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## Interview no. 1718

Alicia Sarmiento Ramirez

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

Interviewee: Alicia Sarmiento Ramirez

Interviene: Alejandro García

Project: ASARCO

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: April 27, 2019

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1718

Transcriber: Roberto Cristoforo

### Summary of Interview:

Alicia Sarmiento Ramirez was born in El Paso Texas, on May 11, 1946 and she recently applied for the renewal of her passport and her birth certificate said that she was born on Smelter town Texas because at that time it used to be separate from El Paso it was like a separate county. Her father used to be a supervisor on an American Melter called ASARCO, and her mother was a housekeeper and she had 3 sisters and her mom took care of them. Her dad worked since 1945 in ASARCO as a supervisor, he got the position because he used to be a carpenter and he had “experience” and he was giving the position of supervisor. She grew up in a neighborhood called Buena Vista, they will always stay at home and go to school, they didn’t spoke Spanish at all so their teachers at school will hit the with a ruler if they spoke Spanish instead of English. She needed to find a way to learn English quickly and she will look at TV and sometimes play with people that only spoke English in order to learn. She attended elementary at a school in Buena Vista and in all the schools will be very strict in the language they spoke while being at school and they will get hit, and the story continues to high school. When they were studying, they wouldn’t have a place to eat for example a cafeteria or a place to play during their recess and they were told to stay in the classroom. Her father was asked to retire early from ASARCO because they were asked to take a medical test and he had only 85% of toxins in his blood and he could get intoxicated in the plant so he was asked to retire for a time but he went back but at the end he retired early. Her father was retired for 3 month and he died from a crash and he hit his head harder enough to kill him, only 3 months later from his retirement. Working at the plant was a high risk and a lot of accidents occurred in the plant and his father and brothers were witnesses of accidents in there.

His father will use a special mask and lens because at the plant they will burn metal such as silver, gold or other metals but the gases emitted by the process of burning were toxic and very harmful for the human being. At the plant they will have special washers in order to clean every employee from head to toe so that they don't take any kind of metal in their clothes or in their body, because even if it wasn't in purpose it was considered a robbery. His father had a bad back due to the hard work and that limited his walking or carrying things at work so he will have trouble doing that. The neighbors will be very unified and if there was a mass they will go together or if there was a picnic they will eat together and every time it rains they will have a flood in their house and on the neighborhood and every one in that community will help each other. She still in touch with the people that used to live in that neighborhood, and she says that she will have messages in Facebook of people that used to know her dad from ASARCO and even her father's best friend messages her. When she finished college, she graduated from a business bachelors and the first job she got was on the credit bureau, then she left that work and got married. One day she was called from her son's school and she was told that she was going to be a volunteer teacher. Her father was buried at the Calavera cemetery where they were going to build a highway and they wanted to remove everybody that was buried in that cemetery. One day she received a call and she was told that they needed to move the body from his father's grave, and she was in shock, so they sent someone to do that job. She says that her grandfather and his father were buried in that same cemetery years apart from each other, but she says that they rest in peace together. She has a lot of good memories and a lot of pictures from their childhood and more recent ones.

Length of interview 1 hour 5 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a