

Spring 1-1-2010

Oral History Transcript - Elvira de la Garza

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Elvira de la Garza Oral History
By
Phillip M. Alonzo
Spring 2010
Ms. Maria Lagorio
St. Joseph Catholic School, Edinburg, Texas
7th Grade

Porcion & Oral History Project
University of Texas Pan American
Community Historical Archeology Program for the Schools
(CHAPS)

Oral History Assignment

April 16, 2010

Interviewer: Phillip Alonzo
Interviewee: Elvira de la Garza, a.k.a. Grandma de la Garza
Occupation: Elementary Teacher & Counselor, Retired
Parents: Pedro & Librada Castro Guerra

Phillip: Where and when were you born?

Elvira: I was born at home in Mission, Texas. My father built the house I was born in.

Phillip: Describe your family: How many brothers and sisters did you have? What were your parents like? How did you all get along?

Elvira: I have two older sisters and a younger brother. My parents were hard working people. My father was a carpenter and my mother was a stay at home mom. My family got along well.

Phillip: What languages were spoken in your home? Are you bi/multilingual?

Elvira: We spoke Spanish at home. I am bilingual. I speak and write in Spanish and English.

Phillip: What stories did you hear about your parents, grandparents, and other ancestors? Elvira:

My ancestors traveled to the United States during the Mexican Revolution looking for work.

Phillip: Did your ancestors immigrate? If so, to and from where and when did they immigrate?

Elvira: My ancestors migrated from Mexico to the United States in the early 1900s.

Phillip: Describe a typical day when you were my age (school, chores, hobbies)

Elvira: I loved school. I walked to school with my sisters and brother. I had to wash dishes, take out the trash, make my bed, and sweep the floor. I enjoyed playing softball and marbles.

Phillip: If married: How old were you when you got married? How did you meet your spouse? Did you have children?

Elvira: I was twenty-three years old when I got married. The first year I taught, I met my husband at my school's Halloween carnival. We married on July 15, 1953. We have five children, three sons and two daughters.

Phillip: What historical events had a strong influence on your life (such as civil rights, wars, technological inventions, etc.)? How did they affect your life?

Elvira: The Great Depression affected my life. Growing up in the 1930s we had little food and barely any money. It taught me to save some money every time I got money.

Phillip: What types of food did you eat growing up? Did you grow food at home? Who did most of the cooking?

Elvira: My family and I ate lots of vegetables. We also ate some meat and fish. Chicken was eaten on Sundays, maybe. My mother would kill the chickens, then pluck the feathers and cook the chicken. We had orange trees, grapefruit trees, fig trees, and mulberry trees. We grew tomatoes and beans in our garden. My mother did most of the cooking.

Phillip: Have you moved throughout your life? How has the town you now live in changed over the years?

Elvira: I didn't move anywhere until I was twenty years old. That is when I moved to Denton, Texas to complete my degree at the University of North Texas. I went there because the Rio Grande Valley only had a two year junior college, Edinburg Junior College. After graduating I moved back to Mission. When I married, I moved to Edinburg. When my oldest son graduated from high school in 1972, I decided to go back to school to earn a masters degree in counseling. By then Edinburg Junior College had grown to Pan American University. Today, it is The University of Texas Pan American.

Phillip: Describe the history of the property you now live on. Have you ever found any fossils or arrow heads on it? (If so, provide a Google Earth image of the property and mark the location). Did your relatives get a land grant from the King of Spain or the Republic of Mexico?

Elvira: No we have never found any fossils or arrow heads. My grandfather received a grant from the King of Spain, but my family lost the land due to non-payment of taxes. We didn't have the money to pay the taxes.

Phillip: What kind of technology did you have growing up (air conditioning, running water, electricity, cars, television, etc.)?

Elvira: We had electricity, natural gas for our stove, and one faucet inside our home. We didn't have air conditioning. We kept our windows open. We had an out house for a restroom. We had an ice box before we had a refrigerator. I never had a television growing up. We listened to the radio and read the newspapers. We got our first car in 1946.