

JESS JAQUESS - ORAL HISTORY

Jess: My name is Jess Jaquess. I live in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I was born in 1944. My birthplace is San Angel, Texas.
I'm married. My year of marriage was 1978.

Interviewer: Did you have any kids?

Jess: No.

Interviewer: How many years did you live in the house where you were born?

Jess: Probably 20 (years).

Interviewer: About 20 years. And that was back in Texas, right?

Jess : No. Actually I left Texas at six months. Then I came to California and I lived here for twenty years. Actually, I did not stayed in Texas for too long.

Interviewer: And after those twenty years that you lived there, where did you live later?

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Jess: Well, I went to the military for three years. I came back and my parents moved.

Interviewer: Do you know why your family moved?

Jess: They sold the house. And they found a better place to live.

Interviewer: What impact did the move have on your family.

Jess: It wasn't really, I don't think, any impact. It's just that I think that they were glad to move from that particular house. It was an older home and we moved to a newer type of home. But the move sort of welcomed.

Interviewer: Now, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Jess: I have five sisters and one brother.

Interviewer: Is that your older brother or are you the older?

Jess: Older. I'm in the middle. I have three younger sisters.

Interviewer: Do all your family, brothers and sisters still exist?

Jess: Yes, all of them still exist.

Interviewer: What do they do for a living?

Jess: Well, I think that. Let me start with my brother. I don't know exactly where he works.

Interviewer: Can you say your brother's name?

Jess: He's my half brother so it will be Joe _____. He works for some manufacturing company in Bakersfield. I don't know many details of his job. And then, one sister works for one of the hospitals. She's not a nurse but I don't know what capacity. And my other sister is a house wife. One sister is sort of self employed. She owns a property. She takes care of my grandmother. She does that full time. The other sister is, I think she works as a buyer for Macys or Emporium

Interviewer: I also want to include the question about how familiar are you with their highest educational degree?

Jess: Yeah, I think my brother had two years of college. And my older sister maybe just high school and my other sister high school. Next sister one year in college. The other one about one year of college and four years of college for my younger sister. She graduated from San Jose State.

Interviewer: The next question is about your parents. One of them is what did your parents do?

Jess: Okay. My mom left my real dad when I was six months years. So I never really have seen him after that. My step dad is a truck driver. And my mom worked in a laundry and then later as cook.

Interviewer: For how many years did they do that?

Jess: My father did that for his entire life. He's retired now.

Interviewer: Is that how they basically make their living?

Jess: Yes. That is correct.

Interviewer: O.K. good. For question number five I have: if your mother worked who looked after the children when she was at work? Who was the person in charge of that?

Jess: In our early years she didn't work. So she took care of us for those years. And she was more of the house wife. When we got into high school, they started a small business. Like a clothing store, used clothing and used merchandise. That kind of thing. You know like a general store. And my step dad passed away. That's when I was finished my Freshman year in high school. After that, we stayed in business 'till, I can't remember. And then we sold the business by the time I was, maybe, a Senior in high school. I think that's when my mom went into, working at a laundry. No, I think she started as cook.

Interviewer: Okay, that's good. Well, the next question is dealing with the... we are going to go back and see if you can remember what schools your brothers and sisters attended. Starting with elementary schools, high school and college. If you can recall those times.

Jess: I remember where I went.

Interviewer: Do you remember what schools you went to?

Jess: Yeah, I went to schools in Bakersfield. And my brothers and sisters started on one side of town. We lived in the same place. They started called ... I can't remember the name of it. And then we all ended up going to a school called McKenley Elementary School. We all were there going about the same time. In 1952 they had that big earthquake in Bakersfield. It was probably, maybe, the fourth largest in the state. It was like a 6.2. So it knocked down all the schools, all the old schools, and ours was one of them. After that we had to be bused to another school. We had like double sessions. The morning session would be for the kids that had already went there. From noon to five was for the kids from the earthquake's schools.

Interviewer: That is interesting because it kind of reminds me when I went to school in Tijuana. We had two turns which was "turno vespertino which is in the morning, and turno matutino, which was in the afternoon". To me, that is kind of the same thing that they were having (in Bakersfield) after the earthquake, when all the

schools went down and staff like that. Do you remember the high schools that you and your...?

Jess: Yeah, we all went to the same high school, Bakersfield High School.

Interviewer: Was that the only high school at that time?

Jess: No. They had East Bakersfield High, North High School and South High came in a little later. And then they had a testing school Called Garza's High.

Interviewer: How about college? Do you recall the names of them?

Jess: Yeah. They had one college at that time called Bakersfield Junior College. That's where everybody goes.

Interviewer: Can you recall if they found financial support for their education?

Jess: Not enough. I don't think there was (any) that I know of. It was a Junior college There wasn't any... There might have been some low income type of financing but I don't think that that information was available. So most people worked their way through college. There was alot of night school at that time.

Interviewer: You have already answered my next question because that's basically what I was going to ask you. I guess that... So in other words they (students) did just worked their way through. You mentioned earlier that you went to the military. The question that I'm going to ask you now is where.

Jess: OK. I ended up on Fort Campbell, I started at Fort Ord Basic Training. I was in the National Guard for about two years. And out of the National Guard I went to regular service. In two and a half more years I ended up in Fort Cambelton Technical United Force Division. That was during the Vietnam Era but our division wasn't involved with Vietnam. So we didn't get to go.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that? Were you looking forward to go out there and?

Jess: I think that, I wished, at that time I sort of wanted that adventure. But now that I did not go and I looked at it I was real fortunate because I don't know how I would have... my mind would have developed after that.

Interviewer: Did going to the military had any impact on your education and your family life?

Jess: Yes, you see the value of an education when you're in there and as far as my family life I don't know what you mean by that. People go in pretty young to the service you know, you come out a lot

more mature. I think you appreciate what your family did for you and when you get there you get to see life in a different way. Appreciating what your parents have done for you most of the time.

Interviewer: My next question would be, what were you doing in 1965?

Jess: In 1965 I was basically hanging out. I was getting ready to go to the service. I was going for two and a half years in the military. It wasn't a lot happening at that time with the exception of the grape boycott. It was just starting up. I was starting to read about that.

Interviewer: It is kind of nice hearing that because I wasn't even born at that time and is nice hearing from people whom were already there. Anyway, my next question is what were your main concerns of that time?

Jess: Main concerns were cars. Just trying to get enough money to keep your cars up your clothes up, your social life.

Interviewer: Were you active in artistic groups?

Jess: No.

Interviewer: How about social groups?

Jess: Yes, it was like a ... It was a church's softball team.

Interviewer: Were you involved with any political groups?

Jess: No, there wasn't that many political groups at that time. I forget the name of that place ESO was probably the only thing going on in town. I was not part of it.

Interviewer: That one social group that you mentioned. Did you help organize that group during the time you were involved?

Jess: Other than keeping the team together, no. In a way it was organization. Because you know, it was nothing political other than the social aspect of the group.

Interviewer: I remember when I first met you, that you said that you have several newspaper clippings that you have kept from during those times. I'm jumping ahead.

Jess: I do, so you can have them if you want. (They are accessible)

Interviewer: Would you be willing to get them for me, for the other meeting, if we there is another interview?

Jess: Yes.

Interviewer: This question will basically deal with the walkouts on Roosevelt Jr. High and San Jose State College. Do you recall that time?

Jess: No, because I wasn't here yet. I got here in 1970. So all I heard was, about the walkouts.

Interviewer: You said that you heard about. Can you elaborate a little about is it that you heard about it?

Jess: I heard about the Roosevelt Walkout and I guess one of the Organizers was Jose Carrasco. But I guess that was probably during at the beginning of what they call the Chicano Movement. Other than that I supposedly it was pretty successful.

Interviewer: Did you have any friends that were involved with that, with the Walkout?

Jess: Just Jose Carrasco that I can remember.

Interviewer: Did you know Mauro Chavez at that time?

Jess: Yes, but I knew him in 1970. I did not know him during the time that they walked out. He was here. But I don't even know the year when the walk-out took place. What year was it?

Interviewer: 68. (Mauro) was one of the students that began the walkout from the Commencement, because that was basically what it was about. OK. Do you recall the Fiestas de Las Rosas?

Jess: That was before, also. I heard that it was a... alot of chaos. I remember that much about it. Remembering that thing , somebody mentioned that at that time it was going to pick out into a chance of violence. Unfortunately was here and they felt that at that time. What ever happened it looked like it was going to become a confrontation from the beginning. So, I guess it happened.

Interviewer: Yeah, it did happened unfortunately. I haven't heard much about it but I know that Carrasco has alot of stuff to say about it.

Jess: Jose was pretty involved with that, so he would know. Tino Esparza.

Interviewer: Now I would like to ask you if you were involved with the Chicano Student Movement at City College or at San Jose State College.

Jess: At San Jose State.

Interviewer: Were you a member of MASC or any other student or any other student organizations on campus?

Jess: I was ... at that time we had MEChA and I was a member of that. My role there was just a member. I didn't held any offices. Shortly after that there was alot of confrontation in MEChA so they decided to table MEChA for a year. Because there was so much

conflict going on at that time and at that time there was a lot of other groups on campus. They had like the Chicano Journalism, Chicano Political Science group. They had a group that I was involved with called Que Tal. The news publication on campus. And the time they decided to take over the MEChA group, over the MEChA organization they developed the committee the march to Sacramento. Everybody wanted the march for Sacramento. Everybody didn't get together at the MEChA meetings to make it an _____. So they tabled MEChA and they got people from all the different groups to get the march to Sacramento going.

Interviewer: You said that you were a member of MEChA. How? Do you recall how often you guys met? And also with the Que Tal.

Jess: Yeah, we met once a week at Newman Hall across the street from here. I guess it was Tuesdays or something like that.

Interviewer: What were the main objectives and concerns ...?

Jess: It's hard to remember now. I'm sure there was a lot of them at that time on campus. When I got here we usually got different speakers come in sometimes from the community expressing their concerns. The one that I remember is the person by the name of Ramon Martinez. He came in. He was a student at that time. He gave a talk about how important it is to get a teaching credential for helping out. And for teaching. I remember it was a good speech with a standing ovation approach. But also I think it was like a

meeting important for people to come in with their main concerns either in the community or out on campus.

Interviewer: You mentioned that specific individual that you remembered. Can you recall anymore individuals that were most actively involved in the Chicano Student movement.

Jess: There was quite a few. Some were a Pros some were Cons. By my view point. So it was a lot of people involved. It was like anything else, yet they had different rules that not always were accepted or ideas. There was one I guess because of MEChA that there was a lot of.. Lets say that not everybody agreed with a lot of their views. There was Art Lopez, Pete Michell, Ramon Martinez, Gabe Reyes, Mauro Chavez. A lot of those people there and there was a lot more members form what I remember. You know all the ... nobody ever greed or I'm sure you have the same thing here.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, we sure do. That's what I was about to say.

Jess: It's the same thing about calling yourselves Chicanos. There are alot of different fashions on campus. Some are a little more conservative. Some are a little more neg, not negative but more in the radical thing. Some are in between. There is alot of pressure to be in one or the other. Until this day, it's still the same. You go out in the community and you get a radical or conservative. But nobody is right. Nobody is wrong. The hard part is to accept everybody the way they are. When you're organizing, if you can do that, you get

along a lot better, you get a lot more things done. That's why, I think, that march, when the organizing committee for the march, the whole focus was to organize the march and make it successful. So everybody is labeled to put down their weapons for a couple of months there and organize that march and for _____, and then is successful. That's one thing, I think, that came out of the march was everybody is able to put their feelings aside for a while. Most of us feel _____ So we did not have anything to do with it.

Interviewer: My next question would be - have you heard of the Mexican American Youth Organization or other organizations at the high school level? And if you do, what did they do?

Jess: Let me see. No I don't remember. You mean that are in existence right now? The only one that I've heard is the MESA program because I have a niece in _____ that department. That's about it. Essentially they bring students here at San Jose State during the Summer to know what it feels like.

Interviewer: This other question deals with the EOP. Were you aware of the existence of Chicano EOP at SJCC and SJSC?

Jess: Just at San Jose State. When I went to Bakersfield Junior College they did not have nothing that existed like that. So when I had friends that went to San Jose State they came by here telling me about the EOP Program and the possibilities were good to attend San Jose State. It kind of seemed unreal when someone is trying to

explain that to you that "Hey we can get you into a four year college" and that kind of thing and financial problems.. when they first tell you that it seems unreal that you can't realize it. So that's how I got started with this. Friends coming down from here. Mainly like Joe Begual _____, Ruben Diaz came down to a place on college and he helped recruit probably twenty people. At that time it was a big contingent of people whom registered it was mainly because of pre-requisites.

Interviewer: Do you recall who was the Chair of EOP?

Jess: When I got here Humberto Garza was the director and Jesus Reyna was his assistant director. The Director of EOP and Assistant Director.