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Interview no. 1664

Ramon A. Salas

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Ramon A. Salas

Interviewer: Dr. Monica Perales

Project: Smelertown Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: August 18, 1995

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Transcript No.: 1664

Transcriber / Summary: Vanessa Pantoja

Ramon A. Salas was born in Mexico and migrated to Smelertown in the 1920's. He attended school in Mexico and then finished his education at a public school in Smelertown. He attended vocational classes which help him learn a trade. This is where he was introduced to construction. Salas worked in construction and was employed by El Paso Natural Gas for 20 years until he retired. Salas detailed demographic of Smelertown where Anglos occupied houses ASARCO owned on a hill and the Mexican workers lived below them. Some of the Mexican houses did not have running water. Times were difficult due to the great depression, but working at the smelter with low rent allowed people to survive. He recalls his childhood as school and helping around the house. There were extracurricular activities such as basketball and baseball teams. There were also dances. He even met his wife in Smelertown. They moved to downtown El Paso in 1940, and lived there until 1955 when Salas was employed by Natural Gas. Salas also discussed working on the road to mount Cristo Rey. He describes this as hard work and recalls getting paid \$1.50 a day for six hours of work. There were few safety regulations and a large risk with climbing the mountain, but they competed the trail to Mt. Cristo Rey. Salas says the best aspect of living in Smelertown was the sense of community where everyone knew each other. Salas went on to have five children with his wife; two of his children became lawyers.

Length of interview 51 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a