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Carolina Moriel Garza

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Mining in Mexico
Oral History Project

Carolina Moriel de Garza
by Michelle G. Benavides

November 30, 1996

B: This is an interview with Carolina Moriel de Garza. The interview, by Michelle Benavides, is part of the Mining in Mexico Oral History Project. We are located at the home of Mrs. Garza at Calle Bosque, Numero 45, Colonia Las Fuentes, Hidalgo del Parral, Chihuahua, Mexico. Today's date is November 30, 1996. How about if we begin the interview, Mrs. Garza, by having you share some biographical information with us.

G: Okay. What can I say? I was born in the small town of Parral and my dad had worked for the mining company. We didn't live in the mining camp because there weren't any homes many times because you had to have a certain position so that you could have a house. So when I was five, we moved into the camp. We were there for two years and then we left to another mining camp that is in Zacatecas, San Martín, and there I started the first grade.

B: Let me back up before you go on. I'll ask you to tell me when you were born.

G: Oh, I was born in 1954, August 16, 1954. By that time my brother was born and we left to live in Zacatecas.

B: What did your father do?

G: My father was always in charge of the labor department. When we got to that camp there weren't enough homes, so we had to live in a little town that was called- the camp was San Martín. And then we lived in another small town...Sombrerete. We had one of those really big houses that have those wells in the middle. They had to cover it up because they were very afraid that something could happen to us. When we lived there I used to go to first grade. I used to drive thirty minutes with my dad to the school. It was really scary because I couldn't speak English. I didn't know how to speak English because my parents didn't speak English, so I really had a hard time. In first grade I had a teacher whose name was Caroline. She was so beautiful and very nice. Then they moved us back to Prieta and it was really nice to come back.

B: What was the name of the company where your father was employed?

G: My father has always worked for ASARCO [American Smelting and Refining Company]. They had many mining camps all over Mexico. He was a laborer in the labor department. He used to do a lot of contracts for the other companies that were ASARCO because ASARCO had many companies. He used to travel to do their contracts. I think they do contracts every two years. I don't know. They needed somebody; that's why we went to live over there in San Martín.

B: And was there a mining camp there?

G: There was a mining camp, but it had very few homes when we were there, so we were waiting for them to do a home so then we could move into it. There I met the Faulkners and there were two of them: Anna and Martha. We went to school together. When we moved to over here the Faulkners followed us. They went to Santa Bárbara. You kept moving sometimes, you know, from one place to another and you kept seeing your friends that you made. When we moved into this camp I had to repeat first grade because I couldn't speak the language and it was a little frustrating. My brother was now going, also, to school and it was a really, really nice experience. It was a one-room. It was about ten, sometimes eighteen [students] and that's where I met most of my friends that I still have contact with. We had only one teacher, Mrs. [Eloisa P.] Tatum. She was fantastic. She was really nice...very, very disciplined. At that time I can remember the flies would fly and you could hear them. You were just so disciplined. It was so funny. Many people nowadays think that kind of discipline was real bad, but I think all of us accomplished so much and all of us have done really well professionally because we had just such a good elementary background I think. She was a very good teacher.

Then there were too many of us. When I was living at the camp there were few Mexicans. There were more Americans; there was the de Bastianis', Mrs. Rice was there, Penny, and my friend Katie, my best friend, but she was living in Santa

Bárbara. We always used to get together, you know, the children from both camps. We celebrated everything that was American. We had Halloween. We never did have Thanksgiving, though. I don't remember ever celebrating Thanksgiving. We had Christmas. We had Valentine's Day.

It was just a lot of studying, but fun. We had to go to the Spanish school, so in the morning we would go to English from 8:30 a.m to 3:00 p.m.

B: This was at La Prieta?

G: At La Prieta. Then at three o'clock my mother would drive us down to a school that was very close there and it was a very low income school. They accepted that we could go just in the afternoon. It was about five or six of us, just the people that their parents were not really Americans. They really wanted us to get our certificate in the elementary school in Mexico.

B: How far up did the school go to?

G: The school in La Prieta was from first to eighth grade.

B: So what happened?

G: The ones that were Canadian would go to boarding school in Canada. The ones that were Americans would go to boarding school. In El Paso, Loretto was one place that they would go. And the boys went to some military school, not Roswell. Roswell, I don't remember, was popular then. We would just stop and we would go to high school in town. What happened was that all of us had a little problem with the language. We

were usually doing second grade in the elementary English school and first grade in the Spanish. We were a little bit behind. Then when we finished school we were still in eighth grade and we had to go to high school, so we went to night school down in the town. We would go to night school. I did eighth grade and then I did one year of high school here.

B: Can you tell me about attending night school?

G: We took at night school- that was sort of high school. I did high school, so then I had a free morning, so I went to a commercial school, like a secretarial. I would go to the secretarial school and then I would go to the night school, which was high school. Then I decided that I had to learn how to do- how do you call it when you do for secretaries?

B: Shorthand?

G: Shorthand. That's when Mrs. de Bastiani and Mrs. Rice came into my life because they were going to teach me shorthand, but in English, not in Spanish. The school very nicely accepted that I could take it with them and she could just send a grade in. So I had to go to school from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Then at 2:30 p.m. I would run down with Mrs. Rice and Mrs. de Bastiani. Then Mrs. Rice left, so Mrs. de Bastiani would give me the class. Then I had to be ready at 4:00 p.m. to go to my night school. I would come around 9:30 p.m. and I had to do my typing. I don't know. When you have friends that are very academic, I suppose, you just do that, but I also had time to have fun.

B: When your father was employed at La Prieta where did you live?

G: We lived at the camp now.

B: In La Prieta?

G: In La Prieta. After we came back, when I was seven years old, we never moved out of La Prieta until I went to UTEP, [The University of Texas at El Paso].

B: What was the name of the mining colony at La Prieta?

G: It was called La Prieta.

B: Could you describe it?

G: ASARCO?

B: The mining colony.

G: Oh, the camp was a beautiful, gorgeous place. It was really nice. There were many homes. There was a lot of grass. We had a beautiful lake. We used to go fishing with the little pin and you could catch all these fish and you would just throw them back in. It was just so nice to have... . We used to go swimming. We had a swimming teacher in the summer. He's a doctor now. He was a boy scout and he was really nice. He really worked us out. We used to have tennis classes because there was a tennis court. There was a school, the one-room school. If the family would grow- then I had my sister and then I had another brother- and if you couldn't fit in the house, and if somebody would move out, maybe you could get a bigger house. So then we moved into a bigger house that was close to the school. There were three homes there that were very similar and we used to live in the middle. Then

Teacher Tatum, our teacher, used to live next door. Mrs. Tatum didn't have any kids at that time. All her kids were gone off to school, like everybody had to go off to school. There was this place up in the camp that we used to call the Silla del Rey (?) that was up in the mountain. We could go up there and we would play that we were kings and queens. It looks like if it was so far away and now that I have gone there it is just so close, you know. There some people got into the riding, into the *adelitas*, so they built some special... . In back of my house was this place where they had all the horses. In the mining camp, in the back of the homes, there were these tailings, as they were called. And the tailings was the prohibited place to go. You could drown because if they were wet you would just sink in. But it was also a place where we could really just go and see if we would sink in. That was the only thing that was prohibited to do and we used to go and do that. We used to have a hospital. We would go to the hospital. You could go walking if you had to go to the doctor or something. And one of my friends, the people that I was carpooling with to school, their mother was the head nurse, so we would walk over there or she would come over here. It was a really nice hospital, very clean, very organized. I was always very impressed there when I was a kid and I used to go there. I was really impressed.

Then there was a baseball camp. When we got older, we used to play baseball. We had one of the men from the mine

come and teach us how to play baseball. My brother lost his tooth there. He used to drive a little jeep. He didn't put on the mask and he lost it. It was hanging down and we took him to the hospital in the jeep. Then we found out that the doctor had cut the little whatever that was hanging there and you shouldn't do that; you should always put it back in. He's always had problems because he lost that tooth until he got to the States and they did a good job. Now he's very happy with his teeth.

We used to study a lot. We did. We had to achieve because you were pressured, I felt. My friends laughed because I used to cry two days of the week. At 2:30 p.m. I would cry because I had to do phonics. I hated phonics. I didn't know the names of the...I didn't know that this was a school or that this was whatever, you know. And I had to know if it was a long or a short vowel. I really have this thing about phonics, but I survived it.

We used to have plays at the end of the class. We used to have plays and we used to learn our parts. And we did all this, you know. Oh, it was so much fun, those plays. And they didn't move us out for a long time. We stayed there, but then my friends did move out. And I stayed behind with my friends that just were from a Mexican family. We were going to the school. By then, my friend Katie had moved out to Loretto. The Garcías' that I met later on were at Loretto. Some people from Parral were in Loretto. We used to come to

town once a week so my mother could do the grocery shopping, but there wasn't too much going on with the people from the town.

I decided that I was going to go maybe to UTEP because of the influence that most of them were some place around there. That's why I chose to go to UTEP and because I did love English and I thought it would be a good idea. So I was accepted in UTEP, but what I did, is that I took the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] and I passed it. But I had to have five years of high school, which they counted my two years of the secretarial school, so my last two years of high school I skipped them. I didn't do those. Then I went to UTEP and all my friends were back again and... . By then my friend, Penny Marlow, who had lived in the camp, when she was fifteen, her dad was transferred to Mexico City to become a big shot. Her father was a personality. They used to call him Marble because he wouldn't spend money. He was very strict on money. They left and then Katie's dad became the manager. They moved in from Santa Bárbara and he became the manager. He was very easy going. He would let us do many things that were... . They would help us to have fun. Katie's mother always helped us to have fun.

What I feel that there was so much...it was like a big family. Everybody took care of everybody. You had to work to do charity activities for the town, for the orphanage here. If they were going to do something you always had a little job

to do. If people came in from another mining camp and they were new you had to be very hospitable. You had to go visit and you had to make sure that the kids, you know, know the kids... . If anybody came on vacations- we had a lot of visitors- you always had to make sure that you invited them. There wasn't any... . I don't know. I feel nowadays that people are not as social and as nice to neighbors. We were like that. There was this neighbor that we had all our lives, Mrs. Reyes, the Reyes'. He was in charge of the safety department. They had three daughters and every time we moved a house- or either they moved first and then we moved, but we were always neighbors, always. So we used to go over there and have lunch or supper. We were always together. The father would always give us honey with lemon. I can remember him lining us up with the same spoon. (laughter) All of us would get sick because he would give us the honey with lemon [with the same spoon] so that we wouldn't get a sore throat.

In the summer we would take our swimming course and we would swim all morning. Then at the end of the course we had to have competitions with the people from the other camps. That's how we got to know some of the other people from the other camps. By then we weren't driving. Nobody was driving. We sort of didn't need to drive. We just wanted to stay in our camp because there were so many activities that you could do at the camp.

B: Were all of your friends living in La Prieta?

G: Most of them were living at La Prieta then or they had moved in from Santa Bárbara. And they have come or gone. When my friend Penny left we had all these parties. She was fifteen. The only time that we sort of began to socialize with the people from the town was when...in this town there is this debutantes' dance when you're fifteen, so when people started going to the debutantes' dance then we started to socialize with the people of the town. My friend Katie at that time...it was going to be her debutantes' dance, so all the friends that we had met but had gone to another camp came for that special occasion.

We used to have a lot of pajama parties. We used to do that. I remember that. And we could use the guest house. They would let us use the guest house because it had two bedrooms and it had enough space so that all the women, all of us, could stay there. And, I think, that's where we started experimenting with liquor. One of our friends got very drunk with vodka because we knew that if we put some water nobody would know, you know. We did that and we were...one of our friends got so sick and the boys would come and give us Gallo [brand name of liquor] through the window. After every dance we would all spend the night there. Now we started going to dances. Our friends would come for the summer. I had a friend. She was my mother's friend. She was a piano teacher. By now we were going to UTEP. We were all going to UTEP. We were being friends at UTEP. We were friends with other

people. Now we were a little bit, you know... . It wasn't so close, our little circle. She used to say that she should put a little sign up that says how much for breakfast, how much for lunch, because I always had somebody stay at my house.

B: Where were you living?

G: In Prieta. When we would come back from school somebody would come down that wasn't living in camp. Penny, for example, her mother passed away. That was a really sad thing that happened to her. Then her brother passed away. They were living in Mexico City, so for the summer she would come and spend a whole summer at my home or at Katie's home...or whoever. Then there was another girl. Her parents were in Mexico City and she would come down, too. Whoever had been friends when you were young, now that they could come and visit...and we always had people staying with us. Another thing that was real nice was that you could have your cousins come over and they would let you use an empty house that was next door. All that my mom would do, she would just put a lot of beds up there, you know, and they could...the men, the boys would stay there. They would just have the meals at my house.

B: How did your mother pass her day?

G: My mother...we always had good help. We always had two maids. And what my mother would do is that she would get up and go on her walk then she would cook because we had lunch at 12:00 p.m.- so it was real short time- and she would cook and then she would knit and then she would socialize. Suddenly, one

day out of the blue she learned to play Canasta. They would play Canasta. There was a lot of Canasta. They would play Canasta. I never felt that my mother wasn't there because everything was so close. We would get out of school at 3:00 p.m. and she would drive us to the other school. Then she would pick us up at 6:00 p.m. if it was a school day. If it was not she would play Canasta. The women would play Canasta at 1:00 p.m. Our life was ruled by this whistle; five [minutes] to 7:00 a.m., 7:00 a.m., 7:25 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 12:00 noon, five [minutes] to 1:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m., 4:30 p.m., and 10:00 p.m. All our lives, you knew it. You just knew what you were going to do because of that whistle. At 1:00 p.m. the women would run out the back door to play cards and at 4:30 p.m. they would run back in when their husbands came. She would always be home for my dad. My dad used to go to work at 7:30 a.m., he came for lunch at 12:00 [noon], left at 1:00, came at 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. Sometimes he had to work, but he was very disciplined, very, very disciplined.

B: What was your daddy's name?

G: My dad's name is Melchor. My mom passed away in 1970 when we moved to another camp. My dad had a very horrible job. He always had to fight the syndicate. The syndicate, when we were in Prieta, was strong but they were nice. He was always doing the contracts and he helped on any problems that they had. I can remember very much one time that there was a fire in the mine and it took forever. It was really very stressing

for all of us to know that there was so much danger underground and that they had to stop work. It was full of tense. I can remember that. The camp was close to the mill and to the mine and to my dad's office because he could walk if he wanted to. You could never go there. It was prohibited to go there because it was dangerous. You couldn't walk over there or go see anything there.

The camp was full. The homes were full. Sometimes families would come and they had to wait for a house to be unoccupied. What they usually did is that they would move out when somebody was going to move in. When people move from one home to the other I can remember us carrying the tables and everything from one place to another. We always helped each other. That was so nice, I think. I do think that there were many, many problems with the older women, but you never knew about it.

B: What kind of problems?

G: I think that there were some later when I moved. There were a lot of problems because there was competition. There was envy sometimes. They say that the women handled their position like if it was them [their husbands] and according to how much power he had...they felt that they had. I never sensed that when I was young, not even when I was at a university level. I never sensed that.

Then some of my friends, for example, Rosemary, who did education, came back and married somebody and went to live in

the camp and Teacher Tatum retired. Now she was in charge of the camp school. So was Princesa Fernández who had gone to UTEP, too. She was working in UTEP, then she came down to take care of the school. They didn't have as many people there. Then I graduated from UTEP and most of my friends stayed in El Paso. Another friend, my friend Penny, went to England for a year. I suddenly was ahead of all of them. I don't even know why. Then I came back and everybody said that it wasn't a good idea to come back because it was such a small town. I got offered a job in Frisco. I went to the interview and they told me, "No", because I was too young. I was only twenty when I graduated from UTEP.

B: My goodness, that was young.

G: I was twenty-one. I just turned twenty-one.

B: That's young.

G: I know because I did that skipping.

B: Let me ask you. Where did you live when you were attending UTEP?

G: I lived in Prieta. I still lived in Prieta. I told you I lived so many years in Prieta.

B: But when you were attending school in El Paso...

G: When I was attending school in El Paso I was living in Juárez with one of my aunts. We had to cross the border everyday. It was horrible. I was the only woman. One of my cousins and friends, they were sometimes horrible. Then my last year I moved in with my other aunt in El Paso, which was really nice.

My friend, Penny, who had come back from Mexico City was living in the dorms. Everybody thought I lived in the dorms because whenever I would finish class I would go to the dorms or I would wait for people for a ride, you know. We were always waiting to come home. That was the thing we wanted to do...come home. We always used to bring a friend down, somebody that we met there or whatever. They always loved to come home to Parral.

Then I went to live in Frisco. My dad...ASARCO had this bad thing that when people began to get very old... . By then, ASARCO became Mexican. The Mexican percentage was much more than the American.

B: That was during the process?

G: That was during the process, when I graduated.

B: The Mexicanization?

G: Yes. The Mexicanization

B: Can you explain that?

G: Okay. ASARCO had so much percentage that was American and a little percentage Mexican. Then some Mexicans bought it. When they bought it they started laying off a lot of people. They reduced the employees that they had. Things began to change because from then we began having Mexican managers. When these Mexican managers came it was like a fight for power. Things got a little more difficult. What they began to do is that they would try to discourage you to get to your retiring. They would send you to a far-away camp that was just started.

It was very difficult for you because your family was already in university or whatever. By then my dad had worked thirty-three years for ASARCO and he sensed that they were going to move him out. ASARCO did not pay as well as Frisco. Frisco was a company that paid their employees very well and sometimes paid in dollars.

B: Who owned Frisco?

G: Frisco was owned by a company in England. They were English. Frisco was supposed to be like a richer mine. It was different. The people from Frisco were a little different. They were like more competitive because they had high salaries and they had more... . And the people from Santa Bárbara or Prieta, we were of the same company and we were a little more common, I suppose. They used to have these parties between the three camps. Santa Bárbara always had the Halloween dance and it was a beautiful Halloween dance. They had it at the club. They spent a lot of money. They brought a really good orchestra. They had fantastic food. Prieta would have Fourth of July parties. They would spend a lot of money. They had a good orchestra and they would have a good meal. Frisco had the summer dance and they did the same thing. Frisco was very well known for famous Mrs. [Louise Ferrari de] Petrucci, who was the best Italian cook around. Everybody just said, "How good!" Because all of these camps had a hotel for the bachelors...for the people who weren't married. And they had a cook. And one of the cooks, the best one, was always Mrs.

Petrucci. Everybody wanted to go visit there so that you could get to eat at the restaurant.

B: Well, it sounds to me if it was a triangle.

G: It was a triangle, yeah. You used to go from one place to the other.

B: How far apart were they located?

G: They are twenty minutes, twenty minutes apart. Twenty-two minutes to Santa Bárbara, twenty two kilometers, excuse me. It takes you about thirty-five minutes. All of them had the American schools.

B: This was before Mexicanization?

G: Before Mexicanization. All of them had the American schools. We had the best school according to everybody. We were the best because we had very good teachers. Then there was Mrs. Araujo...

End of Tape One

Side A

Beginning of Tape One

Side B

B: You were telling me about Mrs. Finita.

G: Oh, Mrs. Finita. She was a personality. It was Mrs. Finita and Mrs. [Kelly] Spillsbury that were doing the school in

Santa Bárbara. Mrs. Finita used to travel. She travelled all over the world, but we knew who was a good school because when people were transferred from one- Santa Bárbara, not Frisco people- some Frisco people would come work for ASARCO, but that was very strange because there was always ASARCO people trying to go to the good salaries of Frisco. You could always tell and say, "Oh God. Mrs. Finita wasn't doing a very good job." These kids can't...or they would go one year less.

B: How do you spell her last name?

G: Finita? Beckman? Her name was Finita. F-I-N-I-T-A. She still lives. She has Alzheimer's [disease], I think. She was a personality because she travelled a lot; she went to Europe and came back. She would always tell her students and they would always sort of brag about all they knew because Finita had done all this travelling. Then I came back and I didn't get the job.

B: Were you disappointed?

G: Yeah, we were very disappointed. By then we had a very nice supper for Mrs. Tatum, who was living in El Paso retired. To this supper Johnny Sonza (?) and Katie came. I went to this supper. Robert, her brother, came to the supper. It was so nice, that supper. I remember that Katie told me there that they had not found anybody, so they were going to give me the job. Katie was accepted to a master's school and Robert...something very good happened to him that I cannot remember. Johnny was going to get married. He at last had

foreign companies way off there, you know. They didn't like living in the sierras so they sent their Mexican engineers. The Texas Miners were the few [who] developed the mining, the actually mining experience. That's what we had done, so when we had to staff twenty companies, the Texas Miners were right there with the experience even though. . . .

And we all came from small management because bigger companies tend to make specialties. I fight that with the young fellows today. They're young engineers or specialists. This guy works five years in the stope. Is he ever going to be a mining engineer? No, sir. He's going to be a stope engineer.

So we found ourselves busy running the new companies and Texas Miners were doing quite well. We were not the only ones, but the Texas Miners, we had the command of English, which was a lot of help technically to keep up with literature and whatnot. We had that advantage, practically none other. We were no different. We had more experience. And, remember, we had been a product of the Depression. That had made a work ethic that was highly developed. No welfare then. You had to work for your bread. Everybody had to work. That work ethic was a big, important factor with Texas Miners.

And then our policy of getting our master's degree, working as miners in the United States before we came to Mexico. I worked for one year at Wagon Wheel Gap and I came being quite a damn good miner with a pick and shovel. That,

managers were in I think, maybe, there was a little, but it wasn't as noticeable. You wouldn't get a house or you wouldn't get a higher salary or anything because of the wives' relationship. It was very apart. That wasn't influencing before and now it was influencing. So my dad had to make the decision that he was offered a good job in Frisco because the labor manager that had been there for so many years- now, people in those days didn't move around. People just stayed in their jobs because... . I don't know. You know, if it was a good job, it was a good salary, the life there was so nice that nobody cared to move out. And, also, you were not afraid to lose your job. If you had it you could just keep it. They would transfer you to another company, but most of the times they did hire you. But then the firing came and it was agonizing for everybody because you never knew if you were going to be the next one. Things got difficult in mining and they began to reduce, reduce, reduce, so my dad got offered a job in Frisco. It was a very good job, very well-paid job, the same job. But the people from Frisco, the syndicate in Frisco, was also known as a syndicate that was very strong. They had always received a lot concessions, but now mining was difficult and it was very hard to handle. So my dad didn't know if he could move in, if he could handle those people, but we did. And when we moved out of there I think it was a very traumatic experience for my mother. My mother never accepted the fact that we were living in that camp. She just adored

the Prieta camp so much.

There was a little thing that happened here in my family. My youngest brother, when he was nine months old, he had lung problems. And the doctor, the mine doctor, was not to be found on Sunday. So they transferred him to the hospital in the town and someway or another, I don't want to make it too long, he burned. The crib that he was in burned. And my mom walked in and took him out. He had very severe burns in his face and in his hands because he tried to like help himself. So from there my mom had to always go to El Paso to get...he had surgery, that plastic surgery. And my mom had a lot of problems with her nerves because it had been so traumatic, you know, the experience. It was so good that we lived in that camp because he grew with everybody and nobody would see him different. By then there was no more American school. They said that not many people were interested. They couldn't find a teacher. They just didn't give us another part of the company and it was like everybody was very disappointed. So he had to go to a Spanish school in the town. They had a chauffeur drive all the kids down and pick them up. For him it was very difficult because people started noticing. He started noticing that he was different and he suffered a lot. I think my mother suffered with him.

So when we moved to Frisco my mother, she got Lupus, but nobody knew she had Lupus. So she was having a hard time. I'm sorry; before that we moved to Santa Bárbara. And I was

working for Frisco and I would drive from Frisco to Santa Bárbara every morning. It was just a ten-minute drive. Then there was a big politics in Santa Bárbara and they moved us from Santa Bárbara back to Prieta. But we knew there was something coming before we moved to Frisco. There was something coming. So that's the time when things were very difficult in ASARCO and there was a lot of politics played.

I had to borrow my dad's car and I remember so clearly Mrs. Araujo said, "Why are you coming in late?" I said, "I had to borrow my dad's car." The bus wasn't a very good system then and she said, "Well, you have to buy a car." I said, "I don't have the money." She said, "Well, we're going to go to Jack." Because she was a very good friend of Jack's. And we go into his office. I always felt that Jack, the two people he was scared of was of the teacher, the pilot and the doctor, a famous doctor that they had in Frisco. And he said, "Julia, we can't give her a loan for a car. It's not acceptable." And she said, "It is because she needs it." So I got a loan. I got a loan. I got a very well-paid job. I made more than the engineers because teachers were so difficult to find. My husband says it's not true, but I did.

B: How much did you make? Do you remember your first paycheck?

G: I asked for 7,500 pesos. The peso was 12.50 then. And then they gave me 5,500 because I was just out of school and you would get really good raises, so I ended up really making a lot of money. And I got the loan because I could have the

money to pay for the loan, have a new car. You know, it was really nice. And it was all to Mrs. Araujo's good word for me, because if not, he would have never given me the loan.

By then my parents moved into Frisco and my mother did not like it. She did not like it. She was a very respected woman by then because she was a fantastic cook. She was a well organizer. She was a very good Canasta player. Many of my friends now were getting married...my friends that I grew up with. My mother would really help them when they moved into the camp because some of them did move into the camp. So now my friends became really good friends of my mom. My mom loved to socialize. She loved it. She loved to have people. She was always having people home. She was a very unhappy woman in Frisco. I feel very bad for her because she really didn't like it. By then we were all off at school. My sister was coming here. There's no high school in Frisco that's private, so they had to come here. They had the facility. A chauffeur would drive them in a *combi* [a type of Volkswagen "bus" or van], drive them, pick them up, and come back.

I continued working in Frisco. I met my husband in Santa Bárbara. He came by because he was a geologist and they said that the best school was ASARCO. You had to work for ASARCO to become a good geologist, so he came from Midland, Texas. He graduated from Austin. He came down and worked. And in those times these mining companies had this program for *decados*, they used to call it. And this was that all the

schools that had a...the mining schools could sent a lot of their students to do their practice. And the company would give them room and board. A company would pay for that. And God, there were so many, so many coming into the town and to the company, but they were all very Southern...from the South, very short. I'm so tall I always wanted to find a husband that was tall.

I had a good friend, she was a teacher at the Santa Bárbara. I was a teacher at Frisco. Mrs. Araujo stayed there for one year. She retired and she moved to Parral, to her home in Parral, and I was in charge now of the school. I was terrified but someway or another managed to survive my first year alone. Then we had so many kids that we had to ask Mrs. Barssé, who came to move into the camp, if she would help me. She helped. Then Tencha Lizara, another very dear friend of mine, moved into this camp in Frisco and she also helped with the school. And everybody really liked the American school because the kids would pick up the language so much easier. By then we were noticing how much you needed to speak English. So many people said that they stayed in Frisco just for the school. It was incredible, you know. I had gone to that school. I knew how to teach in a one-room school because not everybody can. They said, "How can you do it?" Because while one of them was reading the other one was doing math on the blackboard and you were dictating spelling. If you walked into there you would have thought it was chaos. But I was

very disciplined because I was taught that way. Mrs. Araujo was very disciplined. Besides, Mrs. Araujo had so much respect that the women would not interfere with her. Whatever she said was done, so I was very lucky. But then on my second year I almost wanted to chicken out because everybody wanted to do what they wanted...like mothers are, you know. There were not many Americans anymore; they were usually just Mexicans. It was very hard to teach their children because their children did not hear the language; only at the school. But I have always loved teaching and I had some excellent kids. I did have my problems and I just...the only way I got over that was I really told them off because when I moved into that camp, there was this thing for poker and those women were playing poker. I think they even played in the morning, but they were good mothers, you know, but some of them were just getting too much into poker. And I met my husband. I got married, but I'm skipping up and down, I got married in Prieta... .

B: Well, I'll have you back up and have you tell me about your courtship.

G: Well, what can I tell you? It just worked out so well because it's very difficult when you are educated in the two cultures. My parents were Mexican, very traditional Mexican; my mother did everything for my dad. But I grew up with a lot of Americans and I had that little feeling that women do not have to put up so much with men. I got the little American thing

that you could be independent. So I never really had a boyfriend that he was so Mexican I could never communicate with him. My husband, Lalo, went to school in the States and thought that women had a place. So it was really good that I met him because I don't know if I would have been married now for nineteen years if I married somebody different. And I think he was lonely. My mother used to invite all of the ones- not everybody, but the ones that we had a good communication with. They would always come to my mom to eat because at the club they used to feed them so little, according to them, and they used to give them a little glass of lemonade and they would choke on the food. So at night they would come for my mother's cakes and for my mother's pies. We had a real nice porch in Santa Bárbara. We would play cards, we would talk, and I would check and there were about five or six of the bachelors that would come with my friend the bachelor; my sister, and my sister's little friend. We used to hang around with little fifteen, sixteen year-old kids because there was not many people at the camp then. We used to play monopoly. We used to do things like that. Then, I don't know, I decided I would go do my Master's in Las Cruces.

B: Had you gotten married by then?

G: No. My friend Katie was at Las Cruces. I was accepted in Las Cruces and Mr. Humphreys agreed to pay me the summer because he used to pay nine months, not the whole year; he gave me the

summer's pay, which was a thousand dollars...I remember for some reason...or two thousand, I think. I paid for the school and I had the money to go live up there. I went up there; my husband drove me up with my friend and then they came back on the bus and I stayed with my car in Las Cruces. My friend Katie and I lived with her grandmother; her grandmother had like a little apartment in the back in Las Cruces. And we lived there for that summer...six weeks.

B: But you weren't married?

G: I wasn't married and I wasn't planning to get married. We were just really good friends. Then I came back and then I did. Somehow or other I ended up getting married. In the next summer I was married and so was my friend Katie. My friend Penny was back in El Paso, but she was not married. Then Binky García and Patricia, they lived in Frisco and their mom, Mrs. García, somebody that I really loved very much and I learned a lot from, lived in Frisco. She was so admirable. You could go visit Mrs. García and she always had time to just sit and talk and she made the best coffee. Her husband would walk in at twelve [noon] because we are still with these hours, okay, these whistles. He would come in and he would turn around and say, "Oh, honey, Carmen and I have been talking so happily here and you know the maid didn't come and there's nothing for lunch. Would you care for a sandwich?" He was always so pleasing and so happy and he would have a sandwich and he would come and talk with us about whatever we

were chatting about.

Frisco then had a few Americans and then they started to leave. Then Mr. Humphreys was there and he was in complete control. He had so much authority it was scary. He was a good manager. He was a very good person. Everybody respected him. I still remember those people because people stayed there. Some people would get sick and they were forever with this long illness and they could still live there in the homes. He would do the best to make sure they had the best medical care and people just felt that it was a big family, I thought, in Frisco, even though it was very competitive and the women were difficult. But when it came to problems everybody there was there to help you. There is where I met the Brillitos. He was the pilot. They didn't have any kids. I got pregnant right off because the doctor, the very, very famous Dr. [José A.] Quintañá, [Sr.]...everybody would go to him. He operated on everybody. He was weenie-tiny...he was petite. He was such a good surgeon. So, of course, he was the company doctor. I went to him and I said, "I have to take birth control. I don't want to get pregnant." And he said, "I have the best thing. You are going to take these shots that it's going to be every three months." And on my honeymoon I read in *Good Housekeeping*, "These shots will be permitted in the United States," I think it was ten years later. I got married in 1976 and they would be in the market in 1986, and I said, "Goodness, gracious. This doctor's going

to kill me." So, of course, they didn't work, and I got pregnant. And I wasn't living in Frisco. I was living in Santa Bárbara because my husband was working for Santa Bárbara.

B: In the mining colony?

G: In the mining colony. They gave us a real nice house. The most horrible-looking furniture, I can remember that. They told me that I could go buy furniture. I went and chose something nice and they said, "No, that's too expensive." That's when things got real funny, you know. But the manager's wife was my mom's very good friend. And by then it was very strange. She was a personality, too, Mrs. Rebecca, *madraza*, very jolly, but when she moved into that camp, she transformed the camps. The manager's wife began to come into the camps. They would transform the manager's home. They would spend such fortunes that you began to see a big difference that wasn't noticeable before. Before they had this really nice home that had a lot of social area because there were the parties. There were the parties when the big shots from Mexico used to come in and there was the Christmas-no, some of them had them in Christmas and some of the colonies had it for New Year's. They had the New Year's, what do you call it? Homecoming?

B: New Year's Eve?

G: No. In the day. They had an open house, the open house. And you always were ready for that open house, for that fantastic

food that they would have at the open house. That started a lot of competition, too, because they would say, "Why won't they paint my home?" The homes were painted, the furniture was of the company. "Why don't they paint my kitchen that is falling apart?" and "The manager gets all this beautiful furniture or gets a new bedroom or a new bathroom." That caused a lot of problems. Before the American wives were more simple, I thought. Mrs. Humphreys in Frisco had a very nice home, but it was not as highly decorated. It was a very good taste home and these other people came in with wallpaper that, you know, you didn't have wallpaper in the colonies, in the camp homes. They were very simple with the beautiful wooden floors and they had all this beautiful old furniture but it was nice. And if your furniture...if you needed a new living set you could sort of ask for it. They would come and see yours and then they said, "Okay, yeah, you can buy one. We will get you one." But then they weren't getting anything for anybody except for the managers' wives and that was not very nice. So then we moved. The manager's wife, I remember, Mrs. Rebecca, she came to see me and she said, "My goodness, Carolina, these sofas are horrible." They were orange with big orange flowers. She said, "What we can do is that we can cut off the legs so that they won't look as high."

But then, Mr. Humphreys, which I think was smart, said, "I am going..." I had worked for Frisco now for three years and he offered my husband a job because it was a geologist's

position there that he could get. So we moved to Frisco. My parents were in Frisco. We moved to a very small house, real nice little house that we had. It was our first home. And my husband liked working for Frisco. He really liked it. In Santa Bárbara he was an underground geologist. He keeps joking that when he got to Santa Bárbara...he came from Monterrey and it was a very long drive, a twelve-hour bus drive, with a second class bus that was very, very difficult to manage. He got to Parral and got a taxi. In the taxi he got to Santa Bárbara. There's a saying, its a little sign that says, "Santa Bárbara." And it has some tall buildings. So my husband kept insisting to the taxi man, "Downtown area, tall buildings." He kept saying, "Take me there." He said, "This is all that there is. It's a very small town." So he said that he was taken underground and he said, "No, I have to go back to Monterrey. I can't stay here. This is too much." But he would remember the bus and he said, "I'm not leaving until I forget about the bus." So then he stayed. Then before he knew it, the poor guy, we were married and we moved to Frisco. I was the teacher. I got pregnant, but I was very lucky; my son was born in June and I was back in school. I worked till the last. We would go from September to May like the Americans. And so I went back to school and we had a good life. It was a good life in Frisco. I had my ups and downs because it was very difficult to be the teacher and live at the same place with it. My husband used to say he had no

personality, no identity; he was the teacher's husband.

We had parties. Frisco was a little more difficult. They had this famous, horrible dance. The watch party that the people from England used to come to. There you could notice the big, big differences which I did not grow up with. I wasn't used to that. There you were, according to your position; you would get invited to some things and to some things no. According to your seniority, also, I suppose. They always had sitting places for the dance and some people got their sitting place and other people had to find a place to sit. I never liked that. I grew up in a company where all were important employees. In Frisco, no. Frisco didn't do that. Frisco had two camps; they had the camps for the people that had a high position and they lived in San Antonio and they had San Luis. People that had a lower position or a lower salary lived in San Luis. The homes were nice, but they didn't have the swimming pool. That was the big difference. They didn't have a very nice club house. And they didn't have Mrs. Petrucci, the good cook. They did not have the American school, so people from San Luis always were trying to get a raise or get a different position so that they could move into San Antonio. Then they could have the American school. Then they could have the swimming pool. So I never liked those dances. I talked to Mrs. Humphreys about it, but I was young and I thought that everybody should be treated the same way and I thought that...but you had to go. They would like call

roll, you know. This man was there; Mr. Humphreys' secretary was there and he had to see you come in and he would write you down. Later it got to where most of the time at the beginning people would go to El Paso and buy their dresses. Everybody was so excited about this dance and the people that were coming in. You had personalities coming in from England, from Mexico City, from Australia. We had some people come in from Australia because there was another camp from the same company that was in Australia. Very nice people would come in. I had always the advantage that my husband and I could speak English and that we could socialize a little more than many of the people there that couldn't speak the language, but I still didn't like it. I didn't like it. And it got to a point where many people started not going to the dance because of the fact that their name wasn't on the seating places or because...I don't know. They had the best band around the state of Chihuahua come to play for the dance. They had the best food. Louisa, always...I don't know how she could cook for all those people, five hundred or six hundred people. Everything was done for that dance. It was very important. People that had worked for the company for twenty-five years got a watch; they joined the club of the *veinte y cinco años*, that they used to call it, which I never liked it. Then my husband sort of started having trouble because Mr. Humphreys decided to retire. I think he told me at a watch party and I cried and cried and cried.

One of the things that I have cried about most in my life...because my mother by then had passed away, I forgot to mention it. She got Lupus and she died in the [19]70s and my dad, for a year, came and my brothers would eat at my home. It was a difficult year, you know, I had just one baby. I had to work; I worked at the school. Then there was the facility of Louisa, so then they all moved in to eat with Louisa. My dad had a maid and my brothers were at home. But then my brothers went off to school and my dad was alone, but he would still continue eating at Louisa's. I kept an eye on the two homes, you know; my dad's home and my home.

Mr. Humphreys retired and my husband felt that he was not doing much. For some reason or other, my friend Penny... . This is when my friend Penny...we still are in contact. They come and visit me. I go visit them. My friend knows this lawyer that wants to start this company. My husband gets all enthusiastic and we're going to leave to San Antonio because they were going to start exporting. This was the time of the exporting-importing. And I get pregnant and I have twins. I have them in El Paso because my first labor was really bad. When I had my little boy everybody said that Dr. Quintañá was the best surgeon, but he was really bad for deliveries. I said, "Why didn't you tell me before?" It was horrible. It was horrible. So I told my husband that I would never get pregnant- if I don't have a kid in the States- in a place where they know what they're doing. For us, where they know

everything they were doing is the States.

B: Where was your son born?

G: In the mining camp with Dr. Quintaña.

B: Did you have any problems during your delivery?

G: Yes, I did. It took me two days and they put this stupid *suero* that they used to call it to help me... . No, I had a lot of problems.

End of Tape One

Side B

Beginning of Tape Two

Side A

B: Okay, so then?

G: We're leaving; we're going to leave Frisco. My husband is going to have this fantastic job in San Antonio. I have the twins. My twins are born in February. I had to stay in El Paso for a month. Rosemary Salsa, my good friend Rosemary, moves into the camp to be a teacher there because we just have so many kids. Mexicans have more kids, so your schools get bigger. We had a lot of kids at the camp at the school. She was teaching some grades and I was teaching some other grades. I went to El Paso for a check-up and had to stay there because that's when they found out I had twins.

B: How far along were you?

G: Eight months. And I had three doctors; two were American doctors and one was Mexican. Nobody knew I was going to have twins. That was strange. I had my twins there. It was very expensive because they were twins. Then I came home. I had a bigger house now; I got a bigger house because my family was growing. I never thought we would move out of there. My dad was there, but then my husband was very... . Another man came into our lives; Mr. Escudero, who I had known all my life, became the manager. He had waited to be the manager all his life and now he was the manager. His wife was a very nice person who I loved very much, but she had the Mexican thing of managing people. Mrs. Madraso, who my mother loved so much and was such a dear friend of my mother, when she was the manager's wife there were little things that sometimes sound so ridiculous. She would tell them how they should dress, what kind of lipstick they should use...that they should all look so nice. They were interfering so much in you personal life that it was causing a lot of stress. Mrs. Escudero was a very nice woman, but she was also very outspoken. It was very different from Mrs. Humphreys. Mrs. Humphreys was always considered like she was stuck-up. Some people thought she didn't care, but she always kept her mouth shut; she didn't want to have problems, she wouldn't interfere. If you would go with her you would have the nicest chats with her because you could talk about everything.

Now the camps were getting to gossiping. They forgot

about this knitting when they used to knit, or about the book club I knew went on when I was a kid, and the cooking. In Frisco everybody was a very good cook, so I learned to cook. But it was really funny some people wouldn't share their recipes. Would you believe that? But I was a teacher and I didn't know that because I share anything that I know. So then everybody would come to my house so they could teach us how to do it because I had gotten her to teach us how to do it. That happened a few times. I didn't realize it until later. They said, "She would never have given us the recipe if you hadn't asked." So they were all quite nice. There were a few that gave me some problems in school.

Rosemary was working with me and I went back to teaching. I didn't breastfeed my twins, but I would give them their bottle in my porch. They would come up and I would give my reading class or my mathematics class, or whatever. The kids were coming back and forth from the school. It was two minutes or five minutes from my house. We would manage it like that. But then my husband decides that we're leaving and it doesn't work out to work in San Antonio. By then I- guess what- I play cards. I learned to play poker, but I would just do it on Wednesdays. We had so much fun. There were sixteen of us and you would do two tables. They were always very nice. When I would get there if there were more on one table they would switch so I could join a group. But I would only do it on that day. All the rest, I think, did it whenever

they could. They were the big poker players. I liked it. It relaxed me. I liked it. In the summertime a friend and I would really make use of the swimming pool. We would swim. We would take our kids swimming. The twins were always with me and little Lalo, my oldest son. Mrs. Barssé was at the camp. Then Mrs. Barssé left and I missed her so much. Then Mrs. García moved to El Paso and she wasn't around.

There were a lot of changes; there was more of the Mexicanization and it happened to Frisco, too. Some Mexican bought it. They were getting a lot of people from other places coming into the camp. Mr. Humphreys was just smart enough to say, "It's time for me to leave." So he left and Mr. Escudero stayed. Things got a little different. I stayed for one more year. Then I moved out and went as far as Parral. My husband went to work in a mining camp, La Domincia. It was a horrible place.

B: What was the name of it?

G: La Domincia. It belonged to DuPont. That was by the Big Bend. But, by now, the new mining companies, even Frisco, were changing the concept of the colony because it was very expensive and it was not a good idea. As I see it, it was the best idea. People stayed in those mining camps because of the facilities of the mining camp. They had one and Frisco had another one. There was some place in Sonora that people would go for two months and leave because there weren't any good schools, they didn't have swimming pools, they didn't have the

tennis courts, they didn't have the bowling alley. There wasn't anything for the women to do and if the women are unhappy they just get restless and want to move out. They didn't have hospital facilities. So this new mining camp, DuPont, was going to be a nightmare, but I had to go. But my husband didn't go there; he decided to go to another mining camp, to another place on his way to Guadalajara. For the first time in his life and in my life there was this American that was like the foreman. He felt competition with my husband and he made his life very difficult. They had to lay off my husband. The man didn't want him there, so he came back to Frisco. I was still living in Frisco and my dad was still there because I had to finish the school year. I didn't feel as comfortable any more. I felt that I should leave as soon as school was out, so I rented a house in Parral and my husband went to work for a lumber company. My twins were two years old.

After working and living eight years in Frisco, but working nine years, we moved into the town. I was very unhappy in the beginning because I didn't have the green and I didn't have the big home. I went to work now for CONALEP System. I was teaching elementary school. The school continued in Frisco, but it didn't last very long. The manager's daughter was giving classes now. She had been my student. Now many of my students by this time were going to high school or the university. I have always been so proud of

all of my students. They have always kept in contact with me. I have many good things to say about all of them, but one of them was the Britos' kids, they moved out to El Paso. It was the first time that we really knew if our kids from the mining school could make it in an all-English environment. Of course, they did. The Brito's kids were very smart and they did. Maggie will graduate from MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] in June. She was an honor student in El Paso and they interviewed her. They did many things with her because she was so outstanding. She said to the newspaper, the *El Paso Times*, that I was the person that had made a lot of difference in her life. I just taught her for three years because they moved out. My friend, Penney, who works in El Paso Public Schools called me and said, "You have a job here. Just move in here with that good publicity." Her mother asked her, "Who was Mrs. Garza? Who was that teacher? You never had a Mrs. Garza." She said, "She was my teacher at the camp." She said, "Margarita, she taught you for three years you know." I don't know...I really made a difference. I really want to go to her graduation at MIT. Another married an American and she wrote to me that if it hadn't been for my English she could have never met and been able to communicate with this wonderful man. Some others of my students never continued to go to the States, but they do know English and they do give English classes. Many of them have had economic problems like everybody has and, I think, that has helped

them. I really feel that the company doing that for their employees was very good. But I still keep in contact with my friends in El Oro and I go play cards. I go visit my dad every Friday.

B: Where does your daddy live?

G: He lives in the camp and I live in Parral. Every Friday at one o'clock after work my kids and I would quickly go visit my father and spend the weekend there, so I didn't lose contact. Things were changing. Mr. Escudero really pepped up the camp. He fixed it real nice. That camp was like nature and Mr. Humphreys didn't work too much on it, but Mr. Escudero did. He put up a lot of trees. If the houses were empty he had gardeners take care of things. He was good for the camp, but there were some problems. I used to play cards with them and Mrs. Humphreys gave me a *concejo*, advice: "Carro, you should never play cards- I never have played- because it makes you very competitive." At that time of my life I didn't understand it, but later I saw it. When people play cards they can become so competitive and lose friendships. That's what they were doing and it was really causing problems. I never played cards for that. I do it for socializing and for having fun. Mrs. Barcena, I would go there every Wednesday and play cards. Then she, sort of, couldn't go any more, but I had my dad so I would go. Then they switched it to Saturdays because I could go on Saturdays. I still have my group. Many of them are gone.

Then Mr. Dyster(?) became the manager. Mr. Escudero, they played something very bad on him; on a Sunday they got rid of him. You know, it was really funny how all these people got fired and it was really hard on them. It was very traumatic for so many of them that they suddenly didn't have a job. They were paid off very well. Frisco paid you off very well. But it seems to me that the time came for everybody and then it came for Mr. Escudero. I have a very, very special love for Mrs. Escudero because she was the woman who helped us when my mother died and I really appreciate her. I taught her kids and I love them very much. I do think if she, maybe, had not interfered so much with the women she wouldn't have suffered so much because everybody was suffering. Everybody was getting upset with everybody. Then many people got laid off. I still see some of those friends that got laid off. They moved into Parral. Some of them moved to where they came from. It's incredible how some of them have not been able to forget the mining camp. The mining camp for them was the best thing that happened to them. Some of them because they grew up there. They married a miner and just stayed in that mining camp. Some of them, they still talk about it. I'm so happy that I lived there, but I'm so happy now that I have another life. It's different. I have my friends, but I think some people have really suffered that they moved from the mining camps. Now I go back and all of them are really ugly, the mining camps. There's not enough

money to keep them going. Prieta lost the lake and lost the water. Every time that my friends come we go out and we look at places. We remember and we feel very sad that it is not as it used to be, but I think that it happens in everything. I think I was very fortunate to grow up like I did because I still have my friends that have helped me. That's as much as I can say on mining camps. I'm very sorry that they lost the glamour...that people got confused. Also what happened is many people who moved into the mining camps did not have the education to live in a community. They did not appreciate it. They didn't take care of the homes, they didn't take care of the swimming pool, so then they started closing everything on them. They started closing the pools. Mr. Dyster had to issue many, many rules because the two camps joined together. They took away the "Berlin Wall." That's what we used to call it as a joke. Too many people in one place sometimes just can't manage it.

I was there a few days ago; now, it's not well taken care of. People don't socialize. You don't see anybody out on the streets. Before we were always at the swimming pool or having a picnic or a party...socializing. Now they don't take advantage of the only one that's left. Here in Prieta there's few homes. The manager there I met him when we were young. When we got out of school he lived in Santa Bárbara. He's one of the few people that I have seen who has continued to work for mining companies. He's a mechanical engineer, I think.

He has tried so much to restore the place and bring back that good image of La Prieta because in the community it was people who used to go up there for visiting who used to just love that place. He's trying to do something for it. I have no contact with Santa Bárbara now. I don't even know anybody that lives there anymore. I haven't gone there for a long time, but now what they did do was that they tried to give an identity to the towns as mining towns. These were the oldest towns in the state. Santa Bárbara is the oldest town in the state. The government started these programs because so many employees got laid off. They didn't know what to do with all these people. They started programs to get jobs for them and they fixed their homes. That's about all I can tell you.

B: Okay. How about if we stop for today then?

G: Yeah.

B: Thank you for your time.

G: You're welcome.

End of Interview