

TAPE ONE**JOSE VILLA - ORAL HISTORY**

Question: What is your name?

Jose: Jose Villa

Question: Do you have any aliases or AKs?

Jose: When I first came to San Jose, I was known as Joseph De?? and I am known as Jose Villa around here. But I was baptised originally by my parents as Jose ?? Villa in ?? , New Mexico in 1931.

Question: And your present address?

Jose: My present address is 


Question: Your year of birth?

Jose: May 29, 1931

Question: And your birthplace?

Jose: Colis, New Mexico???

Question: And your marital status?

Jose: Married, one wife and eight children.

Question: Have you had any previous marriages?

Jose: No.

Question: What year were you married?

Jose: 1955, September 10, 1955

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

Jose: I lived there from the time I was born and I was born in the house at 115 Jones in Clovis, New Mexico. And I lived there from the time I was born until I was about eight years old and I left for one year.

Question: Where did you go?

Jose: I left for one year with my brother John. He was an older brother that took me to College with him when I was eight years old because I was a sickly boy and we were a large family.

There were 15 of us. I was number 12 in a family of 15 and all we had at home was beans and tortillas. And we were so poor that sometimes we couldn't afford a nickel's worth of salt to put in the beans. So my brother took me because I was sickly and he wanted to feed me vegetables and fruits and other more nourishing and more balanced diet, kind of things and he did.

Question: How was he able to do that, going to school himself?

Jose: Well, he had some loans and he was on the G.I. Bill and at that time, the G.I. Bill went a lot further then they do these days.

Question: And did you move anywhere after that? I lived back at my house until my mother died. When my mother died on March 6, 1945 and I was thirteen years old and so when my mother died, a young Franciscan missionary priest helped me into the idea of studying for the priesthood. And so my father gave permission for me to go and I went to study with the German Franciscan priests in Cincinnati, Ohio for three years. It's a minor preparatory seminary.

Question: How old were you when this happened?

Answer: Thirteen.

Question: So, what impact did that move have on your family? It had a tremendous impact on me. Because here I was a young Mexican boy, not ever having gone anywhere by myself, and for the first time in my life, I go across the country in a train. And I'd never been in a train anytime before. I go to Chicago, change trains there and go to Cincinnati, Ohio. It was a hell of an experience; it was an odyssey. Like an odyssey. Here I was from a Mexican home that spoke only Spanish and all of a sudden I find myself somewhere where people spoke mostly German. And the food there was not beans, tortillas and chili. It was sauerkraut, and ????? and applesauce. So that was a hell of a cultural change.

Question: How did your family feel about it?

Jose: I think they felt good. It's an honor to.. for the family if you have someone study for the priesthood. And I come from a family that was pretty religious.

Question: You mentioned you had 15 brothers and sisters. Can you tell me their names?

Jose: Not all 15, the ones that are living. 10 of us are living. Cause the ones that died, except for baby of the family, ??? died. I can remember her death. I have a picture of her. And, but, the other ones were older and died probably during or

either childbirth deaths or they were three... it's my understanding that three of my brothers and sisters died during the great influenza of the 1920s, 30s. There was a huge epidemic and several of them died at the same time from that epidemic. The ones that are living ???? is the oldest, and there is Jesus, and ???? and Jesus were brought over by my parents when they came from Mexico in 1916 and my father brought all of his family from Mexico in 1916. His family at that time consisted of my mother, my two oldest brothers, ???? and Jesus and my two grandparents. A widowed sister that he brought with him with two children and a brother. He just brought his whole family at that time. My grandfather, Antonio died on the trip up north here in Sterling, Texas and he died of dysentery. So, I guess what I am saying is that my father came to this country to escape, to find work, but, to escape the Mexican Revolution because it was in full process then. Pancho Villa was stopping the trains on the border and stopped the train my father was in. But, it goes back to that time when Mexican people were coming up here to find security for their families. My widowed aunt, his sister that he brought, her husband got killed in the Revolution and my father had been involved somehow with the Revolution. So, he decided to bring his whole family. So, ??? and Jesus, who came from Mexico were born in Mexico, then, followed by Juan, John, that took me off to College with him later on. And my sister, Ramona, my brother Antonio, my sister Beneta??, myself, ??? Miquel?? and Max.

I don't think I missed anyone, but that's the ten of us that are living.

Question: That sounds like quite a houseful. What do they do for a living?

Jose: Well, my three oldest one are now retired. Five of the ten retired. That's ???, Jesus, Juan, Antonio, and Ramona. Then my sister Beneta's?? husband is retired. They live in Texas, but, she still works, cleaning houses and getting jobs.

Question: Is that what most of them get, or do?

Jose: No, ????? was a baker by trade. He owned his own bakery. He went bankrupt three times but he kept coming back and establishing his business. And Jesus always worked for the railroad. He was a machinist and he retired as a machinist from the railroad. Santa Clara Railroad, ?? Carlsbad, New Mexico. My brother Antonio retired in Albuquerque, N.M.?? And then my brother Juan retired as a schoolteacher. He was my role model. ????? children that got a high school diploma and a college degree and then, Ramona married a career Air Force guy. They retired in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Antonio is retired in Clovis, New Mexico and then Gilbert, my brother Gilbert was a trucker. He drove these moving trucks, Mayflower Trucks across country. He got hurt so he became disabled and my sister Beneta is still

working off and on and the rest of us are still working. My younger brothers that are working.... Beneta as I said, cleans houses; she doesn't really have to do it. Because her husband is retired from the state employee. And then my brother Michael has worked for many years since he got out of the Air Force for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, Washington. And the baby brother of the family is Max; he's working as a land assessor at the assessment office in ??? County. He's done very well.

Question: So what was your relationships with your brothers and sisters? Well, they had all married and gone off by the time that the three of us, or the three of us left after my Mom died. And I went of to the Seminary. Three of us went into the military; I went into the Air Force later on. My brother, Michael, was a paratrooper and my brother Max was also in the Air Force. So the three of us in the 1950s went into the service. Three of my older brothers were also in the service during World War 11. All of them on active duty. So eight brothers, the two that came from Mexico didn't get into the service because they didn't get their citizenship until much later, but the six of us that were born citizens all served in the Military.

Question: And you mentioned your brother, John, had the highest educational degree.

Jose: He was the first one to get a high school diploma and he was a violinist. So, he was a music teacher. He became a music teacher also. You had asked a question about how did I get along with my brothers and sisters and my older brothers and sisters, pretty much were married and gone when my Mom died. They all married young and had their own families.

Question: What was young?

Jose: They all married at probably age 16 and 17. That's young.

Question: Back then it was the norm?

Jose: Probably, they all married young. Especially in large families wanting to get out. Overcrowded, things like that. But we all got along real fine. You asked about how did we get along? We were a happy family. By that I mean, although we had our little disagreements, everybody sings and everybody laughs and we all had a good time when we all came together, basically. And anything that came out in terms of disagreements was pretty much taken of inside the home. But, my parents were I think very good disciplinarians. So we all grew up with the full notion of respect for each other. Not really getting angry; we didn't... Today, people question each other in loud voices and everything, but, we didn't have that. We couldn't speak at the table. My mother was a very strong disciplinarian.

There were many of us that.... keep the lid on the roof. At the table we were all quiet. Very quiet, my mother took us all to Church. We all observed all Holy Days; she used to pray the Rosary every night. Any my brothers were ??? And my Father, although my Father went to Church probably on the big Holy Days, Christmas and Easter. He didn't go most of the time. But, he always insisted that we go with our Mother.

Question: Why do you feel that was so for him?

Jose: I asked him that once. And he said, ... his answer to me was that "Life was Religion". And he felt, he was very Indian in his way. He was very brief in his explanations. He was very much in the Indian culture, respectful of the environment and that's what he said. (Spanish) You don't have to go to Church to pray to God; we had to go to Church because that's what my Mother wanted. We had to respect our Mother. But, he was trying to tell us respect what I believe in, stay close to Mother Nature, respect everything that lives. He would tell us never take all the fruit off the ???.

Question: That's interesting. I have similar feelings myself. How do you remember your parents? Or are they still living? Is your Father still living?

Jose: My Father died in 1958.

Question: How do you remember them?

Jose: Well, my parents also respected each other a lot. And they showed that respect but, strangely enough, they didn't demonstrate it physically.

Question: In your presence?

Jose: Right, they never touched hands or kissed, things like that. Even embraced. They were very proper. But, they were very respectful too, of each other. My mother treated him with a great deal of respect in everything she did. Always asked him what his needs were or what he needed to do. And my Father would always ask her if she felt we had to go shopping for groceries. It was always an asking and response kind of thing. Never, (Spanish) . They would always kind of communicate with each other questions and answers. In a very respectful way.

Question: What did your parents do for a living?

Jose: My father worked for the railroad. All the Mexicans in 1916 really came to help build the railroads or rebuild them. He worked up and down the Santa Fe Lines and they later on he was a boiler-maker. Mainly, repairing and clean-up the steam engine and boilers. And that's what... except for the times, post-

depression times, they were layed off and we were working in the Texas fields pulling cotton and pulling broom corn and all that kind of stuff. We were migrant workers in a manner of speaking, during hard times. My father is a very hard working man. Extremely hard-working man. He also drank hard and this is ??? (Spanish) That's the time that I saw him the most relaxed. When (Spanish) of Mexico and I remember some of them. (Spanish) as a matter of fact, it was not until I came to San Jose that I started to take guitar lessons just to accompany myself in singing those old songs.

Question: How do you remember your Mother?

Jose: My mother as I said was a real (Spanish). She was in charge of the house. And she was a good cook because she make what we had go around and taste good. She sang. She was a very religious woman. When my parents came from Mexico neither of them every went to school a day in their lives. Neither of them ever learned English, but, my Mother taught herself to read and write (Spanish). Because a lot of my Mother's family is still in Mexico. She had to learn to write so, she could let them know about her family. And she learned that from the (Spanish) , the old testament, reading it little by little, and understanding letters, understanding words. And she taught herself and she used to practice reading from the Old Testament and those were the Fairy Tales we had. Instead of Fairy Tales, a

book, reading; she used to practice reading to us from the Old Testament and so, at a very early age contrary to what a lot of people say in my family's case that Catholics don't read the Bible; I can tell you stories about the Bible, just from listening to her. So she was very deeply religious. She was very committed to all of us, taking care of us individually and because I remember when I would get sick, my favorite treat when I would get better was (Spanish). Ranch style ?? and she would cook me that. When any of us were not feeling good, she always seemed to know what to do that was just us. As an individual. She had a tremendous impact on me; she was a very tender, gentile lady, very sensitive. Extremely sensitive who would cater to our individual needs even though it was a huge family. I became very attached to her. When she died, I was thirteen which is a very crucial stage in ones development. I had not really emancipated myself from her, so that was something that I think stuck with me all my life, until just about three years ago. I had never mourned my mother's death. Something that happened because when she died, my father say, (Spanish) so, I didn't cry and that stayed with me all the time. I never really mourned my mother's death and I didn't do that until three years ago when I wrote a song and a poem about my mother and I started to read it. It tells you a lot about my relationship with my mother.

Question: That sounds interesting. After your mother's death, who looked after the children?

Jose: Well, it was just my two younger brothers and my father was then disabled and... no, he wasn't disabled yet. My two younger brothers,... I was thirteen that means that my brother Michael was eleven and my brother Max was nine. Two years between us. They were at home for awhile with my sister, Beneta who was older than I. And had looked after them and then she got married about a year after I went off to the Seminary. It was my sister that looked after them and then my father did. They looked after each other; they learned to cook; all of learned to cook. And looked out for ourselves and take care of ourselves. It was basically my father that looked after us, after my sister left.

Question: Where did you and your brothers go to elementary school?

Jose: I mentioned a went a year of school with my brother; it was a public school in Las Vegas??, New Mexico. Other than that, when I returned Las Vegas??, I went one year to elementary school in the public school in Clovis, but, after that both my brothers and I all went to the Catholic school. Guadalupe School in ??? Parish in Clovis, New Mexico. And then after I returned from the Seminary, then went on and finished

at Sacred Heart High School which is a Catholic school in Clovis. And so did I finish there after I left the Seminary and came home.

Question: Why did you leave the Seminary?

Jose: I left the Seminary because my Father became disabled; he was hurt in an accident and I felt

Question: At work?

Jose: At work and I felt that I had to come home and help look after him and my brothers too. So, I ??? high school at the Seminary. When I left, I was age thirteen and I was in the seventh grade. So I really went three years, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth, so when I came home I finished the eleventh and twelveth grades. That was a Sacred Heart High School also.

Question: Was that a public or private school?

Jose: Private. Sacred Heart was a Catholic school.

Question: How were you financially able to attend?

Jose: When I went to the Seminary, I got enough studies, because it is a very highly regimented school. Highly disciplined,

high regimented. I learned German; I learned my prayers in German. I learned Latin. I learned Shakespeare in English. A lot of things that very, very advanced teaching and training in Seminaries. So I was ahead of all the other kids when I got back. So I didn't have to take as many classes and I spent my Junior and Senior years working half days at a paint and body shop and all days Saturdays as a way of bringing a little money into the family. So, that's how I finished high school. Working half time and going to school half time.

Question: Did your other brothers and sisters?

Jose: They just kept working at their own thing. They were gone and having families.

Question: And who financed your brother John's education to college.

Jose: It was the G.I. Bill. Mostly. My mother helped out a little bit. My parents helped out a little bit. And John worked his way through college.

Question: Doing what kind of jobs?

Jose: Everything from dishwasher to playing with a little band.

Question: Were you ever in the Military?

Jose: Yes, after I graduated from high school, I went into the Air Force in December, 1950. I was there until December, 1954.

Question: Why did you go into the Military or that particular branch.

Jose: It seemed like everybody was going into the Military. Because either you were being inducted into the Army or you volunteered for one of the other branches of the Service. So, my buddies and everybody I went to school with was volunteering for the Air Force or the Navy or the Marines. Anything but the Army. Nobody wanted to be a foot soldier. And then that was when the Korean War was on and things were pretty tough for anybody in the Army. So I volunteered for the Air Force.

Question: What.. did this have an impact upon your further education?

Jose: Well, in the Air Force, I signed up and was sent to San Antonio, Texas and we were tested to see where our skills lay and this and that. And for awhile, I was going to be in a band because when I was in the Seminary, I learned to play the trumpet and the French Horn. Then I had studied violin under my brother and I kind of had some musical interests but, I decided

that I didn't like what was happening with ??? playing in a band in the Air Force. So, I looked around and decided that for my tests, I could be an instructor because I was a pretty good typist. So I wound up teaching in Cheyenne, Wyoming in their clerical school, preparing clerks to work in wing headquarters and things. Teaching typing, joint ??? message forms and filing and things like that.

Question: Where did you get that training from? From high school?

Jose: I learned to type in high school, seminary, both.

Question: Did you take specific courses for that.

Jose: Yes, I took typing. I was a pretty good typist, still am.

Question: I don't doubt that.

How did your military service effect your family life or your life with the family?

Jose: I was by myself, Max and Mike were still at home with my Dad and I was sending home some money, I figured that wages weren't really good there, but neither was pay in the Air Force, but, it was steadier and it provided a roof over your head and all that sort of thing, clothing, etc. So, I was able to send home a

little bit of money and help them out and well, in some ways more than when I was working at home. Because they paid very low, low wages there to do paint and body work.

Question: What were low wages?

Jose: Something like anywhere from .75 to 1.00 an hour. And at that time for semi-skilled worker it wasn't enough.

Question: So did the military have any effect on your leadership ability?

Jose: Yes, maybe because I became an instructor I was in charge of classes. And so I became a pretty good instructor.

Question: What thoughts ran through your mind to become an instructor?

Jose: Well, I liked teaching. I had my brother's ???? at age eight that he was studying to be a teacher. I was around teacher's. I liked reading, I liked studying. I went to the Seminary. I was exposed to the whole world of reading, studying and teachers. And I think that I just picked up on teachers being important people because they are in charge of others or helping others to learn. And that whole notion just struck me very positively. Something I kind of gravitated to and

thought it would be nice to be a teacher, too. I kind of thought
????? I ran classes. I was good at it because I went from
being a buck private from the time I signed up to being a
Sargent in less than a year. Eleven months as a matter of fact.
I got very high ratings. I was rated very high as a teacher.

Question: Being that it was a military and given the times, do
you feel that being Mexican had any effect?

Jose: Well, it may or may not have. I think for instance, when I
first joined up one of the Sargent's there. They were looking for
people to represent the base in the Golden Gloves and they
wanted me to do it. His stereotype was that Mexicans probably
make good fighters. I say, No, because I never thought about
being a boxer. So, that was about one of the few occasions of
some kind of stereotype or maybe discriminatory tendencies.
And sometimes people said, they noticed an accent. I think we
all feel defensive about being different; I was the only Chicano
teacher.

Question: That's the point I was trying to get to.

Jose: But, I think that the Seminary training helped me get over
my defensiveness in being Mexican or whatever. Because I think
it was at the Seminary that I learned to be very assertive, as a
matter of fact. In the religious sense, you learn how to accept

yourself. In the spiritual sense. So, I think I learned from my Seminary training and my home training; on the one hand to respect others but, on the other hand to be very secure with who you are and what you are. So, I never got defensive about people, although I kind of noticed it, I never struck back or striked them back. I just said, They don't know any better. Most people are either ignorant or they have been taught the wrong things or they don't know better. So I didn't get defensive about it. I learned that I think through my training. The question of discrimination in the military is an interesting one because I had experienced discrimination as a migrant worker. Texas farmers, white farmers always treated us as real pee-ons hired hands, chicken coops and not giving us even water, and things like that. I had an idea of what discrimination was and I felt some of it. But, in the Military, I didn't feel it as much because I was pretty much only guy. Everywhere I went, I seemed to wind up being the only Chicano. And I think people are not threatened by the numbers or whatever. Besides, I was educator or they didn't feel.... possibly..... I don't know, possibly did not feel threatened by me. And the other thing was that I worked very hard at being very, not only a top Chicano, I was top in the classes. I had... I commanded a lot of respect. And I worked very hard to excel. And I was and I think my personality was the kind that was easy-going and relate to other people and I form friendships easily. When something came up about discriminatory, once in awhile, it did, my friends took care of it.

Question: Which friends are you referring to?

Jose: Mostly gringo friends, some black friends and there was discrimination that was... but, it was mostly against blacks. It was not against me. It was diverted away from me because I was an only one. Not a.. I didn't see other Chicanos around me so, I couldn't tell how other people were being treated.

Question: So what happened after the Military?

Jose: You asked a question about the military that had to do with leadership. One of the things that happened to me in Korea when I went overseas to Korea. In 1951, at first, I was stationed with a unit that was based in Korea, the 136 Fighter Bomber Wing and it was based in Korea but, temporarily detached in Japan. So, the first four months of my overseas tour of duty was in Japan. Because, also the North Koreans had pushed our troops out, out in So. Korean to ????. And, including our base was threatened. So, then when our troops pushed them back up to the 38th parallel. I was in charge of moving the whole wing headquarters back to Korea and I was the Chief Clerk of the Combat Unit Headquarters and I was pretty much like the Radar O'Reilly in MASH Unit. The Clerk runs the whole unit. I was literally running the whole unit. Of the Combat Wing Headquarters. I was the agitent?? to the Commanding Officer,

actually had me sit down and forge his name and I could even... I wrote his name on all blank orders, special orders, you name it. So I literally ran the Combat Unit Headquarters for them. That tells you something. If I'm running something, I'm making sure that everything is working right. I also got the Commendation Ribbon for that. From the Secretary of the Air Force. I was in charge also of casualty reporting. I had to report to the next of kin when a pilot got shot down or killed or was missing. I would draft letters for signature for the Commanding Officer. I got the Commendation Ribbon for my....because I was doing the work of Lt. I was a Staff Sargent by that time and because I was doing two jobs. Casualty Reporting and being Chief Clerk ... I got the Commendation Ribbon. I guess that's to let you know that I was recognized I exerted while I was overseas.

Question: So you felt by doing that job or those kinds of jobs...

Jose: I've always been a self-starter and I don't wait for people to tell me what to do. I do things.

Question: Take the initiative?

Jose: I take over.

Question: Nothing wrong with that. So why did you leave the Military?

Jose: I felt that I had other things to do. Such as raising a family. I didn't think the Military was the place to do that. Also, when I had gotten back from the Seminary and finished High School in Clovis, I met my wife and fell in love with her and when I left for the Air Force, she went to College for four years. ?? Women's College. And when I came back from the Air Force, I gave her a ring and got engaged and we got married in 1950. I got discharged from the Air Force in December, 1954. So I married my high school sweetheart. We had known each other for seven years.

Question: So what happened after, besides getting married what were you doing after that?

Jose: Well, I looked around for a job. And there's an Air Base in Clovis, New Mexico. ?? Air Force Base. And I could of had a job being a clerk-typist there. Because I'd done all that. But I decided it wasn't exciting enough. I didn't want to be a Clerk-Typist all my life. And so, I applied for a job with the... there was a national training program for office managers in the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation offices. ACSC offices. Dept of Agriculture. There was a national training program for office managers. So I got into that program and got assigned to Carlsbad, New Mexico. And worked at that for about six months,

then got transferred to Lovington, New Mexico and worked there a couple of months then they stopped the training program. They ran out of funds. So that program came to an end. And I looked around for a job. Especially a job as manager of an ACSC office in Portales, New Mexico but that's mostly Texans and they didn't want to hire a Mexican and I was told that they won't hire a Mexican and they did not. I was told not to even bother applying. I did, I was interviewed. Didn't get the job. But, strangely enough, there was a job opening in Lovington, New Mexico. Of course, I had worked with farmers. Because as manager-trainee, what we did a lot of was, measure cotton lands, check on grain bins and check on allocations and plot what was being raised in certain farming areas, like grains or cotton, because there's a lot of farm subsidies that we really were enforcing. And that farmers and others stayed to their subsidies. Allocations and things like that. So, I got acquainted with farmers and again they were Texas farmers because Lovington was just close to the Texas border. So that when they heard that I did not have a job with the ACSC office, they offered me a job with the Farm Bureau. They offered me a job because they needed someone that spoke Spanish to contract ?? Because the La ??? Program was then in force and so I became manager of the Lee County Farm and Livestock Bureau in 1955, right at the time, I got married. And starting running their office, a lot of it was lobbying with the State and National people for farm prices and things like that, but a lot of it was

also contacting ??? in El Paso, New Mexico. So for two years, I worked at that, but, then the job was good really mostly for the harvesting season. And I didn't have much to do the rest of the year. So my wife who already had a college degree asked if I didn't want to maybe try to go to college, too. I had a cousin at the University of New Mexico, that liked being a student and told me why don't you come study? So, I decided I would take the winter period, which is like our spring break here, to go to school. At the Univ. of New Mexico and because I liked languages, I had studied German and Latin and knew Spanish already, English. I wanted to be in the Foreign Service so, I majored in Intra-American Affairs and went in the Winter Quarter, Winter Semesters to the Univ of New Mexico and I worked during the summers and Fall for the Farm and Livestock Bureau. That started my college career. On my GI Bill.

Jose: I guess I didn't mind contacting ??? because they were my people. I saw in them my father, my mother, my little brothers. They were very hard-working, but, of course, I also knew about the ???? of 72?? which provided for the conditions under which they were to work and I had heard some stories about exploitation. I felt protective. I felt I could help them. In that job and because I was in charge.

Question: Protect them how? By just,

Jose: Protect them in the sense that, make them aware of their rights. Make them aware of their contract under which they came because a lot of them couldn't read. Or write. My parents couldn't read or write originally. So I saw myself as their interpreter, or interpreter of what that contract said to protect their rights. To insure their working conditions. Were proper, etc. There were a lot of violations of the rules and we had Dept of Labor representative, field representative, former secretary to Senator Cutting of New Mexico. En ????? he enforced that contract there. He needed my help to do that too. So, the way this came out one time for instance is that a big group of ?? farmers came in to complain that a big group of ??? didn't want to work. And they wanted them shipped back to Mexico. That was a big threat, I'll send you back home if you don't work. And of course, our people were very poor and they always suffered tremendous things in order to keep their work. So I went out there to investigate. And what happened, and what they complained about is that the cotton ??? were still very green. In order, to pick the cotton, you have to pull the cotton out of the cotton ball. And if it's still green, it will tear up your fingers and that's what they were complaining about. That their fingers were getting torn up by the burrs. In the cotton. And I knew that the contract said, that if the cotton was not ready to be picked, they should not be forced to pick it. And I explained that to them in Spanish, right under the farmers nose. What came out of this was that I told them, that they had the right, not to

pick the cotton and they said well, he threatening to send us back to Mexico, if we don't do this. Well, we still have that right and are protected by that contract and he said, Yea, but you're not responsible for ???? stays there. Just stay here until I go get the ??? legal representative, I'll have him come and explain it to the farmer. But, I organized what was a protest, sit-down strike. Right under the nose of the farmer. And that how I felt I was being protected. And that's an illustration of how I did turn out to be protected. The farmer wanted me hired because I didn't ship this home, but, the U.S. Labor Representative told that farmer if he tried to get back to me or to those people, that he would cut off his contracts completely and cut off any ???? equipment broke down. So it got into a big... that kind of stuff that never gets reported and that happens. That won't of happened if there hadn't been a Mexicano rep to protect the Chicanos although I ???? working for the farmers, I went by what was a legally binding contract. And I think that that was my first real exposure to a lot of the exploitative or negative elements that the ??? Program, but, at least I carried out one part of it. And I have.... and the people liked me and they appreciated my being there. And they showed that they tried to give me gifts and other things. (Spanish).....used to call me (Spanish). Because I did treat them decently.

Question: Looking back now in retrospect, do you feel that the whole program itself was exploitative? Did you feel that at the time?

Jose: I didn't have that knowledge. I didn't understand International Politics at the time. I didn't understand exploitative cheap labor for the benefit of the rich farmers. I didn't understand all those macroeconomic problems. I just knew things weren't quite right. And although I wasn't a lawyer. I wasn't trained yet. To understand contracts. I felt I could do what was right. With the people right there. Where it was happening.

Question: You mentioned after this job, that you pursued your education.

Jose: I started going to the Univ. of New Mexico during the off season. So I had this job for two years. But, then I started my Graduate Degree Program in January or February of 1955, whenever the semester started. Which was January, February, April and part of May. Pretty much acting as ??? . Towards the end of January to almost May. There was time when I was not needed over there at the Farm Bureau and I started my undergraduate work on a B.A. on the G.I. Bill and we also started having family.

Question: At the Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque?

Jose: Right. I started there and after I went there the second time. I decided to stay there and ??? . I got turned on to the whole idea of studying and although we had children, we bought a trailer house. We had a trailer house when we moved to Albuquerque. I went to school full-time and went to work full-time too. Because we had started family already. We had kids.

Question: After... what degree was that?

Jose: It was a Bachelor's Degree in Intra-American Affairs. All the time I went to the University, I worked at the recreation centers, for the state parks recreation department. And I had some very interesting experiences because I was... I became the Director of the East San Jose Community Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And I work most of the ??? and with ??

Question: How was that possible from New Mexico to San Jose?

Jose: Well, over there, there was a section of Albuquerque called the San Jose. There was a West San Jose. One side of the street and there was an East San Jose on the other side of Williams Street Road where the Center was. So we were East San Jose part of what was known.... cause it was a San Jose

Church. And there was a ????. Things are divided into East, Northeast, South, Southwest, ...

Question: There was no connection to San Jose, California?

Jose: No, none at all.

Question: I thought there was some connection.

Jose: I didn't even know about San Jose, California. But, I said it, because it's strange that I worked at the East San Jose Community Center. That was the name of the Center. Worked with mostly Mexican people.

Question: And, where did you do your Graduate work at?

Jose: I started doing some Graduate work there because I had some time from the G.I. Bill. But, I didn't go and get my Master's Degree in Social Work until 1966. At Arizona State University and that was after I had left Albuquerque and went to Yuma, Arizona to work as a Supervisor of Recreation for the City of Yuma. For three years.

Question: And where did you get your Doctorate Degree?

Jose: I do not have a Doctorate.

Question: You don't?

Jose: I have a second Master's degree. In Educational Administration. I got that degree here at San Jose State.

Question: What were you doing in the early 60s?

Jose: I was supervising.... I finished my schooling at ??? in 1960; and left Yuma, Arizona in 1961.

Question: ???

Jose: I was looking for a job. We had four children. When I started at U.N.M. we had no kids when I graduated we had four kids. I needed a job that paid money and so we moved to Yuma, Arizona. That's where there was a job in that region. I'd been working in Recreation a long time. So, Yuma, Arizona offered me a job.

Question: So, you moved there? So how long were you there?

Jose: Three years. From 1961 to 1964.

Question: What happened in 1964?

Jose: Went to Phoenix, Arizona. Better paying job.

Question: You moved for better employment?

Jose: Yea

Question: OK. At that time, what were the things you were learning?

Jose: The things that was happening in '64 were the poverty programs. The start-up of the poverty programs. I was hired in Phoenix, Arizona through the Community Council that hooks up with the Social Planning?? Council of United Way to help organize poverty programs in Phoenix and I was hired because in Recreation I had worked a lot with youth and I was hired as a youth development coordinator. To work with youth ??? organizations to plan and organize programs and services for youth. Mostly in recreation ????? but, it got into education and other areas, employment, etc. And, that intrigued me because we worked with the power structure of Phoenix and the community council and the city's leadership and I got into developing programs and services in all elements of the poverty program, law clinics, child care centers, multiservice centers, etc.

Question: Ok, what were you doing in 1965?

Jose: That's when I started working in Phoenix. Organizing programs and services. Writing portfolios to get... the big program that I organized right off the bat because of my interest in youth and youth programs and services was the Neighborhood Youth Corps. The Neighborhood Youth Corps was a program to employ a lot of youth that were either in school or out of school and try to help them get them back into school. It was a large program.

Question: So your main concerns, you would say at the time were education?

Jose: Field services, education, organizing the poor.

Question: Organizing the poor in terms of what?

Jose: At that time, the poverty program for the poor? And the poor have to be organized to develop some of their own priorities and define their own needs and it was basically an organizing job. We organized neighborhood counselors from neighbors for people, especially for people to go before the city council to state what their needs were regarding anything from unemployment to health, to police protection, to educational services. Everything. For empowerment.

Question: For empowerment. Pretty powerful word nowadays.

Jose: But, that's what it was all about.

Question: So, were you active in any social or political groups?
During the 60s.

Jose: I helped organize Chicano programs and services too and Chicano based organizations. The G.I. forum... I helped organize the G.I. forum, MAPA, in Phoenix, Arizona. I helped get funds to get them through ?? to hire people, to promote programs and services for Chicanos. I organized the Chicano coalition.

Question: Let's take each one specifically. Can you describe the nature of the G.I. forum?

Jose: Well, the G.I. forum had, of course, kids sponsoring, and started in Texas and sponsored??? a little school of 400. Which was really the antecedent or the precursor of the Head Start programs, the poverty programs that were funded by the Government. And I took a great deal of interest in what was happening with Dr. Jorge Sanchez?? and the G.I. forum in Texas and I thought some of those concepts and some of those programs could be transferred to Phoenix along with others that ??? Getting educators and others that had an interest in starting our young kids to start to learn, organized the ...

similar to the little school of 400 started in Texas. And then we really focused on the HeadStart program as a way of bringing a lot of our kids into preparation programs before they start-up in school.

Question: And you mentioned, MAPA?

Jose: MAPA also, MAPA was already organized, but, there wasn't an organized group of people that we promoted a lot of the political awareness in the community, the Chicano community. And so I took an active role in leadership, leadership roles in organizing the programs and services through the Chicano coalition and the Chicano coalition really brought together Chicanos in various levels of programs and services, like educators, health practitioners, small businessmen, etc. that were interested in ??? the progress of the Chicano community. ????? through some of the students at Arizona State University, Chicanos for LaCasa ?? which was kind of a militant group.

Question: What was the nature of that group?

Jose: They started originally supporting Cesar Chavez for ?? and things like that. Organizing marches, protests against growers, I marched and I helped organize some of them. A lot of this was done on my own time because I was a full-time paid worker by the community council and what was called the League

Organization. Leadership and education for the advancement of Phoenix was what the poverty program was known as. And I couldn't organize just Chicanos because I was responsible for organizing all of the poor people, Blacks, poor whites, so my time in organizing like the Chicano Coalition, Chicanos for LaCasa was pretty much evenings and weekends. Was my time.

Question: How did you find the time to do this?

Jose: I worked almost 16 - 18 hours a day. And every Saturday and every Sunday. And I have articles about some of that stuff. About my organizing.

Question: What were your own personal feelings during the 60s, early 60s about yourself, the society, how you fit in, didn't fit in. Society as a whole, etc.

Jose: Well, I think that a lot of anger came out and I was very angry about... I got to thinking a lot about.... after being exposed to the injustices in society especially against minorities and the most especially against Chicanos. I got turned on to the whole idea of working for Chicanos and empowering the Chicanos and demonstrating in behalf of Chicanos. So I was giving vent to a lot of sublimated anger. At the injustice of ... and the discriminatory practice Chicanos had been putting up

with. Or were forced to put up with. And I had decided I would vent that anger in organizing the Chicanos.

Question: Could you name some of those injustices that you saw?

Jose: People again... the failure of kids in school... the treatment of kids in schools... that people were complaining about. Especially through the neighborhood councils, like when I was organizing neighborhood councils and I would meet with a group Chicano parents, Mexican parents, Mexicanos. (Spanish) Here I was somebody that valued language. And also our family taught us the basic values of our culture, which we valued language and we valued religion, we respected other people. We were ?? of respect. We valued family and what I was picking up from the people I was organizing around Phoenix was the (Spanish) it was the opposite of what I had been taught. That was happening to them. I was protected in a way in the schools we went because the Sisters that taught us in the Missionary Schools were very good Sisters. They were not the kind that punished us a lot. They were Lithuanian Sisters which exposed us to another culture and another language from Chicago and Lithuanian. And actually we traded off, they taught us some Lithuanian and I still remember a few words of it. Or us teaching them Spanish and we were using English as a basic communication to learn about each other's language and culture

and we were all Catholics and they were not punitive nuns. These were ... I mean I didn't have that experience of being punished. What I was saying was that I was used and grew up with some respect ???? And then when I saw that the people were complaining; they couldn't get work because they couldn't speak good English or because they spoke English with an accent, it made me angry. It made me angry that that should be the case.

Question: So that was your personal motivation?

Jose: I said, this was not right because I had ?? good experiences as I told you earlier. Not being put down because I always asserted myself and I seemed to command respect. And I didn't understand why people shouldn't be treated that way, whether they were being assertive or not. But just be treated with respect. It made me angry because it was against my people. It made me angry because it was also against the Blacks and I knew about the Civil Rights movement. I knew what was going on in the South, I knew there was a lot of racism. And I knew it was becoming institutionalized like in the schools against kids. And I knew somebody had to do something about it. I decided to do something.

Question: How did you know... or when did you first realize that it was becoming institutionalized?

Jose: Because of the complaints parents were making in the neighborhood councils. And because I had seen some of it in Albuquerque, too. Organizing programs and services for kids, I was already seeing that the people who were poor and happened to be Chicano were treated with total disrespect. And were being used as a cheap source of labor was the other thing that occurred to me. Then there was a lot of ??? among our own people. I found out from ??? and I got to thinking, why did we need to bring ??? . I already had a degree by this time. I had studied History, I had studied this politics. I had studied a lot of stuff that had happened in the Southwest, Mexico and Latin-America. I knew about Revolutions. I knew why my Father brought my family up from Mexico. I knew what he had put up with even though he didn't talk a lot about it. From my older brothers and others that started to tell me stories about what happened to them when they were out in the fields. I knew what the Railroad had done to suppress unionizing efforts by a lot of the Mexican people especially. So what all this knowledge and then thinking back on it, although I had had good experiences. That all this had happened and ??? that's what got me, I said, my Father put up with it all. He protected us from a lot of this racism. And I could remember, when we were ???? in Texas and we went to some little Texas town and we parked out behind the cafe because my Father had to go to the backdoor to buy hamburgers or to buy food. Because he wasn't allowed in

the front door. It didn't occur... at the time I was little. And you don't think about those things. You just think about satisfaction and needing, gratification. But, you don't think about, why is my Father going there through the backdoor and being served by the backdoor. And the other thing too, is that my Father kept ?? is because if started asking questions. Let's say, (Spanish), so we were kept from feeling it directly. My father felt it but, he kept us from feeling it. Then I got to thinking, my father used to get drunk and he used to start cursing at the gringos and things like that. Then I got to figuring out why. And so all of this put together in me caused me to incorporate all this experience and anger and to express it in anger. But anger channeled in for organizing. Towards some sense of.. of bringing about some justice.

Question: Being constructive, instead of destructive.

What events and attitudes led you to San Jose?

Jose: Well, I think as I was saying last time. I had become involved with the ???, the Chicanos for LaCasa, the G.I. Forum, and Operation ???. As a result of helping, working with other community people and looking at the maze of the ??? in Phoenix, I got more and more involved in developing programs and services and also in developing a political base in Phoenix. So, I had become pretty much turned to also what was happening elsewhere. Especially through Cesar Chavez and

La???. And that came to Phoenix, boycott, marches and things like that, but, also, support rallies and marches and so I had participated in some of those and also in organizing parents even through my work as the Director or Coordinator of neighborhood organization division for the poverty program. I got to learn about the problems that Chicano kids, Black kids and minorities were having in downtown Phoenix and in schools throughout the Southwest. So one of the things we did is we organized parents, a parents march to go to Phoenix High School and take the students out and parents and students together and march to City Hall to demand that additional resources be given to the neighborhoods for recreational programs, for schools for tutoring programs, for hiring more Chicano teachers and workers in the City, the recreation areas. So, that... we organized literally parents to march from Santa Rita Church in Phoenix to Phoenix High School and take their kids out of school and march on City Hall. I was told that if I allowed that to happen, I would be fired from my job and the neighborhood workers would be fired from their jobs that we were organizing trouble. Right.

Question: Who told you this?

Jose: The Director... the guy that told me this was the Director of the poverty program for the City of Phoenix who was Bob Finley, a very good friend of mine. But, he said that the City

Manager told him that we should not march. That we weren't being paid to march. And that if parents marched that was one thing, but if marched with them, we would get fired. So I thought that he could draw up the papers that we were marching on. And we did. We had a whole bunch... we had about 400 parents and about 500 - 600 students. So about 1000 of us went to City Hall. And nobody got fired.

Question: So that was just a threat tactic.

Jose: Oh yea, that was a threat to keep us from .. I guess drawing public attention to things that were wrong downtown which was the defensiveness that most people in charge..

Question: Drawing attention publicly, the media..

Jose: When you have a march, you make sure the media knows about it.

Question: My next question, what techniques or strategies did you use, in order to organize those parents, students, so forth?

Jose: It's basic community education. What I call community education and organizing, that is, you identify parents that are dissatisfied or students that are dissatisfied. And you ask them... you begin a process at home, explain the basis of their

dissatisfaction and what they need and try to figure out what the issue is. And out of the process of talking to a lot of these people, you start finding out who else feels that way about it, by going to talk to people in the neighborhoods. By going to neighborhood meetings and listening to people and following up by asking to talk to those people that stand up and say that they are concerned and whatever. So you get people through our neighborhood workers, we got them to start visiting people and ask them what the major concerns were and what they might be willing to do about it. If they were satisfied with the way things were? And what they could do and suggesting things they could do and one of the suggestions was to come together with their neighbors or to go to neighborhood meetings and to start saying this and start documenting what their concerns are so that could then organize around how to present their grievances or complaints together at City Hall and we already had a mechanism set up for our neighborhood organization division that neighbors were being brought together to complain about garbage or streets that needed maintenance, lighting, tree planting, garbage collection, dogs, just litter... so we had already developed a way for people to go to the weekly city council meetings and each neighborhood area would always have representative spokespeople there to say....to say what was wrong with the neighborhoods, what their needs were. So we already had contacts with some people, so that when problems crept up at the high school for instance, a lot of them

were gang fights, there were drugs, kids were drinking. And a lot of this dissatisfaction in just... just disinterest in school. So, then we had youth workers that also were working with some of these, Black youth workers and Chicano youth workers. Finding out what the kids were talking about feeling, about what maybe could be done. As a result of that kind of work pretty soon you start telling people, you all have the same kinds of problems and go to City Hall and organize in such a way that you demand that things get done. So this is the process, that generally took place along with staff, I was in charge of all this, with the staff that come and report and say, which people were willing to do what things. And what people were willing to talk to their neighbors and finally and when they were asked what do you think you want to do...maybe, we ought to go and present our complaints to the City Council,... do you think that will be effective? They didn't seem to think so, so that led to what would make it more effective and that ??? to a lot of numbers of people and a dramatic kind of action. That would catch not only City Hall's attention, but, the whole communities attention. Shame City Hall into action. So, that's basically, in very brief form, the process, organizing process that we had.

Question: OK, so, what happened after this march at City Hall? Well, a lot of things happened, for instance, there were additional police assigned to the neighborhoods for protection, the schools were asked to hire additional Chicano counselors,

Black counselors and teachers, minority teachers. The principal was asked to develop training programs for the teachers to be knowledgeable about the culture and history and the needs of the Chicano community. Another words, a lot of... a strong Affirmative Action program begin to take place for one thing. Parents were invited to come in and observe teachers in the classroom. And the Principal....

Question: Were they able to review curriculum and so forth?

Jose: It started a process of getting educated what they were teaching. And eventually they did. What.. the best thing that happened is that few Chicano teachers that were there that were frustrated because there was a few of them and nobody would listen to them. All of a sudden, a lot of community support for things that they were suggesting to be done. And they begin to get done. So, in other words there was automatically a lot of respect for the few Chicano teachers that were willing to speak up and state what kinds of things need attention and to work with parents in helping them understand matters of instruction and things like that. Getting questions from a policy standpoint from books ??? that reflected the history, the culture, and things like that. So, it got into a real process of change and change in an institutional sense comes very, very slowly.

Question: Becoming aware of that.

Jose: Change in individuals is very, very hard. Change in institutions is infinitely harder.

Question: So, getting back to yourself personally. What happened to you?

Jose: Well, I think that because of my activism and leadership role, I became a leader and I developed that power and a lot of respect. Because I was in charge of the organizers. That were doing a lot of this stuff. I was threatened to be fired with my organizers. We strengthened our respect. We gained more respect with the City Manager, but, also, with the community. They really rallied to our support. And the Manager knew that. My boss knew it. So they listened very carefully to things I had to suggest. And I became more involved in a leadership role with others that looked at what was happening at the University, at ASU. With the community colleges, with manpower training, with the other... with housing, with other broad social issues that needed collective attention. In that regard, I think that we ???? even some of the most conservative people. Because that is a very conservative territory.

Question: Barry Goldwater, back in '64.

Jose: So, we made some good advances, in the meantime, there was a guy, the first Chicano from here, from San Jose or from the nation, as far as I know that got his Ph.D. in Social Welfare from Brandeis University. He was doing his Doctoral Thesis. His Doctoral Thesis was on Participation of the ??? Poverty Programs. And Phoenix was one of the cities, he was looking into because we did develop a reputation of having strong community participation. And so because of that, and because of my activism and work there, he interviewed me as part of his Thesis. He found out about me and then he suggested to the people here in San Jose, that were trying to develop a School of Social Work, that they ought to look at a guy like me to bring to teach in the school and help get the School get going.

Question: What was this gentlemen's name?

Jose: Juan Ramos, Dr. Juan Ramos. So he's the guy that fingered me.

Question: So that's what lead you to come to San Jose?

Jose: Well, what happened is that he was working with National Institute of Mental Health and they put on a conference in Tucson on developing programs, mental health programs and services for the poor. The people here from San Jose that were working on this school. That were the social workers from this

area were invited to the conference in Tucson. And I was invited to that conference in Tucson and so was Miquel ?? who was a....he and I went to the School of Social Work at Arizona State, so it was there in Tucson at that conference in 1968, I believe it was that I meet the people here from San Jose. So when we meet over there in Tucson at this conference, mental health conference, it was to discuss mental health, what programs for Chicanos specifically, I met not only the people from here, but, others from the San ?? and Oakland and San Francisco and Fresno. It was a Southwestern Conference, a lot of Chicanos there.

Question: Could you name some of the people who were from San Jose that went there at the time?

Jose: Sure, Armand Sanchez was there. So, was Simone Dominquez?? was there. Carl Sanchez was there. ??? Luco, I believe was there. I'm not sure, maybe, Manuel Ad?? was too. Sal Alvarez was there. Those are all social workers that were involved with the school here. Developing the school.

Question: Here at San Jose State?

Jose: They were just involved in trying to find out how to get the school organized. Looking for other Chicanos, social work Chicanos because there weren't that many of us that might help.

Be part of the faculty. To develop it. So Juan had already told them they should look for me and I was interviewed there. By some of the people there. They told me about what they were trying to do there. That they were going to be social workers, Chicano social workers, and particularly social workers that were organizers not in the welfare departments. Because the school when it started had a very strong, total curriculum was around planning and organizing and administration, rather than counseling, social welfare. So that appealed to me because I was an organizer. So later on and taking a vacation from Clovis, I literally had a call from.... I was asked to send my resume, so I did. I just had a Master's Degree in Social Work and I hadn't thought about being a professor, but, right after they told me about it, it sounded very exciting. How students should be trained in the communities and at the ????? . Those issues that I had been working on all the time, in housing, on police matters, on things that I had experience with so, when we were on vacation in Clovis, New Mexico, I got a call, could I please come for an interview and so, I took a plane during my vacation from Clovis, New Mexico out here, got interviewed, and got offered the job.

Question: By whom?

Jose: Well, it was Paul Sanchez that was program director here, then. But, then I had to be interviewed by the Mexican-

American Affairs committee. Jose Carrasco was the Chairman of that committee.

Question: What was the purpose of that committee, just strictly hiring?

Jose: The purpose of that committee was to move programs and services on this campus. I didn't know about it, because I had only been talked to by the social workers. But, they already had a Mexican-American Graduate Studies program going. It had been through a group of students, community people and professors here that was known as the American Affairs Committee that interviewed all candidates for any Chicano program, interviewed all Chicano candidates. And in that sense, they were part of the interviewing process for the School of Social Work, because it was a Chicano based program. I went through that Committee too, and had to defend myself, present myself, explain myself to them. I was treated a little roughly.

Question: Certainly, you could understand why, couldn't you?

Jose: Oh yea, I handled it all right. I got hired.

Question: Your heart must have been in the right place. Speaking of that committee, do you recall who else was on the committee.

Jose: It was people like, Lou Caranza, Umberto Garza, Jesse ??, M ?? Chavez, students. Ramon Martinez, there were a number of people, but those were the names that come most readily to mind. At that time, ???, was part of ??? faculty already. Randall Hemenez, there were others too, I just can't remember them all. There were a whole bunch.