

Interviewee: Norma Valdez

Interviewers: Alexis Casiano

Date: October 5, 2012

Location: Cantu family residence

Transcribers: Alexis Casiano, Ramiro Garza, Randy Rosas

The interview was done with Ms. Norma Valdez, elder sibling of Ruben Cantu. The interview was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Rogelio Cantu Sr., Norma Valdez's parents. The crew was Alexis Casiano, primary interviewer, Ramiro Garza, secondary interviewer, and Randy Rosas, cameraman, also present was Eloise Montemayor from UTPA Border Archive Studies.

Alexis Casiano: My name is Alexis Casiano and today is October 5th 2012 um interviewing Ms. Norma Valdez for the Cantu family oral history. Alright? Um so I guess what is your full name?

Norma Valdez: Norma Irene Valdez.

Alexis Casiano: Alright, and um why did your parents pick that name for you?

Norma Valdez: I have no idea.

Alexis Casiano: [Laughing]

Norma Valdez: I guess they... my dad liked it.

Alexis Casiano: Your dad liked it, alright.

Norma Valdez: Mhm

Alexis Casiano: And um could you state your parent's names and your sibling's names.

Norma Valdez: Ok my father is Rogelio Cantu Senior. [Background conversation]

Alexis Casiano: Mhm

Norma Valdez: My mother Hermalinda Rodriguez Cantu, and my brother, I have one Rogelio Cantu Junior and Ruben Cantu.

Alexis Casiano: Alright and so when were you born?

Norma Valdez: When? January the fir- 11th, uh, 1958.

Alexis Casiano: 1958, and were you born here in The Valley?

Norma Valdez: Mhm. Born in Edinburg.

Alexis Casiano: [chuckle] and, uh, how did your family come to live here at this property?

Norma Valdez: Here, here?

Alexis Casiano: Mhm.

Norma Valdez: Because we used to live over there. I don't know if you knew...

Alexis Casiano: Oh I didn't know.

Norma Valdez: Yeah. Where that little wooded area was, we were there for...there that's where we grew up.

Alexis Casiano: Oh, okay.

Norma Valdez: And then my parents used to um take care of the property around here and all that so they got the opportunity to buy this part.

Alexis Casiano: Mhm.

Norma Valdez: And uh, we got the, the land, we got a house and we just moved over.

Alexis Casiano: When did you guys move over?

Norma Valdez: About 1971.

Alexis Casiano: Mhm.

Norma Valdez: Yeah.

Alexis Casiano: And how long had they been living at the other part of the property

Norma Valdez: Oh I'm not sure. A long time...

Alexis Casiano: A long time?

Norma Valdez: So I remember it was just like a two bedroom, um not even a two bedroom. It was a two room house, that's where we all grew up ... Yeah it's amazing, it's like you make space ... and everything works.

Alexis Casiano: And your family had moved from Mexico, and that was where they first?

Norma Valdez: No, my mom is from here. Apparently my dad was born Mexico.

Alexis Casiano: Oh.

Norma Valdez: And well the stories that I hear is that he was a new born when they crossed him over... so my mom is an, an American citizen and my dad became...

Alexis Casiano: Okay. And so what was it like growing up? You mentioned that, you know, it was a two room family, two room house.

Norma Valdez: It was, it was fun. I mean if you didn't know any better. Its... it didn't bother you, you know, not having your own room or anything like that. It's like we were always united as a family, you know, um ... It was, it was fun, it was okay. I mean we had to help out of course and do a lot of stuff. And um...

Alexis Casiano: Well what kind of things did you have to do?

Norma Valdez: Well, we didn't have like the running water or anything like that. We had a well and we took turns getting water out of there in a little bucket like this, you know, and um...

[Overlap in background **Ramiro Garza:** chuckles]

Norma Valdez: We used to have this, um... huge, those galvanized trash cans. And in the mornings we would fill it up, so with the heat of the sun the water would get warm enough to where we could take a bath, or you know that's what we would use it for. And my mom had her ringer washer, but she would build a fire and put one of those galvanized tubs fill it up with water and that's the hot water she would use to wash.

Alexis Casiano: Wow.

Norma Valdez: So it's like you know.

Alexis Casiano: Mhm. Umm, did you, you know, how did you take out trash, wash dishes, things like that too?

[house phone rings]

Norma Valdez: yes, oh gosh. The trash, well back then we didn't have the service of you know pick it up. We would have to separate the cans, you know all that stuff that wouldn't burn and burn up what we could. And um wash dishes, that was my job.

Alexis Casiano: Were um any of the [door slams] chores divided? Like you had to wash dishes, what did your brothers do, what kind of chores did they have?

Norma Valdez: They would have to clean outside. Or do other stuff.

Alexis Casiano: Oh okay and um I guess could you describe like a family dinner. You know who did the cooking and who set up things like that.

Norma Valdez: My mom would do the cooking and I would help her set the table. And then we would all sit to, to eat. And then afterwards of course the cleaning up was mine, kitchen was my job.

Alexis Casiano: And what would you do for fun?

Norma Valdez: What did- We didn't have a TV ok?

Alexis Casiano: [Laughs]

Norma Valdez: No TV. Um... We would play outside with actually dirt, making little mud pies. And um uh cutting the mesquites off the tree and pretending you know to cook. Or my brothers, we had a swing in the back. You know, nothing like what the kids have now.

Alexis Casiano: And would your family ever take trips to the beach or things like that? No?

Norma Valdez: No, none at all. No traveling.

Alexis Casiano: No traveling.

Norma Valdez: Nuh uh.

Alexis Casiano: [laughing] What was your religion growing up?

Norma Valdez: Catholic.

Alexis Casiano: Catholic?

Norma Valdez: Mhm.

Alexis Casiano: And did you attend a church nearby or?

Norma Valdez: It was Sacred Heart here in Edinburg.

Alexis Casiano: Ok um did anybody in your family play musical instruments? Was music a big part in the background growing up?

Norma Valdez: Yes. We did. Uh all three of us actually. My brother and I were with the orchestra and my little brother was in the band.

Alexis Casiano: What instruments did you play?

Norma Valdez: Uh we, I played the violin, and my other brother played the violin, but my little brother for a little while played the cello, then he went into the band to play drums.

Alexis Casiano: And um so I guess you were playing around the house a lot, things like that?

Norma Valdez: Yes.

Alexis Casiano: Any favorite songs you remember playing?

Norma Valdez: Umm, gosh no not really my favorite was from when it was like Christmas time you know we would play the Christmas carols and stuff.

Alexis Casiano: Those were your favorites?

Norma Valdez: Yeah.

Alexis Casiano: So I guess that kind of segue ways into how were the holidays? Were there any special traditions and things that you would do during [interrupted]

Norma Valdez: We never had a Christmas tree. I never had a Christmas tree until I got married like what 30 some years ago. Um... Birthdays, yes we would celebrate birthdays. My mom would make this big feast and you know and we would just have people come over and that was the main thing.

Alexis Casiano: And what were these parties like? Just family and friends?

Norma Valdez: Just family and friends mhm.

Alexis Casiano: Ok.

Norma Valdez: yeah.

Eloise Montemayor: What type of foods were at the feasts?

Norma Valdez: Well she liked to, she always made like um... barbeque you know the, the like the one you buy on Sundays

Alexis Casiano: Mhm.

Norma Valdez: *Barbacoa*. That was part of the, the, the meal that we would have or sometimes of course we would have uh barbeque outside like the chicken mostly chicken.

Alexis Casiano: Mostly chicken?

Norma Valdez: Yeah.

Alexis Casiano: Umm.. Did she bake your cakes or?

Norma Valdez: No.

Alexis Casiano: No?

Norma Valdez: Can I tell you where we used to get them? At the Phoenix Bakery, when it used to be a little, just a corner there in Edinburg and now uh you know they've already, almost closed down but we always used to get my cakes there from Phoenix Bakery.

Alexis Casiano: Okay um are there any special heirloom heirlooms that you have from growing up anything that you've kept photos, bibles, and other things that were passed down to you maybe?

Norma Valdez: I have photos. Um, cause my house burned down about 7 years ago, and I lost a lot of stuff um... Mostly my mom would keep everything and once we were married she would just give us little things, you know. So what she gave me was like all my, my, like my birth certificate and all that you know all the little, the way you know she kept everything like perfect. So yeah uh... the last thing her wedding dress but that's gone, so you know just things like that we try to keep like my dad's hats

Alexis Casiano: Mhm

Norma Valdez: You know keep, they get old but they're still there.

Alexis Casiano: Um well probably, have there been any stories that have been retold and retold, been passed down, things that you've heard about you know your older family members things that have happened?

Norma Valdez: The only story that I ever heard was.. that I hear was when they would, my dad was born in Mexico, when they brought him over. And I don't know how true it is that they crossed him... you know through the river to get him on this side so once he was over here you know they just stayed and everything.

Alexis Casiano: Mhm.

Norma Valdez: But that's like the main story that I always heard about them.

Alexis Casiano: That was the main story?

Norma Valdez: Mhmm. My dad used to say a lot of stuff. He used to tell us things and because he worked all the time so the little time we were with him you know he would sing to us and he would play around with us.

Alexis Casiano: What kind of songs would he sing?

Norma Valdez: Songs that he learned in school.

Alexis Casiano: [Laughing]

Norma Valdez: And he would actually... you know sing them to us. Cause he went to school for a few years, I don't know, and then he decided that he rather stay in the *monte* and play with his brothers and sisters and not go to school at all, so that's what happened.

Alexis Casiano: Okay.

Norma Valdez: Yeah... But he, he learned. I mean he's very smart. He would tell us, and um we had any problems with any of our homework or.. He would help us with the math and all that.

Alexis Casiano: Okay.

Norma Valdez: Mhm.

Alexis Casiano: That's good um... what kind of games did he play? Was it the same stuff as you growing up making mud pies and things like that or?

Norma Valdez: Well in their case they would go and try to kill the little birds with the, what are they called slingshots?

Ramiro Garza: Mhm

Norma Valdez: They would make their own, you know, stuff like that just to be playing around.

Alexis Casiano: Okay um... were you or any of you family members ever mentioned in the newspaper for anything?

Norma Valdez: Besides car wrecks? [Laughs] Um let me see...

Ramiro Garza: Tell us about the car wreck.

Alexis Casiano: If you don't...

Ramiro Garza: If...

Norma Valdez: No, that's fine no. It happened when I was on my way to school, and my mom was taking me and we had an accident right here in the corner right where it used to be first national bank and across the street was uh first state bank there was two banks. So we were on 281, no Closner, going to Edinburg high and right there at the light uh the car coming didn't stop, and just hit my side which made the car go up towards the bank. And that that came out in the front page of the Edinburg daily Review. It's like okay. I wasn't supposed to be late to school but I was late to school. That was, that came out in the ...yeah.

Alexis Casiano: And when was that?

Norma Valdez: That was in 1976 I want to say or '75 yeah.

Ramiro Garza: So did your friends talk about it at school or was it a topic like that, that at your school?

Norma Valdez: I mean, they were, it was a little bit you know... After I didn't show up to school for a couple of days, you know, but nothing serious it was just bumps and glass in my eye and stuff like that that... Mhm... Yeah and I think. I wanna say that there are, my father I think. There's something in the newspaper where he was, when he was picking fruit you know how they would go and take pictures of the truck drivers you know I want to say there's something like that about him.

Alexis Casiano: Do you know maybe when that was?

Norma Valdez: Umm ... That was probably gosh in umm da da da dum... maybe ... the late sixties or close-the seventies yeah.

Alexis Casiano: Okay. Um were there any world events things that happened that you know maybe had an impact while you were growing up maybe big things that you remember happening... I don't know if you were old enough when Kennedy was shot.

(Overlap **Norma Valdez:** yes)

(Overlap **Alexis Casiano:** If that had...)

Norma Valdez: I saw it. I mean I didn't see it happen. But I was watching TV but not at our house cause we didn't have one. We were at my aunt's house and I remember watching it you know all the commotion, everything going on.

Alexis Casiano: Mhm.

Norma Valdez: Yeah.

Alexis Casiano: So you would visit your aunt often to watch TV or was that just?

Norma Valdez: No um as we were growing up we tried to every Sunday go visit my grandparents,

(Overlap **Alexis Casiano:** Mhm)

Norma Valdez: My mom's uh family, and everybody would get together and before we left Bonanza used to come out before it was the news. So we would actually everybody go watch Bonanza and then go home. You know that was our Sunday outing

Alexis Casiano: Mhm.

Norma Valdez: Mhm.

Alexis Casiano: So what else would you do while you were visiting with family?

Norma Valdez: Um... Well my cousins would be there we would play around you know just hide and seek and stuff like that. And my grandfather her mom- her dad used to say a lot of stories now him he was the dentist of the family. He used to pluck, take out your teeth and it's like without you even knowing. You know, it's like you had a loose tooth and he says "come here" and he was blind okay "come here *mijita*" and before you "where is it? where is it?" and it's like "right there grandpa" and it's like "oh this one" and you wouldn't even know it was already out and it's like "okay grandpa" (overlap **Alexis Casiano** laughing) that I remember is everybody would go to him.

Alexis Casiano: Everybody went to him to get a tooth pulled?

Norma Valdez: Mhm, yeah.

Alexis Casiano: Anything else you remember about him?

Norma Valdez: Oh he was awesome. You know him being blind because he was blind for so long. He knew between wheat's and grass and plants. He would weed the garden, he would water it, he would pick cotton, he'd be out in the fields. You know. And this man was completely blind like...

Ramiro Garza: What was his name?

Norma Valdez: Andres Rodriguez.

Ramiro Garza: Andres.

Norma Valdez: Mhm, I mean completely blind.

Alexis Casiano: What caused him to go blind?

Norma Valdez: Uh his optic nerve they dried up both you know. And my mom remembers taking him to the hospital in Mexico, cause they were gonna do it. He walked in seeing and he came out blind. And my mom, I mean she had to do so much for them before she met my dad. She was the breadwinner she was take, the driver she did everything to take care of them completely yeah.

Alexis Casiano: When did your parents meet and get married?

Norma Valdez: They got married in 1953. They had a, like a three day wedding.

Alexis Casiano: What?

Norma Valdez: Yes!

Alexis Casiano: Could you describe that?

Norma Valdez: I mean they, they back then the weddings would go on. They would start on like Thursday, and then you know. And I don't know how they would do it, they had the whole, the bride, the bride and groom, with the *damas* and you know really, really nice. Uh... and um... first it would that it would be together like my grandfather and my dad and them. And then they would get married. And she would actually have to stay at home before she would be able to come home you know those... uh back then it was like so, they were real strict (overlap **Alexis Casiano:** mhm) You know, but I know it lasted three days, three long days for them.

[trailer in the background]

Norma Valdez: Isn't that amazing?

Ramiro Garza: Yeah

Norma Valdez: That it's... And February the 12th, they are going to be married sixty years.

Alexis Casiano: Sixty years? Wow.

Norma Valdez: Mhm.

Alexis Casiano: That's really nice.

Norma Valdez: I know because marriages don't last. Some last what a month, two months?

Alexis Casiano: Yeah, celebrity weddings.

Norma Valdez: No, they've been together and inseparable. Like when one is in the hospital well my dad's here, we have to take him or vice versa but they're always together they're always together and it's you know.

Alexis Casiano: Have you guys celebrated their anniversaries?

Norma Valdez: Mhm.

Alexis Casiano: How?

Norma Valdez: We're planning something for this uh the sixtieth. Cause my mom's birthday is the ninth of this month, she'll be 85 and my dad will be 90 December the first.

Alexis Casiano: And so I imagine the 50th was a big one, did you guys celebrate that?

Norma Valdez: Yeah, we started when we saw that my dad started getting sick and you know, we started celebrating uh on their 37th anniversary. That was, they went and redid their vows. They got married at a church in Alamo and they did that (overlap **Alexis Casiano:** mhm) and her old bridesmaids came

Alexis Casiano: All of them?

Norma Valdez: She had her bridesmaids and now with their husbands. Isn't that amazing?

(Overlap **Ramiro Garza:** That is amazing.)

(Overlap **Alexis Casiano:** That's crazy.)

Norma Valdez: Mhm and they went to the same church they got married and they got married there, they renewed their vows so it was all over again.

Eloise Montemayor: Norma, could you explain for us who [overlap in background **Mrs.**

Cantu: Excuse me] weddings for us it sounds so like wow back then could you explain what goes on day one, day two, day three, a little bit more about the details of a three day wedding the kinds of foods, the traditions

(Overlap **Norma Valdez:** I mean back then,)

(Overlap **Eloise Montemayor:** anything you can remember?)

Norma Valdez: The food they would kill a pig or a kill a cow or whatever. That's what they actually would cook because there was a lot of people going and coming three days ... Uh and in reality I'm not really sure what of three days was the actual wedding, when they got married, but I know it was, you know, uh like getting to know the family. And then um the actual wedding so I'm not sure, but when my mom said a three days I was like "oh my gosh mom how could you afford three day weddings?" You know, yeah they had the bridesmaids had their dresses all the same they had the beautiful wedding dress and they had the ring bearer. My father in his suit and all that you know really nice and I don't know if my mom showed you a picture of that?

Eloise Montemayor: Gosh I don't know

Ramiro Garza: No, but actually if there is a way for us to get pictures of that later (overlap

Norma Valdez: Mhm) We would like to come back to see if we could either scan them or actually take them from here to the archive (overlap **Norma Valdez:** yeah) to have them scanned (overlap **Norma Valdez:** mhm) and add them to this if you could do that for us

Norma Valdez: Yeah, because it's amazing. You know just beautiful black and white pictures, of course, you know but it's amazing how they've been married for so long

Eloise Montemayor: Wow.

Alexis Casiano: And where, these three days it was all at one place or?

Norma Valdez: Yes it was at her house in San Carlos. She lived in San Carlos. Mhm.

Alexis Casiano: So for three days people are coming and going from her house, her home.

Norma Valdez: Mhm... Yeah, back then when she started driving it was like the old trucks and stuff that you had to crank them up to start them. Back then she did all that. Mhm. because she had to take my, my grandparents where they needed to go. And you know she had, she was the oldest of the girls uh so she had all of her brothers and sisters to watch.

Ramiro Garza: So how many were in her family?

Norma Valdez: There were, I don't, I'm not sure if there were like maybe 15, but half of them passed away because in her, the blood, there's the hemophilia blood on her side where they didn't know back then. And she lost most of her brothers to that you know for one had a nose bleed. The other one was appendicitis just surgery they didn't know there's no clotting for it. And um, then she lost some sisters twin sisters as a matter of fact and um but there's I think there's, now there's seven cause she, one of her brothers passed away several years ago. Uh... but it was a big family.

Ramiro Garza: And she was the oldest?

Norma Valdez: Yes, and you should see them when they get together, all of the sisters. It's like, we call them the Golden Girls because they take off. They come pick up mom they go shopping, they go out to eat and it's like you know its I love it. It's like they're together all the time.

Alexis Casiano: And they do that often, once a week?

Norma Valdez: Once a week maybe. Sometimes once a week when they're not working, cause I still have one of my aunts that works or once a month they get together and they have a meal at someone's house.

Alexis Casiano: And what kind of things?

Norma Valdez: Just a dinner, anything everybody takes you know, it's like a potluck. You know the main person. Like let's say my mom is gonna make the main, like *carne guisada* or whatever and everybody else brings the sides.

Alexis Casiano: oh okay

Norma Valdez: The thing is just to get together, and be together, and talk. What they mostly talk about is doctors you know. I tell my mother you don't get together to talk about that. You need to talk about other things you know.

Alexis Casiano: Has there been a progression, like maybe earlier they would talk about different things and now that they're older it's just about doctors?

Norma Valdez: Yeah, it's just doctors. Last time I took her to this uh party when everybody was there and I was just watching them and they were like talking about doctors like when kids are little my dad is better than your dad. It's like my doctor is this and my doctor is that. It's like I go "ay mom". Comparing doctors...

Alexis Casiano: Oh uh was there any other events? I know we went way off from the Kennedy thing, but um anything else you remember?

Norma Valdez: Beulah. Yes that was scary, cause there was water everywhere.

Alexis Casiano: Really?

Norma Valdez: I remember... When we used to live over there, it was the two room house that we lived in, but there was a huge house next to us that belonged to the people that owned the property. And my mom would take care of it, clean it and all that. So we went in there when Beulah came, and I remember waking up after it passed and looking out the window and there was no land. There was water all... I mean completely water... Mhm. And that was really something cause that was when we used to have pigs, and you know calves, and cattle. Uh And that's when all the pigs decided to have their babies. So we had the little pigs and they were in the water floating and it was like come on. At that time, and it was really devastating because all

the fruits from the trees had fallen. And the neighbor had an orchard and there was oranges, all I mean green, the ground was green. And it was lingering for a long time, and you could smell fish odor, and it's like it started, you know, smelling bad and I remember it.

Alexis Casiano: How long did it, did the water stay?

Norma Valdez: It stayed for a while because there's a ditch back here and that overflowed. You know, so it was just until it receded but it was, it was scary.

Ramiro Garza: Do you remember any buildings that might have gotten damaged or houses...that...that you can remember at that time? How old were you at that time?

Norma Valdez: Uhh...it was in '67...I was like nine right?...if I was born in '58. That I remember very well, it's like...and then there was no electricity. So we used to have those oil lamps you know with kerosene you had to...umm...and then just watch out for snakes and stuff like that cause there was stuff in the water coming from all over the place.

Damaging, I think there was a lot of damaged property you know. Umm...I can't recall what buildings but I know downtown floods a lot. There's water I mean even if it rains a little bit it just floods from one end to the other...yeah.

Ramiro Garza: I know that Lyndon B. Johnson came down here at that time. He rode in a helicopter. You don't remember anything about that during that time?

Norma Valdez: I don't...No...I don't remember.

Alexis Casiano: And you guys prepare before the hurricane; was there anything that you did besides just going to the bigger house?

Norma Valdez: Prepared as much as possible as in umm you know making sure that umh everything was put away of, of course trying to get enough food you know in case there was...but get this I'm going to tell you something. We had some people that stayed with us and the lady was pregnant...OK...so she decides to have her baby right in the middle of Beulah so my parents, my mom and my dad, take her and my uncle to San Juan to a maternity clinic and as there driving well it's—the water is like really high the car keeps turning off and it keeps turning off. Finally they get to the hospital and my mom was saying that when they get to the hospital which is just a maternity ward there everybody was—had there umh rubber boots on and all that—the water was so high and they took her in there to have her baby. She had her baby right during Beulah. No electricity mind you...OK...and there with flashlights and stuff. That is uh you know weird and they went through it...they saw it.

Alexis Casiano: And so they just left all the kids home with who was watching them?

Norma Valdez: Uhh, my, we had, there was older adults...yeah...my brothers and I were there and then umh my aunt. I had some other people that were staying there but they left and my uncle left with my dad just in case—you know. Yeah, but the car would turn off and it would turn back on, it's like you know. It's the grace of God that got them to have the baby and not have her there you know, having a child here at the house...can you imagine?

Alexis Casiano: I can't imagine. I don't know what they would have done...

(overlap **Norma Valdez:** I know)

(overlap **Alexis Casiano:** if that was the case?)

(overlap **Norma Valdez:** ahha).

Alexis Casiano: Any other hurricanes?

Norma Valdez: Uhh...

Alexis Casiano: That stand out?

Norma Valdez: Here in the Valley way back then that's the main one. But then now, it's like, as ah, now that I'm older I went through Hurricane Allen that was, I had that was like in 80...80 something I think it was but not as bad as Beulah.

Alexis Casiano: So that was the worse.

Norma Valdez: I would...I think Beulah would be something like what happened in Louisiana but not as bad just because of the water. There was so much water. And I remember, OK I remember Hurricane Gilbert that passed...uhh...it was a few years in the 80's I think it was. Any way I was living over there in Las Milpas. That like they had to let the water come. There was water all over the place and there, there was a lot of damage. And there was a lot of...uhh...debris and animals, wild animals going through the water. Snakes and all that to where they were alerting the people about that, that lived close to the—the levies there in Pharr. And then there was no crossing. My crossing I would have to go all the way to 10th street to come and drop off my kids in school in Pharr and that would be like you know...but other than that besides the damaging of the signs falling and stuff like that you know.

Eloise Montemayor: Norma I have a question for you umm...

Norma Valdez: Uhha

Eloise Montemayor: The freeze in I think it was when we had the white Christmas

Norma Valdez: Uhha

Eloise Montemayor: That was something very difficult for your brother Ruben to talk about and he really couldn't say much because he was so choked up.

Norma Valdez: Yeah.

Eloise Montemayor: Do you think you can give us a little bit of details on how that really affected you all as a family? Cause if it affects your sibling it affects everybody.

Norma Valdez: Right.

Eloise Montemayor: Umm...(overlap **Norma Valdez:** Umm)

(overlap **Eloise Montemayor:** Do you want to tell us a little bit about that event?)

Norma Valdez: My brothers have always been...uhh...they followed my dad's footsteps either trucking or farming and it effects in both ways. Uhh...cause are way of life is you know whatever is being produced will you know that would be part of what we would eat and stuff. So when the freeze comes everything is gone, there's nothing. You know, and it really affects in everything. Uhh...like there's no more produce you know and then everything you put into it and all that is lost and um...there's no work cause there's nothing to haul, there's nothing to cut. So it really effects in your way of life. And in his case like it's really into this it really affects him very emotionally cause that's his life you know. And there's nothing he can do to provide for his family. And for my parents too, because you know. So, um...that's one of the, the, the hardest for him. And in reality it, it always happens when I see him like so depressed and all that it's because something went wrong and that was you know a person can go crazy thinking stuff like that and it really, really affects him that way. And it still does, he still remembers and it's you know. So, it's really...and um...I remember also one time when it froze at my house—it froze right and its devastating to see everything gone and it's just the vegetation around you but compared to him that it's his livelihood you know his money making and there's nothing and its hard. And then um...they do get help but by the time you know you have nothing to live on and it's really hard for them.

Eloise Montemayor: Growing up where umm...was there uh...kind of like ah...ah...distinguished roles for the woman and the men? Umm...I know that you mentioned you would get the water in, in the buckets and everything. Growing up on the farm (**Norma Valdez:**

ahha) did you notice that there were specific things that just the women did and any things that just the men did? Could you explain a little bit about that?

Norma Valdez: See, the thing is like, O.K. us as women we would have to do everything around the house and all that and we never finished doing are stuff right. As a man you go work and you do, you're days over you come home and you can relax and we have to keep going and going. And being at home since they were gone we had to feed the animals you know and help with the washing, getting the water and you know stuff like that. There gone they don't worry about what at home and they come home and it's like it's already done. So it's just that's, not only you know the difference there...

Eloise Montemayor: It never stops...

Norma Valdez: It never stops and it's still going on believe me.

Ramiro Garza: Well, I wanted to ask another question also...um...Mexican culture, just because were from down here. Often times...uhh...during family gatherings...uhh...the men would be in the inside...or no actually the men would be on the outside and the women would be in the inside and that was just a separation. Did that happen at times during?...**(Norma Valdez: yes, always.)**

Norma Valdez: Another thing I failed to mention. That, the men always sat down to eat first back then and then the women and the children. But, but they had to eat first all the time.

Eloise Montemayor: And does that still happen today?

Norma Valdez: In some families it does. Our tradition now is, no everyone sits together but I remember like with my grandfather also, my dad's dad like that too. That my aunt would you know provide for him first always, all the time. And a good thing, the thing that I remember the most from my grandfather when I was growing up that every morning him and my aunt would come visit us. Like us, and then they'd go to my aunt's house to come and see us. Every single morning there was the first stop was here and then over there. Just to come and see how we were. I mean there were no phones or anything right. But that was every single morning.

Ramiro Garza: Umm...in the Mexican American culture there's a fifteen birthday, a *Quinceanera*. (overlap **Norma Valdez:** Right.) (overlap **Ramiro Garza:** Did you have one?)

Norma Valdez: I didn't have one because at that time my father had had an accident. He was climbing onto the truck and he accidentally fell back and you know he was hurt so I didn't get to have one. Umm...but my nieces, my daughter had one, you know my nieces have had there's but I didn't get to have one. And I really, really wanted one cause that's like the tradition right...but...

Eloise Montemayor: Can you talk a little bit more about that tradition? What goes on? What, as a young girl what were your expectations? What were, was that excited you about a *Quinceanera*? What did it, what did it entail for people who may be from up north who don't know what a *Quinceanera* is?

Norma Valdez: Well, just that fact that you are turning fifteen you know it's a special time in your life. Ahh...and having all your friends join you know it's going to church, being blessed, umm...you know cause mainly that's the, the main, now it's more commercial then it was before. Because before it was you go to have your mass at church and they would actually do a mass for you. You know now it's like they combine the mass and then they'll just bless you. You know, you're in your dress and all that and that's it. Before, you would have to go like to all the, the, the meetings that you had to go and you had have your, you had to be baptized, your communion, you had to have your sacraments in order to be able to have your mass in church.

You know and that, that was the whole thing. Now if you just had a party, O.K. it was just a party but a *Quinceanera* going through the whole rituals you know that was the main thing.

Eloise Montemayor: So did...Would you consider *Quinceanera* strongly tied with the, the Catholic church or would you hear of...umm...other girls having *Quinceanera* who weren't Catholic?

Norma Valdez: I did, but though they were the ones that would just have the party with the Damas and the whole yeah. But being a Catholic it's the church.

Eloise Montemayor: And you went through all...

Norma Valdez: The whole process...ahha...see my daughter does *Quinceanera's* so I've seen the difference. You know some they just have the party they don't have anything and then some still do go to the church and they have the, the mass and you know the blessing and they now there's a tradition where your bouquet one of 'em you go and you give it the Virgin you know. That's you know...ahh...something that there doing now as part of thanking you know being, for being blessed, being there you know. So it's the tradition as changing a little but it's somewhat still there. (voice overlap) But to me it's mostly in the, the Catholic.

Alexis Casiano: Umm...had you been preparing for one anyway going to classes and

Norma Valdez: I hadn't started going to classes. I was just preparing as in what I wanted you know. But of course you, that is part of what you had to do. And still, as a matter of fact now when you do have a *Quinceanera* and you're going to go through the church you still have to go through the classes and you have to be going to CCD, you have to do your communion, you have to be like or else they will not do it.

Eloise Montemayor: What does CCD stand for?

Norma Valdez: Umm...it's for your...umm...(voice overlap)..catechism...Catholic catechism diocese. I don't know what it is but it's like you get baptized and then you do your, your baptism and then umm...your *Quinceanera* or whatever then you get confirmed as a during high school I think and then that's your last sacrament before you can get married...if you're going to get married by church you need to be confirmed.

Alexis Casiano: Have you gotten all your sacraments?

Norma Irene Valdez: Yeah...but I didn't get married by church I just got married. But, ahh...my daughter did. You know she had and all my kids have their sacraments.

Alexis Casiano: And was it...was it different maybe the classes for your children getting the sacraments than what you had growing up or is it the same?

Norma Valdez: Ahh...it's almost the same it's just the, the way they are being taught now. Because now it's like they are really strict as you going and the preacher will tell you like once you've done your sacraments and he tells you, O.K. I know that I'm not going to see half of you here coming back because you've already done. And it's true, once they do their, their first communion a lot of the kids don't go back because what for I mean they already got there sacrament right. Before, like when my mom was growing up they would ahh...my grandfather was real strict with the Catholic church like they would fast everyday till noon. I mean that was a must in their family. Their fasting.

Eloise Montemayor: Now Norma...umm...what do you identify yourself more as? You can be a combination of any of these: Latina, Mexican American, Hispanic, Mexican. Which one would you identify with most or all of them or either...(some laughing).

Norma Valdez: Well...I would say...I guess Hispanic.

Eloise Montemayor: Hispanic.

Norma Valdez: Because Mexican O.K., yes I have you know because of my parents but I think Mexican would be more like people that come from Mexico that have their you know their different ways and being a Hispanic is like the, the, the mixture of the Tex-Mex and you know.

Eloise Montemayor: Now growing up in the Valley and being a Hispanic, how do you as a woman Hispanic, how was it back then what do you think it was...umm how different is it for a Hispanic woman growing up back then to a Hispanic girls growing up now. How do you...what differences can you see umm...in every aspect?

Norma Valdez: O.K. back then, being Hispanic I mean as I, I remember you had to, you weren't, as had as much freedom as you do now you know. You had to do what your parents told you like really strict like you had to be home at ten, you'd be home at 9:59 because or else you know. And now what I see it's, it's so much easier for the, the women now to do and to get ahh...their education wise, their career going you know because it's so different. Cause now you can, if you a family person you can leave your children. There's places you can leave your children. Back then there was you know; you had your children O.K. you, you're going to take care of them. That's the way and I mean yes there was people that did have their careers and all that but it took a lot, it took a lot. And ahh...but now I think it's easier because there's a lot of things that you can do. You know if you have to like for example like the day cares and all that. Back then there was nothing like that. Like if you worked out in the field you had to take your kids with you. You couldn't leave them anywhere you know.

Eloise Montemayor: Now did you ever experience any discrimination or witness any discrimination based on your gender or your ethnicity or maybe you heard stories from your family, from your parents or grandparents who have?

Norma Valdez: Yes, I've heard that umm...my parents, my on my mom's side her family used to travel a lot like to go to Michigan to go pick apples or whatever it was and a lot of towns didn't accept Hispanics at all. You couldn't go grocery shopping where other people went. And I rem..my mother-in-law used to say that too. You couldn't walk into a restaurant. They wouldn't serve you, you know. They went through stuff like that. Like going on the road and then you have children and they need to stop for something and they won't they wouldn't accept Hispanics they would just ignore you or tell you to leave. And those are stories that I get here from my aunts you know and my mother-in-law saying that cause they used to travel to Idaho and the same thing would happen to them.

Ramiro Garza: And during what years were those, do you have an idea?

Norma Valdez: Those were like in the, the '60s I think. Cause, I remember I was little when that was going on.

Ramiro Garza: Now with the Anglo population down here do you remember feeling anything like that here or did you...was there a clear cut line you know Mexican's here, Anglos over here? Was there anything like...that going on here?

Norma Valdez: I don't remember anything like that here you know because ahh...once you were in school there was a mixture you know. I didn't see that, that happening. Ahh...I'm, I'm sure there, there could have been something going on but it didn't happen to me and I didn't see it. And as a matter of fact everybody that I've known este were still friends and you know nothing like that happened.

Ramiro Garza: So when the generation you were talking about previously do you think there was a clear cut distinguishing between that generation?

I think there was you know. I think there was. Ahh...I don't know about here because I never heard my parents saying anything about anybody here in the valley discriminating them. Ahh...but as you left and went further up north that's where it was.

Eloise Montemayor: Umm...Norma you mentioned that whenever you did get a chance to see T.V. at someone else's house, I know Bonanza (overlap **Norma Valdez:** Ahha) was the main thing back then can you think of any other shows or what was it that about Bonanza that intrigued you all or, or how did you all relate to it?

Norma Valdez: It was, I guess the western, the farming, the, the horses you know, like the cattle all that it just fit in with our life you know. But yes, once we started watching cartoons like the Flintstones there were like normal cartoons, you know. But, Bonanzas' the one that, O.K. and another one was...umm the Wizard of Oz. Always on Thanksgiving. I remember that. Always we would wait for the Wizard of Oz to come out. That was sweet. Until this day it's like the Wizard of Oz.

Alexis Casiano: So on Thanksgiving even today you still watch Wizard of Oz (overlap **Norma Irene Valdez:** uhha).

Norma Irene Valdez: And my kids now they know that it's a tradition Wizard of Oz Thanksgiving you know so that's what we used to watch, all the time. It's amazing like the years you remember of what you used to do like watching the Wizard of Oz for that you know and then Bonanza every Sunday. That was our treat before we got home because we had school the next day. So...

Eloise Montemayor: Now what about singers? Were there any singers at the time that you identified yourself with or that you still have favorite singers from back then and, and maybe you tend to listen to songs from then or what can you tell us about how the, because right now it's all pop culture technical stuff you know. What about umm...the music you listened to then and, and maybe something you experienced you really liked.

Norma Valdez: Of course, Elvis Presley back then...ahh...Mexican (overlap **Ramiro Garza:** Of course, of course)...ahh back you know my parents used to listen a lot to the music from Mexico like the *corridos*...ahh...*baladas*, the polkas and of course there was like umm...they liked umm...Carlos and Jose, like from back then you know old time musicians that played the music that my father liked which were the *corridos* and he loved them. Antonio Aguilar...umm...

Ramiro Garza: Pedro Infante

Norma Valdez: Ahh, Pedro Infante, este Pedro Ayala used to play the accordion you know, those kind of musicians way back then.

Eloise Montemayor: Did you ever go to, to music halls or go out and...umm dance or anything like that?

Norma Valdez: Umm...not really, the only times were like for weddings that you would go to and you know. Cause my mom and dad they danced a lot and they still do. They still dance...umm...and ahh my dad used to like you know. H—as we got older there were two places that he used to like to take us and that's when the livestock show would come in Mercedes. We went to go see when...ahh Fess Parker came which was Davy Crockett we went to see him. And then we saw ahh...I don't, I can't remember he used to come out in the Virginian and other westerns and then we would go to the La Feria in Reynosa because of all the you know so almost similar to it but it was in the Mexican and those were the only times that he would take us to either Mercedes or to La Feria.

Ramiro Garza: Do you remember when you were growing up...um it seems...ah that Mexican music was a big part of your life. Do you remember hearing stories of your dad ever brought umm.. a serenade to your mom or...ahh during Mother's Day or on her birthday or even on yours or another sibling...do you remember anything like that happening where the mariachi's would come or?

Norma Valdez: Um, actually not really mariachis, but he would always have a band play whenever, even if it was two or three people, because he always like the atmosphere of being outside and hearing music and having his friends over, but we would do it as a family type thing, but he always had someone come and play, even if it was just an accordion and a base player or a guitar player, because he loved that.

Ramiro Garza: That was during Mother's Day or was it any day?

Norma Valdez: It doesn't, not necessarily, it could have been a holiday or it could have just been a regular Sunday, whenever he felt like he wanted it, because it got to where my dad, could, to me, he was well known here. Because I remember, get this, I was supposed to, I was getting married on a Sunday. I didn't have a license, courthouse was closed. He calls Santos Saldana, back then, he was on a fishing trip. This man stops his fishing trip; he comes to open the courthouse on a Saturday to get my marriage license, thanks to him. Can you believe that?

Alexis Casiano: Wow! Why was he so important? What did he do that everybody would stop for him?

Norma Valdez: Just, I guess it's just the way he was. Because even if he wanted to go purchase, let's say, today, I need a new truck. Because I don't know how they did it, back them to where, they would get brand new vehicles. Brand new! To where I can't even do it now because it's like your credit is so bad. But, he would actually go to Robert's Chevrolet or wherever, and whatever he wanted, believe me, he would be able to drive off with it and not have to pay anything. He had pull with that. I guess his credit, I mean, I don't know, it's so different now. But back then they got their money and the first thing they did was pay off whatever they had. So their credit was awesome. My mom has excellent credit right now, to where just because of her age, but just the fact that he could go and tell Mr. Roberts or whoever, I want this or whatever and drive off with that, amazing. And a lot of people know my father. Because of the farming and trucking and the deeds that they've done to help other people in need because they do.

Alexis Casiano: What kinds of things?

Norma Valdez: Ah, if they came, you know, and they're like, they're in need of maybe money or food or shelter, they were always there for them. Or, if they needed a ride to go somewhere. You know, they never said no. Or even if it was on the truck that they drove on, they would take them where they needed to. Yeah, that I can remember like...

Alexis Casiano: And still to this day?

Norma Irene Valdez: And still to this day, people that are still alive that they helped, they actually come to see my parents. They stop by. Young kids that used to go work with them when they were getting, the uh, picking fruit and all that. They all left, they all have their lives, but they come back here. To come and visit mom and dad.

Alexis Casiano: How often would you say?

Norma Valdez: Maybe once or twice a year. Or they, she all of a sudden gets a phone call and it's someone she actually helped raise and they've never forgotten my parents. And it's amazing because then I'm out there and the first thing they ask for is mom and dad. You know, so...

Eloise Montemayor: I have just two more questions, ok?

Norma Valdez: Uh ha...

Eloise Montemayor: As far as the foods, like folk foods. Are there certain dishes that maybe you prepare? *Tamales*, *capirotada*, anything that's very, food that's more regional from around here. Something that you learned maybe from your parents? From your mom and then now you still do it, or maybe, the opposite? Things that you used to eat but you're not eating anymore now because of the changes?

Norma Valdez: Uh, no, it's like the *capirotada*, which I haven't learned how to make yet. Ah, the *nopalitos*, like for the *quaresma* during Lent. The tamales, you know. Just the tradition, the *menudo*, the meals that we would have like once in a long time. And, uh, the chocolate, the Mexican chocolate. The pan she used to bake, just regular bread. Ah, I remember all that because it was not something that we did often. But when we did, you know, it's a lot of work. I remember, let me tell you about the *tamales*. Now you can buy the, everything. We used to have a little back room where we had corn and we had to go and chuck the. Okay, we had to do, go and, so we would grind the corn and all that and get it, then she would cook it. Take it to grind it, to make the *masa*. And then, I would have to, all of us would have to go and get the *hojas*. (door shutting) (**Alexis Casiano:** The husks?) Uh ha, We had to do all that. Now you can go to HEB and buy them, but back then we had to do our own. That was only the bad part about that, but other than that, we would make it a little game. Who would get the most and the best and....

Ramiro Garza: How about the art of making *tortillas*? Because I know in our house, my mom make *tortillas*. It was a fight for the *tortillas*. Was that something (**Norma Valdez:** Uh ha) here too or you had when mom make *tortillas*, it was....

Norma Valdez: No, it was the *tortillas*; you were just waiting like the first one that came out. And of course, from scratch, everything and she still makes *tortillas*. And the refried beans. The everybody, I'm not kidding, would come just for that. I mean she could have anything else laid out. We'd go for the beans and the *tortillas*.

Eloise Montemayor: And these were *tortillas de harina*?

Norma Valdez: ...*De harina* (**Ramiro Garza:** Ok...) And I had a cousin that would actually go into the refrigerator and take out cold beans and put it in a *tortilla* and he would eat them like that.

Ramiro Garza: Ok, did you learn to make *tortillas*?

Norma Valdez: See, the first thing that my mom told my husband when I got married, she can cook anything you want, but don't ask her for *tortillas*, because she doesn't know how to make them. Which I didn't, I learned, and I make them once in a while, and my kids make fun of me. They're like, oh my gosh, what are those round things mom? No, but, I've learned to make a lot from her, because my mom cooks really well, I mean really good. Ah, to where there's still some things that I wanna learn before it's too late, and uh....

Eloise Montemayor: Like what are some dishes that you want to learn?

Norma Valdez: Ok, she made her tamales, I can make tamales, but here tamales are excellent. Because she used to make tamales that went to Germany. Pan Am used to buy tamales from her all the time. Yeah, uh, that to where she makes them all one sized, excellent, like Delia's. You know they, uh, the *capirotada*, which I don't know how to make, that I would like to make. Because I like it, I'm not crazy about it, but I like it and I know that my kids like it. Things like that are, *menudo*, I learned. But I learned from her, what I've. Like making rice and the. Because the rice has this trick to it, and you have to. I've learned from her a lot of stuff.

Eloise: And, uh, I guess my last question is a little bit about folklore and herbal remedies.

Growning up as a child were you ever told stories like La Llorona you know? Mija, don't stay out to late because La Llorona's going to get you, or something like that. And also herbal

remedies, growing up your supposed to get teas, herbs, you would use when you're sick or whatever. Can you give us some...

Norma Valdez: Yes, *La Llorona*, yes we've heard a lot of stories about that. And actually, I think we saw one the other day across the street before they built all those houses. It used to be the reservoir right there before they cleaned it off. We had some workers in the back and they decided to go walking. I mean, before we know it, we hear they were all scared. They saw the *Llorona*. They actually saw her. And she went into the field that was there. So, you know, like, OK! As in remedies, yes, and they still use them. Like of course, I remember back then that they're used to be *curanderos*, that if your baby was *empachado*, or whatever, they would take them and they would do the egg or with a lemon or whatever, for your tummy, the back or whatever it was. And they're still doing like the *manzanilla*, the, they do the *estafiate* for your stomach. And believe it or not, they do work. The teas that you take, yeah, but there's a lot of thing out there that....

Eloise Montemayor: do you continue to do these teas?

Norma Valdez: Yea, the teas yes. Because my kids can drink the manzanilla, the camel meal, every day. Well actually, all the grandkids, they ask, grandma, have you make manzanilla? She always has it.

Eloise Montemayor: And is this, you know. Does she get the regular camel meal tea bags from HEB? Or does she get the... (voice overlap)

Norma Valdez: No, she gets like the...She boils it and then strains it. (voice overlap) I get the tea bags.

Eloise Montemayor: So she grows it?

Norma Valdez: Well, sometimes, right now she doesn't have anything but in the back she had *estafiate*, she had the *salvia*, she had *ruda*, the *hierba buena*, a little bit of everything. And, uh, whenever we're sick, just get a few leaves, boil them, and you know, it was there, yeah.

Eloise Montemayor: And the other folk stories, can you think of aside from *La Llorona*?

Norma Valdez: *La Llorona*.

Eloise Montemayor: Growing up as a child, were you ever?

Norma Valdez: Gosh, (voice overlap) uh, I know there is. (**Eloise Montemayor:** The devil, the *chupacabras*?) Well I remember like, the *chupacabras*. The one I remember (laughing) ah, what they said that happened at the Villa Real, when the half man, half horse or what, the devil or whatever it was. Ok, there's another one about, apparently, my husband told me this one, that over there in Pharr, on Jackson. There used to be right there on Dicker on the corner, a little store, there used to be. They had gas and all that. And there used to be a black limo that passed, you know. And one time it stopped and the man didn't have any money, and he needed gas. So the man said OK, get your gas and just leave me your address and information so I can go collect. So it happened then the man goes to collect, gets to the place and the wife if like, what are you talking about? My husband's been dead for so long, so, no but look and he had proof that he had been there. That he told me because, yeah. And it's like I try not to travel on Jackson when I go home because it's like, ahh, it's scary because I remember that....

Alexis Casiano: Where did he hear that story from?

Norma Valdez: Because he's from over there. He grew up over there and over where they live, according to my mother-in-law, where like, my house is built over like, Indian burial grounds back there. And there's something because you hear all these noises and stuff at my house. And there's always things going on and they were saying, there's, that they see the mama pig with her piglets crossing the street. And people have actually seen that. There are things that happen on

that side of town, like, a lot. Yeah, but when mom was telling me about *La Llorona* crossing the street, like, OK! (voice overlap)

Alexis Casiano: And did you believe it?

Norma Valdez: Actually I like to hear about it, but I really don't, because it hasn't happened to me. But, if it would happen, then I would say it's true. (laughing) But, I have not seen it myself. I've only heard, yeah... (voice overlap)

Ramiro Garza: I would like to ask. Quick question, uh, while you were growing up, did your father, or mother, which I'm sure that they both did, did they give you any advice when you were growing up? Of what to do when you're married? How to be as a wife, as a mom, or your father, how to be as a daughter? What was your place? Do you remember any advice that your parent gave you when you were growing up and you still hold today? And that you may pass on to your own kids?

Norma Valdez: As advice from my mom, of course, the being a wife. Attend you your husband. Ah, your children, take care of your kids. And always be, I guess, a lot of mothers, what I would actually tell my own, is like, the communication that you have with our husband, always keep it, because then, look at them, together forever, it's like, according to my mom, You get married and it's a lifetime (voices overlap) she made it to where, I was supposed to be married forever to my husband. And my dad is real different. I had a closer relationship with my father than I did with my mom. I would be able to talk to my dad and tell him everything, more that I would my mother. (voices in background) He just always told us to just be careful in what we do and reach for the stars because there's nothing to stop us. And I remember, and I loved being with my dad. My kids love being with my dad. Because not everybody got to enjoy him the way we all did. (laughing in background) And only (voice overlap) two of my kids got to enjoy my dad, the way. And they have a lot of memories about that also. When they're in the back, barbecuing all they always talk about is how grandpa used to be and where they used to go, but my dad, he was not as strict as her. And he only spanked me once. And I still remember it to this day, and I still feel them. It was me and my older brother and never again. If he ever had anything, we would sit at the table and he was waiting for us at the table, we knew what was going to happen all all we did was cry. And he wouldn't ever raise his voice or anything. But that's just, to follow our dreams and the sky is the limit. And we've tried. And I see him, and I love my father so much, it hurts to see him...

Alexis Casiano: I think one of, I guess the last thing we wanted to talk about was how the land was used. You said your father was ranching, (voice overlap) things like that?

Norma Valdez: Was used mostly for farming. (horn in background) (door slamming) My nephew just got here or he's leaving. That's the sign that he gives my mom, like I'm here or I'm leaving. It was mostly for farming. And I, the, what I remember the most they ever did was the grain. And I remember we had beans one time. That I had to go and pick of course. But it was mostly farming. Nothing else like buildings or anything like that.

Alexis Casiano: So you mentioned grain and beans, anything else that was grown?

Norma Valdez: Corn, tomatoes, uh, what else? Watermelon and I think I want to say cantaloupe. Because I remember, yeah.

Alexis Casiano: And so you had to pick up some of the stuff, who else helped pick all... (voice overlap)

Norma Valdez: Well, there, my brothers had to, we all had to, then of course people that would come in and ask if we had work or whatever. And it was horrible because it was during school time and if like, I told you, if we were playing instruments, it was during that time, it's like my

parents couldn't really go. I mean, they would allow us to go and do it, but they were not there for us to see us perform or anything like that. That was the bad part, yeah.

Alexis Casiano: And so you said they hired workers, so where did those people come from? Like were they immigrants or were they living here?

Norma Valdez: They were here, they were like actually school kids that wanted extra money to spend. Uh, or like their parents would actually come and ask and then they would bring their kids. Yeah

Alexis Casiano: And so it was men, women, and children. (voice overlap)

Norma Valdez: All kinds of... Rain or shine, we were out there. Believe me.

Alexis Casiano: During school time or after school. (voice overlap)

Norma Valdez: After school and Saturdays all day long.

Alexis Casiano: And so these people would, they were living off the property and they would come every day? (**Norma Valdez:** Uhha, yeah, very punctual too)

Norma Valdez: You know, it's amazing, back then, we used to go pick cotton, because we used to. My dad would be out of town. My mom would take us all, and from the oldest to the youngest. We would have our own sack and we'd be picking right. She wouldn't let us go sit under the trailer or play or anything like that. And there was another family and it was the same amount of kids. And they were the same age-wise. It was a challenge to see who would pick the most pounds at the end of the day. (voice in background) And she wouldn't let us. I mean, she was strict. To this day. (voice overlap)

Alexis Casiano: So that's, you would turn the work into a game? That's how you would get it done? (voice overlap)

Norma Valdez: Yes, that's the only way, it's like if you didn't, it would be so long and boring.

Alexis Casiano: And who would usually win these games?

Norma Valdez: It varies, sometimes hers, us, sometimes the others. But it was like nobody wanted to leave, it was already getting dark and we were still, it's like they were *amachadas* to stay and see who was going to win. But it was fun.

Alexis Casiano: And that food that was picked, would be, did you guys eat some of it? Did you sell any of it?

Norma Valdez: It was, yeah. They would sell it. It would actually, some was taken to the market place in Houston. Because that was one of the, they would haul it, or actually people from different warehouses would come down and see what they had. And they would come and make an offer and that's the way they did it. Not like now that they tell you, like my brother, they tell you, I need so many acres of this, this, this, and this. So he had, because they were already gonna get it. It's gonna belong to them, to the packaging shed. And before somebody used to come and, oh, I want so much of this or whatever. It wasn't like already sold to them. They were already...

Alexis Casiano: So I guess that's how the trucking started? That they had to send it to the, who was the one in charge of that? (voices in background) Who started it?

Norma Valdez: My dad, and my mom used to drive the truck too. Oh god, you get on top of the truck, she'll take off. Oh yes, you know she's got her driver's license. And my dad and her, he would take one of the trucks to the field and she would follow him in the other one to go, they were going to go pick and then my dad would take the trucks to go ad load it and she would stay in the field with the workers and taking over of the truck to move it when it had to be moved.

Alexis Casiano: So when did they start with the trucking?

Norma Valdez: They started, oh gosh, they had already been trucking before we were born, I think. My dad because I remember we were already older and we were already going out to

different places, because they used to haul the rice and grain. There was nothing here in the valley so we had to travel. And that was the only thing we never picked fruits and vegetables anymore because it was just the trucking that he did. But when they were here, the good thing was that we got to eat off of what they would harvest so we got the corn and watermelons fresh off the field. (Laughing)

Alexis Casiano: And the fruit stand, (**Norma Valdez:** Uhha) when was that started?

Norma Valdez: It started over here as just a little table. Many years, I don't know about, gosh, maybe 20 years or something. (voices in background) (door shutting) And she started out with just onions, watermelons, little bit of tomato. People would actually stop. And then they made it a little bit bigger. And they just, a few years ago, redid the street. She had to move from there and put it in here. But they let her keep it, which was good. They let her keep it but it's not the same. Because it's real, there's a lot of traffic but they don't stop. Sometimes they do, it depends.

Alexis Casiano: So has there been, like have you noticed when it grows or declines over the years? Some things are selling better than other things? They get more business during certain times of the year?

Norma Valdez: During watermelon season, or when there's citrus.

Alexis Casiano: And where do they get that fruit from?

Norma Valdez: Where ever they're hauling. One of my brothers, goes to different places to get them. The watermelon sometimes we get them from our field here. Just bring it straight here or we go to different places. (voices in background) Or he brings them from San Manuel or where ever they come and they offer it here. Like when we have corn, we sell it but as they're coming to buy, they go in there and pick it fresh. Or like the squash or whatever so it's fresh.

Alexis Casiano: I think that's all I have. Is there anything else?

Ramiro Garza: Well there's one other thing, just so we can wrap it up. In anticipation of the interview, was there any particular story or particular subject that you want to talk about? I'm sure that you probably thought about the interview. OK, I wonder what they are going to ask me. But did you think of anything in particular you want to add? A subject, a story, you could tell? (**Norma Valdez:** I could tell?)

Norma Valdez: Humm

Ramiro Garza: You don't have to, I mean, I know that we've asked you a lot of different things. (voices overlap) You probably have already covered everything, but maybe you thought, I wish they would ask me about this. (voices overlap)

Norma Valdez: You know, the only thing I think is interesting now is that now, when we were growing up we, the fact that we didn't have all the luxuries that everyone else had. No running water, and out house, and all that, it's like that's the way we grew up. And I wouldn't change it, my life, the way it is. Because I've learned from what it is to have those things. And I tell my kids all the time and they make fun of it. Oh yeah mom the dinosaur times. It like, now, the way we were raised, it's just totally different from where we are now. But I wouldn't change it. It just got better as time went on.

Ramiro Garza: Well I think that we're done and we would like to really thank you for giving us your time. (**Norma Valdez:** Uhha) On behalf of our group, but even the university. (**Alexis Casiano:** Thank you so much) Thank you very much for sharing your time.

Norma Valdez: Thank you, you're welcome.

Eloise Montemayor: Norma, if you could just quickly, I don't think you did this at the beginning, just state your name and date for the record, that would be all. (voices overlap)

Norma Valdez: OK, my name is Norma Irene Valdez and today is October the fifth, 2012.