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José Cisneros
By William Steele
and Terrie Cornell

January 16, 1995

This is an oral history interview with Mr. José Cisneros taken on January 16, 1995 at Mr. Cisneros' home on 3703 Hueco. Interviewers are Terrie Cornell and William Steele. (Cisneros identified as "C" and Cornell identified as "CO")

S: José, I understand that you were born in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution. What do you remember about the Mexican Revolution?

C: Well, my birth was prior to the Mexican Revolution. I was born on April 18, 1910 and the Revolution began in November. So I really don't stick to the Porfirian regime.

S: But it was still going on at the time that you were a young boy of...

C: Well, I think I'll begin with the Revolution. Well, I grew [up] with the Mexican Revolution. And, at the beginning, I don't remember that we felt the impact of the Revolution not until probably about 1914 onwards. That part of Mexico remained quiet as much as I can remember.

CO: What part of Mexico was that?

C: This little town in northern Durango bordering with the state of Chihuahua. It was founded as a Tarahumara mission. And, I think, it was the first of the Tarahumara missions because

it was at the entrance of the Sierra Madre.

CO: Oh.

C: And it was established as a mission house of the Spanish style.

CO: This is where you grew up...

C: Uh-huh.

CO ...as a little boy?

C: The original name was San Miguel de las Bocas. That was the Spanish [name]. And after the Juárez Reform, they changed many of the towns' names. I think it's a terrible thing to do, to change the original names of the early towns. And it was about 1918 when some of the government forces were looking for rebels in the town. And they thought that many of the town people had hidden arms and money and so the government began to dig into the houses and burn them. And they let us go out of the houses. And they mostly completely destroyed the town and we were left without anything on us.

And from then we couldn't return to the houses, so my father thought that we would go to Parral where it was a bigger city and probably there would be a chance to begin our life. But, instead, we headed for Rosario, which is the last railroad station from Jiménez to Parral to Rosario. That was the nearest railroad station. So we were there in [Rosario] probably three and a half or four months and the government forces took - no, it was the Villista forces that took my father by force and to go with them. And we were left alone

with my mother. And she had one child in her arms and there was my youngest brother and I. And before that she had lost three of the children from starvation. And we stayed there surviving mostly on acorns. It was July and the only thing edible at that time was acorns that were very abundant at that time. Now, they have chopped all the trees and all of that part of the country has become desert. It was Lázaro Cárdenas' brother that chopped all the trees to make charcoal. And now everything there is almost like...it's not like when, in the old times, surrounded by oaks.

S: How long was your father with the Villistas?

C: Well, he evaded them probably all of the time that we stayed there...three and a half months. And he appeared there and we left that very night, at night towards Parral on foot. And on the way to Parral my mother lost the other child that she had and we had to bury him on the way to Parral.

And I had a half brother there that was working and he was the one that supplied the money for us to go to a railroad station between Parral and Jiménez called Vaca. Because at that time there were prospects of the mining near Vaca that was going to start and my father thought that he could get a job there, but he didn't. When it came to the Revolution the work never started. And we stayed there until - well, my father's brother lived in the next railroad station and he used to have a very big complex for mining supplies and a general store and billiards and living quarters for several

people. And he was [successful] because the railroad came at the turn of the century through that way and he began to have business there.

So, my uncle, my father's brother, wrote him at Vaca that the house was left alone there and he was planning to see if he could go there and live there and take care of what was left of the old house. So we went there and my father took care of the place, which was in shambles. And we stayed there until 1925. My brother in Parral had come to El Paso with my uncle. And he got a job here in El Paso, so he sent for us to come to Juárez. And where we were - that was a place where my uncle lived. Dorado was the name of the railroad station there where he had his business.

And when we were in Dorado another uncle of mine [came] who lived in El Valle de Allende, that in the early stages when it was founded it was also called El Valle de San Bartolomé. That's where [Don Juan de] Oñate and [Don Antonio] Espejo and most of the expeditions were supplied with food stuffs and cattle and so on. And my uncle came. And when we were in Dorado I happened to begin to learn [from] what they called then *Silabario* [Metódico]. It was a Spanish booklet that showed how to join letters and vowels and so on. And I began to learn to read with the help of my father. So when my uncle from El Valle de San Bartolomé came - and my mother was illiterate. When my uncle came and my mother told him that I could read now, that I used to read to her little pamphlets

and things like that, so he wanted me to go with him and start schooling there. So at that time I was eleven years old when I began to go to school.

And he took me there. I was barefooted still. [He] took me there and they put me with a group of little children because they thought I was going to start school. So they began to know that I was able to read, so they put me the next week in second grade. And from then on I stayed there until we left for Juárez. That was 1925. And from the last part of 1921 until the early part of 1925 was all the schooling I was able to get.

S: But you had started your drawing by then.

C: Well, since, I guess, since...when I was a child in Villa Ocampo I began to draw on wrapping paper, the walls, and so on, but just for the fun of it. And not until we went to Dorado that my uncle left a lot of old letters there and papers and cabinets, I began to use them to draw pictures. And when I was in El Valle I began to draw on typewriting paper. And that's how I began to...

S: But no training?

C: No, no training.

S: No teacher, no formal training at all?

C: I guess, I told John West why I became interested in history. There was the director, the principal of the school, [who] was a very fine man and he usually had, when I was in fourth grade, oral history of Mexico. And he usually delivered his

lessons orally instead of writing on the blackboard and we didn't have to memorize anything, just hear him. And I enjoyed that very much and that's how I became interested in history, trying to visualize how those characters dressed and I began to section by newspaper cuttings, clippings, related to history. And that's how I began my life. (chuckles)

S: So you developed your interest in history just along with your interest in art then...

C: Uh-huh.

S: ...at the same time? Then what happened when you moved to Juárez?

C: When my uncle and my brother got me a school passport and [I] began to study English at Lydia Patterson [Institute] and I stayed there until 1929. That was another three, four years of English, but I couldn't grab it very well because there was no way to practice it. We would come to school and learn the lesson, but went back to Juárez and we didn't speak English and we didn't have contact with English-speaking people. But by that time I began to acquire books little by little. And that's how I began to start my library.

And another thing...when I was in El Valle, Professor Villa was the one that gave us the history lesson. He received newspapers from Mexico City and when he had enough he would give them to my cousin, who had a little grocery, for wrapping paper. But I usually went for them every couple of weeks. But on the way I would scan them (chuckles) and

separate the pieces that I would like to keep, so I had a lot of newspapers hidden under a bed there. And when I went to Dorado with my parents I took them, but my mother didn't know what they were for, so the next time I went she had sold my collection. (laughter)

S: So you started all over again? When did you move to the United States?

C: Well, when I was at school I needed to get some extra money and I had a route with *El Continental* at that time. And because there were no new routes in downtown El Paso they gave me a route on - what was this section of town on Alameda? And, you know, this...

S: You meant down in the lower valley?

C: No, no. Right here at Washington Park and all that...

S: Oh, okay.

C: ...section there, but on the other side of the irrigation ditch. So I bought a bicycle and every morning I would come to deliver the paper before going to school.

S: And how old were you?

C: Well, I think when I was fifteen, probably seventeen, eighteen.

S: When did you start taking any lessons or get any instruction in art?

C: I never did.

S: You never did? That's...

C: I usually went to the public library and [I'd] go to the

books. And not until I met Tom Lea, that introduced me to Miss [Maud Durlin] Sullivan, [El Paso Public Library Director], I began to.... She was a very gentle woman, very kind, very understanding. And since she knew Tom Lea - and carried herself very well - she had a special attention for me. And whenever I went she told me that I didn't have to ask permission to see her...just go straight and open the door. Whatever I needed she would find it for me. So she introduced me to several top illustrators through the books, like Charles Dana Gibson and Harold Smith and Norman Rockwell and so on. She would have a lot of art books that she allowed me to use and to study.

CO: You met her by going to the library?

C: Beg your pardon?

CO: You met her by going to the library?

C: No. When Tom Lea was working on his mural at the courthouse I took several of my sketches to show him. And he seemed to like them and even thought that it would be a good idea to exhibit them at the library, so he gave me a note of introduction for Miss Sullivan and that's the way I met her. And she accepted the offer of coming to show my work there. And she did [exhibit my work]. And at that time Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt was coming to El Paso. And she said, "Probably, I'm going to invite Mrs. Roosevelt to come to the library and probably she will see your exhibit here." But it happened that she didn't show up there. (chuckles)

S: What year was that?

C: Uh...

S: Even Tom Lea must have been a very young man then.

C: Oh, yes. I think it was 1935.

S: So you two have known each other for a long...

C: Oh, yes.

S: ...long time. Tell us something about Tom Lea.

C: Well, since the beginning we became very good friends and I think he has been my advisor ever since. And if you got the...

CO: Turn it off. (taping stopped and started again) You might want to ask the question, again.

S: Are there any stories or...

C: I have...

S: ...anecdotes that you can tell about Tom Lea?

C: There are many, but I have to get them together and recall them. I have difficulty in putting my thoughts together. (chuckles)

S: The letter that he wrote to you mentions you walking into the courthouse.

C: That's what I was telling you that...how I met Miss Sullivan. It was on account of my meeting him there at the courthouse and showing my sketches, my pictures.

S: Uh-huh. And then she arranged for a one-man show for you at the library?

C: Uh-huh.

S: What kind of paintings or what kind of drawings did you have?

C: Pen and ink drawings. And I had about forty pieces at that time at the library because I had been doing.... Before that I had done, already, illustrations for a couple of Mexico's magazines - [*Revista de Revistas* and *Vida Mexicana*] - that they used them on the covers. And there were about two or three feature stories on my work, so when Tom saw them he was very enthusiastic about them. And as I said, since then we have been very close friends and [he has been] mostly my advisor and everything that I have trouble with. Through him I have been able to.... You know, Tom has tremendous talent and even then his work was requested from everywhere. And he was busy with the books of - I forget the.... I stayed on the ranch at Paisano, Frank Dobie's.

CO: Right.

C: So he was illustrating that book on *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver* and he had another one coming from Dobie, from Little Brown and Company in Boston. So there was another book that they wanted him to illustrate written by Bill Johnson. He was then a representative of *Life* and *Time* magazine in Dallas. And I met him one time when Carl Hertzog and I went to Paris, Texas, on account of one of our books that we illustrated. So Tom Lea was very busy and so he offered my service to Little, Brown, and Company to do a book on the conquest of Mexico for young readers. And they accepted my work and I did the work for them. And that was one of the first big-time publishers.

And since then several other publishers in New York and Chicago and Washington [asked me to do illustrations for them]. And I have been doing illustrations for many, many different authors and different types of books. Like one I did for John Carroll on - it's a two-volume book - on the black military experience, the black soldiers. And it's a two-volume book that I illustrated. And I did work for Harold McCracken, the director of the museum in Wyoming, [the Whitney Gallery of Western Art]. He wrote a book on *The American Cowboy* and included my illustration with those of Remington and a lot of other very successful authors. And then I also illustrated another two-volume, [*A Ranching Saga*, Trinity University Press, 1976] on the [William Electious and Ewing] Halsell family of San Antonio by Dr. - what's his...

Co: We can look it up.

C: Well, he [William Curry Holden] lives in.... Well, he just died not many years ago. He lived in Lubbock and he was a very close friend of Peter Hurd. And Tom Lea was supposed to do that and he recommended to do the book for the Halsell family and Trinity University Press published it. And there's so many, many of the books that I even forgot how many I have illustrated. And it was mostly on account of Tom Lea's influence.

S: When you first met Tom Lea was his father mayor of El Paso then or he had been before?

C: I think he had died at that time.

S: He had died by then?

C: Uh-huh.

S: But he had been mayor back before the turn of the century?

C: Uh-huh.

S: Okay. What else can you tell us about Maud Sullivan? She is an interesting character in El Paso's history.

C: Well, most of the contact that I had with her was when I would go to the library and ask for information or Carl Hertzog would do something for her. Carl did several little things for her and many of them needed some kind of illustrations in it.

CO: Was she a tall woman or small or...

C: Medium size. But she always seemed to be smiling.

CO: Was she a funny person?

C: No, she was very kind and you would enjoy talking with her because she had a pleasant voice and a pleasant way to talk.

S: Was the library then where it is now?

C: No, it was - well, the same size, but it was the old Carnegie building. And then I met Helen Farrington. But she, also, was a great woman librarian.

CO: Helen Farrington?

C: Uh-huh.

CO: I don't know that name.

C: Well, she came after Miss Sullivan and she was also a good friend of Carl Hertzog. And we would join together in several things.

S: Did she sponsor one-man shows?

C: No, I didn't have any more shows. From then on most of my work had been for reproduction for books.

S: When did you meet Carl Hertzog?

C: Almost at the same time that [I met] Miss Sullivan...through Tom Lea. They had been working on a book on [Francisco Vázquez de] Coronado, but it happened that Tom Lea asked me if I would do the illustrations for Carl because he had a lot to do. He was working on the mural and had several commissions that he had to fulfill. So then Carl Hertzog found out that a publisher in San Francisco - I don't remember the name - was working on the same project and they had the money to do it, so we had to leave that one. And, instead, we began to do little things. One thing I illustrated for him was the journey of three Englishmen across Texas.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

C: At that time I did that Christmas greeting [folders] for Robert McKee. To me, it was the best paying job at that time. And Mr. McKee liked that very much and he began to send his greetings to most of his business associates. So we got great - what would I say - response from several art-loving people.

S: Were these Christmas cards?

C: It was not Christmas cards. It was rather a folder with a....
The theme that I used was "Building the Governor's Palace in
Santa Fe."

CO: Huh!

C: And it was a big picture with a caption and a flap with hand
lettering and so on.

CO: This was R. E. McKee...

C: Uh-huh.

CO: ...the construction contractor?

C: Uh-huh.

S: So he sent those out...

C: Uh-huh.

S: ...each Christmas?

C: No, that...

S: Just that once?

C: ...that year.

CO: That year.

C: But then we did several things like that for different people.

S: But you did the drawings on it and he...

C: Uh-huh.

S: ... had them printed up.

C: Book plates and greetings and stationery, everything that Carl
could get his hands on. Like the Conquistador Award that Paul
Hervey began to.... We did that in the early days and they
still use [it].

CO: And the library logo for the downtown library?

C: Well, I gave that to the library. I donated it. And we did a lot of things together. Another was *The Red River Valley Then and Now: [Stories of People and Events in the Red River Valley During the First Hundred Years of Its Settlement]*, by George [Alexander White] Neville of Paris, Texas. And at that time they invited us to have an exhibit of the illustrations in the library in Paris. And also Mr. Mays, who was the editor of the newspaper in Paris, invited us to go there for a celebration of the release of the book and also the exhibit there. And they had also a meeting of the Associated Press. There were more than two hundred members of the - this is a name for the association - but Carl delivered a speech there and he asked me to do a brief [speech]. And I had a lot of trouble, but he thought it was very good what I said. I don't know. And that was my first experience in public speaking.

CO: Oh! (laughter)

C: And from then on we went to Austin and we met a friend that for many years we enjoyed doing things together. Dr. Carlos Castañeda, who was in charge of the Latin American Library at the university and Miss [Fannie] Ratchford, who was the director of the library. I had a great experience with her because she took me to the vault of the library and showed me documents that they have, like a letter in the handwriting of Cortez and letters from [George] Washington and several presidents that they have there and one document from [Christopher] Columbus...a lot of things that she thought that

I might be interested in. And, also, they introduced me to several of the faculty there. And we kept friendship by correspondence like - what was it? I'm losing my memory of the things that I...

Co: What was the name of the librarian who took you in the vault?
The lady, Mrs...

C: Ratchford. Ratchford.

Co: Okay.

C: And there was.... I have his autograph and [he was] very nice - I can't recall him because I have been so many years, now. But at that time I made a lot of friends at the University of Texas, like many of the old timers at that time...A. C. Green and Jenkins and several others.

And then many years later they invited us to a celebration with Carl Hertzog at San Antonio. And they housed us at the place where they have - now I forget the name of the place - but we were [treated] very elegantly. It's for special visitors to the university system in San Antonio.

Co: Huh!

C: Lucher's house I think it was.

Co: Huh!

C: It used to belong to a railroad tycoon that he donated it to the university. And they keep it in very fine shape. And a lot of beautiful libraries they have there.... A lot of things...art work and statues in the gardens and so on. So that's some of my adventures with the book business.

S: As I remember, you did the seal of the City of El Paso, did you not?

C: No. What I did was the coat of arms of the City of Juárez. I did the seal of the university here at El Paso...

S: I see.

C: ...two times...when it was Texas Western College and then when it became University of Texas.

S: But you did the seal for the City of Juárez?

C: Uh-huh.

S: Can you describe it and tell us how you were asked to do it?

C: Well, let me show you the... (Mr. Cisneros exits to retrieve sketches) They were produced... (flipping through pages of book)

S: This is the John West biography of you.

CO: Here it is.

S: Can you describe for the tape recorder what...

C: Well...

S: ...the symbology is of it.

C: Well, I wrote in heraldry to the right of the shield and this There's a complete science of heraldry. So many shields are done very arbitrarily, so I tried to follow the heraldry truths and divided it into in four parts, quadrants they called it. So the first quarter is a symbolism of Paso del Norte, the mountains and the pass here and the Northern Star. Then on this one I used...

S: It's the upper right quadrant then.

C: This is the origin of the community. It's part of the Franciscan Order. That's the four wounds of our Lord as they depicted them in sculpture, in coat of arms, and so on. And the third one is when Juárez became a presidio with Indian lands and Spanish lands.

S: That's on the lower left corner.

C: And now the present city with the monument of Juárez here, cotton, and so on. That was the main crop at that time. Now, they are building everywhere and erasing the farms and...

CO: No more cotton fields.

S: How about on top?

C: Well, it's a an Aztec knight eagle that I thought it was proper for the top of the shield.

CO: What is this down here?

C: That's the model that.... I had another but they decided to use this one. But I don't know if you can [read it]. It's in Spanish. I need my...

Co: Oh, your glasses! (laughter)

C: (reading) "...Refugio de la libertad, custodia de la república." It alludes to.... Because Juárez was the last chapter that President Juárez came in and had his last stand here in Juárez. That's Benito Juárez. And "custodia" because it became the capital of Mexico here with Juárez, so they decided on this for the model.

S: Who asked you to do the seal?

C: Well, it was a friend of mine, Professor Armando Chávez. He's

a historian and he has written a history of Juárez and also Rene Mascareñas, who is a very good friend of mine. He was a mayor of Juárez. He was the one that sponsored the...

S: Oh, I see.

C: And, see, these are some of my early illustrations for *The Mexico Magazine* from Lloyd Burlingham. And during the war when I registered the first time, I was already married and they kept me on 4-F. And by the next batch that they called for I already had one of my girls and so they never called me to war. But in the meantime, I went to technical institute and learned aircraft sheet metal.

S: Oh, is that right?

C: Uh-huh.

S: I see. Where was the institute?

C: It was then vocational school in.... It's Rio Grande and...

CO: Right here in El Paso?

C: Uh-huh.

S: Right here.

C: And I had a job in San Diego doing...in the aircraft factory, but my wife didn't want to go and I had my mother in Juárez who began to cry because we were leaving and so on. So I had to stay and I got a job at [El Paso] City Lines. That was a war industry at that time.

S: Uh-huh.

C: And that's why I became a painter with the City Lines.

CO: Until then, what did you do for a living?

C: I had been working at the White House [Department Store] as a window-trimmer.

CO: Window-trimmer?

C: They had display windows all around the Mills Building.

CO: Oh, at the White House. Okay. You put the displays in the windows?

C: Uh-huh. And it was also on account that when I left school I began to deliver groceries, but I was getting very low pay, five dollars a week, at that time. So one time I showed my pictures to [the] consul general from Mexico and he was very much enthusiastic, also, about art and he gave me a recommendation to the White House display department and that's how I got a job there.

S: I see.

C: And I stayed there most of the depression years.

S: And then what year did you go to work for the El Paso City Lines?

C: During the war. And I think it was [19]42.

S: [19]42. In the paint shop?

C: I began as a mechanic's helper. I never had any experience, but there was an opening at the paint department and they asked if I would go there. So I stayed there for almost thirty years, but it was a very boring job. I used to do my work when I came here at night.

S: Did you design the patterns for those street cars?

C: No, mostly it was straight painting only. Once in a while we

had.... They knew that I could make pictures, so I decorated some of the street cars. I think there's one here that I put. (leafs through a book) What I did, I designed - not the actual - but I invented the coat of arms of all the cities around like Las Cruces, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Chihuahua, Parral, and so on. And I decorated all around the street car with the coat of arms. They thought it was every colorful. This picture in the book...

S: You were probably the most elegant painter that any street car company ever had. (chuckles)

C: I don't know. Well, that's the only fun I had then.

CO: You did street cars. Did you do buses? Did you paint buses as well as street cars?

C: Yes, the entire equipment.

CO: But mostly boring spray paint?

C: Uh-huh.

S: So you really were working at two occupations at the same time - one as an artist and one on the street car line.

C: Well, at night when I had the time to spare.

CO: You mentioned you worked downstairs in your basement. A person like me doesn't think of an artist painting in a basement. There's not enough light.

C: Well, you know, my work is working very close, like having [to work at] a desk.

CO: Uh-huh.

C: I don't have to get away from the work, so I work better

sitting down. And the basement is very quiet and no distractions and...

CO: You didn't need a lot of light?

C: No, I don't like to work [in a different location]. My girls even closed the porch there for me to work, but I prefer the basement.

S: But you do mostly line drawings...

C: Uh-huh.

S: ...anyway, black and white.

C: And I use a lot of color now, but I'm color-blind.

CO: I know.

C: By the way, I did this (points to sketches) for a series of historical drawings for the Edinburg Museum in Edinburg, Texas.

S: What's the name of that?

C: It's Hidalgo County Historical Museum. I did, I think, thirty-six, and they asked me to do sixteen more for them. And they are going to use them in a book to promote the museum and, also, to have them in the gallery there. And just this week, I think it was Friday, that Tom Ford, the director of the museum, asked me to do seven more so they can have fifty for the complete collection. And I haven't received the instructions yet, so I'm pending with them now.

S: So you do the color on those, too?

C: Uh-huh. All of these were in color. And there were forty-six all together.

S: And how do you keep track of the colors when you're color-blind?

C: Well, I have to look at the name of the color and try to...

S: So all the pencils are labeled and...

C: Uh-huh. And I can mix colors (points to drawings) like here.

CO: Is that watercolor?

C: This is pencil...

CO: Pencil.

C: ...and watercolor on the figure. My drawings are waterproof ink and it takes watercolor very nicely. Like for the backgrounds I use pencil that they can be rubbed and spread and don't mix with the...

CO: And you did that whole series, which is now in the UTEP Library?

C: [Yes.] Those were the ones that I published in the book, *Riders Across the Centuries* - no, not that one.

CO: Another one.

C: And that got me the...

CO: Oh! (admires sketches)

C: ...Wrangler Award from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and three other awards for the book. [All this] for a man who didn't go to school. And it's... (searches for drawings)

CO: Oh, yes.

C: It's this one. These are the ones that are in the university. One hundred of them.

CO: They're beautiful.

S: So you said you did both seals for - well, the one for TWC and the one for UTEP, also. Who was it that asked you to do the TWC seal?

C: Well, it was mostly through Carl Hertzog, who had been doing his printing at the university.

S: And he asked you to do it?

C: Well, they asked him to get someone to do it and naturally he came to me.

S: He came to you? (chuckles) Of course. And the same with the UTEP seal?

C: [Yes.]

S: Same thing.

C: And I have done logos for several [organizations]...like the Western History Association. I did the logo for them. Also through one of the professors in the university, John Porter Bloom.

CO: John who?

C: Porter Bloom. He married another great lady. I don't recall her first name. But John Porter Bloom went from here to the archives in Washington. And he helped me a lot, because I did several pictures for the Fort Bliss Officers Club and I needed information. And when he was there he was the one that suggested that I would do the logo for the Western History Association.

CO: Huh!

C: And I also did the logo for the *Texas State Historical*

Association Quarterly.

CO: Huh!

C: And they made me a life member.

S: Huh!

CO: Wow!

S: You do more than just drawings and paintings, though. You work in other media, don't you? Haven't you worked in stained glass and...

C: Well, I have done...

S: wood carving?

C: I have done the designs for stained glass windows. The ones in Saint Clement's [Episcopal Pro-Cathedral], [B.M.G.] Williams Hall, all of those. I think there are twenty-two or twenty-four windows that I designed for them. And I have done wood carvings for churches and models for bronze plaques.

S: You did some work for one of the churches in Las Cruces, the old...

C: That's Saint Genevieve.

S: Yeah, yeah.

C: I did a crucifix for Saint Matthew's. It was...

S: (examining photograph) That's wood carving, isn't it?

C: Uh-huh.

CO: Did you carve it?

C: Uh-huh.

CO: And where's this?

C: Saint Matthew's Church in the upper valley.

CO: Oh, okay. It's beautiful.

C: It was the suggestion of Father [William] Ryan to put Christ as a priest in priest vestments.

CO: That's beautiful.

C: "The Eternal Priest."

S: You also did...you carved the cross for Saint Genevieve, too, in Las Cruces, didn't you?

C: Uh-huh.

S: As I remember it.

C: I did two plaques in mahogany that they wanted to put on each side of the alter, one each side. I named that "Our Lady of Las Cruces" because I dressed the Virgin Mary in sort of typical New Mexican dress with *huaraches* and *falda* and all. And the other one was the Sacred Heart to complement both of them.

S: But St. Genevieve's been torn down now, right, when they built the...

C: I think they have them now at the new cathedral there.

S: I was going to ask you where they'd moved them to.

C: I haven't been there.

S: What was your relationship with Francis Fugate?

C: The first book that Texas Western Press published at the new location at the university was *Our Spanish Heritage*. I had done twelve pictures for the yearbook. Carl Hertzog wanted a different idea for several sections of the book.

CO: This is the university yearbook?

C: Uh-huh.

CO: Oh.

C: And we did that and used the theme of our Spanish heritage. And I did the little captions for each picture, but then Carl Hertzog decided to do a book and he called that *Our Spanish Heritage*. And because at that time I was not very good at writing he suggested to get Francis Fugate to do the captions for a full-page story on the pictures. And that's how I became acquainted with Francis Fugate. And since then I have done illustrations for some of his works and we have been friends with Roberta and Francis for a long time.

S: When did you take up calligraphy?

C: Well, ever since I began to work with Carl Hertzog. The first thing that we did for the first book, there was a map there that Jay Tipton, who was the cartoonist for El Paso Electric in those days, that they had cartoons in the advertising sections of the street cars.

CO: Right.

C: He had commissioned Jay Tipton to do the map, but he couldn't do good lettering so Carl was stuck with that book. And when I first met him I - no, I had met him ten years before, as I remember. And then when he had this book I happened to go by the printing [office] on Resler and Carl was at the door and saw me. And he asked me if I was still doing pictures. And I brought some of my sketches to him and then he said, "I have a book here that was the first book that I illustrated, but I

need someone to finish it because Jay Tipton didn't want to do the lettering." And so I had to do the entire map and lettering. But my lettering was not very good at that time, so I decided to do a little research on old type lettering. And I began to find books of the early calligraphers, the Italian handwriting and so on, and I learned how to handle the strokes. And finally I began to do my own calligraphy.

S: And how long ago was that?

C: Well, since that time that Carl Hertzog asked me to do the lettering for the man.

S: Uh-huh.

C: And I learned about that and I have used it in many ways.

S: Including autographing books. I can attest to that.
(chuckles)

CO: Yes.

S: That's all I've got on the list.

CO: Me too. We've covered everything.

S: We're just about at the end of this tape, too, so...
(chuckles)

S: Right. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your history or your life or...

C: Well, if you continue to ask me, probably I would have.
(laughter) This is more or less my story.

S: Well, I thank you very much. I really appreciate the time.

C: And you can keep that copy of...

S: Oh! Well, thank you very much.

C: It's very significant to me.

S: I can see why.

End of Interview