

BRACERO PROJECT

Spring2010

Alfredo Ramírez

Name of interviewee: Alfredo Ramírez

Date of the interview: April 15, 2009

Name of interviewer: Camille Chandler

CC: Well, it was already recorded.

AR: Umm...

CC: Okay. My name is Camille Chandler and today I'm going to interview the bracero Alfredo Ramirez. Today is April 15th of 2009 in Ventura, California. Well, first we are going to start with the first basic question. Where and when were you born?

AR: I was born in Michoacán. Zinaparo, Michoacan, Mexico.

CC: Tell me about your family and the place where you were born.

AR: I was born in Zinaparo, Michoacán. My brothers and I were born there.

CC: How many brothers do you have?

AR: Seven.

CC: Seven?

AR: With me.

CC: And.... is the town small?

AR: Yes.

CC: Yes?

AR: Yes, it's a small town.

CC: Okay, Is it.....rural?

AR: Yes.

CC: Very rural?

AR: Very rural.

CC: And....What were your parents dedicated to?

AR: My father was a *tablajero*.

CC: *Tablajero*, explain that a little bit more?

AR: A *Tablajero*, is a butcher.

CC: How about that!

AR: He had a butcher shop.

CC: Ok. You come from a big family, don't you?

AR: Yes.

CC: Where do your brothers and sisters live now?

AR: Well, I have two sisters left. They live in Zinaparo, Michoacán.

CC: Okay, tell me about when you went to school, that is, if you did go?

AR: Yes, I went until the 6th grade in Zinaparo.

CC: Okay....did you learn to read and write in school?

AR: Yes, in the school, Vicente Guerrero.

CC: Okay, um... Did you work and go to school at the same time?

AR: Yes, I helped my father with everything there.

CC: What did you help with?

AR: I helped take care of the cows as well as kill them.

CC: Oh, so you studied during the day and worked in the afternoon?

AR: I would also help for a while in the morning as well as in the afternoon.

CC: I could imagine that it was very difficult.

AR: Well yes, this is what the majority of the people did in the town.

CC: And why did you decide to stop going to school?

AR: No well, I went to León, Guanajuato. I spent a year there. I stayed with my mother's brother. Then my father asked me to return because I had to come back to Zinaparo to do my military service when I turned 17. Then I came here as a *bracero*.

CC: Okay, okay. Well now we are going back to the topic of the *bracero*. That is why we are here. So, how did you find out about the *bracero* program?

AR: Well, many came from Zinaparo, a lot of them came, many, many persons came.

CC: They came to the United States.

AR: No, they were contracted in different parts of the country. Some were contracted in Mexico, in Irapuato... in different parts. I was hired in Palmin. Everybody would, work out their contract and then return.

CC: Yes!

AR: And sometimes they went back or other times they stayed here, and that was how they did.

CC: Oh! So, some told others about it.

AR: Yes, well yes. Everybody knew about it.

CC: And what was it called? Where there names for the program there in Mexico? What did you call it?

AR: No, well....the *braceros*, the *braceros*.

CC: Oh, the same, The Bracero Program. Very well.

AR: The Bracero Program.

CC: And during that time you lived. Where? ...what do you call it?

AR: In Zinaparo, Michoacán.

CC: So, you lived in Zinaparo before. So... were you married then?

AR: No, no.

CC: Not Yet?

AR: No, no, I hadn't married yet.

CC: Okay, had you ever thought about coming to work in the United States?

AR: Yes, well that's why I came.

CC: But, before the program?

AR: No, not, before the program, because I was too young.

CC: What age were you, when you came?

AR: I was 18 years old.

CC: You were very, very young.

AR: Yes, I was 18, going on 19.

CC: And so....why did you then decide to come to the United States?

AR: Well, to try and have a better life and to see what it was like in this country and well... to work and have a better life.

CC: Did you hear?

AR: Huh!

CC: Did you hear that it was better here?

AR: Yes, we heard about it. No, not only did you hear, we saw that the people working here as *braceros* sent money to Mexico. The exchange was about six pesos for one dollar.

CC: So then, did you think about returning?

AR: Yes, yes all the time.

CC: Yes and to continue living in Mexico?

AR: In México. Well, the thing is. I did not return. Up to this day, I'm still here (laughter).

CC: When you came to the United States was your experience different from what you expected?

AR: Oh yes, very much different.

CC: Why is that?

AR: Because at the beginning I spent a long time, almost 6 months in Palmin. I could not get a contract. It was very difficult. It was not until I went to the Control that I got a card. But I had to pick 2,000 kilos of cotton before they gave me the card.

CC: The control card. Explain to me, what it is?

AR: The rancheros from here gave out those cards. Not just from here but from Texas or other states.

CC: Yes!

AR: The ranchers wanted people to come and pick their crops. That's what made the people come and get their control cards. Because the first time I came, someone who got people in like a coyote, had contact with someone in the Control Office. They robbed us. They robbed about seventy or more of us. They stole about \$1,200 Mexican pesos. We had no choice then, but to go to the Control Office and pick 2,000 kilos of cotton. It was then that they gave us our card and we were able to come.

CC: Excuse me. The control is like the government?

AR: Yes. The Control it was.

CC: With the immigration?

AR: Yes. No.

CC: No?

AR: No. The Control was the rancher's office.

CC: The Control? Okay, like your bosses?

AR: Yes, exactly. The ranchers.

CC: Okay. That's what they're called. Did you call them your bosses "The Control"?

AR: Yes. But, it was coming through the government.

CC: Okay. So then, the *braceros* came legally.

AR: Legally.

CC: And, was there a group that came illegally? Without documents.

AR: Yes.

CC: Did the undocumented workers steal from you?

AR: Yes. But, the thing was that when they hired us in Palmin, they gave us a paper and lunch. They told us to be at the train station the next day at 10:30. The train took us to Calexico where there was an association there, where all the *braceros* arrived.

CC: Yes!

AR: Once we would get to Calexico, the ranchers would choose certain *braceros* and take them to different parts.

CC: And, was there a time when they didn't pick you?

AR: I was one of the first ones to be chosen.

CC: Is that because you are tall?

AR: No, because when the ranchers got there they would say "You and you and you move to this side". And they would tell us where to go, and from there we went to Blythe. No, first we when to Yuba City, where I completed two 45 day contracts. From here we went to Calexico where there was a big Association. They asked us to raise our hands if we wanted another contract. Well, we all raised our hands.

CC: What was the difference between Yuba City and Calexico?

AR: No, Calexico was only a contract center.

CC: Oh! Excuse me.

AR: It was a center, that's where everyone arrived and from there the bosses would take the people to their ranches.

CC: Well, let's continue with the contract process. Describe the contract process. For example, what were the requirements for becoming a *bracero*?

AR: Well they asked for your "cartilla" (military service card) and a birth certificate, that's the only thing they asked for.

CC: And, what about your health?

AR: No well, we passed through an inspection... by a doctor. Everyone, everyone, everyone passed through the inspection.

CC: Yes! Yes. What kind of an inspection did they do?

AR: A whole exam.

CC: Your whole body? Yes! Yes, yes. Oh, okay.

AR: That we didn't have any lice or something else. They shaved our heads.

CC: They did, really?

AR: All this happened in Calexico. Then when all this was done, then we went to work.

I worked with a Japanese man called David Sooner. I worked two 45 day contracts with him. After this they took us to the center and I was contracted in Blythe. I worked for several lettuce companies. I was not the only one. There were many of us.

CC: Umm...

AR: And I stayed there for 18 months.

CC: And, what were your living conditions there?

AR: Well you see, when I went to Maresfield the first time, the boss was very nice.

CC: Yes! Okay.

AR: A very nice person, the housing was one of the best. The barracks were very clean and everything.

CC: Very well, very well.

AR: But, when we got over here... the center where we got contracted in Blythe, we went to Camp California and it was a disaster. There were more than three thousand *braceros* in that camp.

CC: Three thousand *braceros* in how large a space?

AR: No, no. The barracks were large, they were large. There were three thousand, but there were several lettuce companies.

CC: Well, can you describe what typical day was like in the barracks? What was the routine like? What time did you get up? What time did you eat?

AR: We had to be there at the place where you eat at 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm in the dining room.

CC: Umm...

AR: We ate and then we took a bath and went to sleep.

CC: Umm...

AR: At 5:00am we had to be ready in line to eat breakfast. After breakfast we would get on the bus and they would take us to the field.

CC: And this was every day.

AR: And this every day. And Saturday...and sometimes on Sunday we didn't go to work.

CC: Ummm...and what did you do on Sundays, did you go out?

AR: We would go out to town there. Or we would wash our clothes in some tubs they had there for us, to clean everything.

CC: Well, that's good that you mentioned that about washing your clothes, since you were used to the women in Mexico washing the clothes. The women did everything.

AR: I taught myself how to do it. I had to teach myself how to wash and everything.

CC: Aja! Did all the men have to?

AR: Everyone, everyone, there was nothing else to do.

CC: That, what, what feelings did that provoke?

AR: No, well that I had to do these things, I had to do everything.

CC: O well you had to do it, what else.

AR: We all already there.

CC: Was it worth it?

AR: The only thing was that many butlers treated us badly. There were some bosses that.... There were some *braceros* that came from the state of Guerrero; others came from the state of Tamaulipas....and from Oaxaca, many Oaxacans.

CC: And, were they dark skinned?

AR: Yes, short. And they yelled at them horribly... the bosses; bend over you son...!

CC: Was it because they were dark?

AR: No, not because that. It was hard to be in the furrow, from here to there... and you go here [incomprehensible] lettuce and you go there, that was the whole ditch. And that's where they put us, everyone in a ditch. Some of us were in the front and some of us were in the back. And that's when the bosses got mad. They would ask "Why are they in front and you are in the back?" "Move"! And yes, you do suffer, you suffer.

CC: Of course!

AR: And since I wasn't used to working in the field, I wasn't used to this I had to teach myself. The first days when I went to pick tomato my hands got swollen from picking.
I picked very little.

CC: Really, well since we're talking about this, did you ever notice if they took any money from your check?

AR: Yes, it said in the check.

CC: Was it for transportation or equipment?

AR: No, not for that.

CC: ...or for gloves or water?

AR: No.

CC: No, really!

AR: No, not for any of that. They took money for boarding us.

CC: For boarding you!

AR: Yes, yes for food, for the food. Not for where we slept. No but, it said there on the check. They took money away for old age, one dollar and cents every paycheck.

CC: Why, what for?

AR: For the old ones, that is was for the old ones.

CC: Well.

AR: Well, since then, they took Money from us. Like for, not insurance because the boss had us all insured. But for the rest they did take everything from us, and then they took 10% away. They said it was for a certain age... we would reclaim it but they never gave it to us. They didn't give us anything.

CC: And... Did the bosses provide you with any personal item like a toothbrush, soap, towel or shaving razor?

AR: Oh!, no, no, no. We had to buy our own things. We had to buy everything like clothes and the things we needed. On Saturdays or Sundays I would go to town and buy these things.

CC: And did the boss tell you where to buy these things?

AR: No, no, we would go to the town, unless it was far away then the boss would take us.

CC: And when you went to town did you feel discrimination by the Americans? Racism?

AR: Well, well now that, (laughter) no, well sometimes. They didn't, they never told us that we couldn't enter a place. They never did. Well, sometimes we would enter a place with our dirty clothes, but they never told us that we couldn't come in. No, well we were *braceros* and we had our card with our picture and everything. No, they

never told us no, why should I lie? But yes sometimes they treated us badly and they would pay us very little.

CC: Can you share an experience when they treated you badly outside of work?

AR: Well yes, but no, not outside of work.

CC: Okay, How about at work?

AR: At work yes, because they asked to do more then what was fair.

CC: Yes!

AR: That's how they mistreated us. They would tell us that we had to do more, you have to do more.

CC: And paying you less?

AR: Umm... They paid us the minimum. They always paid us the minimum because the government paid 75¢ an hour. Well, I earned 75 cents then I earned 90cents after the contract. That's when we earned more. I earned this in Blythe.

CC: Where?

AR: In Blythe, California.

CC: Okay.

AR: There yes, because it was under a contract for lettuce

CC:[incomprehensible]

AR: Hah!

CC: [incomprehensible]

AR: No, well don't ask me about those things.

CC: What year were you in Blythe earning this...?

AR: In the 60's in 59... in 61.

CC: In 61 I was in Blythe. California earning...

AR: Then I deserted from there.

CC: Aah!

AR: I deserted from there and came to Connor Ranch, but I had already been around there. Those companies took us to different place, here there, all over Arizona, in Tucson.

CC: That was my next question. How many different places did you work in?

AR: Well, I worked in Yuba City, I worked in Blythe, and I worked in Yuma.

CC: Well tell me the city and state.

AR: No in, well California, California.

CC: Okay.

AR: And over here in Yuma it's Arizona, And in Tucson in a ranch, not in the city. In a town called Wildcats.

CC: In Arizona?

AR: Arizona and that's where I worked the most and then here in California.

CC: Okay, in which place did you work the most time?

AR: Well here in the ranch.

CC: La Canada Larga Ranch in Ventura? More or less?

AR: Well yes, that where I stayed the most because I didn't have any documents or papers because I had deserted.

CC: Okay, and what was the transformation like? Why? Explain why you didn't have any papers?

AR: Why, I did have what?

CC: Why is that? Is it because you didn't continue working as a *bracero*? Was it because the Bracero Program had ended?

AR: No, because, because if I waited, if we waited for the contract to expire. They would kick us out and so we would leave before it expired. Since the Migra was not too vigilant then, we would get a bus at the greyhound and go somewhere else. I worked in the different places the companies would take us.

CC: Then, where did you work before?

AR: Before here, I worked in Arizona. I deserted from Arizona to Los Angeles, and then they brought me here.

CC: Okay in what year did you come to this ranch?

AR: Around 61, 62, I don't remember exactly when.

CC: Okay, what kind of work did you do here?

AR: No, well it was a cattle ranch, but they also planted beans and walnuts. But I mainly worked with the cattle.

CC: Is the climate good for that here?

AR: Yes, it was a big cattle ranch, one of the biggest around here.

CC: Well, then. How did you communicate with your family in Mexico during this time?

AR: Well, I didn't for a very long time. I didn't even write them. For many years around six or seven years I didn't. I figured they were more or less alright.

CC: And, how did you send them money? If you did at all.

AR: No, no I didn't. I hardly sent them any money. Because my father had a business and my brother Rodolfo, helped them.

CC: Did you save any?

AR: Hah!

CC: Did you save any?

AR: No I didn't. What was I going to save. I barely had enough to live. We earned a miserable amount. We earned very little. I still have all my paycheck stubs of what I earned.

CC: Those papers would be good for [incomprehensible]

AR: Yes, I have them somewhere, God only knows where! But I do have the stubs somewhere.

CC: Yes, that's good you kept them. Well we're going to talk more about the problems at work. Did you ever have a problem at work? What kind of problem, please explain.

AR: Well, I'm going to tell you the plain truth. I had a lot of good luck because I never had a problem with the bosses or the foremen. They treated me well. But they treated me well because I as well as five other men always worked hard and pushed ahead. But those other workers that fell behind were mistreated. And like I told you before, that when I first came and picked tomatoes my hands would swell up. A young man, a friend of mine told me that "if you continue working so slowly, you will not be able to earn enough money. Pick all the tomatoes you can". Luis was his name. Oh, so that's what I have to do and so I was able to pick from 40 to 50 crates a day. Later I was able to pick up to 95 or more crates a day. But shortly after that, David started to pay us by crate. At first it was very little.

CC: But you motivated them to work hard.

AR: Well yes, but I didn't say anything to them. It's just that I worked faster and moved ahead.

CC: Do they move?

AR: No! And I had a lot of opportunities. Because they would offer me work, they would offer me to be butler. I never wanted.

CC: Why was that?

AR: No, I didn't want it because I figure, I not going to be bossy, not me. But yes, they gave me a lot of opportunities. Here in the ranch they gave me many opportunities. Here I would work at most four or five months very hard and after that I just look at the cattle, I would check the watering holes and domesticate horses.

CC: That was good, that you had a lot of luck!

AR: Yes I did, but there were some that didn't, poor guys. There were some that didn't.

CC: Well, okay. Talking about others arrown you. Let's said, were you witness of any discrimination?

AR: No.

CC: Sometimes, towards other workers?

AR: No.

CC: No! There was no discrimination?

CC: No, because during this time when we were there, I was in Blythe the longest, If they didn't want a certain person, for one reason or another, they would say "Not this one for this reason, not that one for this other reason." But since we had a contract, they had to wait until that contract was expired.

CC: Now, let's talk about the workers in Blythe. What were some of their common complaints? For example: about food, boarding, their bosses and wages.

AR: The food was very bad there in Blythe. The salaries were very low and the food was very bad. They only gave us ox tails, green beans, peas and in the morning some eggs and an awful porridge. The food was very bad.

CC: Yes, typical tasteless food of the United States.

AR: Bad, bad. They served us from these very large pots. The food was very bad.

CC: And, did you have contact with the Control like you said earlier on a daily basis, once in a while? Did they show up?

AR: Well, once in a while.

CC: They didn't really have anything to talk about with the workers, right?

AR: No, hardly ever, because when we left the dining room we went straight to the bus where they took us to our work. We already knew what to do.

CC: Yes

AR: But, there very difficult times for us. When I came there were very difficult times.

CC: When? When did you live this?

AR: When...yes when I was waiting there to be contracted. There were times when we didn't even eat.

CC: Yes!

AR: There in Palmin.

CC: Waiting to get work?

AR: Waiting to see if we could get contracted.

CC: Where is Palmin?

AR: El Palmin, is in Sonora.

CC: Oh! Still in Mexico? How long did you wait there?

AR: I waited there 6 months to be contracted. From here we went to the Control in Ciudad Obregon. There they gave us our control card, in a ranch called Rancho *Tepeyac*.

CC: Then, you started in Sonora?

AR: Yes it was there.

CC: 6 months.

AR: Yes, it was there where they contracted the people

CC: You waited 6 months and from there you went to Ciudad Obregon.

AR: No, from there we went to Obregon City, to get the card. And then we returned. We got contracted in El Palmin. Once contracted they gave us a lunch bag and we waited for the train. The next day the train left at 10:00am and took us to Mexicali, all the way to Calexico.

CC: What happened in Calexico? Did they look for lice?

AR: No, as soon as we entered they shaved our heads.

CC:

AR: Yes they shaved us, then another doctor would see us and if we had anything they would not let us pass.

CC: And, did they take off your clothes?

AR: All our clothes...just like God....

CC: You've shown us the pictures.

AR: Oh!, yes.

CC: Very, very ugly, very ugly.

AR: And there were some doctors, those doctors did treat us bad. And they would yell at us "Move!" Yes, it was very hard at the border.

CC: Very traumatizing.

AR: Yes, many persons. I saw two or three young men die over there in Sonora. Because they didn't eat, they didn't eat.

CC: Really? Did they faint?

AR: They fainted there and there they remained, there in El Palmin.

CC: And you with such little money that you brought from your town. How did you eat?

AR: No, I took my Money, but they stole it from a lot of us. That was a coyote that was in contact with the office.

CC: Of course!

AR: And all of a sudden, he stole from many persons and he left with the money and we never saw him again.

CC: Wow! They very powerful!

AR: Well, they're bad people, bad people

CC: And you had your money hidden? How did they not rob you?

AR: Well, no. I always had my money hidden here, or in my socks. But then we all ran out of money. There were times when they asked us if we wanted to go to *Guaymas* to work. *Guaymas* was close by. And we went to load cotton on ships that were taking it to Japan. They would pay us 25 pesos, 20 pesos a day. And then we were alright. The food in El Palmin cost 1 peso. One Mexican peso for beans, rice and tortillas. And with at least one meal a day, that was alright.

CC: Of course!

AR: Well, I suffered a lot to enter here (this country).

CC: Well then, let's talk about leisure, if there was any. Did you see movies, listen to the radio or go out on Saturdays?

AR: No, we would go out to the town, the town in Blythe because it was on the outskirts. We would stay at a restaurant or a cantina, have a few beers and then go back.

CC: Were you free to go out as you pleased?

AR: Yes, with your card that the government gave you. They never bothered you with that card.

CC: Oh, that's good.

AR: But here, the *braceros* helped the United States. It was when the *braceros* came that the ranchers and companies and the people did better. The only was that there were good times and there were bad times.

CC: For You?

AR: Yes, for us.

CC: In other words, you're saying that you helped improve the economy because of your hard work.

AR: Well yes, the economy of this country improved tremendously. The *braceros* helped to do this.

CC: In agriculture?

AR: In agriculture, yes in the fields.

CC: Yes I know. That's why we are here...

AR: Yes in that camp where I told you, Camp California. There were several ones; Susybell, La Arquelia, Pacifico, Candykey and High Mary, which is the one where I stayed the longest.

CC: Were they companies?

AR: They were only lettuce companies, big lettuce companies. They embark had a lot of lettuce...not just lettuce but cabbage, cauliflower, onion, watermelon and cantaloupe. These were all companies.

CC: Did you help them improve?

AR: Well yes, the worker's labor helped this country prosper the labor.

CC: Then, you should gain your portion.

AR: Well like I told you, they paid us very little. The companies paid very little.

CC: Well, a little at a time. That's why we have started this project, to recognize what you did. Did you celebrate Holy Week or Christmas?

AR: None of that

CC: None of that! Just went to sleep?

AR: No, you didn't hear anything about that. No, not there. I think I went to church in Blythe a couple of times. But only because a young man invited me and he had a little car. "Let's go to mass, come on let's go" he would say. He was from Penjamo, Guanajuato. They called him "the Cheetah". He would tell me, "Come on, let's go!" And I would say, alright, let's go. After mass we would go and eat at a restaurant because everything was very cheap. A good jacket would cost about 4 dollars, but one of those good Levi's jacket. The Levi's pants would cost about 3 dollars. The shirts were also very cheap. So was the underwear. But we earned very little money.

CC: Almost.

AR: We earn \$70.00, \$80.00 pesos per week.

CC: Ey! But, it was better than Mexico, no?

AR: No, no. Of course. If it had been worse, we would have returned to Mexico.

CC: And, what about the 16 de September?

AR: No, they don't even celebrate it here.

CC: Well, let's talk about life after your work as a bracero. Well in your case, about your life here in the United States? Did you return to Mexico after your contract terminated?

AR: Yes, I did return to Mexico. But it was only to get married.

CC: What year was that?

AR: In the 70's, 80's

CC: How old were you when you returned?

AR: I was 26...27 years old.

CC: Did you marry your present wife?

AR: Yes!, yes.

CC: And then what?

AR: Well from there I brought her over here. We lived a little bit here on the ranch. Then we went to Cuyama because I got hurt. The Dr. told me to try working again, but I couldn't.

CC: How long did you stay in Mexico when you got married? How long before you returned?

AR: No...very little

CC: One year?

AR: No, about two or three months?

CC: Oh, so that same year?

AR: Yes, then, then we came over here.

CC: And... did someone help you with the transportation to return? Your boss?

AR: No, no

CC: No! How did you do it? How did you return with your wife?

AR: No, well over there. My brothers helped me.

CC: Did you cross with a coyote?

AR: Huh, yes...the first time, the first time yes.

CC: Oh! Did you do it twice?

AR: Yes, two times.

CC: Tell me about the first time.

AR: Yes because when we got here I got hurt and then I had to fight with the company. I got hurt on 12-12-72.

CC: Where you still a bracero during this time?

AR: No, no. I was a wetback. I was independent from everything.

CC: Okay.

AR: Then I was operated in 73' that was the first time I got operated. Then I won my case against the company and returned to Mexico. I stayed some time there.

CC: How many years did you stay there?

AR: Four

CC: With your wife?

AR: Yes, then we returned.

CC: What year did you return?

AR: In the 80's

CC: Okay.

AR: We returned and since then we have gone to Mexico. But...

CC: And when you returned in the 80's, did you come illegally again?

AR: Yes, I didn't have a Passport. Then I went and got a passport then I had an uncle in the government. He was in Irapuato and told me, "I'm going to give you a credential that says you're an IRS official." He gave it to me and so I only had to present it and crossed very easily.

CC: Here?

AR: Yes, here at the border. I only had to show it and they would say "cross, cross." I still have that credential.

CC: Is it a Mexican credential?

AR: It is a Mexican credential, but it is from the IRS department. That's a very high level.

CC: Yes!, yes.

AR: That's the highest level in the government. That's how I crossed 4 times.

CC: And what did your wife use to cross?

AR: She had a local Passport before.

CC: Oh!, Mexican.

AR: Yes a Passport. She would enter through San Diego. Right?

CC: What is your residency status now?

AR: Well, permanent resident.

CC: Okay, was it easier before?

AR: Don't believe it. It's always been hard.

CC: Well now, we've strayed off the topic. Right?

AR: Yes.

CC: Well after finishing this, what did you do? What was your career? What did you work as in the United States?

AR: When I returned?

CC: Yes, after the 80's

AR: Well, I was a cowboy. I was a cowboy the whole time.

CC: Where?

AR: Here in the ranch. That's where I arrived and that's where I stayed.

CC: Please explain more. Tell me exactly what you did; give me some details about the work.

AR: Well I helped vaccinate the cattle and dehorn and castrate the bulls. I also helped tame the horses.

CC: Okay.

AR: I did all the time, nine hours a day.

CC: Well, now we are going to reflect. This is the end of the interview. What does the term bracero mean to you?

AR: Well, that you come here in search of a better life. To live more comfortably. But sometimes things go wrong. You get sick, you get illnesses. But I've been helped a lot.
Ultimately, I've been given much help.

CC: Okay.

AR: The reality is that since the boss had a good insurance for us, and because I had to fight the company and won. I have not worked since then. They gave me my disability papers. I am 100% disabled.

CC: Okay

AR: And it was over.

CC: Okay, How do you feel about being called a *bracero*?

AR: Mmm... good.

CC: Do you like it?

AR: Yes.

CC: That's good. Are you proud of it?

AR: Very much

CC: That's good.

AR: Yes, very much. Yes because I came to help here, because I was also helped very much. In Mexico I lost a lot of opportunities to enter into government work.

CC: It seems that you are not that type of person? What would you like?

AR: Politics.

CC: Oh, have power? Like what? Better not.

AR: No, no, no,. Not me.

CC: Does it intimidate you?

AR: Yes, I was given many opportunities. But no, not me.

CC: Why? Too much stress? Too much responsibility?

AR: Yes, yes. Why would you want to get involved with problems?

CC: I understand. To summarize, would you say your memories are positive or negative?

AR: 100% positive.

CC: Well that's good. Congratulations! Was being a *bracero* change your life? In what way? How?

AR: My life changed in all aspects.

CC: Yes?

AR: It changed because if I had stayed in Mexico I would have died. I would have died due to illness or God only knows from what! God only knows!

CC: Tell me how did you meet your wife, if you were here and she was in Mexico?

AR: Well, since childhood.

CC: You already knew her?

AR: Since our schooldays.

CC: Aha!

AR: Since we were very Young.

CC: Did you already know you were going to marry her when you came to the United States?

AR: Well yes, because since I was an adolescent I was after her.

CC: Umm...

AR: I never asked her to be my girlfriend, she would say I wasn't.

CC: Laughter

AR: She would say no..no. She would only say no. But that was a lie ()

CC: Last question. Out of curiosity, if there was another Bracero Program, but with different conditions, better conditions, would you consider doing it?

AR: I would do it again, be a *bracero*.

CC: It would not be during war time.

AR: No, no.

CC: But, allow the doors to open once more.

AR: Well yes, do the same thing again.

CC: How?

AR: Do the same thing, the same. Yes!

CC: Why?

AR: Well, because If it was bad the first time, why would things go wrong the second time?

CC: Alright. No?

XX: Alguien más habla. Dice (y entrar legal)

AR: And enter the country legally. Because now they require... It is worse today. Don Jose's son was telling me. These interviews are going to be used in a report. To have...
I don't regret it.

CC: Where there undocumented workers working with you?

AR: There have always been.

CC: But inside the same ranch?

AR: Inside the ranch and everywhere.

CC: Really?

AR: Even the politicians had undocumented workers. Everyone had them.

CC: How did you feel about this, since you had to wait for 6 months to enter?

AR: No, because everyone risked it and fought their own battles. You got ahead here by digging your own nails in. You came over however you could. I was not bothered by that.

CC: That was good that no one resented it.

AR: On the contrary, I am very grateful to God that he helped me. I am thankful for the work I had on that ranch.

AR: I was never fired from a job. I was not mistreated at work. Well there was one time in Blythe. A foreman began to raise his voice at me and another worker. I told him, alright, come on, you'll can't beat me. Take a row and I'll take the other. He replied
"No, not with you".

CC: Yes!

AR: His name was Meño.

CC: Well we are almost done... Is there anything you want to say?

AR: No, well just that I hope this will help you.

CC: (laughter) Thank-you very much for your time.

AR: No, don't worry about it.

CC: And this is the end of the interview between Camille Chandler and Mr. Alfredo Ramirez.