

South Texas Hispanic Farm Labor Communities Oral History Project

Interview with Rosa Linda Reynoso

Interviewee: Rosa Linda Reynoso

Interviewer: Jennifer Eiland

Corpus Christi, TX, March 28, 2014

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JE: Alright. So I'm conducting oral history, um, for the Hispanic Farm Labor Committee of South Texas. Today is March 28, 2014. I am Jennifer Eiland, E-I-L-A-N-D, and I am conducting the interview today and we're interviewing Rosa Reynoso.

RR: Yes. It's Rosa, middle name Linda, Reynoso.

JE: All right, thank you. All right, so I'm sure that, um, that Dr. Mark Robbins explained some of what we're doing, we're collecting oral histories for the Farm Labor Communities of South Texas and I explained further that we're kind of focusing on, um, the role the female within, within that community. So let's go ahead and start of with you.

Um, where did you grow up?

RR: I'm from Brownsville, Texas, born and raised and I'm moved to Corpus Christi in 1976.

JE: All right

RR: And I was born in 1958, so eighteen years within Brownsville.

JE: And, where did your parents say (inaudible) where they from Brownsville also?

RR: Um, no. My mother was from Los Fresnos, Texas and my father was from Mexico, Guanajuato.

JE: All right. So, um did you participate directly with the Farm Labor communities or was it your family that participated?

RR: It was our whole family; my mom, my dad, and myself and my siblings

JE: Okay

RR: As a family, the first year we were a family with other families in a big truck.

JE: I see, all right. So, um, did you -- was it just in Brownsville or did you continue while you moved to Corpus Christi

RR: Oh, I started going up, in the, going up North to do the labor in the migrant fields, I was a migrant. So in the fields we did labor and it started when I was in, um, fifth grade, which was probably like 1968. And I did all my middle school and my high school, going up (inaudible) so that was like seven years. And then I got married and I still did it like two years after.

JE: Um-hum. And that was -- you moved to Corpus Christi or

RR: Yeah, I was already in Corpus, so I went back in the summer and we went, and we just did it two years

JE: Up North?

RR: Up North.

JE: Do you remember what state that you went to or

RR: Oh, yeah. We had, we had, um the beginning years, like I said, we were part of a larger -- it was like one of those eighteen

JE: What

RR: Not that big but, big truck. And, um, the truck driver would recruit families and um, I don't know how that began as far as my father. I guess, he was self-employed mechanic, so I think one of the men that would go take their trucks or cars asked him if he knew how to do diesel truck. So, I guess he worked on that truck, of the truck driver and so that got the, the recruitment going as far as, "oh, I take families up North, you know. And they prefer large families cause all the kids would work.

JE: Oh, yeah.

RR: Yeah. So if you had nine kids, you would (laughter) you would have an advantage over three, four family members. So, um, so my dad was self-employed, my mom never worked. Um, my mom didn't know English or Spanish, I mean she knew Spanish, she didn't know English. My dad on the other side, even though he was from Mexico, he picked up some English. So he was bilingual. So he said he wasn't intimidated, he said yes. So he took us the first year up North and the first year I remember was, and the reason I remember so vividly, is because it was like the first man on the moon

JE: Hum

RR: Yeah

JE: Oh, wow.

RR: Yeah, that summer. So and then we were in Ohio. We went straight up to Ohio. That the was first year we went and it was in July. And like I said, it was like the very beginning trial run and then my -- we all liked it, to work. I mean it just like an adventure for us.

JE: Um-hum

RR: Even though it was hard, just going to field and knowing that we were contributing

JE: Yeah

RR: To something

JE: Yeah

RR: And we were going to get something back because my dad said, "when we get back, we'll buy clothes" (laughter) because we were, um, very, um, very low income.

JE: Um-hum

RR: We were nine in our family as far as siblings and my mom and my dad.

JE: Um-hum

RR: But at that time, we were, we were not nine, he were seven.

JE: Oh, okay so

RR: Because two were born while we were doing the, going up north. In fact, my youngest brother is from Findlay, Ohio, born.

JE: Oh, wow.

RR: Yeah. So my two youngest siblings were born during that period. So we were seven at first. (laughter)

JE:(laughter) so expanded

RR: Yes.

JE: All right. And how old were you, do you remember when you first went up there?

And

RR: Yes. I want to say I was like maybe 11, 10, 11.

JE: Okay.

RR: Um-hum. And, um, and we, because in my middle school in six grade, I was already going; that was like my second year.

JE: Um-hum

RR: And I was 11 then.

JE: Oh. All right, and um, were you the youngest or were there others.

RR: Oh, no, no, no. I was, actually I was the second oldest. So, all the others were younger than myself. And how we did that is, um, because I was the second oldest it was up to us to do more of the work; from my oldest brother, myself because we were like, (laughter) let me, let me explain; my brother and myself are, we are 11 month's apart.

JE: Oh, yeah

RR: And my sister, myself are, um ten month, no. My brother myself were ten months

apart. My sister, my – the next one coming after me is 11 months. So we were very close.
It was like 12, 11, 10, 9, 8 (laughter)

JE: Wow

RR: So, so we, um, we all, um the oldest one, we would all go -- even the, the little one
the six year -- five year-old, she would go and pick some tomatoes when he were doing
tomatoes

JE: And, it was a she

RR: She, uh-huh. Uh-huh. It was two of my oldest brothers and six of us girls.

JE: Okay. All right.

RR: Five were working, um, it was my brother -- I have to

JE: It's okay

RR: Anyway, but we were seven. Two brothers and, and what is it, five girls.

JE: Okay. All right, so that was the first summer you had done so, correct

RR: Yes, the first summer

JE: And, and the man was when the man walks on the moon so you very much

RR: Yes, I remember that. Yes. When they asked, you know where were you when Neil Armstrong, and this and that, I remember because I didn't, wasn't paying too much attention on national, I was just a kid. But I remember when he arrived in Ohio and it just happened that we arrived, it was a home of the brother of the truck driver, the recruiter. And he arrived there because this was going on and they wanted to make sure they didn't miss it. So we got there and his brother literally came out running and said, "hurry up, hurry up and its already" and it was on national TV. So and we're like, I don't know what they're doing so we were like running around and then we went inside and I remember walking inside and all the adults were in the living room watching this thing going on TV and they said, "a man on the moon" and I remember that's (inaudible, laughter). But we went to the very first year to do tomatoes.

JE: Tomatoes

RR: Um-hum

JE: Interesting.

RR: And, um pickles.

JE: Pickles.

RR Um-hum. Pickles first and then tomatoes.

JE: Okay. All right, so, um you said that you went to school when you were up there too,

correct? You said that, so you were at school the first summer as well.

RR: Yes. The first summer we were there because, first summer we didn't know, that's why we were going late, if you will, because it was July, remember the first man on the moon. So in July and we got there and we went to pick pickles, cucumbers. Cucumbers. And then, um, once we did the cucumbers, the season was over and we went in August to, um, tomatoes. And the tomatoes was in August, September. So we did mid-August to, um, September. And end of September, early October, and so we -- in September, on September 1st everybody had to be at school. And so, what happened the first year we all had to go to school because the parents would be fined if they didn't. So, um, I don't know the details how we got enrolled. I think, the schools reps went to the, to the, um farm houses where he were staying and they signed us up. And then the bus would come and pick us up and take us to school. And once there they would welcome us and take us. And it was a different, it was not with the same population, if you will, it was separate.

JE: So all the, all the, um, children of the

RR: The regulars, were, yeah. The regulars were separate and all the farm workers, kids were in special classes.

JE: So, were they in the same school? It was just in a different class

RR: Um-hum. Um-hum. Different class.

JE: Now, why do you think they separated, was it because, um, you were incorporating Spanish into the, into the education

RR: Well, I think more so because we weren't going to be there for the whole year. We were just in and out, if you will. We were just going to be there for few weeks. And I think like the second year and the third year, the schools, um, the schools they took us to like the basement of this church. Because the school didn't have for the older ones. Yeah

JE: I see. All right. So you were at school until, until the end of October

RR: Yeah, Um-hum. About middle of October. It just depends if we, the, um, work.

JE: Yeah.

RR: Yeah. It just depends because the weather; if it rained, we would be delayed. We couldn't work so, you know it just depend on the weather. Mid-to late October.

JE: Okay. All right. So, um, I didn't ask earlier, you said your father was bilingual, but your mother only spoke Spanish. Um, so were you raised in a bilingual family?

RR: Oh, yes. It was, well actually it was, I have to say it was Spanish primary language; Spanish. And my father -- because he never spoke English, only unless he had to.

JE: Um-hum

RR: I'm just saying he picked it up

JE: Yeah.

RR: He kind of knew. But he never talk to us in English, it was all Spanish.

JE: I see. When you went to school, um, were you and your siblings able to, you know,

RR: Communicate? Oh, yeah

JE: (Inaudible) Spanish I mean with English no problem

RR: Yes. Because when he went to, um, even in the regular school, we came home, home our Brownsville, it was just, um, they teach us English, right. And, um, but everybody would speak, it's boarder town, so it's Spanish. So, but we picked up the English. Now, when we went up North, it was all English.

JE: Um-hum

RR: So we had to do the English. So we were bilinguals, we were. Now the only thing is that, um, is that school, as soon as we got out of school up north, as soon as we got out of school at three, it was like the bus would take us -- say for example it was 3:30, quickly, change and go to the field and help your parents.

JE: Wow.

RR: That's it.

JE: So, um, so you (inaudible) were all day such as you work up early, went to school

right after you got out of school you went to the fields. And how long were there till, usually work, how long was the day for you in the fields?

RR: In the fields we were, as soon as we got out of school we went to work and we would stay there really until sundown sometimes. It was till, it was already dusk.

JE: Okay. Now, um, what were your experiences in the schools up North? Um, did you have positive feelings about it? What were your experiences?

RR: You know, um, my memory of the schools is um, they tried to teach us, it was kind of the same. Like, like I told you, you know, I was already in my middle school. So when we were in middle school, they tried to teach us the same subjects; history, you know, math, English, Science. They tried to, they tried as much as they could to show us because when we came back, they, they would give us like a grade of what we stood. And so we would take that to the incoming home school.

However, once we got back to Brownsville, you know, and this is like October, you know late October, we would have to still, um, we would have to stay an hour after school. All the migrant children, kids, would have to stay an hour after school just to make sure that we were aligned as far as the subject areas.

JE: Okay. Um, did you -- were all the students who went to school up North, were they, um would you guys get along, was

RR: They were different. (laughter). We were all different and because, um, we knew each the other as far as the truck, you know when we went with the trucker, it was three or four different families, large families. And we were, we would go up North and one

truck or two trucks, depending, and, um in the back we would, we would all be in the back and of course the driver is in the front. And it was two and a half day trip.

At that time the speed limit was 55 and 50 for trucks. So, and then we would have to stop. So, um it was um, different families we got to meet them, you know on this summer, but when we went to the school we would find out other families from surrounding, um, farm house. You know, farm houses and so that was, that was interesting because some were from Cotulla, some were from, you know, MaCallen, some were from, you know, different parts of the state.

JE: Um-hum

RR: And, and so it was interesting to see how, how wide spread from the state you know families would go up North. It wasn't just like the Valley kids.

JE: Yeah (laughter)

RR: And in fact when we would say, "where are you from?" "You know we're from Brownsville." "Oh Del Valle" You know from the valley. And I would, "where you from?" We're from so-and-so. We're from Cotulla. We're from, you know, Robstown" (laughter). So, and, and as kids, I didn't have that mind set of, oh it's this geographic or the region. You know, but we got along because we were kind of alike, if you will. We were there for only a short time.

JE: I see. All right. So, um, when you were, when you were at the school, um, were there any experiences to where um, they forced you to only speak English or were they accepting of bilingual communication?

RR: Most of the time in the -- I remember some of the, one or two of the, of the instructors were like Hispanic and I think they would ask if somebody knew, and I think they would recruit from the houses, on houses if there was somebody, but most of them were not. I mean, all the years that I went through with my school years, most of them were only English speaking. So, yes, they would tell us you know to try to speak only English because they didn't understand Spanish.

JE: Um-hum

RR: And so it was just you know to communicate with them we would have to do the English only.

JE: Okay. But it wasn't, it was just simple we need to communicate.

RR: Yeah, just a communication. It's not anything like they forced it.

JE: Oh, okay.

RR: It was just like, you know we did to do it. Because we, we wanted to, you know

JE: That's good. Um, all right so just a few more questions on the education front. You said that of course you had to come back to Brownsville at the end of this, um you had to stay an hour past your day. Um, was it difficult to re-acclimate back tow Brownsville or was it a pretty smooth transition?

RR: No, um it was to me, as I was growing up, the bad years to me , I say is because those years were bad for me because like, I would come back and everybody would have their picture already taken in the yearbook. My picture was never in the yearbook. My senior year was like, my picture was not in the yearbook. So all the yearbooks it's like I was never there (laughter) which I was. And, um, but let me go back to the English only. Up North they didn't enforce us it was just to communicate whereas when we came back to Brownsville, for some reason they wanted us to speak English and we couldn't speak Spanish. They want us -- because I think they wanted us to be able to communicate if we were out of the, of the, um, out of the state or somewhere.

JE: Oh, wow. Okay, so up North it was more like a, we could speak English so that we can communicate on the same level whereas at Brownsville it was a necessity

RR: Yes

JE:(inaudible) necessity.

RR: Yes. It's part of the like the curriculum, or whatever (laughter). It's like you have to learn English. Now, as far as, of what years, like I said my year book was never there. Um, the bad part for me, now, I'm talking as myself, I don't know about others, but, um I was in six grade, seventh grade, they put me at, for example there was 6-1 to 6-15 as far as classes, levels. And I was put on 6-11. And then on seventh grade, it was the same. 7-1 to 7-15, I was put on 7-11. When I was in eighth grade, because I did so well on those two others which I thought you know I was, I felt I was like wasting my time in 6-11 and 7-11 so when I went back for eighth grade, they put on 8-15.

JE: Oh.

RR: In the highest.

JE: Good.

RR: Because, um, I would, I would you know, I would do everything to make up being out of the school for migrant. But I would also bringing back my grades.

JE: I see.

RR: That I did out there. So, so they put me in 8-15. It was just kind of, let me tell you that it was, it was to me like they said, "Oh migrants. We have to start them here at the bottom or middle" where they thought, they're never going to catch up. And that was the feeling I got in sixth and seventh grade.

JE: They underestimated

RR: Um-hum. So I proved them wrong (laughter).

JE: Yeah.

RR: So from eighth grade I was at the highest, 8-15

JE: Oh, wow. Um, so do you feel benefited from your time, per education wise, um, up North or was it something that you, um made you stronger because you had to work

harder?

RR: I think, um for me school has, had never been a problem. Others may have had problems, but, um from me, actually my other sisters, my brothers and sisters, I don't see that they had any problems either. And maybe it was our way, mom and dad how they raised us because, let me go back way to beginning, the reason he said he took us the first year, was show us what life is without an education.

And he would always -- every year and, and then every year he would take us he would say, "I'm bringing you back because if you don't finish school this is the type of work you'll be doing." Which is pretty (laughter) that's too much, but he really wanted to let us you know how important education was. And I think all of us, you know, got it, got the point.

JE: So, um, so education was, of course, important for your father. Was there something your mother was really strong about, too?

RR: My mother was the opposite because, I had -- and you have to understand her, they was an at home mom. She never, and I'm not saying she was ignorant, but she knew Spanish. She knew it well. But she didn't, never got, she got to pick up some words in English, I think she understood English but she never did the, the spoken word. She never...

JE: It's hard for (inaudible)

RR: Yeah. So for her, it was like you know whatever or you know but my dad did, he told us, that showed us work ethic.

JE: Um-hum

RR: Because we were like there in the morning and he was like we're going to stay here, we're going on to finish this. And he told us, by this time next week, we should be done with this; three acres, ten acres whatever and then we're going on to that one. So we had like, okay we got to hustle because we have to finish this.

JE: Um-hum. All right. So, um, your mother, did your mother participate in the, in the actual farm work as well

RR: My mom would like when, um when we would all go in the morning – this is before school, okay. Before there was school we would go, all of us would go to work. However, by 11 o'clock or so, and we could work in fields that were close to the houses, so if it was a little bit further, she would go like, leave like at 10, 10:30. So it was only the first part of the morning. And by mid-morning she would go so she could have lunch ready for us, she would cook.

And then we would all go home and eat lunch and then come back in the afternoon. And, um, in the afternoon, it would depend on days, you know say, for example, Tuesday, Thursday, she would go with us. On Monday, Wednesday, she wouldn't because by that time -- you got to understand, there was no washing machines, electric, you had to do the rolling (inaudible, laughter). The washing machines were the old fashion, when you had to put in the water, take out of water, ring the ringer and stuff. So she would have to do and we were nine, seven and two, that's nine. So she had to do the washing the clothes, laundry.

JE: That's a full time job, I'm sure

RR: Yes. So there was some days where she would, some days where she wouldn't. And, um and then, um, I would tell her, you know my mom because I would tell her just leave it there and we'll do it on Saturdays if we get out early on Saturdays. Or if not we'll do it Sundays, the laundry. So she would some of it during the week and then by the time the weekend, it was already another load and we would take care of that.

JE: I see

RR: But she would cook and she would do, in the evenings, she would go for a little bit and on the day that she could and then should would do the dinner.

JE: Okay. All right. So she

RR: My mom, she would cook for everybody.

JE: All right. Um, now, you said that your father, one of the reasons why he took you there was to show you kind of possibly could happen if you don't focus on education. Did he come from migrant farm, family as well as? Is that something he did growing up?

RR: My dad, yes. His background is -- and he always tells us stories about how he grew up and he might have been like eight or nine year-old when his dad would wake him up at five in the morning and he would have to go feed the cows. And you know, take care of them. And, um, because they were and and -- of course, you know, the milk, milk the cows, and so he would do that early.

And so he was raised also in kind of like a farm and so he knew what it was as far as work but, um, his dad died early, I think he was ten years-old when he lost his dad and ever since then -- and he was the oldest I think, that he was the oldest and right next to him was another brother and so it's kind of like it fell on him being the oldest to kind of take care of the, of his family.

JE: Okay.

RR: So, that's how the background of his work ethic.

JE: All right

RR: It's not like I had it hard, you're going to have it harder. No, it's, I had it hard and you need to know how life is without an education. Because he didn't have a chance to do it. And he was, you know he was somebody and he is, I'm sorry, but at that time he would have been like, um he would have picked up because he's, he picked up English on his own.

JE: Very smart

RR: But he never went to school.

JE: Yeah, um

RR: He dropped. He had to because he had to take care of family.

JE: Yeah. He wanted to make sure you didn't have to do that. You were, you guys can focus on

27:09

RR: Then we were grounded as far as education.

JE: All right. Okay, um very interesting.

RR: Um-hum

JE: Your mother, did she come -- you said that your dad came from Mexico, where is your mother

RR: My mother was in Los Fresnos, Texas. And she also worked while she was young. And then when she met my dad, she didn't; he didn't let her work. Because like I said, my dad, was used to taking care of the family. And she never worked when -- we never saw her work. And she was always there, in the, at home, when we got out of school, in the morning, you know, she was there. She would, you know, they would make sure we would did our homework, but she was never -- she didn't know, so we couldn't ask her. It was just like she made sure that were doing something as far as school work.

JE: Yes, so even though she wasn't pressing it quite as much as your dad, she understand the importance of is doing your homework.

RR: Yes

JE: That's good. All right. So, um, you said, you mentioned earlier that at first you were really -- you were happy, I guess you were excited...

RR:(laughter) excited.

JE: So was this something you had, um, I guess, I guess did the excitement leave at some point

RR: It kind of like -- well, you know how it is. You do something, you know new, oh, it's like, you know what are you expecting. So your gonna look forward to it, okay let's seek an adventure. And then you know what it is. The second year it's kind of like a third year and becomes, it becomes like a routine. And the reason I say it becomes a routine, because after the first year it was July, the second year we're out of school by May.

We had to get out of school early. So we were pulled from school in May and then to go work because then what we did was -- when he said that he was leaving earlier the following year, and my dad said okay so we got ready, because we did the other seasonal work which was the cherries. We went to Michigan. We got pulled out early to go do cherries. And then, um that was like from, you know, May, end of May, to June and then July the cucumbers and then in August, the tomatoes. So we did cherries and strawberries. Those are kind of together cause it's not always just cherries, cherries. You got strawberries growing at the same time. So we go do strawberries, we do cherries. We do strawberries, we do cherries. So, and it was a lot, a lot of work but with several families.

JE: All right, now

RR: And, and it was Michigan. And then Indiana for strawberries.

JE: Oh, okay. Now, um you said you started around 10, 11-years-old, um, did you do this throughout school or how old were you, you think, when you stopped?

RR: When I stopped? Okay I was already 20, 21 maybe; my last year.

JE: Okay. Um,

RR: 21.

JE: All right. Now um, did you stop because were doing something else or you decided that were no longer just want to do?

RR: I just stopped because, um, I think the last year it was like, um, I wanted something different and by that time I had two girls.

JE: Um-hum

RR: Um-hum. Already had two children. My second was when I was 21. So, um that was my last year and I didn't go after that cause I just tried to see if I could get a full time here cause it was hard. Once you have a -- little ones, I mean babies (laughter) it was hard to go up North.

Like I said, you can't -- there was no daycare, so, my mom, I didn't want -- she already had enough in her hands to do all (laughter) in addition to take care of babies.

Um, so. Although, she did take care of my first one, my first daughter because she and my little brother were almost the same year, so. My youngest brother, I told you, was born in Findlay, Ohio.

JE: You mentioned that.

RR: Um-hum. So,

JE: All right. Um, now you mention moving to Corpus in 1976, you were -- so when you moved to Corpus was it you and your family that moved to Corpus?

RR: No, just by myself.

JE: And were you still at that time doing migration – migrant farm work?

RR: Yes. Well, when I came in 1976, I didn't think I was going to do it again, because I was already married and came over here. But then in 1977, the Summer of 1977, it was like, we were a close family. We did this area after year after years, and then my mom, you know, she said, "aren't you going to go?" And I said, "I, I'm already married, I don't know." She said well tell him and see if we can go. So -- and, you know what, and the reason I told my husband is so we could see. I was like my dad did to me, I was doing to him. You know we should go, we should go and you know we'll make some money and we'll see, you know, so you could see -- cause he had never been out of the state. And so he agreed and so we went and like I said we went for like two years.

JE: Oh, wow.

RR: Let me see, it was '77; '77,'78,'79. I don't know the 80, I can't remember if we did the 80, but for sure it was three years.

JE: Okay. So, um, what, what was his thoughts on it (laughter)?

RR: Well, he had never been, so I think the first year he was kind of excited and see what's was going on you know, cause he knew I went every year. And then, um so he kind of -- what I think what he liked is the family-style work environments. Cause it was like, yes, it was work but it was family, you know. So I think that's what he liked and that's why we went but like I said after we had two kids, it's hard.

JE: Yeah. Do you feel like you and your family, especially when you were growing up, this, um, this experience of working together did it bring you closer together as a family?

RR: Oh, definitely. I think, um, we, um we all knew -- it's like, how can I explain, it's like you're all in it together, you know what to expect, you know what you have to do. Same goals, same, you know, if we're working towards this all together and we need to finish by you know we want to go home all together, it's that feeling, and we want finish this work so we can go back home to Texas. So, it was like unity. Unity, that's what it was. We felt like one, instead of ten. (Laughter).

JE: Exactly, especially if there --

RR: Cause, yeah, we had the same goals. We just wanted to work, we all wanted to you know, of course get paid. The more we worked the more, the more we got paid. And the

more we did, we finished faster and we could go home faster.

JE: Yeah, I'm sure.

RR: That never happened but (laughter)

JE: So I still have a goal (laughter). All right, um, so, in your experience while, while working in this farm labor community, um, what, what's a funny story? Do you remember any funny stories that happened while you were over there and anything interesting that stands out to you?

RR: I can tell one that's, that's not funny at all

JE: Okay, okay

RR: Serious. I mean this is like what, happening here. (Laughter)

JE: Yeah

RR: Um, um, the first years I told we were going with a truck driver and we went from state to state. From Michigan to Louisiana to Ohio. Okay, then, that happened for, oh gosh, oh, in '73, I want to say in '73 or '74. Um, I think '73 is the year that, um we broke from that truck driver and we went to, um, California. We drove to California. This is not the serious, but I am still giving you some background. In '73, we went to California, my dad has his sister in California, she still lives there, and um, this is 1973, so we drove. What did we know about crossing the desert?

We had a station wagon. In a station wagon, and it was hot and he didn't know that the desert was that long, like I said, 55 miles an hour was the, you know -- we would see barrels on the road and we thought -- and it was water but it wasn't for humans. It was for the cars, so, um and I remember when we got to El Paso, and we're still in Texas, it was so hot. We stayed, and I remember, we stopped to, my dad stopped to rest cause it was late at night and it was so humid, so hot. And, um, I mean, I remember the feeling, I could still feel the, you know, the, the, um, the environment, the weather it was like sticky. And so from there the next day we moved on and we went to California. And in California, this is kind of scary, but this is not the scary one, once we got there, it was a little different in California. So we stayed with my aunt, all of us. She took us in and we were there June, July. We, we went back mid-August. I think that was the only year that we went back in time for school. But because you had to be at least 16, I think, to work. Because they had, it was automated, they were machines. It was wasn't like when we would go to the fields.

JE: Um-hum

RR: I mean, we would still go to the fields, but you had to be on top of this machine. It was machines and so the tomatoes, the tomatoes -- June and July I worked with my aunt in a warehouse. It was just, you know, some other type of work. It was only myself and that's it, and my dad. My mom didn't work so it was just me and my dad and and not even my brother, he didn't work; my oldest brother.

So, then when we did go in, late July and August to the tomatoes, it was automated. So we were on top of this -- it was like a trailer and there was a tractor and then a trailer attached to it and it was like a U platform, and the front of the tractor would pull the tomatoes plants, everything even some dirt. The whole thing. So on the

assembly line type, all of us workers, on the U and so the first one would try to get, move, try to separate you know the good tomatoes with the the rest of the junk. And so, and of course it was fast. It went as fast as tractor was going. So sometimes we would tell him to slow down because he was just (inaudible) and so anyway, one of those -- I just remembered the one next to me, cause we were just like over here just you know like you're focus only in front of you and it's coming by and your kind of grabbing the

JE: Um-hum

RR: Well, there was a snake. They had pulled up, I think I was a rattle snake, I don't know. It was a snake that, that was pulled up with the, um, plants. And so I, you know, so we're working and then -- and so they hit my left shoulder and I'm like, "Oh, a snake." So I kicked the other one on my right and that's how we would tell everybody to be careful. But that was something different, something interesting. I was the only one year we went to California. (laughter)

JE: Was it because of that or just

RR: Because we all couldn't work.

JE: Oh, I see.

RR: You know it was so different. So that was the year '73. And then '74 we went back up North but we went to North Dakota. From '74 through, I think we did it for the sixes years or seven, eight. So '74, '75, '76 all that time we went to North Dakota by ourselves. We found a, um I don't know how my dad found it with some company recruiting family,

but this were like individual family to work for individual farm growers.

And, we were in North Dakota, Colfax; C-O-L-F-A-X. Little, little bitty town. And, um, and the, um farmer, he's deceased now, but we established a relationship that first year to where he said you need to come back next year. Cause he loved the way we worked. It was his first year growing sugar beets. That was '74 when we went it was his first year growing sugar beets and our first year working sugar beets. So that was interesting, we both learned and so we said you need to come back next year. So all the following years that was our last, last place. We just went, every year we went to North Dakota.

Now, this is the serious part. One of the those years and I can't remember, um probably '70 -- I had, I still -- I had my youngest and I had the little -- it was probably 1979, um, no I'm sorry it was '80 because she was month's old, the second one, so it was 1980, my last summer. Because I remember my second one was month's old she was is born on October '79, so it had to be 1980. And, um, where the place we stayed, it was a farmer and he had bought another farm; farmer's ranch. Okay. So this he said y'all can stay in this house which is the other ranch that he had bought and it was another farm, farmer's -- and it was a big -- we love that house so much it was, it was like two-story, it had a balcony and it had everything.

He had put in, like cots you know the metal cots and um some sofas and, um so he had everything for us. And so we were, and so appreciative -- we established that kind of relationship, our family with his family. And so, um, so that house also had a basement. And he told us, here's a basement, if you go down -- and we went down, wow it's so cool. And it was the summer, remember this was all the summer. Oh, it's so cool, you know cool as in cool. You couldn't feel hot. Oh it was so nice and cool we don't need air condition. It was like and we didn't have any air condition anyway, but we felt like oh this is nice temperature.

And, um so, well, we were in the fields and, um, and we were working all of us except my mother and my, my two daughters and my little brother and my youngest sister, they stayed with her. So we were in the fields and like all of a sudden they start getting cloudy. We didn't know it was going to rain, you know. We thought it was just like showers, they said. Well, we see this rain and we're like okay it's going to rain, it's to rain. And this dark, dark -- starting getting dark and we're like the opposite way and our truck is over here and are we're opposite's and this is like an acre, so it's kind of far. And so we were like oh my God. This is not just rain. We didn't know anything about tornadoes. So, we were like, do you think this is -- and my dad was like, "let's go, everybody let's go." Cause it start getting -- I mean you can feel the rush and everything. So we were like, okay. You know and everybody was like, just finished whatever you have, leave it there we'll just finish later. So we all went back to our truck. And this is like a pickup with a camper truck,

JE: Um-hum

RR: Regular truck. So we all got in and my dad and my brother in the front and we were in the back and so we, we drove away and this is farm lands. There is nothing

JE: Nothing

RR: But you know fields, fields gravel roads, fields, fields gravel road. And so finally -- and we were an away from the house. We didn't even make it to the house and then we were -- okay because we started, you know, the wind pushing us and stuff we could feel it. So my dad went to nearest ranch, the nearest ranch house, and those ranch houses they were like gravel road and then kind of like a, um ditch and you go down and

they had like, um, trees on the driveway before you get to the actual house. So we just went in there and he said, he really didn't -- we all didn't know what it was. So we went in there, we thought it was going to be like hail or something so we went in there to protect ourselves, the truck from the hail and everything that we thought because it was but it wasn't just us. So we went in the driveway and, this gravel driveway, with trees on each side and, um, and then we started hearing the rush and it was just pushing the truck. We could feel it like this going back and forth, back and forth.

And, um and we were -- we all got like, I think we were speechless. We were like, what is this? We started like, oh no, what is this? What is this? So and then it's over, just like it that, it's over. So my dad pulls back and then we go -- reverses. Gets on gravel road, main road, again to go to the house because by now we can't go back to work because it's all wet.

JE: Yeah

RR: So we start heading home and we see all the fields. The sugar bee's were like three -- that high, leveled to the ground. You couldn't see any of the sugar beet'. It was all flat. And we were wondering, what happened? So by the time -- at this time we're thinking about my mom and the kids. And so we're like, hope she took them down to the basement. I hope nothing happened. So we got home and sure enough she gets out and she's all scared and the baby was crying and um, she was like what was that? You know -- I did take them down because -- some of them, my middle sister, she had to go upstairs cause it was just because it was a two-story house.

JE: Um-hum

RR: And they came down and they went down to the basement, they did go down to the basement. And, um and we turned on the news, it's a tornado.

JE: Wow. So you know --

RR: A tornado. That was the scary. That was a scary one. We had never been through a tornado and we were out in the fields (laughter).

JE: Wow. They didn't warn you, like, um

RR: Well, we were in the fields

JE: Oh, that's right.

RR: How did they even warning when you're out in the fields and you don't have any communication? We don't have Ipods or (laughter)

JE: Yeah. I mean, um, I guess up North they would never think to tell someone from Texas what a tornado is because, you know a lot of us live in this area where you see it rarely.

48:00

RR: Yeah. Yeah. Our land, I mean, I don't, I don't know if they knew that we didn't know (laughter)

JE: Yeah. It's just like, if you can like, explain a hurricane to somebody

RR: Yes, yeah (laughter).

JE: (laughter, inaudible) -- so pretty much chance about that somehow

RR: So that was the scary one.

JE: All right. Oh, wow.

RR: Yeah.

JE: Um, so were the, um, the sugar beets recoverable or were they just gone.

RR: They were gone.

JE: They were gone

RR: They were gone

JE: They were gone

RR: They were destroyed. Now in that area

JE: Yeah. So, okay

RR: He had other fields. So we -- I mean he had just, I think the foreman just had to do the insurance, claim about those, how much acres he had lost. Because it was only like, a certain area and there was some the other fields on this side that didn't get damaged, they just got wet.

JE: I see. Wow. And that was probably the last year, right? If it was like '80

RR: It was, um, '80, Um-hum. The last year.

JE: All right.(laughter)

RR: Yeah, that was my last year (laughter) that was a scary one. I think after that I didn't want to (inaudible). Although my family, um, my parents and the rest of my, my younger sisters, um, because I was the only one married, they went for the following year, '81. They did go one year after I did.

JE: So, um, after, one year after you did, the whole family stopped going

RR: One more time. They went one more time and then that's it. By '82, nobody was going any more

JE: Um, was it because wasn't a family unit any more or was it just, they decide they were done.

RR: They decide they were done. Cause this time everybody is like in high school and they're, you know. I had already graduated, and the other were already in high school. So

it was like, um, you know, they already know. They're already know they're going to graduate.

JE: All right. So you mention that your family had this great relationship with the, with the last six years, with the individual farmer that took you on. Um, what was your relationship with the previous, um, farm managers

RR: Okay. Before I lose my thought on this one,

JE: Oh, go ahead.

RR: The last year you said we were done, um because also in 1980, when I left -- 1980 and '81, my brother, my oldest brother, remember, I was the oldest, my oldest brother stayed up North in North Dakota. He stayed up there to go to North Dakota State School of Science.

JE: Oh.

RR: And he got an associates degree over there. North Dakota State School of Science. And he stayed there 1980, '81, and in '82 he came back, he graduated in '82. We went there, all of us as a family went in 1982 but it was just to see him graduate.

JE: Oh, wow

RR: And then we came back

JE: So you, so you went as initially as farm laborers but then you came back to watch a family member graduate.

RR: Yes

JE: With a degree

RR: And he lived in Fargo, North Dakota.

JE: I have family from there.

RR Um-hum.

JE: All right, um, so what, what, what did he do with his degree?

RR: Well, he came back, of course to Texas, and he just stayed because he was already married about that time too. So he and his wife stated so that he would get a degree from North Dakota. And then he came back to Brownsville and he went to work with the school district because he was a mechanic. And, and he just work with the school district in the transportation department.

JE: Okay.

RR: He was one of the supervisors

JE: Oh

RR: He was one of the supervisors.

JE: Interesting.

RR: Um-hum

JE: Um, did any, um, other of your family members go to college or?

RR: Um-hum. My, um okay, it's him my oldest and myself, of course, and I'm here at Del Mar

JE: Um-hum

RR: And then my other sister after me, she's in Brownsville in the school district, also. And she's a teacher. As well as the sister after her, she's also in the ISD.

JE: You guys are all in the education.

RR: Um-hum. Both of them are school, in the school. And then, um, the other brother in between them, he, he passed.

JE: Oh, I'm sorry.

RR: He didn't get to, you know, he didn't get to do it but then, um -- so after those two, I have, um, my other sister is in, she stayed in Chicago, Illinois. She's living in Chicago,

Illinois but she's -- although she has some, it's her husband doesn't let her work because she has a handicap

JE: Oh

RR: Handicap, down syndrome child. So she has to care for him.

JE: Yeah. It's a full time job

RR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. She has to care for him. So and then the other one after that, is in the U.T. Brownsville.

JE: She, she goes to school there

RR: She works there.

JE: She works -- wow (laughter)

RR: She got her bachelor's degree. She got her bachelor's degree because she married, um, her husband was in the Army, so in Killeen in central, central, um, central, I, central I don't know, I don't remember but she got her bachelor's now she work at U.T. Brownsville.

JE: Wow.

RR: Um-hum

JE: So do you think that the emphasis that your father had such so strong in education

RR: Oh, yes

JE: I guess that lesson really hit home

RR: Definitely. Cause he want to see all of us working somewhere in -- and he would tell us, you don't being working out in, in the sun and

JE: Yeah

RR: You need a job where you know it's, it's comfortable, you don't have to be in fields, you know; so he want us all -- and my youngest brother, the one that was born in Ohio, he hardly really worked the fields but he but he was around, he's a mechanic and he's in Brownsville and but he works with the, um, he's in Brownsville but works for the San Benito ISD.

JE: Of course. (laughter)

RR: ISD (laughter)

JE: Of course (laughter)

RR: Of course, I've got one, two, three, well, University of Brownsville; three ISD's and one University of Brownsville.

JE: Wow.

RR: U.T. Brownsville.

JE: That's great.

RR: Yeah. So, yes definitely what we did up North, it had an effect on us, all of us. And my, my sister in Chicago I mean because of her son, but otherwise she probably be working.

JE: (Laughter) exactly. But that's, that's a full time job, um, alone. It's probably the most difficult job.

RR: Um-hum

JE: Yup. All right. Well, that was really interesting. So I would say, um, they didn't just get jobs, those who were able to, did they go enter into education.

RR: Yes. Well, after my two brothers were ISD'd one is San Benito the other Brownsville and the two sister's ISD and then my -- University of Brownsville, so. And then myself,

JE: Yeah

RR: (Laughter) six of us. Yeah

JE: Wow. More than half. Wow, very interesting.

RR: Um-hum

JE: Before you moved on to these other questions, do you have any else to say about, um, about your experience that those last two years or the last year

RR: Okay, as far as female roles, what it played? Remember that I told you that I had married, and went for three years up North and um so those three years it turned, because remember it was just my mom who would do all the meals and stuff

JE: Yeah

RR: And so we would just go and I would just help my mom with the laundry. But when I got married, (laughter) we would go up there and then I had to do meals and stuff and laundry and the children because I had two kids after that. So that part, you know, in um, I had to do it anyway, but it was different because you know I had a family to take care of now. And was just hard, you know, that was difficult as far as the time

JE: Yeah.

RR: You know. It takes a lot whether your work in the field all day -- even though my mom was taking caring of them during the day, but coming back and you know, you know it was, oh, let me fix something really quick and she was like, "No you can leave" -- and I said no but, you know, it was something different. We had to do

something different so -- and then, um the laundry it was like increased (laughter) with my two little you ones and my, ourselves you know and that was kind of like the also the um responsibilities, in addition to the work ethic. We all had responsibilities.

My older brother when he, when he married and then he stayed over there, he faced responsibilities, also. So it's kind of like he was showing us; not only the work but you're gonna have a family, you're gonna have to be responsible, you're gonna have to, you know, time management, you're gonna, you know -- so all that is, it just blends in with, with everything, with the work

JE: All right so it seems like one you got married your, your role -- it didn't, I guess changed it transformed, it became more

RR: It did. Yeah cause it was added responsibilities for me.

JE: I see. Um, I bet your mom was happy (laughter) with some of the help

RR: Yes.(laughter). Well, she was -- remember like I said, she was happy even though I was married because we were still like a family. It wasn't just me now, it was more. And so as long as I was there, I think, she, she really didn't, you know, mind it because I would take care of my own but she loved that I was still there

JE: Yeah.

RR: You know. And I like the last year, you know, it was my brother who had stayed up North, I, I didn't go so that's why my dad and my mom, they only went one more year. Cause it really wasn't the same. Once, once, um, you know,

JE: Yeah

RR: We stopped. We stopped (laughter). Everybody had; everybody shifted, you know and besides they had already -- all of them were in high school graduating almost.

JE: Oh, wow. Yeah everyone had moved on become, um to get to the (inaudible, laughter) -- to

RR: to finish their -- they weren't, finish graduation and then went on to college.

JE: Oh, okay. All right, um, just a little bit more, um, few more questions. Thank you so much it's been an hour almost an hour here. Thank you for being patient with us. It went by so fast. (Laughter)

RR: Yes, it did. And I've got so much more.

JE: I know, I know, I know. Um, I'm sure they can always revisit

RR: Oh, yes. If you, if you need to, you know, he can meet again and, um after work or whatever,

JE: Yeah.

RR: You know, I love sharing my stories about migrant, being n migrant.

JE: Very interesting. Um, now um, you listed of course -- you provided one of the scary things that happened and you said that were, it was um, kind of -- at first kind of exciting when you first went, um was there -- anything beside that scary story that you told me and snakes (laughter). Was there anything else that stand out to you, any other event that stands out to you or?

RR: There's several little events um the one thing I did, I did like is like um, for example when he were in -- well, it was in a, like I said we never worked in the city it was always little farm cities, (laughter) suburbs, little suburbs farm lands want even a suburb because you were like in a farm you know, where there will always be you know like ten miles out or whatever and, um but we would go to that little city and then on Saturday's they would take us to the bigger cities. And one of the ones that I really, really remember it was Traverse City, Michigan. Traverse City, Michigan because it had a free zoo.

JE: Oh

RR: And we had to go under a tunnel with street to get there. I remember that (laughter). We parked like in this parking lot and we'll all got down, and this was when we were with the truck driver so we had to rely on the truck driver to take us. So he said, you know, this, like this weekend we're going to go to Traverse City. And we all looked forward for this weekend, so we all worked hard. And so the weekend came we would, we would only work, depending on the weather, we would only work half day. If it rained during that week, we had to postpone and work the whole day to make up.

But that was a good week so we worked half day we got ready and he took us to Traverse City and we parked in a big parking lot and he said (inaudible) we could see you know the fence and stuff and it was like across this four, four-lane divided street.

And we were like how are you gonna get over there? “Oh well, they told us we have to go here.” And here's the entrance and you had to go under the main street

JE: Oh

RR: The main street it was a tunnel kind of like, you were like, aahh, we've never been under a tunnel. (laughter) so that was something exciting. And we went in and, and the zoo was free.

JE: Oh, wow. Was it a petting zoo or?

RR: No, it was regular zoo. Just a regular zoo, a big zoo

JE: Oh, wow

RR: Like, you know San Antonio, Houston Zoo. And we had never been in a zoo. We had never been in a zoo there was no -- in growing in Brownsville, there was no zoo.

JE: Yeah

RR: I think Gladys Porter Zoo was like when I was in high school; they had just open it or were in construction or whatever, but this zoo was different because it was in Michigan.

JE: Yeah (laughter) wow, different.

RR: Yes.

JE: What was your favorite animal, do you remember?

RR: Oh, I always love the giraffe's because I'm so short (laughter) I love looking up at those animals. It was like, wow, they're so tall. I always love giraffe, always.

JE: They got a gentle face, too

RR: Yeah, there just, Um-hum.

JE: All right, um, so really, um you really liked the, um the opportunity for seeing different things up North

RR: Yes, in the cities when they would take us. That was also, and I have to say this because in North Dakota, Sundays and in Ohio, when we were in Ohio, um, Sundays my dad; it was no work, nobody works on Sundays and the problem was when we were, I think maybe that's why kind of went our own ways instead of the truck driver because, um, when we were there it was like if we had to make up we had to work on Sundays. Now, when he went on our own, my dad was like we don't work on Sundays. And that's because, you know we were really religious and he was like Sundays is to go to church.

And so in Ohio, when we went on our own and this, this um the owners, the farmers, the farm and his wife, they also -- you asked about they, they established a relationship, yes we did. When them, they went to Brownsville to visit us as Winter Texas; Texans.

JE: Oh

RR: They took the trip down there. This, and they went like elderly, elderly but you know they were probably like 65.

JE: And this was, this was the first family that you were working before the second one?

RR: Before, yeah before that one in North Dakota.

JE: Okay

RR: And the one in North Dakota, the farmer he, he, in Christmas, he sent us a frame with the praying hands

JE: Oh

RR: So we still have it. My dad still has it. I say we, well, my family in Brownsville.

JE: So, you had great relationship

RR oh, yes. Um-hum. And the lady she went all the way to Brownsville to visit us -- I think she did that twice. Um, her name, Pauline and Russel Shane; S-H-A-N-E. And they're both deceased.

JE: Oh

RR: But Daniel, is his son, and sometimes -- with all this and you know we, we still try to keep in contact (laughter,inaudible) Pauline and Russel Shane.

JE: Wow.

RR: And in North Dakota, not only our, our own farmer or owner but down the street -- down the street, okay, (laughter) gravel, street not a park (?) down the road, there was other farmer, Kenneth Nash and Marry, they had a dairy farm so we would go get milk. And I know, um let me the ice cream buckets, the round ones, five gallon bucket, we would buy ice cream and um, with those buckets we would take them and we would get milk. And I think he would sell it to us for a dollar a bucket. And so we would get fresh milk. My mom loved that (laughter) because it's fresh milk and on the top it's you know the cream

JE: Yeah

RR: So she -- we would, everyday, you know they would tell us come, come, come and they would, so we would go over there after work. We made time, that's the deal. I'm we're so tired and everything afterwards and you know the shower we had to wait and this and that so while some of them were showering every here my mom and myself and some of the girls were, you know, my dad sometimes, we would go and visit-- kind of visit. Go pick up milk and kind of visit with those farmers.

JE: Oh wow

RR: The dairy farm. So they also wrote and they would send us pictures of the family

and um so we, we did establishing relationship and they all also knew we wouldn't work on Sundays. So Sundays were our, like, we would on to Wahpeton, North Dakota for church on Sundays and then come back. It was just kinda like a relaxing you know day, just kind of your mind off work it's just time to do some worship. And just family time, (inaudible laughter).

JE: All right, um, so was there -- the other families that went with you did they have equally positive experience with, with the people they worked with or was it something that you

RR: By, by this time we are on our own.

JE: Oh, on your own.

RR: We're not with a trucker. That's why we did it on our own, I think my dad, because he really didn't want to work on Sundays. And if your part of, you have no control.

Whatever the trucker driver, if he say we're gonna work, your, we have to work because we're with him. And we're going to leave so-and-so we all have to get in a big truck. It was -- one of those, not an eighteen wheeler truck, but those larger trucks. I don't know how to say it.

JE: Did he -- this is quite interesting, the truck (laughter), um, did it have like a trailer or?

RR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It had a big -- it was, it was, one of those loading trucks

JE: Um-hum

RR: That are flat right but then they would put the, covers and they would put those, um, rods, if you will, and then they would cover it.

JE: Oh, okay

RR: It would be covered. And so that the same truck that we used like when we were in the tomatoes, they would take it apart and it would be a loading truck. So every, every, um box they would stack them up in that bed of that big truck.

JE: Um-hum. Um so before you guys went by yourselves when you were with everybody else did you -- did everyone work for this family or was it people went here and you went here

RR: No. The truck driver would find a farmer.

JE: Oh, find a farmer. Okay

RR: Uh-huh. The truck driver would be the contact person for all of us. So we would he would find a farmer, the farmer would say, how many families are you bringing? And he would say well I've got five families. Okay. Well then he would have, five little cottages

JE: Yeah

RR: One bedroom, (laughter) so we would all fit in. So you know we would fit in the cottages. And the same with Indiana -- because he had his connections already

JE: Yeah.

RR: He knew where to go. So he would, he would do the plan ahead and so we just take -- when he would move, go do the strawberries in Indiana we would just go and, and we would stop there and he said okay pick where ever, which cottage y'all want to stay because we're going to stay here for six-weeks, eight weeks. So we would pick, you know the family with which is whatever, whichever.

JE: I see. And, um, general were those families, they were pretty, um -- did you have a good relationship with them.?

RR: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh, yeah. It was like little community (laughter). You know, we had to.

JE: Kind of all work together.

RR: Yeah. And that's where we, we -- children of the other families, we would all play together and wait, and you know wait for the bus to get on, everything. But when would get to the school, that's where I told you that we would meet other children of other families. But they would be working in another farm and another, you know

JE: All right. So just a few more questions. Thank you so much. Um, what was your least favorite thing about doing this job, that stands-out to you?

RR: The least thing about working I would have to say, it's not all fun in the fields. Okay.

Um when it would rain and um, we would still have to do it. If it's during the week, once it would stop raining, um, we would wait for a little bit and then we would go work. So it would be wet and um, I told you about the sugar beets, when they were small it was okay because really it wouldn't get like muddy because the soil over there is not, is not like here, it's different. But, um, when sugar beets were high, when we would have to do the cleaning, you would get your legs all wet.

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JE: Oh, wow

RR: Up to your knees or more and some. You know that why when the tornado came, it was all leveled. And they were already gone. So it wasn't a clean, it was dirty and, um, in the evenings, there was mosquitoes, after the rain and that was bothersome, you know because your trying to work and you got mosquitoes and you put spray and this and that and um, and then of course, sometimes it could dangerous because you don't know, you know -- like going on to the bathroom, you're out if the field and for females

JE: Yeah (laughter)

RR: You know, that was (laughter). I had stop and take a break so you find a spot (laughter) and, um, you just have to be careful you know

JE: Wow

RR: Yeah. For bathroom breaks,(laughter) you want to put it there you can. (Laughter)

JE: We don't think about it but it's very important. (laughter)

RR: You wanted details? (Laughter).

JE: Oh, wow

RR: And just um, you know, the time frame you know it's like after a while it's not (inaudible) and you have you get up so tired, and here we go, but you just kind of motivate yourself because you just have to finish to go back home. So it's like, okay. But once you start working you know and it's just like a family and then, um you know we would encourage each other and stuff. We're almost done and we're almost done. And we just -- and I'll come back to help you out so you can finish your roll you know stuff like that, and just kind of make it -- I know I would try to make it encouraging for the others.

But I know the mosquitoes and the, um, the rain and the sun and the sweat (laughter), the sweat and the headaches. Because sometimes there were a lot of headaches because of the sun you know when was kind of hot and, and, you can feel, feel the heat and um, that, that was no fun.

JE: Yeah. I'm sure.

RR: Evan though you had a good meal or whatever and you're not dehydrated really, but it's the headache of the, um, you know the sun and being out there.

JE: Yeah.

RR: Yeah, it gets to you.

JE: Oh, yeah. We're from South Texas so we know, how the heat gets to you (laughter)

RR: But try working (inaudible, laughter)

JE: Exactly. Wow. All right, and then -- so of course, when the, the -- from the variables, situation outside, um, what would be like something you remember the most, I guess your favorite part of working. Um, is there anything that stands out to you?

RR: Okay. And also about the weather the bad part about it, when we started, like the cucumbers, oh gosh, picking them, they had like (inaudible, laughter) a cucumbers when you pick it, it's got, you know you get used to it but when we first started it was like huh, you know, it was like sting, sting, sting. So picking some of the vegetables, I guess, the fruits, the, um strawberries, we picked them and some of this would like you know they would smell. The bad one, tomatoes, you know when they were already overripe, you get them and they swoosh, you were like (inaudible) you got it all over and then you know that type of bad

JE: Yeah, they didn't have wipes, I'm sure (laughter)

RR: No, we didn't, we just (laughter) moved on. So but what was the other question?

JE: Oh, I'm sorry. So, um is there anything that you remember liking about, about um, I guess your participation and this, working in the fields, was there anything um?

RR: Yes, on the first -- let me tell you, when you first go in the field, and the very first time they told us strawberries. Strawberries (laughter) we didn't think about it, so we would eat one and put one in, eat one and put one in, eat one and put in (laughter) and we got sick. I know I got sick. I got sick. I'm so sick of strawberries. I can eat one but that's it. So, and the same thing with cherries. You know, it's just, you know you like it when you're going in but then when you're there doing it over and over, it's like no more.

But the one thing I never got tired of was the smell of the tomatoes plant. I love the smell of the tomatoes plant even now. You know HEB has some of those little pots when they sale tomatoes plants. I buy the little plant just to smell and I rub it all -- I'm not a gardener but (laughter) I just buy so that I can smell it.

JE: Wow

RR: I don't know if it's the smell or if it brings back memories, you know. But I do love, up to now, the way the tomato plant smell.

JE: Yeah

RR: Um-hum. So

JE: I guess that sounds like, free strawberries (laughter) it's good for like three days and you're done.(Laughter). All right, and then um -- I just want to follow-up something from earlier, um, you said your mom, um you know the first you went up there, there was seven of you and then eventually two more so that means that she was pregnant for probable for two of the times when you went up there

RR: Yes, Um-hum. Well, my youngest sister, um -- she was pregnant actually in Brownsville, she was born in January. So she was six-month, five or six-months, five months when we went up there. Five months, four or five months. And um, so she was young. So my mom it to take care of her. Taking care of an infant, so that year she really didn't work, she was just home taking care of her and of course the cooking and everything.

And so, um, so, she would take her like in August, she would take once in a while, to do a little bit of tomato picking and she would have her in the round walkers

JE: Oh, yeah

RR: Yeah, in the walkers. And I remember we put her there and, and my mom would just go for a little by and my dad would tell her that's enough go home. Because he didn't want her be there with the baby you know so I remember that when she was little. She was like (inaudible) in a round walker and she was like -- you can only have a baby there for so long (laughter). But my mom was trying to help but he would tell her no, go cause that was hard. That was hard for my mom. So she had added responsibility on my, my sister and then um she was -- '71 -- and then four years later, she was pregnant but we went up North and she was pregnant. Cause, see, we went up North in May and he was born in July, in July. So she was seven months pregnant.

I didn't think we are going to go but my dad said -- he didn't want to go, my mom said yes, yes, yes let's go. So we left and, um we went to North Dakota. We went to North Dakota and we did, um, the work in North Dakota, May, June and like July, almost the end of July, we finish so we went to Ohio to do the tomatoes with the other family that went to visit us. So from North Dakota we would go to Ohio with the two

farmers that, that we established relationship. And as soon as we got there, as soon as we got there like an hour later she was in labor.

JE: Oh, wow

RR: So and he was born on the 26th. I think we got there July 25th, and he born on July 26. In the hospital in Findlay, Ohio. And where he lived, we were in a little other farm house close to -- nearest town, little town was, um, Vanlue, (?) Ohio, but they didn't have a hospital. So the biggest-little town was Findlay, Ohio. That had a hospital. So we had to go -- that was one of the things you know farmers -- the farmers houses they lived they were like, um, maybe five miles from a little town.

It was Findlay Ohio, I remember. But they did have one, that was a little town. It wasn't like, you know big city. And so there was no hospital so they had to go to Findlay, Ohio. And that's where he was born. And I don't know if Findlay, Ohio -- I, that time age I didn't pay too much attention. Um, but I want to say it was like maybe 35, 40 minutes away.

JE: Oh, wow

RR: So, that's where she had to go

JE: Um, so I imagine that um, while you were up there, you had -- you took, you took some time right? Or did you guys start

RR: No, he started working -- okay, she was there and the next day she had the baby, and then we started working

JE: Okay

RR: So we started working -- and this is how cool our, the farmer's wife was, the 65 year-old lady, um, um she um, Pauline, she would -- we would be working because my mom stayed a week in the hospital cause the last one she had it c-section. And I think it had to do the trip from North Dakota to Ohio. Because she was very pregnant. And so, um, so she had to have a c-section with my little brother and so, um so we we started working cause she was there a week. So we started working and Pauline Shane, she would go in the evenings and -- casserole. Take us a little casserole and paper plates cause she would, "you girls are working all day out there you do not have to be washing dishes."

She was so nice, oh God bless her. She was extremely nice to us, um, yes Pauline, um she was awesome. And we told her we don't work on Sundays, "we don't either and we don't expect you to work on Sundays" because my dad told them you know the tomatoes when they ripe if you wait 24 hours and so he would tell whatever you could on Saturday all day because Sundays and if their ripe whatever stays, stays. Nobody works on Sundays. So we would have to hustle on Saturdays. To try to it get as much done so that known of the tomatoes would go bad, over ripe.

JE: Yeah. All right. Um, so is there anything else you wanted to say about anything, um

RR: That was hard about talk about female (laughter) giving birth and then coming back home and then having to do meals, right after she came home and she had a baby a new born and then she had to take care of baby. I mean we were out there you know how humid every two hours whatever and then the sleep you know and at night I remember it

was hard for us too because he had to get up early and, um, one night he was crying and crying and crying we all got up, even the boys, and we were like what's wrong with the baby we can't sleep so the next you day he were all like (inaudible) so that little baby my little brother. Everybody, everybody lost sleep. And, um but um that was hard that was very different with a newborn and try to get sleep and going to work. My mom, I don't see how she did it

JE: Did she work at all that summer -- oh okay

RR: No. She was pregnant, she was very pregnant. Not even in North Dakota. But yeah, that would be the most difficult for a female. Maybe up there in work so she really didn't work and then in August by that time he was a like a month or so and no that was in August, but we didn't come back till later that year I think it was early October I think we finished early but still you know he was an infant.

JE: Yeah. All right. Okay so I'm sure you have plenty more to say and definitely I'm sure they would be interested if they had more information to take

RR: I did even get into the Watergate. We were up there when the Watergate

JE: Oh, really, okay we got to take time for that

RR: Yeah (laughter). The Watergate hearings are in the summer of July -- what was it 1974, yeah we were year -- let me tell you, that year we were in Kalama-- not Kalamazoo, we were in Eau Claire, Michigan, it's E-A-U C-L-A-I-R-E, Eau Claire Michigan. And we were working there. And we were part -- and that time were on our

own that year but we couldn't find a place, so a truck driver said you could stay over here with us. So stated with the truck driver.

I think I told you '74 on and I forgot about Eau Claire, and the reason I forgot about is because that year we stayed up there. And we lived in Kalamazoo Michigan but we didn't stay long. We stated August, September, October, November and then in December we went back home because it started snowing. Eau Claire, Michigan and we lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan. And I was in high school in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I was already in, I think it was my ninth grade, I started high school there.

So that was the Watergate. I remember the Watergate hearing because we would go home during lunch my dad would turn on the TV, I tell you my dad understands English and he speaks it so he would turn it on and he would listen to those Watergate and he was like as soon as we got out of work he would go and turn on the TV and he was like the Watergate hearing

JE: Wow

RR: I remember that. You know and that was like okay I didn't pay too much attention because you know teens, who cares, whatever about politics but okay, whatever. But I know he was President Nixon, Nixon

JE: Yeah

RR: And Ford. And my dad would say, oh, he's going to pardon him, he fix his buddy whatever and so but it was interesting to see how most of the men would go straight to see what was going on and I would just -- not, not just my dad. Because, and when they would get together they would talk about, you know, the politics. The Watergate

hearings (laughter) and we were up North, because it happened during in the summer; June, July, whatever. I can't remember, I don't know long it was. I don't have like -- but I remember

JE: Well, it looks like quite a few significant events happened while

RR: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. And I'm sure there's other little ones (laughter)

JE: You can't remember everything

RR: But if you feel like you know pull it all together and you need to talk to me some more

JE: Okay, great. Yeah, um, most definitely it would probably be all four, five hours.

RR: Cause I didn't even go into the first year or that second, first year, um I did do a summer, I, myself and my little brother, um, the one that past, we did two weeks in the cotton fields and we did also the, that was the, um, okra. Okra.

JE: Oh.

RR: Okra and cotton in the area, they were all in Brownsville. And there was a neighborhood, um truck, truck driver also he had a truck and he would go pick up the corner and they were like 16 in that family and they would come and ask us. It was only my brother and myself and we so we join our neighbors who had 16 and we went with them and my mom said okay cause they asked my mom because were young. We were

12 and my brother was nine or something

JE: And where were y'all going?

RR: In areas around, um Brownsville, you know certain little ranch around the surrendering areas. But it was cotton, cotton fields and the um, okra. That also have

JE: Yeah

RR: I was like I just remember (laughter) I don't want to do that again

JE: Sorry. All right, okay so um, so, so there was some work around the area it wasn't all just up North

RR: Up North

JE: But it was just you and your brother

RR: Yes, it was just us for the experience and my dad would say yes you need to if you want to go ahead and go. But he had bigger (laughter) plans for us as far as the fields

JE: Yeah exactly. Make some extra money but remember you're going back to school. I was going to ask but you answered it, did you feel your father's intentions were successful, obviously since all of you...

RR: Um-hum, Um-hum, definitely.

JE: (inaudible) all right so um, any question that I, I really missed? Um, I guess I have one last question and um, was there any significant changes happened throughout your working – was there anything [that] changed, I guess, um, you mentioned the machines in California.

RR: Yes, yes. And then the machine in California, that was just so different. We were not used to that and I think that was around the time this was the early 70's and um I'm not sure when, um you know this Sunday is the Cesar Chavez walk so I, I wasn't really too into the politics at that time, but I remember my dad talking about you know because they had unions, right

JE: Yeah

RR: We didn't have unions, he were on our own. But I do have to say when he started working in Kalamazoo, he was working in one of the, um, because he was a mechanic

JE: Um-hum

RR: He was, he is, he knows but he doesn't work on cars, he's 89 years old. He doesn't have the -- but when we were in the Kalamazoo, Michigan, he worked at, um, oh I don't even know what -- it's, um, assembly line, one of the, oh gosh, I forgot. I have it like there, but I can't – but he worked in one of the factories where they me made, cars assembled them and everything and since he was a mechanic, he knew every part of the engine but they would have him like he said they would have like, they had the doors the fenders, you know every single part of the car. But since he knew the um the motor part

you know they used him more because there was others who just did routine; same-o-thing, same-o-thing.

But he could be somebody they could rotate around. So that's why they really liked him. He was in a union. He said that they had to -- when he was work that he to join the union, it would be better for him to join the union. They had a lot of unions back then, well, maybe now too, but was like more

JE: Especially in that area

RR: Yeah. And so having said that with the field work and we were out there, my dad also knew about the, um, some of those, Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers and this and that so but we never were part of it we really weren't part of it. But he did know and I just didn't pay attention at that time, but that was something that, you know, that I heard and that I knew about

JE: Was he interested in being a part of it or it just never happened?

RR: It just didn't happened in our area because I think because we moved around a lot. And like I told you we, my dad started not being a part of it, group. He wanted to go on our own so that we could have that control if you will because if you joined with the truck driver, you don't have any control.

JE: Yeah

RR: Independent and he wanted to take us like to see this (laughter) on the weekends and do that and we really couldn't.

JE: So it looks like you had to gain that control that Chavez was looking for on his own, anyway on his own. Would you say?

RR: Um-hum, Um-hum

JE: He got, yeah. Was he able to do that without any? (laughter, inaudible) That was interesting.

RR: So, did I answer the question

JE: Oh, yeah um, definitely so that answers the question for sure because seeing the changes Chavez (inaudible) you weren't part of it but you definitely saw it. Did you see any changes in, how, how people were treated due to that?

RR: Well, let me tell you; we could go back (laughter)

JE: I know

RR: In the part where we were in Eau Claire Michigan, there was some, um, other farmers, other families. And across the street they had some, um, African American workers, you know I think they treated them differently. You know because um, I don't know but it seems like they -- we were there and we did the work, we were hard workers. And they were workers but it wasn't like, it wasn't like um, they were already there, you know. Part of the -- I guess they lived around there or something and we weren't so we there and we worked and we finished. Like I said we wanted to finish fast so we could

just go back home. But they were just like they they, didn't and produce I guess of as much or as far as we did, so and that's why I'm thinking they got different treatment

JE: All right. So, um,(laughter) go ahead

RR: It's an e-mail, so. Okay

JE: All right um, but um, when um, did you see, I guess your experience is mostly positive with relation to how people treated you as the farm managers. But did you see anything like maybe that was questionable happening that maybe changed as this activism started happening with Chavez?

RR: Well, um, what what I – the reason we stated in Kalamazoo from Eau Claire because there was some people who would go to the farms, the fields and we were there and that's how they got my dad. They were talking to him and they were saying, you know there wasn't a lot of Hispanic's up North, so they wanted to offer opportunities and this were other Hispanic people, leaders.

And they were like you know you can stay here, because they were already living there and they wanted to see more of the Hispanic population and so they went and told my dad we can find him a job what can you do? dah da-dah da-dah. They got him connected to because was a mechanic, they go to him connected to the auto-maker plant and so they those are kind of like the difference slowly started beginning and this was like I said early 70's and so there were not a lot of Hispanics up there.

And um you know the, the the population was so, I mean like I told you I went to high school at Kalamazoo. There was just another pair of twins, Hispanics that were there in the whole school. So it was my brother and myself and two other young ladies,

Hispanics. There were four of us out of I don't know how many in total you know high school. So, um, so they told us, okay, you can go and I guess – I should have paid more attending to the agencies or organizations that they were working, but they would take us to like um, social services. And they found us the apartments, and they helped out with like the first month's rent for my dad so he didn't, you know, because he knew it was going to be an expense. And so the - - well, we'll pay you the first month just try it and go to work and see to get on your feet and they took us to dental, they provided health and dental service. We have never been to a dentist, I have never been to a dentist. That was the first year I went to a dentist and I was what? 14, so 13, whatever.

But I was like, oh wow, you know, so that was some of the perks (laughter), selling points

JE: So they were trying to get you guys up there...

RR: To stay and we did we stayed for, you know the fall

JE: Until the snow (laughter)

RR: Until the snow came in. And what did we know about snow? That's another, that's another topic. This is not migrant but this is, like, wow (laughter).

JE: Exactly

RR: Galoshes? Oh, we need those

JE: It sounds fun. It is for the first two days and then we have to start deicing your car

before you leave (laughter), going to work is a 30-minute event. Yeah.

RR: That's another story

JE: Exactly. All right. Um,

RR: But yet, that was the changes that I saw where agencies and other people were trying to get um, you know, benefits and people, Hispanic mainly, because we were all Hispanic all the families and they wanted the families to stay and do this and my farther out of the whole families with that trucker that one year I mean it was like we were the only once that stayed and they were like you're gonna stay? I remember my friends that I met there they were like yeah we're going to stay. It was like weird you know well, we'll see.

JE: Yeah

RR: But changes. Can you imagine early 70's where you don't have like I said two Hispanic like I said me and my brother and two more. And now, look at it now, you know the Hispanic population up there is, wow.

JE: Yeah because, because of, because of these endeavors they were, you know paying extra you know

RR: Getting you to stay and, and finish school. And I went to see, this is another story, they took us when I was in high school, on one of those high school tours to a university. Fell in love, fell in love, with Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

They took us on those campus tours. I knew I was gonna want to go there. I said if we stay, I want to come here. It was incredible. To me it was this big university. I mean it was awesome. I was totally impressed. Because we didn't have this here in South Texas, we didn't have it in Brownsville. We didn't a university all we had was Texas Southwest College. And it was old (laughter inaudible) four brown dorms. So this was awesome. And that really, I think that's why I always you know wanted to go into a big higher ed institution

JE: Get a job after college. What college did you end up going to?

RR: Well, I got married remember

JE: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah

1:40

RR: I came to Corpus and I didn't, and this is another story, um I live here in '81, '82 we went to my brother and came back and then in '84 my husband died. So I had my three young girls and so in '84, Fall of '84, that's when I started ,that's when I said I need to go back. I can't do this just through high school I need to go back and do what I always wanted and that was college. So I came here to Del Mar and on my own. That was hard with my three young girls. And so I started Del Mar in '84. And then, um, I graduated in '86 and I started working - - in I got called in in December of '86 to um to work, but I didn't start work until January of '87. So I've been here since 87.

JE: Oh, wow

RR: And after I started here, um I went on to get an associate's degree after hours and then I went to A&M Corpus Christi

JE: To get a bachelor's?

RR: Yes. And I'm like, I never went to go the master's so I was like okay.

JE: (Laughter) yeah

RR: And then I had two other kids. Because I have five

JE: Oh yeah. So that would be extra thousands of dollars, so if you are able to get a job that you love then I would just - - all right. Thank you so much.

RR: I got so many stories

JE: I know. All right, um so is there anything else, whatever comments you wanted to make before we wrap it up for this--for today?

RR: If you want to talk to me, just - - you have my cell phone

JE: Um, I don't know if that was on the e-mail or not

RR: Yeah, 695-xxxx

JE: Of course that's 361

RR: Um-hum. Anything else details about the farming and the experiences, let me know cause there is so many, so many, but I can tell you know, um, the, um, just you know those just kind of pop up you remember but then there's others, you know, and so if you want to talk specifics.

JE: Yeah um well we're going to be writing this paper within the next week so if I have any questions about

RR: Call me on my cell phone

JE: Okay

RR: And even during the day just call me and I'll get out and I'll talk you, because this is school project for you

JE: Yeah, yeah

RR: And, they support, you know, if I tell them it's a student

JE: Yeah I'm an Alumni here

RR: Yeah, there you go

JE: All right. Well, thank you so much for your time and I understand you go on, so

much more stories, but I'm sure we don't want to be here six hours

RR: My life story. I could write a book and tell (inaudible laughter)

JE: That would be definitely interesting

RR: They've been telling me, even my kids would say you know you tell us something and then we'll forget you need to write it down so we can always have it. And they've told me you know write down, you know, because there's so many memories of things that have happened, and you know even my, my brother, I told you stayed in Fargo and he came to visit and then he went back and he was driving through a blizzard.

And he didn't know and the car stalled like a block from his home and he didn't know it was a blizzard. What do we know about tornadoes and blizzards and snow, you know? So other little things like that you know, God is so awesome, He was the one that protected us

JE: Okay. Well, I'm going to turn off these - thank you for your time. This is Jennifer Eiland

Unknown male: We're closing,

RR: Okay. We're closing.

JE: All right. This is Jennifer Eiland and we were interviewing -- go ahead and state your name one more time

RR: Rosa Linda Reynoso

JE: Thank you so much for your time

RR: Your're welcome