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Interview no. 1751

Hernandez

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Hernandez

Interviewer: N/A

Project: Farah

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: N/A

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1751

Transcriber: Andrea Santos

Summary of Interview:

Hernandez began working at Farah on April of 1972. Everyone at Farah left 2 months after and she mentioned that those two months were enough for her to know what was right and what was wrong. Hernandez saw and experience many unjust things in those two months. She didn't know how bad the situation inside the company was until she started to work there and realized that what the people were saying was right and even worse than what they described it as.

The worse part of the Farah company were the managers and their lack of experience in retail and inability to be leaders. Hernandez mentioned that her managers were very rude and didn't care if you got cut or burn with the machines. Accidents would happen very often because the workers didn't get any sort of training, before using the machines. Hernandez did know how to use some of the machines, but not all of them which led to her getting cut multiple times. Besides that, Hernandez had another problem at Farah. This problem was that she was left-handed and everyone else in the line was right-handed. This became an issue because they would work side by side, they would hit each other's arms when they were sewing the pants. Hernandez talked to her supervisor about this issue and she also give him a solution, which was to put her at the end of the line so that she wouldn't be hitting anyone while sewing, but her supervisor didn't accept her solution and told her to change hands when sewing. Hernandez felt discouraged because of his response, because how would she change hands from one day to another if she had been left-handed her whole life. She wouldn't been able to do anything if she switched hands.

At this time in her life, Hernandez had problems in her home. Her sister got pregnant and didn't have money to raise the baby. Her parents also didn't have money and Hernandez and her other sisters were receiving a horrible wage from Farah company. Her oldest sister the one who got pregnant used to work for Farah company, but she had to quit due to her pregnancy. During

this time Hernandez and her younger sisters were on strike. On the other hand her father was a truck driver, he didn't have a constant wage because his salary depended on the trips he got. That made the income in their household very unsteady.

At this point they didn't know what to do to be able to get money for the family and for the upcoming newborn. Hernandez noticed that at work a new girl was getting payed a lot more, the the others who had been working there for years. She started to looking around and trying to figure out the reason for that. Hernandez then was told by other girl, that if you became 'friends' of the manager they would raise your wage. Hernandez didn't like how that sounded and immediately went and talked to her sisters about it. They felt as if there was nothing else to do and as if the strike wasn't working. So, they decided to stop being part of the strike and just go to work because they didn't think that anything would be better.

Hernandez mother wasn't never involved with the Farah company, she would work at local restaurants where she would cook and clean. She would get home very tired, but she never complains because she saw the struggle her daughters were going thru due to their job at Farah. She would tell them to just do their job and never get in trouble, but if they ever got in trouble it had to be worth it. That lesson stuck with Hernandez all her life.

When Hernandez was not working, she liked to drive around the city, hanging out with friends and going to eat. These activities were the same as she did back in High School. Hernandez mentioned that at the time she graduated High School she wasn't sure about continuing her education in college because of the price. So, she decided to go and started to work, but she was very stressed about what the people around her were going to say. She mentioned that her family was very sensitive to criticism and didn't like people talking about them, but Hernandez didn't care she just wanted to do what she liked and not what others liked.

Hernandez now feels sad about not going to college and thinks that if she had gone to college she would not be working at Farah. She also wouldn't have experience all that awful treatment from the company and the struggles they had to go through because of the strike. She now doesn't regret anything as she did before, because now she sees everything as a learning experience and a way to grow as a person.

Length of interview 2:04:57

Length of Transcript _____