Isaías Muro

Transcription

Nombre del entrevistado: Isaías Muro
Fecha de la entrevista: 9 de mayo de 2010
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My name is Aron Pamtz. I am interviewing Isaias Muro and this interview is taking place in Saticoy, California.

AP: La primera pregunta que le voy a preguntar es, ¿donde y cuando nació usted?

IM: Nací en Zacatecas, el 21 de enero, de 1941.

AP: Ahora, háblame de su familia y del lugar donde nació.

IM: Mi padre éramos 10, en la familia fuimos 10 en la familia. Y mi rancho se llamaba Santa Rosa, García de la Cadena Zacatecas, pertenecía al municipio García de la Cadena Zacatecas.

AP: ¿Y a qué se dedicaban sus padres?

IM: Mis padres eran jornaleros, eran jornaleros. Ellos sembraban maíz, fríjol, camotes, papas todo eso sembrábamos

AP: ¿Proviene usted de una familia grande?

IM: Sí, sí mi familia es grande. Tengo muchos tíos, tenía muchos tíos. Mis hermanos fuimos 10.

AP: ¿Dónde viven sus hermanos y hermanas ahora?

IM: Mí mí… tengo una hermana que está en Guadalajara, otro en Zacatecas, y mi hermanos viven en Tepi, 2 hermanos que tengo en Tepi y otro aquí en Mexicali.

AP: ¿Hábleme de cuando fue a la escuela de niño?

IM: No tuve mucha escuela pero si aprendí yo al menos a leer. E, allí no había muchas clases allí en Zacatecas donde yo me crié. Pero ya fue un profesor y empezamos a ir a la escuela. Yo tenía como unos…yo creo 10 años algo así cuando comencé ir a la escuela.

AP: ¿Aprendió usted a leer y escribir?

IM: Aprendí a leer y escribir gracias a Dios y…pos tenía buenos grados pero ya no pude seguir estudiando porque… por mi papá que yo le cocinaba a mi papa porque mi mama murió. Y…

quedamos huérfanos de madre y nosotros le cocinábamos a mi papá y no pude seguir estudiando, pero estudie hasta el cuarto grado yo allí, ya no daban más nomás era hasta el cuarto grado.

AP: ¿Trabajaba al mismo tiempo que estaba en la escuela?

IM: Trabajaba al mismo tiempo que estaba en la escuela. Nosotros sembrábamos maíz, fríjol, camotes y piscabamos el maíz en....en Noviembre recogíamos la cosecha, trabajaba yo todo el tiempo.

AP: ¿Cuántos años tenia cuando empezó a trabajar?

IM: Cunado empecé a trabajar he de tener como uno 8 años. Como uno 8 años tenía yo de edad. Mi padre me empezó a enseñar a trabajar, a escaldar las milpas, de allí fue puro trabajo para mí.

AP: ¿Cuénteme de su primer trabajo que pueda recordar?

IM: Mi primer trabajo pos fue eso. Escaldar las milpas fue mi primer trabajo. Y púes cuidaba las vacas de mi papá, las reses que tenía mi papá pero eso ya fue estaba mas grandecito como de 14 años.

AP: Ahora las preguntas que siguen son sobre el proceso de contratación. La primera pregunta es, ¿cómo se entero usted del programa bracero?

IM: A, el programa bracero llegó a Zacatecas porque allí en el rancho eran muy norteños todos. Nomás cumplían 19 años y luego luego se venía a la braceriada. Pos como para ganar más dinero y eso se venían a la contratación. Y nosotros los enteramos. Primero estaba en Irapuato la contratación y después taba en Mexicali, y después en Empalme Sonora, México. Allí fue onde me contraté, en empalme Sonora México yo me contraté.

AP: ¿Cómo le llamaron al programa bracero en México?

IM: Pos eso si no me acuerdo, nomás el programa bracero nomás, programa de braceros.

AP: ¿Dónde vivía usted en este tiempo?

IM: Allí en Santa Rosa, en Zacatecas vivía.

AP: ¿Qué tipo de trabajo tenía en aquel entonces?

IM: Allí en Zacatecas nomás lo mismo. Sembrar maíz y cosechar y cuidar unas bestias, unas bestias de mi papá y era todo. Cuidar las reses que tenía mí papá, era todo lo que hacía yo allá. Nomás seis meses trabajaba yo y seis meses me la pasaba descansando, ya nomás cuidando las bestias y atendiéndolas.

AP: ¿Estaba usted casado?

IM: No. no.

AP: ¿Alguna vez llegó a pensar trabajar en los Estados Unidos?

IM: A no, no nunca pensé venir a Estados Unidos hasta que se llegó el tiempo. Mi hermano venia, y muchos venían de allí del rancho para Estados Unidos precisamente a la contratación pero nunca me dio mucha tentación de venir paca. Yo tenía mi mira en... hacer un negocio con mis hermanos en Tepic Nayarit México onde ellos vivían, poner un negocio de mariscos, igual que ellos.

AP: ¿Por qué decidió ir a los Estados Unidos?

IM: A muy buena pregunta. Decidí venirme a los Estados Unidos... mi cuñado se iba a venir el que está casado con la hermana mas chica que es mi cuñado, mi cuñado Serapio se llama. Y el se iba a venir para acá... y de un jalón se me metió la locura, vamos a decir así, la emoción de venirme para aca. Unos primos se iban a venir para aca para Estados Unidos el... el 60 cuando yo ya tenía 19 años de edad, yo ya podía venirme para aca. Entonces de allí, de allí comenzó todo de que quería venirme para Estado Unidos a conocer para aca y a trabajar.

AP; ¿Cuáles eran sus medios, o sea, sus expectativas de venir aquí?

IM: A, de conocer para aca y ganar un poco de dinero aquí. Y...pos mandale a mi papá, ayudale a mi papá.

AP: ¿Influyó su familia de alguna forma en su decisión de venir a los Estado Unidos?

IM: Sí, ellos me prestaron el dinero para venir para aca. Mi hermano que ya había estado aquí en San Ibel California, él me había, me prestó el dinero para venirme. Me presto 2000 pesos para venirme yo para aca, él me prestó el dinero. Con el sentimiento me vine porque él es mayor que yo y yo estaba a las órdenes de él porque él es mayor que yo.

AP: ¿Describa el proceso de contratación?

IM: Fue, para mí fue bueno, fue bueno porque cuando vine me estuve, llegamos allá, salimos el 7 de febrero de 1960. Me vine y llegamos allí ese mismo mes, en Febrero a Empalme Sonora. Allí me estuve 3 meses y después... entramos, porque se ocupa contratar un abogado para pasarlo para aca, que pasará la lista que nombrara los nombres. Y entonces este... de allí entonces... de allí fue onde me vine. A los 3 meses me contraté, me contraté bajo un abogado de Guadalajara Jalisco. De allí le pagamos a él, 300 pesos y los contrato él. Con un contrato ya por Estados Unidos y México y el contrato que tenía y usted sabe.

AP: ¿Qué requisitos debían cumplir para ser bracero?

IM: Tenía uno que tener 19 años de edad, 19 años, menos de 19, no lo podían contratar a uno. Era imposible que lo contrataran, si no tenia 19 años no lo podía contratar a uno. Y algún papel

de identificación que tuviera uno. Yo me traje un salvo conducto, una recomendación de mi pueblo allí y una acta de nacimiento, y con eso me vine yo para aca.

AP: ¿No les revisaban las manos?

IM: Sí también también. Bueno ya cuando se contrataba uno, cuando se contrataba uno les chequeaban las manos. Muchas veces muchos tenía que andar con un palo tallándose las manos para que estuvieran un poco rasposas porque si no decían "oye tu pos qué trabajaste en oficina o qué" Y este si, chequeaban las manos, hacía un examen fisiológica tremendo que no he visto otro examen como el que me hicieron cuando yo me contrate.

AP: O sea los que tenían manos…

IM: Manos muy licitas los investigaban más. "Oye pos en que trabajabas, qué tú no trabajabas en algo en México" porque aquí se suponía que venía uno a trabajar.

AP: ¿Hubo algún examen físico?

IM: Un examen físico tremendo que le hacían a uno. Tremendo, un físico le hacían completo a uno. No podía tener ninguna infección en el cuerpo para venir para aca.

AP: ¿Dónde y cuando se enlistó?

IM: Nos enlistamos en Guadalajara porque los metimos con un abogado de…Guaima Sonora y no trabajó la cosa. Recogimos el dinero y nos metimos con ese de Guadalajara. Nos enlistamos con ese abogado de Guadalajara y ese abogado de Guadalajara nos pasó. Y luego luego en cuanto fueron, fueron allá y nos apuntamos. Mandamos a dos, a un pariente mió y a otro conocido mío de allí del rancho que está muy junto de allí de Empalme, los mandamos, les pagamos el pasaje, fue y los apunto allá y el martes llamaron la lista onde estaba mi nombre allí.

AP: ¿Qué le dijeron las autoridades, ya sea mexicana o norteamericanas, que podía esperar de su trabajo?

IM: Las autoridades mexicanas como era un contrato, le pagaban, por cada bracero le pagaban, no se cuanto le pagarían eso no se cuanto le pagarían a México. Pero le pagaban cierto dinero las autoridades americanas al gobierno de México, pero eso si no se cuanto le pagarían. Pero pos eran contrato que ellos tenían, como un negocio de contratar gente para aca. Y era bueno porque uno traía su pasaporte, lo agarraba la migra no le decía a uno nada porque estaba correcto aquí en los Estados Unidos.

AP: ¿Le informaron ellos algo acerca de su salario, condiciones de vida?

IM: No. Nomás dijeron, que… como yo entre aquí al limón al condado de Ventura, a piscar limón e me…lo único que me dijeron, me dijo el americano, "tu poder durar" quiso decir tú puedes durar de 18 a 22 meses contratado porque tu vas a piscar limón me dijeron, tu vas a piscar limón. A piscar limón y vas libre al condado de Ventura. Entonces… o libre a California mejor

dicho. Entonces yo por eso vine aquí, y como… no para nada pero yo era muy fiel a mi trabajo, no fallaba, siempre estaba allí en el trabajo. De modo que por eso duré casi dos años aquí contratado yo. Pero el contrato nomás por de 45 días, por 45 días. Lo calaban si la persona es muy faltosa al trabajo, o muy viciante, muy borracho, a los 45 días le daban su cheque, vamonos. Algunos los mandaron para allá porque eran muy faltosos al trabajo. Pero yo como no fallaba al trabajo siempre por eso me empezaron a dar contratos de 6 meses y de 3 meses.

IM: ¿De qué forma viajo usted el lugar de reclutamiento al centro de los Estados Unidos, o sea, como viajó a los Estados Unidos?

IM: Cuando ya se contrata uno, le ponían el mejor tren, tren de primera. De Empalme Sonora veníamos ya con lonche, con lonche de aquí de los Estados Unidos, un tren de primera hasta Mexicali. Y de allí, cuando ya los contratamos, el centro de California que se termina la contratación… En empalme se hacen los primeros arreglos y después en el centro de California, onde yo pasé, se hizo todo allí, todo el proceso. Entonces si ya me vine en un Greyhound para aca, aquí en el campo del norte que está aquí en la 118.

AP: ¿Cuánto le pagaban?

IM: Bueno nos pagaban muy barato. En aquel tiempo nos pagaban a 14 centavos la caja de limón, que eran por aquí así. Cada bolsa de un saquito, o que le daban a uno para piscar el limón, cada bolsa era una caja. Usted lo llenaba bien, y era una caja completa. No tenia que echarle más, nomás un saco bien, una caja, a 14 centavos la caja. Pero estaba barato en aquel tiempo, ahora ya lo pagan caro, pero estaba barato en aquel tiempo.

AP: ¿Le pagaban en efectivo o con cheque?

IM: Con cheque, con cheque nos pagaban. Cada 15 días nos pagaban con cheque.

AP: ¿Qué hacia usted con el dinero?

IM: Parte le mandé a mi papá. Le mandé a mi papá, o sea, que pagué el dinero a mi hermano, que me traje, y parte lo gasté en ropa que comparaba yo aquí. Eso si no tenía ningún vicio, yo todo el tiempo cargaba mi dinerito allí en mi cartera. No tenía ningún vicio ni nada, yo siempre iba a la iglesia y todo, todo. Eso es lo que hacía nomás, parte le mandé a mi papá.

AP: ¿Cómo enviaba dinero a su familia?

IM: Por medio de los cocineros, los cocineros les decíamos "anda y compra este money orden y me la mandas." Le dábamos la dirección a onde la manden y llegaban bien la money orden, los cheques, gira postal como puedes decirle, llegaban bien a Zacatecas allá, no se perdió ni un cheque.

AP: ¿Se las arregló para ahorrar algún dinero, era difícil?

IM: Bueno como no ganaba mucho, por eso no ahorraba mucho dinero, y luego el dinerito que le mande a mi papá, y como estaba muy barato, nos pagaban muy barato, no ahorraba yo mucho dinero. Y luego compraba mi ropa, pagaba mi comida allí en el campo donde estaba contratado, el borde, pagaba el borde yo allí, era barato también pero como quiera pagaba el borde yo allí

AP: ¿Todos los braceros ganaban igual?

IM: Bueno había unos que eran muy buenos para piscar limón y ganaban más. Porque había uno que era de…de Michoacán. Bueno para piscar el muchacho, ese, Ricardo se llamaba. Muy amigo mío, ese era muy bueno par a piscar. El mismo patrón le arregló papeles porque lo miró que era un excelente para piscar limón. Y entre más piscaba usted, mas ganaba, más dinero más ganaba.

AP: ¿Alguna vez hubo algún problema para recibir el pago?

IM: No. En mi persona no, nunca. Todo el tiempo a la quincena allí estaba el cheque. Nos rayaban a la quincena, cada quincena, nos rayaban el cheque, allí estaba el cheque. Solamente cuando llovía, no trabajábamos, agarrábamos poco cheque. Pero cuanto trabajábamos agarrábamos todo, todo nuestro cheque. A mí no me quedaron a deber ningún centavo porque todo me pagaban.

AP: ¿Siempre era el pago correcto por las horas trabajadas?

IM: Siempre era el pago correcto por las horas trabajadas. Los primeros días, los primeros días trabajamos por horas porque se andaba uno enseñando a piscar limón. Los pagaban por hora pero ya después por cajas, según las cajas que usted hiciera, le pagaban. A la quincena su cheque, le rayaban su cheque allí, con su descuento ya de su comida y todo.

AP: ¿Alguna vez le descontaron dinero de su salario?

IM: Descontaban algo, pero en aquel tiempo le voy hacer franco, no me acuerdo, no me acuerdo. Les descontaban algo porque no le digo que le pagaban cierto dinero a… al gobierno de México, le pagaban cierto dinero, pero no se cuanto, ni nunca me fijé. Lo que pasó, nunca guardé un talón de esos, los tiré todos los talones de cheque. Debía haber guardado pero no los guarde.

AP: ¿Alguna vez tuvo algún problema en el trabajo?

IM: No, yo no. En lo personal no, ningún problema con el mayordomo ni nada. Los mayordomos eran buenas gentes y… y nunca tuve problemas con él. Me trataron bien a mí, me trataron bien. Me trataron muy bien a mí, me pagaron mi cheque cada quince días como le digo, y total.

AP: ¿Y a otro braceros, los demás?

IM: Otros braceros, pos tenían problema en la forma que a veces se emborrachaban y no iban ellos a trabajar. Otros iban y… como andaban en vicio, otros taban enfermos y no iban por la

misma vagancia, por el mismo pecado estaban enfermos y no iban a trabajar, y ellos si tenían problemas. Yo gracias a Dios ni un problema con él, ni con…ni con los patrones tampoco.

AP: ¿Qué tipos de vicios se miraban?

IM: Tomar y jugar baraja, y dados porque allí se hacían jugadas en el campo. Yo nunca jugaba, ni me arrimaba yo a jugar allí, ni me arrimaba yo a verlos jugar. Pero se… jugar dados y barajas jugaban allí los braceros acompañados después del trabajo. Y claro pos tomar,.los que tomaban se iban debes en cuando para las cantinas, barras, yeah.

AP: ¿Mucha prostitución?

IM: Había prostitución, había prostitución, si había prostitución porque llevaban mujeres a que negociaran allí con los braceros. Sí había prostitución. Inclusive a una americana la agarraron y la procesaron porque era una muchacha muy joven allí. La raza dijo "yo ni la conozco a esa mujer, yo ni la conocí ni nada, ni nunca la mire" Pero empezó a decir la raza, un amigo que yo tenía "no pos aquí traen una mucha muy joven".

AP: ¿Quién llevaba esas mujeres, los mayordomos?

IM: Personas, o no que esperanzas que el mayordomo, no ni para cuando, Las personas, personas que se dan cuenta de acá de afuera, las llevaban, gente nacida aquí, gente nacida aquí porque esas mujeres que agarraban eran americanas. Americanas y las llevaban allí a negociar con lo braceros.

AP; ¿Qué sucedía en caso de un accidente o de una enfermedad?

IM: Bueno en caso de accidente lo llevaban a un hospital. Gracias a Dios que yo en los 18, el 21 mes, que estuve cerca de dos años, nunca me enfermé ni nada. Nunca… pero algunos los llevaban al dotor, algunos que se enfermaban los llevaban al dottor, los llevaban al dotor. Les daban cobertura médica, los llevan al dotor a curarlos.

AP: ¿Cuáles eran las quejas más comunes?

IM: Las quejas más comunes… pos a muchos a veces no les gustaba, perdón, el borde. A veces muchos se quejaban que el borde no estaba bueno, sí estaba bueno, yo para mí sí estaba bueno el borde porque nos hacían unas comidas buenas, nos hacían allí. Allí en el campo los cocineros que teníamos allí… yo nunca tenía problemas con los cocineros tampoco porque me la llevaba muy suave. Yo siempre iba a ayudarles a ellos por eso me querían también a mi porque yo iba a ayudarles a los cocineros allí. Para mi no hubo ningún problema. A veces si algunos se quejaban que "no pos esto no me gusta que" pero había muchas clases de comida para que usted comiera, lo que le gustará mas.

AP: ¿Algunos braceros se quejaban de los patrones?

IM: Pos que en la cuadrilla de nosotros lo…nomás la queja que había que los metían a huertas malas, a la cuadrilla de nosotros. Nos metían a huerta malas de picar el limón. Porque en huertas buenas pos más cajas usted hacía. Pero nos metían en huertas malas, y sí había quejas en ese aspecto de las… de que usted sabe… que los metían a huertas malas que no era bastante limón, y otros los traían en huertas buenas donde hacían mucho dinero ellos.

AP: ¿Y si llovía?

IM: Si llovía no, no trabajábamos nosotros. Los días que llovía no trabajábamos. Si nos daban el borde completo y todo, comíamos muy bien ese día, pero no trabajábamos ese día. Pero como quiera pagábamos el borde.

AP: ¿Qué podía hacer si no le gustaba el trabajo?

IM: Podía uno irse. Cumplir los 45 días y decir bueno, pos el trabajo no me gusta, y no podía pedir otro trabajo porque a eso vino, a trabajar allí. Entonces podía uno irse irse para México. A los 45 días se venció mi contrato me voy, porque si desertaba y se iba, era un castigo, no lo volvían a contratar ya. No lo volvían a contratar, si desertaba y se iba, o, era un delito. Pero si se iba voluntariamente que decía, "bueno yo nomás voy a cumplir mis 45 días que vengo contratado, no me gusta el trabajo, me voy," se podía ir, la persona se podía ir.

AP: ¿Encontró algún tipo de discriminación contra usted?

IM: No… yo para mí, para mí no. No sé qué haiga en otras cuadrillas pero para mí no. Todo el tiempo los atendieron bien. A mí, en lo personal, me atendieron bien, nunca me faltó la comida. Lo que yo yo quería comía, y como digo yo de mis amigos, de los cocineros… para mí, para mí. No que en otros lugares… pueda ser que en otros lugares haiga habido, pero en la cuadrilla donde yo estaba no. Nadie se quejaba, lo único que se quejaba era lo que le repetía hace rato de que la huertas estaban un poco malas, no había mucho limón.

AP: ¿Alguna vez escuchó que hubo protestas?

IM: Protestas…no, casi nunca hubo protestas. Siempre la gente vino a trabajar, y nuestra raza es sufrida, y casi no. Que yo, yo no miré protestas, nunca miré protestas. Bueno eso es lo que yo miró, lo que yo vive, los 22 meses que estuve contratado aquí

AP: ¿Qué hacía en su día o días de descanso?

IM: Mis días de descanso iba a la iglesia y leía la Biblia. Eso era mis días de descanso, que era solamente el domingo porque sábado trabajábamos hasta las d12 del día. De lunes a sábado allí estaba yo en el trabajo. Trabajábamos hasta las doce y media del día y nos veníamos para el campo. Y era el domingo ir a la iglesia y leer la Biblia, total, eso es lo que hacía yo

AP: ¿Y los demás braceros que hacían?

IM: Los demás se iban al mundo, su mundo de ellos. A los placeres, a las barras, a gastar su dinero y a gastar su dinerito que ganaban.

AP: ¿No jugaban deportes a veces afuera?

IM: No. Nomás como le dije hace rato, jugaban barja y dados. Apostaban de dinero, y era prohibido, allí llegaba la policía y los paraba porque alguien se quejaba que tan jugando aquí. Venia la policía, hasta eso no decía nada, nosotros no íbamos a la cárcel ni nada. Decía. "guarden su dinero, guarden sus cartas y duérmanse ya," decían cuando llegaba la policía porque bastante fue la policía una vez al campo, y total.

AP: ¿No había organizaciones que iban a presentarles pasatiempos a los braceros, o las iglesias?

IM: No. No había. No había. Y luego, un hermano que trabajaba allí nomás iba a repartir biblias, pero era todo. Un hermano que ya murió, iba a repartir biblias allí al campo, y era total.

AP: ¿Había televisión?

IM: Teníamos televisión, sí había televisión en la comedora, sí había televisión, allí en la comedora había televisión. Un un cuarto especial allí si quería usted mirar televisión o algún programa. Yo casi nunca iba, yo casi nunca iba yo allí a mirar televisión. Tenía televisión, había televisión allí.

AP: ¿Y muchos descansaban nomás?

IM: Muchos descansaban y muchos fallaban por falladores, por la vagancia muchos fallaban de trabajar, también pos ya ve nuestra raza así es, y todo.

AP: ¿Era libre de ir y venir como deseaba, o sea, irse del campamento… a la ciudad?

IM: No a la ciudad sí. No desertarse del campamento, del campo no se podía desertar uno. Pero si tenían libre de uno…. vamos a suponer que quiero ir a San Francisco, podía uno decir a San Francisco, hasta San Francisco podía uno ir con avisándole a los patrones y avisándoles a las personas. Al camperos verle dicho yo voy a pasearme a San Francisco. Okay anda a Sanfrancisco. Podía uno a donde quiera uno podía ir aquí. Menos desertarse del campo, siempre y cuando viniera en dos días o tres días podía venir uno allí otra vez al campo

AP: ¿No iba como al pueblo, a las tiendas?

IM: Sí. Íbamos al pueblo. Cuando estuve aquí en seguida, íbamos a Oxnard, íbamos al pueblo, íbamos al pueblo, iba un vas especial a levantarnos para llevarnos al pueblo porque en aquel entonces, no teníamos licencia. No teníamos nada y no podíamos sacar una licencia para manejar ni nada. Es más, yo ni sabía manejar ni nada

AP: ¿A qué iba a las tiendas, a mirar?

IM: A mirar y a comparar cosas. Comprar ropa muchas veces. Aunque venían los falluqueros allí al campo, las trocas venden ropa allí, venían, y muchas veces no tenía uno en que irse. Y si no quería no quería, pero muchas veces teníamos que ir a comprar a Oxnard o ir a un restaurante, podía uno ir a comer allá.

AP: ¿Siempre le alcanzaba el dinero?

IM: Siempre me alcanza, a mí siempre me alcanzaba el dinero como dije, como yo no mal gastaba nada de mi dinero, yo todo el tiempo traía dinerito en la bolsa.

AP: ¿Tenían radios?

IM: O si. Yo compré un radio muy bueno de transistores. Cuando me hice novio de mi esposa se lo regalé a ella, un radio de transistores. Eso es lo que rifaba mucho, radios japonés, transistores muy buenos. Había muchos radios eso si, muchos radios que tenían los compañeros allí de trabajo.

AP: ¿Esto era cuando estaba aquí?

IM: Eso cuando estaba aquí contratado, sí

AP: ¿En Ventura?

IM: Cuando estaba aquí en Ventura.

AP: ¿Había algunas estaciones de radio en Español?

IM: O si. La kmro de… no la kcpa de Santa Paula y aquí la de Oxnard, no me acuerdo como, no me acuerdo como se llamaba…KOXR… esas eran las dos radios que había en Español, la de Santa Paula y la de Oxnard.

AP: ¿Dónde se encontraba el pueblo más cercano?

IM: El pueblo más cercano pos aquí… bueno porque yo estaba casi entre los pueblos. Cuando estuve aquí en el campo este de…la 118, allí estaba y luego luego Oxnard y Ventura, esta cercas aquí. Y luego cuando me cambiaron a Ventura, después me movieron a Ventura, pos más cerquitas estaba Ventura allí, más cerquitas estaba Ventura, y a veces visitábamos Bakersfield también, visitamos algunas veces Bakersfield para allá.

AP: ¿Cómo llegaban al pueblo?

IM: Bueno cuando yo me hice novio de mi esposa, mis suegros los que iban a ser mi suegros nos llevaban para Bakersfield, fuimos para allá, pero allá nosotros en puro bas. Yo fui a Camarillo algunas veces, fui en bas aquí, fui a Camarilo en el bas, en el Greyhound fui a Camarillo.

AP: ¿Y los demás braceros?

IM: Los demás braceros tenían sus amigos y muchos tenían carros, y muchos ya estaban inmigrados aquí. Les daban raite, se los llevaban. Pero casi siempre andaban en bas. Inclusive venía un autobús y decía "quien quiere ir al pueblo" y los levantaba a uno también.

AP: Había alguna iglesia, cercas de usted?

IM: Cercana pos sí. Aquí yo iba a esta iglesia pero cuando recién que vine, iba a esta iglesia que está en la violeta, allí iba yo a la iglesia. Y después ya cuando me moví para ventura, como quiera venía a esta iglesia porque iba el hermano, el pastor de aquí iba y nos levantaba a mí y a otro muchacho, que se llamaba Daniel y me levantaban y íbamos a la iglesia. El siempre y yo siempre andábamos en la iglesia los domingos

AP: ¿Cuándo los demás braceros iban al pueblo, que hacían allí en el pueblo?

IM: Andar de vagos (risas). Andar de vagos eso si, los que no tienen temor de Dios, andar de vagos. Eso se iban a tomar, a las cantinas, a gastar su dinero y el lunes muchas veces no traían ni un centavo en la bolsa

AP; ¿Entonces iba usted a la iglesia?

IM: Iba a la iglesia, yo siempre iba a la iglesia Desde tiempo todo el tiempo fui a la iglesia. Mi amigo y yo, que se llamaba Daniel, íbamos a la iglesia. Era del estado de México, era él y nos conocimos en la contratación y empezamos juntos. Íbamos a la iglesia nosotros todo el tiempo.

AP: ¿Entonces si iba gente religiosa a los campamentos?

IM: Sí. Iba gente religiosa a los campamentos. Muchos iban a dar servicios, inclusive iban a dar servicios, cultos religiosos allí. Pero pos la gente, unas querían, muchos sí aceptaban, muchos se convirtieron en cristianaos pero muchos no, muchos, muchos no querían. Les gustaba pues más el mundo, les llamaba más el mundo, las cosas del mundo.

AP: ¿Eran anglosajones los que iban al campamento?

IM: No puro latinos. Eran latinos. Eran puros latinos que iban allí, a repartir tratados y eso

AP: ¿En el tiempo que estuvo aquí alguna vez fue de vacacione a México a visitar a su familia?

IM: No porque no podía. Eso si no puede uno, no puede uno. Tiene que estar hasta que se venza todo el contrato. Cuando tiene usted cerca de 2 años, entonces sí, es por ley que tiene que salir a México porque ya no puede estar más aquí. Porque así la asociación de Santa Paula, la asociación estaba en Santa Paula. El mero que mandaba todo se llamaba Victor Veja, y es el que mandaba a uno cuando ya cumplía uno cerca de 2 años, decía "sabes qué, tú y tú ya no puedes estar aquí en los Estados Unidos, sal a tu México y luego regresa después, vuélvete a contratar otra vez pero ya no podemos tenerte tanto aquí. " Porque nomás la ley era cerca de dos años.

AP: ¿Cómo celebraba usted la semana santa y Navidad?

IM: La semana Santa y Navidad, muy buena pregunta. En primer lugar la navidad, bueno la celebrábamos en Zacatecas en la iglesia onde yo me crié. Pero aquí cuando vine, me causaba admiración que tanto foquito colorado y tanta cosa, las casas adornadas. Yo le pregunte al hermano, "qué significa eso," "es la Navidad" dijo, "es la navidad," o pos dije, yo no sé, dije. Pero nosotros celebramos pos aquí en la iglesia. Y una semana santa también aquí, aquí, la celebramos también, en la iglesia también

AP: ¿Entonces las luces eran algo increíble para usted?

IM: Sí para mí todo era increíble porque era admirable todo eso. Porque nunca había visto yo esas cosas. Yo le preguntaba a este hermano, "qué significa, por qué ponen tantas lucecitas en las casas" Me dijo "aquí se celebra Navidad" o bueno dije ta bien.

AP: ¿Usted no estaba acostumbrado a la cultura de aquí?

IM: No claro, no estaba acostumbrado yo a la cultura de aquí.

AP: ¿Celebraban días festivos mexicanos, como el 18 de Septiembre en los campos braceros?

IM: Aquí en los campos no. No nunca nunca celebraban, nunca celebraban. Allí en los campos no, en los campos no.

AP: Entonces en Navidad los demás braceros…

IM: En navidad, sí se celebraba, se celebraba. Como digo, nosotros en la iglesia y la gente pos se sientan a tomar. El día primero del año se iban también a las cantinas ellos a tomar, y eso, el día ultimo del año pues, el 31 de Diciembre.

AP: ¿Regresó usted a México cuando terminó su contrato de trabajar?

IM: Me regresé a México porque tenía que salir para México. El 17 de julio de 1962 salí yo para México otra vez.

AP: ¿Le facilitó su patrón el transporte para regresar a México?

IM: No. Era yo de mi dinero mío. Nomás ellos nos pagaban todo lo que se nos debía, vámonos. Le daban 3 días a uno para que uno arreglara sus cositas, empacara sus trapitos y todo, lavara todo y listo y luego luego para salir, 3 días le daban ora si vámonos. Pero le pagaban todo lo que le debían claro, le daban su cheque y era todo. Ya usted pagaba por su propia cuenta de su propia bolsa

AP: ¿No le ayudaban pues?

IM: No le ayudaban, no eso si, ya para salir no le ayudaban a uno. Nomás uno con su propio dinero salía. Inclusive a un muchacho tuvimos que juntarle porque era muy faltoso en el trabajo y tuvimos que juntarle dinero nosotros para que se fuera. Allí hicimos una colecta en el campo.

Le dimos, era un zacatecano y le digo 'te vamos a juntar,' ya no tenía pa irse, como se iba ir. Y ya le dijo el patrón 'sabes qué tú hasta aquí, ya estas despedido, vete para tu México.' Por faltoso el muchacho, y nosotros le juntamos a él para que se fuera. Pero el patrón no pagaba nada, nomás pagaba lo que le debían a usted, y era todo

AP: ¿Después de terminar su contrato de trabajo, qué tan difícil era conseguir otro contrato nuevo?

IM: Otro contrato ya era muy fácil, buena pregunta, porque ya era muy fácil conseguir otro contrato. Como ya habia venido uno para acá, como ya había venido uno para acá, le daban un mica a uno, una mica, usted traía su mica y luego se contrataba usted. Decían, 'todos los de mica fórmense aquí" porque ya habían venido para acá. Entonces así rápido pasaba, era muy fácil ya cuando ya había venido usted a los Estados unidos, mucho mas fácil que cuando viene la primera vez.

AP: ¿Qué había qué hacer para obtener autorización para regresar a los Estados Unidos?

IM: Bueno tenía que uno trabajar en México por lo menos 2 meses, 2 meses y ganarse una carta. Yo trabajé para venirme para acá otra vez, pero por algunas circunstancias ya no pude pasar para acá. Este e…y ya venía muy bien pero algo pasó, traía una infección aquí en una pierna de algo que me pegó. Me dijo el doctor que por el calor y ya no pude pasar para acá. Pero me gané una carta de control piscando algodón en México y era muy buena la carta porque era de un alemán, se llamaba Enrique Faister en Sonora México. Y ya venía yo derecho y me dijeron "los de mica fórmense acá". Pos yo traía mi mica y luego luego me forme allí, ya venia allí, pero no pude pasar por eso. Y el dotor me dijo "yo te puedo poner una inyección y puedes pasar," pónmela le dije por favor, no no quiso y pos no, esa vez por eso no pasé. Pero ya era muy fácil, ya con mica era muy fácil pasar para acá.

AP: Alguna vez renunció su trabajo de bracero?

IM: No nunca. Me gusto a mí, me gusta mucho esta nación y todo. Nunca que esperanzas, me daba gusto cunado me renovaban mi contrato por seis meses, ya me sentía como de aquí.

AP: ¿Entonces usted no regresó a México, que hizo quedarse en Los Estados Unido, que lo motivó?

IM: Bueno cuando salí ya para México… cuando salí ya para México, mi esposa y yo éramos novios. Duramos tres años de novios como le hemos dicho, y eso fue ya después. Entonces como ya había estado yo aquí, ya conocía yo aquí, pos me gusta esta nación aquí en Estados Unidos. Y entonces sí, cuando ya éramos novios de mi esposa, entonces ya fue diferente. Ya en… 8 días arreglamos inmigración, 8 días nomas arreglamos inmigración por ayuda de mis suegros y mi esposa. Y entonces si los casamos en el 63.

AP: ¿Se hizo ciudadano de los Estados Unidos?

IM: Me hice ciudadano hace 15 años, voy para 16 años que me hice ciudadano de los Estados Unidos

AP: ¿Hábleme de su vida después de haber trabajado como bracero?

IM: Pos ya fue muy diferente porque como ya tenía inmigración, ya podía buscar otro trabajo mejor que piscar limón. Y… entonces ya fue se me abrieron las puertas porque ya tenia inmigración, ya podía tener yo una licencia, podía tener un carro, podía buscar mi trabajo, fue que por eso me metí a la construcción, me metí a la unión porque allí se ganaba mas dinero y… le iba más bien a uno. Entonces pos ya, pero ya con inmigración, con tarjeta verde pos es diferente ya, porque ya aunque… es residente legal aquí, pos ya tiene más garantías la persona. Y jue que me busque ese otro trabajo mejor ya en la construcción, empecé a trabajar en construcción.

AP: ¿O sea, fue a México y volvió a regresar a Los Estado Unido?

IM: Ya cuando fui a México… cuando ya a los 8 días que arreglé para acá, ya hasta el 66 volví para México. El 66, pero ya iba inmigrado, mi esposa y toda la cosa, ya casado y todo.

AP: ¿No entró ilegal?

IM: Nunca estuve ilegal aquí en Estados Unidos. Sí fue con mi contrato, onde quiere que me agarraba la migra no me hacía nada porque yo traía mi contrato. Nunca entré ilegal aquí a los Estados Unidos.

AP: ¿Dónde cruzo la frontera?

IM: Yo pasé por San Isidro. Y cuando pasé de bracero por Calexico porque allí era la línea de pasar. Era cuando…cuando tenía residencia legal, pasé por san Isidro, el 24 de Enero del 63.

AP: ¿Qué pasó cuando estuvo en el centro de recepción?

IM: ¿Dónde, aquí en Calexico?

AP: Sí, cuando iba a entrar.

IM: ¿Cuándo iba a entrar para acá de bracero o inmigrado ya?

AP: Primeramente de bracero.

IM: O no pos en el centro, como le dije hace rato muchos exámenes. Un examen físico, la sangre, pulmón, que no trajera ninguna infección, todo eso. Mucho mas riguroso que el examen que cuando arreglé papeles. Cuando arreglé papeles nomás el pulmón y la sangre y total vámonos. Pero cuando me contraté, sí hubo un físico físico, lo que se nombra físico le hacen a uno de bracero. Y aquí en el centro de California es donde le… usted si va a pasar, o no va a pasar, allí te dicen todo allí. Si lo devuelven allí, lo devuelven, y si pasa, pos se pasa para acá ya.

Porque muchos no pasaban por mal record que tenían en México y allí les descubrían su record, vámonos. Les rayaban en el pasaporte, un lápiz rojo, fórmate allá. Cuando le ponía ese lápiz rojo, ya era, iban para allá, no podía pasar para acá. Algo tenía, algo debía.... o algo, algo algo pasaba. Pero yo no tengo ninguno de esos problemas porque yo...primero dios porque temía a Dios y no era vago ni nada, yo no tenía ninguna infección. Me hicieron el examen completo, mi sangre mi pulmón todo salió muy bien. No infecciones veneráis, no nada de que trajiera nada la persona, lo chequeaban bien. Ya entonces firmaba usted su contrato en el centro de California, ora si súbete al bas y vámonos, al campo onde te vamos a depositar allá.

AP: ¿Qué fue directo a Ventura?

IM: Me vine directo a Ventura sí porque aquí venia destinado. Mi contrato decía que aquí venía destinado yo, al condado de Ventura.

AP: ¿Pos de San Isidro a Ventura?

AP: De San Isidro... No, de Calexico a Ventura, si. Ya cuando entre inmigrado, pos ya entre al campo también porque no onde quedarme pero ya era diferente porque ya tenía mi pasaporte ya, yo tenia mi migración ya. Entonces ya era diferente. Desde luego en el campo ya me ponían separado a mí de los contratados, a mí, como ya tenía mi migración ya. Entre al campo de Oxnard allí, estuve todavía pero ya inmigrado. Pero cuando entré inmigrado entré por SanIsidro, por San Isidro entré. Cuando entré contratado entre por Calexico, por Calexico.

AP: De Guadalajara también a Calexico?

IM: No de aquí, de Empalme Sonora, de empalme Sonora a Mexicali, y allí por Calexico entré, pero con mi contrato, usted uste sabe, no ilegal ni nada, con mi contrato yo.

AP: ¿El abogado...?

IM: El abogado nos, ese para que corriera la lista en Empalme Sonora, el metió la lista y luego luego. Y hasta salió buen abogado porque nos devolvió 500 pesos a cada uno, nomás 300 pagamos, onde quiera pagaban 1000 pesos para pasar. Nosotros nomás al abogado le pagamos 800, pero le devolvió a mi papá 500 pesos mexicanos, le devolvió todavía, nomas 300 pesos los cobró por pasar la lista, pos tienen que ganar algo de dinero y es un contrato, pos es un negocio pues que tenían con Estado Unidos. Pero ya cuando uno viene contratado, viene con lonche bueno, un tren de primera y todo a la perfección para que no hubiera nada.

AP: ¿Describa físicamente el centro de recepción, cómo era que recuerda?

IM: El centro donde...

AP: De recepción.

IM: ¿De dónde?

AP: Cuando los iban a contratar.

IM: O el centro no pos allí en Empalme Sonora. O allí si había desorden allí. En el centro de…y luego tenía que hacer todo. Eran unas grandes oficinas larguísimas como de aquí a la luz. Estaban contratando 800 hombres por hora, cada hora 800 hombres los contrataban a uno y rápido. Que tengo que hacer rápido todo todo quitarse l ropa para un examen y todo rápido ponérsela y rápido correr y todo listo era tremendo allí. Yo soy, no soy muy inteligente pero allí me puse a ver todo lo que estaba pasando y rapidito para que no me regañaran porque muchos "fórmese alla" lo regañaban, no le pegaban ni nada pero lo regañaban a uno. "Hey fórmese allá" y usted se entretenía mas. Si no todo lo que hiciera quítese la ropa, ora si y ya cuando veníamos aquí al cruzar… de Calexico para los Estados Unidos allí lo espreyaban a uno en la ropa. Que no trajera ningún animal, piojos pos no iba a tener piojos uno ya estaba grande pero que no trajera ningún insecto ni nada lo espreyaban a uno, vámonos pásate lo espreyaban a uno allí. Pero era tremendo el centro de la contratación, era tremendo. Y todavía lee estaba platicando a mi esposa, un día que dijeron "para el vienes santo libres a California" y empezó la raza a puchar. 100,000 hombres, 100,000 hombres empezaron a puchar y yo estaba cerquitas del riel como de aquí al pulpito del riel donde ya pasaba uno para la caseta para contratarse uno. Y para dónde me escapaba, nomás me puse las manos en le estómago y empecé a pushar yo también porque si se caía uno allí, lo mataban a pisadas,

AP: ¿Hubo muertes?

IM: No hubo muertes pero se vinieron 3000 sardos, 3000 soldados con los rifles y los resonojiaron un tiempo. Se oyó y se vinieron con los culatas, vámonos, despejaron la gente con las culatas, con las culatas de los rifles.

AP: ¿Soldados norteamericanos?

IM: Soldados mexicanos porque era Empalme Sonora. Esa experiencia si tuve allí en Empalme Sonora, que dijieron "libres a California," que es que los vienes daban libres a California y empieza a puchar la gente y había unos rieles de puro fierro, de esos del tren para que no pase para allá. Y que se viene 3000 soldados resonojiaron los rifles y vámonos. Yo dije que me voy a arrimar yo allí, me dan un culatazo en la cabeza, dije no. Pero era la manera… a 100,000 hombres no era para otra, 100,000 hombres allí en la contratación taba tremendo. Esa fue la única experiencia que tuvo yo allí

AP: ¿Entonces eran multitudes de hombres?

IM: Multitudes de hombres. El viernes y sábado amanecía lleno y todos los días contrataban miles y miles y miles. Y amanecía bien, seria porque viernes y sábado llegan del sur de México muchos bases llenos en la noche. Y amanecía lleno otra vez el lunes, otra vez la contratación, lleno lleno. Era un valle, usted iba por la carretera internacional y era un valle que miraba usted. Puros sombreros allí así como está en los retratos, puros puros sombreros allí se miraban. Yo la primer vez hasta me dio miedo, me dio miedo, pos yo estaba verde, chamaco de a tiro sin paseado ni nada me dio miedo sinceramente, me dio miedo cuando dijo mi cuñado "vamos a la contratación." Los levantamos temprano, como a las 7, como ir a buscar un trabajo Porque a las

8 llamaban, a la 8 llamaban. Y el que no estaba allí se perdió y perdió su dinero y perdió no se presento, vámonos, lista leída, la persona que aparecía allí cuando.... ya metimos el abogado, ese ya estábamos nosotros ya estábamos listos allí temprano y un lunes vino y dijo "el martes los llaman" dijo el abogado. "El martes los van a llamar van a pasar la lista," ya estábamos temprano allí y que voy oyendo los nombres de mi familiares, de los amigos que venían de Santa Rosa, y nombraron mi nombre y corrí a la contratación a contratarnos.

AP: ¿Cómo llamaban la lista por estados?

IM: A veces por estado llamaban la lista. Pero a veces nomás, muchas veces decían, "esos que quedaron enfermos," pero muchas veces los que pagaban más. Dijo es que quedaron enfermos de ayer pero no era así, para no decrepítalos allí Y esos que pagaron pos claro luegos los llamaban primero. Y... eran unas listas así, como del suelo hasta aquí así de grandes pos nosotros mirábamos la lista allí. El abogado agarraba el micrófono y usted lo podía ver. Se subía como a una plataforma y taba llamando la lista allí "Tt t ata t ata fulano tal" y todos nomás corriendo y metidos a la contratación.

AP: ¿Qué pasa con los hombres que no podían pagarle a un abogado?

IM: No pasaban. No pasaban porque ya no traían dinero, lo habían gastado. Yo miré muchos, eso sí mire muchos, ya nomás escribían en tierra porque gastaban el dinero en vagancia en prostitución en Empalme Sonora México. Que allí si había para que se metiera uno hasta a mero adentro de la prostitución. Y muchos gastaban su dinero allí, no pasaban. Ya no traían dinero para contratarse, era en vano el dinero que gastaron. Dejaron sus esposa sus familia allá y gastaron el dinero en la vagancia y no pasaban porque no traían dinero ya para contratarse.

AP: ¿Entonces para venir como bracero tenía que pagarle a un abogado?

IM: Tenía que pagarle a un abogado. Era la ley de México, yo no sé de dónde pero tenía que pagarle a un abogado. Para venirse a contratar porque quién sabe como estaría el contrato de Estados Unidos y México, que arreglos tenían. Porque cierta cantidad de dinero iba para el gobierno de México. Sí, Estados Unidos le pagaba cierta cantidad de dinero por cada bracero, pero no supe cuanto, yo nunca supe cuanto, ni investigamos, ya veníamos tan contentos ya que ni investigamos ya para qué. Nunca investigamos cuanto se le pagaba ni nada. Pero un abogado lo pasaba uno, pasaban la lista allí. Leían la lista y de bolada la lista sulla metía la ponía arriba en la tapa le agarraban la lista y "tatatata" empezaban a contratar a uno. Pero era un desorden el contratación muchos... yo no gastaba ni un peni. Yo traía mi dinerito, me iba a mi comidita allí, me comía mi comidita, no gastaba ni un peni afuera, no mal gastaba. Yo traía mi dinerito todo el tiempo pero a nadie le decía que traía dinero yo. Pero muchos no pasaron, yo nomás los miraba escribir en tierra tristes y ni hablar. Todavía cuando me vine, yo a unos de mis compañeros de mi rancho les di 100 pesos a cada uno "tenga me sobró dinero ten 100 pesos para que te ayudes" le dije. Algunos dos, tengan 100 pesos. Se los regalé para que... yo ya me voy para Estados Unidos se los regaló para que porque se sufría si no cuidaban uno su dinerito, se sufría allí en Empalme Sonora, se sufría. Podía usted gastar el dinero y no pasar porque no tenia con que pagar al abogado.

AP: ¿Nunca llegaban patrones que les ayudaban?

IM: No, allí no. Allí en Empalme no.

AP: Cómo yo te pago…

IM: No. O que buena hubiera sido, pero no ya cuando venia contratado venía usted con el contrato de México y Estados Unidos. Entonces si cuando se sabían que usted que se contrato, usted que se contrato, buen lonche le daban en el centro de California, buen lonche, como digo y los llevaban en un tren de primera. Los traían en puro Greyhound, así los traían aquí, a los campos, pero hasta que se contrataba, al menos no. Menos no , no le ayudaban a uno en esa forma. El que se contrató se contrató y el que no, Dios que lo bendiga. No no hubo contratación, gastó su dinero, malgastó su dinero, se acabó el asunto

AP: ¿Entonces qué fue el primer año que llegó aquí?

IM: El 60 en 1960. En mayo del 1960 llegué aquí. A Empalme llegué ese mismo mes. El día 7 de febrero salí de mi tierra, llegué Emplame. Salí de Zacatecas y llegue a Empalme ese mismo mes pero hasta en mayo me contraté. Me tuve de mayo hasta que son como unos tres meses algo así, y llendo todos los días a la contratación. Todos los días iba yo temprano me levanta… me lavaba la cara, me lavaba los dientes, me arreglaba y me iba a la contratación, todos los días. Como una forma de trabajo, de lunes a viernes porque el sábado no había contratación, pero el lunes… y me contrataba allí

AP: ¿Qué tuvo que hacer para obtener su permiso de trabajo, el abogado?

IM: No pos por el abogado. El abogado que él consiguió el permiso de trabajo y luego… primero Dios, y luego los exámenes que le hacían a uno, que usted los pase los exámenes físicos y listo vámonos a trabajar a Estados Unidos. Ya podía venirse usted usted para Estados Unidos a trabajar.

AP: ¿Cómo era el examen cuando les quitaban la ropa?

IM: Le chequeaban a uno todo, todo un examen físico, de todo. Cuerpo, que no trajiera infecciones veneras, que no tuviera hemorroides que no morranas, que no tuviera nada. Ninguna infección podía traer la persona porque no pasaba. Le decían o malo el pulmón, le sacaban radiografías, placas del pulmón, la sangre pulmón. Si miraba uno, le ponían un lápiz como de acá a aquella banca yo creo. Les ponía las manos "cuantos dedos miras" le decían a uno. Todo eso le chequeaban a uno. Y que ninguna infección podía tener nada. Le digo que yo traía una… tantito y me dijo el mismo dotor me dijo sabes que como tu piel es blanca y hacia muchísimo calor en Sonora dije claro que hacía mucho calor, 126 grados de calor y yo piscando algodón le dije. Dijo por eso te salió, porque tu piel es blanca, es el polvo que te…dijo yo te podía quitar todo. Pero hombre pónmela le dije pero no quiso. No pos ya te rayaron tu papel dijo. Pero si tenía que venir bien sana la persona para acá.

AP: ¿Tubo alguna opción para escoger entre el tipo de trabajo?

IM: O no. No viene uno a piscar. Si lo mandan a piscar naranja piscar limón es es... pos no puede decir uno es que no... entonces le dicen a uno no pos entonces vete, entonces vete, te vamos a echar para México.

AP: ¿Tubo usted algo que decir acerca de el lugar donde lo mandaron a trabajar aquí en Ventura?

IM: Muy buena comida que los daban. El primer día me levanté, llegué a las 4 de la mañana al campo llego el bas del centro de California a la s 4 de la mañana, me dormí una hora y a la hora el campero, la campana, le dije a un amigo mío que es esto, pos no sabia. Es la campana que ya te levantes, como si me acabo de acostar le dije. No es que tienes que levantare dijo tienes que levantarte porque ya se llego el trabajo. Y me fui al comedor ay ya yay, había blanquillos había pan mexicano había avena había oído para que uno comiera. En esa hora pos yo no tenia nada de hambre pero si le daban muy buen lonche le echaban su lonche para que comiera en la tarde usted venia se banaba otra vez a comer a cenar y en la mana otra vez las tres comida muy buenas que daban allí en el campo. Eso si muy buena comida daban para mi yo nunca sufrí por la comida a mí me gusta todo chile, me gusta todo, todo me gusta

AP: ¿Pero si había algunos braceros que no les gustaba?

IM: había unos braceros que no pero eran pocos casi no, casi todo el tiempo se comían todo. Los sándwiches a ellos a muchos no les gustaban, a mi me gustaban los sándwiches también. A veces agarraba sándwiches para llevar pa el trabajo. Allí hacían blanquillos estrellados como usted los quiera, blanquillos en torta como usted los quiera le hacían uno allí, toda comida, muy buena comida que daban

AP: ¿Se le permitía tener con usted algunos objetos personales?

IM: Pos nomas su ropa algún radio toca disco que usted comprara usted los tenía allí en su campo, los tenía en su beliz y allí estaba guardado. Teníamos radio yo compre un radio como le digo compre un radio muy bueno de transistores lo compre de radios japoneses y nunca me dijeron nada nunca, podía tener... meno menos hasta muchos traían navajas pero no se se suponía que tuviera navaja allí pero si tenían muchos navajas también pero no se se suponía

AP: ¿Después que recibió su permiso de trabajo vino aquí a Ventura?

IM: Vine aquí a ventura aquí caí en ventura después que recibí mi permiso ya de trabajo. Me dieron mi papel es un pasaporte le sellan su pasaporte allí por los 45 días y como dije se porto bien se lo renuevan otros 3 meses, otros 4 meses y si se pone bien. Entonces por se lo renuevan por 6 meses derechos por 6 meses derecho se lo renuevan. Pero si es faltoso al trabajo por lo desocupan, también lo desocupan y le dicen pos ya no te podemos dar más contrato y que tiene que hace uno, pos irse para México.

AP: ¿Cuántos anos trabajo usted oficialmente como braceros aquí en los Estados Unidos?

IM: Como bracero, cerca de 2 años muy cerquita de 2 años, como 22, 23 meses cerquitas de 2 años. Nomás la ley requería 18 meses, año y medio, pero yo como me portó muy bien, primero dios me ayudó, me porté bien y todos a mi ni me querían echar. Los patrones cuando me iban a echar, no querían todavía que yo me fuera para México, los patrones dijeron que no. Le dije al mayordomo "ya señor que los van a echara para México" dijo no los patrones los quieren mucho no quieren que se vallan dijo. Pero yo ya tenía mucho tiempo yo ya tenía cerca de 2 años aquí contratado

AP: ¿En qué años?

IM: En el 60. El 17 de julio del 62 yo salí. Yo entré el 60 aquí y... en mayo del 60 entré. Y el 17 de de Julio de 1962 jue, salí, yo ya fue mi salida ya porque ya se me había terminado mi contrato.

AP: ¿En cuántos lugares diferentes trabajo usted como bracero?

IM: Nomás aquí en Ventura, nomás aquí en Ventura. Aquí jue lo único, íbamos a Camarillo a piscar a la huerta de limón a Camarillo. Aquí a Ojai, aquí en Oxnard, allí esos files que mira usted en la central, allí nosotros los piscábamos. Esos files allí del limón, pero nunca salí ya de este condado, allí anduvo piscando todo el tiempo

AP: ¿Qué cosechaban en la granja o el rancho?

IM: ¿En mi tierra?

AP: Aquí como bracero.

IM: No no no podía tener uno ningún trabajo, nomás a lo que vino uno a piscar limón y era total. No podía uno escoger.

AP: Los patrone...

IM: Los patrones

AP: ¿Qué cosechaban ellos?

IM; O que cosechaban, pos nomas limón, yo mis patrones ellos nomas puro limón puro limón cosechaban. A veces, algunos braceros se lo llevaban a piscar aguacate, a mi nunca me llevaron a piscar aguacate. Llegaban "hey quién quiere ir a piscar aguacate," aguacate y limón piscaban y claro, huertas de naranja también. Pero nunca casi nunca fui a la naranja. Después que estaba inmigrado sí fui a la naranja, pero menos no.

AP: ¿Entonces describa el trabajo que usted hacía como bracero?

IM: Pos nomás pura pisca de limón. Pisque eso todo los días porque nunca fui a piscar aguacate puro limón, todo los días los 21 meses que estuve cercas de dos años, como le dije era lo único que piscaba puro limón

AP: ¿Qué era el proceso, como le hacia?

IM: Le dan una tijeras, le dan unos guantes, unas manguillas porque estaban alto los arboles de limón, antes, ora ya son chiquitos bajitos. Pero estaban altos los arboles de limón también. Le daban sus manguillas para que no se raspara porque las espina pican, le daban una medida que usted tenía que ver la medida y todo el que pasará por esa medida no podía piscarlo, pero ya cuando usted se graba, se enseña a piscar limón, ya no más lo mira y no. Pa usar la medida, allí la traía en el dedo pero no la puede usar porque ya sabe el proceso, ya limón, el limón que pasa allí por la medida que tienes, tienes que piscarlo y era todo. Pero era todo no podía opciones de tener opciones de piscar otra cosa. Oyes pos no me gusta el limón cámbiame a otra cosa, no podía uno hacer eso. Nomas el contrato, era nomas venimos al limón, venimos al limón era nuestro contrato, era todo. Teníamos que obedecer el contrato.

AP: ¿Cuántos braceros trabajan junto con usted?

IM: Conmigo, como unos mil como unos mil braceros trabajábamos juntos.

AP: ¿Háblame de los demás braceros que trabajaban allí, hizo alguna amistad?

IM: Como no, eran mis amigos, unos eran mis amigos, si algunos de ellos eran mis amigos los más conocidos que tenía yo en el campo eran amigos míos. Teníamos amista allí con ellos y todo. Pero como yo nunca andaba en problemas, ni en nada. Pos como quiere tenía a veces problemillas porque venían borrachos y querían hacerme tomar cerveza a fuerzas, yo dije no no yo no puedo tomar cerveza, no quiero tomar cerveza, pero era lo último. Después venían y me pedían perdón y ya nunca me volvían a ofender también. Tenía mi lucha yo allí siempre porque al punto borrachito usted sabe se descontrola la persona, pero era todo.

AP: ¿Nunca escucho que había personas ilegales en este país que querían trabajar?

IM: No. Nunca todos los que estaban allí eran contratados, puros contratados. Tenían que trabajar, a uno le pedían pasaporte. La lista llegaba al campero, y el campero sabía allí, fulano de tal fulano de tal viene contratados, están contratados aquí. Le entregaban una lista el del Greyhound, le entregaba una lista al campero, aquí esta la lista, estos te traje y se acabo la cosa. Estos te traje son 50, cuando llegamos al campo allí 50 pelados veníamos en el bas, aquí está la lista, le entregó la lista al campero allí, al que se encargaba del campo, total pero no había había ningún que no tuviera contrato y que estuviera trabajando.

AP: ¿Entonces usted nunca escuchó que su patrón contrato a alguien ilegal?

IM: No y yo nunca escuché que mi patrón contratará alguien ilegal porque como había bastantes braceros, por eso no no no yo creo por eso no hacían eso. Cual yo menos yo nunca escuché eso, que alguien ilegal contratara.

AP: Tenía usted mucho contacto con su patrón?

IM: Pos a veces porque a veces él nos daba raite a otras huertas. Nomás una pura vez me llevó para otra huerta mi mero patrón, el Phil Boss, grande era un americano, sabía un poquito español. Pero esa fue la única vez que me subí a su carro, y fuimos a otra huerta que los iba a llevar para que piscaramos allí un rato. Y nomás un rato piscamos y de allí nos devolvimos ya, ya no fuimos de entonces ya. Nomás con el puro mayordomo nos entendíamos nosotros, el puro mayordomo.

AP: ¿Cómo lo trataban?

IM: A mí me trataron muy bien, muy bien no queja conmigo, en cuanto los patrones, los patrones me trataron muy bien no quedaron a deberme ni un peni, me trataron muy bien a mí, en lo que toca mi persona me trataron muy bien a mí. Y a mis compañeros también, pos no miré que a nadie le haigan quedado a deber dinero, a mis compañeros míos, no. Todo el tiempo nos pagaban, como digo a la quincena hay ta nuestro cheque, nuestro cheque.

AP: ¿Alguna vez fueron autoridades mexicanas al lugar donde usted trabajaba?

IM: Que yo me acuerde no. No.

AP: ¿En alguna ocasión fue la inmigración a revisar la documentación de los trabajadores?

IM: Tampoco nunca. Yo en los años que estuve contratado nunca mira la inmigración, nunca la miré a la inmigración. Como sabían que traían sus papeles uno en orden, no lo molestaban, ni nunca fue la inmigración a los campo no, al campo donde yo estuve.

AP: ¿Cómo se comunicaba con su familia en México?

IM: O les escribía por cartas, por carta yo les mandaba caratas allá. Los cheques que les mande por cartas se los mandaba también a mi papá.

AP: ¿Los visitaba?

IM: No nomás porque no podíamos visitar. No podíamos visitar hasta que no se acaba el contrato podíamos visitar otra vez a México, pero sí, no puras cartas le escribía por cartas a mi papá, yo por cartas, le mandaba cartas a mi papá.

AP: ¿Cuántos días trabajaba a la semana?

IM: Trabajábamos seis días a la semana como le dije, de lunes a sábado y el sábado a las 12 parábamos. Doce y media parábamos y los íbamos al campo todos los días, de lunes a sábado, de lunes a Sábado, por el presupuesto que el sábado era como le digo hasta las doce y media. No era todo el día, pero como quiera a las doce y media doce del día, vámonos para el campo ya, nos íbamos al troque y nos íbamos para allá

AP: ¿Cuántas horas por día?

IM: Cuántas horas por día. Trabajábamos como de las 7 hasta las 4 de la tarde y nos daban que… media hora de lonche algo así, media hora de lonche… se me hace que los daban media hora de lonche, como unas 8 horas yo creo, 8 horas por allí

AP: ¿Describa el día normal de trabajo?

IM: El día normal.

AP: Se levantaba…

IM: El día… cuando yo trabajaba…. No pos me levantaba temprano temprano porque teníamos que estar tempranito porque el troque venia. Si usted taba listo, se lo llevaba, si no, se quedaba. Tenía que estar tempranito allí, ya comido con su lonche, su saco listo, todo lo que usted usaba. Listo ya, esperando ya el troque formado allí, listo. Decían "antes de las… a las 6 vamos a venir a levantarlo," se levantaba a las 5 uno, desayunaba agarraba su lonche, agarraba todo su equipo que iba a usar todas sus tijeras, sus manguillas, todo sus guantes y listo. Allí parado ya parado para que el troque llegaba, el que se quedó se quedó. Nos decían "oye vente… el que se quedó se quedó." Pero era una falta tremenda y luego luego lo marcaban a uno con la falta, le ponían falta 1 también

AP: ¿Hábleme de sus alimentos, que comían?

IM: Los alimentos estaban buenos. En la mañana comíamos avena, alguna pieza de pan, algún sándwich, o algunos blanquillos estrellados, si quería comer la persona unos blanquillos estrellados. Pero había mucho que comer. Si usted deseaba comer plátanos, si usted deseaba comer pan, pan comía, o con avena o nomás una taza de avena pero era todo.

AP: ¿Dónde comía?

IM: En el comedor, tenía un comedor allí especial donde y una cocina donde guisaban los cocineros la comida y el comedor era grande mas grande como este lugar que estamos horita. Mucho más grande y allí todos los sentábamos a comer, todos.

AP: ¿Tenia que pagar por la comida?

IM: Teníamos que pagar 1.25 por día con toy comida y casa, con toy comida y casa y cama, y todo le daban a uno allí. 125 por día las tres comidas.

AP: ¿Cuál fue su opinión de la comida?

IM: Para mí fue muy bueno, no tengo queja yo. Como dije como le dije hace rato, le repite, hace rato, era muy buena comida para mí, muy buena comida, me caía muy bien la comida. La leche por lo pronto no me empezó a caer, pero después me encantaba la leche. Yo estaba impuesto a México, a leche caliente y toda la cosa pero aquí…. Y después me empecé a empicar, nomás

llegaba del trabajo y me tomaba un vasote de leche. Me bañaba y me iba al comedor, me arreglaba, me bañaba, me iba al comedor un vasote de leche. Pero después me empezó a gustar mucho la carne y todo, me empezó a gustar mucho a mí, y se acabo el problema. Nomás problema de la comida, estaba muy buena la comida, daban buena comida.

AP: ¿Le daban suficiente de comer?

IM: Daban suficiente, para mí no hay queja en ese aspecto, suficiente. Le decían a uno, "quiere más." Es más en un día de gracias unas oyonas que hicieron de puros turkeys, muchisimo turkey que dieron, guajolote y dije, qué es esto, "pos es día de gracia" dijeron o bueno, pos yo no sabía le dije y este… muchísimo carne que daban, carne de la que usted quisiera, carne de la que usted quisiera, pan, blanquillos, plátanos, manzanas, todos jugos, leches, lo que usted quisiera tomar, no había problema con la comida, muy buena comida.

AP: Describa donde vivía y cómo estaba a mueblado?

IM: La éramos la cabina onde vivíamos, era éramos doce camas. Cada quien tenía su beliz allí nomás un beliz y algunas sillas teníamos nomas. Ya veces no había basillas allí y nomás teníamos las camitas onde nosotros dormíamos, onde cabe una sola persona, una persona para cada bracero. Éramos 12, 12 vivíamos en esa cabina y era todo. Sus cobijitas que usted había traído y ya todo. Le daban sabanas allí también y almohadas claro, pero era todo. Ya cuando uno se iba a entregar todo allí, agarraba lo que era sus pertenencias, su radio su su beliz y empacaba sus cositas, sus zapatos y todo lo que… vámonos se iba uno.

AP: ¿Había baños con drenaje?

IM: O había baños sí había baños. Los baños estaban grandísimos estaban muchísimos baños, un curco de baños. Oiga muchísimos muchísimos baños. Los baños taban muy buenos para bañarse uno, todo muy bien, muy bien taban, estaba todo muy bien.

AP: ¿Cómo hacia para lavar su ropa?

IM: Para lavar nuestra ropa había lavaderos allí para que usted lavara su ropa. Yo lavaba mi ropa la planchaba, teníamos para planchar también allí y la arreglábamos nuestra ropa todavía había onde lavar la ropa también.

AP: ¿Le proporcionaba artículos de uso personal tales como cepillo de dientes jabón toallas…?

IM: NO. No uno lo compraba nada de eso nada de eso, nada de eso todo eso uno lo compraba.

AP: ¿Entonces no lo ayudaban ellos?

IM: No en esa forma no lo ayudaban a uno, no cuando lo único….nomás lo único, de la forma que le ayudaban a uno nomás que los dieron, cuando los andábamos enseñando a piscar limón por horas. Eso si nos ayudaron es eso porque dijeron "los vamos a poner a piscar limón el primer día, no van a saber cuantas cajas. Van a ser cualquier 2, 3 cajas van a ser." Entonces si

esa vez, en esa forma nos ayudaron por horas. Pero ya usted tenía que comprar su cepillo de dientes, su pasta sus cosas para peinarse y todo eso usted, lo compraba de su dinero. Los sobres para mandar para México, uno los compraba también, sus sobres todo para mandar para México dinero, escribirle a sus familiares uno.

AP: ¿Qué significa el término bracero para usted?

IM: Bracero pos para mí el término bracero es que que como dice por ay, se ocupan las manos, se ocupan las manos, las manos eran importantes. Los brazos eran importantes, por decir, "se ocupan las manos aquí fulano aquí se oye" decían. O "están ocupando manos," quiere decir... por eso le pusieron braceros, porque era trabajar con los brazos con las manos y para mí eso significa y así le pusieron braceros.

AP: ¿Cómo se siente usted de que lo llamen bracero?

IM: Para mí no es ninguna ofensa. En lo personal eso fue lo que fui, bracero yo creo que es honra porque usted vino a trabajar, usted vino a hacer por la vida a trabajar a un mejor ambiente a un mejor trabajo a ganar poco más dinero y para mí, fue un placer ser bracero. Para mi... porque como digo yo por la gracia de Dios me porté bien y todo fue bueno conmigo y no tuve problemas de ninguna índole, nomás a veces como digo que me querían hacer tomar cerveza pero eso es lo de menos, pero para mí fue bueno, para mi fue un pacer ver venido de bracero, conocí lo que era bracero, cuando me platican de bracero, qué me platicas si yo allí pasé, yo me contraté, yo conozco lo que es un bracero, ser bracero.

AP: ¿Sus recuerdos de haber trabajado como bracero son positivos o negativos?

IM: A no positivos, positivos. Yo a mí me gusta todavía recordarme de cuando vine aquí. A veces me acuesto precisamente en mi cama y a veces me quedo dormido pensando como vine yo aquí, como fue mi vida aquí de bracero, lo que trabajé, lo que viví, las experiencias que tuve y todo me jue bien a mí.

AP: El haber sido bracero cambio su vida de alguna manera?

IM: Pos por una parte si oiga. Porque mire, mire donde estoy, me vine para acá. Si no haiga venido de bracero, no conozco Estado Unidos yo. Sí no porque... primero Dios y luego me esforcé yo para venir aquí gracias a Dios, me esforcé para venir aquí, puse de mi cuenta puse de mi de mi de lo que pertenecía a mí, puse mi talento de venir aquí y mi esfuerzo de venir aquí y para mi fue una bendición conocer aquí Estados Unidos y ver venido de bracero. Quizás no hubiera venido yo, si no ha sido la braceriada, no había venido yo aquí a Estados Unidos. Yo me habría quedado con mis hermanos allá en Tepi. A pero como era el programa de bracero, dije voy a ver, se me metió, de una vez, de venirme para acá conocer acá la braceriada.

AP: Okay muchas gracias

IM: Es un placer. h

Elynor Whitaker
CHS 350
Professor José Alamillo
November 29, 2010

Final Project
English Translation of Isaías Muro Interview

Isaías Muro

Transcription

Name of the Interviewee: Isaías Muro
Interview Date: May 9, 2010
Name of the Interviewer: Aron Pamatz

My name is Aron Pamtz. I am interviewing Isaias Muro and this interview is taking place in Saticoy, California.

AP: The first question that I am going to ask is, where and when were you born?

IM: I was born in Zacatecas on January 21, 1941.

AP: Now, tell me about your family and the place where you were born.

IM: My father we were 10, in the family there were 10 of us in the family. And my ranch was called Santa Rosa, García de la Cadena Zacatecas, it was part of the municipality of García de la Cadena Zacatecas.

AP: And what did your parents do?

IM: My parents were day laborers, they were day laborers. They used to plant corn, beans, sweet potatoes, potatoes, we used to plant all of that.

AP: Do you come from a large family?

IM: Yes, my family is large. I have many uncles, I used to have many uncles. My brothers and sisters we were 10.

AP: Where do your brothers and sisters live now?

IM: My my… I have a sister who's in Guadalajara, another one in Zacatecas, and my brothers live in Tepi, I have 2 brothers in Tepi and another one here in Mexicali.

AP: Tell me about when you went to school when you were a child?

IM: I didn't have much schooling but I did at least learn to read. Uh, there weren't many classes there in Zacatecas where I grew up. But then a teacher came and we started to go to school. I was about … I think10 years old something like that when I started going to school.

AP: Did you learn to read and write?

IM: I learned to read and write thank God and…'cause I had good grades but I couldn't continue in school anymore because … on account of my father since I cooked for my dad because my mom died. And … we were motherless orphans and we used to cook for my father and I couldn't go to school anymore, but I got up to the fourth grade there they didn't teach any others it was only up to the fourth grade.

AP: Did you work while you were going to school?

IM: I worked while I was going to school. We used to plant corn, beans, sweet potatoes and we used to pick (sic) corn in … in November we would gather the harvest, I used to work all the time.

AP: How old were you when you started to work?

IM: When (sic) I started to work I must be (sic) about 8 years old. I was about 8 years. My father started teaching me how to work, to *escaldar* the cornstalks (burn the dead cornstalks after the harvest), from then on it was all work for me.

AP: Tell me about your first job that you might remember (sic)?

IM: My first job well it was just that. *Escaldar* the cornstalks was my first job. And well I would take care of my father's cows, the beef cattle that my father had but that wasn't until I was a little older about 14 years old.

AP: Now the following questions are about the hiring process. The first question is, how did you find out about the Bracero Program?

IM: Oh, the Bracero Program came to Zacatecas because there at the ranch they were all very *Norteños*. Just as they turned 19, and then they would right away he (sic) would come to the bracero work. Well in order to earn more money and things like that they would come to be hired. And we them (sic) found out. At first it was in Irapuato the hiring and later it was (sic) in Mexicali, and afterwards in Empalme Sonora, Mexico. That was where I hired myself (sic), in empalme (sic) Sonora Mexico I hired myself (sic).

AP: What did they call the Bracero Program in Mexico?

IM: Well I don't remember that, just the bracero program, that's it, Program of the braceros.

AP: Where were you living at that time?

IM: There in Santa Rosa, I was living in Zacatecas.

AP: What type of work were you doing back then?

IM: There in Zacatecas just the same. Plant corn and harvest and take care of some animals, some of my father's animals and that was all. Take care of the beef cattle that my father had, that's all that I would do there. I would just work for six months and I would spend six months resting, I would only take care of the animals and tend to them

AP: Were you married?

IM: No. no.

AP: Did you ever think about working in the United States?

IM: Oh no, no I never thought about coming to the United States not until the time came. My brother was coming, and many were coming from there from the ranch to the United States precisely to be hired but I was never very tempted to come here (sic). I had my sight set on … setting up a business with my brothers in Tepic Nayarit Mexico (sic) where (sic) they lived, opening a seafood business, the same as them.

AP: Why did you decide to go to the United States?

IM: Ah very good question. I decided to come to the United States … my brother-in-law was going to come over (sic) the one who is married to the youngest sister is my brother-in-law, my brother-in-law Serapio is his name. And he was coming here …and all of a sudden I got the crazy notion, we'll say it this way, the excitement to come here. Some cousins were going to come here to the United States in…in 1960 when I was already 19 years old, I could already come over here. Then from there, from there it all started that I wanted to come to the United State (sic) to see what it was like here and to work.

AP (sic); What were your means, in other words, your expectations about coming here?

IM: Uh, to see what it's like over here and earn some money here. And … well send (sic) it to help my father.

AP: Did your family influence you in any way about your decision to come to the United States?

IM: Yes, they loaned me the money to come over here. My brother who had already been here in San Ibel California, he had, he loaned me the money to come. He loaned (sic) me 2000 pesos so I could come over here, he loaned me the money. I came with consent (sic) because he is older than me and I was under his orders because he is older than me.

AP: Describe the hiring process?

IM: It was, for me it was good, it was good because when I came I stayed (sic), we got there, we left on February 7, 1960. I came and we got there that same month, in February to Empalme Sonora. I spent 3 months there and after that … we got in because you need (sic) to hire an attorney in order to cross you over here, for the roll to be called. For the names to be called. And then well … from there then ..from there it was that I came over (sic). Three months later, I hired myself, I hired myself (sic) through a lawyer from Guadalajara Jalisco. Then we paid him 3000 pesos and he hired them (sic). With a contract already by the United States and Mexico and the contract that I had and you know. (sic)

AP: What requirements did you have to comply with in order to be a bracero?

IM: You had to be 19 years old, 19, under 19, they couldn't hire you. It was impossible to get hired, if you weren't 19 they couldn't hire you (sic). And some identification paper that you might have. I brought with me a safe-conduct, a recommendation from my town over there and a birth certificate and with that, I came over here.

AP: Weren't your hands checked?

IM: Yes also also. Well, once you hired yourself (sic), when you hired yourself they checked your hands. A lot times you had to go around with a stick rubbing your hands so that they would be a little rough because otherwise they would say "Well did you work in an office or what" And uh yes, they checked your hands, they did a tremendous physiological (sic) exam such that I've never seen another exam like the one they did when I hired myself (sic).

AP: In other words, those who had hands …

IM: Very smooth hands were investigated more. "Hey you, well what did you do, didn't you do some kind of work in Mexico" (sic) because supposedly you were coming here to work.

AP: Was there some kind of physical exam?

IM: They used to do quite a physical exam. Amazing, a complete physical that's what they did. You couldn't have any infection on your body in order to come over here.

AP: When and where did you enlist?

IM: We enlisted in Guadalajara because we put them through with an attorney from … Guaima Sonora and the thing didn't work out. We picked up the money and we went through with the one from Guadalajara. We enlisted with that attorney from Guadalajara and that attorney from Guadalajara got us across. And right away as soon as they went, went over there and we signed up. We sent two of them, a relative of mine and another acquaintance of mine from there from the ranch that is very close to there to Empalme, we sent them, we paid their fare, he went and signed them up over there and on Tuesday they called the list where my name was there (sic).

AP: What did the authorities, whether Mexican or American tell you that you could expect from your work?

IM: The Mexican authorities since it was a contract, they were paid, for each bracero they would pay them, I don't know how much they might have paid them that I don't know how much they might have paid Mexico. But they paid them a certain amount of money the American authorities to the Mexican authorities, but that I don't know how much they might have been paid. But well they (sic) were a contract that they had, like a business to hire people to come over here (sic). And it was good because you would bring your passport, Immigration would catch you and wouldn't say anything to you because you were proper here in the United States.

AP: Did they tell you something about your salary, living conditions?

IM: No. They only said, that ...since I came here to the lemon to Ventura County, to pick lemons uhm they ... the only thing they told me, the American man told me, "*tu poder durar*" "You can last" he meant to say you can last from 18 to 22 months hired because you're going to pick lemons they told me, you're going to pick lemons. To pick lemons and you're going to Ventura County freely. Then ... or free to California in other words. So that's why I came here and since ... no not at all but I was very loyal to my work, I wasn't ever absent, I was always there at work. So that's why I was here for almost two years hired (sic). But the contract just for 45 days (sic), for 45 days. They would try you out if the person is absent a lot, or has too many vices, very drunk, after 45 days they would give you your check, good-bye. Some were sent over there because they were absent from work a lot. But since I was hardly ever absent from work because of that they started giving me contracts for 6 months and 3 months.

IM: How did you travel (sic) to the recruitment place to the center in the United States, in other words, how did you travel to the United States?

IM: When you have already hired yourself, they would put you on the best train, on a first-class train. From Empalme Sonora we already came with lunch, (sic) lunch (sic) from here from the United States, a first-class train to Mexicali. And from there, when we had already contracted them (sic) to the center in California where the hiring process is completed... At empalme (sic) the first arrangements are made and later at the center in California, where (sic) I crossed over, it was all done there, the whole process. Then, I came here in a Greyhound, here in the northern field, the one that's here on the 118.

AP: How much were they paying you?

IM: Well they paid us very little. At that time they paid us 14 cents for a box of lemons, which were (sic) about this big. Each bag of a little sack (sic), or that they would give you to pick lemons, each bag was a box. You would fill it up all the way and that was one whole box. You didn't have to put anymore in, just a sack well (sic), a box, at 14 cents a box. But it was cheap back then, now they pay a high price for it but it was cheap then.

AP: Would they pay you cash or by check?

IM: By check, they used to pay us by check. Every two weeks they would pay us by check.

AP: What would you do with the money?

IM: Some of it I sent to my father. I sent to my father, in other words, I paid my brother the money, that I brought, and I spent part of it on clothes that I would buy here. For sure, I had no vices, I used to carry a bit of money there with me in my wallet. I didn't have any vices or nothing. I always went to church and everything, everything. That's all I did, part of it I sent to my dad.

AP: How did you send money to your family?

IM: Through the cooks, the cooks we would tell them (sic) "go and buy this money order (sic) and send it for me." We would give them the address where (sic) to send it and the money order (sic), checks, postal money order (sic) whichever you can call them, would get there just fine to Zacatecas over there, not even one check was lost.

AP: Did you manage to save some money, was it hard?

IM: Well since I didn't make much, then I didn't save much money, and then the bit of money that I sent (sic) to my dad, and since it was low they paid us very little, I didn't save much money. And then I would buy my clothes, I paid for my food there at the field where I was hired, the board (sic), the board (sic), I would pay board (sic) there it was also cheap but anyhow I paid board (sic) there.

AP: Were all the braceros paid the same?

IM: Well, there were some who were very good at picking lemons and they were paid more. Because there was one who was from … from Michoacán. Good when it came to picking, that guy, Ricardo was his name. A very good friend of mine, he was very good at picking. The boss himself took care of his documents because he saw that he was an excellent (sic) at picking lemons. And the more you picked, the more you made, more money you earned more.

AP: Was there ever a problem in getting paid?

IM: No. Not as far as I was concerned, never. Always, when the two weeks were up there was the check. We got paid every two weeks, every two weeks, they would pay us our check, the check was there. Only when it rained, we didn't work, we would get a small check (sic). But whatever we worked we would get it all, the whole check They didn't owe me a penny because they would always pay me everything.

AP: Was the pay always right for the hours worked?

IM: The pay was always right for the hours worked. During the first few days, the first few days, we worked by the hour because you (sic) were learning to pick lemons. They would pay by the hour but then later by the box, according to the boxes you did (sic), you got paid. Every two weeks your check, they paid you your check right there, with the deduction for your meals and everything.

AP: Was money ever deducted from your salary?

IM: They deducted some, but back then I am going to be honest with you, I don't remember, I don't remember. They would deduct something because haven't I told you that they paid a certain amount of money to… to the Mexican government, they paid them a certain amount of money but I don't know how much, and I never paid attention. What happened, I never kept one of those stubs, I threw out all the check stubs (sic). I should have kept (sic) but I didn't keep them.

AP: Did you ever have any problems at work?

IM: No, not me. Personally no, no problems with the foreman or anything. The foremen were good people …and I never had problems with him (sic). They treated me very well, I was treated well. They treated me very well, they paid me my check every two weeks like I say, and that's it.

AP: And from other braceros, the rest of them?

IM: Other braceros, well they had problems in the way that (sic) sometimes they got drunk and they wouldn't go to work. Others went and … since they were given to vice, others were (sic) sick and they didn't go out of laziness, they were sick on account of the same sin and they didn't go to work and yes they had problems. Me, thank Got not even one problem with him, and … not with the bosses either.

AP; What types of vices were there?

IM: Drinking and playing cards, and dice because they would play in the field. I never played and I didn't even come near to play over there and I didn't ever come over to watch them play either. But I know … how to throw the dice and play cards the braceros (sic) would play there together (sic) after work. And of course well to drink… those who drank would go once in a while (sic) to the *cantinas*, bars, yeah.

AP: A lot of prostitution?

IM: There was prostitution, there was prostitution, yes there was prostitution because they would bring women to negotiate there with the braceros. Yes there was prostitution. In fact they even caught an American woman and she was prosecuted because she was a very young woman there (sic). The guys said "I don't even know that woman, I didn't even meet her or nothing, I never saw her either. But the guys started saying, a friend I had, "no well they bring a very young girl here.

AP: Who was bringing those women, the foremen?

IM: People, oh no not the foreman, no never, the people, people who find out from outside they brought them, people who were born here, people who were born here because those women they got were American. American and they would bring them there to negotiate with the braceros.

AP; What happened in case of an accident or an illness?

IM: Well in case of an accident they would take you to a hospital. Thank God that I in the 18, the 21 month (sic), that I was there close to two years, I never got sick or nothing. Never… but some were taken to the doctor (sic), some who got sick were taken to the doctor (sic). They were taken to the doctor (sic). They would give them medical coverage, they took them to the doctor (sic) to cure them.

AP: What were the most common complaints?

IM: The most common complaints … well a lot of them sometimes didn't like, pardon me, the board (sic). Sometimes many complained that the boarding wasn't good, yes it was good, me (sic) as far as I'm concerned it was good the board (sic) because they cooked some good meals for us, they made them there for us. There in the field the cooks we had there … I never had problems with the cooks either because I got along real well with them. I would always go and help them so they also liked me because I would go and help them the cooks there (sic). For me there were no problems. Sometimes some of them did complain that "no well I don't like it that" but there were many types of food for you to eat, whatever you liked best.

AP: Some of the braceros complained about the bosses (sic)

IM: Well in our crew the … the only complaint there was that they would put them in bad orchards, our crew. They put us in bad orchard (sic) for picking (sic) lemons. Because in the good orchards, well you did more boxes. But they would put us in bad orchards, and yes there were complaints in that respect about the … that you know about …that they would take them into bad orchards that there wasn't a lot lemons, and others that they would take them to good orchards where they would make a lot of money.

AP: And if it rained?

IM: If it rained no, we wouldn't work. On the days that it rained we wouldn't work. They did give us all of the board and everything, we ate very well that day, but we didn't work that day. But anyway, we still paid for the board.

AP: What could you do if you didn't like the work?

IM: You could leave. Comply with the 45 days and say ok, well I don't like the work, and you couldn't ask for another job because that's what you came for, to work there. Then you could go to Mexico. After 45 days my contract is up I leave, because if you deserted and left, it was a punishment, they wouldn't hire you again. They wouldn't hire you again, if you deserted and left, uhm, it was a crime. But if you left voluntarily that you said (sic) "well I'm just going to finish my 45 days of the contract I came with, I don't like the work, I am leaving," you could leave, the person could leave.

AP: Did you encounter some type of discrimination against you?

IM: No …me for me (sic), not for me. I don't know if there might be (sic) in other crews but not for me. They (sic) were well cared for all the time. As for me, personally, I was well cared for, I

never lacked food. Whatever I wanted I ate, and like I say about my friends, about the cooks … for me, for me (sic). Maybe in other places … it could be that in other places there might (sic) have been but in the crew I was in there wasn't. Nobody complained, the only thing they complained about was what I repeated (sic) a while ago about the orchards not being so good, there wasn't much lemon.

AP: Did you ever hear that there were protests?

IM: Protests …no, there were hardly ever any protests. People always came to work, and our people can take a lot, and hardly ever That I, I didn't see protests, I never saw any protests. Well that's what I saw (sic), what I live (sic), the 22 months that I had a contract here.

AP: What did you do on your day or days off?

IM: On my days off (sic) I would go to church and read the Bible. That's how it was (sic) on my days off, that it was only on Sunday because on Saturday we worked until 12 noon. From Monday to Saturday I was there at work. We would work until 12:30 in the afternoon (sic) and we would come over to the camp. And it was Sunday (sic) go to church and read the Bible, that's it, that's what I would do.

AP: And what did the other braceros do?

IM: The others went out into the world, their own world. To pleasures, to bars, to spend their money and spend the little money they earned.

AP: Didn't they sometimes play sports outside?

IM: No. Just like I told you a while ago, they would play cards and dice. They would bet money (sic), and it was forbidden, the police would come over and would stop them because somebody would complain that they're (sic) gambling here. The police would come over, and they didn't even say anything, we didn't go to jail or nothing. They would say "put your money away, put your cards away, go to sleep already," they would say that when the police came because the police came over a lot once to the camp, and there you go.

AP: Weren't there any organizations that would come to provide pass times for the braceros, or churches?

IM: No. There weren't any. There were none. And then, a brother who worked there would only come to give out Bibles, but that was all. A brother who already died, would come over to the camp to give out Bibles, and that was it.

AP: Did you have television?

IM: We had television, yes there was television in the dining room (sic), there was television, there in the dining room (sic) there was television. A a (sic) special room over there if you

wanted to watch television or some program. I hardly ever went, I would hardly ever go me (sic) over there to watch television. They had television, there was television over there.

AP: And many of them just rested?

IM: Many rested and many didn't go to work just because they didn't go, due to laziness, many were absent from work, also because well you see our people are that way and all that.

AP: Were you free to come and go as you pleased, in other words, to leave the camp … into the city?

IM: No (sic) into the city yes. Not desert from camp, you couldn't desert from the camp. But you did have free (sic) … let's suppose that I want to go to San Francisco, you could say to San Francisco, as far as San Francisco you could go so long as you telling (sic) the bosses or letting the people know. To the (sic) campers having told them (sic) I'm going to take time off and go to San Francisco. Ok you go to San Francisco. You could go wherever you could go around here. Except desert from camp, so long as you came in two or three days you could come back there again to the camp.

AP: Didn't you go like into town, to the stores?

IM: Yes. We went into town. When I was here right away, we went to Oxnard, we would go into town, we went into town, a special bus would come (sic) to pick us (sic) up to take us into town because back then, we didn't have a license. We didn't have nothing and we couldn't get a driver's license or nothing. Worse, I didn't even know how to drive or nothing.

AP: What did you go to the stores for, to look?

IM: To look and to buy things. To buy clothes lots of times. Although the guys from the Roach Coach came over there to the camp, the trucks sell clothes over there, they would come (sic) and lots of times you didn't have any way of leaving. And if you didn't want to you didn't want to, but lots of times we had to go and shop in Oxnard or go to a restaurant, you could go and eat there.

AP: You always had enough money?

IM: I'm always able to make ends meet, I always had enough money as I said, since I didn't waste any of my money, I always had a little money in my pocket.

AP: Did you have radios?

IM: Oh yes. I bought a very good transistor radio. When my wife and I were still dating I gave it to her, a transistor radio. That was the in thing, Japanese (sic) transistor radios very good ones (sic). There were lots of radios, that's for sure, many radios that the coworkers had over there.

AP: Was that when you were here?

IM: That's when I was here on a contract, yes.

AP: In Ventura?

IM: When I was here in Ventura.

AP: Were there some Spanish (sic) radio stations?

IM: Oh yes. Kmro of … no the kcpa from Santa Paula and here the one from Oxnard, I don't remember, I don't remember the name… KOXR … those were the two radios (sic) they had Spanish, the one from Santa Paula and the one from Oxnard.

AP: Where was the closest town?

IM: The closest town well here … well because I was almost in between towns. When I was here at that camp the one on… the 118, it was over there and right there Oxnard and Ventura, it's close (sic) to here. And then when they moved me to Ventura, later they moved (sic) me to Ventura, well Ventura was even closer over there, Ventura was even closer (sic) from there, and sometimes we went to Bakersfield too, we sometimes went over to Bakersfield.

AP: How did you get to town?

IM: Well, when my wife and I were dating, my in-laws the ones who were going to be my in-laws would take us over to Bakersfield, we went over there, but for us it was just by bus (sic). I went to Camarillo a few times, I went by bus (sic) here, I went to Camarillo on the bus (sic), I went to Camarillo on the Greyhound.

AP: And the other braceros?

IM: The other braceros had their friends and many had cars, and many had already immigrated over here. They would give them a ride (sic), they would take them. But most of the time they rode the bus. In fact a bus would come here and would say "who wants to go into town" and would pick you up too.

AP: Was there a church close (sic) to you?

IM: Close by well yes. Here I would go to this church but when I had just come, I would go to this church on Violeta (sic) that's where I went to church. And later when I moved (sic) to Ventura I would come to this church anyway because the brother came, the pastor from here would go and pick (sic) us up me and another guy, called Daniel and they picked (sic) me up and we went to church. He always (sic) and me always went to church on Sunday.

AP: When the other braceros went into town, what did they do there in town?

IM: Just hang out (laughter). Wandering about the streets that's for sure, those who don't have the fear of God in their hearts, just walk around. For sure they would go drink, to the bars, to

spend their money and a lot of times on Monday many times they didn't even have a penny in their pockets.

AP; So then you would go church?

IM: I would go to church, I always went to church. Since way back (sic) I went to church all the time. My friend and me, the one called Daniel, we went to church. He was from the state of Mexico, he was and we met at the time we got our contracts and we started together. We went to church together all time.

AP: So religious people did come to the camps?

IM: Yes. Religious people came to the camps. Many went to give services, in fact they event went to give services, religious services there. But well people, some of them wanted to. Many many became Christians but many didn't, many didn't want to. want They liked the world more, the world called out to them more, worldly things.

AP: Were they Anglosaxons those who came to the camp?

IM: No just Latinos. They were Latinos. It was just Latinos who went over there, to hand out tracts and stuff.

AP: During the time that you were here did you ever go to Mexico on vacation (sic) to visit your family?

IM: No because I couldn't. That you can't do, you can't. You have to stay until the whole contract expires. When you've been here close to two years, then yes, it's by law that you have to go to Mexico because you can't stay here anymore. Because then the association from Santa Paula, the association was in Santa Paula. The big boss who gave the orders was called Victor Veja, and he is the one who sent you (sic) when you had been here close to 2 years, he would say "you know what and you cannot be here in the United States anymore, go to your Mexico and then come back later, get yourself a contract again but we can't have you here so long anymore." Because the law it was just close to two years (sic).

AP: How did you celebrate Easter (sic) and Christmas?

IM: Easter and Christmas, very good question. In the first place, Christmas (sic) well we used to celebrate it in Zacatecas at the church where (sic) I grew up. But here when I came, for me it was a cause for admiration to see all the little red lights and so many things, the decorated houses. I asked the brother, "what does that mean," "it's Christmas" he said, "it is Christmas," (sic) uhm well I said, I don't know, I said. But we celebrate well (sic) here at church also.

AP: So the lights were something unbelievable for you?

IM: Yes for me everything was unbelievable because all of that was admirable. Because I had never seen those things (sic). I would ask this brother, "what does it mean, why do they put so

many little lights on the houses" He said "Christmas is celebrated here" uhm I said that's (sic) just fine.

AP: You weren't used to this culture?

IM: No of course, I wasn't used to the culture over here.

AP: Do they celebrate Mexican holidays like September 18, at the bracero camps?

IM: Not here at the camps. No, they never never celebrated, they never celebrated. Over there at the camps no, at the camps no.

AP: So at Christmastime the other braceros…

IM: At Christmas (sic), it was celebrated, it was celebrated. Like I say, we at the church and people well they sit and drink. On January 1 they would also go the bars to drink, and also the last day of the year you know, December 31.

AP: Did you return to Mexico when your labor contract expired?

IM: I went back to Mexico because I had to go to Mexico. I left for Mexico again on July 17, 1962.

AP: Did your boss provide transportation for you to go back to Mexico?

IM: No. It was me (sic) from my own money. They just paid us everything they owed us, that's it. They would give you 3 days to get your things ready, to pack the few clothes you had and your stuff, wash (sic) everything and you're ready and right away to leave. 3 days is what they gave you and now there you go. But they paid you all they owed you, of course, they would give you your check and that was it. Then you paid on your own out of your own pocket.

AP: Well, didn't they help you?

IM: They didn't help you, no that's for sure, when you're leaving they didn't help you. You just left with your own money. In fact, we even had to get a collection going for a guy because he was absent from work a lot and we had to collect some money so he could leave. We collected the money over there at the camp. We gave him, he was a Zacatecan and I say (sic) to him "we're going to collect some for you, he didn't have money to leave, how was he going to go. And the boss said to him "you know that this is it, you've been let go, go to your Mexico." Because the guy was absent from work a lot, and we got money together for him so he could leave. But the boss didn't pay for nothing, just paid what he owed you, and that's all.

AP: After you finished your labor contract, how difficult was it to get another contract?

IM: Another contract that was very easy, good question, because then it was very easy to get another contract. Since you had already come over here, since you had already come over here,

they gave you a (sic) green card, a green card, you had your green card and then you would be hired. They would say, "all the ones with green cards, make a line here" because they had already come over here. Then that way you would quickly cross over, it was very easiy then when you had already come to the United States, a lot easier than when you come the first time.

AP: What had to be done to obtain authorization to come back to the United States?

IM: Well, you had to work in Mexico at least 2 months, 2 months and earn yourself a letter. I worked in order to come over here again, but because of some circumstances I wasn't able to cross over here. Uhm uhm … and I was doing very on my way over but something happened, I had an infection here on one of my legs from something that got to me. The doctor told me that because of the heat and I wan't able to cross over. But I earned a *carta de control* (letter of advice) by picking cotton in Mexico and it was a very good letter because it was from a German man, named Enrique Faister in Sonora Mexico. And I was already coming straight through and they told me "those with a green card, line up here." Well I had my green card and right away I stood in line there, I was already coming, but I couldn't cross over because of that. And the doctor (sic) told me "I can give you an injection and you can go across. I told him "Give it to me" I said "please" (sic) no no he didn't want to, and so that's why I didn't get across that time. But by then it was very easy, having a green card already it was very easy to come over here.

AP: Did you ever resign from your job as a bracero?

IM: No never. I liked it, I like this country a lot and all that. Never no way, it made me happy whenever they renewed my contract for six months, I felt like I was from here.

AP: So you didn't go back to Mexico, what did you do to (sic) stay in the United States what motivated you?

IM: Well when I left for Mexico … when I left in order to go to Mexico, mi wife and I were dating. We dated for three years like we (sic) have told you and that was later. Then since I had already been here, I knew my way around, since I like this country over here (sic) in the United States. And then when we were already dating (sic) my wife, then it was different. In just … a week we took care immigration arrangements, in just a week, we made immigration arrangements with my in-laws and my wife's help. And then we did marry them (sic) in 1963.

AP: Did you become a U. S. citizen?

IM: I became a citizen 15 years ago, it's going to be 16 years since I became a United States citizen.

AP: Tell me about your life after having worked as a bracero? (sic)

IM: Well by then it was very different because since I already had immigration (sic), then I could look for a better job other than picking lemons. And then it was (sic) that doors opened for me because I had immigration (sic), now I could have a license, I could have a car, look for my job, that's how I got into construction, I got into the union (sic) because I made more money there

and things went more good (sic) for you. Then well that's it, but with immigration already, with a green card (sic) well it's different then, because then even though … you are a legal resident here, well then the person has more security. And (sic) that's how I found me that other better job (sic)in construction, I started working in construction.

AP: In other words, you went to Mexico and came back to the United States (sic) again?

IM: By the time I went to Mexico … when after only a week I had arranged for over here (sic), I didn't go back to Mexico until 1966. In 1966, but I had already immigrated (sic), my wife and all, already married and everything.

AP: You didn't enter illegal?

IM: I was never illegal here in the United States. It was with my contract, wherever (sic) Immigration caught me Immigration didn't do anything to me because I had my contract. I never came in illegal here into the United States.

AP: Where did you cross the border? (sic)

IM: I crossed through by San Isidro. And when I crossed as a bracero through Calexico because that's where the line was to get across. That's when … when I was a legal resident, I got across through San Isidro, on January (sic) 24, 1963.

AP: What happened when you were at the reception center?

IM: Where, here in Calexico?

AP: Yes, when you were about to enter.

IM: When I was going to come in as a bracero or already immigrated?

AP: At first as a bracero.

IM: Oh no (sic) well at the center, like I told you a while ago many exams. A physical exam, blood, lung (sic), that you wouldn't have any infections, all of that. Much more rigorous than the exam when I made the arrangements for the paperwork. When I got the papers just the lung (sic) and the blood, and that's it. But when I hired myself (sic), there was a physical (sic) physical what you would call a physical is what they do to you (sic) as a bracero. And here at the California center that's where they … if you are going to get across or won't get across, there they tell you everything over there (sic). If they turn you back, they turn you back and if you get across, well then you get across that's it. Because many didn't get through because of the bad record they had in Mexico and there they would find out about their record, and there you go. They would draw a line through the passport, a red pencil, go line up over there. When they put (sic) the red pencil, it was already when they were already on their way over, he (sic) couldn't cross over. He had something, he must've owed something … or something, something something was wrong. But I don't have any of those problems because I … God first because I

feared God and I wasn't lazy or nothing, I didn't have any infections. They did the complete exam, my blood my lung (sic) everything came out very good. No venereal (sic) infections, no nothing that the person might have (sic), they checked you good. Then you'd sign your contract at the center in California now go ahead and get on the bus (sic) andwe'd go to the camp where (sic) we're going to drop you off over there.

AP: So you went directly to Ventura?

IM: I came directly to Ventura yes because I'd been assigned over here. My contract said that this is where I was assigned, to Ventura County.

AP: Well from San Isidro to Ventura?

AP: (sic) From San Isidro … No, from Calexico to Ventura, yes. When I came in already immigrated, well then I came to the camp too because nowhere (sic) to stay but then it was different because I already had my passport then (sic), Then I had my migration already (sic). Then it was different. Of course at the camp then they would put me apart from the ones with a contract, me (sic), since I already had my migration (sic) already. I came to the Oxnard camp over there, I was still there (sic) but already immigrated. But when I came (sic) immigrated I came in through San Isidro, through San Isidro, I came in. When I came with a contract I came in through Calexico, through Calexico.

AP: From Guadalajara to Calexico too?

IM: No from here, from Empalme Sonora, from empalme (sic) Sonora to Mexicali, and there I came in through Calexico, but with my contract, you you know, not illegal or nothing, with my contract me (sic).

AP: The lawyer?

IM: The lawyer he, that one so he could run the list through in Empalme Sonora, he put the list through and right away. And he even turned out to be a good lawyer because he returned 500 pesos to each one, we only paid 300, everywhere they paid 1000 pesos to get through. We just (sic) to the attorney we paid 800, but he returned 500 Mexican pesos to my father, he still returned it, he only charged them 300 pesos to run the list through, since they have to make some money and it's a contract well it's a business then that they had with the United States. But then when you come already hired, you come with a good lunch (sic), a first-class train and everything to perfection so there wouldn't be anything (sic).

AP: Give a physical description of the reception center, how was it do you remember?

IM: The center where …

AP: The reception one.

IM: From where?

AP: When you were going to be hired.

IM: Oh the center no well over there in Empalme Sonora. Oh there it was a mess there. At the center in … and then had (sic) to do everything. Those were huge offices, really long like from here to the light. They were hiring 800 men every hour, every hour 800 men they hired you (sic) and fast. And I have to do everything quickly everything everything take my clothes off for an exam and everything quickly put them on and quickly run and everything ready it was terrible over there. I'm, I'm not very smart but over there I started watching everything that was going on and quickly so they wouldn't scold me because many "line up over there" they growled at you they didn't hit you or nothing but they bawled you out. "Hey line up over there" and you took longer. If not all you did take your clothes off (sic) now and when we were on our way over here to cross over … from Calexico to the United States there they sprayed (sic) you on your clothes. So you wouldn't bring in any bugs, lice well you weren't gonna have lice you were already grown up but so you wouldn't bring in any insects or nothing they'd spray (sic) you over there. But the hiring center was terrible, it was terrible. And I was still telling (sic) my wife, one day when they said "on Good Friday free to California" (sic) and the guys started pushing (sic). 100,000 men, 100,000 men started pushing and I was very close (sic) to the rail like from here to the pulpit from the rail where you went through towards the booth where you hired yourself (sic). And where would I escape to, I just put my hands on my (sic) stomach and started pushing (sic) too because if you fell, they would trample on you and kill you.

AP: Did anyone die?

IM: No one died just 3000 *sardos* (sic), 3000 soldiers with their rifles and they cocked (sic) them for a while. You could hear and they came with the (sic) butts, that's it to clear the people out with the butts, the rifle butts.

AP: American soldiers?

IM: Mexican soldiers because it was Empalme Sonora. That experience I did have (sic) over there in Empalme Sonora, when they said "free to California" which is that on Fridays they gave them free to California and the people start (sic) to push (sic) and there were rails of real iron, the ones from the train so they won't cross over there. And then 3000 soldiers come cock (sic) the rifles and that's it. I told myself why should I get close (sic) over there, and they'll rifle butt me on the head, I said don't. But that was the way … to (sic) … 100,000 men there was no other way, 100,000 men right there at the hiring that was (sic) terrible. That was the only experience that I had (sic) there.

AP: So then it was a multitude of men?

IM: A multitude of men. Friday and Saturday morning it was full and everyday they hired thousands and thousands and thousands. And by morning fine, maybe it was because on Friday and Saturday they came from the south of Mexico many buses (sic) full at night (sic). And it was full again by Monday morning, again the hiring, full full. It was a valley, you would go down the international highway and what you saw was a valley (sic). Just hats over there just like it shows (sic) on the photos, just just hats were seen over there. Me the first time I was even afraid, I was

afraid, well I was green, just a kid without doing any traveling (sic) or nothing I was afraid honestly I was afraid when my brother-in-law said "let's go to the hiring" We got them up (sic) early, about 7, like going to look for work Because (sic) they would call at 8, at (sic) 8 they called. And whoever wasn't there missed out and lost his money and missed out he didn't show up, so, the roll was called, the person showed up there when … we got the lawyer, that one we were already, we were all ready right there early and one Monday he came and said "on Tuesday you'll be called" said the lawyer. "On Tuesday you'll be called they're going to call the roll," we were there early and I start hearing my relatives', my friends' names from Santa Rosa, and they called my name and I ran to the hiring, to hire ourselves (sic).

AP: How was the roll called by State?

IM: Sometimes by state they called the roll (sic). But sometimes they just did, lots of times they would say, "those who were left and were sick," but a lot of times those who paid more. He said well they were left behind yesterday they were sick but it wasn't like that, in order not to *decrepitalos* (sic) right there and those who paid well of course right away they called (sic) them first. And … those lists were like this, from the floor up to here that big since we could see the list there. The lawyer would grab the microphone and you could see him. He would get up on (sic) like a platform and would be (sic) calling the roll there. "Tt t ata t ata so and so" (sic) and everybody just running and going in to the hiring.

AP: What happens (sic) to the men who couldn't pay an attorney?

IM: They wouldn't get through. They wouldn't get through because they didn't have no money left, they had spent it. I saw many that's for sure, I saw a lot, now they would only write on the dirt because they would spend their money just bumming around, on prostitution in Empalme Sonora Mexico. Over there really was (sic) for you to get way deep into prostitution. And many would spend their money there and wouldn't be able to get through. They didn't have money to hire themselves, they spent their money in vain. They left their wife (sic) their family (sic) over there and spent their money bumming around and they wouldn't get through because they had no more money to hire themselves (sic).

AP: Then in order to come as a bracero you had to pay a lawyer?

IM: You had to pay an attorney. It was the law in Mexico, I don't know how come but you had to pay a lawyer. In order to come and hire yourself (sic) because who knows how the United States and Mexican hiring was, what arrangements they had. Because a certain amount of money went to the Mexican government. Yes, the United States paid a certain amount of money for each bracero, but I didn't know how much, I never knew how much, we didn't even investigate, we came and were so happy that we didn't even investigate whatever for. We never investigated how much was paid or nothing. But an attorney would get you across, they would call the roll over there. They would read the list and right away your list was put in it was put on the lid (sic) they would grab the list and "tatatata" they would start hiring you. But it was chaos the (sic) hiring many … I didn't even spend a penny (sic). I had a little money, I would go eat my meal over there, I would eat my food, I didn't even spend a penny (sic) outside, I didn't waste. I had a bit of money all the time but I didn't tell anybody that I had money. But many didn't get through,

I would just look at them writing on the dirt, sad and didn't say nothing. Even when I came over, me to a few guys from my ranch (sic) I gave them 100 pesos each "here I had money left over, here are 100 pesos so you can help yourself" I told him (sic). A couple of them, here are 100 pesos. I gave them to them so that ... I'm going to the United States he gave them to them (sic) so that because you would suffer if you didn't watch the little bit of money you had, there was suffering over there in Empalme Sonora, there was suffering. You could spend the money and not get through because you had nothing to pay the lawyer with.

AP: No bosses ever came to help?

IM: No, not over there. Not over there in Empalme.

AP: How do I pay you …

IM: No. Oh that would've been so good, but no when you came and were already hired you came with the contract from Mexico and the United States. Then that's when they knew that you hired yourself (sic), that you hired yourself, (sic) a good lunch they would give you (sic) at the center in California, good lunch (sic) like I say and they would bring them on a first-class train. They brought them on a real Greyhound, that's how they brought them over here, to the camps, but not until you hired yourself, less no (sic). Less no (sic) they didn't help you in that way. If you got hired you got hired and the one who didn't may God bless him. There was no hiring, you spent your money, you wasted your money, case closed.

AP: Then what was the first year you arrived here? (sic)

IM: In 1960 in 1960. I came here in May of 1960. I came to Empalme that same month. On the 7th of February (sic) I left my home town, I got to Empalme (sic). I left Zacatecas and got to Empalme that same month but I didn't hire myself until May. I stayed since May until that's about three months something like that and going to the hiring place everyday. I would go everyday I would get up early … I'd wash m face, brush my teeth, get ready and go over to the hiring place, everyday. As a kind of job, from Monday through Friday because there was no hiring on Saturday, but on Monday … I'd be (sic) there.

AP: What had to done in order to obtain your work permit, the attorney? (sic)

IM: No well through the lawyer. The lawyer he got the work permit and then … God first, and then the exams that they did, that you would pass the physical exams and there you go to work in the United States. You you (sic) could then come to the United States to work.

AP: How was (sic) the exam when they took your clothes off? (sic)

IM: They checked you all over, a complete physical exam, everything. Body (sic) that had no venereal infections, that it didn't have hemorrhoids that it didn't have piles, that it didn't have nothing. The person couldn't have any infections because he didn't get across. They would tell or (sic) bad lung, they would take X-rays, plates of the lung, the blood of the lung. If you could see, they would put a pencil like from here to that pew I think. They would put the hands out

"how many fingers do you see" they would tell you. They would check all that. And that you couldn't have any infections couldn't have nothing (sic). I tell you that I had a … just a tiny bit and the doctor (sic) himself said you know since your skin is white and it was terribly hot in Sonora I said, of course it's very hot, 126 degrees of heat (sic) and I was picking cotton I said. He said that's why you got it, because your skin is white, it is the dust that you … he said I could take it all off. But come on do it I said but he didn't want to. No well they already marked your paper he said. But the person had to be very healthy to come over here.

AP: Did you have (sic) some option to choose between the type of work?

IM: O no. You don't come to pick (sic). If they send you to pick oranges pick lemons it's it's … well you can't say no … then they tell you well then go, then go, we'll kick you out to Mexico.

AP: Did you have (sic) something to say about the place where they sent you to work here in Ventura?

IM: Very good food they gave us (sic). On the first day I got up, I got there at 4 in the morning to the camp (sic) the bus came from the California center at 4 in the morning, (sic) I slept an hour and in an hour, the *campero* (the guy in charge of the camp), the bell, I told a friend of mine, what's this since I didn't know. It's the bell for you to get up, how's that but I just went to bed I told him. No you have to get up you have to get up because work is here. And I went to the dining room wow, wow, wow, there were eggs there was Mexican bread there was oatmeal I had heard it said for you to eat. At that hour well I wasn't at all hungry but they did give you a very good lunch they would put your lunch so you could eat. In the evening you would come you showered (sic) and again to eat have dinner and in the morning (sic) again all three meal (sic) very good they served there at the camp. That's for sure very good food they served for me I never suffered on account of the good I like everything all the *chile*, I like everything, I like everything.

AP: But there were some braceros who didn't like it?

IM: There were some braceros who didn't but only a few, hardly any, they would eat everything most of the time. The sandwiches they many didn't (sic) like them, I also liked the sandwiches. Sometimes I would grab sandwiches to take to (sic) work. There they made fried eggs any way you wanted scrambled egg sandwich however you wanted they would make them for you over there, all kinds of food they served very good food.

AP: Were you allowed to have some personal property with you?

IM: Well just your clothes a radio or record player (sic) that you bought you would have hem at your camp, you would have them in your suitcase and it was kept there. We had a radio I bought a radio like I said I bought a very good transistor radio I bought it from (sic) Japanese radios and they never said anything never, you could have …except except some even had pocket knives but you weren't supposed to pocket knives (sic) there but yes many had pocket knives but you weren't supposed to.

AP: After you received your work permit you came here to Ventura? (sic)

IM; I came here to Ventura I landed in Ventura after I already got my work permit. They gave me my paper it's a passport they stamp your passport for the 45 days and like I said you behaved well they renew it for another 3 months, another 4 months and if you do well (sic) . Then well they renew it for 6 months straight. But if you're absent from work well then they lay you off, they will also lay you off and they tell you well we can't hire you anymore and what do you do, well go to Mexico.

AP: How many years did you work officially as braceros (sic) here in the United States?

IM: As a bracero, close to 2 years very close to 2 years, about 22, 23 months close to 2 years. Just the law required 18 months, a year and a half but since I behaved (sic) very well, first God helped me, I behaved well and everybody liked me (sic). The bosses, when they were going to kick me out, they didn't want me to go to Mexico yet, the bosses told me that I shouldn't. I told the foreman "already sir that they're going to kick them out to Mexico" (sic) he said no the bosses like you all a lot they don't want you to go (sic) he said. But I had been here a long time and I had been almost two years hired (sic).

AP: During what years?

IM: In 1960. On July 17, 1962 I left. I came here in 1960 … in May, 1960 I entered. And on July 17 of 1962 it was, I left, me (sic) that was my departure already because my contract was already up.

AP: In how many different places did you work as a bracero?

IM: Just here in Ventura, just here in Ventura. This was the only one, we would go to Camarillo to pick the lemon orchard to Camarillo. Over here to Ojai, over here to Oxnard, over there in those fields (sic) that you see on Central (sic), that's where we used to pick. Those fields there lemon fields, but I never left this county, that's where I was the whole time.

AP: What did you harvest at the farm or ranch?

IM: In my home town?

AP: Here as a bracero.

IM: No no you couldn't have no other job, just what you came for to pick lemons and that's all. You couldn't choose.

AP: The bosses

IM: The bosses

AP: What did they harvest?

IM: Oh what did they harvest, well just lemons, me my bosses they (sic) just lemons only lemons they harvested (sic). Sometimes, some braceros were taken to pick avocadoes, they never took me to pick avocadoes. They would come over "hey who wants to go pick avocadoes," avocadoes and lemons were picked and, of course, orange orchards, too. But I hardly ever went over to the oranges (sick). Later when I was immigrated I went to the oranges, but not before.

AP: Then describe the work you did as a bracero? (sic)

IM: Well just the lemon picking. I picked that everyday because I never went to pick avocadoes just lemons everyday (sic) the 21 months that I was here close (sic) to two years, like I said that was the only thing I picked (sic) just lemons.

AP: What was the procedure, how would you do it?

IM: They give you clippers, they give you some gloves, some *manguillas* (arm protectors) because the the lemon trees were tall then now (sic) they are little, not tall. But the lemon trees were tall too. They would give you your *manguillas* so you wouldn't get scraped because the thorn (sic) will stick you, they gave you a measurement that you had to look at the measurement and any that were through that measurement couldn't be picked, but when it's etched, you learn (sic) to pick lemons, then you just look at it and don't. In order to use the measurement, there you had it on your finger but you can't use it because you already know the process, already the lemon, any lemon that goes through the measurement you have to pick it and that's it. But that's all you couldn't have options, have options to pick something else. Listen well I don't like lemons, change me over to something else, you couldn't do that. Just your contract, that was it we came to the lemons, we came to the lemon that was our contract, that's all. We had to obey the contract.

AP: How many braceros worked with you?

IM: With me, about a thousand about one thousand of us braceros worked together.

AP: Tell me about the other braceros who worked over there, did you make some friends?

IM: Of course, they were my friends, some were my friends, yes some of them were my friends the ones I knew better at the camp were my friends. We had a friendship (sic) there with them and all. But since I was never given to problems or nothing. Well anyway you sometimes had slight problems because they came drunk and they wanted to force me by force to drink beer, I said no no I can't drink beer, I don't want to drink beer, but that was the end of it (sic). Then they would come by later and apologized and they never offended me again too (sic). I always had my battle over there because at that point a little drunk you know the person loses control, but that was it.

AP: Did you ever hear that there were illegal people in this country who wanted to work?

IM: No, never all the ones who were over there had contracts, just with contracts. They had to work, they would ask you for your passport. The list came to the *campero*, and the *campero*

knew there, So and So has a contract, they have contracts here. He was handed a list from the Greyhound, they handed a list to the *campero*, here is the list, These are the ones I brought you and that's it. I brought you these it's 50, when we got to the camp over there 50 of us laborers came on the bus (sic) here is the list, he handed the list to the *campero*, the one in charge of the camp, in all but there wasn't anyone (sic) who didn't have a contract and was working.

AP: Then you never heard about your boss hiring (sic) someone who was illegal?

IM: No and I never heard that my boss hired someone who was illegal because since there were a lot of braceros, no no (sic) I don't think that's why they didn't do that. At least I never heard that that someone illegal would be hired.

AP: Did you have much contact with your boss?

IM: Well sometimes because sometimes he would give us a ride (sic) to other orchards. Just once only did my real boss take me to another orchard, that Phil Boss big, he was (sic) an American, he knew a little Spanish. But that was the only time I got in his car, and we went to another orchard that was going to take them (sic) so we could pick (sic) there for a while. And we only picked (sic) there for a while and then we went back and then then we didn't go since then anymore. Only with the real foreman we talked, just the foreman.

AP: How were you treated?

IM: I was treated very well, very well no complaint (sic) on my part, as far as the bosses, the bosses treated me very well they never owed me even a penny (sic), they treated me very well, as far as I am concerned, they treated me very well. And my coworkers too, since I never saw that they owed (sic) any money to my coworkers mine (sic). They always paid us, like when the two weeks were up, check's there (sic) our check.

AP: Did the Mexican authorities ever come to the place where you were working?

IM: Not that I can remember. No.

AP: Did Immigration come over to check the workers' documentation?

IM: Not that either never. Me (sic) during the years that I had my contract I never see (sic) the Immigration, I never saw it the Immigration. Since they knew that they you had your papers in order, they didn't bother you and Immigration never came to the camps (sic) no, to the camp where I was.

AP: How did you get in touch with your family in Mexico?

IM: I either wrote them by letters (sic) by letter I would send them letters (sic) over there. The checks I sent by letter I sent them to my father too.

AP: Did you visit them?

IM: Just because we couldn't visit. We couldn't visit until the contract was up we could visit Mexico again but yes, just letters I would write (sic) letters to my father, me by letter, I sent letters to my father.

AP: How many days a week did you work?

IM: We worked six days a week like I said, from Monday through Saturday and on Saturdays at 10 we stopped. Twelve-thirty (sic) we stopped and they we would go (sic) to the camp (sic) every day, from Monday through Saturday, from Monday to Saturday (sic), because of the budget that Saturday was like I say until 12:30. It wasn't all day but anyway, at 12:30 in the afternoon, we'd go to the camp already, we'd go to the truck (sic) and we'd go over there.

AP: How many hours per day?

IM: How many hours per day. We would work about from 7 till 4 in the afternoon and they gave us what … about half hour for lunch something like that, half hour for lunch … it seems to me they have them (sic) half hour for lunch, about some 8 hours I think 8 hours something like that.

AP: Describe the normal day of work?

IM: The normal day.

AP: You would get up …

IM: The day … when I worked … Uhm Well I got up early early because we had to be bright and early because the truck (sic) would come. If you were (sic) ready, it would take you, if not you stayed behind. You had to be there real early, having already eaten with your lunch (sic), your sack ready, everything that you used. All ready, already waiting for the (sic) truck lined up over there, ready. They would say "before … at 6 we're coming to pick you up (sic)" you would get up at 5, you would eat breakfast grab your lunch, grab all your gear that you were going to use all your scissors, your *manguillas*, all your gloves and there you go. Standing over there (sic) already standing so that the truck (sic) would come, whoever was left just stayed behind. They would say to you "listen come …whoever was left behind just stayed" But it was a terrible offense and right away they would mark you absent, they would also mark it as an offense too.

AP: Tell me about the foods you ate? (sic)

IM: The food was good. In the morning we ate oatmeal, a piece of bread, a sandwich, or fried eggs if the person wanted to eat fried eggs. But there was a lot to eat. If you wanted to eat bananas, if you wanted to eat bread, you ate bread, or with oatmeal or just a bowl of oatmeal but that was it.

AP: Where did you eat?

IM: In the dining room they had a dining room over there special where and a kitchen where the cooks would cook the food and the dining room was big bigger like this place where we are right now (sic). A lot bigger and there we would all (sic) sit down to eat, everyone.

AP: Did you have to pay for the food?

IM: We had to pay 1.25 (sic) per day with all (sic your food and housing, with all (sic) the food and housing and bed, and they gave you everything there. 1.25 per day all three meals.

AP: What was your opinion about the food?

IM: For me it was very good (sic), I have no complaint Like I said (sic) like I said a while ago, it repeats (sic) a while ago, it was very good food for me (sic) very good food, it agreed with me the food. Milk at first didn't quite agree with me, but later I loved milk. I was used to Mexico, hot milk and the whole thing but here … And later I got hooked on it (sic). No sooner did I come from work and I drank a huge glass of milk. I'd shower and I'd go to the dining room, I got dressed, I'd shower, (sic) I'd go to the dining room (sic) a huge glass of milk. But later I started liking meat a lot and everything, I started liking it a lot and that's it. The only problem with the food, the food was very good, they served very good food.

AP: Did they give you enough food?

IM: They gave enough, as far as I'm concerned, there's no complaint in that respect, enough. They would say to you "Would you like more? Even better on a Thanksgiving Day huge pots they made just with turkeys, lots and lots of turkey they served, turkey and I said, what's this "well it's thank you day" they said oh well, I didn't know I told him and uhm… lots (sic) of meat they served, whatever kind of meat (sic) you wanted, any kind of meat you wanted, bread, eggs, bananas, apples, all juices, milks, whatever you wanted to drink, there were no problems with the food, very good food.

AP: Describe where you lived and how it was furnished?

IM: We were (sic) the cabin where (sic) we lived, it was (sic) twelve beds. Each one had his suitcase and just a suitcase and some chairs we just had. And sometimes there were no chairs there and we just the had small beds where we would sleep, where only one person fits, one person for each bracero (sic). There were 12, 12 of us lived in that cabin and that was it. Your blankets that you had brought and that's it. They would also give you sheets and pillows, of course but that was all. Then when you were leaving you turn in everything over there, you would grab what were your belongings, your radio your your (sic) suitcase and you packed up your stuff, your shoes and everything that … and that's it you would go.

AP: Were there bathrooms with sewers?

IM: Oh there were bathrooms yes there were bathrooms. The bathrooms were huge there were (sic) lots of bathrooms. A whole lot of bathrooms, a *curco* of bathrooms. Listen, lots and lots of

bathrooms. The bathrooms were (sic) very good for you to bathe, everything very good, they were (sic) very good, everything was very good.

AP: How did you manage to wash your clothes?

IM: To wash our clothes there were sinks over there for you to wash your clothes. I used to wash my clothes and iron them, we also had a place to iron there and we would take care of our clothes, there was still also a place where you wash (sic) clothes too.

AP: Did they provide items for your personal use like tooth brush soap towels…?

IM: NO. You would buy it none of that none of that, none of that all of that you would buy.

AP: So they didn't help you?

IM: Not in that way they didn't help you, not when the only thing (sic) …just the only thing, the way in which they helped you just that they gave them (sic), when we where learning to pick (sic) lemons by the hour. They really helped us with that because they said "we're going to assign you to pick (sic) lemons on the first day, you're not going to know how many boxes. It's gonna be anywhere from (sic) 2, 3 boxes that's what it'll be." Then that time in that way they helped us by the hour (sic). But you had to buy your own tooth brush, your toothpaste your things to comb your hair and all of that you bought with your own money. The envelopes to send to Mexico, you would also buy them, your envelopes and everything to send to Mexico, money, to write to your relatives.

AP: What does the term bracero mean to you?

IM: Bracero well for me the term bracero it's that that like they say around here, the hands are used, you use your hands, the hands were important. The arms were important, let's say "We need a hand over here So-and-so" you would hear them say. Or "hands are needed," it means … that's why they called it braceros, because it was to work with your arms with your hands and for me that's what it means and so, they called it braceros.

AP: How does it feel to be called bracero?

IM: For me it's not an offense at all. Personally that's what I was, a bracero I think it's an honor because you came to work, you came to make something of yourself, to work in a better environment to (sic)a better job to earn a little more money and for me, it was a pleasure to be a bracero. For me … because like I say by the grace of God I behaved well and everyone (sic) was good to me and I didn't have any problems of any kind, just sometimes like I say they wanted to make me drink beer but that's unimportant, but for me it was good (sic), for me it was a pleasure (sic) to have come (sic) as a bracero, I got to know what it was to be a bracero, when they talk to me about bracero, what are you saying (sic) if I went through that, I hired myself, I know what a bracero is, to be a bracero.

AP: Your memories about having worked as a bracero are positive or negative?

IM: Oh no positive, positive. Me I still like to remember about when I came here. Sometimes, I remember precisely in my bed and sometimes I fall asleep thinking about (sic) how I came here, how my life was here as a bracero, what I worked, what lived, the experiences I had and it was (sic) all good for me.

AP: Did the fact that you were a bracero change your life in some way?

IM: Well in a way it did, you know. Because look, look where I am, I came over here. If I hadn't (sic) come as a bracero, I wouldn't have gotten to see the United States me (sic). If it hadn't been because ...first God and then I made the effort me to come over here thank God, I made the effort to come here, thank God, I made the effort to come over here, I did my part my I gave of myself (sic) did my part, I used my talent for coming here and my effort to come here and for me it was a blessing to get to get to know over here (sic) the United States and have (sic) come as a bracero. I might not have come, if it hadn't (sic) been to the bracero program, I wouldn't have come here to the United States. I would've stayed with my brothers over there in Tepi. Oh but since it was the bracero program, I said I'll go take a look, I got this notion at once to come over here to get to know (sic) over here the bracero program.

AP: Ok thank you very much.

IM: It's a pleasure. h