

Samuel Camacho

Translation

Interviewee's name: Samuel Camacho

Date of Interview: March 6, 2009

Interviewer's names: Frank Barajas and José Alamillo

FB: How old was she?

SC: She was around 10 years old, lived in a hotel, but now lives in Valencia.

JA: Oh.

SC: Yes.

FB: He didn't go to school here at Oxnard High School?

SC: Yes, he went to school here. Not everyone went there, though. They went to Santa Clara.

FB: Oh.

SC: All three of them went. Everyone went, including a daughter who is now dead.

JA: Oh, okay.

JA: Well, let's start the interview. Today is March 6, 2009, and we're with Mr. Samuel Camacho at his house at 550 Ivywood, Oxnard, California. We are José Alamillo, Professor at the university here, Channel Islands, as well as Professor Barajas. We're here to interview him to learn a little bit more about his history as well as the history of the city of Onxard. To begin, when and where were you born?

SC: I was born in Aztlán, Jalisco in 1926.

JA: Tell me a little bit about your family and where you were born.

SC: In Aztlán, as I said. And my family, Camacho, were natives of Nayarit, of the clan of the river Nayarit. I didn't mark time there, I was born there, but I don't know why (laughs).

JA: What did your parents do for a living?

SC: My dad was a shopkeeper.

JA: Oh.

SC: He bought pigs and we took them to Guadalajara. I walked with him there. It took us 15 days with the pigs. He would buy almost 100 pigs and we would take them. In those times, there weren't trucks to carry them. So it took us 15 days to get the animals there. It was very hard in those times, now there are trucks everywhere.

JA: Did you have a big family? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

SC: Enough. No, no (laughs). My dad had 12 brothers and sisters. The Camachos. And my mom also had a big family. Her name was Febronia Sepeda.

JA: Does your whole family live here or did they stay in Mexico?

SC: Everyone lives in Mexico. The only family here are my sister and me and my kids. I formed a family here, you know? I was married in '51. 1951.

JA: Did you go to school in Mexico?

SC: Yes, but not for long.

JA: For how long?

SC: Until the fifth grade, that's it.

JA: Did you learn how to read and write?

SC: Yes, in Mexico.

JA: While you were in school, did you also work?

SC: No, I was young, only 12 or 13 years old. At 14, my dad took me out of school to work with him. So I came to my town in 1942. I was in Lonoche, Sinaloa, and I stayed in that little town with an uncle for three years. In '45 I came here to the border.

JA: What kind of work did you do with your uncle?

SC: A baker. In a bakery.

JA: So that's when you started cooking?

SC: Yes, when I came here, it helped me a lot that I was a baker because when I came here, to Campo Pacifico, which was the first camp that they made, the experience I had of being a baker really reassured me because I knew how to make tortillas. They were always taken to all the *braceros*. The first ones, in '42, who are alive now and are owed money. Then, they were taken by all the cooks. Then a co-worker who took me there told me, "Help us make tortillas." And so we went. None of the others knew anything except me, since I had some experience from the start about how to make them. When we were done, the boss, the head of the camp, said, "Help us, they're going to bring some *braceros* from Mexicali. Help us in the kitchen." So they put me to work into the kitchen in '46. I was working in the fields for about five months, picking chilies and lemons. When the boss saw that I was suited for work in the kitchen, he took me out of the lemon fields and placed me in the kitchen. His name was Lino San Tobal. He ran a lot of camp Buena Vista.

JA: Oh, and his son was George. Jorge.

SC: George, yes. You know George, too.

JA: Yes, we know George.

SC: Yes, you know them.

JA: Mhmm, mhmm. Let's talk a little bit more about the first time that you heard of the *Bracero* Program. Did you live in Mexico when (cell phone rings) you heard about it for the first time?

SC: They signed us up in... I need to answer this (answers the phone). Hello? Yes, come over. If you're going to come, I'm a little busy here, but if you're coming you know what you're going to do here. Monday? Yes, I'm at home, but I'm a busy here with a couple of gentlemen, but you already know what you're doing. Come over, then. Whatever you'd like, Luis. Come over, then. If you're going to come you already know what needs to be done there. Okay, okay bye. Bye. (To the interviewers) It was a gardener who wants to come today. Okay, back to it.

JA: You were about to tell me about the sign-up process...

SC: Right, we were still in Mexicali when they signed us up. It was September 15, so all the government offices were closed, which I thought was strange, and then a man told me, "50 Mexican *pesos* to the man who wants to sign up to work with in the orange fields." They brought printed brochures for all of us unemployed

people. They came saying that there were farms full of all oranges. Then they left us in Anaheim. I was only there 15 days, and a co-worker who came with me said, "Let's go to Oxnard, I know that place." When the 50 pesos came in, my brother had a restaurant in Mexicali. He said, "I'll pay for ten that you bring, ten." Because people didn't have anything to eat there. They piled up to eat for free. He said, "I'll pay for ten," because that was my brother and now me. The man who washed dishes was in charge of me. When I came, and I didn't know anything.

JA: How old were you when you came?

SC: Around 21 years old.

JA: And you weren't married then?

SC: No, no. I got married in '51 here. My wife was from here.

JA: She wasn't from Mexicali?

SC: No, no, no. She was from here, from Oxnard. For a while they lived over there, where the library is on A St. That's where my in-laws lived. They paid 20 pesos in rent for the little rooms. Some of those little houses are still there, near the library. There are some little houses, like offices and so on. That's where my in-laws lived, in the little houses.

JA: Yes, yes that's true.

SC: That's where my in-laws lived, in those little houses.

JA: What was their family's name?

SC: Moreno. They were a big family, too. Moreno, yes.

JA: And the signing-up process that they had at that time, tell me a little bit about that process. What did you have to do to be a *bracero*?

SC: At the beginning, all you had to do was, a man came and signed us up and—

FB: That's it?

SC: They signed us up there and gave us a passport. They gave us a passport, but then here in Ventura, they said the passport wasn't valid anymore. Now they send us as locals to the camp in Garden City. The little houses were on loan to us. And then they were closed because Ávila Camacho brought back the

braceros. The president of Mexico was Ávila Camacho during this time. We went to hotels that are still here on Cooper, an old hotel that is still there. There we lived, and it cost us six *pesos* a week.

JA: Oh, so they didn't live in a camp?

SC: Not there anymore—

JA: Later...

SC: Later while they closed it. I came to the camp and they closed it and then sold it to Mike Ramos. Later, they opened it, but when they closed it, I didn't know where to live. And then we came to rent out the hotels, that are on Cooper, it's on Cooper and G. An old hotel that is still there. They didn't let us bathe because the manager said, "They're wasting water." She was Spanish.

JA: Mmm.

SC: I totally forgot about that lady. I don't know what happened to her. I don't know where she went.

JA: So, so you never had to have a physical exam for, for—

SC: No.

JA: —for signing up? Nothing like that?

SC: Not until later. Now, ultimately, you have to take a physical exam.

JA: Oh.

SC: But when we came here, there wasn't one.

JA: In Mexicali, there wasn't anything like that?

SC: Nothing like that. We just had to give them the paper and that was it. We were off.

JA: Do you remember what year you signed up? The first year?

SC: Yes, it was in '47.

JA: '47.

SC: Yes, in '47.

JA: And if you knew others, did they want them to sign up too? Like family, brothers-in-law...

SC: No, only I came here. Later, in another class of *braceros*, they were brought from Palma and Sonora and so on. And a man who was named Victor Besa brought all the *braceros* to the Ventura County. He was the one who told me one day, "You don't have neighbors or someone who wants to come?" So I talked to my brother and he came with 16. From my—

JA: 16 *braceros*?

SC: —hometown. Yes.

JA: What was the town called? Was it the same town where you were born? Or was it—?

SC: No. They signed them up in Empalme, Sonora. In El Palme, Sonora. But they came from the little town that I told you about.

JA: From Nayarit.

SC: From Nayarit. That man and my brother and all the others. They came in mass quantities, hundreds, hundreds. For example, he asked for one hundred in one night, and they arrived because they were from Central California. And there, as a concentration center. Right.

JA: Mhmm...

SC: Mr. Besa brought them all to the center and from there they divided out to the different companies who wanted them. They were brought here to Santa Paula and to all the counties here. There were a lot of camps during that time.

JA: Do you remember the names of the camps during that time, where the *braceros* were?

SC: No, no. I don't exactly remember them, but for example, Limonera. Limonera, that's still here in Santa Paula. And Piru. Piru, Fillmore.

JA: Piru also had a *bracero* camp?

SC: Yes, they also had a *bracero* camp.

JA: Fillmore.

SC: Fillmore, Santa Paula, which is still a lemon contractor.

JA: What was it called—?

SC: Rafael de León. It owned Sanco company.

JA: Sanco?

SC: Sanco.

JA: And does it still function—?

SC: Yes. He has a ranch there. And they still pick lemons. And—

JA: Could you tell me the names of the others? If you remember?

SC: Of all of them?

JA: Yes (laughs).

SC: Yes. This one was called Jesús Río.

JA: We'll start from the right—

SC: —With the boss.

JA: From here. From the right.

SC: Oh, okay.

JA: To the left. Left.

SC: Rafael, Rafeal de León.

JA: Rafael de León.

SC: Mhmm. That's where I heard of the head director, Jack Loey.

JA: Jack Lawyer?

SC: Uh huh, Loey. Loey. He's already died, too. Next, Mercer Raya.

JA: Mercer Raya.

SC: Uh huh.

JA: And the fourth?

SC: The fourth is Jesús Día.

JA: And the fifth?

SC: Next, El Segundo, was ran by Sevala. He died pretty recently.

JA: Sevala.

SC: And Fidel Sanchez. Fidel Sanchez is a relative of George.

FB: George?

JA: Oh, George Sandoval.

SC: Yes, yes. George Sandoval. Fidel. And next, oh this one, yes. This one, Feliz Velazquez.

JA: Feliz Velazquez.

SC: And Gabriel Romano.

JA: Romano?

SC: Romano, yes. Gabriel. And this is me, Samuel Camacho.

JA: Uh huh.

SC: Bonifacio Garcia.

JA: Bonifacio—

JA & SC: Garcia.

SC: And Jesús Ríó. The last one, here.

JA: Jesús Ríos?

SC: Jesús Ríó, yes.

JA: Mhmm.

SC: Yes, yes. But he isn't dead.

JA: (laughs) (unintelligible)

SC: We've both been lucky.

JA: Yes indeed. Or, been lucky as well. (laughs)

SC: Yes, as well. I'm already 83 years old.

JA: Yes. Tell me a little bit more about the camps that you told us a little about in Oxnard. The first one, the second one, and so on and so forth.

SC: Yes, well I told you about these in Fillmore. And, the I told you about the one in Fillmore.

JA: Oh, El Rancho Sespe?

SC: Rancho Limonera. El Rancho Sespe. Limonera still exists.

JA: Mhmm.

SC: It's big. And later, Garden City. Here, in Garden City. So—

JA: Oh, Garden City.

SC: It's owned by Ramos. By Ramos.

JA: Uh huh. And the other one was Campo Pacífico?

SC: El Pacífico. But this one, it closed.

JA: No, yes. But, in that time—

SC: That's where I arrived after Garden City and the hotel there. We came to ask for work, to pick lemons at Pacífico.

JA: Oh, the hotel—

SC: Yes, the Pacífico. And there they gave us, they were suitable. Where Fidel brought us. Fidel Sanchez. It was Lino San Toba's. And Lino ran the camp there.

Lino was the one who introduced me to George's father, the boss who gave me work there.

JA: There?

SC: Uh huh. In the, the Pacífico. And of all those who Fidel brought to group, there were around 50 of us. During this time, they paid us 28 cents an hour and 14 cents a box. When we didn't do anything, Fidel told us, "What did you want to happen? Make them now." Because there weren't anymore, we looked at the trees. There weren't any at the time, it was during December, and I thought it was strange that there weren't any lemons in Las Posas. And Fidel was the head manager of all of us.

JA: Mmm.

SC: Then, he arrived, I don't know if you've heard of Javier Santana who—

JA: Mhmm.

SC: Who is the newscaster from—

SC & FB: Television.

FB: Yes.

SC: We all walked with the whole family. Those from Jalisco. We all walked—

JA: Oh, yeah?

SC: Yes, I already told you that.

JA: The farms that were around—?

SC: Around Oxnard. Yes. Moorpark and everything because we were going to Moorpark and a little town called Somis. That's where we entered, through nothing, and picked during that time.

JA: And the only work they did there was picking? They didn't do any other kind of work?

SC: No, they didn't do anything more but pick there. Picking, and in '49 they took us to—I didn't work in the kitchen yet, but they brought the people who came to El Pacífico to get through the snow. That was when snow fell here in El Pacífico, right?

JA: Yeah.

SC: Uh huh. Then, it fell, and the trees were covered with snow and the loading of the lemons. (laughs)

FB: Weren't there any *braceros* who drove the tractors in—?

SC: No. No, no, no. The head of the camp, of the ranch was the one who drove the tractor. Not us. It took me a few days to fill them with gas and so on. When it was really cold, we learned. And then, Mr. Lino kept me, while the *braceros* from Mexicali arrived, he still gave me hours. We earned 70 cents an hour.

JA: Was it better to work by the hour?

SC: Yes. By the hour, because at the time, there weren't any lemons. And to keep me, so I didn't have to leave, he paid me by the hour. And then they told us to fill the tractors with gas, oil, to show us how to get them through the cold at night. They put us in charge, to fill them in the morning and we had noses, still full of— Well, I was still single, I still hadn't married.

JA: And how many days a week did they work? Or—?

SC: No, all seven days. The, the—

JA: For all of them?

SC: Yes. It was hard, but I thought that that was just how it was.

JA: Mhmm. (laughs)

SC: He told me, "I'm going to work for a little while in a package for my land." Because they didn't give us a single day off. In the kitchen, nothing. Seven days of work.

JA: But the *braceros* had Sundays off to rest, right?

SC: Ah, well if there was work to do, they went. If there was work then, then they worked then, too.

JA: Also on Sundays?

SC: If they wanted to, yes. And then, after Chávez, they began to give me days. They didn't want to work Saturdays either.

JA: (laughs)

SC: Yes, yes. Really, Chávez's union from then didn't want to work.

JA: (laughs) Not like that.

SC: No. They didn't want to.

JA: And, what about food? What type of food did they eat at that time?

SC: I made the menu.

FB: You made the menu?

SC: Yes, yes.

JA: Or did they give you—?

SC: No. This came from a friend of Jack Loey's, from Point Mugu. Yes, from there. It came from there.

FB: And how many cooks were there in a kitchen?

SC: Oh, there were about six of us.

FB: Six.

SC: Six or seven because, there in the Pacífico, there weren't more than 400 people.

JA: 400 people?

SC: Uh huh.

JA: And they lived there in the camp?

SC: Yes. Later, when I got there, they were made from half wood and the rest of canvas. And later, they made them more modern, like how they were made in Buena Vista and there they had 700 in the dining room. 700 of them came to eat. The room is still there, they do welding in it now.

JA: Oh, yeah?

SC: Yes, it was a big building that's on 5 Street or something. Before the arrival of 3S.

FB: Uh huh.

SC: So it is.

FB: It still exists?

SC: Yes.

JA: Did they have to pay for the food that was served?

SC: They paid 75 cents a day.

JA: A day.

SC: Yes, we also earned 120.

FB: (laughs)

SC: We did. And I lived there, and I went there when I lived in the Omo Hotel. It was called Omo. Filipino.

JA: Was he the owner of the hotel? The Filipino?

SC: Not of the hotel, no. He had a restaurant over on the corner of Hays and La Colonia. Omo was married to a Mexican lady and they still have their two daughters here.

JA: Oh, yes?

SC: Omo does. Tina Omo and I don't know what the other one's name is. The Japanese had an auto shop on 5 and G Street. No, um, Mita. The Japanese.

JA: Did the kitchen have enough food for everyone?

SC: Oh, the owners were really worried about that. Because of that, I always say, people will say that they treated the *braceros* badly. It's all lies because in this book you can see that the doctor would come every week to check on people. Later, when I started working with Coastal Growers, they took me— Are you still recording?

FB: Uh huh.

SC: Yes. They took me from there. From the kitchen. They made me camp manager. It was my job there, to bring the doctors and the sick people who came. That was my job. Yes. And purchasing manager, everything for the dining room and the camp and all, they put me in charge for all the purchases.

JA: And where did they buy everything?

SC: I bought everything.

JA: In the local stores?

SC: Yes, we had salesmen who would come and I would place orders. I did that for 13 years, and they were the best years of my life because—

JA: Why?

SC: I didn't have to get up early anymore. No earlier than 8 when the head of the office came and everyone else had to report to me via radio, and if something special happened, they would call me, and if not, I'd just got back to the fields. I was in charge of Buena Vista, of the Camp 3 S and of Pacífico before they sold it because Pacífico was also owner of Coastal Growers.

FB: What was his name?

SC: Jack Loey.

FB: Oh, Jack Loey. Okay.

SC: Uh huh. It was Jack Loey who—

JA: So, did you cook for both camps?

SC: We already did. I was already the manager.

JA: Of the other cooks?

SC: Yes. At that time, I was the manager. When I was manager, they didn't assign me fieldwork, they were the best years. I was manager of the camps for 13 years. They began to sell the camps, so I managed only 40%. The owners managed the other 60%. And then, I held a meeting to get money when they tried to sell the camp. It was already no more than they needed considering what they got because it cost something close to one million dollars. It's four acres of land there.

JA: Four acres?

SC: Four acres. But we were looks for clients, partners. Two more, a brother-in-law of mine and my son Samuel's father-in-law.

JA: And they, what were they in charge of?

SC: Nothing. They paid me to run the camp and it's utilities. In that time, the camps had utilities. Not anymore. Now no one lives there. Well, I was about to have 400 or so people.

JA: What were the camps like for the people who got there—?

SC: They came alone, then after they came—

FB: After the *braceros*?

SC: When the Bracero Program started, it was only local people. I don't know when they left, but they did. And all of the others that I told you about who worked here were all immigrants. Everyone, the Chamacos and the Grandes. Everyone—

JA: But, they started as workers—

SC: Yes.

JA: Many of them.

SC: Yes.

JA: You didn't have to go to Mexico to get them?

SC: No, that camp was bought by Coastal Grower.

JA: Mhmm.

SC: That one was Buena Vista. And Coastal Grower bought it to make it a parking lot for trucks. It had more than 45 trucks to take people to work. For that reason, they sold the camp. I was saying that as I was managing the land, but more came. There I was the manager of the camps there.

JA: Mhmm, mhmm. And you were in charge of all the—?

SC: Of the purchasing orders. Yes.

JA: The purchasing orders. The, the, um, were the residencies, were they made of wood? What were they made of—?

SC: No. The ones in 3 S were made of all concrete.

JA: Oh.

SC: All concrete. The barracks were all— I remember that they made the walls and the floor. And they stopped there, like the big buildings, up until the roof, they were made of entirely concrete. When they wanted to tear down the barracks, it cost them a quarter of a million dollars to tear them down. And that's not including the cost of cleanup. Therefore, they decided to sell them. But I was happy with my 40%. The camp was full of good utilities.

JA. Uh huh. And how much did people pay to live there?

SC: At that time, 65 a week. Room and board.

JA: Oh, room and board?

SC: Yes, room and board.

JA: And everyone who lived there was single?

SC: Yes, single. Families didn't live there. For this reason, I say that XXX the government brought it during amnesty. It was a big mistake because it brought families and the camp was so full of people that it cost the worker more because with sending 100 dollars there, their families could live well. Ultimately, they brought their families and then there wasn't. There wasn't. Yes. This was, to me, a huge mistake. And now, if there was another amnesty, the same thing would happen. They need to straighten things out because people are coming here by any means possible.

JA: And in the camps, did they also have bathrooms for the—?

SC: Yes, we had 77 showers to bathe in. Regular bathrooms. It was like a room with a shower, and 35 toilets. They're still there in 3 S, even today. They said there was enough. But there wasn't a place for me to bathe because there we also had—

JA: And what did people do to wash clothes?

SC: We had bathtubs to people to wash clothes in. But now, I think they have washing machines there.

JA: (laughs)

SC: Hm? The machines are there. People have to pay to use one, but in either case we didn't have them. There were fruit lunches. When I didn't feel like carrying tacos, I took fruit lunches. Six fruits, a piece of bread, and a chili. We never didn't have a chili.

JA: (laughs) And how much were people paid to there in the camp?

SC: How much—?

JA: Were people paid, for work?

SC: Well, people were paid different—

JA: Different salaries?

SC: Different salaries. But at Coastal Growers, no one could live there unless they were lemon pickers.

JAL Oh.

SC: No one can live in the camp.

JA: Oh, they had to work—

SC: Yes.

JA: —in the camp?

SC: Yes, only workers. And I would have to do the work for those who didn't, if I wanted to. They didn't pay more than 65 *pesos* at the time. This was because we were, um, the tortillas.

JA: And that was—?

SC: This was a cook. I don't know from which camp, but—

JA: And you made tortillas like that, from—?

SC: These are corn tortillas, but we made ours from flour.

JA: How did they make flour tortillas?

SC: For lunch, they made them.

JA: By hand?

SC: By hand. They made them by hand and gave me the job there, to make them. Now they're made by machine. Buena Vista had so many *braceros* that worked there, that bald guy there. They had their own machines to make tortillas to make all the workers' food. They bought us a central, and it was en dollars, you have to remember it was all dollars.

JA: Mhmm. And—?

SC: The people who were coming to the States.

JA: And did you cook Mexican food?

SC: Mexican.

JA: Only Mexican?

SC: Mexican.

JA: They didn't cook Mexican food in the *bracero* camps before, right?

SC: Right. We began to bring a little Mexican food—

JA: You all introduced the camp to Mexican food?

SC: Yes, because it was on the menu, you know?

JA: Yes, right.

SC: Yes, because it was there on the menu.

JA: Ah.

SC: And sometimes we skipped the menu because we made something new.

JA: Oh.

SC: Yes.

JA: But before—? Did the cooks before cook Mexican food, too, or no?

SC: Yes, yes.

JA: Always?

SC: In the camps, it was Mexican food. At one point, when then *braceros* began to arrive, there were 250 Japanese who were already at the camp where Manzanos is now. It was a camp there. And the Japanese had yet to complete their contracts.

FB: Right.

SC: And Limonera, it needed lemons, so they brought 250 of us to Buena Vista.

JA: Japanese?

SC: To 3 S, yes. Japanese.

JA: Uh huh.

SC: To Pacífico.

JA: Oh, Pacífico, oh.

SC: Yes, there they gave us—

JA: Japanese food?

SC: Yes.

JA: (laughs)

SC: Japanese food because they brought a cook with them.

JA: Oh.

SC: There at that camp. A cook came with all of them.

JA: (laughs)

SC: I was assigned to run that camp. Loey told me, “You’ve already managed the Japanese cooks. If they began to leave me, I’m going to have you manage here

too. They aren't hurrying, and they aren't leaving." The Japanese were all street urchins of 20 to 22 years old. And when they began to leave for Japan they chose to finish up with everything. They began to go, and he told me and my assistant because he had hidden the cook to make the things there. I said what was made here. (laughs) The cook came to us one day, and he already knew us, you know? Yeah. He left because he got mad that his assistant got in an argument about bringing, his assistant began to get coffee for them, a coffee maker that held 60 gallons. And he had to take it out, turn it off to get the liquid, right? And the little street kid didn't do it, he said the other day, "Turn it off." Because of this, the welding began to leak, and there was a big burn. And he said, "Because of that, you're going to fight with him." "No, I'm fighting with him, only when I'm paying attention—And besides, you, if you don't, why do you have your cigar at the tables there and we don't have to stop them smoking?" And he said, "Take that cigarette out of your mouth, and if you don't, then you can leave too." And Loey got mad about that with me because I was the boss there and I was in charge of the Japanese cooks. They didn't end up leaving, they just started to work in Los Angeles instead. I saw some of the old people from that time, and they're still there.

JA: And how did you all communicate with them?

SC: With the Japanese?

JA: Yes.

SC: Um, not anything more than do more and make that and make—(laughs)

FB: Like that.

SC: Yes. We made Mexican food and they made a little there too. Like— (laughs). Like that, yes.

JA: They didn't mix the two?

SC: Yes, they liked Mexican food, too. They made it there, too.

JA: Did you learn how to cook Japanese food?

SC: Yes. They weren't there for long when I was managing, they weren't there long. They began to accept them there.

JA: What year was it when, it—?

SC: It was '70, more or less.

JA: Oh, so later.

SC: '70, yes. They began to leave alone, and they ran it. The Japanese didn't work with lemons.

JA: Oh, no?

SC: They're like the Oaxacans. People from Oaxaca don't like lemons.

FB: Why not?

SC: They don't like lemons. They like strawberries. They like all kinds of vegetables. And I asked them about how many hours they were going to give them and how and for how many days. I tell them, I told them, well, "They still haven't left. What are we going to do?" Well, working with things, that— And I told the Oaxacans because they asked me, we made, "I need no more than one." "Well, there's three of us." "Well, they only want one, boys." That's how the Oaxacans were, but they were fine with strawberries. I still see rows of strawberries filled with Oaxacans. Only Oaxacans there, yes.

JA: And, tell me a little bit about when you were a cook. Did you like the food? Were there complaints about the food? Did you have a favorite dish of all of them?

SC: Mm, no, no. Those of us who cooked after some of the *braceros*, there were few. There are always people who don't like something, right? When Chavez's union came they put their more or less—

JA: How, when did the union come?

SC: When the union came, there weren't anymore *braceros*, around '70 something. '70 something.

JA: And what changed when the union came? What things changed?

SC: Well, they were already putting more things that they wanted. They sometimes put me— "We don't want ground meat anymore, we don't want—" Little things like that, you know? There in the house that I lived in, in Three S.

JA: Oh, you lived there?

SC: Yes, I lived there.

JA: And, um, if they wanted better food, what did the union do? How long did they stay there?

SC: Well, look, the union didn't work in the lemon fields.

JA: No?

SC: No.

JA: Why?

SC: They didn't work on the day to day way that they wanted to. If they got to a field that had a lot of land or one we didn't want, we wanted one with more. If there were trees with a lot of branches, we didn't want that either. Four, five more. Then the ranchers filled them with little things like that and then sold the camp. And later, the union came and a rancher left that was really powerful. He, here in what is now El Río, when they bought it, it was all owned by a rancher. But he left, he didn't want the union there, so he left or he sold part of it and so on, but he left. And like the street kids there, one left and they all began to leave because Coastal Growers was closing down. Because that rancher left, they all began to leave. Then, the expenses of the camp were the same, the trucks were the same. They were the same, 40, 50 trucks were there. The expenses were, the ranchers began to— And they won the lawsuit because the union wanted 150 as the minimum of people in a camp. They were done with me and my wife and the 50% because there weren't more than 147. And the union wasn't there anymore (laughs). That's how they lost. Then the company wanted to close the camp, to shut it down. And that was when they gave me 40. They convinced Jack Loey that if they gave it to me, in that year I would give them rent because the ranchers gave him like 92,000 dollars in rent for the camp. Per year, per year. And they convinced Jack Loey that if they left me with the 40, I would give them the same rent. And, since they were fixed numbers, they gave it to me. I had bad months and good months of almost 17,000 dollars. Like in the month of April, and those months, they were filled and they gave me almost 17,000 dollars in a month. Then they left me with 13, and until then they convinced them to not sell the camps. The time came when the owners wanted to sell, and we stayed with him. But now, you can't. There aren't people there. They have 90, 80 people now. And there, well, if you don't have 14, in that time I covered less, you know? It doesn't cut it. Some were begging for the camp's bonds. My other business partners left and only I was left.

JA: So, did they lose money?

SC: Yes, there wasn't anything. He liked it a lot when there was, but afterwards, when there wasn't anything, well what do you do when there isn't anything? There isn't anything.

JA: And why wasn't there anything anymore?

SC: There wasn't anyone there. No one came. And if you didn't have at least 140 people, they costs weren't outweighed by the income. It's because the voucher wasn't more than 9,000 a month. Insurance, water was 4,000 liters a month. Expense, and pure, pure—

JA: Expense.

SC: Expense. Until then, I was left with a good time. Good time.

JA: And did the same time happen with camp Buena Vista? With the same program as—?

SC: As that one, yes. At the time, it wasn't a problem because there were a lot of people. That came to hold 5,000. Yesterday, like a concentration camp, Buena Visa, you know?

JA: Yes.

SC: All the ranchers wanted 50 people in the morning, then they would take 50.

JA: And were the workers legal?

SC: No, they were all *braceros*. All *braceros*.

JA: All *braceros*, oh.

SC: All *braceros*.

JA: So, Buena Vista only used *braceros*—?

SC: All *braceros*.

JA: —as workers?

SC: Yes. Three S used only *braceros* as well.

JA: Oh.

SC: Yes. Only *braceros*. Yes. During that time, there weren't locals while we were there. They made propaganda so that people would come when there weren't any more *braceros*.

JA: And what type of propaganda did they make?

SC: It's what I told you, about the 25. If you an old worker brought a new one, your son or what have you, they gave you 25 and 25 for three months, right? It was when Coastal Growers would give a payment to Ocotlán, Jalisco. For it, they gave it to it.

JA: Why did was it translated, were there a lot of workers from there?

SC: Ocotlán is a sister city to Oxnard.

JA: Oh.

SC: Yes.

JA: Why? Why is it a city—?

SC: They gave it to it, there were a lot of workers and we, when we went to look for people, that's where we went, to Ocotlán.

JA: Oh. They brought *braceros* from there?

SC: No.

JA: Oh, from—?

SC: All, then. All, then.

JA: Oh, then afterwards?

SC: All immigrants, all immigrants.

JA: Oh, immigrants.

SC: All immingrants. They were immigrants, all of them.

JA: But, they came here illegally, right?

SC: No, legally.

JA: Legally.

SC: Legally. And all, all— All of them that you see in the photos of the ladders, all legal.

JA: Mm.

SC: All legals came then. And now, well, now it's filled with all types, you can't tell who is one and who is the other. It's true. That's the history of Oxnard. When I came in '48, I've seen over 50 years in the city of Oxnard, you know?

JA: Right, right.

SC: It was '48. And we celebrated here. Then, the store here wasn't more than where now the—

FB: The post office.

SC: Yes, the post office. There weren't any big stores. That was the biggest one there.

JA: There were already the biggest camps here.

SC: Yes.

JA: Buena Vista, Pacífico, and Three S.

SC: Yes, yes.

JA: Did you know Hector Zamora?

SC: Well, yes.

JA: Tell me a little bit about him.

SC: No, well, I knew him by sight, but we weren't—

FB: Friends.

SC: We weren't friends, you know? Because he was in charge of the offices at Buena Vista. Hector.

JA: Yes.

SC: Hector, and later, the manager was Fidel Villaseñor. That Fidel had. A camp still exists, Loyo's camp that was in Fillmore.

JA: Oh, is it the same camp—?

SC: Loyo's.

JA: He's the manager of that—?

SC: He died. Now his son is the one who runs it.

JA: What is the son's name?

SC: I don't know his name.

SC: And he's alive?

SC: Yes, he's still alive.

JA: And he lives in Loyo?

SC: In Loyo, in Loyo's camp. It's right in the center of Fillmore.

JA: Oh. Right, right, right.

SC: There were packages of oranges there.

JA: So, Fidel and, um, Hector were the two—?

SC: Yes.

JA: They were the owners?

SC: Yes.

JA: They were the owners of Buena Vista, or were they just the managers of—?

SC: No, Fidel was the owner.

JA: They bought it.

SC: In camp Buena Vista there were big barracks that they brought from San Fernando where there were chickens and they brought many of them here,

already finished. Fidel started there. And he assigned me to there and later it was growing and they made materials and all there.

JA: But, who was the owner before Fidel? Coastal Growers?

SC: It was an association, and association. But, Fidel was the owner of the camp. He began to bring *braceros* and they came with the Fidel's signature, the *braceros*. Yes, it started small, and with that he left, stormed up to the father of—

FB: Of George?

SC: Of George, to work with him because Lino, George's father, was the head of camp Pacifico. There.

JA: Really?

SC: And when Fidel got there, it started to be, to change Lino over there. Yes. It wasn't long after that that Lino died, three, four years I think. He was a really good guy.

FB: Yes. Was there every any conflict between the *braceros* and the Mexicans who were here from Mexico?

SC: No.

FB: Not very many?

SC: No, no. Everyone looked at 5 Sreet like it was still as though they were in Mexico. People came and came, and well, I imagine that it was a camp full of immigrants there, at least 300, 400. Later, they moved on to Buena Vista, no, to Three S. Almost 500. And later, at Buena Vista, 5,000. There it was the same, at least 200 stayed, without work, playing ball or something along those lines, you know? Because all the ranchers were busy, then, the next morning there wasn't any other rancher who wanted them. There was a mountain of cooks there, around 40 in Buena Vista.

JA: And they cooked, or rather, you knew them all?

SC: Yes, but not by name. By sight, yes. There are still two of them here. Jesús García was one of them, he married here.

JA: And does he live here?

SC: Yes, he's still alive.

JA: What is his name?

SC: Jesús García.

JA: And he was a cook in Buena Vista?

SC: He was a cook in Buena Vista.

JA: And there was another?

SC: No, no, I don't know the name of the other one. Paulo, but I don't know his last name. He's still alive. He's having a hard life because he was hit with an attack and now walks dragging one of his feet. But those are the only ones I know.

JA: As cooks in the camps?

SC: As cooks in the camps, yes. They looked like doves as they left, they were resting because of all the white outfits. They used white and aprons, you know?

JA: Yes.

SC: And it looked like a mountain of doves there.

JA: Like this?

SC: Oh! It's us. We were—

JA: Where was this picture of you guys taken?

SC: There, in the—

JA: Tell me about it.

SC: In Three S. Yes, those were all my cooks.

JA: What were their names?

SC: And it was for Christmas.

JA: Mhmm.

SC: No, for Thanksgiving. We were separating—

JA: Oh, this was a special dinner, for Thanksgiving.

SC: Yes, Thanksgiving. It was '65.

JA: Did they also make special meals for Christmas.

SC: Yes. Here in this, bring it here, you'll see.

JA: Oh.

SC: This party that we threw for people who lived there. If you're interested in this. From Doctor Anderson from *La Colonia*. He gave a lot of gifts. Mariachis came and everything. Yes. We made tamales and everything. This was in '81.

JA: It seems like the workers were happy with all the Mexican food there.

SC: The bosses were always really worried about that, also in Pacífico when the *braceros* came to buy good quality. Excellent quality. When I was manager there of Three S, always. There were never any calamities. Loey would never have to say anything more than, "How's it going?" Because every department had their bills and bank accounts, you know? And he would tell all of them, "How is the bill in the kitchen?" They would sell me 50 sacks of beans at a good price. Not anymore. He would never have to tell me, "Don't buy something because we don't have the money." Well, actually, in the middle of October we in the kitchen were in the red something like 100,000.

JA: Why?

SC: There wasn't anymore people. Like I said, there wasn't anymore people, but the expenses were still the same. But January came, and they recuperated with 350 ranchers, 100,000 that they chalked up to loss. After they, they never limited me, "Don't buy that because it's really expensive." They never told me anything but yes.

JA: Right.

SC: Yes. When they gave me work, they thought that I would be sitting, watching television, that's it. They would say, "Where are you?" "I'm in Pacífico. I'm here." They put me in charge of management to gain a little experience and everything when—

JA: Oh, when you started.

SC: Yes, because—

JA: Why?

SC: A manager that was there knew how to run it. If they did, they couldn't run it. And they didn't continue anymore after I came and gave the 40%, some of Seaward's, the packaging. And Emi said, "How are you going to do it if you don't know how to run it?" And I told him, "It took me three years to do what they were doing. He told me, "You're running everything." I had the experience of everything that I had done there, in Plumeria. We had, well, what they did, you know? But they put me in charge of maintenance, well, of everything we were in charge of. I would said into the radio, "Emi, where are you going? I'm in Pacífico." Because they ran it, he carried no more.

FB: Did Jack Loey speak Spanish?

SC: Yes. He was the manager of a mine in Peru of 1,000 people. And, because of that, when he came here, he signed the first *bracero* contract. Jack Loey worked for the government, and health and to make—

JA: He worked for the government.

SC: He did everything, so when he drove, he did everything for them, you know? And when he offered me the job of head of the kitchen, the day that I was manager of the camp, he told me, "My office is open whenever you don't know something, I'm here to help you. I want you to progress." And that's what he told me, and Loey—

FB: His full name was Jack Loey?

SC: Jack Loey. Uh huh. Loey. He always helped me out a lot. He, also, truthfully—

FB: Norma?

SC: Donla. The eighth manager.

JA: Who is he?

SC: He was the president of Three S, the Triple S.

JA: Well, before, the boss of—

SC: He was one of the business partners.

JA: Of the business partners?

SC: Of the business partners, and the owners of, well, he was the owner of the entirety of it. Nobody wanted to loan us the balance. We gave 300, 30 as a deposit. And the balance didn't go, they didn't want to give us it because the camp didn't have a name, a camp that the ranchers closed and placed Caterpillars in it, that camp didn't have a name. What is a camp? Nothing. And the banks didn't want to lend us any money. Then, David said, "Look, are you going to stay with the camp even though jail is not the end goal for me?" And that's what he said to get Living bank to become a business partner, that building is still there. He said, "Take the papers there again." It was the first bank that I took the papers to, and I went to ask them to help. They told us, "You didn't bring us anything." And so Nijo and I went to take the papers to other places and time passed. I had the 40%, it was August, you know? But they wanted to sell to divide it amongst the managers there. And he came with a mountain of papers and among them were their papers, the company's papers and all. Then we went to go there again. He said, "You are going to stay with the camp while they throw me in jail." In 8 days, they told me, I mean three days, they talked to us about paying the down-payment in Ventura. That's what I was to do. And I want to see him, David, but he moved with his wife and they live over there, I think, that's what he told me. And also Jack Loey. The ranchers that wanted to sell the camp. And Jack Loey convinced them that I could give them equal rent, because Coastal Growers paid 8,000. Coastal Growers rented it from the owners, you know? And then he told me, "They are leaving me with the 40, and you'll leave them the same." Well, they knew him for a long time, Jack Loey was manager for over 25 years. He was general manager of they whole company, and we would always walk together when someone would remind me when they gave me the job. More when I saw running water where I walked and everything. That man was always prepared when I was going to head to the city. Of all of them, he died of Alzheimer's, he died—

JA: A long time ago?

SC: Some three years ago. He died about three years ago. But he was always very prepared.

JA: He was the owner—?

SC; He retired. He had already retired from the company.

FB: Were there every any parties or dances or anything in the camps?

SC: Not there, with the exception of Christmas.

FB: Oh, nothing else.

SC: They invited all the families they wanted. Families of managers, you know? They had more than 45 managers, not including the checkers, and they were free to invite people. That was the last one because later when we had a party, the managers didn't want them to come so they didn't come. Other people came— For example, I came and they appointed me ten people, but Jack Loey wanted the managers to approve them. For example, the people that I showed you, that were in the photo, were management.

JA: All of them?

SC: Yes, all of them.

JA: And where did they live?

SC: Then their houses here in town. Nobody else but me lived in the camp.

JA: Only you.

SC: And the cooks.

JA: If they didn't approve—?

SC: Then they weren't approved. The managers wanted to approve the families, you know? The others didn't come, and later there weren't anymore of the parties, but they were pretty because they sang there. The mariachis sang and everything. And the doctor would give a lot of gifts, too.

JA: Oh, he gave gifts?

SC: A lot of gifts.

JA: For Christmas?

SC: Yes.

JA: To kids or—?

SC: To everyone. It was huge, and they raffled them off.

JA: Oh, a raffle.

SC: A raffle, yes.

JA: To win prizes.

SC: Yes.

JA: Uh huh. And you also mentioned that people played games, like baseball?

SC: We played ball games, too.

JA: In the middle of the camp?

SC: Yes, behind the camp. There's still—

JA: For fun or what?

SC: Jack Loey paved over a big part. It was big, and there were baskets.

JA: For basketball?

SC: For basketball.

JA: Oh, you didn't play baseball?

SC: No, not baseball. There was a baseball team, but not there in the camp. They represented the camp.

JA: And for church, or mass—?

SC: A priest came. There isn't a church in the photo. A father came for the— This is a room that people went to. The owner came early— Yes. But mass was held in the dining room because the dining room was big enough for all 250 people. Here's another photo of the dining room.

JA: This is the dining room?

SC: Yes, that's the dining room there. We went there for—

JA: Mhmm. And there they held mass?

SC: Yes, they held mass there.

JA: Parties, too, right?

SC: Yes, parties, too. I have a photo of some I knew. They went to sell tickets for the queen.

JA: For what? Tickets for the queen?

SC: Yes, for the queen of the 16th of September.

JA: They had parties?

SC: Yes, a party on the 16th. They went with Dolino and asked permission to ask to go with her to the camps to sell tickets. And that's where I met her. And then time passed, and I went to my godparent's wedding. They told me, "Boy," they said, "You want to go to a wedding?" They said, "We need a chamberlain. And look here, a girl that you know." It was her. So I said, "I'll go."

JA: (laughs)

SC: It was her, the one who sold the tickets.

JA: What was her name?

SC: Consuelo.

JA: Consuelo.

SC: Consuelo Moreno.

JA: Is this her?

SC: That's her.

FB: This one?

SC: Yes, that one.

FB: Oh, that one.

SC: Uh huh.

JA: Is that where you met?

SC: Yes. I was her date to that wedding.

FB: And, what church is this? In Santa Clara?

SC: No. This was La Guadalupe there where the—

FB: Meta Street?

SC: On Meta, which was a clinic.

JA: Mhmm.

SC: That's where I got married. But this isn't from our wedding, this is when I met her, when I was a chamberlain. And then when they built the church, I went there because that's where I got married (laughs). But they were all, that's another sister. Her. She ran for queen of the 16th of September.

FB: What's her name?

SC: Berta.

FB: Berta?

SC: Berta Moreno.

FB: And who is this?

SC: That's her only brother. They were all siblings.

JA: What was your wife's last name?

SC: Moreno. It was a big family, but most didn't stay here. Only these two. She was no older than ten here. This is my sister.

JA: It's your sister?

SC: She's the only one who lives here in El Río.

FB: What's her name?

SC: Altagracia. Ramos, too.

JA: She came here after you, right?

SC: Yes, she came after. She came to visit me, and then met her boyfriend, a cousin. My wife's brother. And then they both came. She was 25, so they've been married over 30 years. She moved with him, who was a business partner of—

JA: Of the camp.

SC: Of the camp, yes. He died recently, about two years ago. He had made good money when he retired, something like 360,000 dollars. And the other one left, when he saw there wasn't any more money, I said, "I'm not going to leave." And he gave us 60,000 dollars. But he had already given us 70,000 dollars, so he didn't give us anymore than 110. That wasn't bad, nor was it bas business. Because they took a lot.

JA: How old were you when you got married?

SC: I was 24, and she was 20.

FB: Did a lot of *braceros* marry women from around here?

JA: From here too?

SC: I only know of Jesús Garcia who lives here.

JA: Oh, that's right. He was a *bracero* who married a woman from around here.

SC: Yes, he married a local woman.

JA: Where there others?

SC: There was one other named Ángel, Ángel Hernandez. I was chamberlain when I got married too.

JA: And how did the workers pass the time? Was there a movie theater there that they went to that showed Mexican films?

SC: The only theater was the Boulevard that's closed now.

JA: They would go there?

SC: Yes, we'd go.

JA: Oh, really?

SC: I took everyone, even my mother-in-law (laughs). She would take me there.

JA: Single guys would go there too, right?

SC: Yes, Mondays.

JA: The *braceros* would go, too?

SC: Yes. It was the only theater around. The tickets were 50 cents.

JA: And they showed Mexican films, right?

SC: Yes, only Mexican films at the Boulevard. Afterwards, they made the Boulevard, which is now *El Mate*. You know it. They only showed Mexican films there. I brought my backpack with my baby bottles and everything because I already had my son and my daughter. He was born in '52 and Cecilia in '53.

FB: Were there ever any problems between Mexicans and the police during those years?

SC: No, never. They went here and there around all the camps. And the place was a store that sold cowboy clothes and everything—

FB: The Army Navy?

SC: No, where Gloria is.

FB: Gordon's?

SC: Gordon's, yes. He had trucks, and he would bring *braceros* from all the camps to the store. They were his trucks.

JA: (laughs)

SC: And he began to sell socks there in the boutique on a table. He would sell, and the store kept growing.

JA: Oh, really?

SC: There, around '48, '49—

JA: And what was the store owner's name?

SC: Mr. Rodgers was his last name—

JA: He was an American?

SC: He was Jewish.

JA: Jewish?

SC: Yes, he was Jewish. And the store kept growing and I think he bought the property, where it is now.

JA: He sold to *braceros*, right?

SC: Yes.

JA: Just things.

SC: They had to pay the trucks in the alley and come into the store. Yes.

JA: Really?

SC: But he helped them a lot. If someone ended up in prison or something, he would bail them out and everything.

JA: Oh, really? He helped them?

SC: He helped them a lot. And they helped him too.

JA: Like, they unloaded the—

SC: Yes, they would unload and carry things into the store. And I said that he started to sell socks there on the sidewalk. He put a table of them out there and it just grew. During that time, if you had money for a pair, it was worth it. You could buy yourself a pair of shoes from three *pesos*. Or a good pair of Levis. But we also didn't make more than \$7.20 a day. I, at 70 cents, had to work nine hours to earn \$7.20. And nowadays people earn more, but everything costs more. A good pair of pants costs 50, 60 dollars.

JA: At that time, things were cheaper. You also said that you had a radio. Did they have stations in Spanish here during that time?

SC: Radio?

JA: Yes, Spanish stations.

SC: Just one that was an hour long in the mornings.

JA: That's it?

SC: Yes, KBBN that is still in Ventura.

JA: KBBN?

SC: Uh huh, KBBN. It was called *El Locutor Palomino*.

JA: Was it a show?

SC: It was an hour long, and you could dedicate songs to your girlfriend or whatever—

JA: (laughs)

SC: —it would cost you a dollar.

JA: Oh, really? (laughs)

SC: I took a dollar there and asked them to dedicate a song, but she was completely asleep and missed it.

JA and SC: (laughs)

SC: The host at the time was named Enrique Palomino.

JA: What was the show called again?

SC: Monday?

JA: The show. It was a show in Spanish?

SC: Yes, only an hour long.

JA: Did it have a name? Enrique Palomino?

SC: Yes, Enrique Palomino. For an hour.

JA: Was that the only way you could listen to Spanish stations because it was the only—?

SC: Yes, it the only hour. Well, the other stations were American, you know? And the station is still there.

JA: Oh, here?

SC: No, it's in Ventura. I said it's called KBBN.

JA: Not all of the workers have a radio to pass the time?

SC: They all did for the Mexican hour.

JA: (laughs)

SC: There were good radio stations that picked up stations from the capital, from Tijuana, from Mexicali and everything. Tube radios. They were huge. Now they're all transistors, but at that time they were all tube radios. They were giant radios. The tube televisions too, I had one in my house that was gigantic. With a screen that was smaller than this.

JA: Mhmm.

SC: But the size was big. They were all made of *burbo* then. You know what *burbo* is?

JA: No.

FB: What is it?

SC: Tubes.

FB: Tubes.

SC: The tubes that they had inside. They were inside the radios. They don't make them anymore, but they would pick up stations from the capital and all, in Spanish.

JA: Oh, really?

SC: From the capital of Mexico, in Spanish.

JA: Mexican songs were very popular at the time.

SC: Yes, indeed.

JA: Yes.

SC: And now there's a lot of television.

JA: Mhmm. And they weren't dances for the workers there, the singles that—?

SC: There were only public dances.

JA: But if they wanted to go to the dances to—

SC: Oh, yes.

JA: —meet girls.

SC: Where the new theater is, the new one over there used to be a dance hall where we would go when I was still single.

JA: And they would take you there, after the dance, right?

SC: Yes.

JA: (laughs) Did they go the barracks?

SC: No, everyone went, even my mother-in-law and her daughters. I went to the dance with my girlfriend. And my mother-in-law, who was very Mexicanized, went. She was from Arizona she would always take her daughters to dance, and they didn't want to because they were a little haughty. The one who was the queen looked at you like she didn't like you. Honestly, "Girls, why don't you come dance?" My mother-in-law was very Mexicanized.

JA: (laughs)

SC: "Let's go." She was very Jewish, and her granddaughter would get mad because they wouldn't go dance. "But, Mom, they're all so short and stout," because all of the girls were big. "Let's go." And they would take the granddaughter, too.

JA: (laughs)

SC: She would say, "Sir, you all came here from the coast." Because that's how the old ladies were. I don't know what they do now because I don't go. They would warn you that if they danced with you, they would tell you no and so would another one, and they all sat there. Now, as much as ever, but I don't go, but one would say no and so would another. And she would bring with them, to the dance hall, which was made of wood.

JA: Oh, the dance hall. What was it called?

SC: KC

JA: JC?

SC: Yes, KC.

JA: And did girls ever come back to the barracks? (laughs)

SC: No, no, no. Not there, no.

JA: They weren't allowed to—?

SC: No.

JA: —go back with girlfriends?

SC: No, no, not there.

JA: It was really strict, huh?

SC: Yes. Now, they're allowed. When I was there, they didn't know I was an owner and they would find me when I was doing my rounds at the camp at night, you know?

JA: Uh huh.

SC: And, "How's it going? You want this? What? Let's go to a room. Three *pesos*. A long time." "Go away. I'm the owner here." But they would find me and they didn't know who I was.

JA: Did you didn't know them?

SC: I didn't know who they were.

JA: Where there a lot of them?

SC: Yes, there were a lot of them. Well, not a ton, but you'd find them in the big camps. There would be one here, and another there.

FB: Prostitues?

SC: Yes, prostitutes.

JA: Are there a lot in Oxnard?

SC: No, there are still a few, but now there isn't as much prostitution as there are drugs.

FB: Drugs.

SC: A lot of drugs. But at that time, there weren't as many.

JA: Thousands of workers used drugs.

SC: They would pay two, three *pesos*. There at the camp, the one that I told you about when I arrived in Anaheim.

JA: Mhmm.

SC: At the end of the row, the same lady sat under a lemon tree. It was a lemon tree near the camp. They brought a mattress. They would go there with the same lady.

JA: How much did they cost?

SC: Well, around two *pesos* at the time. They didn't earn much. But the same lady you give you a—

JA: And did the owners or heads know what was going on?

SC: No, no one talked about what happened in the lemons.

JA: Did you ever go with one?

SC: Well, I was only there for 15 days, and then I came here. Here in *La Colonia* we called them old lady panties. There were rows of lemon trees where the school is. They stuck the high school there, in *La Colonia*. It used to be entirely rows of lemons. And there you would find the old lady panties before they sold it (laughs). It was a great time then, but now it's all different. At the time, almost no one sold drugs. The only thing was that from time to time people would use a little bit of marijuana or things like that, but now I was in the camp and I found burnt spoons and so on.

JA: Cocaine.

SC: Cocaine. Yes. Now they treat me fine because before they never hit me because I followed them to a room and a ranch hand talked to me. He said, "I have flames, make me the hose." And there were a ton of people sleeping on the floor. They would show up at night and walk around the camp, then sleep a little

after I took the hose. They would shower and then leave me alone and that's why they never hit me. Because of what I did. They would sometimes sit in an old chair outside, and a cook told them, "Throw a bucket of water on him from the fridge." He woke up scared then took a shower. But anyway, a few went and some are still here.

JA: When were you a *bracero* in Anaheim for no more than 15 days?

SC: No more than 15 days.

JA: Later, did you return to Mexico?

SC: No, no. I stayed here.

JA: Oh, here.

SC: Here, in Saticoy.

JA: Because you were a *bracero*, you didn't have to go back to Mexico to come back again?

SC: No, I lost my contract. When I came here, my contract had already expired.

JA: So, you never went back to Mexico after—?

SC: No, I went back to Mexico after 13 years here.

JA: Oh, 13 years?

SC: Yes, I married in '51, but I was her boyfriend for three years before I got married because she was 17.

JA: And how did you communicate with your family who stayed in Mexico? Didn't you miss your family—?

SC: I was an orphan. I was two years old when my mom died. And my dad married four times, so we were all kind of orphaned. I had a lot of family there, but I didn't really go there.

FB: You never sent them money?

SC: To whom? No.

JA: But, you had an uncle who—?

SC: Oh, I had a lot of uncles.

JA: But, the uncle that you stayed with, the one who owned the bakery.

SC: Ah, there in Sinaloa.

JA: Yes.

SC: Yes, from Sinaloa. No, when I went—

JA: He helped you?

SC: Yes, I lived with them.

JA: For a little while.

SC: For a time. Three years in the bakery. We would skip in circles there.

JA: But, they were like family?

SC: He was my mom's brother.

JA: Oh, he was your mom's brother.

SC: My mom's brother. All his children live in Guadalajara. When I go, I visit them.

JA: So you were in contact with that part of your mother's family.

SC: Yes, I visit them. I was two years old when my mom died, and a sister of mine who lives in San Luis, Sonora was 20 days old when she died. She died during childbirth. And that's how it was. I'm telling you that we are still alive through good luck, and that's it. I fell once here and they wanted me to relax the reigns. "Don't do this, don't do that." I only had to open the way, and I tried to leave the dance during "*Cielito Lindo*". They told me, "We're going to the bathroom to smoke marijuana, you want to join?" "No, go away," I told him. Nobody had to tell anyone about or anything. I left and married a girl from a good family. The two of us left. And I lived in a garage in *El Río* in my mother-in-law's house, they set up the garage for us. We lived there until they gave me a house in the camp. When Lino, George's father, left to work there, he lived in that house in *El Pacífico*. Then they gave it to me.

JA: Oh, Lino.

SC: Yes. Lino lived in the camp and had a house there. A little house. When I lived with my mother-in-law, I paid 20 dollars in rent at the time. They gave me that little house and I left the garage in *El Río*, and now the freeway runs through there. They sold them, and they gave my mother-in-law this house. They gave her 50 dollars for her house when the freeway was made. And Abrita, my sister, was paid 700 dollars in rent for that little house that my mother-in-law paid 50 dollars for because there was a store on top and everything. She paid 300 to move.

JA: And your sister, does she have the same mother? Or is a different one?

SC: No, she was from my dad's second wife. He didn't have any children with his third wife, but he had four with his fourth wife. But Carnal and all the girls and everyone hugged me. I'm not going to say no. And the sister that lives in *El Río* and I see each other a lot because we're so close. Every week I go eat with them. They tell me, "You've already eaten enough for 20." She's also a widow.

FB: Her name is Altagracia?

SC: Yes, Altagracia. She married a Ramos because my wife was a Moreno Ramos. I used to tell him, "You can't leave my sister or I'll leave your cousin."

JA and SC: (laughs)

JA: Well, sir, thank you very much for all the information.

SC: I hope it helps somehow.

JA: Yes, everything that you told us is really interesting. All the information. We can at least send you a copy of this and we can make copies of your photos, too.

SC: Sure.

JA: With your permission.

SC: Sure, why not?

JA: I don't know if we can make copies here, but could we make copies at the university?

SC: Sure, bring them to me later.

JA: We'll take them to protect them, not to lose them or anything.

SC: They're like turtles.

SC and JA: (laughs)

JA: Um, let's get a folder or something. Also, I'm going to give you some information, a card.

SC: I think that at least they have heard of you both.

JA: Well, at least we can do something.

SC: He's been a teacher for a long time.

JA: Yes.

SC: At least, they have heard of you guys.

JA: At least. Do you know them, has it been awhile?

FB: No. Does he live in Oxnard?

SC: Yes, he lives here on the other street, on Janetwood.

FB: Janetwood?

SC: Uh huh.

FB: Okay.

JA: He lives there. I'm going to give you my card, and Frank's. Your kids can give us a call too, to meet us.

SC: Sure.

JA: But also to—

SC: He's also an afterschool ball coach.

FB: Softball?

SC: Softball.

JA: Oh, he's also a ball coach. And you have a daughter, right? Or do you have two sons?

SC: No, she already died. I have three sons.

JA: Three sons.

SC: Three sons. I had four kids, but my daughter died.

JA: Ah.

SC: These are my kids.