

9-29-2010

Interview no. 1498

Kelly Thomas Pacheco

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Interview with Kelly Thomas Pacheco by Arlina Palacios, 2010, "Interview no. 1498," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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University of Texas at El Paso

Institute of Oral History

Interviewee: Kelly Thomas Pacheco

Interviewer: Arlina Palacios

Project: Paso del Norte Entrepreneurs Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: 29 September 2010

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Transcript No.: 1498

Transcriber: GMR Transcription Services

Biographical Synopsis of Interviewee: Kelly Thomas Pacheco was born in El Paso Texas in July 1963. Kelly attended Zack White School and Coronado High School and has a degree in marketing from The University of Texas at El Paso. Her father, George Thomas was a builder and her mother Janet Vota Thomas was a decorator. Kelly is married with two children and is the founder and owner of Quality Craft Homes in El Paso, Texas.

Summary of Interview: Kelly gives her father, the late George Thomas the credit of having mentored and guided her through the residential building business and Kelly also recognizes she learned decorating from watching her mother who had a natural talent for decorating. Kelly began decorating model homes while in high school. After high school, Kelly ventured into her own business called Del Pueblo Furniture and she would purchase furniture in México and re-sell it in the United States. At the end of 1989, Kelly began working for her father in his business Carefree Homes. Kelly eventually branched out with her own business, Quality Craft Homes in the mid-late 1990's. Kelly worked in the whole building aspect, from creative floor plans, to the decorating process. Kelly expresses her love for creativity and that creativity has flowed in her business. Though Kelly does not create custom homes, Quality Craft Homes offers affordable quality homes that can compete with custom made homes. Quality Craft Homes also build their homes with 100% Energy Star efficiency. Kelly is the recipient of the 2010 Energy Star Leadership in Housing Award. Kelly is a member of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce and the El Paso Association of Builders. The advice Kelly would offer entrepreneurs is keep focused on your goals, take one step at a time, learn to listen and listen to learn, build a team around you, take one step at a time and be flexible.

Length of interview: 84 minutes

Length of Transcript: 37 pages

Name of Interviewee: Kelly Pacheco
Date of Interview: September 29th, 2010
Name of Interviewer: Arlina Pacheco

AP: This is an interview with Kelly Pacheco on September 29th, 2010. The interviewer is Arlina Palacios. This interview is a part of the Paso Del Norte Entrepreneurs Oral History Project. This interview is being conducted in El Paso, Texas. Good morning Miss Pacheco.

KP: Good morning.

AP: Will you state your full name just for the record?

KP: Kelly Thomas Pacheco.

AP: Kelly Thomas Pacheco. And what is the present name of your company?

KP: Quality Craft Homes.

AP: Great. We're going to start with just some basic background information.

KP: Okay.

AP: When and where were you born?

KP: I was born – I'm a native El Pasoan, born in 1963.

AP: And your birthday?

KP: July.

AP: July 1963.

KP: I'm a cancer if it makes a different.

AP: So you were born here in El Paso?

KP: Native El Pasoan.

AP: Tell me about your experiences growing up here in El Paso.

KP: I grew up in the upper valley, El Paso, and it felt like a very small community. Before the valley was developed, we lived amongst,

you know, fields of alfalfa and I grew up, it was a wonderful childhood, grew up riding horses and had a great group of friends and a large family. I have three brothers and two sisters,

AP: Really? What were your parents' names?

KP: My father, George Thomas, and my mother, Janet Vota Thomas.

AP: Okay. And what did your father do, what was his occupation?

KP: My father has always been in construction. When he was a student at UTEP he started building pools. One of his first pools that he built was a hotel on Mesa Street. And I, I'm sorry I cannot remember the name of the hotel, but he was featured in different, you know, El Paso Times and different, you know, UTEP publications. He was maybe a sophomore or a junior and building pools on his own.

AP: On his own? That's how he started?

KP: Yes, that's how he started.

AP: Is that he made his way through college, or is it?

KP: He paid for his own college, yes, um-hum.

AP: And when did your parents meet? Tell me about that.

KP: They met when it was – it was a Texas School of Minds, what was it?

AP: It was the College of Minds.

KP: It was the Col- but after the College of Minds, what was it called? This is going to be a good one, thank God this is edited. Texas Western, okay.

AP: Texas Western.

KP: They met, he – my father was in a fraternity and my mother was in a sorority and they met and they fell in love and they were both students at the time.

AP: What did your mother study at UTEP? Tell me about her.

KP: You know, she did not graduate, unfortunately, and she was probably in liberal studies. I don't know, unfortunately. My father was a business major and part of Admin of Mines and top two per-you know, top percent in his calls, very very bright, very intelligent, so. And he did graduate from UTEP.

AP: He graduated from UTEP.

KP: Well from Texas Western.

AP: Texas Western.

KP: And jut a little bit more family history, my father later on in life was married to Sally, my step-mother, Sally Thomas. She is also deceased. Her father was president of Texas Western when they won the national championship, Doctor Ray. so the family does go back.

AP: So you're UTEP alumni [inaudible].

KP: Yeah, I guess so. Yes I am.

AP: So tell me about your mother.

KP: Well my mother and my father married when they met in college and, you know, started a family. And my father was in construction and my mother stayed home and, you know, raised all of us kids, very brave. And, you know, like I said, I come from a large family, and she helped him and decorated his models throughout the years. And, you know, in that age I guess it was, you know, she supported him emotionally and stayed home with the family.

AP: And you mentioned horses and living in the upper valley.

KP: Yeah, it was, it was great fun. I mean we stayed outside, we – we were like we swam, we swam on the swim teams. We rode horses. It was a very – I don't have any complaints. It was a very lovely childhood.

AP: And where did you go to school?

KP: I went to school at Zack White, I went to school at Lincoln and I went to Cornado. I graduated from Cornado and then went on to UTEP.

AP: And how was Cornado? How was going to school there at that time?

KP: Crazy and wild, and thank God I survived. And my children went there and thank God they survived. So, yeah, no, it was all good. I have some great memories, some great friendships still.

AP: From Cornado?

KP: Oh yeah, yeah. So it was – and I swam through high school until I discovered other things that weren't so healthful. But no, it was all good.

AP: And your siblings, where did they go to school?

KP: They all, they all stayed here locally, went to school. My sister – one of my sisters went off to University of Arizona and studied, and my brother went to SMU. My other brother studied in Colorado for a little bit and my youngest brother, he graduated from – went to NYU for a little bit and then got a masters in architecture at the University of Houston. So we've like studied everywhere, so.

AP: And how was it like growing in –

KP: In a huge family –

AP: Right.

KP: – well it was different. I only have two children, so you know, it was chaotic at times, but I mean it was something that my mom and father wanted, you know, a large family, so. I was just – I was the third girl, so, you know, I don't have much choice, do I?

AP: So you were the third girl.

KP: Yeah.

AP: Did you have – how was your upbringing in terms of not being the oldest, not being –

KP: Well I always kind of wanted to do what, you know, like – I always remember I always wanted to do like what the guys were doing or why couldn't I go camping? Or why couldn't I go fishing? Not that I necessarily wanted to, but I always kind of I guess tested, you know, those roles back when I was a child, you

know. We had specific roles, you know, being a female or being a male. And I always kind of wanted to, you know, go beyond that and not have those expectations. I want – I always wanted – I always had some kind of desire to do different things, you know, that weren't expected, you know, or challenging things, so.

AP: How did your siblings see that?

KP: Probably that I was a pain in the ass. No, excuse me. I think I was a high strung kid, and I think I'm a pretty high strung adult, but that's okay.

AP: That's great. Besides swimming and high school, tell me about swimming and high school.

KP: I loved it. You know, it kept me busy, it kept me in shape. I, unfortunately I didn't see through the – my swimming career in high school, but my daughter did, which I was really excited. And we met so many great people. So many great families and friendships were formed and, you know, I just – I don't think my heart was completely into it, but the years I did swim I really enjoyed it, so. It kept me focused, it kept me out of trouble. But then I found it, so.

AP: And, oh, you mentioned your daughters is?

KP: I have two children. I have a daughter, she's going to be 21 and my son, Estevan is going to be 18. So I have two children. I did not have six.

AP: And I was going to ask you what differences do you see in the Upper Valley now, compared to when you were growing up there?

KP: Well when we were growing up in the Upper Valley, I mean there was cotton fields and boskies and we rode horses and we walked around. It was, I mean it was just a different life altogether. I mean we hung out at the country club, and of course the country club is still there, but it was just different. It wasn't developed, it was, you know, a very close-knit community. We knew all of our neighbors, you know, we all got together and it was just – it was just different. Now, I mean there's been growth and development and – which is understandable, but it was a small, small community growing up.

AP: As compared to today.

KP: Well yeah, I mean as compared to now, I mean, you know, things have changed and the community's – I mean the Upper Valley has gone through tremendous growth. And so, you know, but I have great memories, great memories of growing up. And I lived in the Upper Valley for a long time. And I just recently moved up to the mountain and built another house. I think this is my last house. Hopefully for a while, so. I miss the Valley.

AP: You miss the Valley.

KP: Sure. Sure.

AP: Are you still in contact with some of the families that you grew up with?

KP: No, not really. Through swimming I ran into one of the families and so it was really special to, you know, go back and, you know, some of the memories and, you know, growing up. And so it was fun.

AP: Tell me a bit about some of those memories growing up there.

KP: Oh, you know, I just, I mean we were just free. It was just different, you know. We were just running around and it was just a different scene altogether. You know, we basically lived at the el Paso Country Club, although they might not have wanted – I think we terrorized the waiters and waitresses. You know, we travelled a lot. It was my father and my mom have always been adventurous. And you know, we got to go to the sea, and we got to fishing, and we got to the mountains. We camped a lot. We had a cabin in Willow Creek growing up and that, those memories of that outhouse are still haunting me, and the ghost stories. And we'd go to the lake. We used to have a houseboat. And so we were exposed to a lot of different things. We were exposed to travel. We were exposed to food. We were exposed to different cultures. And so I thought, you know, it was – we were very fortunate.

AP: For me, you know, I don't know, can you tell me where Willow Creek is?

KP: Willow Creek is in the Hela National Forest, okay, and I – it's a little artist community now, Moquione and all that area. But we used to drive up there often and, you know, of course I have memories of sitting in the front seat, because I had to sit in the front seat and always asking, when are we gonna be there? But, you know, we got there and of course there was ghost stories and,

you know, we had to hike up the mountain to go to the bathroom and use the outhouse, and all my brothers terrorized us. But that was their role, right? I mean that's what brothers were supposed to do. But it fun, it was great memories, you know. So we were exposed to a lot of different things.

AP: So you had to make a trek up to the outhouse?

KP: Oh, definitely, yeah. I still remember that outhouse and spiders. But, you know, it was all good, you know, now I know that I probably complained, you know, growing up, but, you know, now looking back we really were exposed to a lot of different things and very fortunate, so. So it was, you know, it was fun.

AP: What is your favorite food? You said that – you mentioned food.

KP: I love food. I just told somebody the other day. As much as I love to eat, I hate going to the grocery store. I love everything. I want to go travel and taste different foods from different cultures. Every single solitary thing that I can taste. I'm – I don't – there's only one food I don't like and I hate to say this in El Paso, Texas, but I don't like molé. I mean, whatever. And I'm not much of a sw- I don't have much of a sweet tooth. But everything else I just absolutely adore, so. I think about food most every day, all day. What am I going to have for lunch? What are we going to have for dinner? I mean that's always a big topic in my household, so.

AP: It's interesting.

KP: Um-hum.

AP: How did you decided to start your business? Was it something that –

KP: Well I – you know, I always knew that I liked, you know, answering to myself. Or I did not want to necessarily answer to somebody else. I mean I wanted to – I've always had that spirit of, you know, wanting to, you know, market my own product or start my own business. I mean market your register, sell something, do this. I've always been kind of motivated and, you know, wanting to do something on my own, okay. I first started when – out of college I started importing furniture out of Mexico. And I would travel in Mexico and, you know, before some of the real rustic furniture was very popular, I would go down to places like Pueblo and Guadalajara and bring back import furniture from Mexico. And I would market it here in the States. I would go to the markets

at Dallas, the furniture markets, and I developed a product line and a brochure and did mass mailings and, you know really just – and I absolutely loved it. And it really taught me about, you know, small business and start-up and marketing plans and product lineup and it – I really enjoyed it. And I enjoyed the travel and I enjoyed, you know, making the connections in Mexico. And I did that for about four years and it was very profitable. And then it wasn't very profitable at times. So it was – it taught me a lot of lessons. It was a great experience.

AP: Well tell me a bit about that. How did you –

KP: It was called Del Pueblo Furniture, okay. And I started importing, like I said, from different various regions in Mexico. First I started – a gentleman, and he is Dusty Henson, he's from El Paso Saddle Blanket, he's the one that kind of helped me when I first started get- you know, in this business. And he introduced me to some of his connection in Mexico, and I thought it would be a great opportunity. And so we started travelling. He travelled with me once, him and his wife, and then I travelled on my own a couple of times. And just, like I said, it just really familiarized myself with the type of furniture that's out there, the different styles, and I had – in my product line I ended up with about 15 different pieces from like sofa tables or an armoire to, you know, a side cabinet or whatever it was, chairs. I imported a lot of Equipale furniture from the Guadalajara region, from that area. And then I used to also paint it. And so that was really fun, you know, so I guess um it was – it was, you know, like my art – I do have an artistic side, so it was, it was fun for me to do that. And I did, like I said, I did that for about four years and I had – I warehoused it here in El Paso and then I would ship it from this point to all over the place, so.

AP: Tell me about this artistic side.

KP: Well I do have an artistic side. I like creating. The most favorite part of my business now is to design. I love designing homes. I used to decorate model homes, many many years ago. And I still help the young lady that I have – that I have hired to decorate my homes. My mom started decorating homes and she is probably the most talented, you know, decorator that I know. Just natural talent. My father was also very very good at design. It just came natural. So I started decorating model homes probably when I was still in high school, okay. And my senior year probably was – I think it was about '80, '80, 1980, 1981 I decorated my first model home for my father and he just basically said, this is where the house is, I want you to go furnish it and the grand opening is in a week. I

mean I had no clue what I was doing, okay? And it really a semi-disaster. But he, he was patient and he helped, he guided me though it. And so over the years I decorated model homes in Dallas for my brother. I decorated model homes in Sierra Vista, Arizona. That was an experience. One time I flew on an airplane while the furniture was being delivered in vans. That was interesting. I was very worried I didn't have everything. But, so he gave me a lot of opportunity and was very patient, and forgiving, okay. Because the first model home was a disaster.

AP: Well tell me about that.

KP: Uh, there was no real, you know, I didn't know much about, you know, style or, you know, flow or colors or – and I think a decorator would probably had died if they walked into that house, but I gave it my best shot, okay. And I – I remember I couldn't even hang a picture, I needed help hanging a picture. And now I just hang the picture, I don't, you know, it's good right there, you know. But – so he, he – we did have a grand opening and I know that – and there was some favorable comments, okay, so it didn't – it wasn't – I felt like it was a disaster, but it wasn't. It worked out okay and so he continued to give me opportunities to decorate the model homes, and that was my spending money through college. I mean I – you know, throughout his – because he used to be a builder here in El Paso, and I would go to the different models and decorate them and get a fee. And, you know, \$500.00 or, you know, to decorate a model was huge money for me at the time. And, you know, I think one time he even paid me \$1000.00 to decorate a house. I mean I couldn't have been more, you know, more excited, so. And I learned, little by little more about, you know, colors and design and style and so, you know, over the years and, you know, it comes together. I think you learn by mistake, right? When you're thrown into something. But I enjoyed it, I really did enjoy it. I don't have time now to do a lot of the decorating, so I do miss it though.

AP: About how long does it take to decorate a home?

KP: Oh my! Well it depends. Now I just have a – I have amassed, I've collected a lot of furniture over the years that I use and I, you know, I use in different models. But to go out and buy new furniture for the model, and it depends if you decorate the whole things, you know, the whole home. But if you stage the whole entire home, all the bedrooms, living areas, kitchen, bathrooms, I mean it could take a couple of weeks, you know, from – and it depends if you, you know, buy local or if you go to market, or, you

know, wherever you get your furniture from. But it just depends. Now it just takes a couple of days because I have, you know, we have the furniture and, you know, we have to spruce up accessories here and there, but that's how I got started in this business, is decorating the model homes.

AP: So it would normally take about two weeks and you did your first one in a week?

KP: Oh no, the first one probably took me a couple of weeks - well it took me, I guess, my dad said, you know, the grand opening is in a couple of weeks. He might have given me a couple of weeks to do it. But I mean I ran everywhere with my head cut off, not knowing, you know, what was going on. But it was fun, it was an experience, it was.

AP: So how did you handle that? Did you go to your mother for advice or you just -

KP: I did, I did. She, like I said, it just comes natural to her. And it definitely comes natural to my father. And yes, I asked a lot of questions and, you know, we got through it, barely. But it was fun. So now I'm not that worried about hanging a picture, I promise.

AP: And you mentioned your mother also decorated.

KP: Oh yeah, she's the queen of decorating. She just has it, it's just a natural talent. So. But that's how I got started in the home building business, or the home building field, first started decorating models for my father, probably in the very very early '80s. And then, you know, he would ask me to participate in the grand openings, coordinate, you know, with the realtors, send out flyers, you know. You know, actually be in charge of the grand openings for, you know, in respect to, you know, invitations, marketing material, flyers, etc., okay, coordinating. Any kind of advertisement, so. And then I was reeled in.

AP: I want to know about the trip to Sierra Vista.

KP: It was one of my father's business partners, and they were building at the time in Sierra Vista, Arizona. And so my father said, you know, we've got a couple of models up there and we've got all this furniture and you're in charge of decorating the models. I was like, how am I going to do this in Sierra Vista, Arizona? He was like, no worries, you're going to fly on the airplane. And the gentleman's name was Lloyd Burson. I believe it was Lloyd

Burson, and he flew me to Sierra Vista, Arizona in some small airplane while the furniture is being transported in vans, okay. And so we got there and thank God I had enough furnishings and accessories and – I mean I overloaded everything just to make certain I had enough. And so that was interesting. It was fun. But and then I would go to Dallas and I dec- like I said, decorated a few models for my brother who was building at the time. And – but unfortunately I don't get to decorate as much as I – as much as I did before, so.

AP: So your brother is also a builder?

KP: He was. He was. But anyways, so we all – I guess it's we all have it in our blood, we're either architects or builders or designers or such, so. It's fun.

AP: Well tell me the current name of your business.

KP: It's Quality Craft Homes.

AP: And give me some background information on your business. How did you decide to start this one?

KP: Well I was working for my father, the late George Thomas, he passed away in 2007. And I started working full time for him in 1991. And I'll never forget, because I had my – well I had my daughter, she was born in '89, and I think I might have been pregnant with my son, and I started working for him. So I still continued to do the model homes, coordinating the grand openings, like I said, staging the model homes. And then it got in – I got more involved in, you know, the actual, everything that had to do with model homes. From landscape design to sales office centers, you know, just really working side-by-side with my father. And the I think he, he encouraged me – he, you know, I started more like, you know, in the office, meeting with homebuyers. And, you know, coordinating all the different color selections process with the homebuyers. So if you were a homebuyer, you'd come in and I would help you design, you know, the interior and exterior of your home. From stucco color to roof shingle color to all that stuff. And I still do that today. Anyways, so I started doing that for him and then it was like little by little he helped me to understand different aspects of the homebuilding business. From, my goodness, cost, budgeting, design, you know, figuring out, you know, the sticks and brick costs. You know, take-offs. I remember one time he handed me, I don't know, 20 or so site plans and said, figure the rock walls, you know. Do rock wall take-offs

for me. And I am like such a mathematician, you know, so it was interesting. So he, you know, like really encourage me to learn more about different aspects from everything. From, I mean, retaining rock wall details, foundation systems. I remember this is one of, I mean this is a huge memory. He would call me into his office and, you know, not real like, Kelly, you know, over the phone, you know, decent. Kelly, we're leaving in the van in five minutes. You know, we're going to the model homes and you're gonna – we're gonna walk the models and you're going to tell me what we need to get – what we need to do structurally, you know, to make, you know any kind of structural changes or any kind of, you know, modifications or, you know if there is anything wrong with the plans or anything, just to walk the models prior to, you know, installation and sheet rock. And so over the years, you know, we would do that, we would go out to the field and he would test me. I mean like, you know, what do you think needs to be done? And is this furdawn correct, or is this wall, or is this bearing wall, you know, what do you think of this design? Are these arches, you know, in the right place? And so, you know, I started helping him more with the design, you know, aspect of things and getting more into to that field of the homebuilding business. So I loved it. I – and at first I was very nervous about going out to the field, because I thought, you know, how am I going to justify, you know, wanting a wall moved or justify, you know, any kind of structural change? At first I was very hesitant to – well because I had to tell him why I thought it would help the design of the house or sell the house. So, you know, over the years I was like, that has to be changed because, you know, the flow is not right, or you know the furdawn doesn't look good, the arch is not, you know, the, you know, it's not to scale. And so I felt a little bit more comfortable and so I got more into the design aspect of it. And then more into the field, understanding the field. From the permitting stage to actually running field. In about 90, I don't know, it was probably in the early '90s, probably '94, '95, I built my first home in the Willows. And I actually did all the permitting. I hired all the subcontractors I was the fore- foreman, forewoman, and, you know, hardhat and all, out in the field, and coordinating all the subcontractors. And I really – I loved that. I mean because I – you learn more out in the field about what goes on, each stage of construction. The coordinating, you know, permitting, the inspections. And you, you know, you learn by, you know, the framing. You learn everything, mechanical. And so that was my first house that I actually built. And I felt very proud of myself when it was all finished. I mean I was over budget, okay. It took me forever to build it, you know. But it really gave me a great basis for what I know, you know, now and – and from

then I was hired as a general contractor to act as – out in the field for some high-end homes. A friend of my father's, who gave me a break, a chance, and I'll never forget it. It was a very high-end custom home. And I actually ran the construction up to the sheetrock stage. Then after that the homeowner started, you know, took over the construction because he was in – he was – had a trim – he was a trim supplier. So he finished out his home, so. But it was a great – it was a learning experience. And I loved – and I still love being out in the field. You kind of get trapped in the office, but, you know, I like being out in the field, you know, look at the, you know, so. I guess it is that creative side of me and to see something being built and seeing something that you designed and you built and you created and you finished, so. I love that part of it.

AP: How was your experience as a woman being out in the field?

KP: Well it still is challenging, not as challenging as it used to be. You know, our culture, and being a woman, and telling men what to do, they don't necessarily take it very – very lightly. But it all worked out. I speak the language and I learned how to – I learned how to communicate with them not only with the language, but how to not offend them and their culture and their upbringing, and I kind of like to tell people what to do. Is that a bad thing?

AP: No it isn't.

KP: But anyways. No, but I mean it all worked out. It all worked out. And my foremans, I mean I have a – my designer is a male and we get along just fine. I get along with men. And I get along with the subcontractors out in the field. I don't threaten them. We have a good relationship. Their relationship, I respect their relationship with my foremans, so when I'm out in the field today, the foreman will be with me, okay. And so, you know, there is – there is mutual respect and so its – I think it's worked out over the years. It's gotten easier.

AP: Okay.

KP: right?

AP: You mentioned that it was a little bit more difficult starting out?

KP: I think so, because I mean, who is this young girl? And what does she know about construction? And, you know, I didn't know. But over time, you know, they taught me and I learned – actually what

I can learn from my subcontractors, the masons, the framers, the men that are out in the field, is more valuable than I can learn here in the office, okay. They are the ones out there building the homes. And so I do respect them. And so when I go out to the field, I – there is a definite mutual respect. You know, I don't – I don't wear a hardhat and I don't wear boots and I don't treat them that way. It's, you know, actually what they can teach me.

AP: Neat. So that was in '95 that you built this?

KP: In '95, yeah. And then with much – I think my father was trying to push me out of the office, to be honest with you, now that I look back on it.

AP: Why do you think that?

KP: Well, because you like, you've been working for me long enough, but he kept – he kept encouraging me, he kept reassuring me that I could design. And I could build on my own. And I could start up my own business and I just knew I couldn't, okay. I just had so many, you know, just – I just was not, I guess, didn't have the self-confidence. Going through some personal issues as well. My children were young, I was a woman, I didn't know a lot about construction. I mean I did, you know, because I was taught by my father, but I op- I started my business in 1997. And I actually went down to the city and posted a bond and voila, I was a homebuilder. I mean there was licensing needed, and so I – I still officed with my father and I still did duties here at – at the time it was – and they still – and we – the business still operates, it's Carefree Homes. But when I was working for my father, in the '90s, it was Carefree Homes started by my father, the late George Thomas, and his wife, Sally Thomas. So I was still here at Carefree Homes, working for them. Fewer and fewer things I was doing for them because I was busier with my company and trying to get it started up. I started very, very small. I would say it was st- I was taking baby steps, you know, then crawling, then walking. I built – I started building in the northeast in the North Hills area. And the developers with my father's signature and everybody else's signature, I finally got some home sites and finally got some construction interim, some interim financing. And started building in, like I said, in about '97, '98, started building. And if it wasn't for my father, I wouldn't be here today, because he taught me everything I know about homebuilding. He, like I said, I'm grateful now that he was trying to push me out the door, you know, and kick me out of the office. But at the time it was very scary. But I – I like challenges, you know, I mean I like to be challenged.

I knew that I had enough experience that I, you know, I had a few plans, I had a few agents I knew. I had, you know, a few lenders that had a little bit of faith in me and I had my father that was backing me, so it was – there I went, off the deep end. No, it was fun.

AP: And how was that push? How was that transition?

KP: At first it was scary that – I mean now looking back, I mean I'm glad it was – I was pushed and encouraged to do it on my own. And I think eventually I would have, but may not as – not in '97, maybe it would have been a little later on, but it was – I enjoyed. And I felt like, you know, I have – you just feel good about yourself, you know, that you've challenged yourself and gone out there and done it, so.

AP: Did you ever talk to your father about that push, or?

KP: Oh yeah, I always – I thanked him. But it was, in about I think it was 2001, and I hope I don't get too emotional. It was about 2000, 2001, I finally, you know, confronted him and said, you know, I'm really not doing anything else for Carefree Homes, I'm just so busy with my own business and I'm going to move out, I'm going to move of the office. And I was so nervous about telling him that, because I, you know, he had given me everything, you know, taught me everything I knew about homebuilding. And he was expecting it, he was like, no problem. He goes, we're even. You've taught me. You've given back to me. And so there I was. I moved out.

AP: That's awesome.

KP: Finally. So it was fun.

AP: And do you think that that was something that he just knew was in you because of you're –

KP: I guess so, you know, it's – I just, I guess it's in my personality.

AP: Right.

KP: To push myself. So, and, you know, he – so I left the office and it was great, I moved into a small office and hired my receptionist full time and grew from them, you know, steady, small steps. But it – and you know, little by little I was able to use some of his home plans and little by little I started designing on my own. And

now that's my most favorite thing I do, is designing my own floor plans.

AP: Tell me about that.

KP: Well if I could every day just sit down with Guillermo, my designer, who does all my permitting and just sit down and just create new plans, I'd do that every day, okay. In our industry we need to change with the market, react, and so the fl- the plans – our product lineup always has to be evolving, right? To meet the buyer's needs, to you know, what is, you know, what buyer is out there and what can they afford. And so we're constantly having to evolve those floor plans and product lineup and so, like I said, that's my most – that's the – my most favorite thing I do. And Guillermo is my designer, he's been with me – well he goes back with me with Carefree Homes. And I've known him – some – my staff has been with me for a long, long time, yeah. For at least 10 years, 15 years some of them.

AP: Was he –

KP: He was at – an employee of Carefree Homes and also my bookkeeper was an employee of Carefree Homes at the time. I didn't steal them, okay. Anyways, and so you know, they came with me and we just started – and we're still a small group. We're still a small group, so.

AP: How many employees do you have?

KP: I have my designer, Guillermo, he is the only male in the office and we're very, very nice to him. And I have Jennifer, who is in charge of my warranty. Jesus that is out in the field, Jesus Martinez, who is charge of – he is my warranty tech. And Paulina who is my bookkeeper. And I have a part-time – a young lady that comes in who's a student that comes in twice a week, just to kind of help file and take care of all the odds and ends. And myself.

AP: And yourself.

KP: Um-hum.

AP: And so you –

KP: We multi-task.

AP: You started building in the northeast.

KP: I started building in the northeast in a community called North Hills, okay. Pricing was probably in the low one hundreds, okay. I build a few homes and sold those right away. Didn't, you know, but I got into the homebuilding business when it was a very – El Paso's a dynamic market and North Hills was a very desirable community. And so my – the homes that I would bu- that I was building were sold. I mean I didn't have too many difficulties, you know, getting them sold or getting them, you know, listed or whatever. So then I think after North Hills, I started – I still am building in the northeast community. I built several houses in the east side, west side, you know, just scattered throughout El Paso. I think I went from building anywhere from maybe four, five houses, you know, 97 to maybe 18, 19 and then builds up to about 40, 50 and last year I closed on 79 houses. So I'm just kind of a mid-range homebuilder.

AP: So you –

KP: Not small, not big.

AP: Somewhere in the middle.

KP: Somewhere in the middle.

AP: You mentioned other areas of El Paso.

KP: I have built everywhere, I've built in the Lower Valley, in Secoro, I have built in the Upper Valley, in the Willows, and I currently have a subdivision that's called Valley Creek in the Upper Valley. I've built my own personal homes in the Upper Valley. I have built on the mountain, west side. I have built east side, I have built in Horizon. So I've really have kind of a broad market, a broad market area where I have built.

AP: What was your business plan when you started out? Did you have one?

KP: You know, I really didn't. I thought I was just going to build a few houses and design a few houses and see how it goes, you know. I think over the years I think Quality Craft Homes has evolved, okay? And I have evolved with that. It's not – I didn't start out, you know, having aspirations to build 500 houses a year. I just thought that I would build in pockets of El Paso and, you know, start, like I said, start real small. And I have, I have remained a very mid-sized builder thought the years. I don't – I've never

really gotten into the custom home build – the custom end of it. I have built some higher end homes on the west side of El Paso and Upper Valley, but I haven't really gotten into that custom end market. So it's really just, you know, I guess you would call me a track home builder, speculative home builder.

AP: What differences have you seen in terms of growth in El Paso since you've built in the east side, Lower Valley?

KP: Well I'll tell you something. The east side of El Paso is just completely changed. It has – we've had tremendous, tremendous growth over the years in east El Paso. Also, northeast El Paso has experienced a lot of growth and change. We have, you know, Bliss, I mean it's a huge, huge force in our economy in our area. Texas Tech Medical School, I mean just everything. Certain markets, like I said, the east side is still the fastest growing community in El Paso that I think. It's changed considerably over the years. And there's a lot of homebuilders out there. There's a lot of competition. Whereas before, you know, when my father was building, I mean there was a few homebuilders. And now there is many, many homebuilders. And a lot of competition. And so, you know, it has really changed. I mean it's not just we can, you know, we can just build a home and – no, we have to be very creative, we have to know what amenities to put into the house. We have, like I said, there is fierce competition out there now.

AP: So tell me about that.

KP: Like I said, there's just a lot of different homebuilders, there's some very large homebuilders out there that have a tremendous part of the market share. And you know, then there's the little, like us out there, you know, in our little communities. But, you know, we – I think we give them a run for the money and we compete, price-wise, value and design, so. It has changed though. Like I said, just because there's a lot of homebuilders.

AP: And how's the market now, compared to when you first started, is it better or worse?

KP: Well there is – I mean the homebuilding industry usually has – experience ups and downs. El Paso is a pretty steady market, okay. We always have been. We're a border region, we don't necessarily experience those highs and lows of the national trends, so we've always been a fairly steady market. So, but like I said, before there wasn't a lot of homebuilders and now there is. A lot more land has been developed and annexed. And so we are

experiencing growing pains, right, all over the city. But it – just overall it is just, it has changed a lot.

AP: What were some of the challenges that you faced when you started your business?

KP: Well I had no – I had no financing. I had no history, I had nothing. I relied on, you know, my father to co-sign. So it took me years to establish relationships with lenders. It took me years to establish relationships with developers. And so, you know, without those relationships, you know, and like the mortgage len- the lenders, the developers, the realtors, without those relationships, I mean, I wouldn't be where I am today. So it took years to develop that. You just don't – that just doesn't happen over night. Like I said, you know, the realtor community is a very tight-knit community in El Paso. And so, you know, over the years I've established, you know, real close ties with that community. Also my lenders. But like I said, it took a lot of hard work and it took a lot of, you know, I had to – I had to prove to them that I was a viable builder, that I was, you know, good for my word, responsible and, right.

AP: And what are the things that they looked for? What was it that you did to build those relationships?

KP: Well they want – they want financials. They want – they delve in – they know more about my personal history than anybody. You know, they – they're looking very closely at you. Their neck is on the line, right? So it – like I said, it took a lot of years to get in the door, okay, per se, with a lot of these lenders. But today, you know, and it's gone through definite changes, our whole lending industry, you know. But, you know, we're – we're there. We're, you know, staying strong and, you know, being committed to this industry is, so.

AP: Do you belong to any of the chambers?

KP: I do, I belong to the Chamber of Commerce. I belong to the El Paso Association of Builders. There was a time that I was more active with the El Paso Association of Builders, except as a board member. So – and it was very, very helpful in keeping up with our industry news and being a part of that group. I unfortunately am not as active as I used to be, but I am still definitely a member of the El Paso Association of Builders. They do tremendous things for our community.

AP: How important do you think that kind of networking is?

KP: Oh it's critical. Without the Association, I mean, we are a group, they represent us locally and state-wide, and a lot of action committees and a lot of positive things have come from that.

AP: And you were talking –

KP: But I'm not – I'm sorry, but I'm not a real politically, you know, involved I should say.

AP: As far as financial, a lot of people don't know how to go about starting their business.

KP: Well, you get a darn good CPA, okay. And you start developing your financial portfolio. And you start small and you build your business step-by-step, and you, you know, you build that house, you sell that house. You build another one. You develop these ties, you develop these relationships, you know, you provide them everything that they ask for, and they are – it's not easy, it's not easy. But it's step-by-step, and like I said, you get – you get a good team put together. And I think that's important. You get a good team that you trust. Whether it is accountants, your lawyers, people around you, your staff, your subcontractors. So you get your team put together and, you know, you start little by little. And your business plan evolves.

AP: Do you have a business plan now?

KP: I do, I do. That is to provide a quality, value, well-built home and to continue in the El Paso market and to like provide, like I said, to provide that quality value, well-priced, dependable service, great warranties, you know.

AP: I want to ask you about your mentors.

KP: I completely screwed that up.

AP: Who do you think your mentors were? Who's your biggest mentor? Did you have several?

KP: Well definitely my father, because he was – he grew – he started in the construction field, like I said, from college. And definitely was my mentor. Also, you know, the more and more I went out to, you know, do the grand openings, there were some realtors that really – that were a great inspiration to me. They – I just felt like they knew the El Paso market and I hope that I listened well, okay. But

there was a large- there was many different mentors in my – when I was, you know, starting my business.

AP: You mentioned that you went with your mom to decorate some of these homes. I really want to know how that went?

KP: Oh I probably was dragged around all kinds of different model homes. I guess maybe something stuc- sunk in, right? And then, guess what, I dragged my kids around to the model homes when they were little. And they remember that. And they have mentioned it to me, Mom, don't you remember dragging – you dragged us around here and there, and I'd always have – and I still to this day, always have something in my vehicle that is for a model home, okay. Just yesterday I had a plant map and a floor plan that I had to deliver to a model. To this day I always have things in my car for a model. But yeah, I was dragged around the models, my children, I dragged them around to the models. My dad dragged me around in the field. So it was just – you know, is it hereditary, is that why I'm in this business? Is it in my blood? I guess it is.

AP: And your children. How do they feel about having a mom who is a business woman? I mean do they –

KP: You know, I guess they just, you know, it's just been a part of their lives, you know, where I'm always late to pick them up because I am in a meeting, or they've just – you know, they're just used to it, I guess. I don't know how they feel. I guess maybe I should ask them when one of these days. You know, my daughter is a – loves to work. And maybe somehow I have, you know, passed that along to her. Because I do love to get up in the morning and be challenged and go to work. And my son, he's getting there, okay. He'll find a job soon. No, no. But, you know, I don't know, I think it's just always been a part of their – they've just always known me to get up and go and, you know, be an entrepreneur and get up and start my business and, you know, be challenged and be hurried and be, you know, I gotta go, I gotta go, I've got a meeting or I'm late for this or I've got to go, you know, check a job. You know, they've been to plenty of job sites, plenty.

AP: Plenty.

KP: Yeah.

AP: I want to get back to UTEP, your days at UTEP. Tell me about that. How was it going to school here?

KP: I liked it. I worked, I worked two jobs. Not successfully, but I worked two jobs and went to UTEP. I loved – I knew from the very beginning that I wanted to go into business, into the business field. Nothing else really, you know, excited me as much as my business classes did. You know, unfor- I wasn't really – I was so busy with work and with school I didn't do a lot of the social things and I wi- and I do wish that I had done some of the social things. I don't have any adverse, you know, memories or negative feelings. I loved my days at UTEP. Yeah, I mean I, you know, like I said, I think that I enjoyed more my business classes. I didn't enjoy paying all my parking fines, but I got through that. I learned a huge lesson. And – no, it went well. I enjoyed my years at UTEP.

AP: Which two jobs did you work at?

KP: Well I worked at a clothing store and I also worked very short stint at a bar restaurant, but that didn't work out. And I was decorating the model homes. So I, I probably did a model, probably a couple of models every month. So I was busy with the models and busy – and I did work every moment I could at the clothing store for years. I helped my mother. She used to have a shoe store and I worked at the shoe store for many years. And so I've always worked. I've always, I've always wanted to do something. And another job I used to do is my dad in all the yards, like the construction sites, you know, when the homes are finished, the field models, I would go and I would rake the yards and pick the weeds on the weekends, and get a little extra money here. I always wanted extra jobs and extra money, so. I was al- I was very busy.

AP: Your mother had a shoe store?

KP: She used to have a shoe store. So and I used to w- I worked there and I think I worked there when it was – was there just some child labour laws in effect – no, I used to work there for a while and just help her out. And so I, I don't know if I helped her or made it more difficulty, but I do remember hanging out at the shoe store for a while.

AP: And where was this store?

KP: On Mesa, it was called Jamlins.

AP: Jamlins.

KP: So I always worked. I always did something. My daughter is a lot like me, I can't sit still. I'm sitting still for this interview, so.

AP: What kind of advice would you give to UTEP students who were thinking about going into business for themselves?

KP: Keep focussed on your goals. Take one step at a time. Build a team around you. Because remember, we're only as good as our team, okay. I rely on my girls, Guillermo, I rely on my field. So build yourself a good team. Listen. There is a lot of good advice out there. You know, take one step at a time. And be flexible. Because our lives change, so plans – our plans have to change, so be flexible. I think when you have a rigid, rigid plan, I think you're setting yourself up for failure too. I think we just have to kind of evolve and kind of trust ourselves too. But be focussed, if you know what you want.

AP: What was the best advice that you've ever been given?

KP: Oh God. Listen. Listen.

AP: Who gave you that advice?

KP: A lot of different people. Just listen. Listen to people, because they really – you can gain a lot of knowledge by listening to people. You learn- you learn a tremendous amount. And I, I still to this day I'm like, Kelly, stop talking and listen. Listen, they might teach you something. So, but stay focussed, you know. There's a lot of opportunities out there, you know, but we make our own opportunities, so.

AP: What's been your biggest success so far, that you feel?

KP: My children.

AP: Your children.

KP: Um-hum. They're going to both be adults soon. They're going to be 21 and they're going to be 18, so I have – I'm going to write them a dear adult letter, okay. You are now officially adults. So, no, but my children. My children come first in my life. And they have – I know that they have to be. But I want them to be. My husband Jay is a huge part of my life. And we have a lot – and to have a lot of fun and to have balance. And then you can come to work and be productive, right?

AP: Right. So your daughter's 21?

KP: My daughter's going to be 21 in November and my son is going to be 18 in November. They're two weeks apart – well, yeah. So, and both in college. So I'm very proud of both of them. And let's see where their lives lead.

AP: Are they here at UTEP, or?

KP: My son is here at El Paso Community and my daughter is at NAU, Northern Arizona University.

AP: Oh, fantastic.

KP: So. So yeah. It's all good, you know. But one day at a time, you know, we've got a lot to be thankful for.

AP: So then you would say that you've gotten a lot of support from your family?

KP: Most definitely. Oh yes, most definitely. I mean, they have – I mean it's – they're part of my team, right? I mean I'm, you know, I've got to do this, I've got to do that. They've been very supportive throughout the years. And the children have. They always have.

AP: You mentioned taking them to the sites.

KP: Of course I have. I've taken them – I've dragged them everywhere. They can tell you. In fact, we have built a lot of houses for ourselves. And so my daughter not long ago said, mom, you do realize that we have lived in X amount of different houses. I don't know what she said. And I said, and so? And what is your point? So it, you know, and we've, you know, we've built and sold and that's what I did growing up, you know, we always – my dad was always building the new houses and we sold them and moved somewhere else. That's part of our – that was part of our lives.

AP: So how many houses do you think you grew up in?

KP: I can't tell you that. I can't tell you that. My daughter said something about calling child protective services. No, a few, a few. A few. Hopefully this, like I said, hopefully – my husband and I built a house not too long ago up on the mountain, something

a lot smaller. And hopefully we'll be there for a while, so. Until we can go sailing off into the sunset.

AP: Fantastic.

KP: It'll be fun. We'll see what life brings.

AP: Going back to advice, listen. What else would you tell young entrepreneurs?

KP: Just stay focussed on your dream. If it is your dream, it's your dream. Nobody else's dream, right? And pursue that, because there's opportunities out there. There is, you know, agencies that will help them, you know, banks, you know, just keep knocking on the door. Be persistent. I know I did, okay. They got real tired of me, okay.

AP: Tell me, tell me about that.

KP: You know, you just keep – you keep persi- you just keep after your dream. Whether it is to be a homebuilder or whether it is to be a seamstress. Whatever it is, you keep focussed on that and people will notice you after – it's not going to happen overnight though. You do have to be persistent, okay. And like I said, just be, you know, very straightforward and be aggressive. I think there is – I think that's important as well. But, you know, never give up. Never give up.

AP: Tell me about being persistent in terms of getting loans from banks?

KP: Well you just keep calling them. And you keep repeating your business plan, and you keep focussed on, you know, what you can do and, you know what? They become part of your team, right? You know, it doesn't – not necessarily at first, but they do become part of your team. And like I said, I view my lenders, the developers, the title companies, the realtors, everybody, we're a team. We're in this together.

AP: Okay. The other thing that I was going to ask you is the Chamber.

KP: And I just joined the Chamber, so don't ask me too many questions about it.

AP: You did. Okay, then I won't ask [inaudible]

(crosstalk)

KP: Cut the cameras!

AP: What motivated you to join the Chamber?

KP: Well, you know, I just felt like it was an important part to be part of the community, okay. And to show my support, all right. And like I said earlier, I'm not always necessarily that involved. And I think being involved and having those relationships, I mean they also reach out to the community, not just to the lenders, not just to the, you know, realtors, not – but to people. I mean I can meet and I can listen and I can learn. So I know that there's people through the chamber that I can meet and I can listen to and I can learn from. And also the Association and also the Texas Association of Builders, okay? So the different – I think different, you know, organizations are important to be a part of.

AP: You mentioned you were a Board Member for?

KP: I used to be more active in the El Paso Association of Builders. And now I'm a member of the El Paso Association of Builders, I don't sit on the Board any more. But I used to. And like I said, I got great – when I was there, you know, I was constantly involved in the decision-making and up to I knew all the industry news, you know, first hand. And so and the relationships that I – that I formed in that Association, I still have today. You know, I can call up a fellow homebuilder and say, hey, you know, I'm having problems with this or problems with that and, you know, there's one lady in particular and we always call – we don't always call each other, but she can call me next month and ask me a question, I'll call her the following month and ask her a question. So, you know, and it's nice to know that you can do that, you know, because we're competitors but we're also in the same industry. So we have to come together.

AP: That's true. I had another question for you.

KP: I'm so glad you're editing this.

AP: Well let's go into the closing up phase. I'm just going to ask you to reflect on your business a little and basically again if there is a question that I haven't asked you, that you feel that there is a, I don't know – tell me more about the services that your business provides and do you see expanding the business any time soon?

KP: I do. I'm constantly expanding to new sub-divisions. I have home sites that I own, different areas that I build in. Right now I build in probably about six or seven different communities throughout El Paso, and I'm constantly looking to, you know, expand those communities. I have model homes right now. I have four furnished model homes that are open from – daily, noon to dark. I work with Options, and I forgot, this is probably – this is very important. Options Realty is a part of my team. Lupe Martinez and I go back years and years from the Carefree Homes days. Without Lupe, I don't know what I would do. I mean we talk on the phone, you know, every day. She is my sales team. She is my sales manager. She's my sales guru. She knows the business back and forth and her team – we're like a family. We meet once a week and her group of agents, you know, we're like – it's almost like in-house and it's not in-house, okay. So Lupe Martinez and Options Realty is a huge part of my business. And they represent me in most all of my communities. And I also work with Caldwell Banker, Heather Finer and Sherry Warren, and they represent me on the west side of El Paso. Like I said, I have a few homes that are under construction right now on the west, on the mountain. And then also I have an area called Valley Creek, okay. So the realtor community is a huge vital part of my business.

AP: How did you meet Lupe?

KP: Lupe, I have known, I think I have known her all my life, but she came ba- no. Probably I met Lupe in the late '80s. Most probably at a grand opening, okay. Most probably when my father was building, George Thomas Homes, and I'm sure I met her, I don't know the exact year. I'm surprised it has not, you know, sunk in, but probably in the lat '80s and we kind of reconnected about a couple of years ago where she became my listing agent, okay. And – but anyways, what I think, I don't think that I would rather do anything else than building and designing and building in the community. I feel like I'm providing – I think it's wonderful like to provide homes for people. I mean this is a basic necessity is a home. And it's something that's – that is so important, part of our lives, is to – I mean it's very personal. And I become – and a lot of the homebuyers, I meet everybody, all my home buyers I meet one-on-one. I go through the whole process with every single solitary homebuyer. From the – right after the contract is signed, I talk about all my warranties, all my inspections. I go over the contract, if they have any questions or concerns. I handle all of their request for change order or upgrades, and so it's one-on-one, just like you're sitting here across from me. They want to meet me and I want to meet them, okay. The agents are here, the buyers are

here, and we sit down and we talk. I don't want to lose that, and I think if I have – if my business was any larger, I wouldn't have that opportunity. A lot of presidents and a lot of owners, particularly in my industry, don't necessarily sit down with their homebuyers. I do. I always have and I always will as long as I'm in this home- in this business. So it's a lot of one-on-one, and that's very important. Like I said, I would rather – I wouldn't – I think I'd rather go sailing, okay, to be totally honest with you. But other than sailing with my kids and my husband, I would rather – I have to be honest, the second thing is I would be here. But anyways, but I think that one-on-one is important. And I meet with them also and I still do the color selections with them. And I make it very very simple. They come back here and they go through all the color process with me. And then after that it's basically all the inspections are done out and all the finalist installations are done out in the field with my foreman.

AP: Now how long does that take?

KP: The preliminaries usually take about an hour and a half. About an hour, hour and a half, just depending on how many questions, concerns. If it's a pre-sale, sometimes it takes a little longer. So if you were coming to me for me to build you a home, you know, we talk about the home site, we talk about the floor plan, we talk about, you know, upgrades, options, and everything like that. So I go through all of that with every single solitary buyer.

AP: And have you built any relationships – how much time do you spend?

KP: I spend on average a couple of hours at least with the home – with the homebuyers.

AP: Okay. And about how many a day do you think?

KP: Oh, well I wish I could tell you it's, you know, daily. Oh no, I don't know. Like I said, last year I closed 79 houses, so. So I met 79 families. And hopefully I'll meet more. I really love that communication. And I really feel that it is so – such a vital part of the process because there's so many different steps. It's not easy to buy a house. It's an emotional purchase. And I think when they can see me one-on-one, I think that really puts them at ease through that whole process. And to hear it from me, you know, warranties, inspections, you know, features. We go over every single solitary feature of the home if they have any questions. So I think that that's a very important part of it.

AP: I think so too.

KP: Yeah.

AP: So is there anything that I didn't ask you that you feel that I should have asked you?

KP: You know, I, you know, I know that I talked about, you know, design and features and making certain that we adapt to the market. But you know, I – you know, I'm a native El Pasoan and of course I have, you know, my complaints or whatever it is, you know, I wish I did th- I wish, you know, you always wish, well I would like to go live on the ocean or I'd like to live on an island. Well, you know, I'm really happy to be living in El Paso, Texas right now. It's a great community, a very dynamic community. I meet people from all over – all over the United States that are coming to live in El Paso. And so I think it's a great time to be an El Pasoan. It's a great time to live in El Paso. It's a great time to be building in El Paso. We have gotten on the map, all right. We are one of the fastest growing building communities in the nation. I read somewhere it was – I think it was top 20 fastest growing markets in the United States. So there's a lot of attention being paid to El Paso. And like I said, I'm glad to be here.

AP: How is the Fort Bliss expansion?

KP: Oh it's a huge part of – huge, huge part of our economy. Huge part of everybody's economy right now. And I like to meet the people. And you know, my favourite thing to say, well I ask a couple of question, you know, like how did you get to my Quality Craft Home and thank you for buying a Quality Craft Home, but welcome to El Paso. You know, welcome to El Paso. There's a lot, you know, a lot of people coming to El Paso. And positive remarks. God, we love the community, love the weather, love the food and love the people. And for us to be here I think, you know, I think it's pretty special. Like I said, I've gone through my times of, God I wish I was on a deserted island, or you know, some tropical place. But you know what, it's – I'm happy to be here.

AP: So you have no regrets?

KP: Not one.

AP: Thank you.

AP: This continues an interview with Miss Kelly Thomas Pacheco. Miss Pacheco, I wanted to ask you a bit about your father's and your mother's heritage. We didn't really talk too much about.

KP: Well my father was born in Plain View, Texas. His father, was an engineer, um also served with the United States Navy. He – they came to El Paso. Actually, my father was in the Air Force for a while and then came to El Paso. My father is of English heritage. The late George Thomas. And he is George Thomas the Second and there is also a George Thomas the Third. There will, unfortunately, not be a George Thomas the Fourth. My mother is of Mexican-Italian heritage. And her father worked at Asarco, also in Parral in the mines. They – my mom was born in Albuquerque. All my aunts and uncles were born here in the United States. My grandfather worked in Mexico, like I said, in the mines, and saved up every penny he had to make certain that they went to the dances and made certain that they also went to school here in the United States, okay. So every one of them had the opportunity for – to study here. My mother got to – you know, came to UTEP. She was a boarder student. In fact, let me go back. She was a boarder student at Loretto when they used to board, okay. So she came to Loretto and then from Loretto went to UTEP, okay. And like I said, she is a Mexican-Italian heritage and spoke some Spanish to us. Unfortunately I learned the majority of my Spanish on the streets. And through the foremans and through the subcontractors and of course learned all the bad words. But also learned some of the good words. And I actually took Spanish classes at UTEP. I probably learned more in Spanish classes at UTEP than anywhere, because, you know, you have to sit down and, you know, write things, you know, and it has to be conjugated correctly. But I do – I am bilingual. I can't say that I'm 100 percent bilingual, but I do – I can communicate with my homebuyers in Spanish if they request. We do have some foreign nationals, Mexicans, that come and purchase houses and do – they do prefer to speak Spanish, which I am more than happy to speak Spanish. My, like I said, you know my, I have cousins and I have an aunt that still lives in – that lives in Chihuahua, and so I'm very proud of who I am. Very proud of my heritage.

AP: So your mother's father worked at Asarco?

KP: A Asarco and actually de- I mean he invented some processes that they still – they don't use any more, but he was a very, very smart man. People had great respect for him. And he was the head of the mine in Parral. And they lived in the American colony in

Parral, Chihuahua. And then sent their children to school here in the States.

AP: And what was his name?

KP: José Vota.

AP: José Vota.

KP: Vota, V-O-T-A.

AP: And your mother was a boarding student at Loretto?

KP: A boarding student at Loretto. Yep.

AP: Did she ever tell you what that was like?

KP: Oh she loved it. Her friends, I mean she absolutely adored it. I mean they would go to dances, I mean they would go – I mean it was a very close-knit community at Loretto, just – I don't know how many stud- you know, boarders were there. But she loved it. She has lots of interesting stories. I can't really remember too many right off the bat, but, you know, she – in fact I think she went to a reunion not too long ago. I think she still keeps in touch with several of the women that she boarded with. They're still in this community, so.

AP: Neat. Um-hum. And your father was in the military.

KP: He was in the Air Force for a while and he came to El Paso and I believe he came to El Paso to move in, I believe, an aunt – one of his aunts moved here. And the started school at the – at Texas Western. And it was in the mid-'50s, like mid to late '50s. So.

AP: And his father?

KP: His father lived here in El Paso, was stationed in Guam for a while. Lived in Washington State for a while, and you know, I have great memories of my grandfather. My grandfather lived here in El Paso in the latter part of his – in his life, with his wife.

AP: Originally they were from Plain View?

KP: Plain View. My father was born in Plain View.

AP: So how old was he, do you know, when they moved over here? Was he already an adult?

KP: When he moved to El Paso he was probably in his, I would say 19, 19. I could be wrong. I don't know.

AP: So do you still have family in Plain View?

KP: I don't believe so, no. No.

AP: And your aunt in Chihuahua?

KP: My aunt in Chihuahua, in fact, she comes to El Paso often. A lot of my cousins live here. A lot of my cousins are moving here. And I still – I'm in contact with many of them.

AP: And she's your mom's sister?

KP: Yes.

AP: How many siblings did your mom have?

KP: My mom has two sisters and two brothers. And her two brothers have – are deceased, but she has two sisters. One lives – my aunt Alma lives in New Hampshire, and my aunt Sophie lives in Chihuahua.

AP: And your father?

KP: My father is – unfortunately his sister and both his brother are deceased. My father is deceased as well.

AP: Sorry. And so the language spoken at home was?

KP: It was English, unfortunately, too bad we weren't born – we weren't raised in a bilingual household. But I think just, you know, later on in life, living in El Paso, getting into the homebuilding industry, studying at UTEP, you know, I picked up the language. I had to. I – it just was normal to pick up the – it was natural to pick up the language. So. And I can communicate fairly well, fairly well.

AP: And going to the Quality Craft Homes, what do you think is the most difficult aspect of building a home?

KP: Today? Getting financing. Today is getting financing. The strict, you know, just the strict requirements. But – and really trying to identify the market and the market needs. You know, it's kind of a – you know, we kind of guess a little bit. But it's identifying the market, identifying the buyer and just being competitive. And like I said, you know, really trying to be competitive with the other homebuilders. Because, you know, it's – you know, I have to offer, you know, I have to look at what they're offering, what their price per square footage is, you know, what their designs are looking like, and you know, I have to constantly, constantly be on top of – top of things.

AP: So –

KP: But it's fun. I'm not complaining.

AP: How difficult is it to build an affordable home?

KP: I think, you know, one time my father said, you know, Kelly, it's a piece of cake to build something, you know, that has – you know, that is high end. I mean because that's – it's – I think it's easier for me to go in and, you know, add all the decorative touches, whether it's you know, the high end, you know, appliances or finishes or faucets or doors or, you know, trim or whatever it is. But what is most challenging is building that affordable product because you're on – I mean we're on budgets regardless, but to keep that house to an affordable level and to still be able to keep my doors open, I think that is the – a huge challenge. So you've got cost restrictions. I mean you've got budget restrictions. You've got construction time schedules. You've got, you know, interest that you're paying. And so all these things kind of collide that can really become disastrous if you don't move that affordable product. So it's – I think it's a lot more challenging, but a lot more rewarding because it's, like I said, it's a huge challenge too to be able to make that – to make any kind of profit and still provide that affordable product. Now El Paso is an affordable market. We are still an affordable market, regardless of all the, you know, fees and impact fees and, you know, annexation fees. There's just one new fee right after another. But we're – all of us in our industry are striving to keep that affordable market. And the move-up market. You know, things have changed a little bit from, you know, maybe two, three years ago. We're not building in that higher end, you know, market any more. We're really trying to focus on that affordable first-time homebuyer and also maybe that move-up buyer, okay. So it's a challenge. It's definitely a challenge keeping your land cost down, from your development costs, your

construction costs, your interest costs, you know, so it's just all – everything put together.

AP: I think your father gave you some good advice there.

KP: Well, you know, yeah. He – you know, you better stay on budget. Yeah. And, you know, and be wise about, you know purchasing, you know. We go out and we – you know, the things that are going into the houses, you know, from sheetrock, insulation, everything is very important. But I've done things – I'm spending a little bit more money – in fact a lot more money and I'm providing amenities in my homes that I'm very proud of. All my homes, for the last, going on four years almost, are all Energy Star, 100 percent Energy Star across the board. From my entry level affordable home to the home that I'm building right now on the west side mountain. So what that entails is that I upgrade my insulation in my walls to R15. My ceilings are upgraded to R30. All my windows are double-pane low E windows. All my homes have refrigeration systems across the board, properly sized. All my homes – we insulate the footings. We just take all these extra steps that aren't necessarily requirements for Energy Star, but we're going one step, two steps, three steps further to ensure that the homes are most energy efficient. Okay, to maximize the energy efficiency of the home.

AP: You mentioned R14?

KP: That's the insulation values. The insulation values that I install in your exterior walls, are going to provide you with that energy efficiency. The – on top of the R15 for the insulation for the walls, I install a rigid foam board for the exterior sheathing that also carries an R value. So my homes are almost right around R19 for the walls. So I am providing a very efficient, energy efficient home that far exceeds any kind of, you know, energy – any kind of code requirements. And so I'm very proud of that. Everything I build has refrigeration systems from now – very comfortable, very quiet, the buyers are going to save on energy costs, guaranteed savings anywhere from \$200.00 to \$500.00. You know, so I think, you know, we hire a company to do all the inspections. So we hire – they do three independent inspections during construction to ensure that I am following all energy requirements, Energy Star requirements. So it's, you know, we're very proud. And I – in 2010 I received an Energy Star Leadership in Housing Award. So we're getting there and our numbers are getting lower. Our energy rating numbers are getting lower. That means more efficient

homes. So we're just trying – trying new things and trying better things every day.

AP: What motivated you to do that?

KP: Well I think what's most important is that we all want to save money. And we all want to ensure a better environment. And we all want to be more comfortable, right? And to have a better built home. And the energy efficiency, I think that we're all – I think that's a very important – you know, we're all thinking in those terms. And our – my kids are even going to be more energy efficient and renewable, you know, resources, so.

AP: Great.

KP: Um-hum.

AP: Well thank you for today's interview.

KP: Okay, thank you.

AP: Thank you for this time. This concludes the interview with Miss Pacheco.

(End of audio)

Duration: 84 minutes

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