

South Texas Hispanic Farm Labor Communities Oral History Project

Interview with Gonzalvo Rosas

Interviewee: Gonzalvo Rosas

Interviewers: Mark Robbins and Christine Robbins

Family Members Present: Alicia (daughter), son

Kingsville, TX, February 19, 2013

**For the most accurate representation of the interview, see the audio recording held at the South Texas Archives at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, as the process of transcription can contain errors or not fully reflect voice intonations, pauses, and other factors that may convey important meanings. The transcript might not reflect the precise phonetic meaning of what was said in all cases. For instance, what sounds like “mm hmm” might be transcribed as “uh huh,” etc.*

MR: Is it going? Okay, good, this is Mr. Rosas.

CR: What’s today’s date?

MR: You know, it’s funny, the other day I was trying to remember the same thing.

CR: It’s February 18th, 2013.

AR: Actually it’s the 19th.

MR: February 19th. Oh good.

CR: Thank you. We should start our recording over! We were wondering if you could kind of talk about when you were growing up on the farm, where your family lived, and who you lived with?

GR: Yeah, ...the house must have been. I tell people that I was born in a little shack beside, I mean in the back of the big house, you know. I still, I don’t know where it was – it was the other side of the fence (laughing).

CR: Yeah...

GR: Yeah. I think I still got a picture of the house but my daddy and my momma sitting down in the back.

AR (to CR and MR): I think you have that.

CR: Yes, yes.

GR: So, it's a long time ago.

CR: Do you know if they built the house? Did your parents build the house, or...?

AR: Did your mom and dad build it?

GR: No, I think the one that built it was my granddaddy you know because he was a carpenter. And I used to tell my grandmamma, to me it seems like my grandpa was not a good carpenter because we lived in shacks, you know, not in good houses and I don't know why (laughing).

AR: You are talking about the house there on the ranch, right?

GR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean I think he built it, I don't know. Somebody else, somebody built it there.

AR: So your grandfather lived there too?

GR: Hmm?

AR: Your grandfather lived there too?

GR: Yeah, yeah, I think he lived in the big house and then we lived in the back. (laughing) Because it used to be in that ranch in this corner there used to be a big house, you know. And there was a big house in the corner and then there was one in the middle of the thing, you know. So there was quite a big-sized ranch

CR: Why did they put one in the middle? Was that to look out and keep an eye over everything?

GR: No, I don't think so.

CR: Okay.

GR: And there was lots of houses all around the _____ area. And I still remember where the barn and everything was there. And I used to tell my grandmamma that I used to remember that because they used to make the dances up in the barn, big barn there. And every time they make a dance they take the seats out of there, clean it out, for the dance. And I tell my grandmamma I still remember when they put me under the chairs there and I'd be watching you dance (laughing). Because a long time ago, the women used to wear long, long dresses, their heels up, they'd start dancing, you know, way, way back then. How old was I? I guess I was about a year old, or something, but I still remember that. And the barn is still there. I guess that barn is about a 130, 125 years old.

AR: The red barn?

GR: Huh?

AR: The red barn?

GR: Yeah.

AR: Wow.

GR: It was built when they build the ranch, 1914 or 1814, 1914.

AR: I want a picture of him by that barn. I really do. We talk about it, but we haven't done it yet. And he planted a tree near the barn.

CR: Wow, is the tree there?

GR (nodding)

CR: Yeah. Yeah.

AR: Actually, you planted a tree by your house, but it's not near the barn, right?

GR: No, no, it's not near the barn.

AR: I thought it was, but it's not.

GR: I tell people it's funny because they used to tell people the black dirt used to be good dirt. But, I don't think so, because I put that tree when I was a kid, oh, about 75 years ago or 60 years ago, and it's still only about 4 or 5 feet tall and that's all.

CR: And that's it.

(All laughing)

CR: Do you know who would go to the dance? The people who worked just on that farm or other farms?

GR: No, no different people used to come from all around, you know. And uh...But not too often they used to make a dance. Maybe about every month or so.

CR: Yeah. Would there be dances on other farms that you would go to, too?

GR: Yeah, Yeah.

CR: Okay, it just kind of rotated?

GR: Yeah.

CR: Okay.

MR: Well, I'm curious, so you mentioned before that there was a church at one point?

GR: Oh yeah, I think I mean that's what people, old people used to say, up around the corner where that old cemetery is. There used to be a church there, you know. I think it was in the corner over in there. But a lot of people don't remember about that church, you know, so me either, because I was too young (laughing).

CR: Right.

GR: So, I don't know, you have to bring one of those things to find a thing because I think it was made of concrete. It was a small one. Not a good building, but I guess it was made of concrete. Still be there somewhere in there because you know the dirt has been piling up, so it might be buried over there. So I don't think there's no way we can find it.

CR: Yeah, I think you might be right. I think you might be right. If there was no church there, did people go to church on Sundays or did they not go to church?

[Family members enter room]

CR (to family member): Hello, how are you?

Family member: I'll stay out of y'all's way.

CR: Oh no, not at all.

AR: Here's a chair.

GR: What were you saying?

CR: Would people go to church on Sunday?

GR: Not there. They'd go into Driscoll.

CR: Into Driscoll, okay.

MR: So did somebody have a truck that would take everybody in on Sunday or did folks go separately?

GR: We used to go in a wagon to go to Driscoll. Me too, I don't know. We used to go from the ranch all the way to Robstown, to buy groceries. People used to buy groceries once a week. So we drove all the way up there.

AR: By horse or by wagon? I mean, by horse or by cart?

GR: Wagons.

AR: Horse and buggy.

GR: And I tell people, one guy who used to work with me in the Highway Department, he didn't believe me that the highway when you come out of Driscoll, going north, the highway used to be on the other side of the railroad tracks.

CR: Oh really? Oh.

GR: Yeah. And he didn't believe me, you know. I said, yeah, it used to be on the other side of the railroad track. So one day we were coming from Corpus and we stopped there and I showed him one of the concrete bricks that is there on the other side.

CR: And it was on the other side, yeah. Wow. Would you go too, or just your parents to the store in Robstown?

GR: My parents, everybody would go.

AR: Everybody would go together.

GR: Yeah, we went on the wagons.

CR: How long did that take? How long would it take to get there?

GR: Oh, I think it'd take about 3 hours, something like that

(laughing)

AR: Big difference.

MR: So, how often did you go to Robstown then?

GR: We used to go about every week, you know, every week we'd go up there.

CR: Do I remember right that your family raised chickens, or...?

GR: We raised chickens, goats, and everything. Lambs, too. Yeah.

CR: Okay.

GR: I used to hate that every time they'd go kill one of those little pigs or lambs. I didn't want them to kill them, because they were so small, but anyway we had to eat so they had to butcher them.

CR: Did you grow a vegetable garden, too?

GR: No, no because the farmer used to have a lot of vegetables.

CR: Okay.

GR: It's kind of funny, long time ago they used to have a lot of vegetables and they'd take them to town to sell them. But then they took them away and I don't know why, but then there was no more vegetables.

CR: Okay. So when you were growing up what did they mostly grow on the farm? What crops did they grow?

GR: Well, there was cane and cotton, you know, and sometimes I say we had some vegetables, too. All kinds of vegetables.

AR: What, like green beans and broccoli? Corn? Onions?

GR: Everything. Corn and onions. We used to have everything, like people look at me kind of funny because when I used to drive a tractor, the whole tractor had a big tank in the front, so we'd open the top and put some corn in there to cook.

CR: Yeah, I just saw something on TV where people are doing that again and cooking on the engines.

AR: Yeah, on the radiator. Did you put it in the radiator?

GR: On the radiator.

AR: A huge radiator so people would cook their corn on the tractor and work at the same time.

MR: Pretty hot out and then you add the heat of the tractor.

GR: If one of your friends wants a piece of corn they just come and open it and reach for it, and have it fresh and everything.

MR: So what time of the morning did you usually start work?

GR: Oh, we start pretty early in the morning, before the sun come out. And that's the problem about the ranches, you know, you had to start before the sun comes up and you head back home when sun goes down. And I always tell people it's kind of funny, I used to get 50 cents a day. A day, not an hour, a day! And I tell my daddy, I don't think this is right, everybody gets a dollar and I only get 50 cents and I do the same job as the rest of the guys, you know. Well son, there's nothing I can do. So I finally got him to go get out of the ranching. Kept on bugging and bugging and finally we left and we went to the Valley and he was kind of unlucky. After we went to the Valley, he got into the Army. He was in the Army about three years, close to that.

MR: So when they paid you 50 cents a day, was that when you were a kid?

GR: I was. I think I was about 12 years old, something like that. But I only get 50 cents a day, not an hour.

CR: Did you have brothers and sisters that worked, too?

GR: Yeah, yeah, all the family worked. And it was kind of funny, you know, each year we used to go to school and then when they started chopping the cotton and everything, then my daddy say, we gonna have to go see the boss. Why? He wants you to quit school and go to work. No, I don't want to quit school, I want to keep going to school. Well, let's go see him. And sometimes after he'd got him, he'd say well you kids have to work. He's say you see, your daddy owe me about 400 dollars already so you better help him pay for that. So every year we had to do that. We finally did, I mean, we finally got him to say okay, we're leaving.

CR: How old were you when you left?

GR: The ranch? Oh I think I was about 13, 14 years old.

CR: Okay.

GR: Yeah.

AR: When you left...when you left the ranch, the farm, you were already 14?

GR: Yeah.

CR: Did the boys and girls, your brothers and sisters, did they do the same kind of work?

GR: Yeah, we all did same kind of work. And it's kind of funny, too many hours for nothing. And like, my sister got a daughter from the farm, I mean the owner of the ranch and I was telling to try to get her to get the...some money out of the ranch because it's his daughter, you know. And said, I don't want to. She said because if you get the money from them, you aren't getting the money from the ranch, you're getting the money from the oil. Because he had 500...oil wells and they used to get \$500, I mean \$1000 a month, you know. \$500 a month, you know, \$1000 a month from the oil. So she could get plenty of money, go ahead and get it. But she didn't want to, you know.

AR: It was your cousin. You said, your sister, but it was your cousin. Your cousin.

GR: Yeah, my cousin.

AR: Yeah, she had an illegitimate child.

GR: And before she got home from the hospital, you better try to get your daughter some [inaudible], his daughter the owner of the ranch, you know get her in there, but she didn't want to. Well, if you didn't want to do it, it's gonna be after you die, too late.

CR: Did they live on the ranch, too?

GR: Yeah, yeah, they lived on the ranch, too.

CR: So, were most of the people who worked on the ranch when you were a kid family members of yours? Your cousins, aunts, and things?

GR: Yeah, most of them were.

CR: Okay. And were there some families that were not relatives?

GR: What?

CR: Were there some families that weren't family of yours? That weren't your relatives? Other families too?

GR: Yeah. They were some.

AR: On the ranch?

GR: Yeah.

CR: How many families do you think lived there?

GR: I think about 30, 30 families.

AR: 30 different families?

GR: Yeah, 30 different families. Because it was a big ranch. There was 500 acres of land, you know, so they had to take care of the land.

AR: Did they all live in the same little neighborhood or were they scattered?

GR: They were scattered.

CR: Did you live closer to your families, your aunts and your uncles?

GR: Yeah, we lived pretty close to them.

CR: Okay.

AR: I guess there was different clusters of families.

CR: Yeah, different clusters.

MR: What kinds of things did you do for fun when you weren't working?

GR: Well, we chopped cotton, picked cotton, you know and I mean tried to get the seed from the cane, you know, and put them in boxes, you know. It was a lot of work there (laughing)

MR: So, not a lot of free time then. Wow.

AR: What did you do for fun? What did you do for fun when you were little?

GR: For fun? Well, playing something, you know.

AR: Didn't you swim in the tanks? Didn't you swim in the tank, the water tank where somebody drowned? Right?

GR: Yeah.

[Noise, something clatters] Sorry.

AR: What else did you do for fun? What else did you do for fun?

GR: Well, we did a lot of games, you know. Played ball and everything.

AR: Baseball?

GR: It was not football during that time. But we played baseball. We used to have some teams to go to all of the ranches and play. Yeah, because it was a lot of kids and we'd go to all the farms and play ball.

CR: That's cool. Were the teams competitive or was it just for fun?

GR: Oh, it was just for fun.

CR: Would girls play too? Or just boys?

GR: Just boys.

CR: What did the girls do? Did they, were they cheerleaders?

GR: Some of them were cheerleaders.

CR: So did you, you knew other kids on other ranches? You knew other children?

GR: Yeah, yeah, I knew them.

CR: Okay. What kinds of places would you see them? Church?

GR: Well, most of the time it was in school.

CR: School? Okay.

GR: When they had some dances and everything, we'd see them in that time.

MR: So where did you go to school? Was that nearby?

GR: In Driscoll.

MR: In Driscoll, okay.

CR: Where in Driscoll? Is it still there?

GR: Well, they already built a new one you know. They already build about 2, 3 new ones. They already scrapped mine.

AR: But was it at the same place? At the same place where the old one was.

GR: Yeah, same place.

AR: They'd just knock it down and build another one, knock it down and build another one. Okay.

CR: Was it a school just for kids who worked on the ranches or did, like, the Flinn kids go to school, too?

GR: Yeah, they...well, people were from all...to go up to school. All mixed up.

CR: Okay.

AR: Including the Flinn kids?

GR: Yeah, yeah.

CR: Okay.

CR: Was...do you remember Petronila, the little town that's there now, was there a town there then?

GR: Yeah, it was there.

CR: It was there already, okay.

GR: Yeah. I tell people, you know, it's kind of funny, you know that Petronila was the first town that built here in Texas, you know and it didn't grow up, it's still the same. It was built a long time ago. And it's kind of funny, the story about that lady. Used to be a lady that owned the Petronila Ranch. She was the owner all the way to Laredo. She was the owner of that, you know, she had a lot of land. So pretty soon they start selling and selling and selling until they ran out of land.

MR: Did you ever work on any of the other farms in the area, aside from the Flinn farm?

GR: No, no, no, it was that one there. And I don't think the boss would let us go [laughing]. Afraid might lose us. Anyway.

MR: How much did the Flinn family, how much did you see them when you were working? Were they monitoring things, or were they kind of off on their own?

GR: Well, we'd see them sometimes when we come to eat at noon. Yeah, because we came every day to eat in their house and then go back, walking, they didn't have...because there was no transportation. We had to walk to the house, and then we have to walk back again. Same thing.

AR: You'd pass by their house?

GR: Hmm?

AR: You'd pass by their house?

GR: Sometimes, yes, we do. But we'd have to eat every day at their house.

CR: Who made the food at lunchtime?

GR: Hmm?

CR: Who made the food at lunch?

GR: Grandmama. My grandmama made the food for everybody.

CR: Would it be just for your parents, you, and your brothers and sisters? Or would it be for your aunts, uncles, cousins, too?

GR: No, just for sisters and brothers. Not for the aunts and cousins.

AR: So I guess everybody ate in their own house.

CR: In their own house, yeah.

GR: One time one of my cousins wanted to make a book, and I tell him how to make the book, you know. And the people here on the ranch, they come and eat, and after they eat they go sit on the porch and then here comes the _____ to get the bugs out of their hair. And they say you have to put that in the book, you want to make a story, so go ahead and do a full story.

AR: And sometimes y'all would sleep outside, right?

GR: Yeah. Yeah in the hot weather we had to sleep outside and we had to put some [inaudible], smoke the mosquito out of the bed.

CR: Wow. Were the mosquitoes bad?

GR: Yeah, it was bad.

AR: And there was no insect repellent so they'd have to sleep near a fire to create a lot of smoke to repel the mosquitoes cause it was too hot to sleep inside. Can you imagine?

GR: It used to be a lot of fun on the ranch (laughing).

AR: It doesn't sound like fun to me.

CR: How big was your house?

GR: I think the house, I mean where I was born, it was about 12 by 20, something like that. And the other, the big house, was 60 by 60. It was a big house.

AR: Who lived in the big house? Your grandfather?

GR: My grandmama and my parents. I mean, not my parents, my grandfather and my grandmama [Grandma Susanna] and my uncles.

AR: Their other kids. Okay, that makes sense. What was your grandfather's name?

GR: Susannah

AR: Your grandfather's name.

GR: Crispin.

AR: Crispin and Susannah. And their other kids?

[Unintelligible]

GR: Alejandro.

AR: Alejandro lived there too?

GR: Yes, my uncles used lived there too.

AR: How many? What were their names?

GR: Alejandro, Jose, and Marcos. My uncles they lived there too.

AR: And they had kids too?

GR: No, they were not married then.

AR: Oh, they were still young.

GR: They were not married then. After they got married they had to have a little house....

AR: So that's why you and your father and the other kids lived in another house.

GR: Yeah, we lived in the back of the little house.

AR: The back of the big house, in a little house. And it was you and Mama Teresa, and Papa Crispin -

GR: ...And my sisters and brothers.

AR: Before my grandmother died, it was them two and 5 kids.

MR: So what age did you start working? What age?

GR: I think I started working by 7 or 8 or so. When I retired, you know, I was 55, people thought I was crazy. I said no, I'm not crazy. I wanted to retire because I started working when I was a kid, so I guess I had been working too much (laughing). And it was funny, I tell people I have been retired 39 years already. 39 years.

AR: 29.

GR: Huh?

AR: 29 years. Amanda is 29 years old. You retired when Amanda was born.

GR: Oh. 29. Okay. Anyway, that's a lot of years. I didn't think I was gonna make it that long. Anyway, I am okay. Not really okay, because I have heart problems. But they finally fixed it up last week. Because the beeps was 140 a minute. It was too fast.

CR: Wow, fast!

GR: So, they finally got it to about 70-something. So I check it every hour to make, see if it is doing okay.

CR: Good! What about when you were little, if someone got sick, what did you do?

GR: Well, if somebody got sick, they just had to cure them ourselves, at the house. There was no doctor, nothing. Unless we got really bad and sick, then they take us to the doctor. To Bishop, Texas.

CR: Oh, in Bishop, there was a doctor?

GR: There was a doctor in Bishop.

MR: Do you remember anybody getting sick enough that they had to go to Bishop?

GR: Well, there was lots of time when a lot of the kids got sick and they had to take them to Bishop and the hospital. But people didn't believe [?] in the hospital in that time.

AR: Where was the hospital?

GR: Hmm?

AR: Where was the hospital?

GR: Here in Kingsville.

AR: In Kingsville, really? Wow. Where?

GR: Here in Kingsville.

AR: But where in Kingsville?

GR: You know where the old hospital was?

AR: Yeah, 9th street, 9th and Caesar. Okay, so it was still there then.

CR: That's neat. In your family, when someone got sick, who gave them cures? Your mom?

GR: My grandmamma. Yeah. Yeah, she was like a nurse to us. Give us some medication. Some of the medication was kind of bad, but anyway we had to take it (laughing).

CR: Tasted bad? Or smelled bad?

GR: Anyway, we had to take it.

AR: Did it taste bad?

GR: Some medication, yeah.

AR: What was it? Do you remember?

GR: No, I don't know what it was.

CR: Did she make it, or?

GR: She used to make it. Get some of those weeds and mix it up and cook them with something (laughing).

CR: Did they have an herb garden for that? Or any...

GR: Yeah, yeah, they got them in the garden there.

AR: So she would grow them?

GR: Yeah.

AR: Or look in the *monte* right?

GR: Hmm?

AR: Or would she find some in the *monte*?

GR: Some of them yeah, but most of them she had them up in the garden.

CR: What's *monte*?

AR: Brush.

CR/MR: Oh, okay.

AR: Because I've seen my granny on my mom's side do that. Go to my uncle's ranch looking for a certain weed, herb

GR: Like my son was telling me, you better go and get the map you gave to them, the nurse, I mean the church. I said, I can make another one because it was the houses, the ranch, where they were.

AR: I think you have a copy of it.

CR: Yeah, I have one, I don't know if shows where the houses were. But it shows where the cemetery is.

AR: Do you have it with you, because he might be able to show you where the houses were.

CR: I don't actually, I am sorry, I don't.

GR: I told them down here in the Kingsville church, I think maybe you have to try the Cathedral in Corpus, because maybe they know something about this old cemetery. But I haven't heard no word from them, so I guess maybe they forgot about it.

AR: Maybe they lost the number.

GR: I've got the names of the people who are buried there, you know. Not all of them, cause it's kind of funny that the old people don't know where they are. We know some of them because they got one of those cages, you know, to share where they are. But there's only about 3 or 4 or so.

CR: Do you remember going to the cemetery when you were little?

GR: Oh yeah, we used to go there every time we bury somebody there. Yeah, we used to go there. But it's kind of funny but that cemetery was built way, way, way back. 1800s, you know. I think it was 1835, you know. And there's some people that was buried after that. I think one of them was 70-something. I don't know why they can't find who built the cemetery.

CR: Yeah.

AR: Y'all don't have that information?

CR: No, we don't know. There aren't good records for when it was established and who established it. None of that is there.

AR: I think, wasn't someone going to check with the church or the diocese or something?

CR: Yes, and they haven't turned anything up yet. They said before 1913, I think it is, might be 1911 but I think it is 1913, there was no Diocese of Corpus Christi, it was Galveston and Brownsville. But Galveston, a lot of its records were destroyed by a hurricane. And Brownsville, they don't have any record. So, I know people had tried to research the old church that was supposed to be there to ask if Brownsville had any records, or Galveston. Corpus Christi, the Cathedral, said they didn't know anything about it, they didn't have any records.

GR: The priest here in Kingsville, said I don't know, we had nothing to do with that. It was kind of funny, you know. He didn't even want to check.

MR: When you went to the cemetery as a kid for burials, was there a priest there?

GR: Yeah, sometimes there was a priest there.

MR: From Driscoll?

GR: No, from the ranch.

AR: The priest that was there at the ranch where the church was?

GR: No, no, no, there was no such thing as a church.

AR: Where would the priest come from?

GR: From Bishop, or Driscoll.

CR: Was there a church in Petronila?

GR: No, no, I think they built one but maybe 20 years ago.

CR: Okay, okay, hmm.

GR: And it's kind of funny, you know, Petronila, was the first place they built here in Texas and they haven't gotten nothing from that ranch. And it was land from Petronila all the way to Laredo. Big plots of land, you know.

MR: So was the road that goes next to the Flinn Farm, was that always where it is today or was that in a different place?

GR: Well the one that I used to go to the cemetery there, it used to be there, but they plowed and there's no more. They even took the bridge out of there. And I even tried to go and ask if they have some records of when they built it. No, they haven't got no records or nothing.

CR: [drawing] So, when you were growing up...[Drawing on a map and pointing] I tried to draw the farm and FM665, Petronila is out here and then [County Road] 18 right there. Um, the cemetery is there. You said there was a bridge over here, and it connected?

GR: [drawing] Yeah, it was a road. Well, the cemetery is supposed to be somewhere in here.

AR: She said it's right here, the cemetery is right here now. So the road was kind of this way, and it would go to the cemetery.

GR: It was on the other side of the cemetery.

AR: It was on the other side of the cemetery, where the creek is?

GR: No, not the creek, no. The cemetery is supposed to be on this side, and the road was somewhere in there. And the skeletons used to be right there.

AR: The two rows of skeletons.

CR: (Drawing) Okay, the skeletons.

AR: But now that road is plowed over?

GR: Yeah, you can't hardly tell where that road used to be. That's why I had a hard time trying to find where the skeletons were the other day (referring to a visit in December 2012).

CR: Right.

AR: But see, he said the cemetery is over here, and not where you put it.

CR: And then your house was down here?

GR: Yeah. No, not there. Somewhere in here. Because that's the other road.

AR: (Pointing) Near 665?

GR: Yeah.

AR: I thought it was further back, Dad.

GR: No, 665 goes all the way from Driscoll to Petronila.

AR: And your house was right up against the road?

GR: It was on the corner of 665.

CR: Okay.

AR: But he always points to trees that are further in the back.

GR: No, the trees were planted by the other houses.

AR: Oh, okay. So you were in a little house right next to the 665 and the trees that you planted –

GR: - Were half a mile down that way.

AR: Oh, okay, I always though the trees were planted right up against your house.

GR: And the trees are still there, but they haven't grown nothing.

CR: Where are the trees?

GR: Up on the corner of the land, it's about to the south, I mean the southside maybe half a mile down. Because this used to be a line of houses going there.

CR: Okay, on 665.

GR: No, the other side.

CR: Oh, on the other side.

AR: Half a mile south of 665.

GR: Huh?

AR: About half a mile south?

GR: Yeah, yeah.

AR: But exactly where, I wouldn't know. Because I get confused about where.

GR: Yeah, when they rebuilt the ranch, they built the house about half a mile away from the road. A row of houses.

AR: A row of houses. What's that road in the back? Remember when we came out of the cemetery and I was going to go to 665 and you said, no, there's a road right there. What road is that?

GR: [County Road] It's number 18.

CR: Number 18 crosses [FM] 665, yeah. And then I think [County Road] 75...is it 75 on the other side of the ditch?

GR: Yeah, County Road 75.

AR: See I thought that's where the houses were. Were they back there?

GR: Huh?

AR: Were the row of houses back there by 75?

GR: No, no. It's too far from them.

AR: It's too far back.

CR: More by 665.

AR: Kind of in between I guess.

CR: Okay. That's interesting.

GR: Yeah (laughing).

CR: Were there any other big houses? Or just your grandma's?

GR: No, there were big houses. I say, used to be about every 200 or 300 feet there used to be a big house. There used to be one in each corner and one in the middle, so I am guessing about 6 or 7 big houses.

CR (to AR): What were you going to ask?

AR: I guess, who lived in those houses, you know? If there was a big house and then other little houses around them?

GR: Yeah.

CR: Do you remember the names of the people who lived in the houses?

GR: Not really, no (laughing).

CR: It's a long time.

GR: Yeah.

MR: So when you were working, how much of the time were you normally picking cotton, versus sugar cane?

GR: Well, picking cotton was my favorite job (laughing), because I used to make money as a kid picking cotton. I used to be a good picker. I still got the ___ where I used to pull the cotton, right here... [laughter].

MR: Did they pay you the same regardless of the crop, it was 50 cents a day no matter what?

GR: No, no, no. When you pick cotton it was a different story. They'd pay you by the pound. By hundred. But they say, I mean, that it was better to pick cotton than the rest of the job because in picking cotton you could quit whenever you wanted to. But working, you had to work, no matter what.

MR: Because it was by the pound, yeah.

AR: You could set a goal, I guess. You could get to that goal and call it a day.

MR: Did you ever stop in the middle of the day when it got really hot, or just kind of power through that?

GR: Well, sometimes it was too hot we just went home. But the heat was bad at that time. I tell people that way, way back, the heat, I mean the sun, was hotter than right now. I don't think so, but anyway, to me, it seemed like it was.

AR: Cause you didn't have air conditioning to get into.

GR: No, there was no air conditioning at that time.

CR: Did your family ever go to Corpus Christi?

GR: Yeah, we used to go every once in a while. Not too often. But we used to go up there.

CR: Why would you go to Corpus Christi?

GR: Well, sometimes my family went to shopping, buy clothes...

CR: Oh, okay. Would you go to the beach, go swimming?

GR: Yeah, we used to go to the beach just about every Saturday.

MR: Did you go to the beach on the bay, by where downtown is now?

GR: We used to go the beach by where they had the carnival. I think they still got it again. But they took everything away and then built it back again.

MR: Over at North Beach?

GR: Yeah, North Beach.

MR: What was that like? Did you have a pretty good time doing that?

GR: Oh yeah, we had a good time swimming, and... (laughing).

MR: Did you ever play any games there?

GR: No, no, not really.

CR: We just learned that at North Beach there, there was a pool that had saltwater that people could swim in. I don't know when that was, but they said that that way they could take out all of the seaweed and the junk out of the water and people could swim, but without...

MR:...and no jellyfish.

CR: Yeah, they'd take out the jellyfish. They'd filter it. I don't know when that was.

AR: Do you remember that?

GR: No.

AR: They didn't have a saltwater pool? A saltwater pool. That's weird.

GR: No, at that time, there was no pools around there.

CR: Did you travel anywhere else? Where else would you travel to?

GR: The beach.

AR: Anywhere else, Dad?

CR: Any other towns that you would visit?

GR: No, Corpus.

CR: Corpus, Robstown.

AR (to GR): What were you looking at?

GR: In the house, you know, that thing that they are going to rebuild. The [inaudible] housing. They are going to rebuild it. Texas rancher.

CR: Do you remember, were there any police or anything like that when you were little?

GR: Oh yeah, in Corpus, yeah, there was lot of police.

CR: Anybody ever come to the farm, to the ranch?

GR: No, no.

AR: What about when people died? Nobody came over? The police didn't come over?

GR: No, no. Because they didn't kill nobody.

AR: No murders? What about when your cousin died in the tank?

GR: No, just the Justice of the Peace came, the only one who came.

AR: No investigation. It was a straight drowning, anyway.

CR: Did people get sick from the flu? What did people get sick from?

GR: Well, a lot of people got sick from TB. It was that time, you know. TB was bad then.

MR: Were they ever taken when they got sick over to the Sanitarium, in Corpus Christi, I guess up by Calallen, over there?

AR: I don't think he understood the question.

MR: When anybody got sick from TB did they go to the hospital or anything?

GR: Yeah, they went to the hospital and then they put them in those places where they got them in the Valley, where they got the TB people and stay there.

AR: I guess that's a yes. In the Valley, that's where.

MR: You mentioned last time we spoke that you had gone elsewhere around the country, too, working. What are your most memorable experiences traveling up elsewhere, outside of Texas?

GR: We went out to North Texas to pick cotton each year. And that's why I used to tell my daddy, we pick cotton, we came in December, we started school, and then by January, by February we had to get out of school to go work. So, I tell my daddy, I don't think it's right. Well the boss, he wants you people, you kids, to work. So we had to work. I was against that, you know.

MR: How did the school react? Did they want the kids to stay in school, or they just kind of accepted the seasonal patterns?

GR: No, they just want us to go to work, no school, period.

AR: So did the school care that y'all were taken out of school?

GR: Yeah, they knew that but they just did nothing about it.

AR: They knew about it?

GR: Yeah. I don't know why they didn't do nothing about it. But usually all the kids had to quit school to go to work.

AR: Dad, tell them about when you would travel to North Texas, that they didn't want you all there. Remember the signs that they would put? Tell them about that.

GR: After I would tell my Daddy, we would go to West Texas to pick cotton. And it's kind of funny, I'd say "Daddy, I don't see why we have to come here. You see the signs there, "No Mexicans or dogs allowed inside." Some big signs, you know. So I said, why we have to come here in the first place? But my old man was so stubborn that he didn't care.

FM: Isn't there something in the law or the courts about the thing in Driscoll, about the Hispanics and the school system? There was something.

AR: It was a lawsuit, but I think it was in the 50s.

FM: It was bad.

AR: Back in the 20s, there were no laws like that.

CR: Do you remember on the farm or in Driscoll or around there, was there a lot of prejudice or no?

GR: Yeah, there was a lot of prejudice, yeah. But they didn't...I don't know why the police didn't do nothing for it.

MR: Can you think of examples of prejudice? Can you think of examples of when you felt people were being prejudiced?

GR: Uh, yes, I mean, like here in Driscoll we couldn't even go from the Spanish school to the American school ever. They didn't want us in there.

AR: Segregated.

GR: Anyway, all the time is gone.

CR: What language did your family speak?

GR: Spanish and American.

CR: Both?

GR: Both of them.

CR: Okay. Do you have any other relatives that grew up on the farm that are nearby here still? Is there anybody else, a cousin or brother or sister who is here?

GR: Well, there's a cousin that lives up on...what's that street? Antonia?

AR: Raglin Street.

AR: Yeah, I told you about her before. She doesn't speak English though.

GR: Not too good English, but anyway. Yeah, she was born and raised on the farm.

AR: Yeah, she was raised as your sister, right?

CR: Oh. She's your cousin, but she was raised as a sister.

GR: Yeah.

AR: I think so, because didn't her mom die really young? Her mom is buried there at the farm. What's her mom's name? Como se llama? Gregoria?

GR: No. Hmm.

AR: She's on the list.

CR: Is it Apolonia?

GR: Yeah.

AR: That was her mom. I think her mom and her stepmom are both there. But I think their grandma, cause his mom died when he was five, little, like 5 and a half. And then her mom died. So the grandma kind of helped raise them all.

CR: And your mother is buried in Driscoll?

GR: Yeah.

CR: Your brother, your little brother Noe, is buried –

GR: He's buried on the farm.

CR: And your father is buried in Driscoll?

GR: Right.

AR: No.

GR: No, he's buried in Alice.

AR: In Alice, with his second wife. She just died not that long ago.

CR: Do you think Antonia would be willing to talk with us? With a translator?

AR: Her son, her son speaks both.

GR: Maybe so, I think we have to make that arrangement with her.

AR: No, I'll stay out of it. I'll stay out of that one. It's no hassle, I love the lady, I love her to death. I get busy and I'm already bombarded. That's another...you know, he's my dad, and you know. I'll let someone else handle her.

CR: Is there anyone else you can think of besides Antonia?

GR: No, she's the only one here, pretty close. So, we'll have to make some arrangements to see if she wants to talk to you.

AR: Dad, what about your sisters and brothers? Do you think they remember anything about the ranch, or were they too little?

GR: No, they were too little then.

AR: Because if you were 13 or 14 when you left, they would have been about, what? 10 or 11? 9, 10. They would be little, very little. Because there were five of them. One died as an infant. All the rest of them are all still alive. He's the oldest. But they would be a lot younger when they left the property. So they may or may not remember something.

FM: Are you all just doing the ranch, or Driscoll?

CR: Both.

FM: Because he actually knows a lady, we met her daughter in Houston and she knew him, her mom. And she's from Driscoll. I'd have to look 'em up. I don't know if she's alive or not. But she remembers going to school with him. And they called the school, "La Nopaleda." That's what they called it. And if you know what "Nopaleda" is, that doesn't sound very nice. [Talking over one another]

AR: Prickly pear, is that what you are saying?

GR: Yeah.

CR: And she was living in Driscoll, still living in Driscoll or she was up in Houston?

FM: She still lives in Driscoll. Last time I knew she was living on 77. I could be wrong. Well, she must be from that ranch because....

CR: Someone told me about, when someone did research in 1991, Clothilde Garcia did research on the cemetery and she interviewed two people. And one of them is maybe the woman you are talking about: Otila Trevino. She said she had lived on the farm.

AR: Do you remember her, Dad? Otila Trevino.

GR: I don't know, but she didn't live on the ranch.

CR: No? Okay. The other one they interviewed was Roberto Saldana. They said he used to own the gas station.

GR: Yeah, but he's already dead.

CR: That's what I heard. But I didn't know if his widow, I think she is still alive, if she might know anything.

FM: She sounds like that lady.

CR: Maybe that's it. The way it was described in 1991 was that she lived in a brick house behind the old gas station, that would be on 77.

FM: I think that's her. I can't remember her last name. It was one of those, her daughter was with a friend of mine and they didn't call themselves married. So, I forget her last name. I could get in touch with her and see.

CR: That would be wonderful. We're interested in taking down histories of anyone who worked on ranches around that time period, 1920s, 30s, 40s, 50s.

FM: Are you doing this for the college, or what's your deal?

CR: Yes and no. We are both members of the Nueces County Historical Commission. It's a history group, basically in Nueces County. And most of the stories that are written down about ranches and farms in this area are either written about King or Kennedy ranches or they are from the stories of the owners, so they are the white people's perspective.

FM: You would have loved my grandmother, but she's gone, because she had a mind like a steel trap. She's go *mil-novecientos*. She could remember if it was cloudy or sunny. But that's gone, you know. But they, well, they have a lot of stories.

CR: So, that's our goal is to record people's stories and then we'll put them together as part of an archive so that there is something from that perspective.

FM: That's great.

MR: Researchers then would be able to have a more comprehensive record to look at. I think we were struck by when we saw the records of the Flinn Farm, it was really just from the perspective of the owners and not much else, and of course that's a very, only one slice of people's experiences there. So we were interested in exploring beyond that.

FM: How far back do you all go?

MR: As far back as we can. As far back as memories would allow or stories told across generations.

CR: We would be interested in recording people's stories of, stories their grandmother told them, you know, even if their grandmother isn't alive, or their great-grandmother, if it was a story that was handed down in the family.

FM: Well, one thing you all were asking about as far as the law, the Texas Rangers to them were like the KKK. Period. My grandfather caught me playing the Lone Ranger and he said “No boy, no. Take that off.” He said no way. As far as the laws were concerned it was....(laughing) There was no love lost there.

CR: Well, I'd love to leave my phone number with you or see if anybody, if you know of anybody else that would want to talk with us. Antonia, or anybody in Driscoll.

FM: Well, I had questions, but finish with him, because mine comes from the other side of the family. I love, you know, he never tells us. I keep asking, but he never...And he has trouble hearing too. But I am glad that he is talking to you all, because I asked him. And he does have pictures, if you all need pictures also.

CR: Maybe, could we come back again some other time and I can bring the map and see if there is anything else that comes out? And I'll bring you what we have and see if there is anything else you remember that you could add to it. Would that be okay?

GR: That would be okay.

CR: Thank you, that would be wonderful. We haven't gone to the cemetery since we were with you and a couple of my students who had been helping they sent me a message and said, we better go back because the brush is going to be way up there again. I thought, oh no, we worked so hard!

MR: Better get out the clippers again.

CR: Yeah, cut things back again.

GR: The other day I saw one guy in Driscoll and I forget to ask him see if he got a letter from Carolyn, gave him permission to go out there. I told him we can get a backhoe and we can go out there and clean.

AR: No, Dad, a backhoe would ruin a cemetery. That's not what they want.

FM: He doesn't understand that, doesn't understand the concept.

AR: Well, he does if you explain it. Remember how they were very careful, and everything had little flags. That was to protect the cemetery. So a backhoe is not what they want up there. They have permission. They have permission. We don't have permission. They do.

CR: But you can go there any time.

FM: Right. It's a law that says they have to give you.

CR: I always wonder about, do you know if you go to Chapman Ranch, the road to Chapman Ranch before you get to Chapman Ranch, on the right-hand side, there is a cemetery in a field.

GR: It's in the field, yeah.

CR: Would anybody buried there be related to the people who are buried at Flinn?

GR: No, no.

CR: Too far?

GR: Too far, yeah.

[Separate conversation]

GR: Have you...about the cemetery, because the one time they told me they were going to find out see who built the cemetery – was it the Spaniards or the Mexicans?

CR: We don't know, we don't know who built it.

AR: Not yet. Maybe you'll come down to it. Maybe at some point you'll find some archived records, somewhere.

CR: We keep looking.

FM: What is that road that goes from the King Ranch into San Diego and Benavides? Dad? Supposedly there is, and he has pointed it out, it's caliche brick that I read in a book, it's so old that the Spaniards didn't know who built it. And it's on the side of the road and they put cattle in there and chickens. It used to have, when I was a kid, it was four walls. I think it is down to three. But it's on the side of the road, and it's ancient.

CR: I love roads because even though they may change a little bit, like being on the other side of the railroad, a lot of times they are close. People didn't want to clear again and so you end up with these really neat patterns – history after history after history on the same road. It's amazing, you can get back 500 years and you know people are on that same stretch.

AR: That's why he said, the one that was going. What was that road that was used, Dad, that they used near the Rancho Colorado? *Que quiere el camino?*. There was a road, there was a name for it. El Camino... Real.

GR: El Camino Real.

AR: That was used way back in the day, and I guess they are still using it.

GR: Even the Mexican Army used to mention the Camino Real. They used to come from Mexico all the way to Riviera.

[Separate Conversation]

CR: Thank you very much for speaking with us.