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Interview no. 726

Louise Gates

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Louise Gates (1902-)
INTERVIEWER: Sarah E. John
PROJECT: _____
DATE OF INTERVIEW: December 14 and 15, 1978
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO.: 726
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 726

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Born in Mexico, American father and a Mexican mother, grew up in mining towns in Coahuila; spent adult life in El Paso.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Discusses her childhood in Sierra Mojada, Coahuila, with particular emphasis on experiences during the Mexican Revolution; recalls the 1920's and 30's in El Paso, speakeasies and local distillers during the prohibition years and the Depression.

Length of interview: 4 hours Length of transcript: 96 pages

Louise Gates
December 14, 1978
By Sarah John

J: The first question I'd like to ask you is about your grandparents on both sides, and if you can tell us a little bit about them.

G: My father's family, I know just his father's name and his mother's name. They were Joseph A. Gates and Elvira Cannady. And they lived in Shawneetown, Illinois, where my father was born. Now they, to my knowledge the family came to that locale, which is Gatman (?) County, I believe, from the Carolinas, and came to the Carolinas originally from England. Then, of course my father's name was Walter Benjamin Gates. He was one of a number of children--mostly sisters though, only one other boy, so there're not too many Gates.

My mother, I do have quite a bit of history on that family, because we have Colonel Rafael Barrios, from the province of Viscaya in Spain. He came with the Spaniards in the army and died in Mexico in 1811. Now, he was the father of Jose Antonio Barrios, who was born in Hacienda de San Amateo in Valparaiso, from Mexico. And he was the one who founded the Hacienda de la Parada, where my mother was born.

J: So is that your mother's father, Jose Antonio Barrios?

G: Jose Antonio would be her grandfather. See, [Rafael] was her great grandfather, [Jose Antonio] is her grandfather. Now we have Colonel Rafael Barrios from the province of Viscaya in Spain, who came to Mexico. We have no birthdate, but he died

in 1811. Then his son, Jose Antonio Barrios, was married to Sra. Donaciana Minjares de Barrios. And they bought and founded the Hacienda de la Parada close to Sombrerete in Zacatecas. And his son, Manuel Maria Barrios y Minjares married Francisca Ochoa y Laurensana. That would be my mother's mother and father. So my mother's name was Guadalupe, and she was born in Sombrerete, Zacatecas.

J: How did your parents meet? Do you know that story?

G: My father went to Mexico when he was 17 years old. My mother and father were married in 1896, so that would be nine years prior to that. So the arithmetic. So it was in the 1870s. He went by steamer to Veracruz and then into Mexico City, a young man looking for adventure and to make his fortune, you know. Those things happened then. Then he worked at various jobs, but he finally made the connection with the American Smelting and Refining Company, and went to work with them in Sombrerete. And there he met my mother and married her in 1896. And they lived there after their marriage, only I believe, about five years. Then we moved also to other mining places, the Abrigonia Mines near Saltillo, Coahuila and then later to Sierra Mojada. We were there prior to the Revolution, certainly four or five years. I know I attended school there-- first and second grade.

J: You were born in Sombrerete. What year were you born?

G: 1902. My sister, Mrs. Reynolds, was born in 1900; and our older sister, Leonor Amalia, was born three years before that, 1897. Of course, our brother was born in Sierra Mojada,

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October 12, 1910.

J: So he was born right in the middle. [Laughter]

G: He's never known peace. And that is the family until 1916. My sister Eugenia Tula Gates Garnand was born here in El Paso in 1916.

J: Apparently you remember a lot of things that happened during your childhood. Let's say before the Revolution, do you have any recollections of what life was like then?

G: It was very, very pleasant in Sierra Mojada. I do not recall the other places too well, not really. So I must have been quite young. Well, it was prior to being school age, although you didn't enter school until seven years old. But, life in Sierra Mojada was just really ideal. I often feel sorry for city children, because we had our horses and I would ride bare back all over the place, the hills. There were very nice families there; not too many that I remember, American families.

J: I was going to ask you about that, too.

G: I don't remember any. I remember a German family and an Italian family. although they were merchants; that is, the Italian family. But the German family, he was an engineer with the Pinones Mining Company, which I believe was largely owned by German capital.

J: Was it a common thing for an American to marry someone from Mexico at that time?

G: Very, very... Yes. Yes.

J: Was there any flak from anyone? I mean, did it seem very odd?

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G: No.

J: It was something that was accepted, then, by both sides, you would think?

G: Yes, it was. It was accepted. I don't know that there were too many, but I don't know that there were too many, but I don't think that there was any objection to that from the standpoint of being an American. Course, I didn't run into or realize any prejudice against Americans until sometime during the Revolution. And it may be that it didn't exist too much before that. And Germans, of course, in Mexico, the Germans married a great deal into the better families. Because from Germany--and there were a great many Germans in Mexico--they were not, you know, didn't come there penniless. They were generally from wealthy families, and they came and established business, hardware businesses a great deal. You know, I remember only German hardware stores. And the young men married a lot of Mexican girls. And so there's a lot of German names you'll find, I'm sure, in the telephone books all over the country in Mexico.

But, there in Sombrerete, I don't know that anybody else was married to an American at the time that mother married dad. But he was a very acceptable bachelor, because one of her cousins, even, never spoke to her again because she married him. [Laughter] So there was nothing, it wasn't strange or anything; there just weren't that many bachelors, American bachelors. Or possibly they didn't intend to stay in the country. Or if they weren't bachelors, they didn't have their

family with them in Sierra Mojada, young engineers who would come and go. Well, of course, they didn't stay too long.

And of course, social life in Sierra Mojada was rather nonexistent. It was a small town. But we had good friends, and there was a great deal done in the way of picnics, you know going to where they grew...they didn't grow very much, and no fruit, but there would be corn planted in small milpas, you know. And one of these fun things was, the whole family, several families, going there and the mozos would go ahead of us and cook the corn on the cob--either roasted, you know, or boiled. And since it took time, of course they'd go ahead and do that. And then of course the ladies all brought, you know, food they'd get together, or families. There weren't too many.

But, it was a pleasant life and great for a child. I roamed around the hills there looking for some pretty rocks. I loved [doing that]. Even now I pick up a rock if I'm walking and I see a pretty one. And we rode horseback. My dad played tennis, we had a tennis court. My dad and my older sister and some of the men who were there, engineers, played tennis. Mother was a great cook, and of course, you know a lot of it was just home entertainment. There were no movies, you know, and no theater. There were school functions.

J: What kind of things did you have there, recreational or social activities at your school?

G: Well, they taught by the way, sewing to girls. We were in one...one section was girls, and [in] the other section (there was a big wall between) were the boys. And we in this school

were taught sewing for an hour every day, even in in first grade. I have a sampler hanging there. Of course, everybody, all young ladies, were taught to play the piano. It was not at school, but there would be some local lady who gave piano lessons. This was just almost mandatory, you know. And my sisters, my older sister Leonor and Laura played...there was an orchestra, because they played the mandolin with the school orchestra. So there was the type of entertainment at the school.

And we went to school on horseback, two on a horse--that is, my sister Laura and I. We were, of course, smaller. And, well, I believe that you would call the school equipment and the plant, the building and so on, most primitive by the standards now, you know, here. Heavenly days! There's the gymnasium and there's the football playing field, and there are so many activities. There, we just purely went to school and for classes. And, as I say, even an hour of sewing for the girls. They also taught painting, too because my older sister learned to paint, oil painting. There were some beautiful things we had that she had painted. She died in 1912, and she was 14 years old; so you see, she was quite young. But, they crowded the...primary education was five years. If you finished the fifth grade, then you were going onto what I believe would be called high school, secondary school.

J: Were the classes all in Spanish?

G: Oh, definitely. There [was] no other language taught. None whatever, you know. Now, in the larger cities I suppose there

were, you know, schools that taught English and so; up here in Chihuahua, probably. You know, larger cities. But there and in smaller towns, why, no; they just taught everything in Spanish. I did not speak English till I came up here.

J: So your father spoke Spanish very well.

G: Well, my father spoke Spanish perfectly, with no accent. And he was self-taught. All those years after he reached Mexico I suppose he found that he was definitely in the minority [laughter], and he had to learn Spanish if he was going to get along. So he did. And [he] learned to speak it very fluently. He was, as a matter of fact, taking Spanish classes from this cousin of mother's. So he spoke Spanish. And of course, Spanish was easier for mother. Although when I was about a year old, she went with the three of us to Alto Pass, Illinois, which is near Shawneetown, to visit my father's brother, Arthur Gates, because they wanted to meet Walter's wife and family. And she travelled by herself, speaking no English, with the three children. I was about a year old, and of course Laura about two, and Leonor about five.

And she had a letter, and the consulate here took care of her, you know. In other words, she was placed on the train in Sombrerete; although it doesn't reach Sombrerete, it's kind of a distance off. And she went all the way up to Alto Pass, and she had to change trains in St. Louis. But also the consul met her train, and I believe she had to stay overnight in order to get the next train over to Alto Pass, Illinois. And they took care of, you know...there was not that much travel so that a

consulate could give individual attention, even though you were not necessarily a threat, very important person. And then mother stayed there for several months, and one of her nieces, by marriage, my father's nieces, was a teacher there, and she taught mother English. And mother learned to speak English very well. She preferred Spanish, but she certainly understood all, any English, and could of course, speak it too. She had a slight accent. But since she preferred Spanish, and Dad spoke Spanish, and we were going to school in Spanish, and all our friends were Mexican people, well, we just didn't learn English until we got up here. And then...it doesn't take long.

J: When you have to, you have to.

G: And at that age you could really, I believe, pick up several languages if you're exposed to them. And of course we lived at that time where there was no one that I know of that spoke Spanish, around Bailey School. So just in order to play and get along we had to start speaking English. I had to go onto first grade here. I'd been to first and second in Mexico, and, as I say, they crammed a lot of reading, writing, and arithmetic into [the day], because I believe we went to school till five.

J: So it was a longer day than they have now.

G: A longer day. And that last hour, of course, was, in our case, sewing, and I don't know about the boys. But, I had to go in first grade here, we both did even though my sister was further along in school in Mexico, because we had to get the language first. But I didn't have to attend second grade here. From

the first I went to the third, because by then I had the English. And as far as the arithmetic and so on was concerned, I had that already. And I found that it was relatively simple. I think that you do not necessarily require bilingual education, if you just make up your mind and your family wants you to learn English. But this doesn't mean that we forgot our Spanish, because we didn't. And we certainly didn't forget about our heritage or family or anything else, but we just learned English.

J: Before we go any further, I'd like to back up a little bit and talk about the Revolutionary days that you lived through and your family lived through.

G: Well, now, that was prior to the Revolution. Life was quite pleasant and my memories of it are all just good. It was a lovely climate. It did rain in the winter a lot, but that was all, no cold.

But then there began to be rumors of revolution, which as children we didn't even hear. But then it did break out in November, November 20th, 1910, which was a Sunday. And while this was down in Morelia, in the southern part of the country, we just heard of it, and it was in the newspaper. And certainly Father was aware of it, but it didn't concern us too much. Life went on as usual. There was just nothing changed, until about a year later, I believe. It had reached the northern part. The Maderistas had reached the northern part of Mexico and taken Tlaxcala and then began to spread out. And then the first ones to come into Sierra Mojada were Maderistas.

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J: Did you see them?

G: Yes. I remember one scene quite well. They were, of course, always on horseback and well armed with the cartridge belts crossed, one around their waist and two across their chest, and large sombreros. And incredibly they would have a picture of the Virgen de Guadalupe or the Santo Nino de Atocha in their hat--almost all of them. And they came by the house, outside of our wall. And Isabel, our mozo, brought corn in sacks for their horses; and they were pleasant, talking and laughing, talking to Isabel. We saw them, but they did not molest us in any way not that first bunch.

They had, however (I imagine it was the first bunch), they had cut the railroad, which is done very effectively by burning their wooden tressels, and then of course the railroads can't run, and that was the beginning of trouble. Because, of course, that was the only communication between Sierra Mojada and the rest of Mexico, and all food had to come by train. There was very little--there were chickens, eggs, a little corn, and some beef, of course, grown there in the valley. But we ordered our groceries, I believe, from Chihuahua, and much no one will remember, I'm sure, but canned butter.

But after the train didn't run, we couldn't order anything. And it was during this period that Papa would send wagons out to Cuatro Cienegas which was really the closest place that could provide any of this food. Escalon is just a stop in the railroad. And he would fly an American flag on these wagons--small. (We weren't equipped!) And they got

through with corn, beans, coffee, sugar, piloncillo--basic things. But fruit, vegetables, things like that, we just [had] whatever was grown there in the valley. And I suppose we did better than most, because they could bring it to us and sell it to us, but I suppose many people simply didn't have it. And they used to bring eggs and chickens for sale to our house, and of course we had some chickens too, but not enough to provide us with anything like that. But the people in the pueblo did. So we had that type of thing. But it began to be scarce, you know, the basic foods other than what came in in wagons that Papa sent out. He had a great concern, of course, with keeping the mines operating and feeding the people. And of course they used piloncillo but we had the white sugar.

And of course, since it is such an out of the way, off the beaten path place, we, I believe, we felt that; although now any small town would have begun to feel these privations, because there was no communication. And all the farming and ranching was disrupted. The armies killed off the beef as they came across it for their own use and so on. But even in larger cities, they had to go out to the outskirts of town to meet the people coming in from ranches, go out there and try to catch 'em to get, you know, the things that they used to bring to our house in Sierra Mojada. In Chihuahua I've heard of people who had to go out and try to get the eggs and the things from the farmers, before they reached the city.

So [the] branch line, as I say, it belonged to the family of Doctor Safford. And Dr. Safford practiced here in El Paso

for many years, and his son was also a doctor. Of course, they're both dead now, his son too. And Mrs. D. Belding was a Safford. But, that was the only means of travel, and it was used mostly by the mining to, you know, carry the ore into the smelter. I believe it went to Torreon, to the smelter in Torreon.

And of course 1911 would be when the revolution reached Sierra Mojada. We did have, before that, a Porfiro Diaz detachment, and they were stationed up en el pueblo. We called it el pueblo, but it was Sierra Mojada proper; that was the old town, really old. And the railroad came in through the lower end of the valley to Esmeralda. And they were stationed up there. Of course, I have no idea how in the world they ever got paid or anything else. And when the Maderistas were rumored to be coming towards Sierra Mojada, they got up on the schoolhouse, which was the tallest building in town, and just stayed there; and no Maderistas showed for weeks. I don't know just how many, but they nearly died of sunstroke up there.

And then I think their captain decided that [they should leave]. They were rather nice, the captain was--very nice person. Of course, the soldiers, you just didn't know. My father and the company doctor had gone up there to treat the army for this, their illness, so he was well acquainted with the captain. And the captain decided he had better just leave Sierra Mojada; he was entirely isolated, and if some Maderistas came in there was nothing really that he could do, since they were just such a small garrison. They were on foot, and they

marched past our house on just sandals, no shoes--just huaraches--and their faces all swollen from the exposure. And their uniforms were made of manta trigena, which is unbleached muslin; and rather ragged, very clean. And [they] had a big flag and on it was the word paz, which means peace. So I just hope they made it, [chuckles] because by then the whole country was in an uproar. There were not only Maderistas between Sierra Mojada and Torreón, there would be also the Orozquistas. I believe that the Carrancistas came in later. But I do remember that pathetic troop going by our house. They had to pass through on their way out of the valley.

J: This happened about 1911 or so?

G: After 1911.

J: Were you forced to leave after that? How did you come about leaving? Was there an order, did you get run out of town?

G: No. There'd been no rail communication, food was scarce, and the Maderistas had actually come into town. And while they seemed to be a friendly bunch at the time, there was no way of knowing. And my father decided then, because the conditions in the country were getting to be chaotic, because Orozco had started a movement of his own up here in the northern states, Pascual Orozco, and he had an army. And there was constant fighting. And over this railroad here to Juárez, no one could travel because since it was the only means of communications they fought over it all the time. So Papa just decided it was time to get his family out of Sierra Mojada and to the United States, because he just didn't know when [things would blow

up]. the rumors were that. Well, they were more than rumors. The Maderistas, this was Gustavo Madero, and he was he brother of Francisco I. Madero, who was an educated man, I believe a graduate of Yale, certainly of one those eastern universities. He got the idea that there should be democracy in Mexico. And it wasn't a bad idea, but he didn't live very long. [Chuckle] Huerta, his chief of staff turned against him and as a matter of fact, a few days later shot him and the vice president.

So my father just thought that it was best to get his family out of Mexico. Because Gustavo Madero's army, these were not disciplined armies. When you're speaking of an army, you have a different vision now. There was no discipline, they were just people, whoever joined up. They had a horse and a gun, "Come with us," you know. And it looked very attractive to a lot of the peones and rancheros, a great lark. And off they'd go. And then they weren't disciplined. The ones right immediately under the commanding officer probably were professionals or obeyed or knew what the commanding officer wanted to do. But when they went into a town, they pillaged and murdered and so on, before actually the commanding officer could restrain 'em, if he had a mind to do so. But I believe they did, for instance Maderista commanders, and the Carranzistas. Carranza was a very...even scholarly person. And they had visions of the country being really modernized and industrialized, and having free elections, which certainly didn't...there were no free elections during Diaz's time. It was supposedly a democracy, and they had elections every six

years, but nobody dared to run against him, or for that matter his governors all over the country he appointed. I know you couldn't even run for, be against the governors, because you just disappeared. They'd send for them to Mexico City, and that was it--you never heard from them again. So these people like Madero and Carranza, they had the idea of having a democracy in the country, which, such as it is, it finally has come about, you know. They do have that one party sort of that dominates; but then you can run against anybody now.

Well, Dad just decided that we had to leave. Conditions probably were worse than I know, because my mother and dad were so calm, you know, that we didn't realized any danger. But we just started out, then, and the only way to come was by buggy and with mules, because they had taken the horses. That's the first thing they would [take], the horses. They would also come to the gate or go to the door. They were more respectful, though, of our gate; they did not come in. Other, I'm sure, houses of Mexican people they would just open the door and go in if they wanted to. But they would pound on the gate and ask to see the senor, and ask if he had any guns. Well, I remember Dad giving 'em one of his rifles, because of course you wouldn't get by with telling them that you didn't have any [chuckles]. So he said, "Isabel, bring my rifle." So Isabel brought the rifle. And they would requisite men and then money, you know, from the office. That's why Dad kept actually in the office safe only a small amount of money, and it was silver pesos. Because he could open the safe and say,

"Well, this is what we have. This is what I have, so you can have it." And they would give him an IOU. At that time they gave an IOU for it. Cuando triunfe la causa, they were going to pay it back. So they were not really too, too bad.

Of course, I can't say how they were with their own, with the Mexican people. In Torreon when Gustavo Madero first entered with his army, they killed Chinese people--just all they could lay their hands on. In fact, Gustavo Madero finally sent some of the people he could trust I suppose and got the remnants of the chinese colony (apparently there were quite a few there) and put them in what had been the Spanish consulate--it was the second floor of a bank building there--for their protection, because his army was just busy killing 'em, just killing 'em men, women, and children. Possibly because the Chinese were reputed to hoard all their money because they were going back to China when they got, you know, well off. When they accumulated enough money they could go back to China and be well to do there. And I believe that was the main idea. I know it was in the case of our Chinaman, our cook.

So things were just very, very bad. It's a chaotic condition. There's just men with guns and no discipline. And then they scattered out. Gustavo Madero was in Torreon, but then [in] all of the adjoining towns and ranches, whatever his troops did, why he wouldn't even know what it was. So I suppose that things were really very bad, and that's why Dad decided to pack us up, because it couldn't have been for any other reason than that he saw danger for us, and also

privation. Then, too, you didn't know when in those days the local people might get a grudge, which they did in other places. You know, somebody that you had no idea would join up with the revolucionarios when they came in, and then he'd get even for whatever grievance he happened to have. So we just started out. And it must have been a hard decision certainly with a family, and just in a buggy, and the buckboard with the baggage and a tent, food, to strike out that distance. I can't say exactly what the distance is. I do remember two nights, but there may have been more that I don't recall exactly.

J: But you didn't have very many personal possessions then, right? Just the basic necessities?

G: Just some clothes. You know, a buckboard is not all that big (You've seen them in movies), so that you couldn't pack more than possibly a couple of trunks--you know, the old fashioned trunks. I know we still had one here at N. Campbell [Street]. But that's it. That's all you [could take]. Mother carried with her their wedding portraits without frames, and this shawl that my grandmother embroidered. That would be Francisca Ochoa y Laurensana. She embroidered that, and that was in Maximilians's day, which it has an Imperial flag on it. And so that, and her little Christ child. That's what she brought in the way of...other than clothes. And then in the way of food, I only remember Mama there boiling potatoes at our campsites, because I don't know what else we carried. But there wasn't much else. Besides, with no refrigeration, I don't know what you could carry that would [not spoil]. I suppose at this

ranch--when we'd run into these ranches, they were little ranches, little old adobe two, three room houses along the way, and not too many of those that I remember--I suppose we could buy eggs something like that, chicken. But there wasn't too much in the way of food that you could carry anyway.

It rained on that trip, this I remember. And [it would] become sometimes cold, although it was summer. But the rains, it would get cool. And whatever days it took, I remember two nights. One of 'em was just driving rain and the other one in the little ranchito where the fleas just literally ate us up. We slept on the floor; but then that's what the people had, they slept on the floor too. So [chuckle]... And they were kind. But we didn't try that again, although I don't even know if we ran into any more inhabited places. It was really desolate. We would run into occasionally some armed men.

J: Was there ever any trouble with them?

G: No, they were friendly enough. They were kind of frightening because they were always armed and sometimes drunk. And I can remember one sitting there on his horse by our buggy and offering his bottle of sotol to Papa and to Mama. Of course my mother, who was a very dignified type, pretended to have a drink. They didn't dare say no, you know--they wouldn't offend them. But they were friendly enough. And there was not a trace of ill feeling towards Americans as such. They had a particular enmity for what they, the people, they called los cientificos and that just meant the rich to them. And being rich was a crime to them. That is, they were fair game.

People in the cities would roll up their rugs and hide all their fine furniture and try to look as poor as possible in case they came in or looked in the windows or something like that, because being rich was... What they wanted, of course, was to steal; that's how they lived. Although the armies, the organized part of the army was probably being sent money and supplies from Mexico City, from their central headquarters, whoever it was that was in power. But it changed hands quite a bit, from Huerta then [to the others]. I do remember that very well--they were not unfriendly, not at first.

J: You made up a campsite on your way, is that right?

G: When it rained, that night it rained, we did have the tent. But when it was not raining, we simply spread the blankets and went to sleep on the ground.

J: How did you carry water? Did you have bags?

G: We must have had some type of container for water.

J: Because besides you, I guess you would need to give some to the mules also.

G: Well, there were, there were rivers along. All of the mechanics of the thing are a little foggy, naturally, because it was something that my father was taking care of and my mother was coping with and since she didn't make any great hullabaloo about it, why, we weren't aware of it. But obviously we had water.

J: I was just curious because it is such a long way and you would need to have some available.

G: Some way to carry it; oh yes, we would. I don't think it would

be anything that anybody even recognizes now, you know, but the five gallon tin used to be almost a staple thing. They built houses out of it [chuckle]. It was a square tin and many things were shipped in it--coal, oil, which was used extensively, and many other things--so that probably that's what we were carrying in those cans, those five gallon tin containers. I remember those all, you know, quite vividly, not necessarily on the trip, but they were in use. So possibly that's what we had water in. And I know that they were used in our kitchen--you know, cut off the top and used for flour and beans and so on. They were very useful things. And many things must have come in them, because they were very plentiful. People even built houses out of [them.]

But particularly now, in retrospect, I know that my mother and father were great! Because we didn't cry, we weren't frightened. We accepted everything as it came, just because they were so calm. Mother wasn't complaining of the lack of this or that--simply make do with what was available and make us as comfortable as possible and try to keep us well, which we did. My father, of course, was suffering a severe case of shingles at the time of this trip, so that his health was a great concern to us. But, of course, he just took care of all the details the best he could. I have no idea how we carried cash. Because this would be...he must have had some. And it was always dangerous to have any money, because that they want.

J: First thing they would want.

G: We had two drivers, and of course that helped a great deal.

Aurelio, who had been our coachman for a long time, and his little boy came along; and then another one, I don't remember his name. But they would tend to the mules and the loading 'n' unloading. And when we got to Presidio, there was no bridge there. And the river there is not like the river here; it was turbulent and wide, and has plenty of water in it because the Conchos flows into it up above. And so we were rowed across in boats. And the mules were led down to the water, and these drivers and some other people there from Presidio swam them across. And then we stayed at Mr. Klein's. He was very hospitable. I remember his name very well, but I don't remember what he looked like. He had the general store, and put us up for the night. And we had a bath, which was a great luxury. But no clean clothes because the wagon had broken down further back. Aurelio had to get the parts there at Mr. Klein's and go back for it. So we still had no clean clothes.

J: Was there any problem in crossing, as far as the immigration people were concerned?

G: Oh, heavenly days, no! As a matter of fact, at that time, when there were many, many people coming into the United States fleeing from the revolucionarios, the United States [had] just [an] open arms policy. There are a great many people here, now, that never went back. Of course in our case there was no problem because we were American citizens. Prior to 1924, you know, if you're born of American parents in whatever country and registered at the nearest American Consulate, you were an American citizen. That, of course, has changed. But these

other people who were Mexican nationals and citizens who did come here because of the Revolution, I'm sure have been able to be naturalized or get their status legalized in some way, because at that time they simply could walk across the bridge anytime because they were coming here for, well, in danger of their lives. The entire Terrazas family moved out of Chihuahua and lived here, and many, many other people. And many of them are still probably here. So, I don't remember, there were no Customs, no Immigration. We simply came over. Of course, we wouldn't have had a problem anyway, but then, I don't think that you would have had one, even Mexican people would not have. The United States was very, very hospitable.

And then from Presidio we went (also it was in our buggy) to Shafter, Texas, and got there late at night. And too late to even look for any place to stay, and then by then we were very used to it. And if it wasn't raining we'd just put the blankets on the ground and went to sleep. And it was dark, [we didn't know where we were]. But as it happened then, when we woke up we were near the camp of the 7th Cavalry troops. They had them stationed all along the border during the Revolution, because there was a great deal of arms around it. Now, I remember that the first Maderistas, those first revolucionarios that we saw, were carrying German guns, a Mauser. They were equipped with German arms. But [afterwards], since the whole country got up, one or the other of the revolutionary armies began to need other arms from the United States. And quite a bit of this gun money went on. I believe they were guarding

against that, although they still were getting them over. Where else would Mexico get any arms? They didn't manufacture any such thing as that. So they got it either from Germany or the United States. And the first ones, it was German.

And the soldiers were so kind. They were shocked to see an American family, you know, in the shape we were in. [Laughter] And they came over with hotcakes and bacon and all such luxuries, and coffee, and were so kind. And then, we went on from there. I don't know that we could get a train there. I believe we went on to Marfa, and got the train from Marfa. But Shafter was where we spent that night. And then in Marfa, though, Dad secured a compartment, because of course we were grubby. [Chuckle] And then in that way we came to El Paso and went to the Linden Hotel. It was a quiet family hotel. I think it's a little run down now, I only see it once in a while. And Dad went to the White House and had a saleslady bring some clothes for us so we would be presentable. And later Aurelio came with the luggage. Now, Mr. Klein must have helped him to get to the train with that.

J: Had your father known him before?

G: No, but I think anyone will find that during troubled times, people, they're helpful. It wouldn't make any difference, you know. I suppose Dad would've left money for his passage, because I remember Aurelio and his boy in El Paso.

J: So they did come all the way up with you.

G: Now how he went back, this I don't remember.

J: But they did make it as far as El Paso after all.

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G: Yes he did, and put the luggage on the train. And I don't think Aurelio would've known how, so I think that Mr. Klein must have helped with that.

[PAUSE]

J: Where is the Linden Hotel? I know I've seen it, but I can't place it.

G: You know where the library park is?

J: Yes.

G: Well, it's on Oregon Street, right there, next block, about a three story building.

J: I knew I had seen it, I just couldn't place which one it was.

G: And I have no idea now what it is. I mean, I think it's still a hotel and probably still that name.

J: What did El Paso look like to you? I guess at that time that was the largest city you'd ever been in.

G: I saw my first electric light! So it was dazzling. They did not have neon signs, but they had electric signs, colored bulbs, and this was breathtaking, you know, to someone who had never seen [them].

J: Sure. You were about nine years old, I guess.

G: I was eight, just eight. Probably turned nine, that summer.

J: My goodness, big change.

G: Yes, it was a big change. Of course there were probably automobiles, but I don't remember. We certainly didn't have one at that time. And you really didn't need them, you know. El Paso was quite small. It really mushroomed during the Revolution, because, oh, so many thousands, really thousands of

people came to El Paso from Mexico, some even on foot all the way from Torreon. Mr. Warner was one of those. At one time the Warner Drugs Company, Warner Drugstore, he had had a drugstore in Torreon. And he was with a group that purely walked from Torreon. Not everyone, you see, would have buggy and even mules in a town like Torreon.

J: And I guess, depending on where you were and what army went in and took whatever from, maybe you were left with less than other people anyway.

G: Well, and if they took the buggy when you didn't have any conveyance and the trains were not running, or if they were military trains, just used to carry their supplies (coal, and food, and ammunition, and so on) so that civilian travel was not even safe for that matter, there were people who just walked all the way to the border.

Well, we did of course reach here after that trip, and we lived on a house on Virginia Street and went to Bailey School, and would probably have stayed here until things quieted down in Mexico. No one knew that the Revolution was going to go on certainly for 17 years, from 1910, and I'm sure expected it to be over soon. Anyway we would've stayed, I believe. My dad went back, however, just as soon as he got us established and got the house, and we started school. And he went on back by way of Eagle Pass and Cuatro Cienegas. Still no train from Juarez. But my older sister was taken ill, very seriously ill. As a matter of fact, she had a burst appendix. Now [my sister] Mrs. Reynolds and I have remembered that she was very sick at

times, in very great pain. But you didn't know what was wrong in a place like that, so we just didn't realize; and nothing you could do about it anyway, I suppose. Well, I'm sure that a competent doctor had examined her and said that it was an appendix and she needed to be operated on. Of course, these were a long time ago, and possibly even in the United States these things happened. Well, she was taken very seriously ill, was taken to Rolsten Hospital.

J: Where was that located?

G: Well, my best recollection is...and I believe if I saw the building, I would recognize it, if it's still there. It was, say, between Kansas and Campbell, or Kansas and Stanton, on Wyoming. And I know it was at least three or four stories, because she was on the third floor. And her condition became, well, very grave, because she'd had peritonitis. I believe they did operate, but by then this had spread, this infection. So Mama wired Dad, but the telegraph was cut, so the wire had to go by horseback from Cuatro Cienegas in. So Dad didn't get here until after she was dead. He did arrive and they did hold a funeral. She died on March 19, 1912. And then my mother just didn't want to stay. This was her oldest child, and she didn't want to stay. She wanted to go with dad, so we returned that summer. We went by way of Presidio that time by train to Monclova and Cuatro Cienegas. And the railway ended there, and we again went in a carriage.

J: Did you have any trouble on the trip back? Going back in did you meet up with any armed guards or men?

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G: None whatever.

J: No battles or anything on the way.

G: No. No battles on the way down; no disturbance whatever. We stopped, I believe, only overnight, over one night, and it was at a ranch, abandoned, called La Vibora. And it was supposed to be rattlesnake country, and all the mozos, the drivers, kept the fire going all night. And Dr. Safford's brother Frank was traveling with us going back to Escalon by way of Cuatro Cienegas, Sierra Mojada, and then to Escalon, to try to get the railroad back in operation since it was such a vital...well, it was vital to any industry there in Sierra Mojada. Because, what? You could get yourself out in a buggy and you could carry a few supplies in a wagon, but ore had to be shipped by train. And when we got there, yes, the trip was uneventful entirely, but our life there in the next two years, which were 1911 and '14, was not uneventful. [Chuckles]

J: What experiences did you go through then?

G: Well, by then of course Orozco had rebelled against Madero. And then, General Victoriano Huerta had taken over the presidency by a palace coup. (We would call it that; as a matter of fact, it was in the castillo of Chapultepec), and imprisoned Madero and his vice President Pino Suarez and later shot them. They applied what they called in Mexico the ley fuga, which is "shot while trying to escape." I remember pictures in the newspaper, that cars were open a great deal. They had cloth, canvas tops, and they rolled it back, they rolled down. So they had a picture in the papers Well, by

then, of course we had Carrancistas and Orozquistas operating in this part of Chihuahua and Coahuila. Now, Sonora was more or less dominated by an army, the troops of general Obregon, so I don't believe that Venustiano Carranza's troops were in there. And of course, in the south was the Pancho Villa of the southern states, Emiliano Zapata. I only mention him in passing, because of course we didn't live in that part of Mexico, so we don't know too much about it other than that. My second cousin's parents, that would be Rafael Barrios' daughters' children (there were three girls), were left orphans. Both their father and mother were blown up in a train during Zapata's day down in that part of Mexico. So they had problems. But he was the Pancho Villa of that southern area.

And of course, when we got back on home, there we found that the house had been looted. Now, we had nothing but the kitchen stove, which was a big wood burning stove, you know, and a dresser with no drawers, and that was that! But even the bathtub was gone. But papa retrieved [the piano]. Some friend had rescued the piano, you know, from looters--just taken it to his house. And that way if we got back, we got our piano back; if not, at least the looters didn't. And I know that dad sent for more furniture. But we had some beds from probably locally, from somebody, because we did have beds. But for a while we didn't have anything in the kitchen other than the stove, and had to wait until mama could get cooking utensils and so on. And during that time we were eating at the bachelor's mess where they had the Chinese cook, and he cooked

for the engineers when they were there. Engineers came only as consultants, but there would be a mechanic or two, something like that, they had a Chinese cook.

And we settled down there. There [was] no school, because of course there was no civilian government, no municipal government, and probably no pay, and probably the teachers would've been afraid anyway. So the schools were closed. So Papa sent for a teacher from Torreon for us, Jesusita Cuellar, very nice lady and very religious, and she promptly organized these catechism classes, because of course, there was no school for anybody. And I believe there may have been a priest, but some of the time there probably wasn't. Because they, the revolucionarios on the whole were anti-clerical, so a priest was not always safe, so I doubt if there was one. I do remember mother working on getting donations from the merchants and so on to bring one, so I don't believe that there had been one. So the children were just growing up who no schooling and no religion up to when Jesusita organized these catechism classes. We had to walk down the railroad track to the town, which was maybe three or four miles, for the classes, but the children were very well behaved. They sat on the floor, because this is one of those old churches that the Spaniards built, you know, with stone floors and no pews. And we'd watch for, always, for men on horseback, because by then, if a man was on horseback, he was a revolucionario of one army or the other, because no one else had horses. And we would then get on the far side of the embankment, railroad embankment, you know, and lie down and

keep low until they passed. We just never felt too safe about them.

They must have left Papa a horse though, because he would have to ride horseback to the mines, it was too great a distance. And they were interested in businesses continuing, because of course that kept the people working and also they needed the revenue, you know, where would they make these prestamos if you weren't operating? [Chuckle]. And so they let Papa keep a horse. You asked me about my life before the Revolution. Well, I would go with papa to the mines. I'd ride on the back of his horse, and just ride down on the ore bucket, there were no cages. You know, they put planks on the ore bucket and you stood there and held on to the cable and went down to the mines. But he was allowed to keep a horse, you know, to ride and supervise the mines. And this was rather a quiet time. Huertista troops were there, and we had no disturbances really. The captain in command was the one who would send for Dad, often just tell him to come see him, and Papa would go. And my mother used to send me along, because she felt that they wouldn't harm a man who had his children with him, you know, one or more of his children with him because they weren't uncivilized, you know. But she would send me along. And I would sit in the buggy and then he would go in to see the captain. And I remember Dad saying, "Now, be very quiet, and he didn't need to, I think I was paralyzed. [Laughter]. But, often though, Dad went by himself.

And a Mr. Conklin who was there, superintendent of mines

from some other company (Mr. Conklin later lived here in El Paso; I wish I could remember his first name), he played the piano, and so the captain enjoyed these command performances. He'd have Mr. Conklin play the piano, one he had requisitioned from some local resident. And he enjoyed also to have a drink with them, and he enjoyed telling them that he didn't like americanos, and he was going to shoot them before he left. So Papa was on notice. Now, Mr. Conklin, of course, was by himself there, and he just quietly slipped away--which a man alone could, you know, just ride a horse and leave. Of course Papa was in a different position, and he was still there when the Carrancistas were coming. And it was known that they were coming. And they were fixing the train, the railways that came, 'cause they were coming, a reasonable force--not the thousands that they looked like to us, but there were several hundred and with, of course, their horses and so on, and they were coming by train. They were having to fix the track and the bridges, as they came. So the captain had warning that they were coming and he was going to be outnumbered. And when they reached the town though, he came by the house looking for Dad, but Dad was not to be found. Isabel told him that he didn't know where Mr. Gates was. And papa was hidden under a pile of mesquite wood [chuckles] in our shed, because he had told him [he would shoot him] and he had meant it.

J: He went looking for him. [Laughter]

G: He was looking for him on his way out of town. And that's the battle we saw. My sister and I were stationed then, we got up

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in the attic window to watch as they came, the Orozquistas, the colorados.

J: And this was against Huerta's army?

G: Against Huerta. He had rebelled against Madero, but then Huerta had taken over for Madero, so they were against Huerta. And they were quite a few, and they were of course riding, they were on horseback by the time of course, the train came into town, but that was probably, as I say, there or four miles away. And then they came riding through our compound there on horseback and shooting, and you could see bullets thud against the adobe of the wall. Our house had a wall around it, very high wall, about, oh, seven feet, six feet high; and then cactus, big, the big, big, cactus--we don't see any of it here. But it can grow as tall as a tree. And it had cactus on the inside around the wall. That's a very effective barrier, believe me! But anyhow, I remember the bullets thudding against the adobe, and the men riding, galloping by. And they went shooting ahead at whatever they saw, or even if they didn't see anything, or anything that moved. And we heard later they had caught up with the captain and that they had shot 'em. they didn't take prisoners--they simply shot people. And if they didn't shoot 'em then, they took them back to the cuartel and shot 'em later.

J: Were you ever a witness to any of those things? I know you saw the battle, but firing squads or anything like that.

G: No, no, this would've been down there. As a matter of fact, that's when they raided the bachelor's quarters, we did see the

poor Chinaman, you know, in his orange and black striped shirt and his apron still on, and he was there for just a minute. He was out running the horses, but of course they caught him and took him on down to, you know, headquarters. They simply requisitioned a house down in Esmeralda and that was headquarters--"You leave, and I'll come in." And they took the Paymaster out of the office, they took him prisoner, and would've taken his brother, Antonio Herrera, who was the bookkeeper, but he managed to go out the back way or something and hid.

J: This was the paymaster for the AS&R Company?

G: For the AS&R company, yes. They were in the office. They took Jose Herrera and shot him. I did see later in the day his body and the body of another, someone else, a friend of Dad's. They came in front of our house on a buckboard, and little boy son of one of the dead men was sitting on the seat with the driver and crying. I just can see the little guy. And of course, all on earth that, the crime that they had committed, this is Antonio and Jose Herrera, was that they were nephews of Venustiano Carranza. And that was all it took.

J: Was your father harassed in any way?

G: Yes. At that time, yes. He attempted of course to intervene there, and this was right in front of our house. By then of course Mama had joined [us]. We were down on a side porch, not in the attic window, but we were on a side porch of the house watching, and my mother was there and a couple of the servants, and we saw Papa go out. There were just solid men on horseback

between our house and the office--really a large number of 'em. And when they took Jose Herrera prisoner, Papa came out of the office to try to intercede for him, and they turned their guns on Dad. He was just standing there, and we just dropped down on our knees and prayed. But there was something I guess about Dad, a commanding... It was something about him, because why they didn't just shoot him, I don't know. But because he spoke Spanish to them, maybe that was it.

Anyhow, he wasn't able to reason with them about Jose at all. Now, about the Chinese cook, they told him he'd have to go see the commander, which he did. He borrowed a horse, I'm sure, 'cause it was a white horse--and I don't know whose it was--and went down to intercede for this Chinaman, Chinese cook. And they did turn him loose, but on condition that he'd leave town on the next train. But really all they wanted was to ransack his quarters, because they [were] reputed to have some money. I'm sure he did have some, 'cause they didn't bank it, you know, there was no bank there. And that's really all they wanted. But in the case of Jose Herrera, of course, he was of the enemy. So, we were frightened. And I still remember Mother, thought, that day going calmly into the kitchen to fix lunch for us and for the people who'd lost their cook, 'cause he'd been taken prisoner.

J: She was really strong. "Life goes on. I have to cook lunch."

G: Life goes on, we have to eat." And during that time, when the Orozquistas were there, we had a French doctor, the company, I believe they were required to maintain a physician, a doctor

for their men. And it wasn't too desirable a job, so I think you got some rather odd...you know, it had to be an adventuresome soul, at best. And our doctor was a Frenchman, and his name was De Medici de Baron. He claimed to be a descendent of Catherine De Medici, and of course no way to prove that. But he made a mistake of...he'd go down to the cantinas in town, you know. Now, of course, at El Volcan, where we lived, there were no gathering places whatever, so normally it was a quiet place, and no disturbances of the kind that you would have where there's saloons and so on. Well, he would go into town and somehow made an enemy of the captain, Mancha. And this Captain Mancha would come riding up and ride around our house and the house where he lived, which was the bachelor quarters shooting and yelling. And we'd all lie down on the floor and blew out the lamps. And of course the doctor began to really believe he meant it. So you know, he would stop going to town and he kept a very low profile there, you know. But then the captain, this Capitan Mancha would come pounding on our door looking for him. So Dad decided to get him to leave.

And the way they did that, the company had some handcars, the kind you see a railroad repair crews using.

J: Those pump. Yes.

G: Pump. But they had gasoline motors on them to use because while the track was repaired. And the trains were running, but just whenever it suited the military and for their use, and that was it. And so in order to have reliable mail and that

type thing, why the company had these flatcars with the gasoline motors. And the mines were up in the foothills high above the town so that if you put the handcar on the track up at the mines it would coast all the way through town without starting the motor. So that's how the doctor got out of town. And after passing the town why they could start the motor and he could go on to Escalon and on.

And then it was in that type of conveyance of that type of train car with a motor that Papa had to go to Torreon to answer some charges filed against him by some disgruntled employee; although, you know, he'd done everything in the world for them that he could and shouldn't have had an enemy in the world. But someone filed charges with the headquarters there, a General Bravo. So Dad had to go answer the charges, and Mother came later and brought her mother with her. She stayed for a visit with her brother, he lived in Torreon. And then she brought her mother with her and our grandmother stayed with us.

Then this next time things were reasonably quiet, although there was no more school, no. Jesusita went back to Torreon. And certainly no catechism classes. We stayed mostly just around in El Volcan. Isabel of course was the one who did the marketing, so there was really no reason to leave. We just had a rather quiet time of it. A priest did come and we'd go to church, but of course you had a coachman with you. But you didn't wander around at all. And Mama continued our schooling. She wasn't a teacher, but she did the best she could. And that was the way we lived until sometime in 1914. Because in April

of 1914 American troops occupied Veracruz. And after that, Americans were not welcome and they were not safe. Now the attitude definitely changed. That I believe would be when Mr. Arnold [decided to come on].

And by then of course Villa was really in power. He and his forces had defeated Orozco and killed him and they were the power up in this northern part. His headquarters, I believe it may even have been in Juarez, because he certainly was in Juarez. And they had had a battle, you know, for Juarez, the Villistas, you know, when they came in. And the government troops, whoever the government was at that time, were allowed to come across into the United States and were transported through the United States to some point where they could go back to Mexico City in safety. Now they had to leave their arms behind. But this is historically true, the United States let the [Federal Army through]. They would have been just slaughtered if they'd stayed, if they'd had to stand their ground there. Now there was a battle, and I believe bullets even hit the White House Department Store. But they were hopelessly outnumbered and would've been just [slaughtered], because as I say, they didn't take prisoners. Now if you were of the opposing army you were gonna be shot when they captured you, so that ended it. So they were allowed to just leave their arms behind and come over into the United States, and were transported from here to some point in Mexico where they could safely [cross]--probably over someplace in Sonora. There's something on that, I'm sure, in your records.

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J: I can't remember the details, but I think Douglas or Agua Prieta.

G: Prieta. It was something in Sonora, because that was not Villa territory. Well, after that we did get a telegram, Papa got a telegram from the State Department advising him to leave by the next train available. And we did come, then, by train. Now we rode in a caboose on that little branch line, because it had no passenger accommodations. But amazingly, on the main train here to Juarez we had Pullman.

J: So you went from Torreon, then, at that time?

G: No, we were still in Sierra Mojada, and that's where Papa received the telegram telling him to leave and get his family out.

J: And you went from there on the caboose to where?

G: Escalon, and there got this railroad here that comes to Juarez, and it had Pullman. And [it] cost papa \$4,000 pesos for tickets, but they were Villa pesos. He printed his own money in Chihuahua. It was worth about a cent apiece up here in the United States, if that. And so we were even comfortable. The only thing was in, on that trip, of course we had a military escort. As a matter of fact, trains had military escorts for many years after that. It was a gondola, is that what they call them? Those half railroad cars. And they had a big 4 X 4 in each corner and wooden planks across the roof, and soldiers rode on those.

J: And those soldiers would be of the government in power at the time?

G: Well, in power at the time; or Villistas, if in Villa territory. Now believe me, he recognized no one but his own. So you didn't feel too happy, too easy, even with the escort. But then it was an escort, and I believe that there was some arrangement made diplomatically for the Americans to be allowed to leave. Although during that time it occurred that Santa Isabel massacre of 18 Americans. It was between Chihuahua City and in the mountains there, Santa Isabel is in there someplace. And there somebody just took them off the train and shot them. They were employees of some mining company. But we apparently were to be allowed because there was certainly no incident on this train, other than that we were sidetracked--you know, just put on the side track, because the military trains, his army was going south then to take Mexico City. He was going to be President, I suppose. And so his army was on the way south and they would side track you. And one time overnight, we simply went to sleep and woke up in the same place. I don't really know exactly how long the trip took, but certainly it was slow, and we began to run out of food on the train.

But I remember those troop trains. They had, you know, box cars with men and horses and some coaches, passenger coaches. I suppose the officers rode them, and their ladies. But the flatcars would have the poor soldaderas and goats and chickens and the children and so on, on there. Course, the trains didn't run very fast. The road beds were such that even later, in later years when things had quieted down and so on--of course they nationalized the railroads, you know, the

government took it over and they brought in some new engines--but they couldn't run them over 20 miles an hour because the railroad tracks were in such disrepair that if you ran a train fast it derailed. So anyway, soldaderas were just in the flatcars. You know, they may perhaps have been there by choice, but I think it was an incredibly harsh life. They couldn't live very long--that's true for sure. But they were very necessary because they did the cooking and they did the stealing for food. Not all of it, of course; I suppose some of it was issued to 'em or the men procured it. But they did the cooking and the laundry and so on for the troops.

J: And they fought at times, too.

G: And at times they fought. During Villa's time they were called Adelitas, because there was a song: "Si Adelita se Fuera conmigo," and it became very popular. Like Lady Marlene during the war. You may not remember, but the German Army sang that "Lady Marlene" a lot, which by the way is a very pretty song. But anyway the Adelitas they called these women, the army women, in Villas' day.

But it was, as I say, it was a quiet trip. We just went along, had to wait until the military trains went by, and then they would make another start again, and then stop again and so on. Villa then was on his way down to Mexico City, but he was defeated by Obregon twice, at Celaya and Guanajuato. And after that he was not a really organized army anymore, but they continued to operate. And even after he died, why there were Villistas roaming around, although they may have been some

other kind. But then men had learned to live just with a horse and a gun, and have probably no place to go back to. So they kept that up--pillaging and raiding. And we were, of course, frightened when we got to Juarez. It was at night. And you weren't allowed to take money out of the country--that is, the pesos. And so I don't know how many Papa had and any jewelry or anything like that wasn't safe. And the trains came across. You didn't have to get off in Juarez, they came across to the Santa Fe station. I think it's down on South Oregon. It's not really a station now, but it's a freight stop there. And it's still there. But they came across the river, the bridge, the whole train.

But they got on to inspect, you know, and these were Villa officials. And there were a big bunch of them and they were questioning everybody, and of course you weren't allowed to bring any money across, which I don't know that we were. But we did have small bundles tied in handkerchiefs of valuables, you know, to get them across, that we had, to bring them with you. Because your luggage, while they had a baggage car, you had no idea you'd ever retrieve it. You know, you may never see it again. And that's when they stopped at our seat. And Mama's little Santo Nino was wrapped in a shawl. My sister was holding it, and they wanted to know what that was. So really, just they were frightening, you know. But they didn't hurt anybody really, not on the train. You were just glad to get across and rid of 'em. And amazingly they let the luggage car come over the next day. Not that night, 'cause it was late.

And so then we came and lived only a short time, I believe, on North El Paso, but then we moved to Campbell Street and went to St. Joseph's Academy.

J: This was in 1916?

G: This would be 1914, late '14. And we enrolled, then, at St. Joseph's Academy, which is a predecessor of Loretto Academy, the Sisters of Loretto. Well, I graduated from Loretto, (but it was then on North El Paso, 700), and we lived on North Campbell. And it was just strictly a girls school, but because we had no other way to...you know, my brother was then small but it was time for him to start I guess first grade or maybe it was kindergarten. And they let Enrique Creel, who by the way was a Terrazas grandson from Chihuahua, they let him go to school, the Sisters did, and my brother, just because, well, we didn't have any other place to take him, and we had to take him. My sister [and I] would walk to school, and we could take him with us.

J: Were they the only two boys, then?

G: They were the only two boys, he and Kike Creel. We stayed here. Papa went back, of course, to Sierra Mojada, but conditions were not such then that you could [go back]. Villas's people were just marauders by then, in small towns. Now a larger city was reasonably safe. But small towns, or the mining [areas], you know, just wasn't. So we stayed here and moved out to Douglas Street. And we had a car, we drove a car. And I know I drove it and they didn't have the regulations they do now, because I certainly wasn't sixteen. But anyway, I

still went to St. Joseph's. Then my sister married in 1918. And after her marriage, probably a year or so later, her husband, who was with the Seventh Cavalry (he was a dentist, a lieutenant with the Seventh cavalry), after the 1918 Armistice, of course he left the army and he went to Torreon to practice. He had the opportunity, found out through my mother's brother, that a Dr. Coleman was retiring, going back to Indiana, and he could take over his practice. So Bill and my sister went down there to practice dentistry. And then is when my mother moved to Gomez Palacio, because she still could not go back to Sierra Mojada. It was too unsettled and the house was completely...you know, it had been looted again, there was nothing in it. They had even stripped the bark off the trees and they all died. Because they had their horses in the yard, and the horses of course eat the bark off the trees. So she had a house in Gomez.

I went away to school, left to boarding school in Nashville, Tennessee. And I didn't go back until...well, I was 18, so it was 1920. And Papa met me in St. Louis and we came on down to El Paso and then into Mexico. And at that time the train still ran only in the daytime. It wasn't safe. And by then there was no such thing as Pullman; they were just old coaches and in a terrible state of repairs. Some of the seats were gone and some of the windows broken. And you had to get there very early because there were no reserved seats. You just took what you...you know--first come, first served. And they were terribly crowded. And it was on that trip, going

down to Gomez--Gomez is just across the Nazas river from Torreon, so you went to Torreon by train and then by streetcar over to Gomez--that I saw a couple of men hanging from telephone poles. I don't know how long they'd been there.

J: What did you think when you saw them?

G: Well, the conductor was very matter of fact about it. He came by and pointed them out, nothing unusual about it, I suppose. They were going on, you know. As I say, there were no quarters given. You just weren't supposed to be caught anywhere. And then they fought among themselves, too. You had no idea just who those poor guys were. They may have been some more of the same, and that was how they ended up. And when we got to a station north of Torreon, it was dark then. Well, we stayed in Jimenez, which is south of Chihuahua. The company maintained the houses at these stopping places because the train stopped at night. And they had houses rented, I suppose, and had beds and a caretaker. So we would spend the night. And then the next day, of course, we went on into Torreon.

But it was night before we got there, and north of Torreon we reached a station called Conejos. And there was no station agent--he was not there--and the wires were cut, telegraph wires. And this was a bad sign. This is in 1920. So the conductor and the troops got out and they walked ahead of the train to make sure there wasn't a roadblock or the track torn up or something, because they would just tear up a piece, a section of track, and then the train would be derailed or have to stop, and then they could get on and rob it--which went on.

Probably the troops were some deterrent, but you weren't really sure about that. Anyway, that's how we got to Torreon. And then things had settled down some of course by then, so that Dad felt that we could go back to Sierra Mojada. And sold the house in Gomez and we packed up all the furniture and had the Dodge. Our Dodge that I had driven here in El Paso was transported to Sierra Mojada, and I drove in Sierra Mojada. And I'm sure that people, the local people, were amazed. Many of them had not seen an automobile, period, then; certainly a girl driving one was unheard of. And Isabel was still there.

J: After all those years.

G: Our Isabel, that I had trailed along behind in my bare feet before I ever started school. And he was so fond of me that here I was 18, and he wouldn't go home until I came home. He worried over me, you know. But life was not unpleasant. We had horses again and I could ride over the hills unattended. And there were a few people, you know; there was a little social life. Some of it centered around the school. The school was open with only one teacher, but my brother attended it. I played the piano for the school functions.

And one night that we had been up at the school to play the piano for some function, we heard that that night the Villistas had raided lower down, but they didn't come to [Sierra Mojada]. They would just hit and run--you know, come in and loot the stores and steal what they needed and could carry. And of course if somebody got in their way, they'd shoot them. But they didn't go looking for trouble. You

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didn't know if they were many or just a few.

But life was pleasant and I [was] of course young, and you can enjoy lots of things. Some of the families had come back that we knew and we visited, and as I say, rode horseback. And then by then of course I was old enough to play tennis with Dad. Dad was a tennis player way until he was 60 years old. But school was just one teacher, you know. And my brother was getting to an age when he needed to go to what I believe would be called high school. So then we moved to Chihuahua City. And he worked there in the AS and R smelter. And we stayed there until 1926, and then moved up here and did not go back to Mexico.

J: After 1926 that was it.

G: That was it. Mother didn't want to. She really didn't. I believe I stayed longer than that, 'cause I stayed with Dad for about a couple of years, 'cause I was having a ball in Chihuahua. Anyway, that's when we moved to El Paso and did not go back. And later Dad came on up here, stayed.

Louise Gates
December 15, 1978
Tape #2

J: The first thing I wanted to ask is, when you got here in 1926 for the last time, was all of your family here then at that time, did they all settle here at that time?

G: My sister, Mrs. Reynolds, was still in Torreon. She had nine children, and of those children the oldest was born in El Paso, and the youngest. And that interval she lived in

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Torreon.

J: I see. But the rest of you were here, then.

G: Yes, we were here. So that would be my brother and my sister Tula Garnand, Mom, Dad.

J: Well, by that time of course, you were through with all your schooling, is that correct?

G: Yes, I was

J: Did you begin to work at that time when you got here in town?

G: I went to the International Business college, which was in the building that is at the northwest corner of Stanton and Texas. And up on possibly [the] fifth floor, I believe, was the International Business College. Because I had graduated from Loretto but I didn't have a thing in the world to offer the business world, and so I went there to take shorthand, typing. And from there I went to work in, I believe, six months.

My first job was with the Ben Hines Lumber Company which was at 1600 Texas Street, and it was the Hines Brothers, Emmett and Edward. Emmett Hines moved away. Well, I believe we began to feel the crunch, you know. Now the crash we know was in '29, of the Depression; you know the stock market crash was October 1929. But I can't really attribute the fact that the Hines Lumber Company had financial difficulties to that. There was some other reasons for it. But in any case, Mr. Emmett Hines was the president, and he got into financial difficulties, and the Tri-State Association of Credit men (they were in the Caples Building) was named by the creditors to liquidate the assets and recover what they could for the

creditors and so on. And so that job of course was in jeopardy. But while I was there, I decided well, I'd better learn to do all of the work, and went into the bookkeeping part. So, when the Tri-State was operating it, they retained me and laid off the other employees, because I could do [the work], besides the fact that I could speak Spanish, which has always been important here, there's so many customers here. And then later Mr. Edward Hines went into business here in El Paso, and as president. He died I think two years ago, and the Hines Lumber Company still exists.

But I can't say that the Depression had anything to do with that. The effects of the Depression I don't believe were felt here until later in the '30s. Of course the big blow was the closing, you know, the bank moratorium, and then everybody knew something. They felt that, and I imagine businesses felt it very badly. I wasn't as much aware. By then I had gone to work for...and this would be interesting because it was a business partnership, and Mr. Bus Gillette of the old Gillette family was one of the main members of that. And he married the widow of Dr. Safford's son, Dr. Safford, Jr. I don't if his name was actually Junior, but he was the younger Safford, and he later died. Bus Gillette is, oh, in his 80s now I'm sure, anyway, he's still here, and it was a very old family in this area. Anyway, that folded, and that was by then Depression.

J: Did your family have a hard time during that time? I know things were scarce and what have you, but how did you get along?

G: We got along. It was difficult. I was never without a job. Of course my brother was going to UTEP by then. He graduated from Cathedral High School and was going to UTEP. And he had an eight hour a night job at Lind Air Products and going to college. And of course I was working and the Gillette Company folded, so I had to find other work. But the Tri-State Association Credit men helped me. They were no doubt very busy since they were in the business of liquidating companies that got into trouble. And I worked part time for a while, and then had a job with the Rogers Hoyt Furniture Company, which was catty-corner from the main post office on Stanton and Mills. But we had bought that home on North Campbell, 1611, my dad had. And I will say this. Mr. Roosevelt was elected President and the country was in such financial straits. People were in soup lines and jobless, and it was of course much more difficult in the larger cities and they had felt the effects I believe a couple of years before we did. And then too, here things are cheaper. In Juarez, the exchange was two for one, and there was a real savings in going to Juarez to buy some staples like sugar, coffee, beans, that type thing. It isn't now. I think you'd pay as much for beans over there or more, but that wasn't true then. And so of course I think we used that quite a bit. And managed even on what sounds like ridiculous salaries now, but it bought a whole lot more--\$15 a week.

And Mr. Roosevelt among his programs, one was the HOLC, Home Owners Loan Corporation. I know that now there have been

so many programs for helping people come out of Washington that we're about to strangle in them. But there weren't any during the Depression. There was no unemployment. You lost your job and that was your last dollar. And there was no welfare, no federal welfare, and no really statewide welfare. There was a local old folks home, you know, where really indigent people...well, they didn't let people just die in the streets, you know. And no doubt there was something for children, orphans. But they had to be very needy people and it was a very small type of thing so that it wasn't anything that anybody [could] resort to. So when I say that somehow it wasn't too bad, I am talking about someone who somehow was working all the time.

And through this HOLC, the payments on our home, of course the mortgage company was holding the paper, and they would've been impossible to meet, utterly impossible to meet. But if it was your home, now you weren't entitled to this particular type of loan unless it was your home or your farm where you lived and made your living. But that program was great. Because I remember that it cut the payments to \$10.73. And this'll give you an idea of how well I remember, how important that was. It simply stretched it out then, and the government no doubt guaranteeing it, and stretched it out over a great many more years, but jumping from \$70 a month, which you couldn't possibly get hold of because we didn't make that much. Well, it was great. So of course we could keep the home. You did a lot yourself. I remember painting the rooms and so on. You

simply didn't hire to [get] things done.

It must have been of course extremely difficult if you really had no job. I don't know what people did. I just didn't know anyone like that. I know that the employees there with the Rogers Furniture Company, were...the loan sharks had a stranglehold. It was just pitiful, really, because they didn't even know what they finally paid back. They didn't. And you couldn't get those people to give a statement. We had a very valuable employee, Jesus Reyes, who later had a venetian blind business of his own on Yandell--just a really super type of employee there. You know, the kind who could refinish furniture. And, well, they would wait for him on payday just right around the corner, and they had driven his car right off way from his home, and he was just about to lose his mind. And you could not go, I'm sorry to say this, but these people, that type people, would have to go to the doctor with the money in their hand or the doctor didn't see them. Now, I certainly didn't have that happen to me, but they would need to go to the doctor and they'd have to have the...it wasn't a great deal, I'm sure that the doctor's fees were much more reasonable. But they had to have the money. So they'd go borrow it at the loan shark.

J: well, how did these loan sharks get their money? I mean, who were they?

G: Well, I do know there were some Briar brothers. This was the one that I remember particularly in the case of Jesus. Because since he was a valued employee and a very good person and we

just thought there, my employer and I, that we'd just take his debt, find out what it was, and pay it off and then we could deduct so much from his salary. But do you know that we couldn't get those people to give you a statement. You know, say, "Well, he owes this much right now." I would try, but you see they just didn't. They just kept him paying five dollars a [week], you know. Oh, they'd go out of their way to get a dollar a week. But they'd keep on getting it as long as the guy lived. That was the principle of it. And then they'd just lend him some more. And they were afraid of them. They'd say. "Oh, no, no, senorita, I can't. I don't want them to get mad. 'Cause then next time I have to go to a doctor..." That's the only place they could go get some money, and they were afraid they wouldn't let them have it. So they never even...they just kept on going in there with their whatever a week, you know. As I say, it might even have been just a dollar a week, but they just kept 'em constantly in their debt. And it was difficult, if almost impossible, to get a really up to date statement so that you could say, he could say, "Well, I'll pay it today. How much is it?"

J: Was that pretty widespread?

G: Yes, I'm afraid that it was. Now, I just happen to know that particular firm because I dealt with them in this case. And we finally, by threatening... Well, as a matter of fact, I believe it was about then that Texas (simply timed a little late, but and probably this happened in other states, too), they passed some type of usury law, you know, where it couldn't

exceed so much a year, whatever it is. But at that time it would exceed, they'd pay a hundred percent interest on the original amount because they never did quit paying. Of course, they'd borrow in the meantime. But they'd have to borrow. And so, yes, there were some hard times.

As I say, I always worked, and then as soon as my brother could, he found a job. And of course he worked many places before he found this Lind Air job which was a steady one but a hard job. Eight hours, ten to seven in the morning, you know. But you didn't ask, like for people who are going to work now, you didn't ask, "When do I get a vacation?" Now there were no such things as pension plans. I believe the Civil Service [had a pension plan]. And of course that was a job that was [really sought after]. There were not as many as there are now. In fact, in proportion to the working force, a very small portion [were] employed by the government. It got to be more and more and more later. As you know now we have a lot of 'em. But they were very desirable jobs because of all the things there are. In the first place they paid better, and they did have a pension. And of course hospitalization was nonexistent--insurance, that type of policies. Now the railroads had pension plans, but I don't know that anybody had any hospitalization type of thing. You just were on your own, and this was something else again.

Now there were professional men, men who had all the business and so on, that drove what they called jitneys. Now that would be their own car. You know, they were left with an

automobile in serviceable condition. And they were paid...they even called the dime, the ten cent piece, a jitney. For a dime you could get a ride from let's say... well, we lived on North Campbell. It'd be 25 cents I guess from here, further away. And they just drove people, they used them as taxis, and they were called jitneys, because they were a dime. And you'd just stand on the corner and they'd drive along and pick people up. Of course you got so they had a route, sort of. And here were business people and some professional men. And one of those men, I wish I could remember his name, but his wife went to Hotel Dieu. But I'm not singling out Hotel Dieu, I'm sure the same conditions existed in the other hospitals. And his wife had had a baby, and he had to go every night with what he had taken in that day and pay on the bill. You learn the value of a dollar, you really do.

We walked to work, of course, It was really no hardship and even be good for us. You know, from North Campbell right in the area there, the high school, you know, this side of the block, down to town, Rogers Hoyt which was on Texas Street. That's no walk at all. And then though to go back I would take a bus, which was a Mesa bus. You went over to the plaza, they all took off from the plaza, and ride home. But we had a car. It was a Willis Night, a large car. This money began to be just what I made, and that's it. So, it got too, well, a little bit too expensive. You know,, it began to need repairs. And even though you could get repairs cheaper it just was not worth keeping, particularly since we did live within walking

distance from our church (we went to the cathedral then) and from downtown. And everybody was in good enough shape. You know, my parents were very active, really.

Daddy, my father died in 1944, the day of the Battle of the Bulge. Because he had been listening to the news on radio--no television naturally--but on radio. And my sister, Mrs. Reynolds, had of course moved up here after Torreon. When her oldest boy was about eight, I think about eight years old (no, maybe older), he came up here and went to school one year, lived with us. But they moved back up here. And she had, this was in the war, she had four boys in Europe. And two of 'em, the younger boys, one was killed over there. And the two younger were in just plain like you know, 99th Infantry and 82nd Airborne and such as that. Now the older boy was a dentist already. That's Bill Reynolds, Jr. He went in as an officer and was a dentist and presumably would not be in danger. But he's the one that was wounded. He was riding in an ambulance, attached to a field hospital. And they were generally about 15 miles behind the front. They weren't dressing stations in front line type thing, but in field hospitals. And he was riding along in France, some of those roads, with another lieutenant, and they hit a land mine. So of course it blew the ambulance and Bill and Lieutenant Lamar into the air. And when he landed he couldn't stand up because his foot was demolished. And then the Germans came out from the hedge rows, behind the hedge rows, and took him prisoner.

So how I started talking about that is that my Dad

naturally was most interested. Oh, he simply listened to every word about the war. And he heard all the bad news that that was the day of the Battle of the Bulge and the 99th Infantry was right in the middle of it. And perhaps that was what aggravated... He had had a physical. We had a doctor friend, we'd been friends, he had practiced in Torreon, Dr. Jeffro. And he had moved up here And so we were very fortunate, we had Dr. Junper and of course he didn't charge anything. Because of the long friendship just Bill my brother-in-law and my Dad. So my Dad had had a physical, not I suppose as thorough as they are able to give now, but he had had one not too long before that. But that day, he leaned up against the wall, then slid down to the floor and he was dead. Which now I know to be possibly the best way, of course.

But the Depression, yes, was it was difficult. We were younger, of course. And not too many people had money, so you didn't feel too self conscious about having no new clothes and not driving a car, because your friends didn't either. And you managed to have some fun, you know. And my brother had friends up at UTEP. And they all wore corduroy. You know, just as they wear jeans now, they wore these corduroys. And the dirtier they got, the more fashionable they were. (Laughter)

J: It's like today. The more worn out the jeans, the better it is.

G: The better it is. Which was probably a necessity, but it became fashionable. And they congregated a great deal, the college crowd, over at the Rio Grande Bar in Juarez, which was

on the Santa Fe Street Bridge going south there, maybe two, four blocks. And they had nickle beer for the students there. So it was a great place. And you know they had fun--you know, a bunch of college kids and nickle beer. And even that I don't think they did too often, but nevertheless. And of course you walked. You just walked, you didn't ride. 'Cause I remember selling the Willis Night for \$50 and bought an evening dress. Well, it was just sitting there with the tires flat and no money to buy new ones. That was not a very wise thing to do but it was also not a very stupid thing to do.

Since you asked about the Depression, just prior to the '29 and then the '30s on through there for a while, some part of the '30s (I'd have to have the Wall Street Journal tell me where the upturn came), but anyway, through those years, before that had been the Roaring 20s, which everyone has heard of. You know, the Flapper Age and lots of fun. Well, it looks kind of crazy, you know, and doing the Charleston and everything. Oh, the more screwball young people act, the better, you know. It was a really exhibitionist era. Well maybe that's what carried us over well through the Depression. We still were on that high, you know. In other words, you could be light hearted and laugh even though there was very little left to laugh about. Where you'd pay the light bill, but you didn't pay the water bill' but when they threatened to cut off the light, pay the light bill. And it revolved. But you kept the lights on, and you kept the water. It was always, you know, skating on the edge of disaster, but disaster did not strike

our family. Now there were families I'm sure where it did. The breadwinner becoming ill, for instance.

Now my brother was working and I do know that he came up with appendicitis, and I had to make arrangements with Southwestern Hospital. The Crimmon family seemed to be involved in it, running it, whether they owned it outright or it was part of a corporation. But anyway, well, they let you pay so much a week. And the operation was \$200. See, it gives you an idea of the difference in prices that made possible living on small salaries. You didn't live well, and of course you didn't replace anything--like say the automobile or any furniture and so on. And we were not renting, and the HOLC kept us in a home. But it must have been most difficult really, for people who were renting and then had no job. I wonder, I would like to find out, and no doubt you would too, who came to their rescue, since [there] wasn't unemployment and there wasn't the welfare agencies. I suppose that whatever they might have been called at that time, in order to help people to manage through.

J: Were the public works going on here?

G: Now the WPA, that, yes. Works Progress Administration, WPA. Yes, they came in. And with I imagine that came in at the same time as this HOLC did, the Home Owners Loans. And there was another one, NYA, National Youth Administration, and my brother went to work for that. Lyndon Johnson was a newly elected Congressman at that time, and he was in some way involved in it. I know because he came out here to inspect, an inspection

type of thing. And he had gone to work for that NYA. And of course, whatever the salaries [were], they weren't that much, but they were steady. So as far as our family and no doubt, a great many others, things began to look up with those programs. They built roads and these roadside campsites. I know my brother, the NYA, was doing some of those. And so it was a life saver, really, for people. Of course, you had to be young; it wasn't the type of job that...it was out in the sun and pick and shovel type of thing. It wasn't office work. But those programs helped a great deal. And they established some camps. This would be important, I suppose in larger cities. I know there was one up near Mogollon, New Mexico, where young men could go and live and work, and they worked on roads and so on. So that was, I suppose, the stop gap.

Some of what they built was useless, and they built one school building off Alabama or some street like that, that was never put to use, because really it wouldn't pass the [inspection]. But it was better than just giving a check. In other words, they worked for the check. If there was anything handed out [to] anyone not working be for someone who was entirely unable to work, because these programs were for work. They helped a lot, but the man or woman had to go to work to get it. And they didn't work perhaps too fast or too well, but they got out there. And oh, they had cartoons that come out in the paper, you know, about the WPA worker was always leaning on his shovel. (Chuckles) But he had to get out there to lean on the shovel, now; he couldn't just go down to the office and

collect it, he had to get out there. But yes, I'm glad you reminded me of those, because my brother went to work with the National Youth Administration.

And of course from a personal standpoint, you see, we were hard up. I do know that, that you didn't replace things. And then my sister got through the high school and went to UTEP one year. But then that was it. She couldn't afford to go to UTEP, go to college, and she got a job with the Cotton Industries. It was over there near the smelter. I believe that building now belongs to UTEP. Didn't they make an engineering building out of that?

J: I think so.

G: I believe so. And that certainly was a help. And we had been using an icebox--I mean icebox with ice, when we could buy the ice. But since you didn't have all that much to keep, you know, you bought mostly from day to day. Now my aunt, my mother's sister, who had been run out of Chihuahua, by Renteria because he didn't like Spaniards and she was married to a Spaniard. So when he went into Chihuahua he put a train on the track and gave the Spaniards 24 hours to get on it. And the day they were leaving, before they left, and he was eating an apple, and he made 'em a speech. He told them that no hard feelings, but Mexico was for the Mexicans and he didn't want the gachupines anymore. So, here came the poor gachupines to El Paso. The population grew tremendously. Now some of the people of course had money, some of the people who came up here as refugees. Perhaps they had been foresighted enough to get

some of their assets in liquid form and get it out of the country. But, now my aunt, he had a wholesale grocery business, and what could he bring, really, except what cash he had. Because the first thing Villa or any other revolutionary commander did when he went into a town or a city was impound the bank. They took over the main thing, the money (Chuckles), first thing. So of course it wasn't the case of go down and draw out any money, because that's the first thing they did, sew it up.

So they had to come here, and she went to work at the Texas Grand Hotel. I believe it's still there. It was a theater on the first floor. It's on the corner of Campbell, northwest corner of Campbell, and maybe it's a parking lot now. I don't go to town. But she went to work there as a maid. Of course it didn't last all that long. [Her husband] in the grocery business, and as I say, some of the other Spaniards, the ones who had some assets, money someplace, investments maybe, Spain, whatever, they helped each other. And they helped him to open up one of these little corner grocery stores.

J: what was his name?

G: Juan Fernandez. And to begin with, it was down on Santa Fe, South Santa Fe. And then he found a better location at the corner of what is now there on Florence, three something South Florence. And there he operated just one of those corner grocery stores. But they, of course, worked. You know, he had no clerk. He did all the work himself and his wife helped.

And they raised one daughter who was graduated from Loretto and is Mrs. McCammon, Mrs. Bill McCammon, here in town. Wonderful person who adopted twin boys.

But anyway, people managed. Perhaps there were people who died of privation, but I didn't know any. But you see, my mother's sister, who had been, well, raised in the Hacienda de la Parada just like Mama had, she wasn't too proud to go to work as a maid at the hotel, if that's all that you could do in order to live. And I think it made better and happier people, truly. Perhaps looking back on it, it makes it more pleasant. No, I'm not glamorizing it. It was hard. But you certainly had a lot of pride in what you accomplished. You just did. And of course just seeing Mr. Juan Fernandez (and he never did learn to speak English), he ran his little store there and put [his daughter] through Loretto. And by that time, of course things were much more prosperous. She's the age of my sister, around the early 60s. When she was let's say 17 or 18 years old she had her automobile. But he never did move away from there. My aunt wanted to, but he didn't want to. He knew he couldn't operate a store in any other part of town and live profitably. But they were very useful, those little stores. Because people had money enough to buy just day to day--milk, bread, that was a bet seller. And they didn't have refrigeration so they bought from day to day. And those little stores did very well. And this was before the supermarkets.

J: What do you think made you and your brother able to find jobs, as opposed to someone else?

G: Well, as opposed to someone else? Well, just the fact that we worked hard. At the Tri-State Association of Creditmen, when I worked for them--because that was a stop gap from the Hines Lumber job to my next job, because they kept me but they let other people go--well just, it's not hard to guess why. I was doing what two people had done. And it didn't bother me. If anybody thinks that I'm crying about it, I am not. I just was so proud. And I know we were sending out letters, and I could, (and we're talking about a mechanical typewriter, not an electric) address 2500 in a day and get 'em out. Now the letter was, not the letter itself but the address, was to different people, so you had to put your paper in, put the address on and address the envelope--2500 in one day. And take the dictation and write the 110 letters in a day. Well, you just took pride. And you just were doing a lot of work. And so of course when something came up that one of their people they were managing, you know had been bought out by somebody and could operate on their own, had been able to bail out of their slump, well, who do they recommend? Who do they send out? And it goes like that, you see. And I think at that time people were willing really to do a better job because there was somebody, there was a line there waiting for you to falter. And that was a good way to have people make up their mind, "Well I'm gonna do better and more work than anybody, and that way I will be the one who stays and the other person will [not]." And so you did and you kept going.

Now from the Rogers Hoyt job I heard of what was then a

bonanza, which was to go to work either for the federal government, the Civil Service jobs, or the state, or possibly the city. But this was a state job. I think the fact that we were bilingual [helped]. And we didn't have to play it up, but still you were. Now on this job it was very important. It was a secretary to the District Attorney. Roy Jackson was District Attorney then and his secretary was leaving, she was getting married. But you had to have Spanish there. And so, well, it paid \$150 a month and this was really, you know, big money and so on. So, I applied for it and my employer went down and talked to Mr. Jackson, because of course he was in politics you know, and you didn't hire somebody's help away, because that would be bad politics. But to overcome that, my employer went down and told him that he didn't want lose me but he wanted me to have better job, and more than I was earning there. And I went to work for Roy Jackson, and worked twelve and a half years.

And at that time non-support--that would be a man who doesn't support his family while he's living with his family--was a felony. Well, it's not a very practical idea, because you see a felony of course is punishable by a term in the penitentiary. And in a penitentiary he most certainly couldn't support the family. I believe it is now a misdemeanor and can be handled in County Court. But at that time it was a felony, so it was in the DA office. And it was still hard times. That was my job, as it turns out. I did the legal briefs and so on but the big part was the non-support cases. Sometimes Monday

mornings my heart would sink and the stomach turn over 'cause there would be lined up on those benches the wives, with or without children, whose husband had not shown up with the paycheck, or had spent it. And it was a difficult time, yes. I remember some of 'em, the men were working as they used to tell me in el sacate, mowing lawns. But you see, you could get a man to mow a lawn. Now just really it's big business unless you can find a neighborhood boy that's willing or wants to work, doesn't have too much money, [and wants] to work for some. But then of course, whatever he was paid it couldn't, it was less than a dollar a day for doing it. But anyway that was my job, the non-support cases.

I learned a lot, and I didn't always favor women. If somebody is inclined to think that way or would be inclined to think that way, no. I tried to be fair, and also I realized that if you demanded too much you would get nothing. Because all a man had to do was catch a freight train. You know at that time what used to be just hobos rode the rails, the freight trains. But at that time it was just plain people. Many, many other types of men, not hobos, just trying to get from one part of the country to the other looking for work, perhaps for a better climate. Because if you're going to be penniless and homeless, well, don't do it where the snow is two feet deep. So there were really just lots of 'em on each freight. And the employees on the freight trains just ignored 'em and let 'em ride, because what harm were they doing. But you had that problem in dealing with non-support--that is that

if you pushed a man too far, why he could just get a freight and leave, and there was no way to get him back. Because the state of Texas was certainly not gonna spend the money to [do it]. You have to send two men if he was arrested in let's say Los Angeles. That was the mecca. Of course they would go to California. I don't know how much better they did there, but... You'd have to send two men to California and bring him back. And then when he got here you couldn't prosecute him, because why would you do that? Send him to the penitentiary. And so you just did the best you could.

But there was by then a welfare department, because I remember dealing with the ladies from the welfare, caseworkers from the welfare department. And I'm glad of it of course, because so many of those men, while they would lose their way sometimes, you know, on Friday night stop by the [saloon] to have some beer. But many of 'em were really trying but they just couldn't make enough. So by then I know there was a welfare department, 'cause I remember some of the welfare workers. I had to explain that to them, what I just said--that I didn't push them in too far because I felt that something was better than nothing. And it was discretionary. The law had nothing to do with my decisions. It was just a case of you were going to do the best you could for a woman and her children.

J: Was this already then the late Depression years?

G: Late Depression.

J: That's when the welfare started?

G: Started, [yes]. Oh, the attorneys were so helpful. Mr. Fryer, bless his heart. Because, well, in extreme cases, where the man just persistently spent all his money at the ...one of 'em told me one time, and I think that was one of the funniest expressions I ever heard. "Oh, senorita," this would be in Spanish, "I want to go and take care of my family, but se me atraviesa la cantina," (chuckles) as though the saloon came out and stopped him. It moved; he didn't, it moved. So anyway, he worked for the railroad, so he really had a steady job. Just a section hand, but nevertheless. And finally, and this was something else strictly not legal, but you did it and who could find fault with it. And the constable and the low opinion of the JP court. They were very helpful. They'd go out and they'd arrest 'em and he'd be in jail. Well, the idea was, of course, he wasn't doing any good there and you didn't want him to lose his job either. But he'd see a lawyer in the hallway and he'd hire him. And they would all come and see me and tell me, "Now what're we gonna do about Pedro," or whatever. "Well, if you do so and so, why he can get out!" And this as I say now this would be tampering with the legal process, wouldn't it? (Laughs) So it turned out to be more of a collection agency. But we were dealing with hard times, you know. And besides, when you are, you want money immediately. Now due process, supposing that we had gone through it, wouldn't get that family today's food. And this, we're talking about today's food.

Now there were a few non-support cases came in there where

she really was just as much entitled to support from her husband as the poor woman, one who really would have nothing to eat if he didn't contribute. But she had family. But she's just as much entitled to it, but the urgency was not there. And we still had to tend to those, of course. But then those cases you almost have to go through the due process, because otherwise you'd be in trouble. As I say, in the other cases you didn't because their attorneys [took care of it. There was more of] an immediate need. And if they did have an attorney, I remember Mr. Bill Fryer, God bless him, and Frank Galvan (now that's the father of this [one]), George Rodriguez, father of... They would were glad to cooperate, and they'd give him a talking to and put the fear of the Lord in him, and then he'd do pretty good. And in some cases they were separated, and they'd go home and take the money and she would climb all over him. And of course all that did was drive him away. And so I had them bring the money to me and I would give them a receipt, and then she would come and get it and she would countersign the receipt. And this has nothing to do with the law, but it was a practical way to avoid those confrontations, you know.

J: And to insure that they did get the money that they deserved.

G: And to insure that this was every week that they got the money.

J: Did you do this alone or did you have a staff helping you at that time?

G: There was no staff, no; as far as the paper work is concerned, no. But as far as help, heavenly days, yes. I'm speaking of the constable's office and the JP's office. They'd go out and

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find these guys so I could get 'em in. Sometimes of course, if they were employed you can just call their employer, and they were always cooperative. But there wasn't any staff.

J: Gosh, that's a lot of work.

G: Yes, it was work, but it was there to be done.

J: But it really helped the people who were involved.

G: Who were involved. And as I say, it was a judgement type of system. And of course, Roy Jackson concurred in it. He couldn't very well handle it. He was handling criminal cases and so were his staff of Bill Clayton, Harold Long, John Croom who's father had been a judge here. Anyway there were two assistants or three always, and then his investigator. Well, the investigator was generally kept busy with his work. But everybody else was very helpful. The police were, you know, because it was an emergency. It was the Depression and you had people who would be hungry and you weren't trying to put them off to welfare. You see, now so many agencies, whatever they happen to be, just refer you to the welfare. They won't be bothered with trying to get the problem solved in any other way, just refer it to the welfare people. And of course I guess they're better trained. Certainly my training had nothing to do with that. But I just had to devise some system for working.

J: That's really interesting.

G: It is interesting. It worked to a certain extent. And in some cases I had some very, very wonderful experiences and good results. One poor lady, she was such a nice person, with four

children and not a citizen, and she lived in Juarez, was married to a man who had a Civil Service job. And they had been living in Juarez because of course it was cheaper. And then he simply got transferred into New Mexico and then he stopped supporting her. Well, she was not of the jurisdiction of the court here, living in Juarez. And she made efforts through the consulate, the Mexican consulate, to get some support. But they weren't in the business, and I suppose they wrote to him a couple of times and that was about it. And she was entitled, of course, to get a passport and come over here and live with her four children. And he was working for Civil Service and should be supporting her. Mr. Jackson let me have all the time I needed to get her her papers and get her across. And in the meantime of course, we put some pressure on the employers up there, and he was sending money to our office. There again I don't know if you could do that now, but you could then. And of course it was a very rewarding thing to do so.

But I suppose, yes. When to begin with I said, well, the Depression wasn't so bad...yes it was. It was not too bad for us because I always worked. And even if it wasn't too much of a job and even though the job didn't pay well, you could eat. And the Home Owner's Loan made it possible for us to keep the home. And then of course my brother began to work. But he was going to college and then he went to work for that NYA. I suppose then things began to look better for everybody and business of course began to pick up. I'm sure the powers that

be were working hard to get business going again, which the only way to solve poverty is to have jobs. And the banks, of course the First National is the only one that closed and liquidated. The State National of course closed for the moratorium you know, whatever length of time that was. Because of course they were afraid of a run on banks. If one went broke, why the people would simply go and drain the other institutions. Now whether the El Paso National was in existence then or not I don't know, but it certainly was very shortly after that, I remember. And it was on Mesa Avenue across from Kress's in there in that block. And just a small bank. And now look at it.

[PAUSE]

J: You mentioned a little bit about the twenties.

G: Oh, the Roaring Twenties.

J: The Roaring Twenties. And some of the things you were talking about was the wild days and what have you.

G: In the roaring 20s we had Prohibition.

J: What do you remember about that era here in El Paso?

G: Well, in El Paso, of course, we also were a little bit... I'm sure people who do not approve of drinking wouldn't like this expression. I think we were lucky there, too, in having Mexico right across, you know, where it could be obtained. And you weren't supposed to bring it across, but some of our best citizens did--you know, a bottle. And of course some people just purely were in business getting it across I'm sure. Now you didn't get real good liquor, perhaps. But if you were

having a party and needed some liquor, you went to a certain taxi stand and you told so and so, you know, somebody, what you needed. And we operated on trust, heaven knows, gave him the money, and then you would find it in a gunny sack on your front porch. (Chuckles)

J: Well I guess you did, this, right, a couple of times? (Laughs)

G: That it was illegal?

J: Yes.

G: Well, actually what I was doing in the DA office was illegal. Well, many of us, and that's true all over the country, as you know, they later repealed the Prohibition law because it purely didn't work. People were going to get some liquor and it hatched out the mobster era, because they began to deal in it in a big way. And of course that led to this Al Capone and that type of Prohibition king. And since it is lucrative, well we now have it with the marijuana. As long as something is gonna make that type of profit, it's going to attract not the reputable businessman--he already has a business--but the one who, the quick buck artist, the one that wants to make a [fast buck], and [it's] then that it gets rough. And which it did get rough in that era.

J: Was there someone known here in town that was of that caliber, like an Al Capone, that did a lot of rum running, or was it just anybody who decided they wanted to do that that got into that business?

G: Well, I suppose I'm talking about the little penny ante business, you know. There was a place down on South Oregon I

believe something like that, one of those two story tenements. And if you went, it was a really dark, passageway between two tenements. And at the fourth or fifth door down this passageway, there was a boot hanging, like shoe repair type thing. There you knocked on the door, and you could buy it.

J: Was it pretty common? Were there many people that were involved in something like that?

G: Yes. I'm sure, I know there was a place on Alameda called Jessie's Place, and she made beer. And now by then I was not college age and was not, of course, going to college, but of course my younger brother and my sister were of that age, and this place was popular. It was on Alameda and she made beer. Now you know, I would say that as far as the police were concerned--the local, the city police--I think they paid no mind. It was a federal type of thing. And prohibition agents were hard put, you know, to stop all of this, and I imagine it was very difficult. The liquor was not served. I know there was a nightclub in the basement of the Mills building, The Modern, called The Modern and it was THE place. And you took your own bottle and you drank it in coffee cups, you know.

J: So that was the speakeasy here.

G: That was the speakeasy. But they didn't sell it. No, you had to [take] your own. And then they furnished the coffee cups. But now that was a big laugh because anybody probably would know better, but... And at the dances, country club or school dances, some of the college dances at the Women's Club and so on, they did not [serve liquor]. They had the bottle out in

the car. Now they didn't actually take the bottle into those places, but they'd then go out to the car.

J: I've heard from interviews and read that during that time Juarez was a big place to go. They had nightclubs, they had gambling houses.

G: Oh, yes. Right down that main street from the Stanton Street Bridge, there was a casino I guess, and they had chukaluk, blackjack, the whole bit. Everybody just went. And if you wanted to have fun there was nothing like it, because you'd meet people you knew. All you had to do was get over there and everybody you knew was there. Now, you know, it's mostly strangers. Even to the younger people I'm sure it's not the same. The Rio Grande Bar, you know, the one that had the nickle beer. Of course, they had other things, they would serve other liquor, and very fine meals. And then this casino was where Lucia Perez is now I believe in Juarez. And across the street was another very, very [nice place]. And the Central Cafe, that was down further away. As you make a loop from Stanton, at that time there was of course no Cordova, so it was the loop was the...oh, I just thought of something. You will love this. The loop was, go down Santa Fe and come back Stanton Bridge, or vice versa. So there were nightclubs all on in that route, all the way to that main street down there where the market is, the 16th of September or something. And the Central cafe was one of the better places to dance in and so on, and of course they had reasonably good liquor, too. You know, I mean by that you weren't taking any chance on it, it

was straight American, which wasn't good, but it was made there in Juarez. And Waterfill and Fraser, oh boy.

But among the things during Prohibition was the nine o'clock bridge. No doubt in an effort to stop all of this, the Customs or whatever service it is in charge of making the rules for the international bridge there, they would close it at nine o'clock. So everybody had to just dash over madly at five. When I say everybody I certainly don't mean everybody, I mean people I knew. And so many of the people would have to go over right at five o'clock, you see because they had to get back at nine.

J: Right after work. (Chuckles)

G: Right after work. And then they later relaxed that to twelve o'clock bridge. And of course if you got caught over there you had to stay there, you know. But this was the real fun part--that as long as you were in the line, they didn't close the bridge, you know. So all along that line, all along, they would serve. The waiters would come out from...every other place was a bar, and the ones in between were saloons, you know, so they would run out and wait on people, sell it into the cars, you know. 'Cause you had to get in the line, because if there was a gap in the line they'd close the gate at the bridge. So that was the fun part (Laughter)

J: That's crazy. They made their money as you were leaving.

G: Yes, I'm sure they sold more.

J: That one last drink before you hit the line.

G: That one for the road was really something. Yes, El Paso was

fortunate or unfortunate, whichever way you view it from that standpoint, because they did have Juarez. But Juarez was a, just a very respectable place, really. Honestly it was. Everybody, it was just everybody went. There were, as I say, very few places over here. Because, what for? Now later, after national Prohibition was repealed but Texas was still dry, then we had places open up on state line up there. Tom Bershell's, it was half in Texas and half in New Mexico. The line ran right through the kitchen or something, you know. Now that was an interesting thing because you... (Laughs).

J: You drink on one side of the room and you eat on the other.

G: And of course that wasn't the only place, you know. There were several places up there on the New Mexico side. But that I had forgotten about, the nine o'clock bridge and the twelve o'clock bridge. But it was a real blast because in the meantime people would visit, you know, back and forth in the cars, 'cause the line moved slowly. (Chuckles) So the party was just all along the street there. And you know, the Customs people as you went across there, they would take cars apart and they would impound the car if you had any hidden on the car, so that wasn't a good idea. Now People had to maybe have it hidden on their person. In that case it would just be confiscated; you know, if you had it in your pocket they just took it. But if it was in the car, then whammo, the car was kept by them.

J: I heard that there were also sometimes battles between the G-men and the rum runners.

G: Oh, yes. Yes, there really were. And as I say, that type

thing does breed violence. A very fine law enforcement officer [from] an old family, Frank Scotten [worked with] I suppose it was the Custom's people having to enforce it. And they would try to stop it along the river because they'd wade across the river; though there was more water in the river, there wasn't as much of it being taken out for irrigation and the river had not been channeled. So [with] the river full, it furnished more hiding--you know, the salt cedar and so on. But there was water in it. But they'd try to stop it coming across there, because that was a big operation. You know, I mean there'd be trucks go down there. Not go across, of course, 'cause you couldn't drive a truck across the river, but you could park it and then the men, somebody'd bring it over and load the truck. So that was big business and then it went on to Dallas and so on. It was being run into the country. And there was a hay and feed business here that, you know, would put a little feed on top of it. (Laughs)

J: It wasn't all hay and feed.

G: And that's what it was. And Frank Scotten was killed in one of those rum battles down there, fighting and shooting down over there. Because they were trying to stop it, of course. It was just kind of hopeless, but they were trying to stop it. Because it would be brought across all the way down to Zaragosa, Porvenir, and on down to Esperanza, which is near Sierra Blanca, you know. You didn't have to bother with the border right here, it would be all on down the river. And I just know about this Frank Scotten because I knew the family.

He was a very fine police officer, and certainly there probably were others just trying to do their job. But it was just too difficult a thing to do.

As I say, later repealed, and Texas remained dry, and then they relaxed it to bottled goods. You know, no liquor by the drink. Well, that operated this way. Where the Goodwill Industries is now was a place, very nice. The Flores, now the Flores family, they had had the Waterfill and Fraser distillery over [in Juarez]. It's an old family here. Juan Hart, there was a Hart's Mill up there up in the upper river there, and Juan Hart was one of the pioneers here. And the Flores, of course they had Henry and Enrique, and then there were two sisters, their descendants. And of course I think possibly they're both dead now. Yes, I'm sure they are. I know Enrique is, but then they may have some other family here. But very fine people. I know Mr. Flores, Jose Flores, had the Desert Art Center downtown near the State National Bank too. But they had operated or possibly owned outright the Waterfill and Fraser Distillery. And that Goodwill Industries was built for that, it was built as a nightclub. And the liquor store was next to it so that people could buy the bottle. They didn't sell it by the drink but they sold it by the bottle and they could take it in.

J: And they could take it in.

G: And there's one good part about it--that began to bring money into El Paso and also tax money to Texas, which was being lost entirely over in Juarez. Juarez was very prosperous I'm sure at

that time. Well, historically everyone knows now that Prohibition did not work. And in the mountains, if you went to Ruidoso, then there was Heavy's. Now that's the name of the place, Heavy's Place. Well, and they make what I believe is called Mountain Dew. You know, they purely distilled some type of whiskey. We must have had I think an iron constitution (Laughs.). But we didn't have to resort to this bathtub gin type of thing, you know, where it was alcohol really and people were even blinded and so on. No. Because of course why it may have been cut, you know which I'm sure it was. Some of the stuff that was bought here, bottles weren't sealed. Now the ones for instance that you bought at the place where the little boot hanged, the bottle wasn't sealed. So it was probably, it was cut. They could [make] three bottles out of one or something like that, you know. But it wasn't poisonous.

J: That's an interesting time to think about.

G: It is an interesting time to think about. And not just the Prohibition part about it, of course. It's the fact that as I say, people were gay. Now the crash did come, and it did sober people up a lot. But before that it was good times. No war. Remember, no war. And that other war to end all wars had ended. Of course there may have been wars in other parts of the world but not anything that the United States was involved in. So money had come back, businesses. Well, it's before the Depression. But whether it was on paper or not, it was good times. Probably a lot of it was on paper, because stocks could be bought on just ten percent margin. So actually men would

only put up ten cents and buy a dollar's worth of stock. Well, then if the next day it went to two dollars he would sell it for two dollars, and whammo, look at the profit. And of course they were doing that on a large scale. But then when the bottom fell out, the brokerage firms had to call in all of it, all of the stock, because it wasn't paid for. Item one, purely wasn't. Now of course you can't do that there's a law against it, that buying on just a ten percent margin. Can you imagine that? And you could just wait and wait and make a thousand percent, and having put up only the ten cents on each dollar. So that got legislated out.

And so just people did have a very good time. And people began to have more freedom from public opinion. Now we have that now till it's license, you know; more than freedom it has become license. And at that time sure enough you did a great many screwball things, but some were still frowned on and you didn't want to be thought that type person, so therefore that was a brake. Sort of a brake on people going too wild. But I still think that possibly that helped carry us in the Depression, that spirit that we had built up of being gay and laughing if off. But maybe just being more fortunate than other people helped us, and in good health. Not always, though. I had a mastoid operation. But the things didn't cost as much, and you were allowed of course to pay hospitals on a weekly basis, so you didn't have any insurance. And no doubt doctors took losses, because of course [if] the people couldn't pay, well, they just didn't. Because there wasn't much they

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could do about it, really. Unless the person did feel obligated to pay, I suppose there wasn't much for you to make 'em.

J: When you first came here in 1926, to live, did you perceive any kind of special relationship between Juarez and El Paso? I mean, were the two cities friendly, unfriendly?

G: Friendly.

J: You know, how did you see it? I mean, was it any big deal going over there or was it...?

G: No, no. Heavenly days, no. I believe that we all, just as you would for any city, you knew that you stayed more or less on the beaten track, on the main streets. We didn't go off on the side streets and to the outskirts or anything like that. And possibly things were happening there that were bad and so on. But on that, as far as going over there even for dinner and for lunch, why we'd go, women would go to lunch there just like we go to lunch now anyplace. And you could walk down the street anytime, I suppose, and not be molested. I never saw anybody nor was anybody ever in all my groups with the many, many people I went over there with, ever had an argument or any difficulty.

J: Did your family know any families that lived in Juarez? Did you have any relatives?

G: No. Well, my mother's brother moved up there, but this was much later than the period we're talking about. No we didn't know anyone over there, but of course there were many fine families over there. And there was no ill will that I can

remember, and no fear whatever about going. We didn't go anywhere but the main streets and the better places. I don't know what you would have to do after they started opening the bridge all night. Most places there were open till two in the morning. And even if you stayed till two in the morning, well, you wouldn't have any problems with anybody [molesting] you. So there wasn't any particular fear of going to Juarez or anything like that. Of course, traffic was not a problem. No I believe there is, you're a little uneasy about driving over there because there is so much traffic. But at that time it wasn't such a problem.

J: I think I asked you this before concerning when you lived in Mexico. Was the fact that your father was American and your mother Mexican, when you moved here to El Paso was that looked upon as being strange?

G: Yes.

J: You said in Mexico that there wasn't anything strange about it or it was accepted fairly well. Was that accepted here also?

G: Not by everybody, no. really. And I should mention here in passing that at the time they were going to build Cathedral, whatever time that was, my father was actually here. Now that was during the time that he was going back and forth a lot. He would come in, by the way, from some of those trips from San Antonio. I remember going down to meet the train from San Antonio, because that's the way he was coming. They were raising the money for Cathedral. Because of course, the influx of people from Mexico, most of them Catholic, had created a

problem. For instance, Holy Family Church was a small chapel on North Oregon Street in about the 700 block, and that's where so many of the...oh, I hate to use the word class now, but the Mexican people who had come here, you know, such as the Terrazas, the Creel, oh, so many of them, they would go there to that Holy Family. And then they built the Holy Family Church and school that's on Main Street I think now. And they came, I know, to Dad to ask for money for the building fund for Cathedral. And they mentioned to him, and I think this was very ill advised, that they had to get a church that would permit the Mexicans to come too. So yes, you did run into it here, I would say just about like there used to be in east Texas or there.

J: Did you have any problems at all?

G: Socially?

J: Yes.

G: I believe yes, in that there were certainly some mothers who, when they found out, and from me they found out right away that I had been born in Mexico--I was an American but I was also part mexican--well, that was something that that I have often said, that I was a Mexican when it wasn't fashionable and they didn't pay you extra. I mean, I never attempted to hide it. I was, as a matter of fact, proud of it. I was very proud of my mother and of her family. They were a very, very industrious people. And also their courage--now let's face it, my mother's and then my aunt who came here and she went to work as a maid at the Texas Grand Hotel now, and she didn't think anything,

that was it. This shows a great deal I believe of what we called guts. So I admire it. So I was very proud of it and people soon found out about it, and I think some of the ladies whose sons I was going with tried to discourage the friendship because I was [Mexican]. Yes, I don't think there's any doubt about it, there was that. And it continued. I don't know that it exists now at all, but it certainly was something to run into then.

J: Well, then, if you saw that yourself, then I guess you must have seen some cases where there was a lot discrimination against the Mexican population that lived here.

G: Yes, I would say that. You see, there again I lucked out in a way in that possibly if I had been dark skinned, you know more of a, more a Mexican-looking person, and also if my English had had an accent, perhaps I wouldn't have been able to get the jobs that I did. That wouldn't have been true at Tory Jackson's from the DA office, of course, but in private business. Because I remember Mr. Escajeda being in the El Paso National Bank and seeing Mr. Escajeda for the first time as an officer in a bank, don't you see. Now prior to that there just hadn't been any, which was of course very shortsighted because they needed a Mexican, a connection. Of course by then Mexico was not poverty stricken, and some of those people who had had money, for one thing some of the families there even though the government took away some of their land, they still had land left. And of course you can't take away from a man his ability to make money. And many of 'em went on back and are wealthy

again; even though they were stripped of everything at that time.

Villa by the way, with regard to Don Luis Terrazas' son, Luis, Jr., he had stayed in Chihuahua. Now the old gentleman came out and most of the family, but of course they had business interests to take care of then, so many things to look after, that I suppose he stayed and was trying to look after [them]. You know, if you leave it you knew you would lose it. And the common belief among people who just don't know any better is that if someone is wealthy they have a lot of cash. Now we all know that someone can be quite wealthy and not have money, actual money. It's in other assets. So they hung him. I mean by that they'd hang him just long enough, not long enough to kill him because he was trying to make him say where his money was.

But that's just an aside. So Mexico was prosperous and there was a lot of good business originating in Mexico. I remember when I worked there at the El Paso National Bank, some of the cattlemen from Chihuahua being there and sure enough talking to Mr. Escajeda and then also to Mr. Young. And it was nothing to lend them five million dollars on just their signature. Now their assets were over there of course, but they were shipping cattle and so on. And we all know that business, as I say, they have assets but not necessarily cash. In order to operate you may need some cash. Well, now the banks definitely needed Mr. Escajeda, and of course later Mr. Moreno. And I'm just talking about El Paso National 'cause I

happen to know. But there was a time when there weren't any officers in any bank.

J: Was it just that the people felt that there wasn't anyone who was capable of taking the job, they didn't like them?

G: Well, they felt I suppose as they did in the south that it was all very fine to have one for a cook or have on for the yard man or whatever, but one of the executives in a business?

J: So they weren't considered equal, then?

G: No, they were not, I'm sorry to say. Of course they've made a great deal of progress, and I do know a great many of the people, Mexican people now, and men, who are successful. They're doctors, they're lawyers. And they grew up in that time, at that time and they made it just the same. Because you know, they're all over town--successful lawyers, successful dentists and doctors and businessmen. In fact many businesses, some of them are old enough that they're not really young people. So they're old enough to have overcome that just by proving, just going to work and learning. They had the opportunity to go to school and by then of course enough money to do do so. And not necessarily on government loans but on papa and mama, their own efforts. And they knew they could and they showed they could and they have. And they're just very fine people. Not that I object to Mexican young people getting their student loans and that type thing, Mexican or any other nationality. I mean Mexican extraction, I should say. But some of the guys we see at the top now made it without that.

J: How do think they did it? It was very difficult of course and

there weren't that many.

G: Well, of course, there were many parents who had small businesses. You know, there's the little grocery store or the little shoe shop, the leather working, all of that type of thing. And they just made a point, they could finance it, it wasn't as expensive. And you know, going to UTEP was not too expensive. And so they did. And in some cases, by the way, since I do know the bank, that particular bank because I worked there, they began to sort of sponsor somebody. You know, they knew the family and they were real sound. Now banks don't take chances. In the first place it's against the law for them to do that. But they knew the family, they knew their worth and so on, and they helped some students. Because of course you'd have to go on to Texas Law School in Austin in order to become a lawyer, or to Galveston to be a doctor.

J: They were just rather enlightened more than any other people.

G: Yes. Oh, I'm sure other banks and other businesses did too. And certainly I did know of a doctor here, because the boy worked for me at Hartshorn while he was going to UTEP. Very bright, he was so bright. And he was such a hard worker. He'd come there at night to work. And he wanted to be a doctor and well, there were nine in his family. His father was a bookkeeper for Reynolds Electric. So college money was just not available; that's, you know, too expensive. That is, medical school. And a doctor here loaned it to him. So there were ways to do it, but you had to show that you were worth the risk. And that's how it started. And of course now there's so

many of the Spanish speaking (well, they're not really, some of 'em not even Spanish speaking anymore, because at first they didn't speak Spanish too much or too well), [who are] quite wealthy, so now they can send their children anywhere. But it was, it was possible to make it.

J: But socially there was very little mixing or very little interaction between the groups.

G: There still was, there was. And it left scars. I know people who are of course younger than I, but who just somehow...it still rankles, you know. But so I didn't experience this. I think that the people that I found felt that way I just dropped. And the people who accepted me as their equal and so on, that's the ones I associated with, and so I didn't have very many unhappy experiences. But I ran into it.

J: When more or less did the relations become more amiable? Was there any time?

G: You mean socially?

J: Yes. Was there any time that you can think that was sort of a turning point? The reason I ask is that some people say after World War II there seemed to be better relations.

G: Well, there certainly...yes, the war of course. Any crisis time, as I mentioned during the Revolution you know, when there's a crisis time, people, strangers will help each other. And I think during the war, sure enough, since of course they went too, you know, well, then it began to level off. And I believe yes, that the common interest of worrying about your son and so on... Well, I suppose there's still some diehards.

They're quite old now, but they still don't think of the Mexican as equals. But I think the war put an end. It simply became, well, just a good feeling between people, took them at their worth, not at their origin.

I think some of the more militant now are destroying a little of that good will. I really do. I know I have said that I'm a Mexican and very proud of it, but I don't want to be called a Chicano. Because it connotes something, it connotes something to me that I don't like. When did that come into being?

J: Well, I was gonna ask you if you'd ever heard that word before recent times.

G: No, not before recent times. And [I] never, never heard it in Mexico. Now I'm sure they don't hear it now. It just originated possibly here on the border. I don't know whether our border or Tijuana or where, the San Diego area or where. But that was not a word in the Mexican dictionary. I'll guarantee that.

J: Do you think that this kind of a movement does any good? Well, you said you thought it destroyed good feelings.

G: I think it is destroying some of the good will that had built up. But of course I don't know of anyone now, though, that would be discriminated against in employment. And of course that's the only discrimination that counts. Because socially, we pick our friends, you know. And everybody's entitled to it. And if they'd rather not associate with someone of French origin or Irish or whatever, well, that's their privilege. But

there are so many people who do want to be friends and they're very fine people and so on, so what do you need with those? And certainly anybody, they can belong to any club. They're not barred from any club that I know of. Do you?

J: Not that I can think of.

G: I can't think of any. So job discrimination would be the nitty gritty. I just don't know of any place where they really just don't hire someone because they are [of] Mexican surname or origin. They might, though, if they don't speak, can't speak English well, and should. Because you need it.

I had a little boy worked for me in Hartshorn. After Robert, the medical student, left, I needed this part time help and I called one of the schools. And they sent me a boy who was supposed to be one of the better students and so on. But I don't see how they could've called him a better student 'cause the poor kid spoke, his English was so bad. And then he couldn't answer the telephone. Well, you see, he was handicapped by not speaking [English]. And he was then a senior in high school. And I remember having had to let him go. He was very attached to, idealized his father a lot, you know. He said, "My father doesn't want me to learn English." So you see we have that. And I told him, "Well, your father's doing you a very great disfavor there. He's hurting you. "Cause if you're going to live here and you're going to work here, you need the English. And you already wasted too much time."

Of course I can afford to talk to anybody like that, tell

them, you know, that it can be done and should be done. And then you can't be discriminated against in the job and that's the only discrimination that really counts. Because socially you can purely ignore the people who are prejudiced. Well there has been prejudice against Catholics in some areas of the country, there was, certainly. In the south, the Ku Klux Klan days wasn't just the Blacks, it was the Catholics. And I shouldn't generalize because I'm sure a great many people didn't feel that way. But you just have to socially ignore it because it is not important. You're gonna pick your friends anyway.

J: You mentioned the KKK. Were they ever organized here in town?

G: Oh, yes. Yes they were, and they even were going to march. There was a judge Issacs here who was the head of the Ku Klux Klan here.

J: What years was this?

G: Let me see. When did I work for Roy Jackson?

J: Well, the Depression years I guess, right?

G: It was towards the end of I would say the Depression, so it'd be, say mid-30s. Call it that. And yes, there was a Ku Klux Klan. And they even had meetings at the Odd Fellows' Hall in their sheets. And I know Mr. Fryer, who by the way, this attorney, he's a legendary character here, you know. He was an extremely capable criminal lawyer. And if there aren't books written about him, there should be. He rates right next to or is equal to Tom Lea as a criminal lawyer of his day, you know. If you were in trouble, get Bill Fryer or Tom Lea. And so he

was a Catholic. So he sat himself, on the stairs there, and just for fun, as they went by in their sheets, he would call them by name and pretend to write it in a notebook. (Laughs) And he was just having a ball.

J: My goodness, but that was fairly dangerous, wasn't it?
(Laughter)

G: Well, but Bill Fryer wouldn't have cared if it was. But he got a real bang out of doing that. And of course I don't know what good it would be to make a list, but the fact that they wore a sheet, you know, showed they didn't much want it known, and he could recognize them. Well, maybe he couldn't, I don't know, but he pretended to. And they were going to have a march. Now this was going to be a real confrontation but I believe that it was stopped, and Bill Fryer had something to do with that too. They were going to march down Oregon Street into the south end of town. And of course that might have ended badly. And of course I guess legally, if they didn't wear the sheets they were entitled to do it or something like that. But they managed to divert it, the city did, diverted into a meeting a Liberty Hall. But they were active here during the really active Ku Klux Klan years. But I believe it was in Oklahoma that someone in the Klan committed some crime or something and went into actual disrepute. Now that would be something that I don't remember too well. But I think there was something happened that was so shocking that it lost any general support. But we had it here.

J: And that was against the Catholics and the Mexican population.

G: And the Mexican people. We really didn't have a Negro problem at all because we had so few. We did have so few then that there wasn't much prejudice directed against them because there weren't very many. There were some that had the St. Regis Barber Shop and oh, everybody went to them, they were the finest barbers in town. But there weren't very many. But this Ku Klux Klan, yes, it was active. The only one I can remember was Judge Issacs, because I heard more about legal men, lawyers, and that he was the head of it. But it lost support because there was something happened, I think it was in Oklahoma. But I don't know that there's too much prejudice now. And as I say, in my opinion, if it's not job discrimination, then it is purely a matter of, well, we're all gonna pick our own friends anyway.

J: But in those earlier times there was that wasn't there? People just weren't hired or were paid less.

G: Yes, I think so, I believe so. I really do believe so. I remember one insurance company who finally did hire one lady. And oh, she went on working for them until she retired and of course was one of the best hands they had. But you just didn't see them. Now I don't know whether they didn't apply or whether they just simply weren't hired. Oh, the Gigert stores always had clerks. And now, my goodness, that's what they have most. But it would have been absurd not to. However I suppose at the Popular, you know, that is a great family. I think we have a great family there. But I think they led the way. Good business, you know--they do tremendous business with people

Louise Gates

from Mexico.

J: So they needed the people there who could communicate.

G: Communicate.

J: But you said after World War II was when people were able to have more prominent positions and things of that type.

G: Positions, and they could run for office.

J: That's another thing, politics.

G: Not too many, not in politics. They couldn't be a force in politics. Of course there were some, you know because for one thing you remember Ysleta was here before any of the people from the other parts of the United States ever [came here]. Ysleta was here in 1500 you know, and those were Spaniards intermarried of course with the Indians, the same population you have in New Mexico. And that would be the...well, sure enough Escajeda was one of the names. And what other one? Apodaca?

J: Alderete?

G: Alderete. And I remember Alderete was in the courthouse. Now they were something, [but not] sheriff. I wonder if this is our first sheriff with a Mexican surname.

J: It's quite possible, probably I'd say after the 1880s. There might have been way back in Ysleta.

G: Way back, in that Ysleta area.

J: When that was the county seat it could have been, but not in the more modern times.

G: I guess this is the first time, isn't it? So you see, there would be deputy sheriffs, but not the sheriff. But the ones

that I know that I see now I know made it on merit and on hard work. And I think people will say to you what I'm saying, and that is that you can ignore the people just like you would ignore anybody who wants to snub you because you're not wealthy. Well, what do you want with those. (Laughs)

I don't like to see--and I think they're hurting themselves and the progress that's been made--the militant, sorry for themselves type. I don't know that I know any but...no, I did too. I did know one. He also worked for me at Hartshorn's. And he had a good job. And he's a nice guy, but he'd grown up going to Bowie High School and had that feeling, you know, of having been discriminated against. And I told him, "Now, I tell you what I want you to do. I want you to go to Juarez and I'll give you a week off--in fact I'll give you two weeks off--and you get a job over in Juarez." Well do you know it's impossible? There is no way that an American can go over there and get a job. Do you know of a way? Really. Except some helper in a little dinky garage or something like that. But the waiters are union, and they have to have a voter registration type of thing. Truly. So that actually I don't know any American who could go over there and get a job. And so, yes, there are some people, sort of scarred, their point of view. But they shouldn't let it. Because he's done well, and his children will do better. And that was true though when they came over in covered wagons. Holy Moses, we all know that. The guy that worked hard made it, and the one that didn't work hard didn't. And it didn't make any difference.

So I'd rather they would stop feeling sorry for themselves and show what they can do, because [they] have a great deal to contribute.

They're very artistic people, by the way. You know what they can do with a few bits of string and straw, and that's sold as curios and so on. They're an artistic people. And they have one great quality, very great. I hope they don't lose it here because of welfare and other things like that. They always took care of their own. I remember houses in Mexico always they would have two or three little old ladies, maybe a little old man. And it was [an] uncle or even [a] compadre, you know, or comadre. They didn't have a home, they were widowed or whatever and no home, so, "Well, come live with us." There was no question about it, just no question whatever.

J: They had a great feeling for family.

G: Taking care of their own. And I just hope they don't lose that because it was a great quality. Of course there was nothing else I suppose, and so maybe that's why they did it. But it was a great thing to do instead of putting them in a nursing home or report 'em to the welfare.

END OF INTERVIEW