

South Texas Hispanic Farm Labor Communities Oral History Project

Interview with Robert Silva

Interviewee: Robert Silva

Interviewers: Mark Robbins and Christine Robbins

Corpus Christi, TX, September 20, 2013

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MR: If you don't mind, this is Robert Silva. And the date today; I'm trying to remember

RS: The 19th.

MR: The 19th of September.

RS: Or 20th? Right?

(Laughter)

MR: I'll go ahead and check. Oh, 20th, September 20th, great. Oh, thank you for drawing that map, that's wonderful.

RS: This is a little creek, it tells how [inaudible] creek and goes where that cemetery is. Agua Dulce, Banquete and it turns to Petronila. Driscoll, this is a model cemetery. The cemetery y'all found is in this area.

MR: Yeah.

RS: Which is called the [Rancho] Colorado.

MR: Yeah.

RS: How did you find that cemetery?

MR: Well, we are both on the Nueces County Historical Commission and one of other members, or the couple of the members, they told us about it and said that it had, you know, needed brushed cleared from it and had been over grown, so we went out there and, it was, you know almost kind of crawl on your hands and knees to get back in there and um we got a lot of students out there from Del Mar and also from Texas A&M Kingsville and worked to clear it. And then we wanted to learn a little bit more about it and then that spawned this oral history project where we, we thought, you know, in the historical record there's not as much of the perspective of individuals who worked on the farms like this one and more, you know, of kind of farm owners and that sort of thing which is an important perspective to have but not a complete one. And so that led us to want to interview individuals who, who can tell us more about those perspectives and both there and just in the whole area.

RS: Well, you go down 77 in between Driscoll and Robstown. You go 2026, and you'll hit can be you'll cross a little creek and you hit the foundation. Right in front is road, farm-to-market road or let's say County Road 85. There's some houses here. Right in front you go about a mile there's some sheds right here.

MR: Okay.

RS: Once you cross the creek, right in here, is the old cemetery.

MR: Um-hum. Oh, wow.

RS: I used to clean it once I left for the military and got overgrown. And there's a lot of graves in there. Where they used to work

MR: Wow.

RS: For the foundation in and around this area. And, um, there were migrants that used to work here.

MR: Um-hum

RS: And it goes into 665 that goes from Driscoll to Alice.

MR: Okay. And so a lot of the migrants and who are buried there, they worked in Petronila area and Driscoll area or?

RS: Yeah

MR: Robstown, mostly?

RS: Mostly working in this area here.

MR: Okay.

RS: Because it was mostly, back then wasn't just cotton.

MR: Um-hum

RS: There was, vegetables, um Robstown was the hub for onions, carrots, pickles, cucumbers and things like that, like the Valley. And um, this how this I'll discuss in a few minutes

MR: Sure

RS: (inaudible) because of this here

MR: Great, great.

RS: Um, Chapman Ranch of course, you know, he came down in 1919. And, um, he started, in 1926, he started tearing down every tree that he could tear down, to make the fields, he, he had, has now and by 1940, he had completed his project of tearing down the fields. And um, he has the fields, he has now. And, um, I think he (inaudible) was from Ireland.

MR: Um-hum

RS: He, he came from Ireland in 1919 and right now there is only one heir, female.

MR: Oh, wow.

RS: And they're selling the land in partials

MR: Um-hum

RS: Um, she, she's in her 80s I think, um, what it is gonna happen when after she passes way because she doesn't have any family? I think, um, [the] foundation is going to get bulk of the estate when she passes away. Um, 51, right here. You come down from Corpus, you are on 286 and then it turns to 70. So all this right here up to London, 43

MR: All right

RS: All this is Chapman Ranch.

MR: Okay

RS: So, now everything is being sold

MR: Um-hum

RS: I wish that sooner or later you go to this area right here.

MR: Yeah

RS: It'll be discussed in a few minutes. You'll see how migrants used to live.

MR: Um-hum

RS: They used to live like cattle. It's, it's on, um. You want to get a real, its on 14, 14 from 286 it goes to 14 and right here on 51 there used to be a windmill right here

MR: Okay

RS: Which supplied water to this people here. There was five barracks.

MR: Okay

RS: And I (inaudible) regular Army barracks, no they were like cattle barracks

MR: Oh

RS: And then there were five-two stalls for men and women to use the toilet. And in one corner of the place there was a place where the foreman to live in; to manage the people [inaudible] wouldn't go out.

My father was 12 years old when he last went at Chapman Ranch, that's when he saw the little boy being burned to death. And, um, he used to cry every time he remembered those incidents that happened. So, I want to discuss one-by-one

MR: Great

RS: The things that happened at Chapman Ranch. I will discuss Chapman Ranch first and then I'm going to discuss what happened to us.

MR: Great.

RS: You tell me when you want to start.

MR: Oh, we can start at any time. I've already had the recorder going if that's all right.

RS: My father was born on December 3, 1928, in Orange Grove, Jim Wells County, Texas. And when their mother passed away on January 3, 1932, they went to Salineno, Starr County, Texas. And, when the age of eight, he started coming to Chapman Ranch, because that was the place to come to. That was considered El Norte or The North. So, on their trip, they used to drive like a deuce and a half truck covered with a tarp and he had a little door in the back and piece of opening in the back for oxygen. And it would be filled with about five or six or seven or eight families. Packed in lie sardines. That included their clothes, their possessions and um little kerosene stoves, mattresses and clothing and bedding and things like that. Upon getting to Chapman Ranch they were assigned, not houses, because the houses were for the foremens but they were assigned like cattle barracks, like the ones, I hope you get the opportunity to see. Each barracks or cattle, I call it cattle barracks stalls contained, um, rooms for 20 families each. So in this area that I discuss earlier were five barracks for 20 families each. So, um, they were assigned that, those barracks, and you

would not leave that barrack until Saturday afternoon and, and then and only then, were you suppose to wander from that area.

You were never allowed to wander from that area because at every cross corner, at every cross, there was a house, a house were the foreman lived and the barracks were on one side, the foreman lived caddy corner, or any one, one of the other corners. And he made sure that those people, these migrants stayed in the area. And they behaved; to the, to the rules and regulations that Mr. Chapman had set. On the way to Chapman Ranch, they had to pass like an obstacle course. Which was Lo Ranches. Lo Raenches; R-A-E-N-C-H-E-S or Border Patrols, that was before they were integrated by Blacks or Mexican Americans. It was purely a White oriented organization. And they were like the, The Gustavo's of the United States. They would terrorize the migrants on their journey wherever they would go either up North to Michigan or North to the Chapman Ranch area.

If they stopped you, lo and behold, they would make you throw everything out, out of your lockers, throw everything out, if you had lunches, they would throw your lunches on the ground and then make you eat them.

MR: Wow.

RS: Just to embarrass you. Even though you showed them papers that were an America citizen or even if you were an illegal immigrant from the other side, they would still harass you. And they would hold you for hours and hours at a time until they were satisfied that they harassed you enough and then they would release you.

Um, again, after they had done that, you would take off and then you would arrive at whatever hours and then you were assigned the barracks that were assigned to. Mostly they would try to keep a whole group together.

When you work for the Chapman Ranch area, you will work for them and they make sure whatever you earned would stay with the Chapman Ranch Company. They had their own post office. They had their own store. They had their own slaughter house. Most of the slaughter house meat were for the foremans but what was leftover was sold to the field hands at high prices.

And, they were allowed to go to town on weekends, after Saturday afternoon. And the weekend was between the present courthouse;

MR: Oh, okay.

RS: Leopard and Miller High School. That's where you see the old buildings on Leopard

MR: Yeah, yeah

RS: In Leopard, in front of the Corpus Christi Independent School District, you see the old buildings. Next to the old Lacks building in front. That's where they had the entertainment buildings, the shows and theaters and things like that.

And then, um, when my father was 12 years-old, he remembers that there were working about two miles from the Chapman Ranch area when they saw a lot of smoke because, as you hit 286 here, there were some barracks, up, up, you follow this road up here, you will see barracks in this area back here close to the King Ranch fence line. They used to live in this area but he said that they were working in this area here when they noticed some smoke coming from this area so they rushed to see what was happening. And back then there was no law against, latch key.

MR: Yeah

RS: And, by the time they got there, the little boy, all I know his name is Canales, he was burned alive. And, I don't know if he is in the Chapman Ranch cemetery or not or if he was taken back to Salineno. But I do know that he was burned alive. And my father remembered that very well.

And like I told you about the stalls, they're still there. There the only ones remaining. It's on 14 and 15.

MR: And so he lived on, in, in those stalls or different ones?

RS: He also had a chance to live, live in this house and we used to take him there and every time; the first time we took him there he started crying

because he said they used to treat them like animals. Because, you look at them and they look, like cattle stalls

MR: Yeah

RS: And, men were in the south, women in the, in the north side.

MR: So, were the men and woman, were they part of families? Were they married, any of them?

RS: [inaudible] were not.

MR: Okay. But if they were married they had to live in separate barracks?

RS: No.

MR: Okay

RS: They all got to live together.

MR: Okay.

RS: There were no unmarried, single men, no, nothing like that.

MR: Okay

RS: They made no distinction for that.

MR: But if you are a man and wife, your wife had to live in a, on the women's side, or did they live in the same?

RS: No. They were with the same family.

MR: Okay. Um, wow.

RS: And there was no, no, no showers for men or showers for women. They had to make do you like, like use sheets to cover and then use the un banyo or what they call it; a tub. A round one-- banyo or a tub. You buy in the stores and to heat up water and take a shower on a daily basis. Or sometimes you had to do without, um, and like I said, windmill [?] would

cover -- can you imagine 20 families? That was a 100 families right here. And these were outhouses for all these hundred families right here.

MR: Wow. Did a lot of the families, did they go to know each other pretty well? And did they tend to work in same area of the ranch?

RS: You--well, some were assigned different areas. So, the foreman or the driver of the truck was one of the members of the, of the families here. So he had to come make various trips to take them to different spots.

MR: Um, hum.

RS: They were-- some would even utilize to kill cattle to provide the meat for the foremans. And if you go to the Chapman Ranch area, you will see spots where you see caliche in the, in the certain junctions where you will see where houses used to stand.

MR: Oh, this is my wife, Christine.

RS: My name is Robert Silva. Pleased to meet you.

CR: Very nice to meet you.

MR: Oh, thank you. Sorry. Mr. Silva was just telling me about, um, Chapman Ranch and the living conditions there and

RS: And this on, on 286 going to Chapman Ranch, Chapman Ranch goes ever there and then goes to 70, Chapman Ranch is right here. You see schools and nice houses. Those were for the big shots. The schools, that was a no-no for migrants. It was just, I wish I was there. It was not, my God, if -- it reminds me of the story Oliver.

MR: Oh yeah.

RS: "Can I have some more?" And, you know, he slept. But if you ever even made a suggestion, "can I go to school?" You were practically beaten to death. But the school is still there, but that was mostly for those Capatazes or the foreman's, the ones who ran the, the company for the Chapmans.

MR: Did that ever change later in the years of the ranch, did the migrants children ever get a chance to go to other schools?

RS: No. That was a no-no. Most, um, most of the people that I know that are adults including my relatives, older relatives. They are now in their 70's or, I hate to say that, but they're ignorant. Because of the fact they either worked here or later progressed to go up North, because they were not allowed to go to school because they started here.

MR: Wow.

RS: And I'm going on to tell you about this, is, um -- because my father got laid off from Reynolds -- he used to work for, for Falcon Dam, for the Government.

MR: Um-hum.

RS: When they were building Falcon Dam we used to own -- you know the funny thing is, we used to own 10,500 acres. But back then, Mexican-Americans were not allowed to progress. You know, blacks had their, their epoch, their era in which they suffered. Mexicans had their era too because of their (inaudible). It was not until the 1970's that Mayo -- you're familiar with Mayo?

MR: Tell me a little more about that. Yeah.

RS: Mexican Americans Youth Organization

MR: Oh, oh, yes. I'm familiar. Yeah.

RS: It occurred in, in, um, Crystal City.

MR: Um-hum

RS: I was a member of Mayo in Texas A&I University before I transferred to Baylor and the U.S. Army. We fought for the rights of Mexican-Americans because you would never see a Mexican-American in positions of responsibility.

MR: Um-hum

RS: At a courthouse. Most of the positions and responsibilities were held by -- don't get me wrong, I'm the not, I nothing against Whites because I am White myself. I'm a half-breed. I call it a half-breed because my name is Joslyn. My great great grandfather was John William B. Joslyn. And, um, so, I cannot criticize the Whites because I'm half White myself. So I'm -- I'm not, I'm not being critical of Whites because I'm not that kind of person.

But Mexican-Americans had their period over here where they suffered while blacks were suffering in the South over there. If you went to a courthouse, most of the secretaries, the judges, the justices of the peace were all white. After the 70's you saw a transformation, where suddenly you saw a Mr. Gonzalez, Precinct No. 1, this and this and that. Everything changed for the better.

MR: Um-hum

RS: I vote, and I vote -- I go because he's Mexican-American, I vote for the one that's best qualified.

MR: Um-hum.

RS: I'm a little against the Republicans because they things they do in blocking -- instead of doing something for the people, they just stop, stop gapping the Government all the time. That's the only thing I'm against...

MR: Um-hum

RS: When my father left Reynolds Aluminum, because they went on strike in 1960, we -- when they built Falcon Dam in 19, they started building in 1947 and completed in 1951. My grandfather lost all the land; where the gates are for the Falcon Dam, all the land in front of the gates where the Falcon Lake is.

MR: Um-hum

RS: My father, grandfather lost for \$.50 [\$.15 [difficult to hear]] an acre.

MR: Wow.

RS: You see. And he knows though he was the Justice of the Peace, a Post Master, for a class for, Post Office. But that was life.

MR: Um-hum

RS: You know, we didn't complain. Electricity didn't come to Salineno until 1951. It be [inaudible] ignorant at the time. They didn't know what electricity was. They found out the hard way. Because they took a bobby pin and stuck it in on one socket, it tickled them. But when they stuck both, it shocked them to heck. But that was people. And they were buying vacuum cleaners when they had houses with dirt floors.

MR: Um-hum

RS: You know. So that, we lived at the ranch, at our ranch with a little house that had a kitchen with a dirt floor. That was when my father got laid off in 1960 from Reynolds where he worked for 25 years. So we went to live in Salineno and he was only getting a \$100 a month, so we used to be migrants also. And, um, we used to come and pick cotton at the Butler's Ranch in Alice. And the old man, Old Man Butler, used to come out every morning, every morning, and tell us, I'm going to say something derogatory but say it. I hope you understand Spanish.

MR: A little bit.

RS: Okay.

MR: A little bit, both of us.

RS: He used to say, (phrase in Spanish). In essence, you work for sunup, from sunup to sunset and don't use the toilet.

MR: Oh.

RS: In other words, don't stop to eat or use the toilet

CR: Um-hum

MR: Wow.

RS: He didn't want us to stop at all. And he made it a point, he was standing with binoculars at his house and if we stopped even to do drink water for 15 minutes, he would bring his truck and tell us, you're wasting too much of time. And one day, one of his foremans -- we used to have blacks working for us picking cotton. One of his foremans, one of the Blacks was not -- You had to, like, like -- a machine that picks cotton goes straight, all even.

MR: Um-hum

RS: Well, one of the Blacks was staying behind, behind, behind, so the foreman took, pulled a cotton plant with a boll still on it and grabbed it and started whipping the guy

MR: Oh my God.

RS: Like during the slave days. And my grandfather was not that kind of man. He took the, grabbed the cotton plant from the guy and punched that white guy and he said, "You don't do that to anybody, only animals. And not even animals are treated like that." He was fired on the spot.

So when I was in college, in history class and we saw, and I remember the guy saying, "No, Masta, No Masta, No, Master. No, Master." And, when I was in college, in high school, and I saw a clip of Roots where Kunta Kinte was being hit.

MR: Um-hum

RS: And he says, "No Masta, No Masta." I said "I've seen that before." And the teacher said, where? When I was a young boy in the fields. How could you do that Silva? That's in the modern time--I really saw it. They thought I was crazy, but I did, in real life.

MR: Wow.

RS: Because, things like that happened, things that I saw when I was little kid. And in La Cassita, Rio Grande City, they used to treat us -- we used to harvest strawberries, which I used to love because you used to eat them on the spot. And we used to harvest cucumbers, green beans, I mean, cucumbers and bell peppers, but I used to hate to harvest green beans

because they were up in the air. You do harvest like this. And if you didn't harvest the, the Anglo foreman used to come and take your, like a cotton sack, you know, pick cotton and put it like this, he said to take your sack and empty it out and they say start over.

MR: Wow.

RS: And La Cassita was finally penalized by the Federal Government for inhumane treatment of the Mexican-Americans back in the 1960's.

MR Um-hum

RS: Finally after my father got his job back after the -- they went back after the strike, I said, "praise the Lord." Back then 1960, \$8.00 an hour was a lot.

MR: Um-hum

RS: I said, no more. So I got my bachelor's and master's and I was working on my doctorate when I got sick.

MR: Wow

RS: So.

MR: So you went to Texas A&I and then

RS: Texas A&I, Baylor. and Boston University.

MR: Oh, wow. Okay. Um, what was it like being part of Mexican-American Youth Organization in Kingsville?

RS: I was locked up. The A&I University did not allow it; the A&I University you were not allowed to speak Spanish

MR: Um-hum.

RS: Even though we were about almost 90 percent Mexican-American and, um, we were not allowed to speak -- even though they had administrators that were Mexican-Americans, Mr. Vidaure, finance officer. I was a member

of the band and I wanted a degree in music, so when I saw the injustices being done and they wouldn't allow Mexicans to speak Spanish; well, that's my tongue.

And, and now I'm certificated in sign language, I speak a little bit of German, Spanish and English. And, um, I look back sometimes and see my picture I say, "my God, what I did for my children." I think the people in, um, in Crystal City because they opened the roads because of them we, we now have a lot of things but sometimes the – I have a phrase that says (speaking Spanish) "the Mexican does nothing, and he doesn't let others do nothing as well."

Sometimes you give a Mexican-American an opportunity to do something -- it's not the Republicans, oh, no (laughter). You give the Mexican-Americans an opportunity to do something but yet -- there's a joke that reminds me of, um, we Hispanics, there's a guy checking the prison system. So he goes to fist prison he looks at it and it's well surrounded by barb wire, guards with weapons and dogs, and lights. He said, "who's here?" The Anglo's. "Oh, A+." He goes to the next one. The same way, well protected. The same way, the first one, "who's here?" The blacks. Oh, A+. But when he gets to the next one, the fences all torn down, the guards, you know, sleeping, the dogs sleeping as well. And they said, "my God, what's wrong here? Who's here?" Well, and then he saw two guys, one would climb up and the other one would pull him down. The other guy climb up and he'd pull him down too. And he said, "who's here?" Oh, this is the Hispanics. But why don't you all fix it? Oh, you see those guys? They've been like that for 20 years and they haven't escaped.

You know, they don't do anything for each other. So I don't got to worry about fixing it. I save money. It's true. Even though we made inroads in the 1970's, we still haven't progressed. It's a shame.

CR: What influenced you to transfer Baylor?

RS: The things that I saw, as I'm speaking to you now, one goes up, the other one pulls him down. And I remember that I was there and I had to take Baptist Geology, and they used to tell me, well, what's the Catholic point of view? And I would -- philosophically tell them my Catholic point of view.

I really enjoyed myself at Baylor. And the funny thing is I got my degree music therapy working with the handicapped, the deaf. And, I'm a very religious man. God works in mysterious ways. I found out when I went to Germany my son was deaf. I had already gotten certified in sign language, and before finding out my son was deaf. And my ex- wife, later, didn't believe in sign language. She, she believes that God will provide. Oh, yes. God will provide, but the Bible says you have to make an effort also. You have to meet God half way.

And in my master's, I wrote a book, a book on epileptic seizures. And when I was an officer in the Army, [inaudible] my career. I was about to be promoted to First Lieutenant when they found a brain tumor. And they stopped the tumor but it was a bleeding tumor the stopped the benign tumor because it was bleeding, but iron left behind caused epileptic seizures. And every once in a while I read the book.

CR: Um-hum

MR: Um-hum

RS: I remember the professor put in, wow this is the most, most informative book I ever read. And the Alice Independent School District one year give it to all its teachers. Because sometimes a student can be lethargic where ...a petite seizure like this, ignoring the teacher, and they get punished.

MR: Um-hum

CR: Yeah

RS: And they get graded for being

MR: Yeah

RS: Ignoring the teacher. Not knowing the student has a petite seizure. My seizures go from petite to grand mal, and that's every night.

MR: Oh

CR: Oh

RS: But I get them at night. Why? I don't know. I can, I am not like that Grinch that stole Christmas, but I cannot have Christmas trees. If they blink, oh my God, or they give me the test, follow the finger,

CR: Um-hum

MR: Um-hum

RS: I'll get a seizure.

MR: Wow

CR: For how many years has that happened?

RS: For 12 years.

CR: 12. Um-hum

MR: Wow.

RS: And I'm not the kind of guy to sit back and say what if. They call me El Teniente, The Lieutenant. And I see a colonel, but he calls me colonel because he knew I would have made colonel. Because I had so many schools coming out of my ears that -- I went to so many military schools and I was about to teach Spanish in West Point when this happened.

CR: Wow. Um-hum. Where you in Germany with the military?

RS: Yes.

CR: Okay.

RS: I even was started special orchestra conduct...I used to play violin. I was in the Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra; and the A&I Symphony Orchestra.

CR: That's wonderful.

RS: Playing violin.

CR: Okay.

RS: I love classical music. The three amigos: Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven (laughter). I love classical music. Are y'all from here?

MR: Um, not originally. I used to play the trumpet, um, not terribly well, but a little in college. I'm originally from Michigan. And Christine is originally from California. Yeah, but we moved down here a few years back and...

RS: I have an aunt in Coachella, and I have ancestors, Joslyn's, they were the first pioneers in Michigan.

MR: Oh, wow. What part of Michigan did--

RS: Oh my God, around the Lansing area.

MR: Oh, that's where I'm from.

RS: Really?

MR: Yeah. I am from Okemos, so -- just a little bit Southeast of Lansing, about maybe 15 miles.

RS: Joslyn is in Charles.

MR: Okay. Huh.

RS: I'm working on ancestry.com

MR: Yeah

RS: Oh, my God. Sometimes I stay up until about 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning, all night working.

CR: My dad is that way. He's working on ours and he loves it.

RS: I had pictures and I even dig into the, um, records of the Mexican records and my grandfather was an officer in World War I. So it follows in the family.

MR: And, did you find the military records from World War I?

RS: Yes.

MR: That's great. Yeah

RS: They keep sending me messages and I correct a lot of errors.

MR and CR: Um-hum

RS: And I correct spellings and because the Gringos -- you know where the word Gringo came from right?

MR: No, no.

RS: During the Mexican War in Monterey, Mexico, where most of my family comes from; the Gonzalez and the Silva's, the Anglo used to wear a green and gold uniform.

MR: Oh, yeah

RS: And instead of saying, "here comes the green and golds," they used to say Gringo. (Laughter) Gringo. Gringo. And the Gringos beat the Mexicans. (Laughter). So

MR: I know what you mean about the spelling errors. My last name before -- my grandfather changed it. It used to be Rabinovitz. And they changed it to Robbins. But when they came over to Ellis Island, it was Rabinowitz. And they just wrote it down wrong all these times until finally they -- I guess my grandfather changed it. Um, so it's interesting

RS: That's the way you spell Joslyn.

MR: Okay, so that's

RS: This is the way we spell it.

MR: And that's how it was?

RS: That's the way it's been spelled so many times. (Laughter).

MR: Yeah.

RS: It's like Silva, is like this, but it's supposed to be DeSilva.

MR: Oh, okay.

CR: Yeah.

RS: Because actually it's a Portuguese name.

MR: Hum

CR: Okay. Interesting.

RS: It's suppose to be the DeSilva, not Silva.

MR: Hum. DeSilva. Interesting.

CR: How many people lived around Chapman Ranch, do you think when you were..?

RS: On a regular season, they wanted to harvest -- they used even to have their own cotton gin.

CR: Oh

RS: Everything was self-contained. It's a miracle they didn't have a railroad line out there. But they had everything self-contained because they wanted to save a lot of money. Um, well the people coming from Salineno, I would say it would be about 60 people in one truck. So can you imagine how trucks came from all over the Valley? They came from as far as from Del Rio in Kinney County all the way to, to um Nueces County. So I figure that, um, in a regular season -- mostly on their cash cow was cotton. Because back then there were no, no, no Texas regulations; agriculture regulations. Back -- now a days they tell you, you plant so many sorghum, so many of cotton, so many of corn.

CR: Um-hum

RS: Back then, bang. They would plant so many of cotton. And the thing is, back then, they would harvest the first time, harvest the second time and harvest the third time. You know what that means, right?

CR: Going back through?

MR: Yeah.

RS: But, you know what that means? You don't get it? Why do you think they only harvest one time today?

CR: Um, because of the

RS: You're an anthropologist

CR: Because of the machine?

RS: No.

CR: No.

RS: Because if you -- it's like this cousin here, first cousin. And this first cousin here male, female, marry each other. What is the possibility of deformation? You see?

CR: Yeah, yeah

MR: Um-hum

RS: Now you know what I'm getting at?

CR: Yeah, I see what you're saying

RS: It's a possibility, some type of negativism down here -- well, look what happened with the czar of Russia, a child had what do you call it? He was a hemophiliac.

CR: Um-hum, yeah

RS: He would bleed to death, with one little scratch. Why? Because they were intermarrying into cousins. The same thing here

CR: Okay

RS: Back in the 1930's and 40's and 50's, up to the 60's, they would harvest the first, second and third. By the time they got to the third, there was a mutation. And by the time, they would get to here, the seed; if the first seed, the plant would grow to let's say five feet. The second time it would grow to four feet. The third time they would harvest, the plant would be a midget. Three to two feet and the product would be deformed. And the quality of the cotton would be on the negative side. Plus here would be positive, positive and here a possibility of either negative or positive [drawing examples while talking].

That's the reason they did away with, these. And now they only run it once and that's it. Plus, it also had the chance of the infamous-- I think that's the way you spell it; boll weevil. By the time this plant was ready again to, be ready to harvest again, it had been attacked by the boll weevil. And that spread the infestation of the boll weevil.

That's the same thing that's happening to watermelons right now. They're planting the watermelons and they grow, and you see huge watermelons, but the second time they're smaller. You see? And that's the same reason-- back then they used to have the people here for -- cotton season starts around the latter part of July. And they wouldn't leave until probably; the first northern comes (inaudible) the 15th of September and they were still harvesting cotton until the about the last part of September. See? July, August, September, three months.

CR: Where would people live during those three months?

RS: In the same houses.

CR: In the houses.

RS: Yes

MR: In the barracks.

CR: In the barracks. Okay. Everybody lived in the barracks?

RS: Yes.

CR: Okay

RS: But remember, there was no gas.

CR: Um-hum

RS: The only thing they had was their kerosene stoves. That's the reason the little boy got burnt.

CR: Were the barracks set up for individual families or was it kind of one big one and with different...?

RS: The barracks is like this, and they had rooms

CR: Okay

RS: Like this. And one door. If it caught fire in front, you were toasted. There was no back door.

CR: Yeah.

RS: And then it had like a sloping, um, roof, and like a stall in the front. And a walkway like cattle in front.

CR: Um-hum

MR: Um-hum

CR: Okay

RS: And you had to be up by 5 o'clock in the morning. And there was no electricity. The electricity was the kerosene lamps and, um, there was no mattress -- that's because you had to bring mattresses or something to put in hay. So you can pack it with hay. You had to bring an apparatus that looked like a mattress but it was loaded with hay.

CR: Okay

RS: And like I said, there was five families so that means there were five rooms. And there was a corridor that ran the length of the barracks and then that sloping, um -- what is it. A sloping roof like this, so when it rained it fell but still it ran back to the corridor, so you could go to the restroom. It was from here to -- where did y'all park, over there?

CR: Um-hum

MR: Yeah, yeah

RS: All the way through there.

CR: Wow.

MR: Wow.

CR: Okay

RS: My brother and I went down there to view the area and we saw, they're still out there.

CR: Really

MR: Hum

CR: Wow.

RS: And, and I said, "Jesus Christ," I said, "these people used to live like cattle."

CR: How long ago was it that you went out there to see it?

RS: Day before yesterday.

CR: Oh

RS: Monday

CR: Oh, okay. I didn't know if you meant a few years ago.

RS: No, no, no. (Talking over each other) there still there. And then we double checked – at every corner where there used to be places, barracks, there's caliche areas where the houses of the foremans used to be.

CR: Okay.

RS: And here, there used to be a papalote –

CR: Um

RS: Pa-pa-lo-te equal windmill [writing it out]

CR: Okay

RS: Lo-te has something to do with air.

CR: Okay

RS: Because (Spanish word) turkey, (Spanish word) corn, what else. It's an Aztec-- my archeology training is in Mesoamerica. And I've dug in Mexico and I've dug in Rome and I've dug in Koln, K-O-L-N. Why they call it K-O-L-O-N, I don't know. It's beyond me. (Laughter). But

CR: The caliche is still there. And the windmill?

RS: Yes.

CR: Okay.

RS: And when the sun comes out, eventually, we'll go out there and you will see the areas.

MR: Yeah, that would be great.

RS: It's like here, in this area here, Agua Dulce, this area here was an Indian Camp ground. And they, they used to -- it used to be like a meat packing company. They used to kill animals there and human remains also. In Agua Dulce

CR: Okay

RS: It's, um,

CR: Okay

RS: Let's, it's um, Agua Dulce. Right here.

CR: Wow.

RS: I discovered that site.

CR: Is it considered Alice, right there?

RS: No, this is part of Nueces County.

CR: Okay

MR: Okay

CR: County area

RS: Yeah. It's about right here.

CR: Okay. Wow. Okay. That's very interesting

RS: This is modern cemetery and right here and another old cemetery but nobody's been buried there lately.

CR: Okay. Do you know at Chapman Ranch, if anybody past away during the time of being there to do work? Do you know if they had a cemetery associated with Chapman Ranch?

RS: It's out there. Yes, yes

CR: The one that's in the field

RS: Yes

CR: Okay. I haven't been there yet.

RS: Yes

MR: Driven by there

CR: Yeah, we've driven by there

RS: And it has, um, a sign out there...

CR: Yeah, okay.

RS: And I know if Canales was taken -- I'll ask my, my -- she's related to me, Irene Canales-Figueroa. She lives in Harlingen and I'm going to Harlingen on the 27th for an appointment, a VA appointment, I'll go by her house and ask her what they did with the body of her brother. Because Roberto---Canales, the brother of the little boy that got burned, was raised by my father and mother as a brother and he also passed away about four years ago. I'll ask what they did with the body.

CR: Yeah

RS: See if they took him back to Salineno.

CR: Um-hum

RS: Like I said, Salineno used to be [inaudible] La Hacienda, you know what a La Hacienda is

CR: Yeah

MR: Um-hum

RS: Lake a big farm

CR: Yeah

MR: Um-hum

RS: It was founded around 1760. And it was founded by members of my family, in Salinas. And later it became a little town. And, um, and then my

grandfather was a Post Master and Justice of the Peace for 38 years. And he died in that position in 1961; 52 years ago. So what's your degree in?

MR: History.

RS: History?

MR: Yup

CR: Anthropology.

RS: Anthropology

CR: Yeah

RS: (Inaudible)

CR: We have fun (laughter)

MR: Yeah, yeah, we do.

RS: I go all over the place. Plus I took a course in paleontology.

MR: I guess I'll shut this off now, if that's okay. Thank you so much.