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## Interview no. 915

Amelia Rosas De Valdez

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Mining in Mexico  
Oral History Project

Amelia Rosas de Valadez  
By Michelle G. Benavides

November 26, 1996

B: This is an interview with Amelia Rosas de Valadez. The interview, by Michelle Benavides, is part of the Mining in Mexico Oral History Project. We are located at the home of Mrs. Valadez at Roberto Madrazo, numero 2, Colonia Central, Hidalgo del Parral, Chihuahua, Mexico. Today's date is November 26, 1996.

I'd like to thank you for your time, Mrs. Valadez, and for consenting to the interview. I'm sure it will be a very important addition to our project. I'd like to begin the interview first by asking you to share a bit of biographical information with me, please. If you can tell us when and where you were born.

V: I was born in Sombrerete, Zacatecas, October 19, 1912 and when we were five years old we came from Sombrerete to El Paso. We had an uncle in El Paso and he was the one that told us to come to El Paso because the revolution was on at that time. So we came. Ramon was seven years old and I was five years old. We came to El Paso and we started to live in El Paso since then. We went to school, Beall School for me, *primaria*, and I went to El Paso High School. I graduated from El Paso

High School. By then Ramon had graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1932 [Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy]. When Ramon graduated his first job in Mexico was here in San Luis Potosí. He had a permanent job in San Luis Potosí, so he told my mother and my father to come live with him. We all came to Mexico from El Paso in 1932. Then I started to work for mining companies. I studied in El Paso. And it was very nice to have learned English and Spanish, so I worked as a Spanish-English secretary. I worked for a lot of American bosses, many of them, for forty-three years in mining companies.

B: Let's back up a little bit. I'd like to have you tell me more about your life in El Paso.

V: Oh, in El Paso I used to work for JC Penney.

B: My goodness! Downtown?

V: Downtown. When El Paso was real nice. And I worked for the Popular Dry Goods, the Popular, la Popular. I used to go to school and work on Saturdays. On vacation time we used to work for JC Penney, too.

B: How old were you when you started to work?

V: Well, let's see, I was sixteen years old when I started to work at JC Penney.

B: And why did you begin to work?

V: In the mining companies?

B: No, at JC Penney's.

V: Sixteen years old.

B: But why did you begin working?

V: Well, I liked to work. I liked to work, to make money to buy my books, to buy my clothes, and to help my mother at home.

B: You mentioned your brother Ramon. Did you have any other brothers or sisters?

V: No, no, we had another brother, but he died when he was a baby.

B: Could you tell me the names of your parents, please?

V: Yes, my father was Pedro Rosas and my mother was Estele Rosas Lugo.

B: And where were they from?

V: They were from Sombrerete, Zacatecas. Both of them were born in Sombrerete.

B: And what did your father do for a living?

V: He was sick. He did not have a good heart and he didn't work very much. He used to work at Fort Bliss. Remember when they had Fort Bliss in El Paso? He worked for Fort Bliss around three or four years in the warehouse. I don't remember what year it was...when they had a lot of soldiers coming from the war and they had Fort Bliss. Do they still have Fort Bliss in El Paso?

B: Yes. And where did you live when you first came to El Paso?

V: In Sombrerete.

B: No. When you came from Mexico to El Paso do you remember where you lived in El Paso...¿el nombre de la calle?

V: We lived on Zaragosa. The street was Zaragosa, numero 8.

They call it Second Ward.

B: Yes. Was it an apartment or a house?

V: An apartment. Then we left that house and came way back near the Manhattan [Heights; a neighborhood in El Paso] on Walnut Street. We had another house there. From there we came back to Mexico.

B: When you were attending school- you mentioned that you attended elementary school at Beall- you entered not knowing any English?

V: Yes.

B: How difficult was it to learn?

V: Not at all. I don't remember having any difficulty in school when I was five years old. And, I guess, they did not have any kindergarten then. I went to a Catholic school with nuns for two years.

B: Do you remember the name of the school?

V: Yes. Sagrado Corazon, Sagrado Corazon.

B: Sacred Heart.

V: Sacred Heart, yeah. I was there for two years and then my mother took me to the public school, to Beall school.

B: And were your classes taught in English or Spanish?

V: All of them in English, all of them in English. All classes were in English, no Spanish at all. And then I finished the eighth grade in Beall school and then I went to El Paso High School.

B: Do you remember the names of some of your favorite teachers?

V: No, I don't remember. There were so many of them. I went to El Paso High four years. I have my diploma somewhere. I have it. I have my diploma that I graduated.

B: And while you were in high school your brother, Ramon, was attending school at UTEP?

V: He was attending, yes. And that's why in 1932 when he graduated and he had his first job I had to quit working at JC Penney. I quit working there, so my mother and my father and I came to join Ramon in San Luis Potosí.

B: How did you feel about returning back to Mexico?

V: Well I liked Mexico, yes, but I missed El Paso, too. I still miss El Paso, I don't know. I never went back to El Paso for the past thirty years.

B: That's a long time.

V: A long time because I was working. Two years ago I went to El Paso for two or three days. I didn't like it.

B: It has changed greatly.

V: It has changed very, very much. I used to loved to work and look at the stores and buy things in El Paso. And at Christmas time I enjoyed it very, very much.

B: Let's go back to your days at JC Penney's. What did you do?

V: I worked as a sales lady. I liked it very much. I had a very nice lady that had charge of all the store.

B: What was her name?

V: Mrs. White, Mrs. White.

B: Do you remember her first name?

V: No. No, I don't remember her first name. She was very nice to me and I liked her very much. Then I had to resign that job because we came with Ramon to Mexico.

B: How much were you paid a week? Do you remember?

V: I remember it was five dollars a week.

B: Oh my goodness! Back then was that a lot of money.

V: Oh, yes.

B: What did you do with your paycheck?

V: I worked. I remember I bought my shoes, my dresses, and my hat. We used to wear hats on Easter, remember? Well, I was very young. I liked good things, nice things. All my pay I spent on clothes. If I needed some books, I would buy some books or anything I wanted.

B: Did you ever have any intentions of attending school or college after you graduated from high school?

V: I did but we didn't have any money. In 1932 there was a big crisis in El Paso. I mean in whole states it was the crisis of 1932, remember? I don't know if you remember. All the stores were not selling very much. There was no money. Well, that was during the Second War and it was very hard to live. No jobs, no nothing, and then when we came back to Mexico everything changed. In Mexico Ramon started to work with the mines and I worked with- during my vacation or part-time- with the same company he used to work for.

B: How did he get his job with that company?

V: Well, there was a department where they gave jobs to all the

engineers.

B: From UTEP?

V: No, let's see. Ramon had a friend in some place. She used to employ a lot of people, a lot of students for mining camps, and she gave him a job here in San Luis Potosí. When he was in San Luis Potosí he had a friend, an American friend, that went to Bolivia. His name was [W.H.] Sarrels.

B: Can you spell that?

V: No, I don't think I can spell it. And he called Ramon and he took him. Ramon was already married and they had a little baby. So they went to Bolivia. Ramon first went to Bolivia and then his wife went to Bolivia, too.

B: Did you stay behind in San Luis Potosí?

V: Yes, I stayed behind because I had my father with me and my father was sick. He had heart trouble.

B: And were you still working for the mining companies?

V: Yes.

B: What was the name of the company?

V: First it was American Smelting and Refining Company. Twenty years after that they called it ASARCO. And after that the Mexicans took over and called it Industria Minera México.

B: Well, tell me about your job at San Luis Potosí.

V: It was a very nice job. I worked for those companies for at least forty, forty-three years.

B: So you worked through all of the changes.

V: Yes, yes. I started in Matehuala- that was American Smelting-



Matehuala, San Luis Potosí. Then they closed in Matehuala for they had a revolutionary strike, they called it, and then I went to Monterrey and worked for the American Smelting, too.

B: You went by yourself?

V: Yes, and my father was back in Matehuala. Then I went back to Matehuala again and got married in 1949. I kept working when I was married. I did not have any children. God knows why. (chuckles) After that I worked for Industria Minera México in Charcas, San Luis Potosí until I was transferred.

B: Okay, I'll ask you to back up again. I'd like to hear all of your good stories about every place where you worked. How about if we begin with your job in Matehuala?

V: Matehuala is a nice place.

B: Can you spell Matehuala, *por favor*?

V: Yes. M-A-T-E-H-U-A-L-A. Mate-hua-la. Matehuala. Very nice place there. It's not cold, it's not hot. *La travieza, el trópico de Cáncer. ¿Cómo se dice, trópico de Cáncer?*

B: The Tropic of Cancer.

V: The Tropic of Cancer. It's close by the Tropic of Cancer, so it's a very, very nice climate there. What else can I tell you about?

B: Tell me about your job. What did you do at your job?

V: Well, everything was secretarial work. I was a Spanish-English secretary. They used to write everything in English. Letters and everything were written in English. I received letters in English. I had to take dictation from all the

American bosses. A few letters were written in Spanish then, but almost all in English.

B: Were you the only female in the office?

V: I was. At that time I was the only female in the company. After probably twelve years they started to employ girls.

B: When you were working in Matehuala where did you live?

V: I lived in Matehuala.

B: Was there a mining camp?

V: No, it was a sort of a town, a town where they had houses. They had a church, a plaza, and everything. The mine was very close to the town, so they had a lot of houses for the employees.

B: Did the company pay for your housing?

V: No, at that time they did not pay for my house. For higher employees they had houses, I mean. They never paid any rent for me. I paid my own rent. I paid my own light, water and everything.

B: And your father was with you at this time?

V: Yes, my father was with me at that time.

B: So tell me what a typical day was like.

V: Well, it was very nice. We had a lot of parties at the company. The days were very nice, very nice. We had plenty of nice young people working for the company. And we had picnics. We had parties, dances, and music. They used to have a club where they had all of these parties and we enjoyed them very much.

B: What nationality were most of the management?

V: They all were Americans at first. Way back in 1952, maybe, they were all American. All the bosses were American. The highest places where they worked...they all were American. The lower jobs they gave them to *peones*, to the workmen. In Matehuala they used to work at least 800 people, 800 workmen, and some thirty confidential employees.

B: Confidential? What does confidential mean?

V: Confidential means that they had advantages...nicer, better salaries. Higher employees had houses just because they were employees. And the rest of them were *peones*, the workmen.

B: So how did you fit in? Were you considered to be...did they classify you with the upper management?

V: They called me a confidential employee.

B: So you had many of the advantages that they had?

V: *Sí*, uh-huh.

B: The management, were their wives there with them, also?

V: Oh yes, all of them, all of them. Many couples lived in Matehuala over thirty or forty years. They liked the climate, they liked the work, and they stayed in Matehuala. Most of them went back to the States when Mexico took over the mines, but many of them even died in Matehuala. They liked Matehuala very much.

B: What did they mine in Matehuala?

V: In Matehuala they used to mine copper and in San Luis Potosí they mined zinc and copper, too, and a little silver and a

little gold; very, very little gold and very little silver. But most of it, it's zinc. In Charcas they're still working the company. Industria Minera México is still working Charcas.

B: How old were you when you were in Matehuala?

V: Let's see, in Matehuala I must have been thirty years old, I guess.

B: ?Soltera?

V: Soltera, sí.

B: Were you ever asked out to go on a date by any of the bachelors or men that were working?

V: No, not the workers. I had my fiancée that was not working for the company. He was working for some other company.

B: Where did you meet your fiancée?

V: In San Luis Potosí. I met him in San Luis Potosí and we were married in 1949.

B: So you were apart while you were courting him, weren't you?

V: Yes.

B: And how was that?

V: Well, (chuckles) I really don't know.

B: Was it difficult?

V: No, not difficult at all. No, not at all.

B: Did you have to wear a uniform to work?

V: No, I never did.

B: Well, how did you dress to go to work?

V: I liked to work with a white blouse, a black skirt, or

anything I wanted to wear. I could wear anything I liked.

B: Did you dress up?

V: Oh, yes. I had to be very nicely dressed and had to have a very good appearance. I had to be very nice to all, everybody...be courteous and polite to everybody. And everybody liked me very much.

B: What was the name of your first boss there?

V: D.J. Pope.

B: Pope? P-O-P-E?

V: P-O-P-E, yes. D.J. Pope. And I had very, very many American bosses. Well, I don't even remember their names.

B: At that first job?

V: Yes.

B: How often did they leave? Did they rotate them or did they retire?

V: No, they used to stay in the mining camp for years and years and years. They did not rotate them. They stayed there for very many years.

B: How did you keep up with the styles?

V: Well, Matehuala had very many styles, you know. We kept just ordinary styles.

B: Did you have magazines to read to tell you how they were dressing?

V: Yes, I used to buy magazines. I used to buy American magazines.

B: I noticed that you have a sewing machine sitting on the table

with us. Can I ask you if you sewed back then?

V: Yes, I liked to sew very much.

B: When did you learn to sew?

V: All my life I've liked to sew very much. I don't sew very well, you know, but I like to sew.

B: I think you're being modest.

V: Yes. (chuckles)

B: And what about hair styles?

V: Well, I used to wear my hair long, but when you're working, you know, you have to be quick about getting dressed, quick about taking a bath, and quick about being at your office, so I cut my hair off. I cut my hair in style.

B: Bobbed?

V: Bobbed, yes.

B: And while you were at work who cared for your father?

V: I had a maid that took care of him.

B: Did she do any cooking for him?

V: Oh, yes, she used to do the cooking, wash the dishes, wash the clothes, and take care of my father and everything. When I was working in Matehuala it was quite a little bit off from town, so we had to drive a bus to the mine and we didn't come back before dinner. They had a restaurant over there, so we could eat at the restaurant. So I came back home after five o'clock. The company had a bus that brought us back to town after five o'clock.

B: How long was the ride to the camp?

V: Fifteen or twenty minutes, not very far.

B: And did the company pay for your lunch?

V: No, we used to pay for the lunch.

B: How was the food?

V: Very nice food, very nice. They used to have Chinese cooks. We had very nice food.

B: Did they prepare Chinese food or Mexican food?

V: Mexican food, Mexican food. And it was not very expensive for the employees. They had a very special price for all of the confidential employees.

B: Did the laborers eat apart?

V: Yes, oh yes. They brought their food from their homes and they took one hour for lunch. They had a little house, a little room, where they could have a little stove and heat their food. It was very nice for them, too.

B: What type of medical care was available to you?

V: They had a hospital and two nurses and one doctor. Very nice service for every employee...for both confidential employees and for the workmen, too.

B: It was separate then?

V: No, the same doctor for the confidential employees and for the families of the workmen. Until 1980, when the social security came to the company, all the employees had social security attention.

B: Is that SAR? Is that how they pronounce it, S-A-R, SAR?

V: No, I don't think so.

B: Did you ever get sick?

V: No, not at all.

B: Were there ever any mine accidents that you can remember?

V: Oh yes, there were a lot. Not very many, but they did have mining accidents.

B: What happened?

V: Well, one time a man was going down the mine hole and he had a rope. He was lowering himself to the second floor and the rope was not very strong and the man very very heavy, so *se rebento* and he went way back down and he was killed. And another time *la caleza- ¿cómo se llama la caleza* where they drive the man up and down?

B: Like a basket?

V: Yes. They were seven workmen coming down from the third floor and it broke. Something happened. It broke and it went down to the floor and they were killed, seven of them. Oh, there in the mine it's very dangerous.

B: Did they stop operations when something like that happened?

V: No, no, no. They kept on, they kept on.

B: How about occupational diseases like silicosis?

V: Oh yes, they had silicosis, yes. All the workmen that work in the mine, even though they protect themselves from silicosis, they get silicosis. Because, you know, the air and the dust can get into their nose and down to their chest. Many of them have silicosis. All of them, I guess, have silicosis.

B: Would the company compensate them?



V: Well, when they retire they do pay [them for] their silicosis according to] the grade. If it's too much or little they pay for their silicosis, yes. And it's just like tuberculosis, you know. What else?

B: So after you worked there where was your next position?

V: After I worked in Matehuala, as I said, I went to Monterrey.

B: For the same company?

V: For American Smelting and Refining Company. I worked for a doctor, Doctor Bella Gonzalez. He was a man that had been in the revolution. He was a cavalier, a lieutenant. I worked four years there.

B: In Monterrey?

V: In Monterrey. Before I was married.

B: I'm confused. I thought the company had transferred you to Monterrey?

V: No.

B: Why did you move to Monterrey?

V: Because in Matehuala they closed the mine. They closed the mine in Matehuala...

**End of Tape One**

**Side A**

## Beginning of Tape One

### Side B

V: Yes, in Matehuala they closed the mine. They closed the mine because they had a revolutionary strike. A doctor came over to the mine to take over all the medical instruments of the company and bring them to Monterrey. He talked to me and he said, "You're going to lose your job and, if you like, I have a position for you in Monterrey. Would you like to be my secretary?" So, I thought, "If I am out of work here in Matehuala and he's offering me a job in Monterrey, I'll have to take it." So I took the job in Monterrey and I worked for that doctor over four years.

B: What did you do for him?

V: A secretary, too, but it was very hard for me because of his his dictation and because it was medical stuff, you know. It's very, very hard to take dictation from a doctor. If you haven't worked for a doctor before, it's very, very hard.

B: So the terminology changed from mining to medical?

V: From mining to medical. After four years I went back to Matehuala.

B: Was your father with you in Monterrey?

V: I took my father to Monterrey, yes.

B: What did he think of you moving to Monterrey?

V: He liked Monterrey very much because it was a big city.

B: It's a beautiful city.

V: It's a big town, big city. He used to go down to the church and stay over there and listen to the music. On Sundays he used to take a taxi and go over to the church and stay over there and hear the music and then he would come back to the house to have lunch. He liked it very much. I got married and went back to Matehuala, again, because my husband was in Matehuala.

B: When you moved to Monterrey your fiancée was where?

V: Matehuala. He was in Matehuala.

B: I want you to tell me about your courtship with him.

V: It was a very short courtship because I knew him for years and years. I was getting old and I thought, "Since my father's not going to live very long I have to have a partner." I thought about it very much; I said to myself, "What am I going to do if my father dies?" And my brother was here in Parral. So, I thought, I'll get married. So I got married. (chuckles)

B: There was no courtship?

V: Yes, two years, that was all.

B: And what was his name?

V: Reymundo Valadez.

B: Reymundo?

V: Reymundo Valadez. He died in January, 1981. So, I was all alone in Charcas, San Luis Potosí. I had no family over there. My only family is Ramon and Teresa, his wife. Ramon told me to come over to Parral and live with them, but I

didn't want to live with them, so I bought this house. This house is mine and I like it very much. I live here by myself and they live over there. I stay with them on Sundays. I go to church and from church I go and visit them and stay with them all of Sunday.

B: To their house here in Parral?

V: To their house here in Parral. I sleep over there that night and then I come back to my house on Monday morning. (chuckles) It works very well like that. They can have their own house over there and I can have my house over here.

B: Well, you seem to be very independent.

V: Independent, yes.

B: Let's back up to your courtship. You say you dated for two years?

V: Two years.

B: Was it long-distance dating?

V: No, not very much. I don't think so because I knew him and he knew me.

B: How did you meet him?

V: We worked in the same company.

B: Right, you mentioned that.

V: Yes, we worked in the same company.

B: Where were you married?

V: I was married in Matehuala on Valentine's Day. (laughs)

B: How romantic!

V: How romantic.

B: Can you tell me about your wedding day?

V: It was a very, very nice wedding because I wore a white dress and we went to church. Teresa and Ramon went to my wedding day. I had a lot of visitors. I had a lot of friends. They had a big wedding cake. Oh, it was very nice.

B: Who stood in your wedding? Who witnessed the ceremony?

V: An American boss I used to have, Mr. Reyer.

B: Can you spell his name, please?

V: R-E-Y-E-R, Reyer, and his wife. His wife died two years after that. Mr. Reyer went back to New York with his family.

B: Did you go on a honeymoon?

V: Yes, I went on a honeymoon to Mexico City and Taxco. We spent eight days in Taxco and seven days in Mexico City.

B: And how did you travel?

V: By train. We didn't have very much money to spend on my wedding.

B: Did he give you a wedding present?

V: Yes.

B: What did he give you?

V: A nightgown, some money, and Mexican gold coins, one hundred peso coins. I spent all those gold coins. (chuckles)

B: In Mexico City?

V: No, in other places.

B: What did your father think about you getting married?

V: He didn't like it very much because he was so used to me living with him and he living with me. He wasn't very happy

about my marriage. But then when I was married he used to visit Ramon and stay with him weeks and weeks over here [in Parral] with Ramon.

B: That must have been such a hard decision for you to make since you had been caring for your father for so many years.

V: Yes. I was old when I married, so that's why I think I didn't have any children.

B: How old were you?

V: I must have been thirty-five, thirty-six years.

B: That's not so old. I didn't get married until I was thirty-two. After you came back from the honeymoon where did you live?

V: In Matehuala. I lived in Matehuala again.

B: And you went back to work?

V: And I went back to work.

B: What did your husband think about you returning to work?

V: If we didn't have any family he thought it was okay for me to work. He worked and I worked, both of us.

B: And what did he do?

V: He was an employee for the company, too. He used to work as a bookkeeper.

B: Were you in the same office?

V: In the same office mostly.

B: How was that, living together and then working together?

V: Well, it was just fine, just fine. No trouble at all.

B: Did he go to school to learn bookkeeping?

V: Yes, he went to school in Durango, I think. He was from Durango. He worked and studied in Durango as a bookkeeper.

B: So when you went back to work what happened? You had mentioned there was a revolutionary strike and you lost your job. How did you end up back working for the same company?

V: They were *desmantelando*. They were taking everything from the mine. They were sending all the machinery to other companies, everything from the office, all of the office equipment to all the units, so there was work to do: I made lists of all the material that was shipped from one unit to another unit. It took them at least four years to clean up the company, then it was closed.

B: But during this time...you were in Monterrey those four years?

V: No. After I married I came back to Matehuala and I worked in Matehuala again when they were taking up everything...machinery and everything. They were moving over to all the other companies.

B: Why were they moving the equipment and machinery?

V: Because the mine was closed. They were not going to work it anymore.

B: Why?

V: Because the prices of the ores were very low. The *sindicato* wanted very high wages and the company did not want to pay very high wages.

B: Can you tell me a little bit about the *sindicato*?

V: The *sindicato* is a group that takes care of all the workmen.

They take care of all the work and of the people working. They see that they are paid what the company offers them to pay. You know, the *sindicato* works for the workmen. All the companies have *sindicatos*, all of them. They have to take charge of all the people, of all the workmen.

B: So you came back and you worked for the company again when they were shipping out or moving the equipment to other units?

V: *Sí*, moving, yes.

B: Was that a temporary job?

V: It was a temporary job, yes.

B: What did you think?

V: *Pues*, nothing.

B: Were you worried about your next job?

V: No, I wasn't worried, because my husband was still working for the company. He was sent back to Taxco to work; he had a job.

B: Did you go with him?

V: No. I didn't go with him.

B: What did you do when he was transferred to Taxco?

V: When he was transferred to Taxco I worked for Charcas, not for Matehuala, for a mining company in Charcas. While he was in Taxco I was working in Charcas. Charcas is still working right now.

B: This was the American Smelting and Refining Company still?

V: No. It was Industria Minera México, Industria Minera México. It's still working now. I worked there for forty-three years in that mine.



B: Can you explain to me about the change of companies? *Por ejemplo*, you told me first that it was the American Smelting and Refining Company and then it became ASARCO and then it became the Industria Minera México.

V: Industria Minera México.

B: How did that change come about?

V: I don't know. I think they sold shares. They sold shares to Mexican companies, so when it was Industria Minera México they Mexicanized the companies, all the mining companies. The Mexicans had more percentage in the mines...over fifty percent of the mines.

B: Did the management change?

V: Yes. All of the Americans left the companies because they became Mexican companies then.

B: Who took their places?

V: Mexican engineers, employees...everything Mexican.

B: How did you feel about that change?

V: I didn't feel anything. If I worked for an American boss, then for a Mexican boss, it didn't matter very much.

B: Your job didn't change much after?

V: No. At first, I used to work all in English. Then I used to work with Mexicans and we worked all in Spanish.

B: And were you comfortable working in both?

V: In both, oh yes. More or less, I was doing fine.

B: So, your bosses changed. Did you have a change in pay?

V: Yes, because when I was working in Monterrey they used to pay

in U.S. currency. Well, I tell you, when the peso was floating- they call it floating because it was up and down- they changed my salary in dollars to the equivalent in pesos. After that, all the salaries I got were in pesos.

B: How did you feel about that?

V: I didn't like it very much because I used to work for U.S. currency (chuckles) and then it changed to Mexican pesos. I used to save money in dollars.

B: Did they pay you *en efectivo*?

V: Yes. They used to pay *en efectivo* every week. My salary was paid every week. We used to have a Christmas bonus and, in May, if the company had enough profits we used to have a sort of a bonus.

B: Do you remember the biggest dollar amount that you got as a bonus?

V: Oh yes, a hundred and fifty dollars. (chuckles)

B: That was a lot, wasn't it?

V: That was a lot then, yes.

B: When the companies were Mexicanized did you have the same benefits: health benefits, hospitalization?

V: Yes. I had everything just like we had when the companies were in the hands of American people.

B: Were you entitled to a pension?

V: Yes. I was entitled to a pension. When I was sixty-five years I was entitled to a pension. I have a pension fee. I receive it every month.

B: Let's go back to Charcas. You were working in Charcas. And this was after the company was Mexicanized?

V: Yes.

B: How long were you in Charcas?

V: Forty-three years, forty-three years.

B: Could you tell me a little bit about the mining operation?

V: Not very much because my work was in the office and the mining operation is different. I couldn't tell you how they did the ore or mill the ore. I don't think I could explain it.

B: I'm sure Mr. Rosas will take care of that during his interview. Did you notice any changes in the office? The technology, for example...did the typewriters change? Did your equipment change?

V: Yes. We used to change every five years. They took the old equipment and brought new equipment.

B: Did you get to choose any of the equipment?

V: Yes, I did, but I didn't get to use an electric typewriter. I used to have one of those regular typewriters. When they started to bring electric typewriters, I don't know. I used to work very fast on the ordinary typewriter, but not on the electric typewriter. (laughs)

B: You must have strong fingers.

V: I guess so.

B: The dictating machine...what was that like?

V: We didn't have a dictating machine.

B: How did the bosses dictate?

V: He dictated and I took notes on it on a book.

B: Did you take shorthand?

V: Yes. I took shorthand in Spanish. I worked very nice. You know, after you work so many years in a company you know all the work. The boss knows that you know what to answer, what to write, what to do, and so I didn't have any trouble working for anybody or any of the bosses.

B: When a new boss came in, did you often times have to tell him what to do?

V: Yes. They were new and sometimes they didn't know what to do when something came up.

B: How did they address you?

V: Amelia, by my name.

B: Did you ever have to make coffee for them?

V: Oh, yes. (laughs)

B: Was that part of your job?

V: Yes, that was part of my job, too.

B: Did that bother you?

V: Not at all. They were very nice people so, I took care of the coffee, too. (laughs)

B: In Charcas was there a mining colony?

V: Yes.

B: Can you tell me a little bit about the colony?

V: The colony was very nice for all the confidential employees, as I said it before. They had very nice houses. They had a club. They had a very nice restaurant where the bosses could

go and eat. Anybody could pay and have lunch in the restaurant.

B: Where did the laborers live in Charcas?

V: They had houses. It's not a very big town, but they had houses for the workmen.

B: Was there a mining colony, or were they housed in the town?

V: Well, the town was small, but they had ordinary houses for all the workmen. At the mine they had a colony for all the high employees, for *empleados de confianza*. They didn't pay rent, light, water. The company paid everything for them.

B: Where did you live?

V: I lived downtown. I bought a house. I had my own house downtown. I worked for the company, but I came back to my house in the afternoon. After I got out of the office I came to my house.

B: Did they offer you a place to stay in the colony?

V: Yes, they did, but I didn't like it.

B: Why?

V: I had a lot of friends in downtown. They had parties. On coffee breaks I came back to my house. I could be happier downtown than over at the company.

B: But if you wanted to you could have gone?

V: Oh, yes. I used to go to their parties. On the *Diez de Mayo* they made a party, and on *Navidad*, Thanksgiving...Christmas. They had suppers and everything. I used to go to all of the parties. I was invited to all of the parties.

B: Was there a church in the colony?

V: No, they did not have one. The church was in Charcas. They had two churches in Charcas. All of the employees, confidential employees, came to downtown and went to church downtown.

B: Was there a library there?

V: They had a library, a small one.

B: In the town or in the colony?

V: In the town. They had one in the company, too. They had a library for all the employees.

B: Where did they get their books from?

V: They collected books from everybody or they would buy books from other places.

B: The children of the employees that lived in the colony... where did they attend school?

V: They had a special teacher in Spanish for all the children on the colony. Before the company was Mexicanized they had an English teacher, but after that they had a Mexican teacher.

B: And what was the highest grade the children could attend?

V: The sixth grade.

B: What would happen after sixth grade?

V: They could go to *preparatoria*, high school, downtown. After that they could go to San Luis Potosí to the university.

B: How far was San Luis Potosí?

V: Three hours from Charcas...three hours in a bus or one and a half hours by car.

B: Did many of the parents send their children to school in the United States after they'd completed their schooling?

V: No, not many. I guess it was more expensive to send them to the States than to send them to San Luis Potosí. If an American couple had the money they could send them to the United States, but there was not very many children that could go the States to study.

B: So they would continue their education in Spanish?

V: Most of them, yes.

B: That's interesting. Did many women give birth in Charcas?

V: Yes, because they had their hospital for the company with very good doctors.

B: Did you know of anyone that gave birth there?

V: Yes. Most of them.

B: Did they talk about their experiences?

V: I guess so. Most of them were very nice and the doctors took very good care of the mother and the child.

B: Where were the doctors from?

V: Several places. They could come from Guanajuato, they could come from Mexico City, or they could come from any other place.

B: You mentioned that you had many friends in Charcas. Do you keep in touch in any of them?

V: With two of them...two *comadres*. You know what a *comadre* is?

B: Yes. You baptized their children.

V: Yes.

B: What are their names?

V: One of them is Monina and the other one is Estela. They write letters to me. After two, three years I still receive letters from them.

B: And did they work, also?

V: No. They have stores. One of them is a person that has cattle and a ranch. The other one had a dry goods store.

B: How did you meet them?

V: When I used to live Charcas they had the parties and they had dances; we met at the dance, at a tea party, a coffee break, or something like that.

B: Did the women who lived in the colony interact much with the women that lived in the town?

V: Some of them. Others thought they were very special living in the colony, but most of them had friends in downtown.

B: Were there very strict social lines? Was there a heirarchy?

V: No. I don't think so, not at all.

B: Did the American wives learn to speak Spanish?

V: Yes, most of them.

B: How did they learn?

V: They used to have books in Spanish and they studied Spanish. Most of them could speak Spanish after two or three years.

B: Did they have help in the house?

V: Yes. All of them. All of them had help at their own house.

B: How do you think they felt about living away from the United States?



V: I think they liked Mexico. I really think they liked Mexico because most of my friends, that's what they said. They liked to live in Mexico rather than in the United States. I don't know why, but I had friends that lived in Matehuala and in Charcas very many, many, many years. I don't know, they had more advantages, *ventajas*. They liked the Mexican people. They worked with Mexicans. They had a lot of servants because it was cheaper to have a lot of servants here in Mexico than in the States. They had two or three maids. They liked that, too. They had very nice houses. They didn't have to pay rent or pay light or water or anything.

B: So we can almost say that their standard of living was much higher here than it would have been than in the United States?

V: Probably. I had a friend, an American fellow that used to go to the States, and he said, "I don't want to go to the States because nobody knows me over there." He had a lot of Mexican friends here in Mexico.

B: Did you ever hear of any women returning back to the States because of unhappiness?

V: One did. I remember a lady- but I think she went out of her head- that was living in Matehuala with her husband. One day, just suddenly, she took the car and drove to San Luis Potosí and went to the bank and drew out all the money they had and then went to a hotel and hired one room. She went into the room and locked herself in the room. Something happened to her; the husband had to go to San Luis. Somebody told the

husband that the lady had taken the car and she was driving to San Luis. He went to San Luis to get his wife.

B: And what happened after she locked herself in the room?

V: Somebody in the hotel had to open up the room when the husband was there and they had to go to the States to have medical care for her. She never came back. I don't know what happened to her but she never came back. Something happened, I don't know. Maybe she drank too much, I don't know.

**End of Tape One**

**Side B**

**Beginning of Tape Two**

**Side A**

B: Mrs. Valadez, you mentioned at one point during our interview that you worked by yourself in the office.

V: Most of the time, yes.

B: Did you ever get any help?

V: Yes, ten days after working with the *compañía* in Charcas I had a girl that helped me with the work.

B: Why did they get help for you?

V: We had a lot of things to do that I didn't have time to do all the work, so they hired another girl.

B: Did you have any say-so in who they hired?

V: No, not at all. The company hired the girl. I didn't have anything to do with the girl.

B: And where was she from?

V: She was from the same place that I lived...in Charcas. It was a girl that had studied to be a secretary in San Luis Potosí, so she was okay when she came to work for me.

B: How did you feel about having help in the office?

V: Fine, because I could do something else and she could do part of my work. That was just fine. It was easy for me to do something else and not take all the work by myself.

B: Was it hard to give orders?

V: Not at all, because the job is not very heavy. After a week of work the girl was doing fine. After a week or two she was doing fine.

B: She was trained very quickly?

V: She was trained very quickly. She could take dictation from the boss. It was very nice to have help. I could go out of the office and she could stay at the office until I came back. She could take care of anything that came up.

B: When did you decide to retire?

V: I did not retire. They have a rule that when you get to be sixty-five years that it is your age for pension. So, when I was sixty-five years I was eligible for pension. They told me that I was sixty-five and I could retire if I wanted, so I said I wanted to retire and I retired.

B: You were ready to retire?

V: I was ready to retire.

B: Did they give you a party?

V: Oh, yes. They gave me a party, (chuckles) at the club. We had a very nice dinner at the party and we danced a little bit.

B: Did they give you a retirement gift?

V: Yes. They gave me a silver *charola*, a *charola* and coffee set and a *licorera* to put liquor on. I still have them here.

B: Was it an emotional moment?

V: Oh yes, very emotional, because I knew then (with emotion) I could I do anything I wanted to. I could sleep late, you know.

B: Well, you know how that goes. For once you probably can sleep late.

V: Yes, I could go to any party and stay longer hours and sleep in the next day longer than other days. It was very nice, my retirement.

B: And your husband?

V: My husband also retired in Taxco. When he was sixty-five years they retired him from Taxco. Taxco is another Industria Minera México unit. So he came from Taxco to live with me. Both of us lived in Charcas until he died in 1981.

B: So part of the time while you were working in Charcas he was living in Taxco. Can you tell me about that separation?

V: It was very hard, but he came back. He could visit me every six months or every three months. Can you imagine?

B: That must have been so difficult.

V: Yes, it was very difficult because he was in Taxco and I was here. They promised to transfer me to Taxco, but I didn't want to go to Taxco. I had my own house. I had to move everything to Taxco and since I was just about to retire, it wasn't very nice to go to Taxco and then come back to my house in Charcas again. I told them I did not want to go to Taxco, so I kept working in Charcas until I retired. My husband kept working in Taxco until he retired. He retired before I did- I don't remember the exact date- but he retired three or four years before I retired. We lived very happy then. He was retired and I was retired. We lived together until he died in 1981.

B: When you retired you moved back to Parral?

V: No. I kept living in Charcas until my husband died. When my husband died that was when I came to Parral.

B: How did he die?

V: Heart disease. He had heart disease.

B: Did you sell your house in Charcas?

V: Yes. I sold my house in Charcas. I sold my house in Charcas before I bought this house. With the money that I got for my house I paid part of this house. I came to live to Parral. I miss very much my old friends, my old town, and my old mining place. I miss it sometimes, but I'm happy here in Parral.

B: It became home for you.

V: Yes. I like Parral, but Parral is not very well economically. They closed the mine here in Parral because of the low price of the ores. Most of the stores are closed because there's no money. There's not very much money circulating in town.

B: Which mine closed?

V: La Prieta, they call it La Prieta.

B: But is there one mine still operating?

V: Santa Bárbara is working. I think they're working part-time.

B: And who owns Santa Bárbara?

V: Industria Minera México.

B: Have you ever gone out there?

V: No, I haven't gone out there. I haven't gone down to the mine. I haven't gone down to the little town. It's a little town, not very far...Santa Bárbara. You can go down by bus or car. I never have been at the mine. I don't know the houses or the people who live in Santa Bárbara.

B: Do you think the secretaries there now have computers?

V: I couldn't tell you, I don't know. I haven't been to the office, not at all. I guess they have computers now. All the companies have computers.

B: Looking back on all the years that you spent working with the various mining companies, would you have changed anything?

V: Like what?

B: Would you have changed your line of work? Would you have done something different?

V: I don't think so because I liked the work. I wanted to work

for the mining company because it was easy for me. I learned a lot of things. If I went down to another place I would have lost all my years of work with the company. I would have lost my pension plan. I would have lost something that I would not recover if I went to another place. I spent all of the time in mining places and did not count the years that I worked until I was told that I was going to be pensioned. You know, the time goes by so quickly that before I knew it, it was forty-three years that I had worked for the mining company. (chuckles) That was nice, having worked for so long.

B: Does it seem like a long time?

V: I think so. It seems like a long time; forty-three years, can you imagine? That's too many years.

B: But good memories, I think.

V: (chuckles) Good memories, yes.

B: What words of advice would you give to a person going to work as a secretary for the mining company since you have done it- or did it- for forty-three years? What would you tell them?

V: The first thing, they should be well prepared; to know what they're going to work with; to have very good scholarship; to be very polite to everybody, to be amicable, amigables, to everybody; to help every workman if they need help, to help everybody; and do nice work and like your boss because you have to work with the boss many, many years; to be very polite to your boss; to establish a good friendship with his wife and children, that's the most important.

B: I think you said a lot right there. Well, how about we stop for now?

V: Yes, sure.

B: I'd like to thank you for your time.

V: You're welcome, you're welcome.

B: This is the end of the interview.

**End of Interview**