

South Texas Hispanic Farm Labor Communities Oral History Project

Interview with Sara Flores

Interviewee: Sara Flores

Interviewers: Mark Robbins and Christine Robbins

Corpus Christi, TX, November 1, 2013

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

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SF: Bullard is the other laborers, you know, kids school. And, and I know she went there because, um my sister was her teacher at Bullard.

CR: Oh

SF: And the other person that my sister was a teacher of, well, her name was Hilda Tagle, she's a district judge.

MR: Oh, yeah. Okay.

SF: You've heard the name, I'm sure. She's

MR: I talked to her, her, her um brother, I think it was, on the phone.

SF: It could be, I don't know. Anyhow, she called me because my sister, Elsie, who also taught in Robstown, a little bit but not much, but she worked for Hilda's

campaign when he was running for something or the other judge, I guess. And, um, she called her to ask her, you know, if she could send me any information or do anything. So Hilda called me the day before yesterday and she told me that she's moving to Corpus and she's very interested in whatever she could do to help.

But, she did not go to the [Robstown] labor camp school. She didn't go to the labor camp school because my sister, Mary, who was her fifth grade teacher, convinced her and a few other people that they should live with the grandparents while the daddies went off to work. You know, the families went off to work and so -- that's what they did. Hilda was one, the other one was Richard Borchard -- you know the name? He was a county judge. And maybe two or three others that were all part of this class that my sister had that were really bright kids, and she went to visit all the parents to talk to them about, you know, keeping them in school. Because they were just too smart to, to lose out and not go and whatever.

So that's the connection that I have with the Hilda Tagle. My sister, Elsie who taught here for many years, she's recuperated from (inaudible)...

I'm the one that does all the walking up and down the halls (referring to her dog barking). Come here, come on Chickees (dog in background). And so, um, I, I called Richard Borchard, but evidently the phone book, which I have a really old one, I don't know where the new one is, and um, no that's not his office anymore. That's somebody else office so I don't know if he could give you, you know, having been the County Judge and having been in a situation where his family were migrants workers, and that, you know, he did make it. And so did Hilda and probably a lot of others.

But my sister, Mary, has passed away. She's the one that would know

what to tell you about everything because she didn't forget anything. But she died about almost two years ago. So we didn't get that information because we didn't think about it or we didn't think it was important.

Now, I went to school -- I went to school, I taught school there [at the Robstown Labor Camp School] but I don't know what year it was. I know it was after 1955, because I taught, the first year I taught in 1955, I had no degree and, um they needed teachers for the migrant kids and so they, you know, called the -- the university out in Kingsville. And somebody, you know, gave them my name and, um I didn't have a degree but I was, you know, in my last year of school. And if would I come and interview for a job and so I did.

So I worked at labor camp, I mean in Bull[ard] -- Robstown Elementary for two years. And then I finished -- well, one-and-a-half-years. I finished the, the last semester I had to go back to college because I couldn't graduate if I didn't do student teaching. I've been teaching a year and a half, right? (Laughter). That was a rule. I had to be in school, to be -- have somebody come check you to see if you did student teaching. So I graduated in '57, 1957, but I started teaching in 1955.

Okay, and then my sister, Elsie, took my place when I went back to college. And she has not forgiven me for it at all, because -- I don't know if you know about how they one the teacher retirement system and all that. I was there past the, the first, the semester. And if you're there, you know, for more than one day after the semester, then you get the whole year's credit. Well, my sister didn't get it because I had it. (Laughter). And she still, after all this time brings it up. Hey, how did we know? We didn't know anything at the time. We were really dumb, we were really -- innocent.

Anyhow, so, that, so it was after '55, because those were the two years

that I taught at, at Robstown Elementary. So it could have been '58,'59,'60. My husband was in the Army, we got married when I graduated and we went in the service but every time he went off somewhere, I'd come back to Kingsville and stay at my mother's because I had babies to take care of, and he was off for a year. Let's see, where did he go the first year? Thailand, I think. So, I'm thinking child, you know, what the baby that I had that year? Um, my daughter, Sara Lynn, was born when he was in, um that wasn't in Korea -- anyway, I've been racking my brain but I can't find out what it is, what days they were.

However, if you wanted to find out more about it, have you been to the, to the, um, the museum?

MR: The Robstown museum?

SF: Yeah.

MR: Yes. Yes, I have had the opportunity to talk to a few people there. Dusty Knoblauch, who unfortunately just passed away, she's a friend of ours and we've talked to Pedro Maldonado, who's there, and um, Lilly Chapa Smith,

SF: Yeah, I got her name too from somebody. Anyway, um, what I, what I did find out is that I was there too late. I got there 3:23 and they closed at 3:00. So, I didn't find out anything. So I went back to the, to the County Courthouse; the Annex, and the lady couldn't find anybody that knew anything about labor camp school. But she did give me that historical group and they meet.

There is a meet -- it is open tomorrow. The, the museum is open tomorrow from 1:00 to 3:00. But I can't go because I have a friend coming from Houston

who wants me to go with her to this festival about Dia De Los Muertos, downtown. And so she's coming from Houston, I can't go do that, it's only two-hour project

MR: Yeah, yeah

SF: But it is open the first Saturday of the month. So, if y'all get a chance, maybe you might go. The thing is, that I talked Joann Patillo

MR: Yeah, I've, I've interviewed her, too, before.

SF: She didn't seem to know anything about it -- what was happening. Hey, there in charge of all historical markers, how come she didn't know about this one? She went to school with me, I mean she was in my class

CR: Oh, yeah

SF: We were PE teachers, majors together.

CR: Oh.

SF: But she don't remember me because, you know, I was not Anglo. Okay. You know we didn't associate with each other. But she does, she did give me Sam Keach's name. And Sam Keach donated the library, I mean the thing, so, you know all this, this is what I found out this week. I've called several times but he doesn't answer to see...

MR: We've spoken to Sam, um, yeah, yeah

SF: To see if he knew anything. But, um, I haven't talked to him. So, you know, they were all dead ends. (Laughter). I did find out one thing though and I haven't been able to get a hold of him, but Hilda told me that, um, that there was a song written, a Corrido, about labor camp school.

CR: Oh

SF: And they gave me the name of the, of the band, and I went through everything, and YouTubed the other night and could not find that particular song. But then there was 40 albums and that -- and these are long plays, you know, they have a lot of things on them and it doesn't tell you what song and you can't play them unless you do something. I've never done YouTube.

So, I said, well, I know how else to find it but, but the song was written by this group called, The Trailereros. Trailereros are the guys who drove the 18-wheeler's. Trailereros del Norte and you might be able to find somebody that knows something about them. But they are on YouTube with all these records. But I couldn't find that particular one. And then she says, she listens to it sometimes on the radio. I said, "Well, how could I find it?" She said, "Well, I know, try YouTube."

You know, so I've been -- I looked at YouTube, didn't get anything, I tried calling KUNO, which plays a lot of old songs, a lot of old Mexican songs, and they don't answer the phone. So I guess nobody is there.

MR: Thank you for inquiring with that.

SF: So, but the song can about a little boy is talking about going to school at a labor camp school. That's what the words are about. So I thought that might be a, you know, good thing that might be of interest to you all. Or maybe to find the song and when you have the dedication have somebody play it, you know, or something.

So I tried calling Johnny Canales, who is also from Robstown. And he has a lot to do with music. But I can't get a hold of him, I can't find him. I was looking at some really old phone books because I don't know what I did (inaudible laughter). But Johnny Canales has been involved with music for a long time and he -- if anybody would know how to find that song or tell you something about -- because he went to high school. Well I think he went to high school, he went to school, he was a Cotton Picker, that's all I know, you know. We always talked about it.

And Johnny -- I know if you know Johnny Canales or not but he was very popular, he had a show that - he was always bringing bands in and stuff and dances, all over this area. And even in Miami and other places. And now he's back in, um, in show business again, they tell me. And he has a show on, um, on Telemundo, I think. But I didn't get, I didn't get to look for it. But, but he might have information about the people that lived there, because he knows all these old bands and all these old people that lived there. And, you know, he has a lot of contacts with, with old families.

Another person, that I don't know what his name is, but he was the mayor of Robstown, ten, fifteen, twenty years ago. All I know about him is that, the, let me see -- he had, do you know anything about Robstown at all?

MR: Yeah, yeah, um...

SF: He has a lot of, um, Poinsettias. He is very well-known for this huge amount of Poinsettias in his yard. And he came once to the garden club that I belong to -- I'm a master gardener. He came and he talked about how to plant them, how to cut them, when to do all this stuff, and he gave me a couple of pieces. Well, I had really good luck with them, except -- then they froze.

But his name, he has something to do with a, a, VFW or (inaudible) or some kind -- A dance hall, not a dance hall but like a night club, bar, veteran, something or the other. And I could probably find out what his name is and, you know, what he might have. If he would have -- know people. Because he was, he is an older man. He might have been around at that time.

I started teaching in '55, that means those kids were born in 1950. Okay? So, so then the kids at the labor camp probably were born '53, '54, '55, you know after '50, I mean after 1955 because that's -- there wasn't a labor camp in at that time.

Later they called me, when I came back when another time my husband went off -- he went to Thailand, he went to Vietnam, he went to Germany, he went somewhere; I can't remember. Anyhow, he was a career officer. So every time he went, I came back to Kingsville and stayed with my mother or near my mother because I had five kids; I had six total at the end. But, um, she, um -- we went to a party at this place, where, where this ex-mayor is. And I have two or three leads out; a friend of mine is checking other people that she talked to and maybe somebody in her church might know,

MR: Great

SF: And maybe they can get some information. But I haven't followed up on any of it because I was busy all day yesterday. I was busy in Robstown, I didn't get to talk to anybody. It was all dead-end street but that's okay. It was not a problem. It was kind of nice to go back, it's fallen apart. By the way, I don't know -- do y'all live in Robstown

MR: No, no.

CR: No.

MR: I go through there every now and then from folks we know at the museum, and...

SF: The -- yesterday, my sister from Houston was telling me, well, she said, "you know what is the place that has the, the -- it came out in the Houston newspapers that the place that had the most going for it and was really getting to explode in, in economy and home and everything is Robstown." Not Corpus Christi, Robstown.

Well, you know Highway 69 is going through there, the Fulton thing is taking stuff to the, you know, out to the water ways, um, and um, it's just you know, there's probably a lot of land available. But a lot of those people may come here to move but you know where this oil, Eagle Shale, whatever it is, you know, there's a lot of people moving into this area for that work. So you may be surprised that, that Robstown may develop into something in the next ten years,

but it looked really bad yesterday, you know.

So anyhow, this one lady that, that I know in Robstown, um, is checking on her church members to see if any of them knew -- she did know if, you know, she didn't remember, but she's just a little bit younger than I am, not much, and, um so, I've got leads out but until I check back with them and say, "hey did you find out --

CR: Thank you

MR: Thank you

SF: -- anything?" Um, maybe you might be able to have something follow-up on.

MR: Great

SF: That's, that's about it. Um, let me see what else. The labor camp, have you been there?

MR: Yes, in its current status as a park. Yeah.

SF: It's a park. It's a county park but next to the labor camp, they built a senior citizens, um, building but they've torn it down. I don't know why or what, you know. It wasn't very old, I would imagine. But it could have been, you know, it could have been, um, material knocking -- brick or whatever. So that senior place is no longer there but the county park -- and the one that knows about all of that is Joann. Because she's been involved with all these community projects

and all this stuff. And she's on the board for the, for the,

MR: The museum?

SF: The museum, I can't think of the word. And, um, so, you know, she might be able to, to come up with something more for you.

Now my sister Elsie doesn't remember anything. Because she didn't ever teach there and she was, she, you know, she finished college after I did and started working in Kingsville. So she didn't come back to work there. But I did work at Robstown Elementary, I worked at Bullard, I worked at the Labor Camp and I worked at Lotspeich. So four different times I went to work there and it was after the migrant kids came in. Because that's when I happened to come after Christmas, you know, to come down because my husband was going somewhere and so I would go to, um, go to work, right away.

MR: Did you teach all of the subjects?

SF: No, mostly lower grades, first and second grade. I didn't teach kindergarten. At Bullard I had one class that had 45 first graders that came in in November. 45 in my room. And, you know, all you could do is just kind of keep order and try to keep something, you know, keep them all busy to be able to teach them anything.

But most of them left as soon as the crops were open up again and up North, you know. They were always going to West Texas or to Michigan or wherever they all went. Besides cotton, they did mostly fruit and vegetables. And I don't know too much more about them because I didn't go to their homes.

I had some really neat kids, um, that I remember at Robstown Elementary my first year, but I taught first grade there and I taught first grade at Bullard. And I think I taught second grade at, no it was third grade at Lotspeich.

I took somebody's place who had a baby, you know, and they needed a teacher, so it was not really a migrant program. Now, the ones who might have some information for you, are those people that have been involved with the Federal Migrant Programs. I do know of one person here in town, that used to do that, he doesn't do that anymore but he was, you know, one of these -- going to all these meetings and conferences and stuff. And getting money for different programs, and so forth. And his name is Edward Cabrera, C-A-B-R-E-R-A. And he lives out on the Island. I don't know, um, the number, his phone (inaudible, dog barking) but he came for my husband funeral because he was very close to my brother-in-laws, and my husband -- when they were growing up.

He's a gentleman that has a false leg -- you know, he had his leg, lost his leg when he was young. And, so, I know that he came to Killeen. I lived in Killeen for 35 years. He came to Killeen to do, um, a Hispanic week; something or the other, you know, speech, one time.

But he was here when my brother-in-laws came down for my husband's funeral. So, and he lives there, I know his sister's name is Susana but I don't know what her married name is. But I could find it because some of the other girls -- girls, my age -- you know, from Kingsville have contact with them. But I haven't seen him or heard of him or anything. But he might know some of the actual history of migrant programs. And, um he might have some names to give you. If I can, I'll, you know, try to reach him.

MR: Sure

CR: Thank you

SF: But not until after Sunday. (Laughter) Because I've got this friend that comes, that's got to -- And she went to college, she lived with us. My mother had a boarding house in Kingsville. And so, um, so we've been friends for over 50 years. She lives in Houston, but she's coming down for -- she wants to come to this thing that's going on -- a lot of places have, having stuff but another good contact would be going to talk to the, um, senior citizens groups. You know, the really old ones, maybe not in, in funerals, I mean not in, you know, nursing homes but those that go to, to, groups that have activities for senior citizens.

CR: That's a good idea

SF: Maybe you could find somebody there that knows somebody that they can send you to.

MR: That would great. So, how many classrooms were there, do you remember, at the labor camp.

SF: I don't remember. There weren't very many of them. They were large, I'm sure. And I believe it was an Army barracks; I think, but -- you know, I may have, be mistaking it for some other place. But it seems to me -- now, what I did find out was that the kids that went to school there, lived there. It was a camp, and the people came and, you know, they had housing or temporary housing or trailers or sheds or shacks, you know, that they had there for people to, to rent,

to live at when they were, when they were in town. But most of them had contacts with family, you know, in Robstown

MR: Did you have much contact with the parents when you were teaching there?

SF: No. No, I didn't. I usually do, but I didn't there because I can't even remember if I was there a whole, a whole semester, a whole year. I know it wasn't a year. It seems to me like, I'm trying to think that when I was there, um, somebody - - they needed a teacher at Lotspeich, and that's when they called me to go to Lotspeich.

So then, I, you know, I didn't teach there the whole year. And I don't remember any of the other teachers, and nobody else seems to know, and of course, most of them are dead. You know, so -- I'm 77. So, you know, they had to be -- those that were teaching there for a long time, a lot older than I. And, like I said, I had one lady checking with women that go to this, it's a Protestant Church on, on, Third. I don't know, it's a big one, um, they, they - that I have been to there church, they have -- they're selling food for money-raising kind of stuff maybe once or twice. And, that's the extent of what I know about it

CR: Can you remember what the classroom looked like at all?

SF: I can't remember anything. I'm really having a terrible time with my memory. My sister is really worried about me; my younger sister, the one from Houston. She says, you just did that, what kind -- noooo (laughter). I didn't need it, it's gone

CR: That's right

MR: Yeah

SF: I find that's what I did with college too, you know. If you studied long enough to pass the test, and then put it away, and never used it again. And I never did teach PE but one semester. And that was in New Jersey (laughter) for four months and I had to quit because I was pregnant, and back in '64 or '5 whatever it was.

Um, you couldn't teach if you were pregnant, if you showed. This was way back. So, you know, there's a lot of history there. So I didn't teach after that, I just taught first grade and second grade because I had the hours to get a certificate to teach elementary school.

MR: Did most of the kids speak English and Spanish or mostly Spanish?

SF: No, they didn't speak English. They all spoke Spanish. And it was not a bilingual program, you know, bilingual was not in at the time, but everything had been explained to them, you know, so they could understand what it was we were trying to teach them to read. And, it was difficult, I remember but I don't remember any of the details. Bilingual didn't come in really until '68.

CR: Okay

SF: When the bilingual program was started, the law. When it was no longer illegal for us to talk Spanish to the kids in school. So-

MR: Do you remember that being frustrating to not to be able to speak Spanish to the students, when they were?

SF: Yes, it was because, you know, how else are you going to teach them anything if they don't know what you're talking about. You know, if you say one or two words, and oh, oh okay, you know, it clicks and they, they can, you know, relate to what it is you're trying to teach them.

But mostly, I guess, since I was teaching first grade mostly it was phonetic. Trying to teach them to read even if they didn't know what it was, you know. See Spot run, you know. It was -- if I remember correctly, it was old books, you know, from other schools. It was, you know -- and it was a county school. A lady told me yesterday that, that had to have been a county school. So anything on the, the, layout of the program, the facility, or whatever, is probably in the archives of the, of the county clerk's office or whatever -- whoever take care that stuff.

I know a saw a building in, in Robstown that said, um, county what -- county something. Maybe that's what they were talking about. There's you know, that you could go -- the lady at the, um, county clerk's office could tell you where that archive is, if it's -- the one that I saw that's what it looked like but it didn't have much in front of it or anything that you should say, oh this is - might what it is. It could be just a storage place but here in town they should have it or could at least tell you because it's a county. The county clerk's office is here.

MR: Do you remember any of the kids having to leave class to go work in the fields locally with their parents or did - were they pretty consistent?

SF: I don't, I don't remember. I really don't remember. Okay, let me go let her out (laughter, referring to the dog). She's gonna scratch a hole on that door. Come on, come on. (Barking sound)... [short discussion of the dogs follows]

CR: How long did you teach at Bullard? Couple of years maybe?

SF: No. I think just one year.

CR: Okay

SF: Um, it was a full year. Now my sister taught there several years before I did. And I don't know if she had already come -- you know, she had moved to Port La Vaca. Her husband got a job in Port La Vaca and so she left and there was an opening for me to go, you know, when I came to town because we were traveling all the time.

So, um, I taught in Bullard, um, I had real close connections with two or three kids, but do you think I can remember their names? Not for anything. One of them was a real tomboy and a trouble maker. But, you know, that was an older -- it had to have been a fourth grade or fifth grade class that I thought there. All I can remember about Bullard is that, I had to go deliver my car to New Orleans, because I was moving -- my husband was in Germany and I was moving to Germany when - - but I had the car so I had to take it to Bullard, to New Orleans. And this teacher, male teacher, that -- I was good looking, okay, this male teacher there wanted to drive me to New Orleans (laughter). What? No way. That's all I remember about Bullard, can you believe that? I can't think of the principal's name, I can't think of his name, um, nothing.

So I really don't know anything more than that. I did call my sister's ex-husband because his wife was from Robstown but she never returned my calls. Anyhow, they leave in Killeen, too, of all places. That's where I lived for 35 years.

Now, what else can I tell you? I'm trying to think what -- something and there's nobody to ask. You know, my sister, Mary, was the fountain of information because she didn't forget anything. And I can't ask my cousin, who lives down the end of the street, because she never taught there. You know, but she remembers everything about everything, so. But she didn't have any contact with, with the, Robstown.

MR: Did they ever have recess or anything like that at the labor camp?

SF: Oh, yeah we always had recess

MR: And what kind of things did the kids do, if you remember?

SF: Run around. There wasn't any equipment that I can think of, you know.

MR: Oh, okay.

SF: There was not even jump ropes or stuff like that. I don't believe we had anything. We just let them get out and run and play with each other and, um, you know, bring them back in and as far as I know, recess was only once a day but it could have been twice a day. Because if it's hot, you know, there was no air conditioning at the time and, um, so we may have gone out more than once.

Um, we didn't have any programs because -- I'm into programs, you know, doing programs at schools and stuff.

But I don't remember that there was -- there was no, no, um, what's the word? Nobody cared about the labor camp school. You know, the people at the school district, I don't know if they had anything to do with it or if it was a county school -- was, were they in charge or what? But there was no emphasis on, on trying to make things better for the kids there. It was just a place to hold them up until they left. And so we had to do the best we could with what little materials and things we had to, you know, to try and teach them before they took off again.

I had one little boy in the first grade, nine years old, that was a bully. That was a class of 45. I remember that, that he was nine years old. Had not been - - he had never finished first grade, because they kept moving all the time.

CR: Yeah

MR: Do you remember which subject you found most challenging or most rewarding to teach at either Bullard or the labor camp?

SF: I don't know for sure, but my, my total emphasis was doing unit teaching. You know, we do a unit on pigs, let's say, so there was everything; math about pigs, reading about pig stories, or about chicks or about you know, so that you tie it all into, into their funds of knowledge. You know what that is? The funds of knowledge my sister -- my daughter teaches it University of Mexico. She's always talking about funds of knowledge.

You use whatever they know, you know, to do -- so that they can relate to and, and (inaudible) the thing, you know, so I always taught that way. But I didn't

know what it was called. Okay. And, but, but then they got off to this new math and new this and new that and the kids never really learned anything well and guess what? They're going back to units and that kind of stuff. Because, um, you know, you can't isolate it. Because it's not something that, that they can relate to, so.

Anyway, that's -- we didn't have programs, we may have had a, a, you know, an Easter Egg Hunt, or we may have had that kind of stuff but very limited because there was no money and, um and I was traveling. I lived in Kingsville, so I commuted.

CR: Okay

MR: Uh huh.

CR: Do you remember people living there at the camp?

SF: No. I don't. I didn't remember about them living there. Um, this, I think it was, it was Hilda Tagle that told me, I think she might have something more that she can give you, but -- like she was in the car traveling when she called me. She's going to be moving down here. When did you plan to do this?

MR: Um, well, I need to get in contact with the Texas Historical Commission to see if we can have more time, but within the next couple of months. We've been doing some archival research and interviewing, um those that we can find. But potentially as early as in the next couple of months; maybe we'll get another month or so

SF: Okay. Do you have, do you have a deed already and all that stuff, to get a historical marker -- I know, because we just, just done one for our cemetery in Duvall County and they -- the people that had donated that land had to you know, have it documented in the whatever

MR: We have the, the dates that, when it started off as a Federal Labor Camp, so, we have the dates of the establishment of that and then, I think I have somewhere the date of when it turned over to county control but I don't actually have the deed, so that is something on the docket for us to get. So we can prove that...

SF: Because, they're going to ask for it, if they haven't already. Because that's part of the, the deeds have to be approved. You know, they have to go through whatever junk, whatever hoops it is that they have, that they have to do. Um, there was something I thought of just now, you see, I can't -- if I don't say it what I think of it, it's gone

CR: That happens to me all the time

SF: Oh, yeah? Um, the, this Edward worked in federal programs. He was, he was involved, you know -- more like an administrator -- he didn't teach or I don't think. But anyway he was doing a lot of politicking {sic} and stuff for the federal programs for the migrants.

And there were a lot of others but I can't think of any off hand. Um, not, not here in Texas. I had contact with a lot of them and because I used to be on

the Board of Education, no on the National Education Association Board. I was in the board for six years and so I went to Washington a lot and we dealt with those kind of, you know, situations and problems and stuff, through, through the Hispanic group that I headed.

And that's, that's about it. I don't know anything else. I'm gonna try to find out who this lawyer was -- it seems like his name was Johnny. Also

MR: Like Johnny Canales

SF: Johnny Maldonado, Johnny -- who would know?

MR: Okay.

SF: I know I went to a birthday, to a birthday party (laughter)

MR: We'll stop it right here (audio stops)

Part two of audio

SF: All her brothers and sisters kids were going to college. She didn't ever tell us that, but we know that was her, her, thing about moving there, that we had, you know, she was not gonna be able to send us to school. And all her brothers and sisters kids were in school. And I had been to A&I. (Laughter)

CR: A&I (laughter). Was it always girls who lived at the boarding house?

SF: Yes. Always girls.

CR: Always girls

SF: All the guys would come and eat there or come and study with them or come to parties there, you know, and that stuff like - But no, it was always girls. And like I said, it was like, you know, mother was going on to make sure that those girls didn't get in trouble. You know, no telling what they'd be doing at the dorms. So their parents had a connection with my mother, from, from the ranches in Duval County; relatives and old friends

MR: Wow

SF: People that, you know, recommended and so forth. And she did that for a long time. She died at 91 -- years old here in Corpus. We all taught school.

CR: What do you think gave her the idea to have a boarding house? Did she have ever say?

SF: Well, she didn't, I know -- she never said but I know that she didn't -- I mean my mother sold Avon, sold Tupperware, sold everything that she could, you know, to keep us going. Sewed clothes; she made clothes for people. Um, because we were a large family, my daddy didn't make enough money, we were really poor.

And, um, so she, she decided that we would, you know -- she would have to do something. So, on her own without talking to us or anything, two of her

brothers helped her find a place, helped her to move from Kingsv--, from Texas City to Kingsville and um, -- I left a boyfriend. In Kings-- in Texas City. Never saw him again, you know. He was my boyfriend. (Laughter). No telling what happened to him. But anyway, um, you know, we had no more connections with Texas City. It was like a stopping place for us to get back to, to our roots.

CR: Uh huh.

MR: Hum

SF: So that's, you know, that's that story. I'm sure a lot of other stories - -

CR: Was she particularly passionate about girls going to college? Was that something that she was really...?

SF: Um, yes. I think so because like I said, she was, she, she started driving very young. Nobody drove. She drove her daddy to the Valley all the time to go visit a son and daughter-in-law. Um, he didn't trust the two younger sons to drive him anywhere because they'd take off with the car. So my mother, you know, was dependable. And, um, and then she just, um -- what can I say? I wish, I, you know -- I did an oral history of her and I have it on the cassette that I got to trans -- finish transcribing it. But she told me a lot of things about how it was when they were growing up and all that then answering a lot of our questions about cultural things.

You know, how did we celebrate Christmas? Or when you went to a wedding, how did they -- they wouldn't let us go in, we had to look in through the

window of the dance hall, you know. That kind of stuff because she remembered from way back more than, you know, recent. When we -- you know, the questions that I asked her.

That was the year I came back, um to work on my master's at A&I. And, um, then I decided I couldn't do this, you know, just spent the summer down here. So then I went -- I got my master's at U.T. But, yeah, all of her sisters, brothers and sisters -- I'd say there was about 40 of us that were teachers. That was the thing for teachers to do, right?

And is this was an upper class family that had land and had a history of family connections with Mexico, with land over there, you know, there was -- what I would say, now, we would probably call it, you know, upper class. They had, they had, um, connections with people that were in power like, um the -- why did they give them this land to all these people? Because they had connections with, with the court. They, the people came from Spain to Mexico and they gave them land. Because they were, they had -- what we call Palanka, I don't know what you would call it in English. You know, they had an Inn. And so, and I don't know -- I'm telling you all a lot, you probable need to go, but -- you don't? Okay.

The, the men in Spain, they got the land and they got the Crest; the Coat of Arms and they got the tile or whatever of the first born or the first son or whatever. But all the rest of them had nothing. They were depending on the brother to, to let them live there or whatever, and so a lot of them became soldiers and came to, to the new world as soldiers or as, as government employee types, kind of stuff or whatever because they had connections with the court in Spain.

And that's why -- where the name Hidalgo comes from. Hidalgo stands for

Hijo de Algo, okay. Nobody knows this, but we know it, you know. Hijo de Algo. They were called Hidalgos, they had a connection but they didn't have any money or whatever, so they came down here, they married each other, you know, the families that brought their wives, their children. They, they never married the Indians or, or what they called the Mexicans. Because they were mixed Indians and Spanish. It was a very close knit - and they were all Jewish. We have found out that we have a Jewish connection, all of those, all of the people that your -- my family, a lot of other families, you know, can trace their roots back to the inquisition. And that's where they came to Monterrey and to, to the border towns.

MR: Uh huh.

CR: That's interesting.

SF: Yeah. There's a lot of stuff. I wish I had time to sit down write it but I'm too busy watching the stupid Novelas (laughter). Every night, I'm sitting here working and watching them. Let me show you my, my get-up over here, back here.

MR: Sure

Recording Ends