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Interview no. 1715

Frank Gallardo

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Frank Gallardo

Interviene: Alejandro García

Project: Asarco

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: March 24, 2019

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1715

Transcriber: Roberto Cristoforo

Summary of Interview:

Frank Gallardo was born and raised in El Paso, he started working in ASARCO because he had 3 uncles that used to work in there, he started working on ASARCO in August 26, 1972. His first shift on ASARCO began at 3 O'clock on the evening, he will go every Monday to see if there was any open positions for a job but for 3 years he didn't get the chance, so one Wednesday he received a call from the industry to tell him that he was hired. He needed to meet some expectations such as the weight, that for that time was required to weight 125 pounds and he weighed 119, and the nurse give him a chance and told him that he wouldn't last, and he work in there or lasted 27 years and 9 months. April 21, 1999 was his last day working in there after almost 28 years, it was not only his last day, it was for around 100 people that were gathered in a baseball field. He started working as a labor pool that was shoveling dirt and making piles of that dirt, so he manages to get out of the 24-hour shift that they had and got into a 11-hour job that it was unloading. The minimum wage on that time was of 1 dollar and 90 cents and he started with 3 dollars and 35 cents that it was a huge difference and he worked a lot of hours and he even got a house in the first month of work. He says that those 27 years were from hard work and he even saw people that died on the plant in a point where you could get traumatized from watching how they died. He had 2 injuries

while working there, he had a mechanical issue and almost got his finger of the left hand amputated, but thanks to his coworkers and nurses, he was not amputated and the other accident but nothing compared to that accident, he was traumatized and he thought about not going back but he did. As the time passed by the security of the plant was getting better so that created more confidence in him and in the other employees. When he survived at the accident, he was given an award as well as his coworker who help him and they got medals for being hero and survivor. He has that the company was huge and had over 3000 employees over the time. His friend died on the plant because a power problem, but the hardest thing for him is that his friend died in his arms and he says that he would do anything for bring him back for even seconds. He has a lot of memories as well as pictures and items that he used to use, and those memories are meaningful for him. He says that there was a lot of works that get contaminated from the plant and he remembers them as heroes and respects them. He says that the plant melts material like cooper or silver but the temperature in there was really hi, in a point were you just get close and you stared sweating. He attended at the time where they demolished the ASARCO towers in 2013 and he got nostalgic. The managers at that plant where strict on their work because there was a lot of risk in the safety, so they needed to follow the rules and have a good conduct. He went to the plat that they have in Tucson, Arizona, and the workers at the plant were surprised that there was a worker that had work for 28 years and was proud of working in ASARCO. The workers at the plant at that time they were 80 percent Mexicans and 20 percent a mixture of whites and blacks, and that shows how Mexicans are hard workers. The plant had like a union where around 90 percent where part of it and they used to have meetings in order to make corrections and make a safer environment. There was a place called the Calavera where the I-10 passes thru, it was a place that it was a cemetery, and he had relatives buried in there. When ASARCO hired him, he will have the same wage for 1 year and he could be going up each year. He has a co worker who transferred from El Paso to Arizona in order to keep working in the plants of ASARCO because it's a good pay, around 5000 to 6000 dollars a month. He says that it does not matter if the plant will move 100 miles of the city he would still work in there because as he mentions before it was a good wage. At the time he and his friend retired they received a 500 dollar check every week.

Length of interview 1 hour 5 minutes

Length of Transcript: n/a