

It is July 19, 2009. This is an interview for Steel Valley Voices. I'm Esther Newman (E) and I'm here with Linda Roth (L) and her mother, Elvira Hernandez (EH). (at their home on Youngstown's West Side)

E – And I would like to start out to tell you Linda, er, ask you, Linda, about your childhood.

L – Sure.

E – Well, start at the beginning.

L – The beginning. I was born in Warren, Ohio, about 14 miles from here. I was born August 1<sup>st</sup>. I was a premature baby, three months premature. Came in weighing at 3 pounds. At that time, there was not much technology but I did survive and I was raised in Youngstown. When did you and dad move here? When I was only a year or so old. Moved to Youngstown and was raised on the west side and I presently live here on the west side. When we were in Warren, we lived with Grandma and Grandpa? With my dad's parents? (asking Elvira)

EH – Just a little while

L – Just a little while?

EH – Just months.

L – Right. But then once we came to Youngstown, we had our own home. So, um, that's a little bit about me.

E – Where did you go to school, Linda?

L – I went through several elementary schools, public and parochial, but I did graduate in 1969 from Chaney High School. A West Side school. I did, then, went, to Trumbull Memorial School of Nursing for several years, but did not finish the program. But I did eventually go back to Kent State University and did graduate with my degree. I was an R.N. uh, since 1990. I was a late bloomer by the time I went to college and finished. I started working... continue with this? I started working at St. E's Hospital. That was my dream, working at St. E's. I'd always, you know from different pregnancies, from hospitalizations, I had always gone to St. E's and always thought it was the most fantastic hospital ever and I always wanted to work there. So I did. I worked in the, well, the general med floor, but then I went into the critical care areas and worked the Intensive and Intermediates until I left the hospital in 2000, after ten years experience. Then went out and did home nursing and hospice, which I'm presently a hospice nurse right now. So that's what I do. I do the home care visits for hospice.

E – And, so, when did you get married?

L – I was married, goodness, I have to think about this one, in 1972. December 2<sup>nd</sup>. I met my husband through mutual friends and we were engaged quite quickly, after six months. But then... after I'd known him, met him, we were engaged, but then we waited for another year

before we actually got married. But unfortunately, the marriage did not last. I was divorced in '88, so that's, it's been a while, sixteen years. I do have two children. My daughter, Consuelo, she was born, we call her "Punkin," she was born in August of '73 and my son, Antonio, was born in January '76. That's what I have. I have those two.

E – And your husband was not Mexican, is that correct?

L – No, he was not. He was combination English, German, and I believe Welsh. Um, but their... you know, they didn't really have much of a culture. They, well, I mean, we were all Americans, but they just were Americans. Whereas we still kept our culture. We were still Mexicans and Americans. Americans by citizenship, and you know, but Mexicans by culture.

E – Tell me a little bit about that. When you were a child, what do you remember about how your family maintained its own culture?

L – What I do remember, it's because all my grandparents, you know, immigrated here from Mexico. So they were all born there, so they kept their language. So I remember them always talking to me and not understanding a word they said. But, you know, then they learned English, but I do remember just the gathering, when the families gathered together. I just remember the music. I mean, all of them, either they played the music on records or when there, certain family members would get together, they would play the guitar and they would sing. I remember that. I remember, of course, the food. You know, it was always Mexican so we always had tortillas and beans and rice. Mom, she... that's her mainstay and would eat that. Not that we didn't have other dishes. We did. We loved other cuisines but mainly it was all Mexican. I remember, um, going to the Mexican dances to celebrate Independence Day, the sixteenth of September. I remember going to Lorain. That's where they had the big dances. Not in this area here. Now, they, presently, then in the last twenty years they've had dances here but way back then, let's say, like fifty years ago, they had all the big dances up in Elyria and Lorain. There must be big Mexican communities up there. I remember those.

E – Did you... when did you get interested in... were you part of the Mexican Club in Youngstown or how did that come about?

L – Well, my grandfather, Mom's dad, his name is Raphael, and he was one of the charter members of the Mexican *Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana*, here in town. So him, along with ten others... how many were there? Eleven?

EH – I'd say ten.

L – ...and friends, and close friends, and neighbors of each other, they formed the Mexican Society.

E – And this was your father? (to Elvira)

L – Yes, his name was Raphael.

E – Elvira’s father.

L – Yes. Herrera was his last name and he had kind of ... I’m trying to... I wrote a little bit down. Gosh this is all from my Grandma and Grandpa Hernandez but... Yeah, Poppa came her in 1928, I believe. He immigrated here to work in the steel mills. He had come here pre-... for several years and then would go back and forth. (phone interruption)

(File#2)

L – Getting back to my grandpa being a charter member of the Mexican Society. When I was little, I don’t remember much about the Mexican Club. I mean, the group itself, what I do remember, though, are the picnics, the annual summer picnics. So we would always have a picnic at, it was Cedar Lake out in Lordstown, I think it was. There were hundreds, I mean, there was, I mean, hundreds of people mainly from the few Mexican families that were here in town. But it would be the thing that we looked forward to every year and that’s what I do remember about the Mexican Society. Now, of course, as I grew older, into my teens and twenties, then, then of course, they were reaching out more to our age group. They’d have picnics, they’d have dances and at one point, they even had classes in teaching our children, my children’s age, you know my kids’ generation, how to do the dances and so... but that’s what I remember about the Mexican club. Now, Mom and Dad were members of it. Mom and Dad both were active in it. I myself, I don’t know for what reason, I did not join. I think just maybe because there were so many older people. You know, they weren’t my age so I didn’t get involved.

E – Did...You had brothers? Do you have brothers and sisters?

L – I have one brother.

E – You have one brother.

L – One brother, Joe. Now he, he has really not been in the area for the last thirty years because he’s lived in other states and out of the country. So, yeah, but he... Now he lived with my grandparents, my mom’s parents, go back and forth. So, again, he, too, was really brought up in the culture. He’s the one that had learned how Spanish is spoken. I did not, on the other hand because my dad, I think I told you before, my dad, his family, his parents did not teach the boys Spanish. So my dad did not, he understood a little but did not speak so of course in our home, it wasn’t spoken other than my mom with her sisters, or her sister, or her family because my dad didn’t understand, so of course me being in this home, I didn’t learn. I mean, I’m sure, I understand if people speak to me slowly. I can understand, but to speak it myself, I won’t because you have to be able to roll your R’s and I can’t do that so it sounds stupid. So that’s the only reason I will not speak it because I can’t... It doesn’t sound right to me, so I don’t. Now, I remember in high school, I took Spanish, I mean straight A’s, big deal, you know. That was nothing, you know, but it’s just to get out, I mean...

E – Was there a reason why your father’s family didn’t teach them Spanish? Was it a specific effort to get them to be English...

L – I don't believe that was it. I don't believe, I'm sure, because both my grandparents both came from Mexico at the same time and my dad his ten brothers and sister, I don't know whether it was just the fact that, you know, the boys didn't take time to learn. There were so many of them so close in age, that you know... I don't know why Dad didn't learn Spanish. You know, I don't really know why. (phone interruption)

(File#3)

E – Yes...

L – I don't know why. Both my grandparents spoke Spanish to each other. And grandma always had an accent and she talked to me in Spanish and she'd get mad at me because I wouldn't understand her but why she didn't teach her own children... They know bits and pieces but not one of them speaks fluently. Not one of them. Well, I'm sorry, Uncle Jessie does because he never came to the States. He stayed in Mexico with a family member. That was the oldest child.

E – For your father's family, what region of Mexico did they come from? Do you know?

L – Michoacan. They were all from Michoacan. Grandpa, his name was Manuel. He came from La Luz. And grandma, her name was Hinodeva, she came from, she came from, what was her...? Hinodeva Rios, she came from Chavinda. Now those were all in central Mexico, from the state of Michoacan. My grandfather, my dad's father, my mom's father, Raphael, he came from, where'd he come from mom? La Cieneguita?

EH – La Cieneguita.

L – That's a little ranch. And then my grandmother, Nicondra, she came from El Rodeo. One of the two, yeah. So there was just little ranches in central Mexico. So they all came from the same area of Mexico. Same state.

E – On both sides?

L – On both sides, yes, but not knowing each other until once they got here.

E – And you said they arrived in the Twenties.

L – In the Twenties.

E – To work for the steel mills.

L – My paternal grandfather, Raphael, he worked in the steel mills.

EH – Yes. Yeah.

L – My maternal... was steel mills. And then my paternal worked on the railroad. Maternal grandfather is your dad, worked in the steel mills.

EH – My dad, yes.

L – And my grandmothers, they didn't work. They stayed home with the children. And then, I guess my dad's father worked in the railroad. He's the one that relocated in Warren.

E – Did both of your grandmothers, then, speak, learn less English than the fathers because they weren't working outside the home or ...?

L – The both learned, they both spoke, they both learned English.

EH – The used to go to that...

L – In the city here, my mom's mother, they would have, like in the settlements...

EH – school...

L- ...they would have, there were classes that helped the different cultures, not just Mexicans, but different cultures learned to speak English and my grandmothers were very active in that. So I think that why, now the girls and her, my mom has a sister and a brother, an adopted brother, they learned English very well. Because even though they spoke Spanish fluently at home, they still learned English so my grandmother was pretty good at that. She spoke English all the time to me. Now, on the other hand, my dad's mother, I don't know that Grandma was that involved in anything. Maybe she was just so busy with all those kids. You know, I mean, honestly...

E – Yes.

L -They were all within the same age that I... I don't know that, I never heard of her being involved in anything until after the boys were in the service. Then she became very involved in groups because her of her boys in the military. So maybe that's why she didn't speak English as much.

E – Were those classes sponsored by the city, then?

L – They were sponsored by the city, yeah, it was like a settlement in the lower east south side of town. Right by the University, really. What was that called, Mom? What was that settlement called?

EH – I can't remember.

L – I don't know, is there any history of that that you know?

E – Not that I'm aware of, so...

L – There was... I know, you know my cousin across the street, now you met her, Lena Montmore, her last name was Cija, now her, just across the street there. I know her mother, her mother also went with my grandmother, you know to this, to these classes and, oh, they had everything. They had, they had, very involved in teaching them a lot of things.

EH – Nice.

L – Um, one thing I don't know about my ma, I remember, I mean I'll always remember this. My grandmother, she would use her own form of English or Mexican, you know Spanish, or Spanglish, we would call it, because she wanted an iron, what did she tell you? An iron. So she...

EH – *Plancha*.

L – So, iron is *plancha*.

EH – *Plancha*.

L – But she would just cut it off and say “planch” and she thought that was English. Or else, if she wanted pork shoulder and she called it...

EH – “Porkshola.”

L - ... “porkshola” you know, so she made her own, but hey, people knew what she was talking about.

EH – She would go into the store and they said, “We know what you want.”

L – She wanted pork shoulder.

EH – They were Jewish.

E – The storeowners were Jewish?

EH – Yes. The said “your mother wanted porkshola. Pork chops.” (laughter)

E – What kind... so after your grandparents, or grandfathers, worked in the steel mills, did subsequent generations stay in that industry until they couldn't?

L – Well, truthfully, I don't think any of my dad's brothers with my grandpa working in the railroad, none of them went into that. And then, my grandfather had the two daughters, and the son, and worked in the steel mill... I don't know, Uncle Rich,

EH – Rich

L - ...worked the railroad. So my mom's brother worked the railroad. But, no, no one followed into the steel mills. And then mom worked in Packard and she, my aunt stayed at home.

E - You worked at Packard, Elvira?

L - Yes, she retired from Packard.

EH - I retired from Packard.

L - So she went to a factory but not a steel mill. But her sister, my aunt Essie, she...

EH - She worked at the restaurant.

L - Well, she was a waitress, but again, she was a stay-at-home mom. Now Mom went to work when, I think I was in first grade. And, um, my uncle, my adopted uncle, he went to the railroad. And that's where it stopped because his son went into, into the...

EH - Restaurant

L - ...restaurant business.

E - Do you... I guess I'm interested in if you see any difference between your, the maintenance of your cultural traditions now versus when you were children. Are you ...is it more difficult to maintain?

L - It's more difficult because not speaking the language and not having that community of Mexicans around you...because we've all intermarried and so they break off, or they've moved away. Now this isn't the most prosperous city in the area so, of course, people do move. We don't get together like we used to so it is really difficult for us to keep that culture. Oh yeah, I mean there's Mexican restaurants everywhere now but, then there wasn't one when I was growing up but that keep our culture. I mean we have the food here at home. We know how to cook it. But with the family members dying off, with their history that they didn't tell, I mean, we should have recorded all this years ago while Mom could still remember it, or my aunt was still alive to say. It's hard now with my dad gone and several of his brothers gone, we've lost all of that so it's really difficult.

E - You mentioned intermarriage and mentioned that your husband was not Mexican. Tell me about your kids' experience and how they... what kind of identity do they have?

L - They see themselves as Mexicans. I mean, and no, nothing against my husband and his nationality or culture, because really, there was nothing. They were just Americans, as we all are, but my kids, though, we always raised them, you know, first of all with their names Consuelo Nicondra Roth and Antonio Raphael Roth. I wanted them to have that. I did not want them losing that. And, from the time they were born, we have always put their race as Hispanic. I mean not that it made much of a difference but I just know that, I just wanted them to have a

little bit of that. You know, they were raised in the home, they heard the language, they've heard the music, they've been to Mexico. Um...

E – I guess that's one of my questions. That was something I was going to ask you about. Have you all returned to Mexico to visit your family?

EH – Oh yes.

E – Many times?

L – Mom has many times.

EH – Many times.

L – From the time she was married, my grandfather...

EH – Grandparents.

L – and my grandmother would always return to Mexico for months on end. And my mom returned but after she was married, they would really just go to vacation spots, resort spots. Her and my dad. Dad was always afraid to go to Mexico at first.

EH – (laughter)

L – because, for whatever reason...

EH – He didn't understand anything...

L – Well, my grandmother put it into their heads that there was always robbers. You're going to get robbed all the time.

EH – Oh, she...

L – Remember, Grandma always said that. And why Grandma said that, I don't know.

EH – I don't know.

L – But all the boys were afraid to go. But, so Dad, Dad liked the resorts. Dad wanted all the comforts, all the modernization here in the States and not what Mexico at that time had to offer. Because when I went back, I went back several times with Mom, as a teenager. My last time back there, though, to visit family was in '69 or '68. And even then, they were living in, what do you call them? Mud, adobe homes with maybe one light bulb and maybe one room. No running water. No heat. And, you know, I mean, very comfortable and living very well but I do remember that. And staying there, we stayed there a month. So, but that was my last...and then we always talked about taking my children back because they wanted to see how it was. But it's so modern now, you wouldn't even... I wouldn't recognize the ranch anymore. The ranch where

the stone fences built between the properties, it was all these adobe homes with the big open courtyard, the big huge wooden doors. You open them up and go into a beautiful courtyard with rooms all around. But, there wasn't even glass windows. There were shutters. That's what it was. So Dad never liked that so when we went back to Mexico, we always went to the resorts. So, I don't know, Mom always had hopes of going back again but I don't even know that you would remember your cousins. (speaking to Elvira)

EH – They're all dead.

L – Well, no.

EH – Just about.

L – Well, they're not all dead. Their children, their parents are dead. Your aunts and uncles. But, your cousins have all immigrated here. There out in Idaho and California and so that's where her cousins are.

E – Many family members, then, from Mexico...

L – Oh yeah.

E – emigrated.

L – Right. A lot of them do come just for, just for the planting seasons.

E – And that's because the area that they were from was very rural, just a farming area.

L – Yes, because it was all agricultural, yes. They weren't in any type of business or any industry. Not those areas. They were all farmers. Uh, crop sharers too, I think, because I don't think they owned their land. They just grew... what I remember were the little... were they soybeans? Or chickpeas...

EH – Yeah

L – ...you always grew? Because I remember going out on the horse, going out to the farm area. And then they would have the big burlap sacks in the one room where the boys slept. That's what they slept on, sacks of these peas or these beans that they grew. So I don't remember them ever saying that they owned the land.

EH – Oh yeah.

L – Oh they did?

EH – They owned land.

L – Did they own it? Okay. I'm glad you said that.

EH – They did. They owned their own land.

E – (interruption- edit tape at 13:39)... How is it different here, then, for you, right now in Youngstown, than your children? Is there any, in terms of your feeling Mexican, being Mexican, celebrating being Mexican...or even compared to your generation. How each generation...

L – Um, no, I don't think there's really a whole lot of difference other than the language. That English is being spoken because my kids still feel as much Mexican and feel the pride in being so. We still keep our holidays, you know, we celebrate the same way we did when my mom was young, you know, so none of that has changed. It's just that we don't have the community closeness that we, that I had as a young girl, or my mom did as a child.

E – When you were a kid Youngstown, was there an area of town that had more Mexicans living in it or were you always a relatively small population here.

L – No, I think there was really a large population...

EH – Large.

L - ...but they were in different parts of town but I do know in this area, in this neighborhood here, there were quite a few families on the west side of Youngstown. South, down there, I know, there was some on the south side, the east side, but on the west side alone, there was quite a few families that I knew of.

E – Did church play a central role in culture or not?

L – No.

E - Was there a Mexican church?

L – No, no, there wasn't one, a Mexican church, or a Spanish speaking church until I was a teenager and then, that was St. Rose of Lima, but that was out in Coitsville and that was way too far. Now, of course, we were all raised Catholic, but I think, um, a lot of us did not stay in the religion. So, you know, we lose some of that. But St. Brendan's is my parents' church and there was no culture there. It was a melting pot. It was not something just, that you know, that Mexicans went to. So that didn't...

E – You mentioned that your brother learned to speak Spanish fluently. Did... was there... and that your father's brothers all did not, just out of happenstance, did any of them later on express some interest in, in participating more in the culture by, through language? Or, it just pretty much...

L – Unfortunately, my dad's family, the boys, there was nine of them, they, other than for one uncle who lived in San Antonio because he was in the Air Force, and he retired from there so he stayed in San Antone and married a Mexican woman and of course kept his culture but he never learned the language. Uncle Sal, did only bits and pieces, but the other brothers who married

different nationalities, to this day, you would not know that one of them were Mexican other than, you know, them saying, “well, I’m Mexican,” but you don’t even hear them saying, “I’m Mexican.” So my dad’s family, his brothers and their children, and their children, I mean, they don’t know. They don’t know their culture. It’s my mom and her sister that kept us going, that we know our culture and that we’re proud of it. My cousins who are my age, they’re clueless. My young cousin just died several weeks ago so we’ve been together as a family. On my dad’s side, we were gathering together for a month or so. And then talking with my cousins, they’ve lost, they had no idea about anything. And I looked at them and said, “what a shame. You don’t even know who you are.”

EH – Uh huh.

L – But you know, they’re fun. They’re Italians, they call themselves hillbillies, they’re whatever. But, you know, they’re not Mexican. They know Grandma and Grandpa came from Mexico but that’s all they know.

E – Elvira, I wanted to ask you, you said that you came...how old were you when you came to Youngstown?

EH – I was eighteen months. Eighteen months.

E – So you don’t remember much of Mexico!

EH – No, but from afterwards, grew up and got married, I knew Mexico, like...

L - Well Mom, Poppa would keep taking you back and forth.

EH – Yeah, he kept us going back and forth.

E – And, how did you meet your husband? (To Elvira) In Youngstown?

EH – In Warren.

E – Er, I mean in Warren.

EH – They were our friends, my mother’s friends, and they were up to our house every Sunday. She would bring her boys. (laughing)

L – So my grandparents became friends. How they became friends because Warren is so far away, but they did.

EH – And then we’d go up to their house all the time, too, so...

E – So Linda, it was your father’s family that was in Warren, and now, Elvira, your family, was in Youngstown.

EH – Yes.

E – And yet you ended up working in Warren.

EH – In Warren. Yes. Packard. Yup.

E – And you went to school in Youngstown, as well.

EH – Oh yes. From a...

L – You graduated when, in '47? Or '46? From Rayen.

EH – From Rayen.

L – Rayen High School.

EH – (???)

L – Yes, they did. Rayen High School that she graduated from, in '46? Either '46 or '45, Mom.

EH – (laughing) I don't remember. With my mind going, forget it.

E – How about, where you stand to go in the future. What plans do you have, are you still active in the club and how do you see it continuing?

L – Well, no, I, at this moment, I am not active in the club. I did express some interest to Rachel Velasco and then Armando Labra about becoming involved but that's, I haven't been...

E – You're busy.

L – Well, I'm very busy with work and with children and then being here with Mom and it makes it really difficult for me to be active in anything other than that. (Sigh) I would like to see, you know, that I know there have been some attempts made to have another Mexican reunion picnic again but that never came about. You know, I know some of the other, my generation, they've tried, but it just didn't come through. What do I plan? I would like to go, you know... you always here it on TV, this course, in offering to teach you any language and I would be, I would love to do that just to learn Spanish, but then again, will I use it because, you know, it won't sound right? I don't know? Going back to Mexico? I don't have any plans for that.

E – How about your children. Are they studying Spanish? Do you think they will?

They did not take it in school. Well, my daughter did and she failed, I think. (Laughter) She didn't apply herself. My son never attempted. I don't know. I do know, though, I've noticed my daughter teaching the baby, Isabella, teaching her...

EH – Dora.

L- Huh?

EH – Dora.

L- Oh well, Dora, well, of course, “Dora, The Explorer” on TV, Isa knows a lot. She learns Spanish that way. But my daughter does try to teach her, you know, what little my daughter knows. But she, we always get books, like for the holidays. Children’s books. We go to the library and, or, bookstore and get something about little Mexican children so she can learn. So my daughter is trying to keep the culture for her. My daughter is the Mexican cook in the family. I mean, we all do it but she, if she’s willing to do it, I’ll let her do it. You know, she does cook. My son-in-law, you’d have thought he was Mexican because that’s all he wants to eat are tacos, though. (laughter) But, as far as my son, I don’t know. He doesn’t say a whole lot. I’ve been playing the music. I have recordings or CDs of the Mexican music and all but, I’d like to listen to them on certain days. I don’t listen to it daily, I just, there’s just certain days, that okay, I’d like to listen to a few songs.

E – Reconnect a little.

L – Yeah, put ‘em on my IPod, you know, listen. Mom has a whole library in there of CDs and tapes that she hasn’t listened to at all. I don’t know why you don’t listen.

EH – I don’t know how to.

L – We show you how to work it, Mom.

EH – Nobody showed me how to.

L – Yeah, you just forget. Just forget. But my dad was really into playing Mexican music.

EH – Uh, huh.

L – My daughter remembers as a little girl, because she can remember back to two years, I don’t know how she remembers that far back, I can’t remember, but she remembers my dad dancing with her all the time. He’d pick her up and he’d put the music on. He would just dance all around. And that’s what she remembers. So I think she’d like to continue doing something.

E – So you’re hopeful that the traditions are strong enough.

L – Right. Our traditions, as far as our foods for the holidays, and how we celebrate the holidays as I was brought up, they’re going to continue, I’m sure of that. But that’s about all I’m sure of.

E – Thank you very much for taking the time Elvira and Linda, especially, to talk to us today. Thank you so much.

End of interview

(Our parting conversation circled back to the topic of immigration, so I turned the recorder back on with Linda in midsentence.)

L - ... but they also came because of the Revolution because they were going to be forced to into fighting and I do know that one time, well Joe said, my brother said that my grandfather, he'd been taking care of the horses for Pancho Villa.

EH - hmm, hmm.

L - ...that he was in charge of taking care of the horses but that he did not want to fight. You know, and that's... as to why, I do not know, but I do remember. This just came to me now that, that was one of the reasons he came to the States, too, is to get away from that.

E - Was there someone in the United States that was encouraging him to come...

EH - Oh, no.

E - ...or did he come here knowing no one?

EH - No, he didn't know anybody.

L - He came with a friend. He came with Mr. Nolasco, Joey said. So, and then they just grew up right over here. You know, they grew up in the same neighborhood with my mom as a child and then when they married, and I grew up with their, you know, their children up on this area. So, (to her granddaughter) Nita! Where are you? Get your head out of that window!

E - So your father did feel the affects of prejudice in Warren.

L - Oh, strongly. Yeah, they had gone, even though they had lived in Warren, they had gone to the Howland schools and Dad and his brothers all say that the fights that they'd get into. And the boys were all dark. I think there was one fair-skinned boy. My mom's fair but my dad was very dark. But they, with the name Hernandez, you know, they were always singled out and they were always overlooked, my dad said. Always, always. And he always carried a grudge for that. Always, he was always...

E - And you mean overlooked by the teachers?

L - Overlooked by anything, by teachers, by whatever, you know. The boys were all athletic, they were all, but they would never win out for that. Um, so I do remember him. He was very bitter about it. He carried that to his death, you know, being very bitter, thinking that he was being discriminated against. You know, even here, you know, somebody'd look at him the wrong way. "Oh, well, you know, they know I'm Mexican." I'd say, "Dad, that's not it." You know?

EH – (laughing)

L – You know? That’s not it. I myself never felt prejudice. Mom never felt the prejudice. And it’s just never like that.

E – In Monkey’s Nest, perhaps, it was because there were so many...

EH – So many different...

E – Different groups.

EH – And they were all, they knew we were Mexicans, but they were just the nicest ...

L – Because I think they all felt that, you know, you know, they discriminate against one people then, of course, they can expect that, you know. So I know there was a respect for everything, but I don’t know why it was different in Howland. Maybe it was just that the area there. I don’t know, but my dad did remember that. It was a problem with him all the time.

E – And that might have had, played a role, then too, in the boys not wanting to...(learn Spanish)

L – That could be it. I did not even think of that. That probably did have something to do with that.

EH – Bye, bye (to neighbor)

L –That’s why they didn’t want to be singled out or set apart or... I mean, I know my aunt doesn’t even pronounce her last name right. It’s Hernandez, or ‘ernandez, but they say “Hernandez.”

EH – Yeah, who did that? (laughing) Who says that?

L – Aunt Sissie. “Hernandez.” She always says “Hernandez.”

EH – She’s not married to one?

L – Well, no, I don’t know why, Mom, but that’s... well, even my cousin Diana. My cousin Diana is a schoolteacher and there, I know she likes to do things properly, but she calls herself “Hernandez,” too. So, I don’t know.

EH – Except when they say anything, I says Hernandez. Don’t knock my name.

L – Oh well, we’re going to get her turning on me, here. (laughing)

EH – I’ll take over for Dad. Don’t knock my name.

L – She would say, well, they don't look Mexican and she (Elvira) would say, "What does a Mexican look like?"

EH – I says, am I supposed to have five ears or what?

L – But yet, but yet, when we go out, you'll say, "Ooh, he looks Mexican." That's when we'll tell her, "What does a Mexican look like?"

(Both laugh.)

EH – They'd say, "Are you Mexican?" I just say, yeah. My dad was fair, my mother was a little...

L – My grandfather was, what, green eyes.

EH – Green eyes.

L – He had real green eyes and nephews that were blonds.

EH – Hmm, hmm.

L – But then, Mama was not real dark.

EH – She wasn't dark. And my sister wasn't dark either.

L – But then my dad's mother was an Indian. I don't know what tribe, and she was very dark. You've seen the Mexican Indians with their dark braids and their real dark skin. That was my grandmother and I think most of her boys took after her.

E – So color played as much a role as any...

L – Well, color did play a part. I shouldn't say I didn't have any discrimination because growing up in the neighborhood, when I was little, we were always outside. I became very dark. I was always very dark and the kids would laugh at me. But that was just here. I never felt it in school.

E – Or professionally?

L – Or profession, never, never professionally. No. So, and I don't, I always say, I guess, I'm Mexican. So...

E – So, it changed for the good, then.

L – Yes.

EH – (laughs)

E – Thank you.

L – You're welcome.