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## Interview no. 1716

Anastacio Zavala

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Anastacio Zavala

Interviewer: Alejandro Garcia

Project: ASARCO

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: April 9, 2019

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1716

Transcriber: Roberto Cristoforo

### Summary of Interview:

Anastacio Zavala was born in El Paso Texas, he used to live in an area called Francis. His father was a liver and he used to have a horse and they used to ride it. He started working in ASARCO on June 30 1965, at the age of mid 30s, he started working because of the death of his neighbor, and they called him and he needed to have a high school diploma and he was able to work there. His first job was in the department and he was going to be transferred but someone had an accident and he stayed in that department. His work was unloading and loading the machines that crushed the rocks on our side. He worked there from 1965 all the way to 1997 almost 32 years in ASARCO. They had a special training of safety at the plant, the training consisted of a talk in order to be aware of the potential risks and how to act in case of an accident. While he was working there, he was told of some accidents that occurred in the plant, from people that fell to people that died in the plant. Most of the accidents were caused by the huge machines they had, it could be hard to use and that was the reason for most of the accidents. They used to have a huge meeting as a union in a park that was close to the plant. They give them updates on the machinery as well as more safety protocols. The accidents were common as well as fires in the plant, they will burn tires and that caused some fires on the plant and the concentration of smoke was very high and nobody said anything. At that time the inspectors weren't looking that much at the effects of the contamination and when there was a lot of smoke, they will only make a fine to ASARCO of 30 dollars. At the

plant they needed to be respirators in order to not get intoxicated, the most common will be masks of oxygen but as the time passed by new technology will be used. The supervisors were pretty good with them, because if they do their job there will be no problems at all, the only problem is that they were strict with the safety measures, but he never had any complaints or problems at the plant. He had a good relationship with all the workers of the plant as well as the supervisors and director of ASARCO. He mentioned that they had a good and healthy diet and that was something that helped him a lot because they were exposed to highly toxins in the air that could affect his health. He never had any type of healthy issues related to the exposure in the plant and he says that if you had your respirator everything would be fine, because there were people that did not use it in a proper way and that affected their health and some of them either died or had a complication. Some of the memories he had was that at school they were very strict, but he learned and that was something good for him. He was a very honest man and he liked to play by the rules because he says that if you follow the rules you will succeed. The sport that he enjoyed the most was baseball; they will play in his community with other people. The church that he attended was called Cristo Rey and he loved to go to that church. Anastacio has a lot of memories and some of them are captured in pictures, and he remembers those moments with a lot of joy. He has a lot of pictures and some artefacts that he is willing to donate in order to display them in the museum of history and with those pictures people can learn how the ASARCO plant used to work. Unfortunately, Anastacios son was diagnosed with leukemia and his son was in the necessity of going to a lot of doctors' appointments in different parts of the country. Overall, he had a good life and he describes his memories as good memories and there were some ups and downs, but he is thankful for being alive, and for him sharing his life story is amazing for him.

Length of interview 1-hour

Length of Transcript n/a