good. I took 'em to the state. Fought over there, the state titles and so forth. Now, some of these kids, they had problems in their home probably. Now, they see you boxing, and they had sort of a challenge. 'Cause they beginning to don't take orders from their leaders or you know, just "Hey, come on, let's go over here and let's go smoke pot, let's get beer." Once you get away from all that experience, you go through the fire like they say. You been in the fire, you don't want again because you know it's bad for you, but if you got a weak mind, you can get hooked up on dope. That's how, myself, I really enjoy that man, I enjoy the beating that my dad gave me for fourteen days in bed, and told me what was right and the good. Of course, not all of it. I mean, I still had experience of going, on being not as a thief or anything like that, which I never did that. If you can work with your hands, and make money, you can drink and get drunk with beer. But don't mixed up with any drugs or anything.

Now these young kids now they got gang wars. Now, it's a total different. They got the idea from Mexico City, that just because they live on a farm, he's got a gun and he'll fight the next farmer over there, and so forth. They still got those ideas from there. That's how come over here everybody's shooting somebody. But if they realize that they can get one leader, and put 'em together in the ring, and let 'em fight it out, I don't think they won't be using guns. They be using a fist fight like we used to do years back, between gangs. Of course, when somebody jumps you over, two against one, then another one jumps, then everybody starts swinging, well that's a total different story. Now those were gang wars. Not compared to today. Today, now there's gang war between weapons. Years back it used to be fist fights.

T: What did the zoot suit look like?

A: Well, the zoot suit, I'll tell you where they got the dress, how they were dressed up. First of all, a zoot suit is a style made from the Dutch people. You remember the Dutch people are the ones that got a wooden shoe. Now they got the Dutch pants they call them, they're baggy. Now that's known, over here, as a zoot suit. Not a suit but a zoot pant. Now whenever you send it to the cleaners you were a zoot suiter from, say, the cuff was fourteen or twelve-inch and then it was baggy up. Then of course you got your big shoes, which had double soles, big heels,

and a big spike on it, it comes down. On the top you wear a big tie, or velvet tie, and your coat. Your coat comes in from back during the say 1800 century where they used to have those big long tail coats. You combine them into it, close it down, and you got a zoot suiter. By having a big bunch of pads on your broad shoulders, and cut into a V type.

Now, styles like that came in of course, it was first introduced in England, if I'm not mistaken, where the zoot suiter came in. Then the zoot suiter came into L.A. L.A. they began to put the styles, of how they dressed up, a big chain. Well the chain is actually just a little decoration, like a woman carries a decoration on her neck. Now people carry from the belt into it and they say, "Oh, at the end of the chain, he's got a big knife." Which wasn't true. Could be a key chain, or car chain, whatever you call it. Now, of course, you got your other people, that combine. You don't have to wear a big, fancy color zoot suit way up to your length of your hands which they used to call it tails. Now those you can combine into a plain zoot suit. You look what some of the movies. It was a cross type of coat. You go and you cross it from the right to the left and you tied it. Now big broad sholders, and so forth like that, are known as a zoot suiter. That's where it actually came by.

Now, duck tail, a guy wear long hair, not like today, they got long hair that half of them look like a woman, but they're not. They used to cut in in a style where you cut it in the very back of your neck, or the very back of your head, sort of a channel. Cut it down, and you cross your hair, one side to the other one, and it's got a little channel like that. That's known as a duck tail type. If you're ever seen a duck, you notice how it's got its tail in like that. So they cut part of his hair, then they cross it in and you comb it down, and you got a big duck tail. Now the hat I'm not so sure. I don't remember actually how it came out. But I tell you it was pick up by a colored guy that was using a big, side, Al Capone-type hat, used it sideways. Somebody got the idea. Of course, you know, most of the ideas come from the east coast or the west coast. They start somebody move to a big Navaho hat, which you can see the Navaho hat, Indians, they carry a big sombrero. Or a big straight hat with a big couple of cowboy type, but they block it and they put a feather on it. That's how they're known as the zoot suiters. It's a style, actually, what they were selling.

Of course, at that time, the clothes were expensive. It's a total different, different idea of people, zoot suiter. Zoot suiter was just a style like nowadays, you got people wearing no bra and so forth. At that time

everybody was total different. Even the girls at that year. They call them, "Have you make yourself a drape?" What's a drape" You never heard of a drape. Well. It's a sort of a style of a girl that her clothes were sort of baggy on the side, narrow up just above her knee. Now those are dresses they call them drapes, is to a girl. And they had big pompadours. Now let me tell you a little story about the pompadour, where it got the idea. If you remember most of the movie stars, seen movies about during the war and so forth like that. Now those girls, during the war, when the zoot suiter, the gang fights, you used to have your girlfriend. Of course, if they catch you with a knife, you're over the limit, you go to jail for carrying a cancealed weapon. So your girlfriend had a big pompadour. You've seen them way up real high. Some of those girls not only carried a knife for the guy, you know, or things like that. Now there's some of them that were pushers, and they carry the little plastic bag with marijuana on it. You know, just have a smoke on it and so forth.

I remember one time, I was picked up on a Saturday and they had a whole bunch of girls there at the city of El Paso jail. And that woman that was in charge of the guys going to reform school and the girls and so forth. I remember, she took the hair out of the girls, and the girls had some smoke pot in there, and boy, you

oughta see how she really slapped the face out of that girl, 'cause she was using marijuana for her boyfriend. But that was nothing. The girls didn't smoke it. It was just the guy they used to hang around. At that time, a marijuana cigarette cost you 25¢. No, I'm sorry, it was less than that, it was 20¢. But the girls used to be what they call it now, is the working horse or the mule. Now those were the girls that used to have the big pompadour. They couldn't get them nothing to drink, you know, because they were out of age limit, so they smoke a little bit of that pot. And then somebody get a little alcohol, went and bought a bottle for \$2, you get a little small bottle of alcohol, mix it to go to the dance floors, and so forth. Not only that, I mean some girls really join up with some of the guys that were dressed in zoot suiter, because boy, they used to dressed like beautiful girls, big pompadour, big drape dresses, high heels and so forth. Now, I'll show you some pictures later on about the girls, how they look, how they dressed, and so forth.

Now, whenever there was a gang fight, in a dance hall or anything, the guy always used to run to the girlfriend, who knows damn well what he wanted. She was carrying his knife, or carrying any kind of a weapon. 'Cause every time he goes to a dance hall, he used to go

through your pockets to see if you're not carrying knives or nothing like that. But the girls, they never searched them. So, the girls didn't wear a purse either, or anything like that. They used to go, just a little money on the pocket, and your boyfriend puts his money in her pocket, and so forth, but the girls carry the weapons for him. I know that because I seen it. I know I got friends, girlfriends, not girlfriends, but friends of mine that used to be in that kind of business. Now some of them are already married, and you see 'em, and you couldn't believe it, that she was one of the worst girls that ever was, or one of the worst guys that used to be.

Now myself, I consider myself lucky, 'cause that's how I got out of all this, boxing, I joined the Army. And like I said, I met this man, took me away from all that, keep me away from the streets, and the people liek that. Sooner or later I probably been in jail, probably been doing time or something like that. Well after a while, I got out of it, joined the Army, and I figured, "Well, since I've got experience of all of this," I say, "I'll join the airborne." I went into the airborne, graduated from jump school, got my wings and everything, got out of service, and I became a boxer for a little while. I retired, met my wife, I've got four girls now, which have been married for

quite a while, I got my own home.

When I got out of service, first thing I went to work wss for a shoe company, name's Given Brothers Shoe Company. I was working at 75¢ an hour. I started there as a janitor boy. Started working, and there were some guys that were working at stock and so forth. Well, I worked there for a hile. Of course I got the job through the same guy that got me away from this bad company, the same man that taught me how to box got me that job after I got out of the service. I started working at Given Brothers, I started from the bottom as a janitor, worked myself to a stock man, shipping clerk, and then a travel salesman. I worked for that company for almost 15 years. After that I quit that job because they wanted to give me a job as a store manager. I was getting tired of selling shoes. So I quit Given Brothers but I'm really proud of that company, because they helped me a lot, make me save my money, see little things what I could do, and buy what I needed, what I don't need I didn't have to be in debt.

I was off for about a week, out of a job. Started working with Raytheon Company, got the first job here. I started from the bottom again, started working as a janitor, cleaning up, doing errands, painting, electrical work and so forth. I start from the bottom, I been here now for almost 20 years with the company, and I'm a big

honcho now. I'm a big man now, I run my people, my labor crew, and so forth. I got people that work for me in my labor crew. Now them engineers, technicians, and I guess, what you're learning by it, with the experience that you got, you teach them to certain people. And of course, you got bad people that ain't worth teaching nothing, 'cause they never get anything through their head. My high school experience, I wouldn't say I learned too much in high school, but what I learned, I learned to being always on the go, always on the go, here and there, learning some things that I shouldn't do.

Of course, just before I went into the service, I worked with my dad, where he was working at the Darbyshire Company, he was a boiler maker. He showed me a trade and everything, which I'm really proud about that. And I know I can do anything that I say, "Well, if I don't know, I'll learn it, I'll try it." 'Cause it's not that high school. Actually, high school diploma right nowadays ain't not worth nothing, I got young kids with high school diplomas here working with me. Half of them they never have worked in their lifes. They don't know. So, things like that, I mean, experience that I have. And stuff that I'll probably remember back after we get through here. I can still give you some more information I remember and give you some pictures and tell you some stories of some of the guys that I got pictures here of them.

Their experience, they were good guys, they were bad guys, they were mean guys. Some of them are still living, some of them are passed away, some of them are put up in the state, up in Chino, up in California, that I used to hang around with them.

Now, sometimes I work with the law enforcements. I'm good friend of the sheriff here, Mike Sullivan. you can look at my records. I never have been arrested for drunk driving, theft, or anything--just fighting on the street. Of course I been in jail before, after I got out of the service, after being working at Raytheon, every once in a while I start fighting and I go to jail. But, they let me out, you know. The last time I was in jail been about two years ago. It was in a parade. With some smart aleck kid and his girlfirend, and they were really talking nasty and I had my family with me, and some nephews, and they were sitting down at the curb, and they were doing lot of things that the kids instead of looking at the parade they were looking at this young couple, what they were saying. And I told 'em to get away from there cause nobody was listening to the nasty things they were saying, and the kid asked me kind of smart aleck and all that so I just let 'em have it. Poom! Knocked his teeth out. Monday night, here comes the police, go to jail, file a complaint against me, 'caust they thought I was professional fighter. Put me there, got out right away, they let me out, 'cause there was a court hearing,

and they fined me \$25 for hitting the kid and the girl, trying to teach them some manners, and behave themselves. But the judge suspend my fine. He didn't fine me, so I was all right. That was two years in a row, every parade, I got into a fight.

The last one, I remember one incident, I had one of my bosses with me. We were drinking. He's working out here with me. We were drinking, one Friday, we got into a fight. Cops came over and took me to jail. They stripped my clothes and sent me all the way up to the last floor. It was during September I remember that year. It was cold. Took my clothes and let me sober up. Man, I'll never forget it. Well, of course I didn't want to take my clothes off but I got into a hassle with the jailers there. Oh, they really gave me a whipping on the side of my body. But they tear my shorts, took my jacket, my everything, they put me in jail until I spent the night until 5 o'clock the next morning. They got me down and boy, I almost freeze to death. But I keep on doing physical work in that cell. It was cold, no place to lay down, everything steel, and concrete floor, and I don't know. I guess I was lucky. So, they got me down, gave me a cup of coffee, and dress up, call home, come and get me out, and post bond, have a hearing, they fine us. But I appealed the case, and I won it, 'cause I know I was in my rights. What the guy was doing, the owner of the bar, pulled a gun out on me, and all that, and boy, when he got

out of that bar there, I sure let him have it. That's how come the cops came over and took me in.

And the last one, right after I got out of the service, I was still kind of little big wheel because I was a paratrooper. I just got out of the service, I had a big fight. I remember one Sunday afternoon I had a big fight with two guys and a woman. I beat the hell out of the woman, I beat the hell out of the other guy, and the big I took him out and I hit him. And during the hassle where we were fighting there was another guy, which I won't mention his name, he stopped me. And of course, I was the only one fighting there, they blamed me. I went to jail. Now this is before I had this other job, this big company I'm working now. My boss, where I worked with this company, he was a probational officer, which was a parole board, and I explained it to him what happened that Sunday, and everything. So we had a hearing, and all that, and of course, they fined me \$75 I remember. Fined me \$75, and no sentence or nothing. Just tell me to lay off drinking for a while, and stop being in a bar, picking up fights and everything. So, that went for a little while, but that didn't stop me from fighting in the bars, little odds and ends, and that's the last I ever saw of this guy. I been in jail about five times since I got out of the service.

T: Is it this jail down here that they're having so many problems with now?

A: That's right. Now, if you notice in the paper that they're going to use the new city jail. Now that was the jail they used to use 20 years ago, maybe a little less, for the city. Now used to be another one on First and Campbell. Used to be a small city jail, where they book you. They book you there, and if you couldn't pay the fine or something, at that time, they used to take you to work like a chain gang. They used to chain your legs, and take you down on the south side cleaning alleys and so forth to pay off the fine. If you were a certain age, you don't have to go to reform school, well they put you in there. And you had to work your way out. You work your day, they give you a little container of milk, one sandwich cut in half, either bologna or cheese, and one apple. That was your lunch. And then they work you and you come back, and then you have your lunch, beans or any kind of devil food, deviled meat whatever you call it, and black coffee, no sugar, no milk. In the morning they give you oatmeal, just a little, and no sugar. You couldn't use a spoon anything like that.

But see at that time the cops, in those years, the cops were more strictly, and more mean, and they controlled the jail better than they do nowadays. See that's how come you get so many crimes that's happening there. Somebody take advantage of a young guy that's never been in jail.

You yourself, if you say, "Well I've been in jail," you know what it's like, so you got to fight your own battles there. Of course, when they're two or three guys jumping you, you gotta fight 'em out regardless, even if you know you're gonna lose, but you're still fighting then they'll avoid you. But nowadays you get some of these young kids that never been in jail, and there are people there that's been there before and they'll take advantage of you and they do a lot of things to them. In those years, they only had two guys to a cell. Nowadays they put 'em all together so you can imagine what happens and all of that for being in a jail and so forth.

Now I've known guys for the experience that they've never been in jail. Oh, they really think they're mean and all that sort of stuff. I know a guy that I know but I won't mention his name because he's a good friend of mine. He had a little trouble, went to jail, and only spent maybe about half a day or a day maybe there until they get him out. Now you oughta see him. He's one of the religious man that boy, he won't let you say a bad word or nothing, he doesn't drink now. He, like they say, he saw the light. But I don't believe on that. I mean, it's people that they never been. They think they're mean outside. But once you been in jail, you begin to cut it, you know, you gotta fight 'em, 'cause there's some people there that

been there more than you. And you only going to spend one night, maybe one or two nights and that's it. But you gotta fight it.

Me, I say with the experience that I have that I always been fighting, I don't take nothing like that, I don't respect anybody, even if the guy is crippled or nothing. I don't respect him. Because he can do- he himself, now by crippled I mean a guy that's got his arm broken, or anything like that, or maybe his ears, or the day before he had that. Maybe he was doing something bad, or something like that. Now, I have beaten up guys that come from the service, they're handicapped, their hand is busted up from being wounded, or so but still, you don't have no pity for them, regardless of it, 'cause he can turn himself back and kill you. Even if he's got one hand, can pull out a knife and cut you right in the back with it and you're it. Now he says, "I'm crippled. That's self-defense," which is a lot of bull. I don't believe on that. I figure that a person is gonna say, "I'm gonna kill you," while he's cutting you, he's gonna kill you, regardless of it, even if he's crippled. So, I don't have any pity for handicapped.

Now, how many times you seen, nowadays, it's a young kid that you look at him in a wheelchair sitting outside the porch. Now this is true for a fact. There are guys that they look around, now you go to the south side right not, and you'll see a guy sitting in the wheelchair.

He says, "Poor guy, look, he lives in that neighborhood. He's crippled." Now you don't know he's crippled. Maybe he's just acting, or maybe he's just selling something. A guy that's crippled in a chair, you don't judge him just by seeing that he's handicapped. Maybe he's selling something or he's just acting like he's crippled. So you give him sanction. You let him go. And he's the guy that's carrying the dope right there, or whatever it is. Nowadays, Police nowadays, they don't do that. In years back, now the cops that used to be the real detectives over there, those guys didn't care if you were handicapped, or you were crippled, they'll kick your butt and put you in a car, drag you even if you couldn't walk. But they'll search you regardless of it. Nowadays you can't do it. Cops cannot do that. In years back they do it.

Now I go with the law years back, because it was a lot better, it was not that much of a crime. Of course, gang fights and so forth, and somebody got cut up, but not so bad. But nowadays, you can't even look at nobody else cause right away they're gonna kill you with a shotgun or a gun they come and pull you, and so forth. I believe some of those cops already are retired, some of them, well there's a friend of mine which was a detective he was the one that put me in jail one time when they picked me up. They had me charged with aggravated assault and so forth. And now, I see him, I met him in church,

and we talk about it, and he knows. He can give you more information what kind of a guy I was, and now I behave. They retired from the service, from the police department, and things like that. Nowadays it's a total different story. Of course, I got a respect for another person. It's an old man and all that. I can see that. But some of these other people that you see 'am handicapped or anything like that, no, I don't believe on that. I believe that anybody's got his rights nowadays, his rights which I didn't, at that time. I didn't think I had any rights at all, period. You gotta fight it out, run it out, or whatever it is. But I never seen anything happen like nowadays, years back.

So that's what I say about the south side. The south side, it was beautiful. I mean, it was quiet, nobody bother you, people they'd know where you were from, neighborhood you used to go and things like that. Of course, if you're looking for trouble you'll find it. But if you were not looking for trouble, course you couldn't go see a girlfriend to another neighborhood, or you couldn't see it cause her brother's probably got his gang and they'll come beat the hell out of you, and so forth like that. Now, things like that, I mean nowadays you don't see it. Now the the girlfriend's got a car, and the boyfriend, they meet some other place, 'cause they don't want to until they're ready to get

married they find out, "Well, this guy lives way over, how come he's going with a girlfriend over here?" But those years, I mean you couldn't go to the neighborhood, and go and see a girlfriend, or go and see a girl at school, and say, "Well, how about a date tonight?" "Yeah, come to my house." "Well, geez, what neighborhood you live on?" Man, you didn't want to go over there. Things like that. Of course, I had girlfriends different areas but I always used to take two or three guys with me. They used to wait for me while I go and see my girlfriend, and if anything happens, or anything like the brother went and got his gang, that's all I had to do is say "Buddy, I came here to see your sister. That's it. I didn't come here to take advantage of her or anything like that." But I always had two or three guys with me every time I used to go see a girlfriend to another neighborhood. I'd fight it out with them, or things like that, you know.

Well, that's part of it, if you wanta, then we can work it out later on. I'll show you some pictures here of some of the guys here, what happened to them, and then you can take part of the scrapbook that I got here and I'll bring you another one. The girls, how they dressed up, between the difference, and how they got initiation by their nicknames. Of course, I remember this guy by the name of Chayo, used to call

him Chayo. He was a good swimmer. He used to get on top of the tree and holler like Tarzan. And the day I got baptized by, they had my nickname as Diablo, was, they used to tie you up, and they had a post at the corner of the neighborhood. They get on top of the roof like of that and drop you watermelons, buckets of water, somebody went and got a bucket full of pee, and pour it in you and crucified you there. And it's OK. So you're crucified, you got your name and so forth. That's how some of the guys used to do it. But see, it was just between the people there, and in the guys the gang, not the gang but the neighborhood.

There was people that used to call them different names, their mother used to come out and "His name is not that. His name is so and so. Don't call him that." So you began to test the mother. They used to go to my house and call "Diablo! Devil!" My mother used to say, "His name is not Diablo. His name is Beto." And so forth. They used to get my mother and say, "Are you the mother of the Devil?" And then my mother say, "Yes." She finally gave in, and ever since that everybody knows me by the Diablo. I never fight it, because I know it won't do me any good to. And there's people now, that I see them go, no, and they call them by their nickname and they get mad. Oh, they want to be called by Mr. Martinez, Mr. So and So, which I don't believe. They

were a bunch of hoodlums the same way I was, and now they're begining to act like they're decent people.

It's a funny thing about that. I have never object to people that call me Diablo because they know me from that time, that I was known, nicknamed as Diablo, and I'm grown up. Some of my kids say, they even ask them, "Are you the daughter of Diablo?" They say "Yes." You know, it's a funny thing you know. People that remember things like that. And I'm not ashamed. I mean, I haven't done anything that I said I've done wrong. I mean, oh things, you know. I've always figured that I had a pretty good life, from the time I was born, to the time that I'm living now, and I'm enjoying life as much as I can. I've got a pretty good job, I get a good salary, I got money I paid for my house, I got two girls in college. One of them is a librarian for the public library there, and of course I got the youngest one. I still like to enjoy life. Once in a while I get into a little harrasment with guys at the bar, and of course things, stupidity, that they argue about the south side, which they don't know the difference between the south side and the present south side.