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Anthony Victoria [00:00:03] If you don't mind, can you repeat kind of like what you were saying earlier about your family's roots, de donde son and all that.

Raul Raya [00:00:12] Oh they're from... my uncle is from Leon, Guanajuato. My aunt is from Guanajuato, Guanajuato, that would be the capital of Guanajuato. And they knew each other in Irapuato because they moved to Irapuato when they were... well, my great grandmother took my aunt to Irapuato, so that's where they met their selves there. My uncle used to deliver potatoes, all over the from Leon to different states. So that's how they lived in the... they call mercados. So, you know, like a big markets, and open markets. Anyway, that's where they meet.

Anthony Victoria [00:00:55] And in Guanajuato they have a lot of potato farms? Is that why they would...

Raul Raya [00:01:01] No, Guanajuato doesn't have no farms. Irapuato does have a lot of farms and is known by its strawberries.

Anthony Victoria [00:01:06] Oh Okay.

Raul Raya [00:01:06] That's the way they know Irapuato, there's a lot of strawberries all over, around.

Anthony Victoria [00:01:14] And when did your parents come here to the United States? When did they come here to San Bernardino?

Raul Raya [00:01:18] Well, they came here... they came here...

Anthony Victoria [00:01:21] Or your relatives I should say.

Raul Raya [00:01:22] Yeah but they're my... but they're my folks, to be honest, because they... they raised me. What year did they came? No that was a long time. I don't remember right now the date.

Anthony Victoria [00:01:32] Thats Okay.

Lydia Raya [00:01:33] I had the green card, but... (laughs)

Raul Raya [00:01:38] Next time we bring it here. Yeah, but no its been a long... They only paid when they came inside to this country. You could not... you only pay there at the line. It wasn't that you get papers, they charge him so much.

Anthony Victoria [00:01:53] It was different than what it is today?

Raul Raya [00:01:55] Oh yes, a lot of difference. So that's the reason they came, you know the both of them... they came over here. Me, I've been here since they brought me back from Mexico. Also from Irapuato, they brought me when I was six years old.

Anthony Victoria [00:02:10] So I know you have all these great photos of you know (indistict). Sorry it's loud. You have these photos of your family, your beautiful...

Raul Raya [00:02:20] It shows a family, its all part of the... The store has been 76 years open. Myself, the reason I'm here, because they raised me just like one of the boys, but there was only three of us to put it. There was my Uncle Carlos and my Aunt Jenny and another aunt that she passed away already, Virginia, and myself. But it was only me and my cousin Carlos, my Uncle Carlos, I call him. We're the only ones that were the boys from the family here, and my aunt Jenny, because my aunt, Virginia, had left the house very young, so she was never around so... but my Uncle Andres, and my Aunt Pascuala, they're... they sacrificed a lot for the store. When they bought it was from here to there, half of what it is now. And they built this one later on. So...

Anthony Victoria [00:03:20] So how long has this store been here, like the way it is now?

Raul Raya [00:03:24] 76 years.

Anthony Victoria [00:03:26] 76 years.

Raul Raya [00:03:27] The only thing we have changed, we moved... we had a different... shelves here all the way, you know... where we had the bread and all that different so... But the store has been the same for all those years. The only problem is that I have not changed it because the city want me to put in a new coat, and for me to put a new coat, it would take us, quite a bit of money. So that's why we run it the same way so that they won't bother us that way so...

Anthony Victoria [00:04:01] Yeah, and how has the city been like. And, like, you know, over all these years? I know we talked about this quite a bit a year or two ago but... Whats the ...

Raul Raya [00:04:10] Well the city has been the... before it used to be, to me, the city was doing good when we had the air... The air base here. We had the Santa Fe working. Almost most of the people were working there. All those people that the Santa Fe had working, they had credit here. The family would come for the grocery, but the store had... I mean it was packed with everything, and it was all products that everybody would use. This little box here, it used to be books and the people that were... that came to buy their groceries, but to pick up their groceries and then they would pay when they got paid. But it was all full of... books. A lot of them, believe it or not, but they did some of them once they started moving out, they never came back and paid. But that's, that was part of the... in those years it was not like today. I mean, right now you have to watch who you even, try to trust. But in those days I think everybody was more... more trust, and the people, they respected each other more than what it is now.

Anthony Victoria [00:05:43] yeah, Different times.

Raul Raya [00:05:43] Different times, it changed a lot from the rail tracks to the other side, where the freeway is at, all those were houses. At the same time, there were more white people on that side of the rail tracks. From the rail tracks to this side was the west side and most Mexicans and black people, we were living here.

Anthony Victoria [00:06:06] So tell me a little bit about these photos, if you don't mind. I know you're pointing out that in some of these it's your primo.

Raul Raya [00:06:12] Yeah. Well, my my primo, since I was raised here and I was one of them, I called everybody aunt and uncle because that's why sometimes it gets confused for people. But the only ones that are original is my uncle Andres and my aunt Pascuala. Those are my folks, I call them folks because they're the ones that raised me. My cousin, I also call him uncle because I was just brought up that way in my mind that everybody was my uncle. But, you know, I try to explain to people, they are... well actually we are like brothers.

Anthony Victoria [00:06:52] Yeah.

Raul Raya [00:06:54] That's why it is.

Anthony Victoria [00:06:55] Yes. Yeah. I like my dad. For example, my dad, he was raised by my great grandma. So a lot of his uncles are actually his, quote on quote brothers.

Raul Raya [00:07:05] Right.

Anthony Victoria [00:07:06] You know, it's just the way it is sometimes.

Raul Raya [00:07:07] Well, that's more in the Mexicans, way of raising you up to the culture that we've had in those years, so you respect. If I was a youngest, I had to respect every one of my cousin who was a little older than I was. Actually, he was just coming out of the Korean War when I arrived here. So that's, you know, that's a lot of years that. Well, he did put a lot of years in when the service, you know, but.

Anthony Victoria [00:07:40] How, how old were you when you're uncle or when your brother or your uncle was in the service? When your family was?

Raul Raya [00:07:44] Well, that's when I came in. Six years old, actually. So I've been here for all of my life. I have not gone to... the only times I've been to Mexico is when my real mom died, my dad, and one of my brothers. That's that three times I've been in Mexico, but most of my life has been here on this side. I was raised... I came in with actually already with my credentials were already for residents and I came as a student because that's the way the, you know, it was done as a student. And believe it or not, in those years immigration will check on the people. They came here after, you know, after a couple of weeks, I guess, when I was supposed to be here, I was supposed to be in school, but my aunts were trying to tell me No, let em. Don't put em right away. Let him, be with the kids here, so maybe he will get adjust to it. Immigration told them "no, that boy had to be in school". (laughs) That's why they tell them and they did, they put me right away in school.

Anthony Victoria [00:09:04] So what's schools did you go to?

Raul Raya [00:09:06] I went to Harding school. Harding school was my grammar school. Grammar school. And that was here on F Street. Right close to there used to be the YMCA in the corner there fifth, and F.

Anthony Victoria [00:09:19] and it's not there anymore?

Raul Raya [00:09:20] No, it's, they've made it into a home for older people and like.

Anthony Victoria [00:09:27] oh a Senior home

Raul Raya [00:09:27] Senior home, that's what it was.

Anthony Victoria [00:09:28] Okay.

Raul Raya [00:09:29] That's what it was. And they made that school, actually a senior home to the building. And, and, they took, had anyone close it down.

Anthony Victoria [00:09:36] So it's kind of close to where Saint Bernard is.

Raul Raya [00:09:39] Right there, right next to almost and right across each other and then I went to Sturges. That was a junior high school, but I only went to the seventh grade. In those years, you didn't need to have that much education because my aunts were really upset because "why didnt you let me go, go to work someplace" and you know. Well, and she used to get upset because "Don't you have enough work here"? Because I did have a lot of work, I used to be the one to put all this stuff on the shelves, in those years we used to have all the bottles of sodas. They used to come in glass. We we had to put all the bottles in the regular cases, you know. So I did have work to do, but I just wanted to... I never seen any money, maybe that's why (laughs). And it wasn't because I, I didn't expect money. But I did want to you know, have some. And I started working when it was \$0.65 an hour and I was picking apricots up. That's right. That's what I when I started just going on the field, of course, I, I had it changed after a while. I went to construction and I ended up being a chef for 50 years.

Anthony Victoria [00:11:02] Oh, wow. A chef?

Raul Raya [00:11:04] A chef

Raul Raya [00:11:04] What did you cook?

Raul Raya [00:11:07] Anything (laughs). But I started as a breakfast cook. The build up, it was a coffee shop right here on SambosPancake House. They built a place there, and I, I brought my, my color board, and they didn't let me go to work on the construction right away, so but I didn't. I just wanted to work. And I apply there as a dishwasher and from there, a coffee shop. I became one of the cook, one of the cooks for the Sambos that became a trainer for training cooks. They sent me to Vegas. Vegas was a different process for me. And, I met a lady that her mom was had to do with the New Frontier. They was open and she was a friend of that chef there. And the lady told me, you know, why don't you...why don't you just learn something else instead of just being a a breakfast cook, you know, a coffee shop cook. So she introduce me to the chef of the new frontier. They start me from scratch but I became one. And that's that's how I end up working in just hotels. I work in Palm Springs, the Riviera Hotel for nine years. I went to where the Ocotill Lodge, I had, I had several hotels where I was involved. And, my last one was at the...

Lydia Raya [00:12:56] Indian Wells.

Anthony Victoria [00:12:57] Indian Wells, that's right Indian Wells. There was, vintage.

Lydia Raya [00:13:02] Vintage.

Anthony Victoria [00:13:02] Vintage? Yeah. The vintage club for fire control for five years.

Anthony Victoria [00:13:07] And what was your role at the hotels?

Raul Raya [00:13:11] In the hotels, I always became the... in the Riviera, I was the chef for the banquets. Okay. And the other ones, I was the chef for the Ocotill Lodge. I was the chef for the whole process uh, at the Vintage. I was a third cook. That what we call third cook. Like, you got the sous chef. Well, actually, you got a second chef first, and then the sous chef. And then the second cook would be the one that does all the cooking.

Anthony Victoria [00:13:40] Wow

Raul Raya [00:13:43] Oh, yeah, there's a lot, there's a lot of history, but I don't... I never talk about it.

Anthony Victoria [00:13:48] Well, I'm glad you're sharing it because... It also doesn't... well, it's no surprise now why people love your menudo.

Raul Raya [00:13:58] Well.

Anthony Victoria [00:13:59] I mean, it's it's a popular thing is what I'm... I'm learning on the west side.

Raul Raya [00:14:03] Well, I, we've been calling and they've been calling us when I'm going to start back to cook menudo for the people . And I tell her, you know what I said? Maybe we'll start from the house, maybe I, because I have a... I built a kitchen there for myself because I used to do cater. After I got away from the big kitchens, I started doing cater for myself here at the house. So I built a little kitchen. They have there they could do everything, so.

Anthony Victoria [00:14:36] that's nice.

Raul Raya [00:14:38] Here in San Bernardino, I cooked for the mayor of the San Bernardino. That's quite a few years back.

Anthony Victoria [00:14:45] Which mayor was it? Do you remember?

Raul Raya [00:14:46] I dont

Lydia Raya [00:14:46] It was a lady

Raul Raya [00:14:47] Yeah. That lady.

Anthony Victoria [00:14:49] Was it Valles?

Raul Raya [00:14:49] Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I think Valles.

Anthony Victoria [00:14:52] oh okay.

Raul Raya [00:14:52] I like where they made her a party, and I was one the chef to do it. I the owner for the queens. They used to be a sandwich place that guy was catering in the kitchen. They knew that there was free that could help them out for catering. So the first...Anyway, I got involved with it. I went in to do a cater for him for 500...for 500 people.

From those 500 people. The guy that made the party is a real estate guy. I forgot his name. But anyway, he made another party for a thousand people. That's when I told him, no, I cannot do that type of... I need extra, and we need another executive chef because you want different kitchens. He wanted, He was placing all his, employees.

Anthony Victoria [00:15:54] That's a lot of people.

Raul Raya [00:15:55] Oh, well. And especially when you have all these different kitchens, I. There's no way I could. So we can track, a chef from LA. That was his second to help him out and everything, but it came out that, that guy. Believe it or not that guy help Richie. His name is Richie. Richie Salas. Anyway, so he help him out to buy...and actually, I don't know whether he bought it or he put it on his hands. Cassius Cleaver, I believe that was Cassius Cleaver from the city from before, Ontario in between Ontario and Fontana, I believe.

Anthony Victoria [00:16:55] Rancho Cucamonga?

Raul Raya [00:16:56] Yeah.

Anthony Victoria [00:16:56] Okay, gotcha.

Raul Raya [00:16:57] They used to be the place there it was known by prime rib, many, many people. It was there for many years. A lot of people... That was before even my times. The place was there and Foothill used to be the main. The main street to go all the way to Palm Springs. So that place was every... most of the movie stars that would go to Palm Springs, they would stop there to eat some prime rib. It was... It was German people, that owned it.

Anthony Victoria [00:17:34] I'm hungry now Mr. Raya.

Lydia Raya [00:17:37] How many crime rates you had time?

Raul Raya [00:17:39] Well, in those years, they they cook quite a few prime rib, those people. But like in the Riviera Hotel, it was known by most of the big companies. They would have their parties there. It was a 500 rooms in that hotel... it's still there. But it was 500 rooms and believe it or not, the executive chef they came in because they have different... It's like a chef already working. But German people, they're... they're the ones that run that one. They knew how to run all these caterers because we had caters to... The biggest was the Coca Cola for 10,000 people. Different... different people that would come in, breakfast, lunch and dinner. They have all those people there. That was the biggest I have ever worked. Not me... not me Only but it was, I mean, we had...

Anthony Victoria [00:18:41] But you're the the chef here.

Raul Raya [00:18:42] Well, for banquets. Yes.

Anthony Victoria [00:18:45] Yeah.

Raul Raya [00:18:45] And the second chef would be the... well they knew how to run it. Yeah, we had... we had a room for 2000 people that could carry 2000 people. It's still there. And then we had another kitchen. They were... Then we had, rotate oven that we

can put 35 primeribs into it...it rotates, you know. And then myself and the second cook, we were the mostly the ones in charge for all that stuff. But I was young.

Anthony Victoria [00:19:23] So I have a question. So when you were doing this, you were also helping run the store, to my understanding, right? Or at that point... yeah.

Raul Raya [00:19:31] After I left, I always came here all the time because I... I drove back and forth to Palm Springs almost 20 years. That's what I last over there... 20 years in Palm Springs. That was, going back and forth. Why? I still don't know why I couldn't go to Palm Springs because we came from Vegas. And the first thing when we came back from Vegas, she said, "Desert again?" because I told her we were going to go to a Palm Springs because I said thats desert... see what used to be all desert. Now it's just it's a whole different city. It's a whole different process now. So that's what it was when I started there I... you could see it was only two streets, Palm Canyon and Indian Avenue. Palm Canyon will go in, but you can come through there too. And Indian just used to be the other way going out of Palm Springs to the to the freeway Ten Street.