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Interview no. 1638

Margarita R. Mendoza

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Margarita R. Mendoza

Interviewer: Barbara Dent

Project: El Paso Clothing Industry

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: January 28, 2011

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1638

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Margarita Mendoza was an employee for Union Manufacturing in El Paso, TX; was born in East Chicago, IN on July 28, 1927; her parents were from Durango, Mexico; her father was a farmer for his mother's family on their hacienda, she describes how they met when she was a baby and he was a farmhand; she reveals father's brothers fought with the revolutionaries in the Mexican Revolution, but he came to the U.S. in 1910; she relays mother's family struggle to escape the Mexican Revolution, she describes her parent's courtship; she mentions they had six children while working in Kansas and moved to East Chicago to work in the steel industry, had four more children; describes mother's job as a seamstress and the demographics of the town; she recounts the inheritance property that her mother received from her wealthy family after the Mexican Revolution, and family decided to be moved back to Parral, Mexico for thirteen years; she goes over death of three siblings, eventual decision to move to Juarez, Mexico in 1946; she recounts brothers service in the U.S. military during World War II and Korea respectively; she covers the last years of her parents; she describes herself as the leader of the family despite being the eighth child; she explains everyone gradually moved to El Paso, she didn't want to leave her friends so she didn't move until 1960. Ms. Mendoza recounts working various jobs to support her mother, as a result married late in life; she reveals that she got her job with Union Manufacturing sewing due to her brother being a line supervisor, lasted forty years; she gives details on her duties at the factory making pants, tells about the conditions and pay; she talks about applying for a payroll position when another girl quit, issue of her gaining the position due to not having formal education but general manager James Kradz gave her a chance; she states she did well and eventually became in charge of payroll. She recalls how she met her husband in Juarez, he worked for her church; she recalls his moving to El Paso and the birth of their son; she reveals how she got her husband numerous positions at the factory throughout the years; she explains that the factory was not unionized, workers liked the management and conditions; she gives the history of Union Manufacturing, opened in 1910 by Albert Harris in Los Angeles, CA; she

mentions that El Paso was the manufacturing location, small in comparison to Farah and Levi; she says they had to close when manufacturing went overseas in the 1970s; she recalls when she was laid off, her husband went to El Paso Community College for plastic molding, she retired and did volunteer work in payroll with La Fe Clinic in South El Paso; she describes inputting payroll on the computer as easy, later offered a full time position at age seventy; she tells about her husband's gaining employment at Community College instead of taking work in maquiladoras. Ms. Mendoza recounts her eventual move to the west side of El Paso and describes the education and upbringing of her son, his full scholarship to Princeton University in New Jersey; she describes her brother that was in the Army in World War II and went to work as a civilian for the supply system at Ft. Bliss, TX, her other brother that served in Korea became a mathematician after graduating from UTEP; she reveals son lives in New York, received two master's degrees from Georgetown University in Washington D.C.; she states later he worked for Morgan Stanley, and then IBM where he is currently a Vice President; she goes over son's marriage to a Japanese woman while living in Japan for work, she mentions her granddaughter. She goes on to describe Parral during World War II, Mexico didn't have rationing and was not drastically affected by the war; she describes her brother's experience in the Korean War with a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital; she gives the origins of *Escuela Montessori* in Juarez that her son attended; she explains the Italian Montessori educational approach, credits it with her son's ability to learn very quickly; she goes over the whereabouts of various family members; she gives details on her current volunteer work for her church, also at UTEP Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens and Sierra Medical Center; she reveals that she and her husband have travelled the world and still enjoy it. Ms. Mendoza closes by stating she currently enjoys spending time with her granddaughter.

Length of interview 118 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a