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Interview no. 778

Luz Villegas

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Luz Villegas
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Charles Martin
PROJECT: History of the University
DATE OF INTERVIEW: October 22, 1989
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO: 778
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Raised in El Paso's southside, attended Jefferson High School, student at UTEP 1977-1982; first woman president of Student Association 1981-82.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Tells of her experiences as a student 1977-1982 with special emphasis on student government activities 1981-82 and working with Dr. Haskell Monroe, then the president of UTEP.

Length of Interview: 55 minutes Length of Transcript 24 pages

Luz Villegas
October 22, 1989
Professor Charles H. Martin
UTEP Diamond Jubilee

This is an interview conducted on Sunday, October 22, 1989, by Charles H. Martin with Luz Villegas. And I should add that sitting in on the interview today is Ken Tarrango.

M: Okay, why don't we start out on this tape segment here, by you mentioning to me where you grew up and where you went to high school and when you finished high school.

V: I grew up mainly in El Paso. I was born in Chicago and lived there till I was nine years old, so I mainly grew up in El Paso. I went to high school at Jefferson High School, which is down on Alameda Street. I don't know if you're familiar with that. But I went to Jefferson High School, graduated from there in 1977 and started here at UTEP the very following fall, in the fall of 1977.

M: How did your family live in Chicago?

V: I really don't know. My father came here from Mexico, and he had a job working with some sort of carpeting factory. He was working there. And on a visit here to El Paso he met my mother who was from El Paso. They got married and went back to Chicago and lived there until I was nine years old. And we came here for health reasons. My brother was . . . had asthma and back then that was the thing that doctors recommended, to move to a warm climate. And since my mother was originally from El Paso, we came here to El Paso.

M: Were you involved in student government activities or other kinds of activities like that in high school?

V: I wasn't involved in student government. My two main, major activities were journalism, which was the yearbook, I was on the yearbook staff, and my primary activity was being on the debate team. My brother and I, who are twins, (for your information), were a debate team in high school.

M: That's interesting. When you started at UTEP what were your first impressions on coming over here, of coming to UTEP and your first impressions going through your first year over here. How big a change?

V: Yeah, it was a big change. You have to remember I was going to Jefferson High School, and Jefferson High School, which is probably 98 percent Hispanic, probably one percent black, and maybe one person Anglo. I was accustomed to that kind of environment, so coming to UTEP was actually a cultural shock for me. Having grown up in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood and school, so it was a cultural shock for me, but I was very, very concerned about doing well in college, and my first year here at UTEP was really a very quiet year. I spent many, many, many hours in the Library and got past my first year. And it wasn't until my sophomore year that I started to get involved in other things, and that's when both my brother and I again joined the debate team here at UTEP. And that took up quite a bit of our time, and we enjoyed it, because our tournaments were in other cities and other states, and we were out at debate tournaments out in California, Colorado, Arizona, mostly the Southwest area of the U.S.

M: Who coached the debate team then? Did you have a regular coach?

V: Back then it was Dr. Elkins. Dr. Elkins and then Dr. Roy Gentry. He was sort of the assistant coach for the debate.

T: Charles Elkins?

V: Elkins, what was his first name? I can't remember his first name.

M: You went to tournaments in the Southwest?

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V: In the southwest area. We went as far east as San Marcos; I think [giggles] was the farthest east that we ever got. We mostly concentrated like I said in the Southwest area: Colorado, California, Arizona.

M: What kinds of social activities and whatever were you involved in your first two years?

V: First two years? I wasn't involved in very many; the debate team was it my second year. Like I said my first year I didn't do anything. My second year I was on the debate team. It was while I was on the debate team I had one of our fellow debaters, his name was Victor Castillo, he was a student council member at the time, and he was forming a ticket to run for the following year. And this just happened to be a mostly, at that time this was mostly Chicano ticket. A lot of the members on the ticket were members who had been, who were members of the Mecha Organization. I don't know if he was necessarily associated with them, but he was friends with a lot of these people. It was by chance that I ended up on their ticket. He had formed his ticket and at the end realized that he had no women on his ticket. [laughs] I was just a fellow debater, and he just happened to ask whether I might be interested in running for student council [laughs], 'cause he needed a girl's name on his ticket. It's real interesting how that turned out.

M: Yes, what an accident.

V: It was.

M: Were you elected to some position in this . . .

V: I was elected to student council, which would have been, for the following year, which would have been my junior year; I was a student council member. At that time Eddie Forkerway was president. Eddie Forkaway was a football player, the jock, very well liked, very well known around the UTEP campus. Do you remember him?

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M: Slightly. So what happened to your first year on the student council? Anything exciting?

V: Anything exciting. Oh gosh, that was so long ago. I don't remember too many controversies from that year.

F: It seems like Eddie wanted to censor Mollie Fennell and her coverage of the council.

V: That's true. Of course there was always the friction between student council and The Prospector. The Prospector always believing that there was some big news to come out of something. Eddie Forkaway was the president, Paul Yetter was the vice-president, internal affairs vice-president. Mike Charter was I believe a student council member and in those days or he may have been external vice-president that year. In those days Mike Charter was very, very politically, very vocal, very involved type of person. He was always stirring up something, and I don't mean that in a bad sense. He cared very much about student rights and the student voice.

M: Did you then run for president the next year?

V: Yeah, the following we formed a ticket where Luis Patino was the president; I was running for internal affairs vice-president.

F: Mike Putney.

V: Mike Putney was running for external affairs vice-president, and Jimmy Legareta was running for activities coordinator. We were very successful in that three of the four officer candidates got into office. Mike Putney was the one who did not. But we ended up with Leo Sanchez and . . .

M: [coughing] What sorts of campaigning did you do? What was student council campaign like?

V: We had a very, very, very big campaign. We were the ACTION ticket. We went all out in putting together posters. We had campaign photos [laughs].

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Now that I think about it we had campaign photos. We had posters. There was a special, The Prospector went as far as to put out a special campaign issue that dealt with nothing but, and I've got a copy of it in here somewhere, that dealt with nothing but all the candidates who were running for student council, both the officers and the council members; which I was very impressed. I thought this is what The Prospector should be doing; this type of thing. They put out a special issue just for that.

M: How carefully did students follow campaigns in the late 70's, early 80's?

V: That year I think it was big because that's the time that we started with controversy over the cuts, the budget cuts that Reagan was implementing and which were going to affect our financial aid. Like I said, simultaneously on the state level we were also facing the increases in tuition, the tuition increases. Back then we were paying four dollars a credit hour. I don't know what it's like now, but four dollars is very inexpensive. We saw the financial aid cuts as being, as affecting our student body very significantly because of the makeup of our student body. More than fifty percent of our student body at that time was receiving some sort of financial aid. The majority of our student body, well not the majority, a good percentage of the student body was holding some sort of part-time job. It was just the nature of our student body. You know we are a commuter school. I think we always have been. The fact that the majority of the student body are Hispanics and at that point they were, I don't know if they still are now. A lot of them came from lower income families so, therefore it was important for them to maintain, to be able to meet their financial needs here at UTEP.

M: Okay, so this is, these were the sort of issues that came up while you were the internal affairs?

V: Right.

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M: Okay, and then when did you decide to run for the student association president?

V: It was that end of the year.

M: Which was, which year?

V: Which was '81, May '81. I was graduating and had not quite decided what I was going to do career wise. I had held a job over at the Electric Company doing public relations, which is what my degree is in. It's journalism with a public relations option. I had not decided whether that was exactly what I wanted to do. Having an interest in public administration and or law, I decided to hang around an extra year and take some classes in that. We had pretty much, that would have been '80--'81 and about that time we had fought the tuition increases as hard as we could and that was behind us. We had supported Ronald Coleman back in those days, because Ronald Coleman was very much aware of what we were striving for, but that was pretty much behind us. The elections had gone by. I'm talking about the gubernatorial elections; those were behind us. Those issues kind of went away for a while. I know that Luis Patino still vowed to work on them, and it never really came up again; not that following year. When I got elected SA president, I started in June of 1981, we were really on a . . . internally within our student association, one of my personal goals was to unify the student association again. We had seen a lot of small factions growing within the student association to where we weren't really doing very much. We weren't accomplishing a whole lot. That was one of my personal goals as student body president, to unify the student association. That was one of the things that I did manage to accomplish, that I felt very good about. I think over all it did help the student body, because then we had all sixteen student council members and the officers, all headed in one direction. We

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were all aiming towards the same thing. Since we had been so political the year before, we had gotten involving with a lot of politicking and a lot of lobbying and things like that. The next year when I took over, we concentrated a lot on just trying to provide services on campus. It was a very service orientated student association. We had heard many complaints during our campaigning, that well what is a student association do for the everyday student here at UTEP. We took that criticism and said, " Well, we're going to do something."

M: Okay.

V: We started out, from beginning of the year we set up our goals and objectives and in fact I have list of the projects that we under took. [Taking out some papers.] I didn't even know that I even had this anymore. There were very general goals, for example: providing recognition for students, providing something that was, something that would help the commuter students--people who had to drive back and forth, from home to school and things like that.

M: What kinds of specific things did you come up with?

V: The File-A-Book Program, which has been in existence for a long time. We finally got a full-time person to work at the File-A-Book Program, all day during the first, I think the week before school started and then for about two weeks thereafter. We had a full-time File-A-Book person, coordinator, File-A-Book coordinator.

M: You might explain what that is?

V: The File-A-Book Program is a program where students can take their used books. They put them on file at the office, and we actually had a File-A-Book office, and other students who would be interested in purchasing that particular book would look it up, based on subject and professor, I guess,

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and then purchase that book. They would look at the card, see who was selling that particular book, and then call up the person, and arrange to buy the book from that person. Which was a very good option, alternative I guess, to buying books, regardless of whether they were used or new, at the book store. They could usually buy a used book at File-A-Book, through File-A-Book at an even lower price than they could buy a used book at the book store.

M: What other kinds of things did?

V: Well, that was that. That very first semester of the Fall of 1981 we increased the library hours, because we had heard about how you can't even go study at the library during finals week, so we put this out [looks at document]. We had increased the hours from 8:00 am to 12:00 midnight and this was for -- what does it say out here-- two weeks, I believe. It took effect the week before finals and it continued through the week of finals. We did that. Everybody was very supportive, President Monroe was supportive, the library staff was supportive, and the whole bit. Focusing on our goal to try to help commuter students we decided to sponsor a car maintenance workshop which we thought, this is something that any student could probably take advantage of. I believe we had two car maintenance workshops, this here was one of them. It was held at Ysleta Vocational High School. I had completely forgotten about this until I pulled out this little folder. [chuckles] It was free. Everything that we did was free to all students, since it was student money that we were using to fund these little activities. We never charged students anything for any of this. We put together an apartment referral, and this was aimed at our older student population, students who were probably married, the non-traditional students who were married and were no longer living at home and were concerned about finding a place to live

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close to campus. This was put together, and Lesly Morgan, who was my internal affairs vice-president, she was the one who headed this program. What we did is we sent letters out to a lot of the surrounding apartment complexes and put this information together. It's basically just information on all the different apartment complexes in the area close to UTEP. This was something again that was a first, along with car maintenance workshop, along with the increase library hours, all of these were firsts. This one was our . . . I remember just sitting there at a student council meeting, and we were all thinking, well you know we really need to do something that any student anywhere can take advantage of. I mean, here they pay their student fees, and any Joe Blow out there should be able to take advantage of something. We just decided to have a Summer cook out, and this was at Leech Grove. We had it from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. We gave out free hot-dogs, chips and cokes to any student that would show up at Leech Grove during lunch time. And we had a good turnout, (were you there) [to Ken Tarrago].

F: No.

V: You weren't there. We had a good turnout. And it was the student council members out there cooking the hot dogs and everything. This is something that has always been on-going--the Honors List. The certificates and everything are purchased by the student association, and then each of the departments are the ones that put the lists together. But that was in keeping with our goal to offer recognition to the students. The Share-A-Ride program, I'd forgotten about that, we had had a Share-A-Ride program, but I think this year was the first time that we had a computerized program. And what we did is, during registration we had a table available where the students could sign up for--students who were interested in the program--could sign up, and they filled out this information in, as to when they

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arrived on campus and when they left campus. And then we were feeding this into a computer and trying to match them with other students. And the computers would come up with a computer list of possible matches. So that was a--also a--new twist. We had had this before, but I think this was the first year we had computerized it.

M: The City used to have some kind of share-a-ride program too.

V: Uh huh, uh huh. I believe after that, and this is after I was gone, they may have experimented with the idea of providing choice parking spots for students who were involved in the share-a-ride program. I don't know if that ever came about. I think it did. I'm not sure. The ice-cream social . . . if you recall this was shortly after Dr. Monroe had come to campus. Dr. Monroe was very concerned with academia and having a convocation. He was the one who started the tradition of having convocations here at UTEP. So this was just the student association's effort to try to get students involved. We just had an ice-cream social before the convocation, trying to get them to attend. This here was our list [indicating to a list at hand] of projects, projects that we had decided to undertake that particular year, which was '81--'82. We were looking back -- at the end the year we looked and back and thought, well, we really did accomplish a lot. A lot that we set out to do was actually done and that was the main difference between our administration and prior administrations in that we were -- effective. We got things done. The good thing was that I like to think, that since we were getting things done, there wasn't a whole lot of controversy.

M: Umm, hmm.

V: In my opinion, no news was good news as far as The Prospector was concerned. [chuckles] We weren't making a whole lot of headlines but then again the things that make the headlines are the bad . . .

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M: Yeah, there's a lot of controversy.

V: . . . controversies. One thing we fought very hard . . . oh, Dr. Monroe, that was the year . . . that was the year I think Dr. Monroe starting having his meetings -- we would have monthly meetings with Dr. Monroe, and that was our opportunity to speak to the administration about important issues -- two-way communication, also finding out what they were doing. That was about the time we changed the school colors. Dr. Monroe had set up a special committee to look into changing the school colors. I was on the committee, Jimmie Legareto was on the committee, and I don't remember who all else.

M: That's when you decided to . . .

V: . . . to add the blue. Before that it had been orange and white. We added the blue so that the official colors became UTEP orange and Columbian Blue, is what it's called, and it's sort of a light blue, a light shade of blue, sort of a baby blue or a sky blue.

M: Let me go back for a moment and just ask you something about running for office, two different years you were involved. What kind of voting blocks were there or what were the role of different groups on campus? At one time fraternities and sororities dominated campus life back in the 1950's. What were the groups or blocks that influenced, if there groups or blocks, in the late 70's early 80's?

V: The year that I ran for . . . the very first year that I ran for student council like I said the group that I had joined, the ticket was primarily a Mecha ticket, like sort of a Chicano student ticket. If I'm not mistaken that was last that we ever saw a per se Chicano movement ticket involved in student government. That was the last year. After that we did have tickets. For example, I was involved with the action ticket, and I believe we ran against a New Deal ticket.

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F: It just kind of depended.

V: They had a good portion of sororities and fraternities students within the tickets, but it wasn't composed completely of sororities . . .

M: They were more spread around, rather than having . . .

F: It wasn't a block per se.

V: Umm, hmm.

M: . . . their ticket.

V: Umm, hmm.

F: Engineering generally banded that the Engineering candidates. You know you knew somebody in your fraternity or sorority who was running generally that was a good source of votes.

V: Actually, I think a lot of it was strategy and sort of a marketing strategy. We knew that if we could get a diverse ticket . . .

M: Umm, hmm.

V: . . . it would be easier to get into office that way. [laughs]

M: Sure.

V: Because each candidate would be pushing his ticket. If we got an engineering student on our ticket, he'd be pushing out at the Engineering Building. The liberal arts people would be pushing here in the Liberal Arts Building, and that was the way to get elected. I think we just wised up. [laughs] We wised up, and most of the tickets were that way--they were diverse, very diverse--and that was the strategy when we were forming the tickets. That was the strategy. You know we felt, well we've got a liberal arts, we've got an engineering student, we need a frat or sorority person, a little bit of everything.

M: So, it seems like at the time you started maybe there was still in campus politics a little bit of an Anglo-Chicano split from earlier . . .

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V: Just a little bit.

M: . . . but then that begins to dissipate and you have different kinds of alignments after that, and different issues of concern to students.

V: Sure, sure. We were very much aware of the fact that we . . . I think we reacted to Dr. Monroe and that was a very big . . . Dr. Monroe came from [Texas] A & M.

M: Yes, I remember.

V: A & M, you know the character of A & M University is very, very different from ours. We are a commuters campus, whereas they were not. They had most of their students living on campus, or a significant portion of their students living on campus. They were very rich in tradition, whereas we lacked some of that tradition. And when Dr. Monroe came on campus, he wanted, he wanted that tradition. And he wanted that closeness, that tradition, that pride that A & M students felt for their university. But the nature of our university was very different. And we spent, the very first year that he was here, we spent . . . [End of Side One]

[Side Two]

M: You said you were basically trying to teach Dr. Monroe about . . .

V: . . . what our student body was like. We said the majority of them are Hispanic, many of them have jobs, many of them are dependent on financial aid--the average age of our student body at that time was 25. I don't know what it's now, but the average age was 25, also which coincides with the commuter student body. We said, "This campus is empty by one o'clock in the afternoon. Everybody is gone, everybody has come in and put in their hours and is gone, probably off at a part-time job." One of the big controversies that we had with the administration, that was the year that the administration decided that for all of their academic scholarships they were

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going to require students, students receiving academic scholarships, had to fulfill their 30 hour requirement within their first or second semester. And that was a very big controversy, the entire student association was against that. We said, "We see absolutely nothing wrong with giving them a full calendar year, which would mean they would have, they would be able to use the summer sessions to fulfill that 30 hour requirement within their first year. And again, keeping in mind the make-up of the student body. We [student association] said, "A lot of these people are working part-time, a lot of these people very purposely decide to take a 12 hour load in the fall, a 12 hour load in the spring, and then finish the six hours in the summer." They said, "It doesn't make them any less of a student; these are still your 'A' students who are worthy of these scholarships, of the academic scholarships; it's just that a lot of them have this need to work." And we fought that very, very, hard, and the administration won out. But we didn't forget, we didn't forget that loss, and towards the end of the year, my year as president, we had a very unfortunate incident, which was Phil Holt. He was an engineering student who was a senior, and he . . . on their way to an engineering convention the automobile that he was driving in had an accident, and he got killed. And he was a non-traditional student, what we call non-traditional student, after high school he had gone and served time in the military, and then he had come back to school to get his degree. He was engineering degree; he was an excellent . . . he was mortor board, high honors, high grades, the ideal student, and he got killed in that automobile accident. So we, sort of to get back at Dr. Monroe for that 30 hour requirement, we decided to set up a scholarship in Phil Holt's name, and I imagine that still exists. And the only requirements that we made for the scholarship was that they be, number one, a non-traditional student, and our

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definition of non-traditional was: a student who after graduating from high school had been out of the academics for at least a year, and who was now pursuing a degree here at the university. And the other requirement was that he fulfill 30 hours in one calendar year. And that was also one way that we were serving a non-traditional student. Again we had a very significant number of students who were non-traditional. So that was our little contribution to helping the non-traditional students. We did a lot. . . One other thing that I remember we did, I don't know if it still goes on, but because of the non-traditional, all the evening students that we had, we extended the hours of our student association election well into the evening hours, so they could also participate. And we extended . . . we did that here as well as out at the Nursing College.

M: What about other incidents, at one time we mentioned something earlier when we were talking about campus controversies, how once it had Chicano demonstrations, and we had anti-war demonstrations, what kind of . . . closest thing to demonstrations while you were at UTEP?

V: Demonstrations . . . well I guess just the Iranian one, is the one that comes . . .

M: So what happened with the Iranians.

V: . . . immediately to mind. We had a . . . there was, I believe there was an Iranian students group, and what I mean by that is an actual registered student organization for Iranian students, and they had decided to have a demonstration, and they had gone to talk to Dean Avila and decided they wanted to have their little demonstration out at the Student Union court yard, and the veterans group, which was Ki Gamma, had gotten wind of that, and they didn't like that. They thought that was somewhat un-American. I guess the Iranian students, I guess that was in the days when they were

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supporting the Ayatollah or what was going on?

F: The hostages were still in possession . . . were still held in the Embassy.

V: That's right, that was in the Carter-Reagan days when we had the American Hostages in Iran. So here were the Iranian students, like I said earlier, you have to recall their position at that time. Their funds had been frozen; they couldn't pay for their tuition; they couldn't pay for their housing; they couldn't pay for anything. And I remember the University taking special measures to provide for them because of that. But they decided to have their demonstration out at the Union, and they did, and it was around lunch time, I suppose, and it wasn't until towards the end of the demonstration; well throughout the demonstration we kept hearing a lot of people yelling out . . .

M: You were watching the demonstration?

V: Yeah, I was just there as an observer. And there were a few people mostly some of these Ki Gamma students, yelling things out at the Iranian students, and I think it just--one person yelled out something, and another person yelled, and it just got worse and worse and worse. And when the demonstration ended, everybody, people decided to just start running after them. And they dropped everything that they had, and they just started running for their lives. And they ran around the Student Union building, and here were all these Ki Gamma people, and then everybody else decided to jump in on it too. And they ran around to the back of the Union Building to one of the doors that leads to the, I guess one of the staff entrances to the cafeteria, and that was the only door they found open--cause I remember that too--they kept going from door to door, and all the doors were locked. And that was the first door that they found open, and they went inside, and I

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remember we did get the police out there. And then the students were out there. They wouldn't leave. They were angry at these Iranian students. Until after a while it finally calmed down. F: They started to leave when they realized they weren't going to get inside.

V: But as far as actual demonstrations, that was the only demonstration that I can think of during the time that I was here. Things had settled down tremendously, had calmed down a lot. And I think we were getting a lot done; we were not so concerned with the politics. We were just getting down to business. We had one small controversy toward the end of my year with the Student Fees Allocations Committee, which is a committee that recommends to Dr. Monroe how student fees should be allocated among the different groups that receives the fees. And again, that was primarily Prospector initiated, in that they wanted to sit in at our committee meetings. Now the committee is consisted primarily, the majority of the committee are students anyway, and they are students selected by the Student Association. But the Prospector felt a need, for some reason, to sit through these meetings to see how their monies were being allocated. And we received an opinion from Legal Counsel who said we were not part of--we did not fall under the open meetings law--we did not have to open our meetings to the press, since we had no power. We were just a recommending committee, and they asked me, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "Well, in all fairness to the members of the committee we should ask the members of the committee. They're the ones who are going to have sit here with the press in the same room." And so we did, and everybody--including the students--voted [that], we didn't want the press in the room. And that turned into a pretty big controversy with the political cartoons, and I'll never forget that that was the only negative publicity that I can think of that I ever got, that political cartoon. They

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had a Brutus stabbing Caesar in the back, and I was Brutus, and Caesar was the student body.

M: What about other things on campus, anything like fads? I think earlier we mentioned earlier things like streaking or things like that, that they had experiences earlier?

V: We caught the tail end of that. I think it might have been my freshman year when I saw a streaker. We were having one of the Homecoming parades, and there was a streaker running through the Homecoming parade, but that's all I remember. The years that I was here we had a losing football team--I don't know that that's changed.

F: Maybe the only thing was Hackysack was big, you know that little ball people would kick around with their feet.

V: Yeah, yeah that was big among students.

F: You would find a few of those going around the plaza.

V: That was big and what else? Sort of the tail end of the country-western fad.

F: Yeah, the urban cowboy craze.

V: Yeah, the urban cowboy fad, because I remember I wore cowboy boots to school everyday.

F: The urban cowboy craze was going down, and New Wave music was on its way in.

V: New Wave music was on its way in. "Rock Lobster," The B-52s, slam dancing, that was big.

M: What about other kinds of less pleasant trends. Things like alcohol or drugs, or things like that?

V: I cannot recall that we ever addressed anything like that.

F: Were there beer sales in the Union yet?

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V: Yeah, that was one of the things . . . we got beer sales in the Union, and that was probably around 78-79, when we finally started selling beer in the cafeteria. And we had been fighting that for a long time, and as a matter of fact when Dr. Monroe took over, he was not very crazy about selling beer in the cafeteria. And we thought he was going to put an end to it, but he didn't, and we proceeded. It was under very, very controlled rules. I think it was only sold after twelve o'clock and up to seven o'clock. But it led to some other nice things, like the Student Union . . . the Student Programs Office started having dinner theaters out there. It was nice to go to the Dinner theater, and they would serve beer and wine prior to going in and having dinner and sitting down and watching the dinner theater. We managed to turn it into a positive thing rather than something negative. But I really don't remember very many problems with drinking or drugs or anything like that.

M: What about parking? Any problems or issues . . .

V: Parking has always been a problem. [chuckles] The share-a-ride program was one of our attempts to try to alleviate that problem. Really when you stop and think about it, it's not so much a problem of not having sufficient parking for all of our commuters, it's a matter of the fact that the commuters have to walk such a long way from the parking lot to where their classes are held, where their classes are located . . . that's the real problem . . . cause there's always been sufficient parking.

M: Let me tie in a few loose threads here. Were there any particular professors, members of the administration, members of the staff that were particularly useful, inspirational or whatever, during the time you were here?

V: I just saw that we elected that year that I was there, we elected Dr.

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Chaplewey as teacher of the year or professor of the year. He was a -- I don't know if he's still here, but he was a . . .

M: He's retired now.

V: . . . He was Biology professor, who taught a lot of the freshman Biology courses. [He was] Very interesting, very fascinating . . . very inspirational to a lot of the students, very enjoyable. People enjoyed his classes.

M: Umm, hmm. Did you do something with faculty evaluations or something?

V: Oh! That was one of the things that we had, were pursuing to preform faculty evaluation for the students to have faculty evaluations. That didn't get very far because, again tieing in with Dr. Monroe's . . . administration -- we had a problem with. At that time Dr. Monroe decided to implement his merit, his faculty merit system, which up until that point I don't we had anything as structured, maybe something informally existed, but we had not had anything that structured up until that point. It was because of the merit, implementing the merit system that this didn't really fly. The faculty evaluations didn't really fly. He got a lot of heat over that. My understanding was that there was a . . . concern to limit the number of faculty tenures. In his opinion, and I remember him talking to us about this at our monthly meetings with Dr. Monroe, in his opinion faculty tenures were positions of great honor and of prestige and were not to be given out to just anyone. It was certainly not to be measured by the amount of time a person, a teacher had spent at the university. Unfortunately we lost very many good professors because of that, and Dr. Elkins was one of them, and Dr. Gentry was another one, who were the debate coaches. They had been here for -- oh, not too, too long, but you know four or five years. They realized that tenure was just about, it was almost impossible the way the program had been

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implemented.

M: Let me ask about your own family background in terms of coming to college and had either or your parents attended college . . .

V: No.

M: . . . or other faculty members.

V: Or?

M: Excuse me other family members.

V: Family members. No, I was the first one in my family to receive a graduate degree. Neither of my parents had any kind of a formal education. My father dropped out of the first grade. My mother quit after the sixth grade, I believe. If it wasn't for a very concern sociology professor in high school. He did his part, and I wish I knew where he was now, but he did his part to try to get a lot of the Hispanic students at Jefferson High School to go on to college. I rememeber he showed up one day in class and had a stack of UTEP applications.

M: Oh!

V: That's how . . . it's almost embarassing for me to admit it, but that's how I ever even ended up in college. He came up to me and he says, "You've got the grades, you're going to college," and he handed me an application. He said, "Fill this out, send it in and when they send you some materials back, come back and see me." That's how it happened. I really didn't have any plans to go on to college . . . despite that fact that I had done well in high school. It was just one of those things. I guess when you come from a family, who has not had any kind of a college education . . .

M: Sure.

V: . . . and you grow up in a area, I grew up in south El Paso, where not very many people have a college education. I don't know. I'm very grateful

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to him.

M: What do you think that you got out of UTEP or what do you think you remember most about your years at UTEP?

V: I have very fond memories of UTEP. [giggles] They range everything from the pride that I felt winning those debate trophies and bringing them back to UTEP. I imagine they're still around here somewhere, I don't know. That was a good feeling because . . . I remember going to debate tournaments where people would say, "What's a UTEP?" [laughs] We'd say, "University of Texas at El Paso." We spread the name around, so there was a lot pride there, through the debate team. The university . . . being such a -- the university having such a unique student body, being bi-cultural and being a commuter student body, a commuter campus, you meet a lot of very interesting people here. It is very different from a lot of universities. It's not gonna be like your A&M's or your Texas Tech's or your UT's. It's very, very unique. I remember thinking, "I wonder if there's any university, anywhere in this country that even comes close to being a lot like UTEP." And we did find one and that's Pan American University, down at . . .

F: Edinburg [Texas].

V: Edinburg. They also had, being on, being a border town, they had student population that was primarily Hispanic, also very, very much relying on Financial Aid . . .

M: Right.

V: . . . things like that. I've always thought of UTEP as being very unique, very, very unique, in terms of a student composition.

M: What did you do after you graduated, after you completed your year of . . .

V: Oh, after I left . . .

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M: . . . after you graduated?

V: Well, it was that year that I still didn't know what I wanted to do. I tried law school for a while. A lot of people were trying law school, that was the thing to do. [giggles] It was -- we had a lot of people go off to law school. I tried law school for a while. I decided that wasn't for me, and I even tried going back and doing some public relations, and that really wasn't for me. The problem with public relations is that it wasn't very intellectually stimulating. The problem with law school was, I realized that regardless of the fact that you may go there with good intentions, and thinking, "Well, I want to help people," which a lot of students do think that, in the end it all ends up being, it all comes down to economics, money . . . so I quit that.

M: Okay, so what did you do then?

V: Oh, then I went to Dallas, and I've been there ever since. I've been working as paralegal. It started out as a temporary job, since I had just gotten out of law school, that was one thing I did know how to do; started out as a temporary job, and I've been there for three and half years. It's intellectually stimulating, but I don't have to make the decisions about, what's this dead person gonna cost us . . . and that's what we end up doing a lot of.

M: One last thing also, I noticed that I didn't really ask you about, you mentioned joining this first ticket on the student association because they needed a woman on the ticket . . .

V: Umm, hmm.

M: . . . because it overlooked it . . .

V: Umm, hmm.

M: . . . how many woman were involved in student government in those days

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and how conscious were you of being the first woman Student Association president?

V: Well, the female composition was always, it was always about half and half, that was not, as far as I can remember that was never a problem. I believe I was the first [female] Internal Affairs V.P. I know there was a woman executive vice-president, but I don't know whether if she was in charge of running the council meetings. I remember that when I got elected internal affairs vice-president, there was actually a Prospector reporter who said, "Well, do you think you're gonna be able to keep order in council, being a woman?" [laughs] I told him, "Well, I'm very well familiar with parliamentary procedures, and I can bang that gavel as loud as anybody. There's no reason why I shouldn't." So really it started back then, when I had taken over the vice-presidency and had to keep order in the Student Council meetings. Gosh, I heard stories about Student Council meetings being so loud and boisterous and unruly, and people breaking quorum, and a lot of that went on in the 70's, but again a lot of that had toned down by the time we were in office.

M: Was gender an issue at all when you ran for the president's position and what were . . .

V: People were aware of it, and it was certainly covered by The Prospector, the fact that if I were elected I would have been the first female student body president. But it I never really became an issue as far as campaigning. It never became an issue.

M: Okay, is there anything else I haven't asked you, that I should have quizzed you about?

V: Ah, no, that pretty much covers everything.