

Interviewees:

Jose M. Ramirez

Interviewer:

Antonio Vasquez, then known as Robert Gonzales

Interview Date:

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Interview Location:

Rubidoux, California

Antonio Vasquez [00:00:00] Today's July 12, 2000. This is Robert Gonzales interviewing Mr. Jose Ramirez in his home in Rubidoux, California. Mr. RAMIREZ, We we were talking about some really interesting things about the revolution earlier, but let's go back a little bit. First, could you tell me your full name, when you were born, and where you were born.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:00:22] Okay. My name is Jose M Ramirez, like you said before. And I was born in Bakersfield, California. About to the age of, two or three years, during the depression, we moved from town to town or a, rancher, from a ranch to ranch and. My father you know was working all this time. Then we work and and now but we work in the farm. The main the main station was in in, Tagus ranch. The Tagus ranch occupied lot of people, bracero or not, but the housing, they give them a good place to live. Almost all, although it was a small place to live in, but they gave them a good place to live. But they also give them work to to work on their peach.

Antonio Vasquez [00:01:46] Peach.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:01:47] Peach.

Antonio Vasquez [00:01:48] Orchard.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:01:49] Yeah that's right.

Antonio Vasquez [00:01:49] This this was the Tagus ranch?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:01:50] Tagus ranch.

Antonio Vasquez [00:01:51] Where where was

Jose M. Ramirez [00:01:52] North north of Tulare. North of Tulare. Tagus ranch doesn't exist anymore. But the rancher, had a lot of land, you have a lot of places, the peach and as far as I know, apricot. And when the thing was done, when all the peach was completed, harvested, everything, then they say, well, you guys move to wherever you can, where you can get work and come back within so many weeks to start cleaning up this, the whole thing, irrigating, and start getting ready for the next crop. For the meantime, my father, which is my grandfather, we would go to Visalia, we would go to Bakersfield, we would go to Hanford, we would go to Corcoran. All this, Modesto, all these places and and trying to find work. And wherever they could find work they find it all. The almond, the almond. I was a little kid at that time. My oldest brother, they will go into the trees to check in the trees, and then then they have the big canvases on the bottom to collect all the almond. We go to the places where there was the prune for the plums. The same thing. Put a big canvas on the ground and they make, oldest brother will get under the tree and then check the the tree to get the plum there.

Antonio Vasquez [00:03:33] [inaudible].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:03:33] That's right. Right. Like monkeys, you know. And and guess what I do? That's when I eat.

Antonio Vasquez [00:03:40] [laughs]

Jose M. Ramirez [00:03:42] Because, you know, was just a small kid you know, I I get hungry so I eat fruits, vegetables, whatever you can get. You know, the time came back again to go back into Tagus ranch. My my father would go into irrigating during the night. And all the peons, all the workers would have different chores to do. Cooking, you know, cleaning all that. But this this is the first after my mom died. Cause when when when my father. When my father was, well, becomes chased or um, from Mexico. He has two sons from his third wife.

Antonio Vasquez [00:04:36] This was your grandfather

Jose M. Ramirez [00:04:36] My grandfather.

Antonio Vasquez [00:04:37] What was his name?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:04:39] [inaudible] Ramirez. I call him father because the only father I knew, okay. Well he had two sons. So he came away from from [inaudible] Pancho Villa in Carranza right, like I said before. The Pancho Villa, the the soldier or the guerriero, he accused my my father that he was a carrancista, and he said no. He said you are Villista, I am not I am a peaceful man. I just will keep my my work and feed my family. When that happens then the the guerriero accuse him and try to beat him with a saber. When when my father see that he was triggered with a saber then he go under the wheel, that would collect the water to to irrigate his, his land. And then the guy couldn't do nothing so he puts his saber away and he get his gun. And then my father would come out, and finally so many in and outs, my father took it, took a chance that this guy was entertaining putting his gun into his holster. My father jump on his horseback and and grab him both with his hand very tight against the bandeliers full of ammunition. So when that happened, the [inaudible] gave up and he landed on his back with all the bandoliers and the gun. So the guerriero took off. He said you just wait. You just wait and and don't go away. So when that happened, my father, of course, did what it was the best thing to do. Go to his father, in fact, I knew his mother, my great grandmother. I knew her. I got to meet her.

Antonio Vasquez [00:06:38] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:06:38] She was an old lady. And that my great grandfather I never knew. And I don't remember his name either. But his parents told him, get out of here. Get out of here. Because when they, these guerrieros come over they don't they don't stop at nothing, they kill you. So that's why he came to the United States leaving his two sons and his first wife. Well, somehow his first wife died sometime, I don't know what happened, that he she died leaving two childrens, [inaudible] plus leaving orphans. But they were in care of great parents. He came to the United States and he work, and then somehow he went back to after all this had happened then he went back to Mexico and then he remarry with the lady Eleanor Lelos Santos. Then he came back United States because he was given a paper, written paper from the, from the government, from the INS and the, immigration that he, he and his family could come to the United States any time they wanted for the rest of his life. So he came with his with his second wife and and they had, other children, which was Juan, Paula my mom, Guadalupe, Marcel, and Felipe. all these guys were born somewhere in New Mexico or someplace. But, you know, so he kept moving towards California. Somewhere in that section his wife die. Eleanor die. I don't know where she died. Leaving orphan Juan, Paula, Guadalupe, Marcel, and Felipe. 5 kids. Well, something happened to that young girl, Paula, that she got pregnant. That's when she had me in Bakersfield on, on there. I understand that I was born in cotton field. You know, I said, well well Jesus Christ was luckier than I because he was born in a manger, I was born in a cotton

field. So I was even worst than Jesus Christ was you know but anyway, all this time, that I was born in then, about two or three years later

Antonio Vasquez [00:09:34] Which year were you born?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:36] 1927. Yeah, in nine- yeah yeah in 1927 that's when I was born. My mom, I understand went to the restroom from the outside room, through the little room, so little restroom they used to have on the on the open country. It was very common.

Antonio Vasquez [00:10:01] [inaudible].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:10:01] You know, she went to the restroom and she got bitten by a black widow spider. So by the time they get the medical, you know all that, well she got poisoned, she die. Of course, when she died, well, I was just a small child. And I remember distinctly remember that they put her on a table. Just nothing, no casket no nothing, covered with a blank- with a white sheet. Well, I wasn't, but somebody had me on his arms and I was trying to to go to my mom because I must have been hungry or something because I wanted to go to my mom. And I'm pretty sure I must have been breast fed, because otherwise why would I go to my mom. So I wanted to to, to go to my mom. And then. And then somebody in the kitchen. My, my, away, away from the from the person. And then my somebody said let him go, let him go. It'll be the only thing he's got for the rest of his life. So they placed me on her body and I went towards the uh towards the uh, to her feet. But I knew somehow I knew that was the wrong end, so I turned around and went towards her face. But then by this time, they removed me and I cry. And I cry. And I cry until I fell asleep I guess because I don't remember anything more than that. But next thing I remember, a big funeral procession going to the, to the cemetery. That's all I remember about my mom. Years after that, you know, then we were back in, by the way she died, she was buried in Hanford, she's she's buried in Hanford. Somehow we went back to to our main place to live, Tagus ranch, and I was brought up there in the little community that at least they must have had about least ten, about two rows of small houses, at least ten or 15 small units. So this was a small community, but it was community, no store no nothing. The closest store would be Tulare, that was the closest place.

Antonio Vasquez [00:12:33] How far was that away?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:12:33] At least half hour of or more I don't know of driving from [inaudible] automobile how much is that, 1939 1930 automobile. How far can they drive and the road roadways. By the way. By the way that little town that community of that many people, they claim that Joaquin Murrieta bandit was his soul would come over to that place on a white horse.

And the reason I'm saying that is because later on, later on the reason I'm saying this is because my father wanted to to go to a to Tulare. And, and his other son Guadalupe want want to drive. Naturally, he decided to take his car himself and we turned over the car in 1929 Chevrolet that we keep but we turn over upside down and burn up and some he had me for some neighbor that we're passing by who would have been burned to death riding their crap. [laughs] Well, anyway, we were talking about the Tagus ranch. That the the all the all the people, you know, they had a, what is it, 10, 30, 50, about 50 communi- small houses. I would the time the day at the house, you know. Guadalupe, Marcel, and Felipe would go to school and my mother already gone. Juan had been away long, long. I didn't even know I didn't I didn't even know him more than my mom. And they would all go to school but I stayed home all by myself. And in that time, there was no babysitter. Nobody would take care of anybody. So when the government saw these things happening, that the kids were all by themselves, then either the county or the state. They said, Well, Mr. Ramirez, we're going to take your kids and put them in foster homes. And he say no. No. My childrens are my responsibility. I don't want them to be separated. But listen, Mr. Ramirez, you have no wife. Your daughter just passed away and all these things. So you have to give them for you to make a better living. You can you you have to put them in foster homes that way you will be free to to go to work whenever, he say no. He hired some ladies to take care of us. But these ladies wound up stealing, stealing the food. See, because he he always had enough. The main things to to to to make to make your groceries which is flour, salt, beans, and lard. There was the whole main thing they would have. He always buyed enough. But when when he hired these people, his ladies, everything disappear right away. So he had to fire them. So he got nobody. Nobody to to to babysit us or to for me for that matter because I was the little one I was the smallest child. I was his grandkid, you know, but I was smaller one. So, so these people would take advantage of him. During the day when when nobody was there at the house or even in fact, nobody, nobody, nobody was there I would go out and play in the little community there. And as soon as the people see me going by myself, they get, they call their own kids to get inside because they didn't want they didn't want their kids to be involved with me. But the only kid that would play once in a while with me was the, the foreman's child. He was, but he lived in a bigger home and a better home because he was a foreman and his his wife would let me play with with him. His name was Juan Dena. I don't know, but sounds like Hispanic. So pretty soon, pretty soon my father decided that him and another 3 to 3 families go to Mexico, move back to Mexico, because the government was getting too close to remove his kids. So then then he he and other people began to get ready to go drive their cars to take our automobile to back to Mexico. And we did move to Mexico. We already, we already went through all these little places that I mentioned before. Corcoran, Modesto, [inaudible].

Antonio Vasquez [00:18:39] How how old were you when you moved when you moved back to Mexico?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:18:45] I imagine that I. When we got to Mexico, we. I remember that the the almanac in my great grandmother's house, it said 1933. So I must have been 27 to 33 that's about 5 6 or so.

Antonio Vasquez [00:19:12] Um, what where, uh. I I didn't ask this earlier but what, where is your grandfather from? So you-

Jose M. Ramirez [00:19:19] From Aguascalientes.

Antonio Vasquez [00:19:20] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:19:20] He was when

Antonio Vasquez [00:19:20] [inaudible].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:19:20] [?] small town. [?]. He was born there.

Antonio Vasquez [00:19:24] Alright.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:19:24] Yeah. In Aguas- in the state of Aguascalientes.

Antonio Vasquez [00:19:24] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:19:31] And uh, his his family is also like three boys and four girls. He had he had three three brothers. Himself is Marco, Marco and Isadora no Marco and [inaudible], there were two boys and four girls. My, my, my family's also three boys and four girls. It's kind of funny.

Antonio Vasquez [00:20:15] Yeah, yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:20:16] It's random. But anyway. When when all this thing was getting getting close to being moved to Mexico because of the government, I went through many other things. I wound up I wound up in the in the hospital the first time. I don't remember that one, but uh. Well, I re- I recall that being sitting on on on the wall, or or that tub, you know, that metal tub that used, the washtub fell off in my hand and then and and made a gauche. It didn't make an opening. So my my father didn't know that I was hurt, but with time became contagious. And when when finally when he discover my whole head, he was so with getting, you know,

Antonio Vasquez [00:21:24] An infection?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:21:25] Infection.

Antonio Vasquez [00:21:27] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:21:27] So he they took me to the to the hospital in in Tulare. And get in the hospital, and and I remember that they cut and put gauze inside my my skull. And, and you know, with time I went back to it, went back to the small community. The second time that I had a medical experience is when we were eating, a yellow jacket stung me right here on on my right side of the neck. And and then my my whole my whole back became swollen. So they took me to the doctor again, trying to find out what went wrong. And and then they they begin to to cut me, because they thought it was the mumps. So they begin to cut here, here you can see here. So when we moved to Mexico, my infection was, my wounds, my well yeah my wounds wouldn't be completely healed. And I had a one of a little piece of flesh hanging like people, like almost, like an earring. But it was right here. So when we moved to Mexico. But when we moved to Mexico, my all these three families were on a on a caravan, went to the grapevine and the grapevine our car wouldn't even make make it the hill. So, so they had to get somebody to to help us. We get a tow truck and the garage, which still exist right in the grapevine. They they fix, the car, whatever was wrong. But then then we continue our trip to, uh, to Mexico. And. And I remember we stop in. We stop in Calipatia. We stayed for some time there, working, three families, working during the peak season that we and every day we pick all of the [laughs].

Antonio Vasquez [00:23:56] [inaudible] all the time.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:23:56] [?] all the time. Pick for breakfast pick for lunch, and you know, because they had money, but they hadn't saved up for their restaurant.

Antonio Vasquez [00:24:08] Right.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:24:10] So we wound up make we wound up in El Paso. And while they were figuring the, the paperwork and all that, one of the, the immigration or the, what is it the name. Um, border, border, border people told my father.

Antonio Vasquez [00:24:34] [inaudible].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:24:34] [inaudible].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:24:39] But, but you are not a Ramirez. He kept banging on on my head all the time, you are not a Ramirez you are a [inaudible last name] .

Antonio Vasquez [00:24:46] [repeats last name].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:24:46] You are a [last name]. Later on, I probably come up with that because the reason I am called Jose M. Ramirez is because later on, you know you come, come right on to it. We wound up in El Paso, and then and then the one of the border, border guards, I don't know whether the Mexican side or the American side discouraged my father not to drive this automobile to get to Mexico because there were no rules.

Antonio Vasquez [00:25:23] Oh okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:25:24] See. So the best thing you can do, Mr. Ramirez, is to sell off the car. Or they got a good price because, you know, as if some somehow I remember that that we had the stove [laughs] you know [inaudible] bunch of junk. Have a stove and other things in the car and. And and they told him to, they told him to, they give him a free passage with everything to Aguascalientes. Everything included plus money, they were going to give for the car and all that. But my father had had somebody in in the. One of her sisters was married to an individual that was a railroad person. I don't know what kind of a situation was that, whether he was a big shot in it or he was just a worker or not, I don't know. But he he had a, he was a railroad individual and and also they ran a small bus at that time what nineteen, in the early 1930s what, transportation. A station wagon from Jesus de Maria to the city of Aguascalientes, you know, the transportation business. And then later on, I learned the the what a bigger bus but but I never knew that. And we wound up in Jesús María. We wound up in Jesús María, small, small town

and and. Also, also his family, my family were, well, were good to see him but a lot of people, I don't know, after so long. They don't get each other. Get along, too. You know, because you're from another country. You came from another. You know, you're norteno, you know, you're not welcome really, you're you're not really welcome. They get bored with you, you know, So they they begin to say something. But they didn't bother me, because I was a small kid anyway. So his sisters, 2, 3, of his sisters, they they tried to steal. He went he tried to go in that into the into some kind of business getting pigs, you know, fresh so he can sell them. He would buy a lot of corn to feed him. But the big thing is fair enough and yet the the all the corn was disappearing. So, so, you know, this family, you know, you know, it's always family try to make something better for a most of its brothers anyway. Guadalupe didn't like Mexico. That's the oldest boy. My mother was the oldest, but, you know, she a long time pass away. So Guadalupe was the living guy, didn't like being in Mexico. Marcel didn't last very long because I think I'm I don't know what happened, but I think that because he was kind of young when his mother died, he became so. Some kind of. Some kind of. Uh. Um. What was is it. Kids. Get. Get sick, get. Something, you know, with physically, you begin to grow. You know, you get some kind of frustration, you get some kind of a.

Antonio Vasquez [00:29:42] Yeah, I know what you mean. You get.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:29:44] Sick.

Antonio Vasquez [00:29:44] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:29:45] So he didn't. He didn't, he didn't last very long. He die also in in Mexico. So living Felipe, he was the youngest of my father's son. You know, he was a young age except me as a grandson, but he was more, more rugged you, he misses mom but what are you going to do? You know, he get along better than most anybody. So, so what do you do when you go to another country? Do what they do. What kind of a living is there? You don't believe this. But at that time, the biggest, the most work that you could do to survive was two things. Either go and get the firewood to sell in the city of Aguascalientes or carbón, make carbón, charcoal.

Antonio Vasquez [00:30:44] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:30:45] So we both we we we did both. We we go to the nearest hills and get firewood, and the next day we go sell it, you know, for profit. But then when we go to to get the carbón, it takes longer to make it, three or four days, and it takes two days to, to get to the come back at least a week, complete week to to make one one load of carbón. See? So, so.

What do you call people? arrieros. Arrieros. Can you imagine that? We did it. Well, you cannot make carbón, you cannot destroy any piece of property any nearby in Jesús María because they the owners, they don't like to, their their property be destroyed. And yet a lot of people went over there to to bring firewood. If its dry, they didn't mind. But if it's green they didn't want you there. So the only place we could go was La Sierra Fría. La Sierra Fría is is up north the the the border of the state of Zacatecas in Aguascalientes. See any, anybody that is born in Jesús María is entitled to do whatever he wants to at La Sierra Fría. But it it took us two days to get there. On horseback or burro back whatever, but it took us two days. So it took us three or four days to to make our our carbón.

Antonio Vasquez [00:32:32] How, how did you make it? How is it made?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:32:34] It's fantastic the way you do it. You've cut your um, you cut your wood, your trees, green trees had to be. You had to make it about this big. Well, about two feet, let's, 18 inches long at least 18 inches long. Make a circle about this high and about ten feet wide. And then you make a little candle it inside with a dry [inaudible] for you to make it work and they pull it up like in an oven. Then you cover up with the dry grass. When you cover with dry grass, then you go and then with the dirt, wet dirt and cover it but the dirt has to be so so, no rack no nothing. Just so so clean. Then you cover up and then light up the the the match inside, the the candlelight. And then, then when you see when you see white smoke coming out of the little bit like a little bit of chimney on the top, it's not ready because you you leave about, about at least six inches of the ground not completely covered. You let the the air go under. Okay. Once the smoke began to get a little bit blueish, then you lower all this dirt all the way to the bottom and cover up the top and then make some some small holes around it for the for the smoke to get out. And this is just blueish smoke. And this is like the [inaudible] the the firewood would burn that exactly the way you cut it, its the the pieces of tree come up with the same markings and everything.

Antonio Vasquez [00:34:36] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:34:37] See.

Antonio Vasquez [00:34:38] Its just charred

Jose M. Ramirez [00:34:40] Charred yeah. But it's just completely cooked. You know. So it comes down to [inaudible] the the wood becomes small so so naturally, you just, when you go, you dig it up and then let it cool off and then take it to the city and then and then sell it. That's at that time to, for. Especially for cooking beans. Anything that takes a long time to cook, thats the

best kind of fuel you would use. They want no, no kerosene, no gasoline, no nothing. It's just either charcoal or firewood. The the tortiera, you know, the restaurants use a lot of, at that time use firewood because it's just flame. And they want flame to make the tortillas to get, put them in the comal, right away, you know, they make tortillas in in a hurry for the customers, let's face it, and the carbón, just when they have to cook something that it takes longer, it stays there longer and you don't have to worry about the smoke or anything. So thats thats how you make it. But it takes longer to to make. Lupe, Lupe, and and and he didn't like the idea of going, its rough living. It is a rough living to get three or four days, five days up in nowhere. In the summer it's okay. What do you do when it's raining? You have to learn how to survive. Thats the way you see that the Rambo guy you know, surviving with a little knife and it's, that how you got to do it. You learn. It's nothing wrong. It's beautiful. But you learn it and you do, you you get away with, with, you know, survival, with the, off the ground, little nopales and corn or whatever you can get up and [inaudible]. No problem. You just survival is the main thing. Felipe, he stayed there longer. Lupe came back right away. Must have been during the during the, late thirties or early forties when when the war in Jap- in the Second World War started, he wound up being drafted, Lupe.

Antonio Vasquez [00:37:12] Oh, because you were Ameri- you were all American citizens weren't you.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:37:15] Yes. Yes.

Antonio Vasquez [00:37:17] Okay. Thats' right you were all born here. Okay. Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:37:18] Yes. So he wound up in he he wound up in in the, at the war. And then he he will write to my father said, I want to bring Jose back. But, I didn't. I, I couldn't come because I didn't have no training, no education. And when I when we moved to Mexico, we speak Spanish and no English. And the only English that I could speak was water, salt, and spoons. They were the big three [laughs]

Antonio Vasquez [00:37:53] All right, the the the three big ones, alright. Go on.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:37:55] But anyway, all this time there, I grew up, went few days, a few years in in in school, up to fourth grade. I became real good in in education. I like it. When when Lupe came back on his furlough, oh he said, by this time, it what already what is it 1941? 42? Or, gosh I don't know. He said, I want you to go with me. Go back, because here in Mexico with no, no future. I say I cannot leave my father by himself. By this time, he already married for the third time. The. So so we, my father decided yes, he he let me come with Lupe. And and and he

said I, I, I can leave him with my Uncle Marco, my, one of my father's brothers. He he was living in Mesilla park, New Mexico. Children have two kids only. Jose Ramirez and Ofelia. That's all, two kids. So I wound up in in in L- in Las Cruces or in Mesilla Park, I'm sorry, which a few miles south of Las Cruces, and I stay there. Lupe went back to the [inaudible] where he was going to, going to finish his term in in the Army. I. I stay there in Las Cruces, Mesilla Park, I'm sorry, and also work in the farm because, that's that's all I knew. Work in the field, I was pretty good at the, working with the ax, the machete, cutting the trees, you know, had to be good. Otherwise, you would never make it. Became real good on on on with the pick and shovel. So I work in the on the field, irrigating, during the po- all the potato harvesting also. And, and the guys the the the the property owner or that the rancher, he wanted people to work. But at the little park, Mesilla Park, you can't get nobody to work. There's lot of Mexican people there, but you won't find anybody to go to work in the field.

Antonio Vasquez [00:40:43] What did they do? What what sort of work did they do? Was it mining or [inaudible]?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:40:49] No mining no nothing. Farming. Farming is is abundant, but they only, how they survive, I don't know. It's it's just people doing work to. They don't want to work. Of course, at this time was the the main stream of the Pachuco things.

Antonio Vasquez [00:41:11] Hm okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:41:11] And lot of and lot of people became Pachucos because I, I learned later that the only way the government or the army wouldn't want them-

Antonio Vasquez [00:41:20] Oh I see.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:41:21] To get away from being drafted.

Antonio Vasquez [00:41:23] Okay. All right.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:41:26] See. They will, they get a record. The army don't want people, nobody wants the people with that record. And they only way to get, to avoid the draft, get in trouble. And the only way to get in trouble, by being mean, and they would rob, and all that, you know, And I didn't know, because I, I since I was coming back from from Mexico, I didn't know

the customs in in New Mexico. Or any place for that matter, because when we left, I was very small. I never I never in in in my life until until I came back to United States I never knew Black people. I never see a Black people.

Antonio Vasquez [00:42:10] Yeah. Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:42:10] Because, in, in in. The village where I was brought up in a little. Hanford,.

Antonio Vasquez [00:42:30] [inaudible].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:42:30] Hanford, you know, all those places, there was no, there was no Black people to to see. Only Mexicans, because the Mexicans more work in the in the field. So hard work. And Black people I never knew, and and hardly there were no no Blacks at that time or in the in California. So, so I never knew any Black people. So. So in Mesilla park, thats when I began to see Black people in Las Cruces every time I went to Las Cruces in the in the town to the movies, I see Black people once in a while, but all all the time there wasn't any work there's nobody. There's braceros there. They had braceros there. But I didn't meet anybody, because anybody because I didn't knew who they were, but they were Mexican people. I understand there were braceros in New Mexico. And but we were hand in hand because we didn't worry about we didn't worry about getting, getting accustomed to work, that it was nothing to me. Working on the on the pick and shovel, that's what [inaudible]. Work hard is when you when you work with the ax cutting the big trees.

Antonio Vasquez [00:43:47] Yeah that's

Jose M. Ramirez [00:43:49] Making the the big the small pieces out of big one. That's that's the hard part, especially when it's raining, especially when it's hot. And if you don't move, you don't get nothing done. And when you, when you have only food for only so many days you have to move.

Antonio Vasquez [00:44:08] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:44:09] Or else.

Antonio Vasquez [00:44:11] Stuck.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:44:14] So, so then so, so all those little thing that I remember, you know, like, like trying to remember back into the Jesus Maria thing, when that place from the border town of Zacatecas and Aguascalientes, three times we had to walk, because there were no food. We, we, we ate all of the food because of one delay, one day or two days delay of whatever, losing one animal, burro or mule, whatever, we had to make up our time, in the Sierras, so what do you do? One, one trip, one one time without resting, go all the way to Aguas- Aguascalientes, our our place. Thirty six, thirty eight hours walk.

Antonio Vasquez [00:45:06] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:45:06] Without any rest.

Antonio Vasquez [00:45:07] Amazing.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:45:08] See. So so so, so coming back in to United States and work with the pick and shovel, oh come on.

Antonio Vasquez [00:45:15] [laughs].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:45:15] It was it was a picnic.

Antonio Vasquez [00:45:20] It was a vacation for you.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:45:21] It was a picnic. See. So see that's why I you know, I was amazed to see all these bunch of guys, they didn't want to work.

Antonio Vasquez [00:45:27] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:45:27] I don't blame them, but I mean, someone had to do work. So when when they rancher couldn't find anybody to to to work in the irrigation because he couldn't find

anybody, all the braceros they're not allowed to go in, in at that time to work at night or who can get anybody to water the place. I went 24 hours for three weeks irrigating. But, but then then what, the guys that I knew from from Mesilla park, they were my friends, they were pretty good to eating and drinking wine. Hey Jose, give me a a quarter, give me a sip so so I can get some wine. I say okay, I, to keep them from bothering bugging me, I give him a dollar or two so go get some wine. Well they were pretty good drinking- drinkers. But they they offer me a piece of- a little bit of wine. But you know, well anyway.

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Jose M. Ramirez [00:00:01] In in in in this, this incident. There was nothing. There was nothing compared to the thing you had before. So. So, I didn't mind, I didn't mind. Very soon. Very soon, I don't know, I don't know when was that, how long, but not even a year I guess. My uncle. Yeah. My Uncle Marco said your- his daughter [00:00:35][name, ?], [0.0s] you know, that was my, my mum's

Antonio Vasquez [00:00:40] Sister.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:00:40] Cousin.

Antonio Vasquez [00:00:41] Oh cousin, okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:00:41] Yeah. Yeah. They want you to go to Arizona. I said well okay. Work in the fields too. So her husband, Guillermo Garcia was the foreman of the crew. One crew of braceros. He would go. He would be [00:01:00][?] [0.0s] to work in the field. And and there we're working the lettuce. The harvesting, you know, and also the cantaloupe, and the. Because the guy that the rancher had, many, many blocks of land. And these blocks were about a mile or two miles square.

Antonio Vasquez [00:01:26] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:01:26] Is that a mile, at least?

Antonio Vasquez [00:01:30] Yeah, [00:01:30][?]. [0.0s]

Jose M. Ramirez [00:01:31] [00:01:31][You use a whole] [0.0s] at least one or two miles square that land. And this the rancher, he owns all that because his bosses were Japanese people and they couldn't sign any papers.

Antonio Vasquez [00:01:49] Oh okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:01:49] They couldn't sign any papers when they bought the property. And he was the only one be able to to to sign. So he signs his name when every time they bought a piece of property.

Antonio Vasquez [00:02:00] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:02:00] So when the Japanese, the Japanese were.

Antonio Vasquez [00:02:09] They they were sent off to the camps.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:02:11] Yeah they were. Yeah they were sent to the sent to the camps. So he became the sole owner of those properties in right in Tolleson. I don't know how many, three or four blocks were separate from, we call it block because it was about three or four miles each square in Tolleson.

Antonio Vasquez [00:02:31] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:02:31] And at least by, by. This airport that is near, near Pheonix, and he had another pieces of land. [00:02:48][Bason], [0.0s] he had other piece of land with cattle. So so naturally, he needed people. He needed a lot of people, theres a lot of braceros were involved in there. And and right at the at the, in Tolleson, that's where my uncle Guillermo and his wife, they were they were the, you know, the bosses there, because the foreman.

Antonio Vasquez [00:03:14] Oh okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:03:15] And and since the general foreman would live in the same area because he would go from those places and make sure that everybody was accounted for at the field. That's all he did. But then in his place, he would have somebody in turn that would control the rest of the people. And he had a he had a. Like barrack, with a 12 or 15, I think 12 15 braceros in there, living. One bracero would stay a week to clean up the place and make the food. All the rest of them, go on the field. So the following week, another bracero would take, take his turn and the other one would go, and but they they they get paid. They get paid. They're the. The wages were favorable. I mean we didn't get any more than they did or they didn't get any less than we did or anything, but they get the the boss, the rancher would pay the food bill, half, all the 12, all the 15, whatever they pay, they buy so many, many, so many dollars of food. But they only pay half of that price. And the rancher would pay the other half.

Antonio Vasquez [00:04:39] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:04:39] Okay. So so it was good, a good clean place to live. Nice, along with that, that, along with that barrack, there were houses of legal people that were also workers of that of that rancher. That some drive the tractor, some drive- truckers, some just plain like, you know, they pick and shovel or wherever. But they were living there. They live in the same community. They were very good places to live. The same thing. We had at Tagus ranch, same thing. Nice clean homes. If you keep, if you keep it clean, well we stay clean, if they own well, that they own, like anything else, so. So naturally I met all these people that we worked together with them. And sometimes one guy said, well, I already finished my contract, because they came in contract with the bracero coming with, six months a year or I don't know the rest of them, but they bring another guy to replace the one leaving. So there was the ones that were in there. They knew how to how to harvest their land, how to work on the land. So the new ones. They followed through again, right away.

Antonio Vasquez [00:06:03] Right.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:06:04] I knew a guy that, that he was, he was a devil. Well, he was a good guy but they go I think a devil because he he got himself a wife from Pheonix, to, to live with him. But every so often, he save all his money. And then he would go to Pheonix and spent all that money in bars. He would go Friday night and he wouldn't come back until S- Monday morning. He and then. And then he would write, he would write his mom. He say mom, I have no more money, I had a rough week this time and I need some money. I said how much you want mijo? All three, four hundred, pes- dolares, you know. Okay. She would send him money. So he, he can get some [00:07:05][?]. [0.0s] This guy. This guy would buy clothing, the most expensive one, that the same thing that Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, all those cowboys were wearing

Antonio Vasquez [00:07:17] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:07:17] in the movies

Antonio Vasquez [00:07:18] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:07:19] he would buy them.

Antonio Vasquez [00:07:23] Yeah. [?] wastes a lot of money.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:07:24] When he left, he had three trunks full of clothing, hats and everything. Beautiful.

Antonio Vasquez [00:07:32] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:07:32] Very beautiful clothing.

Antonio Vasquez [00:07:33] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:07:35] That he bought. But he said I'm here just for the fun. I'm here to see how many gringas can I go to bed with. But he, that's, that's his living. What do I care? You know, but all the rest of them. They were all, oh compadre, you know, my wife already bought me a set of mules or a cow or something, a piece of land, and when I finish my contract, I have something to work. Because a lot of people were very smart. Because they they came, took the money and, and then somebody would come over and make you know. So this is why the bracero was very good. To, to me, even though I didn't. Didn't make any difference to me because I was working with them. I learned how to, how to work with them the way they did. And and believe me. During the lettuce. The lettuce, the lettuce is the worst part. Because when they when they when they see the lettuce feilds, [00:08:41][?] [0.0s] in the row. Well, you have to have only one or two the most. But how you do it, have you work in it?

Antonio Vasquez [00:08:50] No, no.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:08:51] No. They have a little hole about this wide, and you could see.

Antonio Vasquez [00:08:55] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:08:57] Like this.

Antonio Vasquez [00:08:58] Oh okay. Yeah, little short handle though.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:01] With a short handle.

Antonio Vasquez [00:09:01] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:02] And that's how you do it. And the rest of it, you, you get even one. One or two. Let's say a mile long road.

Antonio Vasquez [00:09:15] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:16] Going that way.

Antonio Vasquez [00:09:19] Amazing. The the what, rows was that, they were, they had like a, their fields are big. They're very big.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:24] That's right. Because that's, those fields were long. You remember, the block,

Antonio Vasquez [00:09:28] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:28] The guys two three miles of property.

Antonio Vasquez [00:09:32] Yeah, each section is a mile, a mile inside.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:34] Right.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:34] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:09:35] So, so you work less and yet all these braceros, very good for that. And then in order for for me to make myself valuable for them. So I didn't. So they didn't think that that because I was the the nephew of the foreman, I would, you know they favor me. No. I had to be working just as good as they were or better. So I had to work. Of course, at the time I was young, I still was young, twenty, early twenties. Of course yeah, but this time I was I was already registered to the local board, you know, the local board you know when someone, when the draft board.

Antonio Vasquez [00:10:20] The draft board.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:10:20] Yeah. But they called the local board and you had to register at 19, but I was over 19 when I registered, when I came back. So, so it was still with a limit. Otherwise they would punish you at that time. I understand they give you, you know, arrest you, if you give if you give you a good reason for not to registering.

Antonio Vasquez [00:10:42] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:10:42] So I was registered already. So. So also the the the the rancher. Well. He would hire people from the community, like people from Tolleson. Right? Anybody? I need so many people. He already had so many braceros working for him. But he still work, get some more people from the community. To work. Two women. Two women that I that. Well, I just knew them by by name, but. [00:11:23][Bartolas] [0.0s] I guess one young girl, [00:11:25][Bartolas], [0.0s] was name named [00:11:26]Bartolas [0.0s] because, were born the same day, but at different years. But they were sisters, [00:11:34]Bartolas, [0.0s] they call them [00:11:35]Bartolas. [0.0s]

Antonio Vasquez [00:11:36] [laughs]

Jose M. Ramirez [00:11:36] They were they were so good for that.

Antonio Vasquez [00:11:41] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:11:41] They work and they they beat any any braceros to work.

Antonio Vasquez [00:11:46] [00:11:46][inaudible]. [0.0s]

Jose M. Ramirez [00:11:46] Because they pay you. Yeah. They pay you for the row.

Antonio Vasquez [00:11:50] Oh, you got paid by the row.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:11:51] That's right. They pay you by the row. They don't pay you by the hour.

Antonio Vasquez [00:11:55] What would they pay for, five rows?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:11:57] I don't remember. But it was all I know it was very good money, because these girls, they. They got paid good, good wages doing that. And they weren't married. They were they were single mother, but they weren't married, and they were supporting their father. And they by themselves built a house, a four bedroom house, that I know of, block, cement block. They, they didn't hire anybody. They did it by themselves.

Antonio Vasquez [00:12:30] By themselves.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:12:31] Yeah. So, so so we work there and the with along with the braceros. Well that, I only spent two two summers in Arizona. On the canteloupe, when the canteloupe harvest and the canteloupe the canteloupe harvest. We work from 4:00 in the morning until 11. Because the sun, it the the heat is

Antonio Vasquez [00:13:00] Oh it's too hot out.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:13:01] It's too hot. Too hot.

Antonio Vasquez [00:13:02] Okay. And you work in the in the dark.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:13:04] Well, in the morning, yeah, but it by 4 its already late, early anyway.

Antonio Vasquez [00:13:09] Yeah, yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:13:09] And you already picking off this big, you know, every day every day four hour. I think, five week we work.

Antonio Vasquez [00:13:15] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:13:15] Yeah. And it, and it's and we had that the truck pull the conveyor and we just put the, the cantaloupe into the conveyor. The conveyor will, will bring that fruit. Onto the truck. One guy would be there with a with a with a huge you know canvas due to that so they wouldn't get damage.

Antonio Vasquez [00:13:44] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:13:45] See. And then making sure that the the fruit don't get damaged or because you know, when its damaged by the time you get shipped to another state or another country, the fruit is no good.

Antonio Vasquez [00:13:57] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:13:58] So they had to be careful. And the and the rancher had a ten, ten army trucks. Ten army trucks and and trailers, they fill them up with with that. And which in turn. When when, when, when they the rancher bought it but the real owner, the Japanese bought them, the rancher had to sign for it.

Antonio Vasquez [00:14:26] For the for the equipment or for the

Jose M. Ramirez [00:14:27] They had to sign for the- yeah for the piece of property, the ownership. So, they they you know, Mr. Anderson,

Antonio Vasquez [00:14:34] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:14:34] Had to sign because the Japanese can sign for it.

Antonio Vasquez [00:14:36] So he actually owned the property.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:14:38] He actually own it without cost him any anything, but he was the owner, and he only had a wife and a son, that's all. So his son had had all the money in the world. So, so, so, so finally at the at the end of the five weeks of working on the canteloupe, then then they said well they said that's the end of it, we complete our contract with the markets there's no more. But this time, it was so hot that, you know, it's just. We had two weeks of a high hot heat. Hot days, 120. 120 day and night. So you can imagine how hard it is to work under those discontents. So hot. Well, anyway, my last year in Arizona, I, I was, I was. Came up with another guy from Corona. He said he was from Corona. His name was, he was raised in Corona but just like me, raised in Mexico. So. His name was [00:15:53][?name] [0.0s] Garcia, but he, we team up pretty good. Roommates and that they are, my uncle gave us a little house. We both live together there and we spend our money together. And we made very good money, very good money on, on those five days, five weeks alone, over \$1,000. Over.

Antonio Vasquez [00:16:17] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:16:17] Easy. Over \$1,000 on on five weeks.

Antonio Vasquez [00:16:20] Wow. Now I understand this is what this is like in 1940s, late 1940s?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:16:24] Late forties.

Antonio Vasquez [00:16:26] Okay. Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:16:26] In the late forties, 43, 47 something.

Antonio Vasquez [00:16:32] That is quite a bit of money for for five weeks work back then I would imagine. Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:16:33] Then. And the following year the boss, the ranchers had some cattle in [00:16:40][? place]. [0.0s] So he said, I need, I need four four people to work and I up in the high Sierras. You say, what is it? Well, we're going to build some fence. We, we build some tanks. You know, when it snows, the snow stays there, it melts then it becomes a water place for the cattle.

Antonio Vasquez [00:17:09] Yeah. Right

Jose M. Ramirez [00:17:10] But we needed that the the the fence. So, so cattle, when when the cattle gets thirsty, they look for water and they go in there and then we put an automatic tr- gate. The cattle can go in, but it can't get out. See. So the rancher, so so before we come in this section, we go to every tank and get the cattle before the, the, the snow starts to keep them, to keep them from dying up in the, lost up in the Sierras. See. So the, you know when it snow it snows up in the Arizona you know. So that was the thing we did, fence and put gates on those on those tanks. So we worked there about six months, maybe, while while it was, you know, of of the, after after the of the the the cold, cold temperatures.

Antonio Vasquez [00:18:21] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:18:21] No rain or anything but nice weather.

Antonio Vasquez [00:18:23] Breeze.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:18:23] But still frozen to. [00:18:24][?] [0.0s] There. One thing I had to learn because I didn't mention this, my Tia [00:18:37]Otelia, [0.0s] my my aunt [00:18:37][Otelia] [0.0s] ,the the wife to the willy, Guillermo Garcia. Well, he was the second second husband to this woman, my uncle Mark's daughter. He had two sons. Yes. It wasn't to

drink. Yeah yeah, oh I see. Yeah. Yeah, he. They had two. She has two two sons with the first marriage and three kids from the second marriage from, Garc- Guillermo. Well. Cruz was the youngest of the two because the oldest was still in the Army. Cruz myself, then Garcia and that brother in law my Jose Ramirez from Mexico that my. We we wound, wound up in that place and [00:19:39][? place] [0.0s] making friends. We had to learn how to cook. Cooking, it wasn't for a man. Only women supposed to cook, not men. But there, thats only guys were. We learn or we don't eat. [Laughs] We had to learn how to make tortillas. We had to make learn how to, you know, remember how to make arroz and then cook them, you know, the best we could. The, the ranchers, the foreman don't know how to make biscuits. But Mexican [00:20:19][?] [0.0s] Biscuits. Just give them enough tortillas and beans, that's all you care, you know? But we made it pretty good. We made real good. There I had to learn. I learned how to drive. In the High Sierras. A road that only about eig- well seven feet wide. Only one road,.

Antonio Vasquez [00:20:42] You know, it's only like the one. One car road.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:20:46] One car road yeah. One side of is big hill and the bottom on the other side. Well, there's no end to it. And I learned how to drive, and I was pretty good. Raymond my my my, Jose Ramirez's brother in law, was told to to continue to do what I was doing, bringing firewood. Because the winter comes, the foreman had to have plenty of firewood for the for the winter, okay. So I was doing that, all this time to get the wood, just before we went back to the city, you know, I was collecting firewood and I had to, Cruz couldn't come back again. He was an American citizen, if he didn't want to work anymore that's it. He say I'm not gonna work, I have my rights. But the other three guys left, they say well, we're stuck here, so do, we'll do the best we can. So. So then I continue do continue doing that firewood collecting. And then the ranger said, well, listen, I said, since. Since. Since I don't have Cruz anymore, can you, he say are you, you know how to ride a horse. Well, I know some. Because I want you to go with me, collect some of the cattle already. And I want Raymond to go and and I want Raymond to go finish what you're doing, just one or two more truckloads of firewood so we can, so you I take you back to the city. I said okay. Sounds like a good idea. But first he said get on that on that horse. Yeah. I went over to a went and got on top of that horse, and it gave me that, that [00:22:53][?]. [0.0s] I went over and I got him back. They are tricky to do it, but you have to know to, at it real good and say you do it. So now we go and get ready to go and get them some of the cattle. So. So Raymond was supposed to go pick up some firewood. It will have leftover two or mo- one or two more truckloads of of wood. Before we left. He come back. With his, water canteen you know on his shoulder and whistling. Hey Raymond what happen, where's the truck? Eh I don't know the dumb truck. He say I went up, went real good, coming down, I didn't remove my foot off the gas pedal and went just like crazy and turn over about 150 feet of let, and, miracle he didn't get killed.

Antonio Vasquez [00:23:49] Oh wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:23:49] He just walk away with little scratch on his nose that's all. So that was the end of the everything else as well. They said, okay, already its messed up so don't worry. So because the truck is supposed to take you back into the, in the, to the city, back to the Phoenix, it's coming over and be here any minute, so it's okay don't worry about. So instead of taking cattle like he was supposed to take some cattle, he took the truck, wrecked truck and asked to get back to the city. Little after that, I told, I told uh [?], Garcia, you know, my roommates [?], I'm going to California. When you going to come back? I was born in California. I'm going back. But this time, Lupe was already living in Los Angeles. He, I already had this address. Twenty nine something, [00:24:51][LaSalle] [0.0s] Avenue, somewhere near between Jefferson and Adams. About two blocks east of western. [00:25:01][LaSalle] [0.0s] Avenue. I say I'm leaving, so he got he got mad at me, because, you know, he didn't he didn't want to be by himself. I said we we were pretty good friends, but I say well, every time I. I want to a. Every time I want to do something, I say buy clothing or buy a car, which we could buy a car because at one time we got a big check, you know, a lot of money. He said, sounds like a good idea he said. Let's go. And by the time we got to Phoenix and get ready to buy a piece of equipment or the car or something he say hey hey hey hey hey wait a minute. I say what is it? Say, if we die, who's going to take care of the car? Who going to take care of the clothing? I- you're right. Well, let's go to the bar. [laughs].

Antonio Vasquez [00:26:04] [laughs].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:26:04] So. So that's why I said, I'm not going to be able to to do anything for myself with this guy. So the only thing to do, just get away from me. So I came. I came I had some money saved up in. In, of course, the safest bank would be my shoe. They take my money right and there.

Antonio Vasquez [00:26:28] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:26:28] And I got to Los Angeles. And when I found, when I went to dig for my money, it's gone. Get the guy there. I was I was coming with another guy, he, he took it. So then I had no choice but to. But to go and look for my brother. And he caused me a lot of time. Every Mexican that I met in the city of Los Angeles, in the street or on Broadway and Main Street, nobody knew how to. What I was talking about, couldn't understand me. They said you know, I don't understand, I don't know Spanish, I don't understand Spanish I don't know Spanish. Gotcha. So finally I somehow got to my my brother's and and, he wasn't there, his wife was. So I, I say well I'll come back later. So I, when I came back, he said, well, after we chitchat for a little while, then what are you going to do? I say I want, I want you to pay me the money I loan you so I can get my ticket to go to Tulare or Tagus ranch, you know, because people know

me there and I can. I can work. He said, No, I'm not going to give you. You're going to stay here. What am I going to do here in the city of Los Angeles? Well, I don't know but we'll manage something. I said listen I don't know English, I don't know how to handle myself in the city, there's no, where you go, what can what can you do in. In. in the city if you don't know how to do anything? He say well, don't worry. I said okay. So I began to work, his wife [00:28:11][told me] [0.0s] said listen. [00:28:11]There's a place that you can go to in Anaheim, [San Diego] or Anaheim. I'm going to get you a ticket so you can go and go to a [?] with a Japanese people in in [Santa [17.3s] Ana]. I said well, okay. So somehow I don't remember how in the world happened that I got information needed to know and everything, and pretty soon I was traveling every day from Los Angeles to [00:28:44][San Diego] [0.2s] in the red car. Every morning, I, by by 5:00, I'll be always on my way. I started 7:00 and I be home about 10:00 every day. When was well, a lot of braceros were in there, picking chilies. When the chili harvest ended there's one guy, one guy said, what did you earn today? Anybody wants to go to Riverside? Wheres that? He say well, I'll give you ride there for one dollar I take you over there and bring you back. And to pick oranges.

Antonio Vasquez [00:29:23] Okay.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:29:25] So I well, I say okay. I have nothing, no nothing to no place to go to or anything. You know, the only place to go to my is my brother's house. And and I didn't want to be too much of a bother. I said okay. Well, sure. I would up in, somewhere in Riverside, picking oranges. Oh, my gosh. It was a better place than it than it was before and that I was I was before in. Lot of oranges to eat. [laughs] I ate myself-, you know, my my stomach full of oranges and that. And I'd pick one or one and I eat two. And by the time I fill up one of the bags, I probably made about \$1 the whole day, but I ate a lot of oranges.

Antonio Vasquez [00:30:17] [laughs].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:30:17] So I, I got my dollars, the guy said well, that's all you earned today. I said okay. So I got \$1 to give to the to the guy for my for my transit back to the Anaheim and I and, and from there I took my my, my trip to Los Angeles. There was a long day. Because I didn't make any money then.

Antonio Vasquez [00:30:38] Yeah.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:30:39] Yeah. But I work in, a lot of braceros were oranges. My lists my lists tried to get the, my 1 orange was looking so good I climbed a little bit too far. I wound up on

the other side of the tree. I mean, its, the ladder, you know, fell and then said oh, my God. I said, Well, anyways, time to go anyway.

Antonio Vasquez [00:31:04] Yeah, wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:31:04] So. So that's the only thing that I can tell you about the about the braceros. Because I work in them also in Arizona. But the. As as far as I know, they were pretty well. Pretty well. Taking care or giving eniugh, enough work and place to live. And in a lot of times I didn't like the idea that a lot of people said, well, I didn't, I didn't get, we didn't get a good restroom, good service. I said, well, they had everyt- the restrooms, they were just small things on the end of the of the field. The housing. The house weren't that, that bad. Because the way I was, I was used to, in Mexico. A lot of times, when we going to the to the High Sierras, when it was raining and I mean raining, within 5 minutes we have our [00:32:12][curtain] [0.0s] made and we sleep comfortable all night. The water may be going under, but we'd be sleeping very comfortable. We're comfortable with the equipment we take from the burros or the mules that we had, you know, the equipment we had. Our food was never fail, never spoiled because tortillas and beans, what can goes bad? make sure that they don't get wet and that's all. And that well, while you while you doing the work and cutting your trees, you you also cook your beans. So what's the big deal? So this is why I didn't I didn't I didn't think it was bad treatment for for the braceros for that matter, because I never, I had it a lot better here than I had it in in Mexico, especially High Sierras.

Antonio Vasquez [00:33:05] Okay. Do you remember when you're talking to any of the braceros, any of them, that you got to know, were these men, were they from cities or were they from the country in Mexico?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:33:22] The ones that I knew were like my, well the ones in Arizona, they were from the small ranch, small ranches, small communities, because they were they were inclined to buy a lot of pieces of land, a cow or two, or a or a team of mules. And where else except, you know, people that live in, to the small communities to do the work. So that's why, that's why, I don't know, why else they would, this guy would leave in it. That, at that time, they would hire people for the farming, so this is why I, I feel that they were from farm- farming community.

Antonio Vasquez [00:34:18] Right, right, right.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:34:18] Because if you hire anybody from the city to work in the in the field, forget it. We had too many people like that here in the United States. [00:34:27][They're not so

down.] [0.0s] Yeah. So so naturally, all this thing that I learned in Mexico, there was nothing here. I work in in irrigation in New in New Mexico for a month. Day and night. It didn't bother me. I, when, when, when, pretty soon, you know, when I when I work. My brother Lupe, they, he place me into a. No, after the chili incident, I found a job at the, I went to look for a dishwasher job in Los Angeles at the. What is it, Fillmore hotel, downtown? I think it's Fillmore. Fillmore hotel right in downtown. I went to look for a job right in Pershing Square, and the guy I asked, I asked to, he said. He said, are you? What do you want? I say, I'd like to get a job as a dishwasher? He said what, are you crazy? No, I'm not. Of course it was a Spanish. He said are you a union member? I said no, I am not. Because you know. He said then I cannot give you a job because you're not union member. Well, then, then I'd like to, I'd like to become a union member so I can get here a job. He said well you see Mr. Rodriguez over ther? The guy over there? Yeah. Well that guy is the guy that take of the union guys. Go ask him. So I went over to, to to Mr. Rodriguez. I don't remember his name now, but anyway, and it's and it's a, I say Mr. Rodriguez, as I understand you're the guy that union, you think of take care of the union personnel. Yes. I said, well, I would like to become a member so I can get a job here with the other guy there as a dishwasher. He said well do you have a job? No, I don't. He said how can I, how can you become a member if you don't have a job? But he said that that that if you make me a membership, you know if I become a member that he give me a job. Yeah, but you don't have a job yet.

Antonio Vasquez [00:37:14] So you can't become a member yet. Yeah.

Antonio Vasquez [00:37:15] Yeah. So then I said, well, I went back to the other guy first and then I said listen, he tell it that if you give me a job, that he can make me a member of the union. Yeah, but you're not a member yet. No, I'm not. [inaudible] You're not a member yet how can I give you a job! I say you bunch of, I cuss him so bad. I cuss him so badly. All my, my words, the [?] we learned on on on the [00:37:48][open car] [0.0s] in the high Sierra. You learn a lot of good word for the for your burros, for your mules. You call them [?] they don't, they don't talk back to you so you just [?]. And I tell them the same thing to them, I say bunch of idiots, you know. So then I said, well, what am I gonna do now? I went to one guy, but they name, Mr, Mr. Beach. He had an unemployment office, some part in downtown L.A., on Second Street, I think or Broadway. He said I have a job for you. Dishwasher? He say no I have a place they called Los Cuates cafe, in East Hollywood. I said, okay. So I went over there to Hollywood and Sunset Boulevard and near near Carson. And yes, there was a place named Los Cuates cafe. Two Mexicans. They were cuates, twin brothers from Guadalajara I understand, good looking guys, but they were owners. One sold the other one out and so one guy became the owner. But still the name stay Los Cuates cafe. He was married to one of the ex-producers wives in Hollywood. Anyway, but. He said, he said are you willing to work? Yeah I am willing to work. What do you know? What do you know about this? Nothing. I don't know nothing. But give me a chance. Listen, if you don't like the way it work, he- I'll give me a whole week, you know? Don't, you have to pay me. Just, just give me something to eat and that's it. Look, you don't have to pay me, if you don't like it. I work one week, without any pay. And at the end of the week said, oh Jose,

you're hired. Be here next week on Monday or whatever, you know. Okay. So the three week I earn, I think \$3.50. But there's nothing to worry about, I was living in my my brother's house anyway. So from Sunset and Carson to go to Western and Jefferson, it's a long drive. It's a long, you know, if you miss it, if you miss your bus, then there's no more bus until next day. See, there had to be at least 11:00 to get the red car to go downtown, downtown to get the, J car to go to Western and, you know, Adams and Western Jefferson. Twice. Twice or three times, I missed that darned red car. What did I do? I walk. And those three times the police get me. The police they say hey, what are you doing? Well, coming from work. Where you work? I, my my broken English, I work and I gave them the card, I said this is where I work. And they just, you know, my boss my, he is my boss. He said come on, son. Gave me a ride, from Sunset, Sunset and Western all, all the way down to almost to the house.

Antonio Vasquez [00:41:36] They gave, the police gave you a ride?

Jose M. Ramirez [00:41:37] Gave me a ride. The police gave me a ride. I said okay, and they three times they gave me a ride. So I I am very grateful to the police. They never harass me, they never did, they never did me any any harm or insulted me or anything. And I couldn't be any worse than any other Mexican because I couldn't speak English at that time. So I I was very, very lucky in that respect. And I work with these people, until 19... 49. I think. Or 50. Or 51, somewhere, well, no. 49 because when I left, there was a there was a some kind of a bad part on this, the the to the restaurant something happened that the, his brother, one of the twins, we had some, they had some kind of a group from Mexico. Movie stars or whatever, they came to to the Million Dollar Theater and perform. And they were known to these people, to these twins. So the guy thought, hey, hey since since already late, let's go eat to my brothers at my my brothers. Sure. Well, they were a lot of people, eating. Well, when when they were getting ready to leave, the the guy, they know how to ask him say, well, how are you going to gonna pay, you know? So, so the guy, was big huge Mexican, he must have been seven feet high, he said what do you mean pay? You invite us didn't you? Well, I invite you here because you're the only place open right now but you know, but not because you're going to get something for free. The, the twins I went to [?] were six footers, you know, but this guy was a little foot bigger than this. So somehow the cuss each other for that, and that the the twins was already half drunk. Somehow he has put, he has he has in his pocket and that guy hit him straight like this on his forehead and the guy drop dead. Flat on his back and crack his skull.

Antonio Vasquez [00:44:05] Ooh.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:44:05] That's from from. From that day on, the guy was in the hospital almost a year, unconscious. And that cost them cost his brother every day, you know, the hospital. Even though before that happened, this this restaurant was making so good that the bar that the restaurant across them, they they had a ad on on the on the outside that said "All

you can eat for a dollar something", dollar something, all you can eat. And they still didn't sell enough. The twin, the Cuates cafe, they start at about four. They start open at 4:00 in the evening, and they had a line already, bout two blo- two blocks long. And there was nothing but work until 11 o'clock.

Antonio Vasquez [00:45:03] Wow.

Jose M. Ramirez [00:45:03] That's way I was late couple of time, two or three times. It was nothing but but work, work, work. And what did they serve? Tacos, enchiladas very, very small the item that steak, or or steak picado, you know the steak picado, but the enchiladas and tacos and tamales, that was the main dish.

Antonio Vasquez [00:45:23] [00:45:23][And it was a lot of business]. [0.0s]

Jose M. Ramirez [00:45:23] And it did a lot of business and that they [?] cost them almost \$5, that included salad and wi- and a little bit of the wine and all that, \$4, or was it 4, \$5 something. They, they were making very good money. The other guys at the, at the other restaurant, they hardly get anybody. But all this time they made all this money. I would work on on on the dining room. I would, I would mop. And then, and then, and then, and then wax it by knee. So that the tables, the the the room, the floor was spotless, that everything's spotless, and then I, after that I would go and help the cook for the cooking and the. And then wash the dishes, the pots and all that. So that, the people were very happy with me.

Antonio Vasquez [00:46:31] [inaudible].

Jose M. Ramirez [00:46:31] I did most. In in in fact, at the end, almost at the end, they when I they find out that I was missing my bus, they say listen oh