

6-25-1989

## Interview no. 775

Cesar Arroyo

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### Recommended Citation

Interview with Cesar Arroyo by Professors Charles H. Martin and Cheryl Martin, 1989, "Interview no. 775,"  
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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Cesar Arroyo

INTERVIEWER: Professors Charles H. Martin and Cheryl Martin

PROJECT: History of the University

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 25, 1989

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO: 775

TRANSCRIPT NO: 775

TRANSCRIBER: \_\_\_\_\_

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Born in Parral, Mexico; immigrated to El Paso with family fleeing Pancho Villa in 1914; grew up in Sunset Heights; student and athlete at College of Mines 1935-1939.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Family background in Parral, Mexico; Pancho Villa destroyed his parents home; immigrated to El Paso 1914; early years in Sunset Heights neighborhood, attended Vilas, Morehead, and El Paso High School; student athlete at College of Mines 1935-1939; mining career in Mexico.

Length of Interview: 1 hour 10 min. Length of Transcript 25 pages

Cesar Arroyo Schaefer  
June 25, 1989  
Interviewed by Professor Cheryl and Charles Martin  
UTEP 75th Anniversary

Cheryl Martin: This is an interview with Ingeniero Cesar Arroyo Schaeffer, in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, by Charles Martin and Cheryl Martin. [Charles Martin is identified with the initials "M", while Cheryl Martin's initials are "CM." Mr. Arroyo will be identified by the initial "A."

C: Well, what I wanted to start back to when you first came from Mexico to the United States and we'll just start and come through. So lets see, your were actually born in Mexico, rather . . .

A: I was born in Parral, down south, Parral, Mexico. Our whole family had to leave during the Revolution. I was about three years old when we left.

C: That's when you came to El Paso then and . . .

A: Yes. I went through all the grammar school and high school and college there.

C: Which schools did you go to?

A: I went to grammar school in Vilas.

CM: It's still there.

A: Then I went to Morehead Junior High and El Paso High School.

C: Where did your family live?

A: On Sunset Heights on Mundy Avenue. You want a glass of water? [coughing in the background]

CM: Whatever.

C: Well, let's see, lets go through it chronologically. What kind of work did your father do in Mexico and what kind of work did he find in the United States?

A: My father was an accountant. He came in from Spain when he was fifteen years old. He studied and worked in Parral. He was a Spaniard from

Bilbao. My mother is half-German and half-Mexican. My parents had thirteen children.

C: Did your father work for with the mining, an accountant for the mining companies or other . . .

A: No, he worked in the store, a merchandise store, while he was studying. It was a custom in those days to call a young fellow from Spain, and the Spaniards were owners of that merchandise store and gave him [a job] and he studied. A few years later he quit and put up a shoe factory [for] mining boots. That prospered quite a bit. And he had a ranch near Parral. Villa was after him all the time to get money from him. Finally, that's why he had to leave. He was getting money and then wanted more and more, so my dad had to leave. He left alone from Parral to Ojinaga on a horse. And he sent for the family later on.

C: When the family joined him did you come directly to El Paso or did you go to Ojinaga or someplace else . . .

A: No, direct to El Paso. There was no trouble with immigration. There were a lot of people going into El Paso at that time, they just let them in. They took your name and a little information and you were a resident.

CM: What year was it then?

A: Well . . . must have been about 1914.

C: What kind of work did your father find in El Paso?

A: Well, he was a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company. Dealt in sugar, bananas, and fruits in South America. It was a very strong company, all over South America and Central America.

C: The name of the company was . . . ?

A: United Fruit.

ARRDYD

C: Oh yeah.

A: But the name of the company in El Paso was Sonora Commission Company, but it was a subsidiary. He did very well. He didn't know any English and he learned it real fast.

C: What was Sunset Heights in those days?

A: Well it was one of the best neighborhoods. All the Jews in that area. It leaned a little bit closer to Yandell Blvd. and that street that goes toward the school--what's the name of that street?

C: Hawthorne?

A: Hawthorne. Around that area lived all the Jews. All around merchants, Popular Drygoods, White House. We lived about three streets down towards Mundy Ave.

C: Did your parents mostly associate with other refugee families from Mexico or with the other families that were already there? Did they plan to go back to Mexico?

A: Well, my dad never did want to go back because Villa had destroyed his home. It was a three-story: a basement, where he had his shoe shop; and the next one was about the river level, and the two stories for the family. He tore it up completely. His troops just tore up the floor, blew up the safe--they didn't find anything. No, in El Paso there were quite a few of them from Mexico. We had friends there, my dad and mother had friends there. Right there in the same neighborhood.

C: Did any others of your family--of your relatives from Mexico--also come to El Paso or did they stay behind in Parral.

A: They stayed behind. The Schaeffers stayed behind. My grandfather, Felipe Schaeffer, got along real well with Villa . . . during that time, foreigners, to kill them or hang them. They wanted money, but my

grandfather never had any trouble. My grandfather came from the old country, and then up in St. Louis and he worked there for a while, and then he came to San Antonio and then Parral. He dealt in mining, my grandfather . . . my voice loud enough?

C: It's working fine. It's very good at picking up, it's too good, it picks up things from outside. When you went to the public schools did you speak any English before you started going to school at Vilas?

A: No, I didn't speak any English; I learned it there. I picked it up fast.

C: Do you have anything you remember in particular from going to school at Vilas or at Morehead?

A: Well, we had very good teachers. They were very kind to us that came from Mexico. There wasn't any discrimination among the teachers. Some of the lower class people, like peons, working in El Paso, they were discriminated against a little bit, they were dark, Indian characteristics, features . . . . A little discrimination is a big loss. I would think there's not much discrimination now. Do you?

CM: Not as much as there used to be.

A: I didn't have any trouble in school. My athletic career started in Morehead Junior High. Didn't anybody invite us to grammar school track meets.

C: What about at El Paso High, that where our son graduated by the way?

A: Well, I didn't go out much for sports there. I was working, had a delivery route, and I had to go on a bus toward the smelter to pick up two big cans of milk, about five gallon cans of milk. I'd go on the bus and leave the empties and pick up the full ones. I had to do that about six o'clock in the morning. And then I'd deliver my route. I had to be at civilian school at eight o'clock.

C: Do you remember any of the teachers or anything in particular about El Paso High?

A: Well, a math teacher, I can't remember her name, she was very good mathematician. She was Jewish. I forget her name now. And there were other teachers. . . Kelly. There were two Kelly sisters. One of them married one of the professors at the College of Mines.

C: Mary Kelly Quinn.

A: Quinn, yeah. Those are the ones I remember best. I took ROTC there--at El Paso High. I didn't drill much; I was on the Rifle Team. We spent our time shooting and other things, but I got to be a lieutenant.

C: When did you graduate from El Paso High?

A: '34. No, '33. It was 1933 . . . 1932 because after I left El Paso High, after I graduated, I worked for a year and a half before going to college.

C: That was during the Depression, so . . .

A: Yeah.

C: . . . jobs must have a little bit hard to find.

A: Yeah, and thirteen in the family. My father and mother fifteen.

C: What kind of job did you get at that time?

A: Well, I knew a fellow named David or Bob McKee at a construction company. You remember that company? McKee.

CM: Let me check.

A: It was very strong all over the Southwest. He got me a scholarship at the New Mexico Aggies. I went there, my first year, I went to school in New Mexico. (You want to be looking at the Yearbook while I talk?)

C: Sure.

A: Let me bring it. [Brings back Yearbook]. That's a Flowsheet.

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C: It's a Flowsheet from '38.

A: You know what flowsheet means? It's what the ore, the raw ore, is passed through the mill. Sort of schematic, different departments. They only put this out once a year. I want to show you where I am: This is me when I got out of school. Don't look the same . . . I'm 77 years old now. These were '38's records, and and these were '39 records. The commencement was only once a year, so I had to go back in May for my diploma. That's when I was on a basketball team, the varsity basketball. We had a lot of good athletes from Louisiana, back in the bayou country. They always had Copenhagen in their mouths. [Laughter in background] Pretty rough boys.

C: More like baseball players today. [Looking at yearbook] Oh my goodness look that. . . number 6.

CM: Oh that's Ross Moore.

A: This is Ross Moore.

C: Here's a Pat Connolly. I bet this . . .

CM: The husband of the . . . or relative.

C: Vince Andreas. Vincente Andreas, I wonder if that's the Vincent Andreas we know, or his son, probably his father. I bet I know his son and grand-daughter.

A: How long you been at this school?

C: Since 1978.

A: So you've been there quite a while. [Pointing to yearbook] Both of these fellows were from Louisiana--good guards, as good as they make them. He married Kate Lawson, her father was on the Water Commission there in El Paso, very prominent. Here are the rest of the team, basketball. When I was in track I used run the 100, 200, broad jump. Harry Phillips, the



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coach. And I played tennis. These two boys are from Monterrey, they're twins. They don't look alike but . . . . One of the matches that we played against Arizona, why this fellow Beatie, he stuffed himself with sandies and a bunch of junk and that afternoon before the game, boy he was puking all over. We lost that match quickly. This is the scientific club. At the Aggies I went out for football. I was captain of the [freshman] team there. I was captain and quarterback. Here I am with the ball.

C: Did you find Las Cruces and A&M any different or very much different from El Paso?

A: Well, there's a lot of farmers there. A lot of people taking farming. They had such a good school, engineering school. I started to take mechanical engineering, but then the coach at Texas College of Mines offered me a better scholarship, and then I'd be at home, so that's when I changed schools. (The number of the pages are a little bit off, you might correct some of them.) I had a lot of clippings but one of the times we moved we lost them.

C: What position did you play on the basketball team?

A: Forward. We beat them, "the Aggie pups beat New Mexico University. Arroyo, the Aggie safety, started things off right in the third period by returning a punt 70 yards for a touchdown."

CM: Wow. That's pretty good.

A: We played . . . well I was in high school and that's one of the reasons I did not play basketball there. There was a McNut Oilers, we had a very good team. There wasn't any colleges that could beat us at that time. We used to play the terrible Swedes and the Harlem Globetrotters. This is one of those times I ran a race there in Juarez. I won the 100 yard.

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C: I'll let you read it aloud [to Cheryl Martin].

CM: "El equipo de ??camp Welchhood??, 'head line reads', Cesar Arroyo resulto en primer lugar en la carrera de 100m. El equipo de campo y pista de los Aggies de Nuevo Mexico derrotaron a los preparatorianos de la Austin [high school] en una competencia que se [tuvo] en el campo de los locales. Austin iso 48 1/2 puntos, mientras que los Aggies hicieron 102 1/2. Cesar Arroyo gano el primer lugar en la carrera de 100 metros, su tiempo fue 10.2z Richard King fue el unico atleta de las Panteras que gano un primer lugar, el desalto de altura. Campbell Weaver, ex-atleta de esta frontera, quien ahora pertence a Collegio del Mexicano, gano primeros lugares en las dos carreras de obstaculos."

C: Interesting. Now you said you came to the College of Mines, and you were going to play football but didn't you play football there for . . .

A: No, I had too many labs. I went out about a week or two, but then I was getting way behind on the labs, so I had to quit. But I took part in the basketball, track, tennis. This is about the time I got out of school, 1938.

CM: It's The Prospector.

A: If you want to read. It goes down to about here and then it starts talking about somebody else.

C: "May 21, 1938. The press box cube, by Bill Saffold, Prospector Sports Editor. Feeling in a good humour we decided to pay tribute to someone this week in our sports column. After a bit of a search we selected Cesar Arroyo to put under the magnifying glass. Cesar, you must know, is that short, stocky, quiet individual who has all year managed to bear up under an engineering course on one hand and a big athletic program on the other. He has worked hard at each one and has done well in both.

Overcoming the handicap of small size, a real handicap in this day of sports, Cesar has played basketball for the Miners and lettered. His letter was well earned. Although he did not play as many games as some of the other players, Cesar was one of the hardest working men on the team, and he was hard to stop when shooting for the basket. His funny side shot . . . ."

A: I was left handed and shot with one hand.

C: Ah . . . . "his funny side shot, something that endeared him to Mines basketball fans--especially when the shot went in." [Laughter] I guess it didn't go in all the time. "But if you think that Cesar was busy then, listen to this: track season came on and so did tennis. Cesar liked each sport, and he was good in both. He was shark at tennis and was the leading man of an all-too small squad of dash man out for track. Now any man would have tossed a coin and then picked one; that is, any man but Cesar. Cesar took part in both sports. Track and tennis meets often came on the same day, and Cesar would have to take part in both of them. He would run his hundred yard dash and then slip out of his spiked shoes into his best pair of tennis kicks and then meander on down to the courts to play his matches. Then it was back to the track to see if he was needed on a relay squad or in any other capacity. Cesar kept that up for three years and his grades are still average. For any athlete his grades are unusually good. As this is beginning to sound like an elegant dirge, we feel that Cesar doesn't like to feel as though we were talking of the dead departed--we'll quit." But it still goes on. Oh that's fascinating. And that must have been particularly challenging to do taking the engineering courses with the labs, too.

A: Yeah.

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C: Where did you play basketball back then. Was there a gym?

A: Well, yeah, Holliday I think.

CM: Holliday Hall.

C: That was what you used to play in?

A: Yeah. This is when we played the Sambo Sweets, similar to Harlem Globetrotters. This is when I was in high school.

C: These were touring teams I bet.

A: Yes.

C: They used to have the House of David, used to be another that would come.

A: The Harlem Globetrotters still play. They've been in El Paso several times. I was still in high school. A Chihuahua team invited three of us to play with them in the Mexican National Tournament. We didn't too well, I think we came in third or fourth. We went to Tampico just for the [tournament]. I played baseball during the social league. I was a pitcher.

CM: In El Paso?

A: No, here.

CM: Oh, here.

A: On a team. I'm the third man there [pointing to picture]. It's a social league—we won it.

C: When you were playing basketball for Mines, what teams would you play against?

A: All the border conference.

C: Did you make the road trips to, to where . . .

A: Well, to Tucson, and all the other teams on the Border Conference. We played Sul Ross too, but they weren't in the Border Conference.

C: What about tennis or track? Would you go out of town? I guess you'd

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have to go out town.

A: Yeah, we most of our meets were held, some in El Paso, the College of Mines, and some in New Mexico A&M, and University of Arizona. How many buildings do they have now?

CM: A lot more.

C: A lot.

A: About sixty something.

C: Possibly, that many, yeah.

A: There were only about eight, in that time, when I went to school.

C: What buildings did you have most of your classes in?

A: Well let's see, [going through yearbook]. I can't remember exactly when the schools started letting women in school. Probably about two or three years before I went in. They had some good looking girls in there, good looking girls. Let me look at the buildings. The new library and administration and the main building and engineering building. This was the engineering, and metallurgy, the one in the back there. This is the gym. Kidd Field, he was very well liked in school and in El Paso. Dean Kidd, he was dean of engineering. Burges Hall, woman dorms.

C: Did you have a particular major in engineering, or was it just a general major?

A: No, mining. Minor in Geology.

C: And when you weren't playing sports and you weren't in engineering classes or engineering labs, were you involved in very many social activities. How much time was there to do? You did a lot.

A: Well, my social life stayed to usually on the weekends, in the evening they'd have a dance at school. When over there, what they call a Casino there on Oregon Street, that was where most of the Mexican people went to

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their dances.

CM: Where on Oregon Street?

A: Well, it used to be the old Army "Y".

CM: Downtown?

A: Downtown. They sold it to a group of Mexicans who converted it to casino and dances.

C: Were there very many other students from Mexico, or Mexican students from El Paso at the time?

A: Well, lots of the engineers were from Mexico. It was cheaper to go there than going to Mexico City. The only other mining school, good engineering school was in Mexico City, too far. Tuition wasn't very high. That's Colleen Moore, remember her, the actress.

CM: An actress. No I don't.

A: That's a pretty long time ago.

CM: She became actress after leaving college or . . .

A: No, she visited the school when she was an actress. Do you smoke?

C: No, not a smoker.

A: You mind if I smoke?

C: Go ahead, sure. While you were going to school taking the mining courses, did you live at home with your parents all the time?

A: Yes, I could reach the school in 15 minutes. Go down Hawthorne.

C: Did you go through the St. Patricks Day, whatever they used to call it, for the mining students?

A: Yes, there was a St. Patrick's Day.

CM: There's some pictures here, they went to Oro Grande for that?

C: Did you go out there and go thru the . . .

A: Yeah, the hazing.

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C: What was that like? Do you remember that?

A: Well, they used to take us into an old mine, working of course that was safe, but they used to blindfold us and beat us on the tails, we were on our knees. It wasn't too bad.

C: Do you remember any of the professors in particular or any of the special activities in your mining classes?

A: Well, Dr. Graham taught us metallurgy. Professor Seamon taught chemistry. There's a Seamon hall. Dean Kidd, I forget his first name, and Dean Thomas (Eugene Thomas). That one fellow there graduated six months before I did, John Holguin. He was a very good student. He turned out to be one of the best mining engineers in Mexico. Juan Holguin. He lives in Torreon now. Very good student.

CM: It [yearbook] says he was president of Phi Beta Mex. Was that a . . .

A: That was a Mexican fraternity.

CM: At the college. Were you a member of that fraternity [Mr. Arroyo's wife walks in].

A: This is my wife.

[Exchange of greetings and hellos.]

C: What was the name of this group again, that you were a member of?

CM: Were you a member of Phi Beta Mex?

A: Yes, I was.

CM: Phi Beta Mex, and John Holguin was the president?

C: Did they sponsor dances and . . . ?

A: Phi Beta Mex. Yes. Most of our dances were at the Casino that was where the Hispanics went to dance.

C: What would be different about the dances there and the dances on campus?

A: Probably more drinking on the campus. [Laughter] You used to go outside

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that Holliday Hall and had their liquor in the car, take a swig and go back in.

C: Were the students all pretty serious back then, or they also liked to have a good time at these dances or whatever?

A: Well, it was the engineers who were more serious. It was the people/students who were taking other courses like administration, those are the ones who had a better time at the dances. They had quite a few different degrees that you could take at that time. But I imagine in engineering there were only . . . probably when I started there were about 200 and when the coeds, came in, and I think the school had about 1000 students when they took in coeds. They had a lot of different degrees by that time.

C: What kind of jobs did people take when they finished the engineering school or the mining school?

A: Well, at that time when I got out of school there were quite a few jobs available. I wrote out three applications, and I got all three accepted. But I took the one up there in Santa Eulalia [above Chihuahua] because it was close to home.

C: What kind of jobs would other people take, would they be in the United States or Mexico or other countries?

A: Well very few of the Latins/Hispanic engineers stayed in the state, very few of them. Most came to Mexico. They were scattered all over Mexico.

C: How did the Mexican students find themselves treated? Were they pretty much treated like the others? Or were there few people who that . . . .

A: No, in engineering we were pretty close together, the Anglos and the Mexicans, the Hispanics. We got along pretty well. "Peedoggies" that's what we called the other ones. What is this all for, just for the



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record?

C: It's for the Institute of Oral History which has about 800 interviews-- not all students--on different projects, and so it's part of the official archives of the University. And then we also have this Diamond Jubilee 75th Anniversary from which were going back and trying to specifically interview former students to make sure we have a record of the students, of what it was like to be a student at the University in its history. Because in the 75th Anniversary they're very interested in building the history or writing the history or recording the history of the University. So we're trying to get as many interviews as we can about, particularly the College of Mines, because there are not always so many people still alive who attended the College of Mines and also Texas Western.

A: A lot of the ones who got out of school with me are dead now, dead already. I'm 77 and a half. I'll be 78 in December.

C: Let me think of a couple of other things here, too. How well did the basketball teams do when you were playing on the team?

A: Not very good. [Laughter] (Would you care for coffee?)

CM: No, thanks.

C: No, thank you, we just had the breakfast before we came over. Did you lose most of the games, many of them?

A: Well we had the record for one year in basketball. [Dog barking in the background.] This boy Mora was a very good player. And Matheson, he turned Pro after . . . . Arroyo-43, I only made 43 points in the season.

C: Lets see, you're one, two, three, four, that was number five scorer on the team.

A: We also played Tempe. We played Socorro. We lost. Socorro School of

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Mines beat us 33 - 24. And we played in Chihuahua one year.

C: Who did you play in Chihuahua, was it a tournament or something?

A: Yeah, it was a tournament for just local teams. [Person in the back ground calling for Mr. Arroyo's wife, "Que quieren, no esta, no, no esta.] They want to talk to my wife. We won one and lost one here in Chihuahua. One of the games was awfully rough. Ross Moore went dribbling down the sidelines, and the gym was packed, and they stuck their foot, and they tripped Ross Moore. That started a riot. And the governor was there, and Ross Moore threw in the ball at one of the players. He ducked, and it hit the governor right on the stomach. [laughter].

CM: The governor of Texas?

A: No, the governor of Chihuahua. Hit him right on the stomach. So we had to leave. The coach asked me, "What'll we do, Cesar?", I said "We'd better go." The score was tied 50 to 50. [Laughter].

[END OF SIDE ONE]

A: New Mexico University. We lost that game too. Tempe, no we beat Tempe 42 to 35. University of Arizona, we lost 47 to 31, University of Arizona. Tempe beat us in another game. The Aggies beat us in another game. Texas Mines-- last place in the conference. No, we didn't have a very good team. This was Pennington, his brother was our coach. We had some rough, good fellows. This guy was rough as heck. And all those guys from Louisiana started fighting right away.

CM: Why did they come from Louisiana to Texas Mines?

A: Well, Mack Saxon, the football coach, I think he coached back in that country first, called them and gave them all the scholarships.

C: Was there any place that was particular rougher to play at or any team

where if you went to play in Arizona it was always a rougher game, then if you played other teams?

A: Usually it was Arizona University.

C: And where did you play when you went over there?

A: The gym that was Bear Down. I don't know, they probably have a better gym now.

C: So those were your rough games over there?

A: And the Aggies, we were rivals with the Aggies, New Mexico Aggies. The New Mexico Aggies had a real good team back then. It was '35 or '36. They won the National Championship in Long Island, New York. And later on, they won it again with all those colored boys on the team, they won. When did they win it?

C: I know they had an outstanding team one of those years, I remember . . .

A: They won the national tournament. All colored boys.

C: I think I know the team that you're talking about. Was there anything else that you remember in particular from when you were at Mines, anything that any particular event, person that stands out?

A: You mean another student?

C: Student or professor or just something interesting or funny that happened when you were there.

A: Well, probably quite a few times we enjoyed a good laugh, but I can't remember right now.

C: Did you ever have any explosions in your lab?

A: No. I remember one time I parked my brothers car, the Plymouth, great big ole car, long thing, right in front of the office of Dean Kidd, Engineering school, and he came into the class, and he says, "Who's got that big moose out there in front of my office." [Laughter] I raised my

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hand, He said, "Get it out of there."

C: Did very many students have cars back in those days?

A: Well, mostly the Peedoggies, engineers did not. That was my brother's car there.

C: What about your brothers and sisters? Did any of them also go to the college?

A: I had a sister Irene. She got valedictorian in high school and valedictorian in Texas University, she took languages. Very smart.

C: Which one of the children were you in the family? One of the oldest or the youngest?

A: No, I was three younger than my . . . Bertha, Irene and Robert, then me.

C: How did the older ones adjust to moving since they would have lived longer in Mexico before moving to El Paso?

A: Well, they had friends they had met, people who had left Mexico in the Revolution in the same neighborhood. There were young girls and boys. They carried on their friendship. Alice, a sister of mine, she was a very good athlete. She was on every team in El Paso High--every team.

C: Did any of them go back to Mexico to work?

A: No, I'm the only one who came back to Mexico. I took mining. Found quite a few jobs up in Sonora. My first job was in El Potosi, which is a subsidiary of the Howsan??? [unintelligible]. It was El Potosi mining, which is above Santo Domingo. I worked there three years and then I went to Santa Barbara with AS&R.

C: And where was Santa Barbara located?

A: A little west of Parral.

C: What kind of mining did they do there?

A: There was gold, silver, lead, zinc.

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C: Who did you work for?

A: At Santa Barbara--A.S. & R. American Smelting and Refining Company.

C: A.S.A.R.C.O.

A: I worked there till I got to be mine foreman. I worked three years. I quit to go on my own in a small mine. I started a small mine in about 1947 and worked about twenty years, in small scale. I did pretty well at one time.

C: Was this--where were you working at around most around Parral or back here in Chihuahua?

A: No, I worked in the Placier de Guadalupe out there east of here, in a small mining area; lead, zinc and silver.

C: What was the name of the little town or the mining area?

A: Placier de Guadalupe, Placer. Like placer.

CM: Placer mining.

A: There was an area there. And then I worked for Manganese in the western part of Chihuahua near Casas Grandes. I was doing consulting work at the same time. I was co-founder of the equivalent to the A.I.M.E., in Mexico; Asociacion de Ingenieros Metrologistas y Ecologicos en Mexico. I was the co-founder and the president.

C: Where there any changes in the mining industry during Cardenas or under any other president?

A: No, they didn't bother me too much--normal strikes for higher wages. They didn't bother me much. It was English companies and American companies and German companies back during the revolution.

C: Did they continue to own the mines or did they eventually sell them to Mexican companies?

A: Well in, I forget the date but anyway, they Mexicanized mining. The

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Americans could only have 49% -- 51% Mexican. That's when a lot of the Americans started moving out of the top half jobs. And little by little they started moving--went back to the states to work.

C: Was there--where would they recruit the Mexican engineers to replace them? Was there any other schools in Mexico where people studied?

A: Well, at that time, yes, you had a good school in Mexico City, mining; one in Guanajuato had a mining school. About three mining schools. All of the Hispanic engineers, most of them, went to Mexico and stayed in Mexico. They started getting top jobs when they Mexicanized.

C: Was there any major boom or bust in the mining industry in Chihuahua or Parral while you were working there?

A: Well the price of silver was pretty good most of the time. Right now it's real low. Mexico is the biggest silver producer in the world.

C: What about strikes? You said there were--sometimes they'd have big strikes.

A: Every two years you have another contractor renew the contract, and they usually have some (weird ways)--more side benefits and higher wages.

C: Was there ever any strike that was bigger than any of the others?

A: Well, sometimes they lasted two or three months when a company wouldn't give in. If one company had a strike, why the other companies in Mexico would help them become keep them alive. In Caronero we were in a real bad strike. It was copper, I think, Caronero.

C: What was that?

CM: It's in Sonora. You're talking about the strike before the revolution?

A: Yeah, before the revolution. The Americans there--they had guards--were they rough. They killed some miners.

C: Who were the people that worked in the mines where you were? Were they

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mostly--were they ever Indians or people of Indian background or mostly typical Chihuahuences?

A: A Mexican and a mixture of Mexican and a Indian. I mean a Spaniard and an Indian -- Spaniard and and Indian. That's what Mexican is. The Mexican mining laborers, they're very good at working mines. Makes a good employee.

C: When did you finally retire?

A: In 1985. I went back to after I quit mining on my own. I went back to Industrial Minera Mexico, which was partly A.S.& R. I used to go out in hills quite a bit for look at prospects that the company might take over. I was traveling a lot. Riding a mule a lot. Walking a lot. The last time I went out in the sierra, I was in hot country. I was perspiring all the time. I was on a mule. I got soaking wet, and I caught a bad cold. I'd been coming to town--turn into a drunken pneumonia--that's when I quit. I was getting old anyway to go down mines. You go down these old mines--they're not safe, you know, they're abandoned. So I figured physically I should stop. I'd been doing a lot of translating on geology from English to Spanish for the company too. Did you walk over?

CM: Yeah.

A: It's about a fifteen minute walk.

CM: Yeah, ten or fifteen ....

C: It's a comfortable walk.

CM: A nice walk.

C: Can you think of anything else we should ask?

CM: I was just curious when you went to other places to play basketball games and track meets, how did you travel? On train?

A: Traveled by bus. It was close, like New Mexico Aggies, a lot of the

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players had cars.

CM: Was this a bus from the college or was it . . . ?

A: It was a college bus. We never did fly around the Southwest, it was either by bus or by car. When Dean Kidd died, why the next in line should have been Eugene Thomas, but they didn't give it to him. He was kind of sore about that.

CM: Why didn't they give to him. Do you know?

A: Well, the Board of Regents in Texas picked somebody else. By that time the college had grown quite a bit. How many students do you have now?

CM: Just under 15,000, 14,000.

A: Gene Thomas got along pretty well with the Hispanics. He married a girl named Augusta Jones, no, no, who did Sonnichsen marry?

CM: I don't know.

A: It was Augusta Jones. She was a very jolly girl, everybody liked her.

C: Thomas?

CM: Sonnichsen?

A: Sonnichsen. He liked Mexicans very much.

C: Well, I can't think . . . .

A: It's a long history. [Laughter]

CM: Very interesting.

C: They have a very long interview with Sonnichsen, and Mary Kelly Quinn they have an interview with her.

A: She had a sister named Charlene. Her father was a prominent mayor in El Paso.

C: I'm trying to think of who else they had. There's an interview with Baxter Polk, who was the librarian.

A: Yeah, Polk, I remember him. He came in about the time I left, too.



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C: I'm trying to think who else they have interviews further back with.

A: Very interesting story about a graduate in geology. His name was Charles A. Steen, but they called him the "Uranium King." When the States needed uranium, he found a good mine in Moab, Utah. He made a killing. Charles A. Steen.

CM: Was he in school when you were there?

A: He was, I think, a sophomore when I finished school. We became friends later on. When I was working on my own he came down to see us. He went to see one of the mines I was working and sent some geologist down. Their report said it was too [?] a mine for them. They didn't take it. They were really broke when he found this uranium. It was [known] that the United States, GS, Bureau of Mines, had turned down that area, but he got money from friends and his mother, and he drilled a couple of holes, and he struck uranium.

CM: Was this during World War II?

A: He went through, like new rich, he really spent money. He had a brand new Lincoln when he came down, and then he bought a yacht, bought a 40 foot yacht with two diesel engines, and he invited my wife and I and some other friends. He had the yacht on the Pacific side of the Canal Zone, Panama Canal Zone, that's where the yacht was. He cruised all down, went to Tegucigalpa on his plane, big plane, and from there we took small planes to where the yacht was, and we made a three-week trip, fishing. We stopped in Acapulcu, we stopped in Manzanillo, we stopped Guymas, all the way to Puerto Payaso, where the Gulf California ends. From there, he sent for some planes, small private planes, and flew us into Tucson, and he flew us all the way to El Paso. Incidentally, he had a bunch of crooked lawyers, and they were in charge, of course, of all the

accounting and everything--the taxes. Well, somewhere or other they were keeping tax money, and the Internal Revenue sued Steen for three and a half million dollars. So he went broke there.

C: Is he related to the Steele that was the the professor there, wasn't there a Steele . . .

A: This is S-T-E-E-N, Steen.

C: Oh, Steen.

A: Charles Steen. And then he had a bad accident. He was watching a drilling rig without a hard hat, and one of the tools whipped around and hit him on the head. He was in bad shape for about a year. He had a home there, near Reno. About a four million dollar home. He had horses, it was up in the hills, he had steam on the sidewalks so they wouldn't freeze, the sidewalks, walking from the highway to his house. He had an indoor swimming pool. I think he's going to get back on his feet soon, he needs to mine. A Canadian Company, he's working and part ownership.

C: Interesting story. He was a student a couple of years behind you at Mines.

A: We write each other, send cards. The last time he was here was about two years ago. He came alone, he was going to South America, where he worked first, and stopped on the way to Peru. Stopped on the way back. That was the last time he was here. His wife was good in writing letters. She has a lot of money. Her name is M. L. Steen. Her name is Minnie Lee, and the yacht's name was Minnie Lee.

C: I don't think I wrote this down, you actually finished in January of . . .

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A: Of '39.

CM: Where did they hold the commencement exercises back in those days?

A: Well, in May of '39, because they only had commencement exercises once a year, that was at the Scottish Rite, what do they call it?

CM: Temple.

A: Temple.

CM: Where was that?

A: Near the El Paso Public Library. From there you go down Santa Fe Street to the El Paso Civic Center. The Greyhound Bus Depot and the Continental Bus Depot are about three blocks away. That was a nice building. The masons, a lot of money.

C: Last month would have been the 50th Anniversary of when you finished.

A: Well, last January I finished 50 years as a professional.

CM: He got his diploma in May, but he finished his courses in January.

C: So you were technically the Class of '39, but most of the people you were with were actually finished in '38, but you didn't quite finish with them.

A: Very few engineers had finished in January of '39. When I changed courses from mechanical engineering to mining, I had lost a few credits. So I actually was in school, in college, five years.

CM: What made you decide to change from mechanical to mining engineering?

A: Well, I wanted to come back to Mexico, the best career was mining and geology, and my dad had a few mining properties. They were originally sold to his aunt. Will you play back some of that to see how my voice sounds.

C: Sure.