

A People's History of the I.E.: Live from the Frontline Collection 2024.006

Interview Summary

Item Number: 2024.006.008

File Name: 2024.006.008 Oscar Colunga Interview

Interviewee:

Oscar Colunga

Interviewer:

Audrey Maier

Interview Date:

February 10, 2024

Interview Location:

Solvang, CA

Interview Summary completed by:

- Delilah Solis, 2024

Description:

Oscar Colunga shares his life story, starting from his birth during an unexpected snowstorm in San Bernardino, California in 1949. He delves into his family history, especially his parents' life after the Second World War and their emigration to South Colton. He describes his childhood in a Mexican American neighborhood and the culture and society of the 1950s and 1960s. He reflects on his school days, recreational activities, and integration, especially during high school, and his participation in different activities outside school. He addresses aspects of his relatives work in the Colton Cement Plant (California Portland), the explosions at the mines he could hear and see from his house, and the ways the dust got into everything and worsened the air quality. Colunga makes keen points about the ways the dust caused health problems among family members, and the respiratory issues they faced. Colunga also talks about the progression of his career, resulting in his decision to move to Solvang, CA. Looking back at the changes in the decades he has been away, he explains how he wants to retire back to his hometown.

Subject Topic:

- Mexican American History
- Education
- Social Participation
- School Segregation

- World War II
- Mexican Immigration
- Mexican American Families
- Neighborhood Development
- Social Participation
- Local Businesses
- Inland Empire AIDS Project (IAP)

Key Events:

Local or national events discussed. Use bullet points

- WWII
- School Integration

Key Organizations:

- Colton High School
- Hydro Conduit
- Redlands High School
- Woodrow Wilson Elementary School
- Ulysses Grant Elementary School

Spatial Coverage:

Add general locations (street names, cities, areas, etc.) and addresses – use newspaper searches & google searches to find addresses when possible (but note source)

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Colton High School	777 West Valley Blvd, Colton, CA 92324
Vagabond Inn	2000 Ostrems Way, San Bernardino, CA
South Colton	Colton, CA
North Colton	Colton, CA
	Solvang, CA
Etiwanda, CA	Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91739
Highgrove	Highgrove, CA 92507
	Rialto, CA
	San Bernardino, CA
	Redlands, CA
Sylvan Park	601 N University St, Redlands, CA 92374
	Bloomington, CA
	Riverside, CA

	Grand Terrace, CA
	Fontana, CA
	Loma Linda, CA
The Old Hermosa Cemetery	900 N Meridian Ave, Colton, CA 92324
Redlands High School	840 E Citrus Ave, Redlands, CA 92374
Redlands Daily Facts	700 Brookside Ave, Redlands, CA 92373
San Bernardino City Hall	300 North D Street, San Bernardino, CA 92418
San Bernardino Valley College	701 S Mt Vernon Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92410
San Bernardino City Unified School District	777 North F Street, San Bernardino, CA 92410
Inland Empire Heart Center at Saint Bernardine	2101 N Waterman Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92404, United States
Mount Slover	Colton, CA

Temporal Coverage:

1940s-present

Related Materials:

- California State University San Bernardino's South Colton Oral History Collection
- Colunga Photographs in collection 2023.016

Comments:

Oscar Colunga's interview provides a deep look into the lives of Mexican American families in Southern California during the mid-20th century. The interview focuses on the importance of community and blending cultures, bringing attention to both individual and shared experiences during times of big social changes. His tales of school, family, and community involvement paint a picture of larger historical patterns.

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital video		
Digital video		

Digital video		
Digital video		
Digital video		
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Full interview transcript can be found below.

Audrey Maier [00:00:00] Okay, so today is February 10th, 2024.

Oscar Colunga [00:00:07] It is.

Audrey Maier [00:00:09] I'm here with Oscar Colunga in his home in Solvang, California, and my name is Audrey Maier. So let's start first by just having. Why don't you just introduce yourself to someone? Pretend like it's someone you're meeting for the first time?

Oscar Colunga [00:00:25] Well. Hello here. My name is Oscar Colunga, originally from Colton, California, and haven't totally relocated, but been living here in, the city of Solvang, California. Planned, in my retirement. And to relocate back to Colton, Redlands, Loma Linda area, where I grew up and, the better part of my life. About 30 years. 35 40 years. There. But, decided, make a move, career wise, and live here in Solvang.

Audrey Maier [00:01:18] Awesome. That's perfect. And you can look at me. You don't have to look right at the camera because I set up the camera. So if you're looking at me, it feels like you're looking at the camera. Just so. It feels like it's more comfortable to talk. Okay. So let's first start with when you were born. And if you can tell me a little bit about your parents.

Oscar Colunga [00:01:37] Well. My parents Victoria and Narciso. Narciso my father was born in Cucamonga, California, which is in time has changed to Rancho Cucamonga. But, the family, actually relocated to Etiwanda. Which is right next door to Cucamonga. And, my mother was born in, Bluewater, New Mexico, on the. In a train in a boxcar. My grandfather worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad. He was a, a laid man, a foreman with the railroad. And so he was given a, boxcar, with, stove and living quarters for his family. And my aunts and uncles were as they moved from, from Texas all the way to California. Each of the, my, my, aunts and one uncle were born along the way as the track was being laid. And they eventually, ended up, in High Grove, California. And from there, the, the train continued on to the track and, construction continued on into Los Angeles. But my grandfather had decided that, he was working on some projects for him, that this is where they were going to settle. And then they eventually moved to Colton, California, where the family grew up. And, they all were, were raised there, as children and, you know, went to school there, Colton High, which is. It was a great school, and I think it still is. I haven't been there in a long time. And. My father, same thing with the family. Relocated to Fontana. And then from there, some of them stayed in the in the Fontana, Bloomington

area. Others moved on to Colton. That's where he met my mother before. Well, that was after World War Two, when my father was, had finished his military service in, in the Pacific. And they they met there and they married and, of course, established a family and a home and continued their their work there. So it's. And I. My aunts and uncles, a lot of them did move into Colton at the time. There was opportunities for work and, nice school for my cousins, myself, my siblings. And. So it was a. And there was a local, valley, community college, junior college, as they call them. Nearby. So there was opportunities for further education for those that wanted to further expand. Their education. I myself, met my wife, Sandra, then, in Colton and, she was in a parochial school there. I was in a public school, but we, met up when the, in the middle school or junior high school? Colton junior high? Yes. And. Didn't know her. But, in high school, it, became a little bit more. Populated from more kids coming from different schools. I originally had gone to a school, Wilson School in South Colton and which is was kind of segregated in, the Mexican part of town. South Colton, they called it. And, then we from my family, moved to North Colton went to, mixed, elementary school, U.S. grant school, or... Had a different. Different outlook and people and education and culture. And I think. Both sides found the same thing where. It kind of melted. But as children, we really didn't. Recognize it or know it. There was no distinction between one or the other at that time. This was in the late 50s. Early 60s. It was interesting in the in the middle school or junior high school where we all started to, get a little inquisitive. About each other and made friends a little stronger friends with both the, Anglo white people. The Mexican people. So we became a little bit more, as a community of school community. Friends and, but there was no distinction between one or the other. And I think the families. The adults saw that also that everything was going fine, everything was good. And in high school, the same thing. It was a, very. Nice, easy, peaceful community. And of course, there were. You know, clubs or not clubs, so much rouns I guess, at the time of individuals. And But they had it was a purpose or an interest that they had either surfing or literature and education. Or athletics, sports or drama. And so there was a mix of a lot of different interests and groups that kind of moved in that direction. But then we all kind of start to meld and merge into each other. And. So I think at that point we became all interested in other people's interest. And activities, and it was kind of fun. It was fun. It was challenging. Education. You have to keep your grades up. Work hard to at least maintain, B or a C plus average in order to continue in your activities of choice. Photography. Sports, whatever. It was drama, and it was fun. But in order to do that, you had to, the requirement was you had to keep a, a grade level up to par in order to maintain that activity. So your schoolwork wasn't hampered by just going out and doing this. You had to, you know, do the. Do the work. And also learn your activity drama, art, photography, sports, whatever it was. And of course, there were the surfer boys. We weren't that far from from the ocean, 45 miles. So we had the surfers. We had the ruisers, the car club. But there were no at that point at that time. There were no gangs as. We know them now. They were clubs and the clubs, of course, being young teenagers and, we'd like to. You know, get together and go to activities, have dances or go to dances. And they would kind of have their little groups of people. But everybody knew everyone. It was a small community. So how can you not know all these kids you've been going to school with for so many years It was fun, but it was. In some. In some cases, maybe a little intimidating because it says, oh, they're, the intellectuals or they're the sports guys. You know. Or they're the club guys. The car. The car club. You know. And they're. You know. Their so tied into each other. But in a social setting. Everybody was the same. It was, lunch time at school, activities. We all went to the same classes. We had same classes and, you know, history, mathematics, social sciences, whatever. You know, all the, and there was the language clubs, too. The French club, the Spanish club, you know, and those, I think were the top two big ones. There wasn't, so much in German or any of the other languages that are now, but, but we all knew each other and we had, activities that

would promote. These activities for the school. And what are the for the kids in school to let them know, you know what's the opportunities here? What you need to do, you know, what's your activity level but still maintain your your class grades. You know, to do that. So it was a, it was an interesting time. It was a fun time.

Audrey Maier [00:12:31] That's. Wow. You went right into, like, all of school, which is perfect. Can we actually. I'll have you travel back a little bit farther back in time. Where were you? What was your first house that you lived in because you were born in Colton? But then what? Where did you live when you were first born and then when you were growing up?

Oscar Colunga [00:12:52] Well, I remember, the first house that we lived in. It was in South Colton. However the story or my history is being born in January. January 8th, 1949. Living in Colton. But there was no hospitals for delivery there. We did have two doctors there in their office, but I was being, you know, my mother went into labor. And interesting that being in Southern California. Rarely snows there. But the hospital was in San Bernardino, San Bernardino Community Hospital, more on the northern side of San Bernardino. And, my parents said or my father would say I have to drive in the snow to get to the hospital. Well, I'm thinking, oh, boy, that was a cold day. A cold day in January and cold in San Bernardino. Well, the snow, you know, we think of snow as being big, but, you know, it was a dusting of snow [??]. There was snow on the ground. There was snow. But, it's not like the piles of snow that we know of in the Midwest or East Coast. But it was a cold, snowy day when I was born. Interesting. And, but the house was in South Colton. I can't remember the street, it was on. I know the location. I've seen it. And we were just behind. There was a corner grocery store right on the corner, and then we lived behind that. We had a little property, a little house, wooden house, wooden stairs. It was a wooden porch. And, there was kind of a, collection yard. Some people call it, junkyard, but. It was collecting metal, after World War two because of all the metal that was being used on warships and, and, war and. Arms and everything, rubber and metal were precious. So they would send trucks around for anybody that had, you know, accumulated all this. And, there was a yard right, right behind our house that people would leave things, tire rams, mattresses. Old beds that were made out of metal, any metal things. Pots and pans that were, of no use any longer. And rubber, old tires and they would be collected and, it was kind of interesting. We were just little kids and, seeing them and everybody was friendly with. You know, it was an interesting thing to see a truck come by, honk your horn, and everybody hey hey hey hey. You know. Get all excited. But, not much goes on in Colton. That was a fun activity. I saw them, you know, and but, the house itself was very. It wasn't small. That I know of. Had a kitchen, had a living room, had two bedrooms, an indoor bathroom, which was good. Indoor plumbing. Yes. And. Had three brothers at the time there, and. We all there was. We had a pet dog, a cat. There's a tree out front, sidewalks in the neighbors. We all knew each other, as kids. Colton's a small at the time, was very small community. So everyone knew everyone. The families knew each other. The children knew each other. We all knew each other. Cousins, a lot of them from one family or the other. And of course, growing up and then going to school together and, you know, the middle school or junior high school, then the high school. So everyone knew everyone from the time we were small. And. But the house itself was interesting. Everything made out of wood, the floors, it wasn't, hardly insulated, that I know, it was comfortable for us that I can remember. And it was close to town, you know, Colton was a very small community. So we had corner grocery stores. There weren't the Supermarkets. There was one right next door to us. Right in front of us was one. And across the street was another one. And there was a small bakery across the street. And on the other side of the street was a restaurant bar nightclub. Type of, thing. El Sombrero, which was a very

popular place, for the adults, especially on the weekends. My father worked at the hydro conduit or Colton cement. They made, irrigation pipes out of concrete. And. So he was a laborer, hard work. The other men worked on, either on Mount Slover at the cement, the, the mountain. Some worked as mechanics, others in fields. Orchards or ranches. Cooley Ranch was nearby. There were several dairies close by. So it was a, working town. But on the weekends. Whoo hoo! It was. As I remember, I was just small, and my parents would get really dressed up. Really nice. My father had a suit, tie, nice slacks, my mother, nice dress, hair all made up. Nails, painted, earrings, lips, everything. And their like, oh, there says, well, we're going to the dance. And. It was a wild place for - they were young. Got to remember, they. Were young adults raising young children. So weekends they, they, they had they needed their time. And, we stayed alone. My brothers. My three brothers and I. No television at the time, we didn't have a television, had a radio. But I remember the first television, which we'll come to. Shortly, but. Everyone and people came from other towns to this El Sombrero nightclub. Its the only one around that I know of at the time. But they came from Fontana and Bloomington, Redlands, Loma Linda. They were all laborers, in the orchards and the farms and the dairies and the chicken ranches. Wherever. So. You know, their Saturday night was a time to have their time, and Sunday morning was, those who could make it to mass or to the church, they had, they could make it. Others would and, I don't know, but. It was an interesting time. It was a fun time. And, we didn't have to worry about staying home alone. It was, you know, with no TV. You know, only a radio. And the radio only had a couple of stations. And it wasn't all this rock and roll music or. Yeah, you'd listen to something, and then you'd get tired of it. And so we'd start banging on each other. Just running around and playing and doing things or playing some kind of games in the house. Eventually fall asleep. I don't know when my parents would get home. Wake up in the morning and they're there. So, it was, it was interesting.

Audrey Maier [00:21:56] Since you were, actually in this bit since you were talking about, grandma and grandpa. Can you actually. Well, my great grandma and grandpa. Your parents. How did do you know how they met? And, how they got married?

Oscar Colunga [00:22:15] My mother and father. My father had come home after World War two, and he had taken leave once, before he left for for the Pacific. There was photos of him, but they didn't know each other at the time. But my mother worked at, at the Norton airbase at the time, repairing a lot of the women did repairs on airplanes, the military fighter planes that were banged up but not shot down, but they needed repair, so they would. From the Pacific, from the Philippines, across the Pacific to San Bernardino where it's close. Some went to Long Beach. Others came to San Bernardino. Some went to March Field in Riverside. But my mother and her sisters and other women were working to repair the planes to get them back into service. But my mother and father did me[??] until after the war. And they dated, how they met and where they met. I don't know, it may have been at a dance at El Sombrero. I don't know, but I know that my aunts and my mother would love dressing up and going. I mean, what kind of activities do people have when you don't have TVs and you're working Monday through Friday? Long hours. You're tired. When you come home, you can barely fix a meal. Every would help. Our grandparents would help out. Anyone that wasn't working could help. Watch children. It was a community type thing. And they him, they may have met there. I don't know, I they both have expired. They both have died. I never did ask him how they met, but. I remember them being very classy, very neat and very handsome and beautiful. I mean, for their young. You know, course saying[??], as we get older we age a bit. But. And they did elope. My grandparents. My my my mother's parents. My grandparents. My mother's side had to elope from Mexico. They went to Texas to get married because the family wasn't approved and they were very young. I don't know if that was a something in the family, but you got to

remember that it was strict. Mexican families that, and a lot of the families, the Italians, my father, when he was growing up in Ettiwanda Cucamonga, lived among the Italian immigrants and some of the French that came over at the time. His parents came over from Spain, and I think they kind of. Had a caravan or some thing that they all, not all of them, but they kind of met ended up, as a mixed culture, French, Italians, Mexicans, Spanish. My father's family came from Spain and worked in the fields, but, so the culture was strict. And who's going to marry who? And, you know, they didn't approve. No, you're not marrying them. But if they wanted to, they can elope in the middle of the night and move. And my parents eloped and went to Yuma, Arizona and got married. And, the rest is history. They came back and the families accepted it. It was the way it is. And. But they worked hard. They raised a family. And there was no distinction between the. I think most families did not always approve. I think it's the same thing still going on. People don't always approve of you know, my daughter marrying this man or my son marrying that girl. But it was drastic at the time. It was very strict. So in order to really get married. And they got married at a young age, teenagers, which was common at the time. In order to. I'm not going to have them pick who I'm marrying. I want to marry who I want, who I love, who I want to be with. So in the middle of the night, people would elope. And, before was maybe on horseback and buggy. Now, then it was in cars. And, you know, they. Of course, knew what to face when they came back home. They had to face each other's families, that the families had to make amends and say, okay. You know, we we need to get together and work this out and make it work. And they did. So it was all good.

Audrey Maier [00:27:53] Wow, I can't that seems like the whole thing has to go all the way into Yuma, Arizona to get married. I, I could you. How much do you know about grandpa Colunga's like military service. Like what branch he served in and where he was stationed during, the war.

Oscar Colunga [00:28:16] Well, as he tells me. He volunteered. He joined the Army. And, he was, moved or he was assigned to the first Calvary. Fort Bliss. And, they train with horses and mules, and they had the old puffy pants and the long lace up boots and the old hats. And you got to remember that the Army, because in the first calvary and the calvary from the western days was on horses and mules to pack in supplies. And the soldiers rode horses. They had no jeeps. No tanks of trucks. At the time. And so that tradition has been living on for the the Army, the U.S. Army. And so he trained with them. But then when the war escalated and they had to go and the Japanese were fighting in the Pacific, taking over territories, all the Islands in the South Pacific and the Philippines and, and Japan was, the the place where, you know, they were going to accumulate all this property in these territories and make, make the empire bigger for Japan. So, of course they were it was an international. There was a war going on in Europe with the Germans. Germans were doing the same thing. They were attacking and, trying to take over France and England and, you know, all these other countries. So of course, the Army started from the bottom, going down to the South Pacific, off of Australia to New Guinea, the New Guinea Islands. And it was all jungle warfare. So, they did have some jeeps at the time and trucks, but they were also getting bogged down in the jungle and the rain. It was constant rain I hear. [It was cold. And the mud.][??] And the hills and everything. So they they have to go back and use. Not totally[??], but they had to bring in mules to help carry some of the supplies. But they fought in the jungles, inch by inch, all the way. And. Sorry. It was interesting as a young men in war, they fought their way. And his units in the first Cav. fought from New Guinea. Cleared all the islands of the Japanese, established landing strips, supply depots for the Marines, the Navy, the air force to come in. Well, I don't think the Air Force was established at that time. It was, the Army was flying, you know, their planes in. So as they fought island to island. Scrimmages. Brutal hand-to-hand combat at times. And but my

father made it. He got [zinged] a few times by you know, getting bullets and, things. A lot of his friends were killed along the way. He fought from the New Guinea all the way into the other islands and all the way to the Philippines. Helped liberate the Philippines. And which made a strong hold from there to go into Japan. And, he did have quite a lot of commendations along the way. But a humble man just you know, it was what he did. And what was expected. And he felt the same way in a civilian life that this is expected of you if you have a job, if you have a, project or you have something, you need to do it. So that's that was his philosophy and which is is strong in a way. Some people say, well, it's me, but it's not. I think it's a strength. It's a strength that a person would have to fight and go that far, but also in yourself. Whatever it is your education, your profession, your family. You know you don't give up. You got to go and you got to do it. And he said, you can do it and do it right or don't do it at all. But he did it, and he went all the way through. And, that was his. Military life. I thin, I think most Veterans, especially veterans that have been in combat when their life is there on the line, their buddy gets shot, grenade goes of kills a few, and you're thankful you're still there, but you got to keep going. But what they experience is they don't talk about it. They don't want to talk about it. People, you know, it starts to to work on you. And I think they want to forget it. And they just want to concentrate. I made it. I'm safe. This is what I'm going to do now. He did that with his work, with his family. He was an educated man. Drop. Well, he finished high school, but right after high school, he had to go. He went to Chaffey[??] High School and from there went on and joined the military. So, he thought education was. You don't want to do this, stay in school. Yeah, but if you do, better not get into this, infantry and combat because it wasn't. So I admire him for that. He had, strength. And I just hope that other, you know, sons and daughters recognize if their fathers or grandfathers were in that situation would have respect for what they did, and respect for themselves to follow that courage to continue. My father came back, and, you know, I picked up a lot of sayings from him, which I think he picked up from the nationalities of people that migrated or came to the United States. From Italy, from Germany, from France. You know, prior to all the World War, because, you know, the Italians, the Greeks, the Portuguese. You know, we're all here until World War two. You know, that's when. There was a separation between. Nationalities. I think you know, the Europes. You know, the Germans are the bad people. The Japanese are the bad people. But the people that were here came from those countries. But they're American. So they went to fight. So he learned a lot. A lot of slang, sayings, words, phrases from from them, which he would throw out now and then, you know, working with those boys out there and he throw something out because we weren't doing it right, or, you know, and, I kind of picked some of those up. And I figured, what does that mean? What does that mean? I started looking into it. Oh, that's what he means. You know, that was Italian and that was Greek, you know, whatever[??]. But he learned that from his buddies, his soldier friends, his the unit. You know, then everyone was American. You know, race and the country he came from but, you know, some had accents. My father didn't have, an accent. My mother had a little bit of an accent, but not much. So it was hard to tell you know. Was he Italian? Was he Frenc? Was he, you know, Spanish? You know, there was no detectable accent in him. It was English. And, I remember all my uncles were the same way. And my aunts, I could not detect any type of a Spanish or Mexican type. Now, some did. Maybe because they weren't, you know, quite involved with other cultures. And because we're all come from different countries. There was one language in the United States which came originally from England. And that was English. And so, you know, I think the English accent was lost along the way. But the English as we speak it today continued and stayed. But, those those phrases, those. Comments he would come up with, were foreign to me at the time until I, you know, try to figure out what the heck does he mean or what did he say? You know, so I think he learned from his buddies, you know.

Audrey Maier [00:38:37] Brought it back home.

Oscar Colunga [00:38:38] Yeah.

Audrey Maier [00:38:39] You were talking about the, you know, people who were of Japanese descent or German descent that were in the, you know, U.S. and there were some that were locally, too. Do you know anything about, like the Japanese internment that happened in the area?

Oscar Colunga [00:38:54] Well, there was a, as I understand, there was a small, camp. Most, most Japanese were, you know, American, Japanese that were here prior to World War Two. And so were the Germans when World War. You know, when Japan started or invasion. So you know, Germans were of suspicion even though they had been here for many years before the war. They were suspects, you know, keep them under surveillance. The Japanese, they could tell right away who they were. So they rounded them up and put them in Trenton [??] Camps. But there was a small community, very small community around the, Inland Empire, which were migrant, which were workers. The Japanese were, you know, came over to work the fields in the orchards, as laborers. And there was a, a small camp in the Grand Terrace area. There's, Grand Terrace and Colton. If you're familiar with Colton, it's in the San Bernardino Valley, but there are hills to the east, of Colton, small hills. And which is now High Grove and Grand Terrace area. And there was a small spot on top of a hill going up towards Grand Terrace that a small camp was set there for Japanese during that time. And for the longest time we would call it Jap Hill, because the people at the time, we call it. Well, that's where the Japanese are, the Jap hill. And I don't know, I think some of the older people in Colton still remember where Jap Hill is. Well, now there's a lot of nice houses up there and swimming pools and, you know, and [inaudible] oversees to San Bernardino Valley. So it was a good place to keep them in a tight place. And there was nothing much up there other than orange groves, citrus groves, some farmland. But that was an area that people after the war. World War two. And the camp was, you know, the people were, you know, put back into civilization and on their way and doing what they were supposed to do. A lot of the families would go up there to, picnic on Sunday afternoons. It was a nice location. Flat, sunny. Like I said, you could over, it overlooked the San Bernardino Valley. You can see Colton, the cement mountain, Cajon pass, the San Bernardino mountains. It was a nice area for picnics. So people would go we're going up to Jap Hill to have a picnic. Jap Hill, I was like why'd they call it Jap hill. You know, as a boy, I don't know. Later, I found out why they named it that. So, it's funny.

Audrey Maier [00:42:09] I think we have actually have some pictures from that vista, and it's true. You can really see everything. All of, like, Cooley Ranch.

Oscar Colunga [00:42:14] Yeah.

Audrey Maier [00:42:14] Yeah. Maybe let's talk more about grandpa Colunga. So you mentioned that he worked for Colton Cement with the irrigation. So what was his job? And, like, mom was talking about, like, the pipas or the pipes, like, being, like, in a lot of places in Colton too.

Oscar Colunga [00:42:37] Well, my father, did find work at the, at the. It has changed names. It was hydro conduit originally. Then I think there were other companies took it, Martin Marietta. Or the missile [??] Company took it because they were using a lot of cement. So cement was being used for highways. After World war two, General

Eisenhower became President Eisenhower. So he entered, he, started doing the interstate highway system. So a lot of concrete was being used to do the highways, but they also had to do irrigation for flood control and all kinds of things from rivers, dams, and of course, sewage and so forth. So the material that was being used, which, which was abundant was cement. And that's where the, a lot of the cement, Mount Slover, you know, it's known as Cement Mountain or Mount Slover, real close. So it was lots of cement to be done there. But the cement had to be, the pipes had to be reinforced. Or else that cement would just collapse and break under pressure, because, you know, they're buried underground. And, so they had to make, cages out of, rebar, round. So they had a welding shop and used rebar, and they had a ring, and then they would attach it and make a cylinder out of rebar and put them in to these machines that were kind of a mold, and the mold would come together, and the rebar was in there, and the cement would be shot into it. And these things, they called them the spinners. Because they would spin rapidly. So centripetal force would push that cement to the sides. And because they're encased in this, mold that the cement would go out and they knew exactly how much to put in. So, so much concrete inside the rebar in there on the outside wall, the inside wall. And then they would put them out to dry in, these heaters. And then from the heaters, they would let them out put them out in these fields to cure in the sun. And then they would couple them by using these concrete, couplers or the couplers, which are rings that would fit into the pipe so two pipes could fit in to join them with this coupler. But the coupler didn't have any, metal in it. No, rebar. So those would break. And so the, the, they found that, you know, the pipes were holding, but the ring was breaking and leaking or disintegrating. So they came up with an idea that's using fiberglass because fiberglass is a little bit more flexible. It's sturdy. It's not going to break on you. So they opened, or they established a fiberglass manufacturing shop there at the plant. And my father, you know, volunteered and was selected, I don't know if he was selected or volunteered, but he went to making these fiberglass rings, which was the cloth of the glass cloth with, molten glass. Glass. And they had them in different sizes, and it was like a wheel. Like a bicycle wheel kind of set up. And this wheel would turn and, the cloth would come down, it would wrap it, and then the the glass, the fiberglass would come and coat that. So you had to smooth it out and make it to a certain thickness. Warm, and then it would cut off and then they would, you know, that's what he was doing. Different sizes for the different sized pipes that they were making, small pipes to the large irrigation pipes, to the large flood pipes. And, that was a nasty job. The cement was a nasty job. It was wet. It was dirty, it was smelly. But then the fiberglass. Was fiber. I mean, microfiber, you. Could see it in the sunlight from the window. Just like dust. And it's all glass. And he smoked. My father smoked a lot. So he's sitting there with his goggles with a cigarette and he had gloves on, but his hands would turn orange from the amount of glass that was going through there and his face and. But, it was, it was a nasty job. It was, easy. But he did it like he said, you know, you're going to do it, do it right or don't do it at all. Get out of here. But, you know, he did work on it. So fiberglass replaced that concrete couplers, and it proved that they were rigid, they were sturdy, they weren't breaking, and they could move with the movement. Of the earth. And, so he spent the remainder of his time doing those, and, he was orange. His hands, his face, hair, and he smoked like a train, always had a cigarette. And breathing that stuff without a mask. There's some goggles because of his eyes. But his clothes would all be solid with bits of glass, just droplets and stuff. You know, his other clothes were full of cement. Break him up and then throw them in the wash, and, we're out scrubbing them by hand to try to get that cement off, but. It was, I think one of the reasons he he always wanted all his boys. It was all boys, no girls in our family. Just four boys. Three of us. You know, growing up there, that. He said, well, stay in school because you don't want to be like this, you know. So that was another motivation.

Audrey Maier [00:49:33] Right? [??] I mean, you're a respiratory therapist, like, you know, but it's probably like, not good to be breathing in fiberglass. Like, isn't that dangerous?

Oscar Colunga [00:49:42] Very dangerous. He didn't have lung cancer. I think he did have some emphysema, some bronchiectasis, from my education and knowledge of lung disease. I was I was young, I was, you know, just. You know passed high school. But having had not yet entered the respiratory field. I was just getting into it. So I was just learning about that. But, later on and with his constant smoking, he always his habit was just, I mean, out of habit, he would just not even thinking about it. I think I picked that up and and during World War two, in the Army, everybody was given cigarettes and chocolate and, you know, just, you know. The basic stuff. Yeah. For G.I's, you know, out there. But he was a chronic chain smoker. And, and then that the cement and the moisture and then moving to the, the fiberglass rings he was making, I suspect his lungs were becoming, what we call like an interstitial disease, very stiff [??] In the cigarette. And he prided himself, because. His being an athlete. And he could do that. Well, when. were young and in high school and in our 20s, we can do physically anything we're Superman, you know, Superwoman. But in those kind of jobs, and, you know, OSHA really didn't have any regulations to come in and say, oh, they should be wearing these masks and these, you know, suits and, you know, they shouldn't be into this. You know. It's dangerous. Health.[??] Well, you know, OSHA wasn't around at the time, but you know, the and nobody knew. I mean, there was nothing that people knew that much about lung disease. I mean, they knew about tuberculosis and asthma. And emphysema from smoking. But then all these other occupational hazards that are now looked at by OSHA, as far as, you know, chemicals, fumes, particles. We know of. They can, you know, provide protective gear for that. But at the time, there wasn't any and we didn't know it. But, eventually it did catch up to him. And I suspect. That was a big part of his, you know, leading to his death. Was that exchange of oxygen into the lungs, which is not not there.

Audrey Maier [00:52:49] Were there are a lot of people, like in the area that had issues with asthma or lung like, did you have other people in your family that had asthma or issues with their lungs?

Oscar Colunga [00:53:00] Well, asthma was has been around for many, many years, centuries people know of and a lot of cures have been, you know, prescribed for it over the years. But yes, there is, you know, it's a, a condition that's prevalent all over the world, and allergies to. But because of the cement mountain being by and also a lot of ranching, ranches and dairies and orchards, which use, you know, chemicals, spraying for, pesticides, plowing the fields, the dairy, stench. And and then the primary one would have been the Cement Mountain or Mount Slover when they're excavating, excavating the, cement. And they would use, from what I could see as a kid. And then moving on through, junior high and high school. The mountain wasn't that far away. Probably from where we lived in, the north side of Colton, I would say, was probably about two and a half Miles Away. The high school was just across the street. Maybe. Three quarters of a mile at that. But you could, hear a Siren. Going off. To warn the the crew, the people that were working on the mountain because you could see trucks. Dumpsters. And they would always have a big steam Tractor up there that would pick up these piles of cement, dirt and boulders onto these trucks that were a constant roar. But when they stopped and they were going to blast or try to expose some more, more of the mountain and, and get more of the cement, everything would stop. And then the siren would go off. And then after that you could hear a blast. Because we were far away. The sound didn't reach us. But visually you could see. From a distance. This puff. Go up in the air and then you could hear, you know, seconds later, depending on how far you were away, a kaboom. Not a really loud, but a muffled

boom sound. And that would float all over Colton. Just, I mean, just very. Fine dust. Just a cloud. Of dust. And of course, and then my mother had asthma and at times it was real, real bad. I mean, depending on it wasn't so much, I think the blasting, that is. But it didn't help any that it was so much going on there because there was, like I said, ranching and farming and orchards and things going on. So she did have a very severe case of asthma, which at the time that there wasn't a lot of treatment for or medication. So I remember many times that. Going going to the hospital was my father says, you know, come on, boys, where you know, your mom's in the hospital. Let's go see her. Just, the the, real high powered. Intravenous drugs that they would give her to, which were stimulants heart stimulants but dilate the vessels in order to for her to breathe. And it was constant, which was also crippling in a way, her activity level because of the asthma. But then, but I think a lot of that cement dust was not good for the Residents around there. And I remember, a lot of my aunts, because they were living closer to that than we did this constant cleaning the windowsills. Of this dust. Cement dust. Very fine powder. Very fine powder. Which was there constantly. You know, all these years, you know, just there.

Audrey Maier [00:57:30] What was the siren like? And would you? Was there a certain time of day? Would they do blast or was it like, you know, hard to predict.

Oscar Colunga [00:57:40] Well, I never timed, any particular time, but, you know, it's during the daytime that I remember, from junior high to high school. Like, you could hear the siren from a distance. Faintly, but you could hear it. And. At the time you would look up and. Yeah, cause I figured every time that goes off, something's happening.

Oscar Colunga [00:58:07] So the truck stopped moving. But then the sirens would go on, and I wonder why. And then you'd see this. Just this poof. You know. And you could hear a very muffled bang way in the distance. Muffled. I don't think that we're using tons of dynamite. I think they were just, you know, blasting away small chunks at a time. And the trucks would then continue up the hill until they emptied that, and then again the next time, a day or two later, whatever time it was to blast again and get some more cement down. So I never paid much attention to a schedule of when and how often or there, but you can definitely. If you paid attention, you could hear the sirens, and if you looked up at the right time you could see that, you know, in the distance, and then you could hear a muffled. Little blast, you know, like, dynamite. Yeah. Yeah.

Audrey Maier [00:59:13] I feel like that's such a unique experience because, like, I don't think there are many communities where you regularly hear, like, a siren going off.

Oscar Colunga [00:59:21] Well, it was a safety. For all the workers, the trucks that were going up and everybody in the vicinity, they could hear it louder because they're right there. So that means an all clear, all clear, everybody out of the you know, because we're going to blast. And, so everything would stop. You wouldn't see any trucks. No tractors were, you know, the little steam things that were used big. You could see this. Thing up there, this tractor with this big arm and the boys in the pickup a basket full and dump it into the back of these trucks. These, it's just a line of trucks that would just constantly go up and down, up and down. But, I think they were just using small amount of blasting just to get a certain, you know, a little bit at a time, a little bit at time. And it was a tall mountain. It was big. You could see for miles and miles away. I don't know. It's been a long time since I've been out there to see it. So. It's. But, you know, I was told that there's more underground than there was above ground. So, I don't know, maybe it'll continue. And I also was told that there was, quite a bit of marble down there that was being mined also. So I'd like to see it someday.

Audrey Maier [01:00:43] Yeah, we'll have to arrange that. I think that if we could, you know, one of the things that we want to do is sort of like a walking tour of some of these sites. So we'll have to let you know the date and you can come down.

Oscar Colunga [01:00:52] Well, I'm thinking about, notifying and getting in contact with them. And because my curiosity as a kid and looking at it from all sides, because there was, I mean, you could go around that mountain and, you know, from Colton to Riverside. Hitting parts of Rubidoux, but then Riverside and then. Back the other way down into Fontana. It was, interesting and say, man, this is the, you know, mountain and. But, yeah, I'd like to know if there you know what is under that? Under that mountain?

Audrey Maier [01:01:30] Yeah. It's not much of a mountain anymore. It's pretty much flat. And they are starting to go under.

Oscar Colunga [01:01:36] Oh boy. Oh, well, maybe they maybe make that a reservoir or a lake.

Audrey Maier [01:01:42] You were talking about how your dad was very focused on your education, all you and your brothers. So maybe, could you talk a little bit more about. What, like your education experience? Like where you went to school and, what that was like, and then also maybe why you went into, like, respiratory therapy, too.

Oscar Colunga [01:02:09] Well, it's interesting, the, because my mother's illness, with asthma, got me interested. At the time, I wasn't so much, I really didn't know, you know, high school, junior high school, high school. Didn't know what I wanted to do at a time. Now, you got to. Remember, this was, 60s. That I. Thought, well, communication was the key. And this was. I don't even think they had fax machines at the time. Just telephones. But I. Kept reading articles about communication and how the world is going to change and technology as time goes on. I thought, well, people have to communicate. So, you know, this is. Something I'd like to do, you know, something like that. But then I was always interested in medicine and science. I was curious, I had a chemistry set, I had a biology set I got for Christmas. I said I didn't want a toy, I wanted a microscope, and I wanted all these chemicals to see what I could blow up and mix up. And and my curiosity is still there. I have a lot of science books and a lot of medical books and a lot of nature book and stuff. It's still there, as I still have my, and, little microscope where I can, look at bugs and leaves and twigs and rocks and, but, so when I entered, after high school, well, in high school, I took biology, which really interested me. Yeah. Not the smartest guy on the block, but I got through. And. But I got through because it was interesting. I just loved it. It was. Even chemistry was good. It was fun. But they never let me blow anything up because I want to make something, you know? So I just had to learn a few things. And then then. You know, we couldn't afford, college, university or anything. So every boy was on their own. You know, if you want to continue, continue. You have to pay your own way. You live at home and, you know, you find a job and go to school. School was cheap but expensive. Compared to the time, economic wise. You know, buy your own books. At the store there at the, union store, the bookstore, they called it. At the junior college. You paid so much. Money per credit that you're going to in each class had. This is you know, this is a two credit or three credit class. And it was so much for the credits. I mean, we took 3 or 4 of those. The money would and then you have to buy books for each of them. And then the cost of a we, we had a car. Or we had friends that had cars we could, you know, go to a parking and then buy a parking pass. So the cost at the time was. You know, in the family, you know, we were, my mother wasn't working. In any high paying job. She took small jobs

here and there, but nothing to really afford to. But anyway. So yeah, I worked, some part time jobs going to, Valley College, buy whatever books I could. Sometimes they were. Most of the time they were used books. Which the instructors didn't appreciate because there's a new addition I want you to get, I can't afford a new addition. All right. Well, I'll do with this, which did work, and we got through. There wasn't that much between the new edition and the old edition. There was nothing. But anyway, so then, you know taking biology, some basic chemistry, some microbiology, anatomy, and physiology just got me like, going. And then I heard about, then I got a part time job at the Saint Bernadine, working in a cafeteria. And because my mother was working at Saint Bernadine as a nurse aid there so. I was driving Aries[??], and myself and my older brother would drive her to work in San Bernardino from Colton. And so, eventually, in time, I met some of the people that she worked with. And at one time, I met the medical director there and her boss. Which, they asked me what I was doing. I said well I'm going to school the San Bernardino Valley College, and I'm taking these classes because, we're thinking about. And they were opening a respiratory care. They called it Inhalation therapy at the time. Inhalation therapy. Because they were well, it's a long story that evolved over time, but, delivering oxygen and, medication for asthma, emphysema patients and bronchiectasis patients by a mist using different nebulizers at the time, which were gas powered. Which is a long story. It's developed in research and help, with a lot of things over time. But, so I said, oh, okay. So I continued pursuing the sciences and the health care, took all the classes I could there at valley College. I took some that were [inaudible], not colleges, were not offering courses or classes into. They didn't even have a nursing class at the point at that time at Valley College. It came later because they needed nursing. So some nurses and administrators decided that there was these hospitals in the area. There was San Bernardino community, Bernardino County, St. Bernardine, Loma Linda Hospital was starting, Redlands Community Hospital. Loma Linda Community Hospital. And so they needed nurses. So they started these these, nursing programs. But they didn't have anything for respiratory. And I figured, well, nursing. I'll take the classes that they offer. And see if I can pursue something that would meet the requirements that they're opening a department of inhalation therapy, which dealt with lungs, heart, and lung disease. So I did. And then, those kind of I, I kind of finished all that at San Bernardino Valley College. Then Loma Linda had a course that was being offered into some introductory to the respiratory program, because they had established a respirator or inhalation therapy program. It was called inhalation therapy at the time. So I thought, well this'll help me and San Antonio Community College[??] in corona, or Covina. Someplace out there was establishing a course. So I went out there. And took an introductory course into it. So I had those. And then there was a nurse. A head nurse, and the director. Of the new inhalation therapy. Department at Saint Bernardine's that were offering. Introductory courses into this inhalation therapy. So I took all that, went back to Valley College to take their classes, which was a one year program. It's broken up into two semesters. And so I got into that and got a certification from the college into this program. And so I got hired into Saint Bernardine's in February of 1969. At full time to the inhalation therapy department at Saint Bernardine. I'd been working part time, at the cafeteria. And then from there, I did part time in the inhalation therapy department just to maintain oxygen cylinders for the people that we're working in the department and clean some of the equipment, which wasn't much, it was a little room with 2 or 3 people in there just, you know, oh, we need oxygen over here, or we need, these nebulizer, machine over here. And they would go out and do it. It wasn't very active. It was low. Just, I think three people on day shift, two people on evening shift, and one person on night shift. So on weekends, I would go and work with the night shift people. So that person, I would help them. But then I would go to school in the morning to continue classes. Well, anyway, so I got. I got in with my certifications in, from the school, plus the other from, Loma Linda, the one two classes

they took there, the one from San Antonio[??], and combine them into that. So I said, oh, you're, you know, you're I mean, I was the more educated one and this and[??] the people that were there because they. Just promoted orderlies and nurses aides to do this. They taught them the doctor, Bruce Shepherd, who was the medical director, taught them. How to use oxygen therapy. And the nurse there taught them how to use the, the, what they call the intermittent positive pressure breathing machine, which was all pneumatic and operated on gas and oxygen and compressed air to generate pressure to expand the lungs, and at the same time provide a jet of, air into a little cup that had medication to, to vaporize it, make it into a nebulizer. So it would. Be breathed then instead of injected. So go right to the lungs, which help dilate the breathing, the bronchial tubes. Well, one thing led to another and technology I, worked there for, I became full time member, a night shift, for five years, running the night shift, spent a lot of time in the emergency room because it was pretty quiet during nights, getting called here and there, but emergency, or work with asthma, or accidents, pulmonary lung, trauma or stuff. And I moved on to the evening shift. Became charge of the other evening crew about five people, and then moved to the day shift. Which had more people, more more people in the hospital, administrators, head nurses, a lot of doctors. And, I learned, more about the pulmonary function, how to measure lung volumes. Flow rates, and lung expansion, the anatomy of and physiology of the lungs, the chest, the heart, the vessels. In drawing arterial blood. In taking, seminar courses and classes as offered through, other colleges. And there's no computers. No computers. All we had were phones. There weren't even a pagers. Beepers they called them. And eventually became the assistant administrator, director of the department and then the director. But over the years, because we became known as the Inland Empire Heart Center at Saint Bernardine, she goes they were starting to do open heart surgeries and they would do one a week. So they needed assistance because of the they needed to cut into the chest and open the chest in order to do heart surgery. So pneumonia was a big deal and the hyper expansion of the lungs was necessary and coughing and, you know, getting and medications to keep the air tubes. One thing evolved to another and, oh my God, it's so complicated. I don't want to go into all the technical and scientific thing, but I grew, I grew the department into about 55 people. I established the pulmonary lab, which became the cardiopulmonary lab because then I introduce, stress testing, cardiopulmonary stress testing, heart lung on treadmill, and, along with pulmonary functions and arterial blood punctures. But, and I found a company that had these sophisticated instruments that could measure the gas, oxygen and carbon dioxide and the acid base. And the arterial blood, because the arterial blood is the one that in physiology is a one coming right from the lungs to the body to the heart, that's pump to the body, that's bringing fresh oxygen going to the body. The veins are coming back to the lungs to expel the carbon dioxide and have little bit of oxygen. So we want to know from the beginning what's going in and what's coming out and other gases through [hypnography] and so forth. And, newborn infants, we got involved with newborn deliveries, because of the [mucosa], the aspiration of fluids by chromium[??] In the lungs and in premature infants, lack of surfactant, that surfactant is a a substance that. It's like a bubble. It expands before the child delivers or develops surfactant, which helps dilate and open the, alveoli, the the air sacs, to keep them open. So air exchange can occur because the blood vessels are in the outside, the air is on the inside. And that it diffuses through a membrane. So we had to develop were neonates that were premature, and then oh. Man, there's so much. Instruments help with Companies that we're developing. Electronic microprocessors were coming in to the thing and no more. There were some pneumatic things that were needed, but more controlled. Rather than twisting dials and adjusting and trying to put an oxygen analyzer or carbon dioxide in. To see what the gas, so it was very labor intense as far as what we were doing at the time. And it's evolved to the technology of computers, ventilators, neonates are now, oxygen saturation monitors. So you don't have to do as many arterial blood gases, but they're still

needed for certain things. The cardiovascular, the cardiopulmonary stress testing to evaluate the heart and lung condition and the physical, strength of a person, you know, can they, you know, go through extensive heart surgery, kidney surgery, bowel resections, neurological. We went into neurological, intubation, tracheostomy. Oh, boy. You ask a lot, but, yeah, it was. And it hasn't stopped now.

Audrey Maier [01:20:08] That's perfect. Yeah.

Oscar Colunga [01:20:09] Now, remember, the stuff. The things I was. Speaking. About here, Had a interesting part to it that. Also working in that also, taught. They asked me to teach at a. Well it started at San Bernardino Valley College, but then went on to Crafton Hills College because, programs were starting to be established for respiratory care. Because the name changed from inhalation therapy to respiratory therapy to respiratory care. There was an evolution of, there was no certifications at the time. It was. There was maybe 3 or 4 schools. Five schools, maybe in the whole country. Two in the East coast, maybe one up, in the Bay area and one down in San Diego that had, programs for inhalation therapy. Matter of fact, I got recruited to, San Diego at one time to see if I could go down there. And, I'd let my medical director know that I possibly would be leaving Saint Bernie's [??] to go there. Well, they offered me a raise, but I was loyal. I, I wasn't serious about going down there. Now, remember, I was married at the time. I got married there in 1969 when I had started full time. But I was working part time up to that point, going to school, working a little bit at the hospital, working some part time jobs because I had been starting a family. So I had a wife with a child on the way. And so. I don't know. Maybe it was stress. Maybe it wasn't, I can't remember. But trying to. Fit all that into. Some kind of life to have with my wife and new child. On the way and continue on. Was challenging and that didn't stop. It continued. Not only with one, but with two children trying to, buy a house. Trying to make ends meet. My wife wasn't working at the time. Stay at home, mom, take care of the kids. My meager, employment or salary, just to pay what needed to be paid. But I pursued, like my father said, do it. Do it right and or get out, you know? And I loved it. And I wasn't going to get out, but I had to. Scheduling in a way. With work, different shifts, different hours. If I was working nights or evenings or days. Weekends. The hospital doesn't close. So it was weekends. Holidays. And needing the money at the time, was important. But my family was important. So I would volunteer to work weekends or extra shifts. Double shifts, three shifts. Every holiday. Christmas, new Year's, Thanksgiving. Of course. Any any. Because the hospital would pay a dividend, an extra if you would work it. And each shift, night shift paid a different, higher by maybe a few cents more. But that made a difference. Evenings had a differential also, days was straight days. But weekends. Straight days. But the different shifts and the nights or evenings paid a differential. Holidays were even better. So I'll do it, you know, not that I not that I wanted to, but I figured. I didn't want to leave the shifts short handed. I'm very sensitive to my to my coworkers. And later to my employees. Do whatever I could for them because it was demanding work in the hospital. It was life and death situations. And and you had to accept that. Like in war. You don't talk about it. You don't bring it home with you. You leave it, you know. Speaking or talking about the misery, the death, the things you see and have to do are not pleasant things to talk about. And I don't want to talk about them. I don't want to be reminded of them. And my wife and my family didn't want to hear about it. You know. Their partying and they're having a good time. Birthdays, Christmas, you know. Holidays, whatever. But yet, continue in pursuit of. I guess to me, in pursuit of excellence in my field. And if you're going to do it, try to do the best you can. And that's all anybody can ask. And some people give up. I've had a lot of people say this is not for me. Granted. And I would tell them, I said, you know, even when I became an instructor, teacher or, I would say I was a teacher, I'd say I was an instructor at the colleges. And we'd get new people wanting to

go into nursing and then respiratory programs, because I would get a group of people in the beginning to introduce them to Health care. And what's required, what's needed. Are you up for this? You're going to have to work different shifts, holidays. You're going to see misery. You're going to see yucky things, smells, things that aren't pleasant. And some of you're going to make it. Not that you can't. But you just it's not for you. Others. You're going to want to do it because you want to do it. And these things will not impact you. Heart. I hope you have to take it as part of that job. What you're doing. And but you got to remember, you're working on human beings, people. You're not working on a machine. You're not mowing the lawn. You're not. You know, fixing a flat tire. You're you know, what you do is important. You could make it worse for the patient or better for the patient. And if worse. The worst is that's it. So you have to do your best and maintain concentration on it and learn as much as you can and put into practice what you've learned. And do it right and learn whether it was the right thing. Or could you improve on it? Later the next time. And sure enough, he will come. And then one of the one of the days that we had. I would take them three of the hospitals, I would divide the classes up, and some of the group would go to community hospital, San Bernardino community, another one, go to Saint Bernardine's one girl, San Bernardino County Hospital. And they would and they would assign a registry therapist to those groups, usually groups of five, no more. And they would follow that person from the units, from general care, medical care to pediatrics to intensive care, to the emergency room, to labor and delivery wherever. And lo and behold, sure, about 30%, 35% of them would say, no, I can't do this. It's not for me, I can't. handle this. You know, but I saw what I heard, what I smelled, what I had to do. No, I you know. I said, that's fine. It's not for you. You need to do something different and find it. And when you find it, do it well. You that stay, you know what you're looking into. It's going to get worse. It might be better, but you got to remember your successes are going to make it worthwhile. You know when that person walks out of the hospital. And they're doing well, doing better. And the family is grateful. You're not going to get a medal. You're not going to get a \$50,000 check for it. They're just going to say a thank you. But you got to go on and do the next thing to the next person, the best you can. It's a soft thing that somebody feels. I got through it. I helped that person and there's many times when. A patient or a family member would say, oh, they're requesting to see you or talk to you. Because you were there when they needed you. They couldn't breathe. Or they were broken up. And you didn't even they didn't even bother you. You just cleaned it. You helped them, you changed bandages. You did whatever you can with the nurses, with the doctors. You're working with these people? they're all professional. They're not going to go squeamish on you, no. It's what they've signed up for. Now, later in time, you may say. I've had enough I can't do it anymore. That's fine. Okay. But you learned something, so, you know, go on and do whatever you're going to do. I stuck with it, I loved it. The good, the bad. Yeah. But. I don't care how it equalized or not. Good was for me. I know I did it and I improved the whole field from being, a no field to an emerging field to providing certification and registry and degrees, bachelor's and master's in the field of respiratory and education in science to these new respiratory care practitioners. Which before it was just, you know, whatever classes you take that can help you in science. Which I did, I evolved, but then I grouped it all together and talk to people about it, and we grouped it. And my medical director, Doctor Bruce M. Shepherd. Career man. Navy, career surgeon turned anesthesiologist, [he] [??] Devoted his whole life to it. He was in World war two in the Pacific, surgeon general and then that was a military Harvard graduate medical school. But in a civilian life, he switched from surgery to Anesthesiology and became very involved in what we were discussing, establishing schools that just dealt with respiratory therapy. Because medicine was evolving and chest trauma, chest surgery, neurosurgery, head injuries, complicated abdominal surgeries. Transplants were starting to come around. Heart and lung surgery was in its infancy. We were doing that. Neonatal. We were familiar with newborns. And.

You know, we got them going. Okay, wrapped, you know, umbilical cords wrapped around their necks or delivered breech or whatever, and pick.[??] But infants. Premature, one and a half pounders not developed their organs their lungs. Nothing's developed, you know. How do you know? Do we just throw them away? No. Let's do what we can. Established a lot of things, and. I think, knowing myself and what I did, what I saw, who I saw, who I worked with. I worked with some of the best physicians in pulmonary, cardiovascular surgery, neurology, gastrointestinal surgery and disease, cancers, lung cancers, all kinds of cancer. Because these diseases may not always affect the lungs, but they do in the medications or the therapies they're going to will affect gas exchange in the lungs. So we had to study that and establish it and provide a starting point. A point where they're going through these medications or therapies. And then an end point and see their lung function and cardiac function and how that's affected. So there's it's a very, it kept me involved, it kept me interested and I still have I, reluctantly, retired. Only because, age wise. Not that I couldn't do it, and I still would love to do it, but the demand and the hours and time and on your feet constantly, is grueling. And it takes its toll. And. I have admiration for anyone that's in the medical field. And some can go into research. Or administrative duties, or education. There's so many fields that people get [involved][??] into from that. I'm still interested in all my medical books. I don't read all the journals anymore. I had stacks of journals and, challenged with. And a lot of it is mathematics and chemistry and knowing physiology. Astronauts, NASA, sports medicine. You know, there's so many. And that could be transferred. Also into veterinary medicine. But there's behavioral issues. Also. With knowing human personality. Some are strong, some are weak, some are angry, some don't care. They just want to be left. But there's a way to deal. With these people. So psychologically, you also have to put your mind into theirs and speak to them at their level to let them know and educate them that what's going on. You can't just say they don't care or they don't understand, or they're too stupid or you know, they don't care about me. They say, I don't know. Well, that's you know, that's another part of the the process of being in medicine with people. Dealing with people. If you're in a laboratory, you don't have to deal with people. You're just dealing with numbers and tests and results and starting points and end points and, you know, you plot it. But when you're dealing with a human being and not only that person, but you have the family extended. The siblings, the mom, the dad, you know, they got grandma or grandpa in here or they got their baby brother in here, or their little sister over here. And the family is, there looking at the nurse, they're looking at the doctor, looking at respiratory therapists, they're looking at the physical therapists, they're looking at how the laboratory is drawing their blood. Oh, you're hurting them. You're hurting them. Well, you know, you have to maintain. Yet you maintain your professionalism with them and the task at hand. Get that done. But you also have to put yourself into their shoes and explain to them. Yes, I understand, and I know it's uncomfortable. I know it's not right. I know it's ugly and this and that. But explain that this is for the total outcome you know, the doctors and nurses, the laboratory. The respiratory, the physical therapist, the x-ray technician. Everyone is doing their best to get results and information that we need to try to fix the problem or make it better. We may not fix it all way, but we'll make it better. But then you also have to be in the mindset that you're going to lose them. And that's a tough one for a lot of people. You don't get numb to it. You don't get cold to it. But you gotta understand that the person next to them needs the same attention, and they still need your help. There's nothing more you can do here. Everybody did everything they can. Let's move on to the next one. But you can't take that home either. You know, you got to leave it. Like I said earlier. It's something you don't want to talk about, but something that you really need to evaluate before getting into that process, into that field, into that area of whatever you're going to do. You know, an astronomer. Researcher in whatever field they're in. They say, oh, this is too complicated. I can't do this. Well, then you gave up. Well, if you gave up, somebody else would pick up and carry it on. And you

probably are missing out on something here. And that's okay. If you can't do it, don't do it. What do you say? Get out of the way and let somebody else, you know, get in there. So. But raising a family or trying to raise a family during this whole time, adds to all that, too. You know, the kids are sick at their school or, you know, their parties and, you know that, oh, they need new clothes and, you know. It's raising a family is tough enough. But then having the. Well, working is tough and raising a family is tough granted. I. You know, we all do it. Everybody does it. Well, most everybody. But, being in a very stressful and intense field. And things. Can get testy and hard with, you know, your spouse. And. You have to deal with that. You have to handle that in the best way you can. And. The next day you go and do it all over again and over again and over again. And, you know, 55 years of doing it and doing it and doing it and it. It didn't take anything out of me. I think it just made me stronger. In many ways. In many ways. And I sometimes get a little cynical about people that they don't want to work or they can't do this or. This is all I want to do, but they're capable of more if they search and they reach in. But some don't, some just. Just throw their arms up and say, no that's it I can't do this. Well. That's fine, then move out of the way. Like I said earlier, way in the beginning with my father's military and also bringing it up as, you know, as a Spaniard, with the Italians and the Greeks and the others that grew up. Everybody had to pull their own weight. They all had to work. In the orchards. And the fields, in the factory, wherever they were working. Because the family, and maintain family values. You know, you're going to marry them. I don't want to marry them. [I don't marry], you know. Traditional family meals, you know, learn. You know, if you don't learn from any of that. Or. I don't know, maybe, I don't know, maybe. The old world. And the old ways or no where or anywhere here. It's comforting. But I tried to [instill] that in my children, and I think they saw it. The intensity of. You know, sleeping during the day and awake at night [while they're asleep] and I'm awake or on a weekend when they're going to their grandparents. Or. House for a party or, holiday. And I'm at work or, the Sunday. Where we would go to church together. And now he's got to work. And. And a lot of my relatives say, well, why do you have to work? Why do you have to go to work? Well it's a hospital and we don't close the hospital on the weekends. People get sick. They have accidents. They have babies. They have heart attacks. You know, there's, they're things. And. So I think, you know, with my, my own children. I think they saw that. Think that's part of their makeup. Yeah. Both of them knew what I was doing, where I was. They saw it. They've been at the hospital with me when they were younger. They said, nuh I can't take the smell. I can't take the sight of blood, I can't. No, I'm not doing this. Well that's fine. They went on their own way to do other things, but they're good at what they do. Real good, and I'm proud of them. But. Medicine wasn't their deal. But, and that's the same for anyone. I think you find. What it is. And the main thing is, we find it. Then do the best you can. You know, you might not go to the cream of the crop up there, but damn it, you're going to give somebody a race for their money and they're going to. You know, they're going to try harder. And you'll try harder. Make them try harder. You know. If you show up, they're going oh my God, they're here now. I got to try to beat them. All right, well go ahead. And I would say when I was director and my assistant would come and say, oh, they think you're, you know, they're gonna try to get your license. I'll give it to him. Let him take it. Then I said, no, man, because you did this. You did that. They did this. And they'd go like, oh, why do you do that for? You know, like, that's why you're here. Because, you know, we did all this, and now you're you're lucky you didn't do it from the beginning. Came in later. Now we got everything ready for you here. You just do what you're told. And not total, but what you were taught and put it into action. Now. You know, but do it well, you know.

Audrey Maier [01:46:07] I think actually. Grandma Leslie will have dinner ready. Any final words for this round? I have more questions for you tomorrow on, like, Colton and stuff, but anything else on. Any final words for the career aspect?

Oscar Colunga [01:46:22] [No], I. I think about it all the time. I look at things on the computer. I'm always. Pursuing articles, science journals. Just basic things on health care. Anything. It evolves, everything's evolving so much. Technology but knowledge. And that's a whole thing. It's knowledge, you gotta learn. And what you learn, you pass it on, let somebody else carry it from there and see what else they can do. You've done your research, you've done as far as you can. But as time goes on, new techniques, new developments, new technology, medications, things change. So now you have to get it done this far. And now take it from here. To this far. And on from the next one, and on and on. Astronomy. Medicine. Look where it began, the automobile. There are no automobile. Bicycles? Yeah, we had horses. You know, things like that. Where somebody sees something, I can improve on it. I want to try it. I want to see what I can change or make better. That's. That's fine. I mean, that's been going on from. From the beginning of mankind, right? You know, the wheel. Oh, fire! Yeah. Now we know how to do that. All right. You know. Medicine in any field. This doesn't apply just to medicine, but any field. Architecture. Design, engineering, computers. You know. I mean, we had the telephone. You had to pick it up and dial, dial a number. And, you know, didn't even have television. I remember when the first television I saw was. I don't know, I think it was 1954 or 55. A relative, they had bought one, and, man, the whole family, everybody, I don't know, there was probably 5 or 6 families with, I don't know, 15, 20 kids all sitting in front of this big cabinet. Oh wow, you know, we can see people in there. We can hear em, you know. Television. [Where is that now?] You know. Medicine, the same thing. That's my career. I mean, people have their own careers. And their own interest and their own history on it. What they've done to improve on it. Some people just go into it and cruise, they don't want to do no more other than collect a paycheck. Well, you know that. You're getting left behind as far as I'm concerned, not only in the field of your choice, but also in yourself. You're not improving yourself at all. You need to improve yourself as with time, with knowledge, with doing the better than what was being done wrong. But I see what we were doing back then. Seems like ancient medieval medicine. But from where it started and what we have. And it's still changing. It's still new things.

Audrey Maier [01:50:01] Cheers to new things.

Oscar Colunga [01:50:02] Cheers to new things.

Audrey Maier [01:50:04] Perfect. All right. Let's. Okay, so we went all around last time. So I think as I was thinking about it, I wanted to return to like some more of, like what it was like when you were younger. So I know maybe you can, you talked a little bit about the first place you were born, your first house in South Colton. Can you talk a little bit about when you were a kid, what it was like going to Wilson School?

Oscar Colunga [01:50:36] Wilson Elementary in South Colton. Interesting. I had no idea it was. I mean. 99% of. The kids were, Spanish, Mexican. Latino. Origin. And I can't remember of any really, Anglo or white kids being there. But the interesting thing is the school was located on a opposite a very busy street. La Cadena, which was kind of a highway, it was a, it went from, North Colton through South Colton, all the way into, what's known as, Grand Terrace and. And onto the freeway which was 15 north and south that went into Riverside. The far northern side of Riverside. So that street was busy with, a lot of traffic. So there was a walkway, an overpass. For the kids. To walk from one side of the street. Over the street, remember that busy La Cadena street into the school. And it served the you know for[??] Pedestrians. The public to cross that busy street because there was no traffic signals. No stop signs or anything a long there. So and it's still there

today and it's still used and it was a I mean, at the time we just didn't think anything about it but now it's like, oh, well, we have to go over here and go up these stairs and walk across the top of it and of course, you know, for safety, there was fencing on top in the long and there was a gate to close it at certain times and, on to the [back gate] but the school itself was, had a large campus that I can remember as a kid. A simple school, nothing fancy about it. But there were the same curriculums and activities recess, which everybody loved, the kids, you know. Cafeteria. Where you needed to buy lunch tickets. I think the tickets were, you know \$0.15 or something. So depending on the budget you could buy a week's worth of tickets. Parents, you know, give you some money, and they would purchase, you know, purchase a week's worth of tickets, or you can take your own lunch. You gotta remember, the 50s. You know, it doesn't sound like a lot of money, but back then, you know, laborers weren't making not even minimum wage as compared today. I mean, you know, maybe a dollar an hour, something like that. And, so money was tight and you know the movies or candy or anything were luxuries. Even though you had to pay a quarter, you know, how are you going to get a quarter like[??] this? You know, you can ask. It's like asking your parents for a \$20 bill just to, you know, go see a movie and buy some popcorn or something. And you're like, now I can get it in for \$0.10, and then I have \$0.05 to buy popcorn or candy or soda or something. So, you know, woo hoo! I was a recycler. I would. They had their glass recycling like I mentioned earlier and the time, you know, steel and rubber was being collected and, you know, glass also. Being that my father drank quite a bit of beer. You know, I'd get 3 or \$0.04 a bottle or \$0.05, depending on where I went. And taken some, bottles and so, mow lawns, but the school itself was. Nothing nothing different than what I see from the schools here and the children here. Of course, kids are reluctant to go to school. But it was mandatory that you go. Unless your parents pulled you out for some reason. If you are truant for a certain number of days, you know, the school would send, a notice home or somebody would come in, you know. Through an officer.[??] Say, well, you know, because they were not only one school, they were in a district. So they would go to different places, but, and kids would ditch school. But, I mean, nothing's changed about schools been going on for a long time. But if you didn't get to school a certain time in the morning and or late if you're late going to school, the Catholic church, down the street, El Salvador church. The priest there. The [name skips me up], Father Valencia, an old Mexican priest. Didn't speak English. He was well, at the time to me as a kid he seemed like an older man, but he is probably maybe in his 40s or 50s I don't know. But and they needed altar boys for the morning mass, the morning mass. So if his altar boy weren't there and you're late going to school, he'd just drive his car down the street [and he'd kidnap]. Well he wouldn't kidnap. Get in here I need you for church, you know, then I got to go. Get in here hurry.[??] You know of course being a priest you go okay, okay. You know. Off you go. Then take you back to [middle school. They get to school you,] and then you have to explain that the priest got there and you had to be the altar boy at church, you know? So everybody was running, you know, just get to the bridge before the priest gets here. Once you're on the bridge, then, you know, it's like you can hang out there if you want if you're gonna ditch till he left. And then be on your way. But. It was a funny thing, I remember. Love[??] The boys. You know, [we'd bike it in groups]. Oh, here he comes and everybody would scramble. Run, hide somewhere, and were like, ha we're almost to school, you know? But other than that, it was. There's nothing unusual about the school. Yeah. Had a small cafeteria for inside eating and small lunch area outside if you brought your own lunch. Sports. You know, kickball and so forth. Soccer and you know, the playground for children, but nothing different. And well [I found] the differences, when we moved, when the family moved to North Colton. Then we went to grad school and, it was in walking distance to the house our house, the busses usually had to go to [way] outskirts. As I said, there was ranches and orchards and, dairies and so forth. So they would pick up kids from the outlining rural areas, but everybody else would

walk or ride their bicycles to school. And, but walking through those neighborhoods was different than walking through the South Colton neighborhoods. They were the Anglo. And we thought, oh wow, they have a nice house and a nice yard and uh oh, that one's got a big dog and [he's mean to me], you know, so sometimes, you know, being kids go through that, that house and throw a rock into the yard to see that dog would come out and start barking and everybody start running and yelling and you know, just being mischievous. Other times, you know, just to avoid it and go across the street or take the next street over. No different, but the difference was the mix of kids of us that were there and at first I, you know, looking around to see if anyone I knew. There's not too many of us. You know, not too many of the families at the time would move to the north side of colton because that was a more affluent area at the time. Which was, you know, you look now as they were maybe making \$1.50 more an hour than my father was. So, yeah, they were richer they had maybe two cars or a garage for the car. Or a lawn and. But. You know, you're you're growing up at a time when, and it's no different today. I think the period in time that there at is a period of time that things are, like. With my children and they going to. Also, it wasn't segregated. It was inter-racial school. And it was a parochial school. Catholic, that there were blacks, there was Mexicans, there was whites, some Asian there and so they grew up with that mix. But we were in a certain area and there's only one group. You just associate with that group and then when there's a different group, come in, you know, like, you know, how do I manipulate you? I mean, as a child, as a kid, you kind of want to figure it out, but they're your age. And you look in my eye and they have the same kind of clothes. Maybe a little upgrade from no patches or, you know, no holes in their shoes or something and, you know, like, you know, they can afford that. And. But we were fine. And you get to know them real quick. And as kids who don't know the difference. And. So you fit in after a short time. And they all speak the same language. English, of course. And there were Italians, there were Germans, there were French kids, you know, families. But, you know, over time, they also had to learn English. The grandparents, the parents and all the children and it's just English. I happen to maintain spanish because Spanish was spoken at my grandparents house, and also my parents would speak it back and forth. But they also were educated in English. And like I said, my father didn't have an accent but he could speak Spanish. He grew up with it and a couple of other languages I mentioned earlier. He wasn't fluent in them, but he understood phrases and conversations that he had with his. You know, boyhood friends. And. But English was a base language which is still here. So. We all spoke the same language. We, you know, the time we're able to also purchase television and have the same things in the new house on the north side of town. And, it was, you know, fireplace and at the time it was Nora Huff[??], and I look at it now, I go in there it's so tiny. But three bedrooms, one bathroom, a small tiny kitchen, a small tiny living room and we thought a spacious living room with a fireplace. But you look at it now, it's like this. Well. You know, the cost was. Unless you build a two. storey and, you know, four bedroom and two bath. That was. You know, beyond most anybody's reach unless you were really, i'd say on the wealthy side, but maybe owned a business or, you know, came from some money somewhere, but, everyone else, the kids were all the same way. I mean, we got along, from elementary school to junior high school through high school. And of course, things progressed as far as the economics and, trying to keep up with technology at the time. Telephones, maybe instead of 1, 2 telephones in the house now. Wow, you know. But growing up in that era, the school curriculums are still the same, but with knowledge and education, of course more information became available, so you have to learn higher levels of mathematics, the higher level of English composition and how to use it properly. Sciences, which really fascinated me. So I always, you know, going towards the chemistry and the biology and those types of programs. Diddled in music a little bit. Our parents bought us a bought my older brother a cornet, which is similar to a trumpet. And, he played it. Or tried playing it but it didn't work so. You know, I tried it. You

know, I thought, I'm in music class now, and they had music classes. Everybody had an instrument, if not the school had some used instruments that were donated that you could borrow. Learn to play them. No different than it is today. I see children here going to the [lower] school, the elementary or to the middle school carry an instrument of some sort. Clarinet or guitar or some other case with, some brass instrument. To teach you music, another form of education, and learn how to read it and play it in whatever instrument you're using. So I tried it. I liked it, but it just wasn't coming out right and so in middle school or junior high school I gave it up and passed on that to my younger brother Reuben, which is [coming up] said maybe give it a try. You know, my older brother Donald, you know, he tried it and it wasn't working, I tried it. Yeah. Just, you know, some people are more musical in arts and music, express in code, in whatever arts. Painting. Others in literature. Their writings. Others in science. Like. Yeah. Like this. And when you like a subject, you. I think you enjoy it so you pay more attention to it and more detail to it and learn more about it. Same with people with music or art or literature. They're interested in poetry, or being an author, or a journalist or a photographer. There was photography clubs, music clubs. Like I mentioned earlier, in the interview here, that the school progressed in educational activities levels, but they also had the social but also educational. The mechanics and some guys were good at the machine shop or woodshop or automotive. [They had automotive] They were [taught] Or they were thought of not educational people, just fiddlers. [They did some woodworker they had woodshop] or, he's going to the auto shop or, you know, he's working with. And at the time you're thinking, that's not. But now you go like, I need a plumber. I need a mechanic, I need a carpenter. I need somebody, you know, that understands this. And those are valuable, too. And there's nothing wrong with it and everybody can't be scientists or journalists or an author or a great artist or musician. Everything. I took home economics for boys in high school. I learned how to work in the kitchen. I watched my my grandparents. I always go to my grandparents when I was a kid, I early in the morning. It was early in the morning, sneak out of the house and walk across the railroad tracks from North Colton to south Colton, i'd ride my bicycle. And be there with my grandparents because they were they were up like at 430 in the morning and, getting, my grandmother would start cooking and making tortillas, and my grandfather would be out doing some work in the garden or getting ready to go to work and sometimes when he retired, he would or his days off. He had a little wagon, little red flier, red radio wagon that he, he had a chicken coop out in back that, you know, fresh eggs whenever he needed them. If there were too many hands or, rooster too that needed to go. You don't need roosters unless you want fertile eggs. They were so, you know, now and then if they wanted, fresh poultry, chicken or whatever you got there and catch and learn[??] and, but in order to feed them, railroad track going by, there was a silo, a grain silo, not too far off. So I would walk with them early in the morning because the trains would come and unload grain, and a lot of it would fall on to the ground and, pigeons would just flock to it and birds. And so we'd go there and chase home away and scoop up these things of grain. So for the chickens and so I learned about the wheat and the rice and the different, grains that were being delivered up there. And. So home economics put me right into the kitchen where I just love, and I still cook. I love to cook. It's a side hobby of mine, and it involves, when you think about it involves the botany, the vegetables, the fruits. The utensils that you're going to use, the type of metal, the heat. The grains that you're going to use. I think about, you know, an animal being slaughtered for the meat and thinking about a plant which is alive and growing, being cut off to harvest the grain. And, it was alive at some point, but it gave life more substance. Eye[??] Nutrition.

Audrey Maier [02:12:14] [So you never lived in South Colton, right?]

Oscar Colunga [02:12:15] Yeah. They thought we were uppity up I mean the rest of the family, oh, you're too good for, you know, the the time. Our area, the barrio or South Colton predominant. Yeah.[??] Well, you're, you know, high class now your, you know, in the Anglo part of town, you're in the white part of town, you know. And. I. You know at the time, you know, like, no things are the same it's just like my dad and mom, went into debt. Then we have a brand new house. And it was a big deal. I mean, it was a big deal with the family and friends. In the south side of town. But eventually one by one, over time others, you know, made the move. But the place we move them[??] was a totally new small. I think there were maybe 9 or 10 houses here, 12 houses in that one. It was a single street, which was, wasn't in a cul de sac, it just ended. It was just a dead end street. And it was. Used to be, chicken ranch or chicken farm. On the other side. But the developer had built these houses on this just. Little tiny street. And the houses were small, compact. They had a good size yard in the back. Normal size in the front which at the time we thought it was normal. Lawns on the front. Had a curb, which, you know, the Colton was upgrading all the, you know, utilities on the streets and for the people at literacy[??] And sidewalks and things like that, but it was interesting because of the chicken farm or chicken ranch which was right, I mean, right at the end, we were the second house from the end of the street. So it was right there. And I think because of the development and the rules in urban, keeping urban, areas free of, domestic animals; cattle, horses, and chickens. Chickens. Boy.[??] Flies in the chicken droppings and everything in the clucking all day and, now and then maybe a rooster if they were breeding some hens. Rooster two you can hear them out there. And they were right, right next door. And, I think the city it, you know, decided, you know, enough's enough because they're starting to build more houses. And eventually there were some apartments and more houses built off of the south side of, Pennsylvania Avenue, which led up to the junior High School. But. Moving out there from a family, the extended families, point of view is that we left them. We left their neighborhood and [we'll move so far away.] You can come in from one side of town to the other was maybe a mile and a half, two at the most. I mean, you could walk it, but, you know, driving a car or driving your, you know, riding your bicycle, you get there in no time and Colton, a small town at the time. You can, you know you could. There was a bus that would travel maybe a half mile to pick you up and to pick the family up and just take a U-turn and drive back into town. It's two streets, [La Cadena][?] and mount Pleasant. Mount Vernon is.[??] I forget the name of the street that crosses there. But that was town and it was very close. Everything was down there but moving over to that side, because we crossed the railroad tracks, we went from the south side to the north side. Was a big deal at the time, and going to a different school was a big deal. And then. I think with the, my mother saw the change in the dress, how she would dress us or boys in the family. So new jeans we're twice a year because, you know, being boys would wear them out and so put patches on the knees right away when they were new because she knew that's the first thing that's going to go. They're on their knees, you know, digging holes, playing marbles or messing around and falling down. So and it wasn't unusual because all the boys have, either ironed on patches or sewed on patches. The shoes were always scuffed. So you had two sets of shoes that they can afford. One was for every day going to school because they were all scuffy and beat up, and, another one was for Sundays or for parties or a holiday where they were shined and put away and you only use them for church on sunday or for a birthday party or somewhere. And. The shirts were always washed and ironed neat press. Where before it was just, you know, put on a t shirt or a coat and whatever you wore, you wore. And that was a common deal. But then she noticed that in the other side of town. It was up a little bit more. Couple of notches up so, a lot of trips to Sears and Roebuck to, you know, get some newer clothes. And, took very good care of them. You know. They, you know, don't wear them out. Don't tear them and don't soil them too bad. Keep it neat, because she

wanted us that way and that's another part of thing is like, oh, you guys are, like, dressed really nice, you know, from my cousins. To my aunts and uncles.

Audrey Maier [02:19:07] Okay. But yeah, you were talking about like that was another thing that people or your family would notice was that you guys were like dressing fancy.

Oscar Colunga [02:19:13] Well, but they they thought it was fancy. My mother insisted a lot of cleanliness and neatness when we were in public, you know, at home and just fooling around, or we just went to visit cousins or my grandparents. My grandparents were a hub, which at the time was a very common thing. All the extended family, my aunts and uncles and their children, would come to my grandparents house. It was the place where everybody would meet on Sunday. Every Sunday, and breakfast after church. Some that chose not to go to church were. You know. They were looked at not as very good Christian Catholic kids. But yeah, there were some that, you know, just decided, you know, they didn't, you know, sit there for an hour. Holidays or birthday parties or baptisms. A lot of baptisms. A lot of birthday parties, I have a large family of, you know, with. So many aunts and uncles living in the same city, the same town. And each of them having four or more kids, there was always, Sunday or Saturday event an most of those, you know, my mother insisted that, you know, we wear, instead of jeans and slacks or a nice polyester shirt dress. So they thought, oh, you're fancy. You know [inaudible] but, I didn't think anything of it, I just told them they're crazy, you know? This is what it is. You know, I'm sorry. But, and everybody adjusted. I mean, there's no animosity about, my cousins. Or I or my brothers. It was we were all the same. And, in time[??] They developed the same sense. The family developed the same sense of being in the public eye. And. And things economically got better for some of the family members. Uncles that were. Women weren't working. They were at home taking care. Of, you know, so many kids, household duties and with no automatic washer dryer or, all the convenience microwaves or anything. Everything was, a lot of manual working washing clothes with, either in a tub or an old fashioned rotary, washing machine with a roller. You have to put the clothes in and then ring and out. The clothes hangers on the clotheslines outside where you had to hang the clothing. And of course, it was all wrinkled. And, you know, when they're dry, they bring in, and they had to iron shirts and jeans and pants and the cooking was all. Big pots because you had a big family. So it wasn't a little. No fast food or no packaged food. Everything was, you know, you put on the beans in the morning and the rice would go quick. [Or if you had to make.][??] A lot of vegetables. You know, carrots onions, potatoes, cabbage, to cook. You learned how to use those ingredients. So in, high school with home economics and somebody's in the photography club or the journalist club or well, take home economics, you know, you know, make, learn how to increase my, my skills in the kitchen, which helped a lot. So, I take care of my you know, preparation. And then in time, I passed that on I taught that to my my kids but I did take woodshop. I did take metal shop. I never took automotive but I had friends that in high school that we would, repair each other's cars on saturday mornings. Because there weren't mechanics readily available. There were two service stations. Well, three, actually, there's two on the main drag in in Colton, right off the freeway. For motorists going east or west, they can get off, for gasoline or oil or tires or whatever. In South Colton, there was a service station gas. But they also had the mechanics. Tires. They did everything. Brakes, and so forth. So, everybody learned how to work on their own cars at the time those cars were, you know, very simple working. Open the hood, climb inside and take the spark plugs out and clean them and what they call the, alternator and, the, you know, check your, your water level and, radiator and, you know, things, basic things. But they were very simple, very easy to get to, you know, unless you want to hop it up a little bit more than you have to buy the and that was expensive. So, you know, some of the kids would pool their money together and work on one car that was kind

of shared to go cruising. We never had a driver's license and it was easy. It was pretty much open roads out there, it was like i said, there was a lot of farmland. The Cooley Ranch area. There were dairies around so it was country roads [inaudible], from one place to the other there weren't housing tracts or malls or, you know, places like that. It was just kind of open up there so. No, you know, you couldn't do much damage or get into much trouble up there you just went out to kind of get away and, you know, be like, kids now go to the malls there. You know, some place to hang out. It was. You know, that way now and then you'd see another rival go by. Oh, that's, you know, let's race them and that seems[?]. You know, there was open roads. You just. You know, but that's expensive because you have to buy the gas, you know, and, you know, \$0.20 a gallon, you know, we'd go[?], you know, come on, everybody pitch up a nickel, you know, and, buy a gallon of gas in the summer. So it was. High school was an interesting time. You learned a lot about everybody else, but you also expanded your mind into all these other things that were out there. I mean, who could afford a camera for photography or, you know, learn a different language, you know, French and, you know, speak Spanish and English. What else do I [need]? I'm not going to with France, you know, but, there were clubs. The language mostly was French or the Spanish. You know, for the anglo kid[?], a lot of Mexican kids that lost a lot of their Spanish who would also take it. And they said, oh, it's easy for you, you're going to get an A because you already speak it. Well, you know, speaking that and reading that and writing and understanding that are different. Which I admit, I, you know, I, have difficulty reading it. I have to it takes a lot today[?]. I've lost a lot of it over time, of course, but I've tried to during that whole time, I try to maintain some Spanish myself. And, and over time I did. You know, like I said, all my aunts, uncles, cousins, everybody had converted to English. Only my grandparents. So you don't want to be rude. So you want to speak to them and understand them, and they'd understand you and speak to you back in Spanish. And. Which helped me in the medical field because once I got into the medical field after I left high school, went through the city college and the other schools and, working They said, well, you're going to get the Spanish speaking people because and even now, even today, when I, later here working in the, in the critical care and pulmonary and, diagnostic area, there's still and it maintains a lot of Spanish speaking, people, older people. So they were assigned to me, in the hospital. They were assigned to me. Because you speak Spanish. Yeah. Well, at the time, I understood it very well. I spoke it very well in time, I lost a lot of it, but I tried to maintain it, and I still do. And I did quite well with all my patients, and. Oh, I understand very well, you know, get the, you know, got the results. But during the high school times those were being offered, I said why should I take those when I already have it at home. So the time in high school being, you know, exposed to all those different parts of education and, you, you have to look at it as an education. How to read music, how to play music, how to write properly. You know, if you want to, if you want to go into the, the field of carpentry. Construction, automotive. And been[?], going on to hire you, like I had mentioned earlier, those lead to higher levels of thinking for those that want to expand. Working on a car, then you become a car designer or a part compactor until you get the same amount of work out of it. Metalworking. There was a lot of fencing a lot of, metal to be worked on welding, cutting, designing, with wood, the same thing. Photography. You know, you don't just take a picture, you know. Portraits. Become a professional photographer for outdoors or wildlife or domestic, you know, so you expand from that and the idea of education is to give the basics just something to start with and a little bit of knowledge in every aspect of any field, of any style mind [?]. Some don't like this or don't like that. Anatomy. Biology. Physiology. Microbiology. It was challenging, so I took them in college. They weren't being offered in high school, but just basic biology. Basic biology. I had a great biology teacher. Mr. Carlson[?]. And he looked like, I don't know what you call it now, geeks nerd. But his interest was science in biology, which sparked me. And you know, [like I'm the same way] I have the same interest. And. So high

school and you met the people who had the same type of interest. You know, and others that had different interests [that taught you] something that they'd learned in their class, you know, the regular didactic classes were that English. Advanced English, mathematics. I even took drafting in, architectural design drawings which was fun. You like, you know, making things and creating things on paper. But then if you put them on paper, who's going to build them. So the guys in the woodshop or the metal shop. You know, they that's where things come in, you know, if somebody can design it, think it others, okay, let's see if we can build this. They had the knowledge, you know how to use the tools. So high school really just expanded my mind. And I learned from them. And of course, they offered them in college, too, at the time. And physical education. It was interesting because. In physical education, the kids, the girls. And the boys that were interested in sports could expand their, you know, their athletic abilities and those that, you know, want to pursue athletics, track and field, cross-country, baseball, football, tennis, field hockey, soccer. You know, and they said well, you're just playing well, you know, am I just playing a cheerleader? Maybe they want to later develop that cheerleading into dance or gymnastics. You know, and you see them now in the Olympics, in sports, in the pros. And everything. And you know, it says well in high school, oh those are the kids just messing around in the field, they're just playing. Maybe they weren't that great in the didactic areas of their basic, but they got their basic education. But they focused on their athletic abilities and which sport. I'm better at tennis than I am at football or wrestling or boxing or baseball. You know, same with economics, home economics, others become chefs. You know, or, you know, learn how to work and develop tools in the kitchen, which now are common day things. Microwaves, mixers, toasters, you know, things. Electronics. So one thing leads to another in the field and high school was that point in time where all of a sudden your mind starts to open up and you're going, like, what do I want to do? [And you know all] these kids are going in different directions. Then they form little groups of because those groups had the same interests and they spoke about it. Oh, you know, there's a journalist or there's the photographers or those are the bug people, you know, the biologists from all[?]. And. Everybody was equal, everybody had the same thing and then I thought, [their no different]. Their no different than anybody else in all the school for that way and I think they still are, I think that's why they, provide basic, things and from elementary school. Going and learning basic math and basic reading. And reading to writing and art, I mean, you know the watercolors and crayons to I mean, really creating portraits and landscapes and. Really good art. Sciences. Being a bug collector. Running the laboratory somewhere as a professional and becoming an expert and writing articles and discoveries. Every field, so high school was that point in time where that challenged you, if you wanted to know more, then the college was the place to go. And of course, you know, a lot of us, many of us, and even today. Universities and colleges. Picket fences[?], only the rich go and so because they had the money, didn't learn anything, they just were in college and my kids in college, and they came out and they didn't really do much of anything. They, they just because that was, thing to do at the time. But those that wanted to, like, the City College, Valley College and all the other community colleges in the area, if you were interested and wanted to go, you had to pay your own way. And because, as I mentioned, economics, at the time a lot of people weren't making a lot of money. So it was very, very expensive to the family, especially if you had a big family, if you have 1 or 2 children and bein, maybe just an average income family at the time, maybe one of them could afford that, you could afford to send to college and take loans and so forth. Or go for scholarships, and those opportunities were not readily available to the minority groups. Even today, with the the blacks and the next currency[?]. Asians, the people that still on the average, on the average, it's not the norm. But the thing is that it's difficult to maintain a way of life that's comfortable for them, but have the expense of sending one or 2 or 3 kids to college is a burden they can't afford. So but you learn from that. And if you have the drive and the will,

then you find a way to get there. Part time work or, you know, you you do something. Because you still have that interest, whatever it is. I mean, if you want to be an artist or photographer. Or a scientist or a physician. You rise to that level of want to do it, this is what I want to do. Hell, I wouldn't be able to build a house or do plumbing. [I mean i'd do basic] electronics. Electricity. Hell, i'd turn all the electricity off just to change a light bulb. But the high school opened that gate to a lot of us. And. But you gotta remember, the war in Vietnam in the 60s was going. So the scare being drafted and going to war at a young age. You had an option either to enlist, which a lot of my friends did, enlisted into the Marines or the Army, the, you know, one of the military branches. To avoid getting drafted and just getting thrown into the army and to the frontlines. So this way, they figured they have a chance of being in the service, but not being on the frontlines, getting shot at and bombed at and killed. And, a lot of them did, five of them from high school. Very close friends of mine, from childhood through junior high school through high school, enlisted right after graduation. And five of them got killed the first year in the front. They threw them to the front lines. Expendable. You know, you're the ones that were a little bit more savvy, had a little higher education or interest, would go to the Navy or the Air Force where they could learn. A. You know, a skill that was necessary for them to participate in the military but provide a skill level or train. They were trainable to learn something about flying in the Navy or the air Force or in the Navy. But, then the other option after that was. Even if you went right to work, you were going to get drafted. Chances of getting drafted were higher, especially for minority groups. Blacks and the Mexicans and those were frontline draftees a lot of course, a lot of Anglos in the same. You know, the Midwest and the east Coast in the South. Same thing. There's no level, I don't think skin makes a level in your mind of education and knowledge. There's a difference in personality and how people perceive that. But. To the military it makes no difference, you know, you're a body. We want you and we're at war. The other one was if you kept a certain level grade level up and went to college, you were put more to the back of the draft then right up to the front, said, okay, well, maybe they can be it[??], especially if you had a field that you were working on. Engineering. Medicine. You know these these subjects were like, okay, we need them. But we don't need them now to get shot at, maybe they can graduate and become more productive to us at a later time when, you know, we might recruit them. Recruiting was high, in the college level. They sent a lot of military recruiters to get students out, and especially in fields that were needed, Navy, the Air Force. The Army for development. The Army was good at developing a lot of, you know, the weapons, the, armature, especially with skilled laborers, people with, big machinery operators. Truck drivers, things like this. So, you know, recruiting people that were educated, knowledgeable, trainable was high. And you could avoid going into the front line. So you could support that by having. So, you know, those, those high school years for mechanics. The wood shop, the metal shop. You know, if you had an interest and you pursue something higher. Okay well we need those guys to help with the construction of bridges and, you know, operating vehicles and, you know, the specialty things. And. You know, the sciences, of course, [are, you know, like me.] You know, I still want to pursue a medical field. You know, at first I wanted to be a dentist, you know, said well, I don't, you know, [what I have to do is look in people's] mouths and pull teeth or fill a cavity or something. I said, that's not for me. Then I said, ah being a surgeon would be great. You know, you know, see what's inside of people. You know, or fix them. I was good at fixing things. I guess I can fix it. I'm very detailed. So, you know, I pursued that. So that kind of put me in the back. So high school with that time, you got to make a decision, especially that time in, in, in our period where, you know, the option was after you graduate, you get a team, you're going to be drafted. And you got notice if I got my notice, I went, yikes. You know. So, because I was in school, in college and pursuing a, you know, field of medicine and also had a wife that was, pregnant [inaudible]. This our high school was[??], I think 19 or 20 when I got that notice. Scared the

jeebies out of me, you know, like, oh, my god. And my brother was already serving as a medic. He had also wanted to pursue, to be a physician, a doctor. And, he left the house right after graduation, about three weeks after graduating from high school to go on his own. And he did go on to college to, at the time to for medical school. He was good also in the sciences. He and I would work together on some subjects in high school, genetics, working with fruit flies. And looking at the difference, there are differences when you start looking closely at things and they say, well, that's because we, you know, we took this group of flies in this group of fruit flies were easy because they were everywhere and they're easy to capture. And you you can trap them real easy. And you could, you know, of course, go to my microscope at home or the one at the school. You could look at them and then he said, well, what happens if we take this one and this one and put them together. And so, you know, we, he pursued that field. And, then he enlisted into the Navy when he knew he was again close to being drafted and went to the medical training in, San Diego, in the Navy. So they provided him medical training and lo and behold, graduation, going on to a medical ship, with the Navy, he was sent to Vietnam as a medic assigned to the Marines. You don't carry a gun, all you have is a 45 type[??] pistol. And everything else in your pack is bandages, sutures, morphine. Things to wounded[??] and main[??] Soldiers. But he was there, and it was not pleasant. It was, very traumatic. I have to say. So he and I worked together on that. He kept telling me in letters, stay in school. Don't come out here, you know. And because it was a time, and it was also. It also provided the nation with engineers, architectures, biologists, scientists. People that study earth sciences. in later in my medical career in the hospital. Looking for, respiratory therapists at the time. These people had graduated from colleges with bachelors in arts and sciences. But. And NASA and the airforce, this is after Vietnam, just after, we're kind says we're going to go to the moon. So, the colleges were being eveybody was a lot of people a lot of kids were getting scholarships. If they were in some of the sciences, astronomy, Architecture, drawing, designers, engineers, lot of engineers. Biologists, because you have to study lots of you know plants and seed. What's out there, and if we're going to go to the moon. Geology a large[??]. So there were a lot of them that had no fields to go to. And at the time I was able to, they came and said, hey, the medical fields, you know, they need people. So yeah, well, go get your a little bit of medical training. You don't need much. [The rest will teach you about it, well they did]. So I was able to hire people with, college degrees in, certain fields, convert that. They were trainable. They were educated and trainable. Okay. From here on, now you're going to learn the science of pulmonary and, chest and heart disease and. You know, surgery and travel[??] and so forth. So, high school kind of opened that up during that time for us at that time period. I think it's different. Well, it holds true today with, the things that had happened in, in, Desert Storm and, you know, the eastern countries that were still involved in so and who, who's running most of that now? Technicians, scientists, designers, engineers. Fighting from instead of more front line people. You know, like you said boots on the ground. Now it's technology that's fighting the wars, you know, satellite imagery, photographs, things like that. So I think. Elementary school you get the basics. Junior high school, you get to meet more people, get a little involved in more music and science. You're awkward. You're teenager. You're not interested in that. You're interested in other things. And then high school, of course, ah freedom, you know, and if you're able to, you know, get a driver's license and get a car, motorcycle. I had a little motorcycle and we had cars that were. I mean, they needed fixing every weekend to keep them going. And that's why I said, you know, auto mechnics, you'd make friends with, you make friends with the guys [that know, you know]. So. Those, and. Then you also meld with all the other cultures that are there. And so friends were friends. Didn't make any difference, you know, their language, their color of skin. Or anything, their level of economics for the family. Some lived in, in a what we call. The ritzy areas, Grand Terrace, Honey Hills and Colton. Other communities had the same deal. Santa Barbara has their

communities of the wealthy and well-to-do[??], the average people. Then you have the the poorest sections, east side, west side. They call it the barrio the boroughs of big cities in New York and Chicago and, you know, L.A. and so forth. But we all get together as kids in a level of education, of learning. This is the brain, the knowledge, the interest that people have. And. You know, of course, when you need a friend, you need a friend and somebody that has a skill or knowledge or training in something yeah they'll help you with this. You know, [their my friend]. So you can make friends with everyone in high school. [Follow up in college]. You get separated a little bit more. Some move away from home to go. Some stay in the community like we did. But it. It's. I think education is, that level stepping. From one area to another. And the more you learn and others become. PhD Professors, doctors in a certain area of, learning, of education and then become educators themselves. As a parent, you become the educator. You're their first teachers as a child that you would know. They teach you hot, cold don't touch that, don't use this sharp knife or, you know, put your shoes on or, you know, a basic thing. So those are your first teachers. Then you start school. And you can open your eyes. Some people don't they, for some reason. What it is. But. You're exposed to a lot more and that your curiosity of those that have it, continued to move on and be more and more acute. As you can see around me, I'm very curious about a lot of things. Aquarium, my fish, my birds outside, feed, computers, you know, different things. In the, hopefully you educate and pass that on to others, not only your own children or your friends, but people in the community and. You just, do that it's, some people don't have that ability, which is fine. A lot of my friends, you know, just fine working their job and, drinking beer afterwards or, you know, going surfing on the weekends or mountain climbing or hiking or fishing or whatever. And they're fun, I love doing those things. So, like, hang out with them. You know, it's, give me a break from other things. And I think they feel the same way, too, because I talk to them about different subjects. Some have an interest, but they never had the opportunity to pursue it for one reason. Well, and and they're not the minority. They're just people that their fathers were ranchers or cowboys or, grape growers, winemakers or brewers. But their kids weren't interested in pursuing those things. So. They really didn't open their minds wholly at a certain point they thought, well, maybe I'll do that when I, you know, like, my dad's a doctor, I'll be a doctor. Well some don't and others were being pressured. I had, two, high school kids, that I hired, one in San Bernardino at Saint Bernadine's, the one up here in santa Barbara and their fathers were physicians. Well, this time, I think, the one in San Bernardino [has passed away a long, long time ago]. He had a sister that was in medical school. So his father, being a surgeon, wanted his son to go to medical school, and he had no interest in it, but he was being pressured to go and make better grades. This is the happy go lucky high school kid hanging around with his friends, having a good time. And. But he was stressed. And it happens today, which is sad. And I tell people, you don't have to pressure your kid to go to school or go to college. There's more, they can go there later after they find themselves. Their minds are still too young to understand or pursue something. Let them go. You know, work, manual work. If they like it, it makes, you know, you get a paycheck, whatever. Or join the military, learn a skill they teach you if you're interested, and a course teachable and you're willing to learn electronics, being a technician, mechanic. Big equipment. It's not little ranches. It's big. I mean, in the Navy and the Air Force, I mean, the Army, the Marines, they got tanks. I mean, they got guns. Big cannons, you know, somebody's got to work on them, you know? And after that, you can pursue. You know a profession outside of that, once you leave, if you leave the military, some people make it a career, but there's nothing wrong with it. I think everybody knows we need the military and the skill. But some of these, like, they're pressured to pursue something by the family or the father or the mother and both of these kids, you know, sad to say, they committed suicide. Which is, we hear today. Why do kids do this? You know, being bullied. Well, maybe, but I don't think so. I think it's more pressure from

within a family structure. Oh, you're not an architect. You're not an engineer, or you're not a doctor, or, you know, they expect because your father and grandfather were. And maybe the father pursued it because his father and grandfather. Said, but they make it through. And I've had a lot of physicians tell me that you don't have to be the smartest guy. All you have to do is be persistent and stay in there. You know, if you get a C, you pass, they come out to practice and they're not the best doctors. I mean, they're average, you know, and then they get out of their element. They're more than I can handle. You going to go see a specialist, or I can refer you to this other or another [inaudible]. You know, same with any other, you know, police work. Fire, you know. Attorneys. In every profession there are the good ones and not so good. But being pressured to go into a certain field is not the way to go. You let them find their way, but you provide them the opportunity. Go look for it. Go see what you're good at or what's of interest for you. You learn that later from high school. But I know a lot of a lot of my friends in high school were being pressured to pursue a profession that their father was in, or take over a family business. They have no interest in that but what else are you going to do? That's all the family, that's all the father knows. So it's family business. You're going to take over. I'm going to train you, I'm going to teach you. Well, that's fine if you like it. But they don't become very successful at it, so. Yeah. Education. My growing up. My father had. No, no choice of, you know what we're going to do? And we all pursued different directions. My brothers, the younger one, art design became a successful designer of clothes and shoes. Women that he. Cosmetics, hair do, nails, makeup. And everybody thought. Okay, but then you look at these magazines, you get all these, you know, these. The fancy dresses and shoes and hairdos for women and men. Nice. And he was good at that. He was great. But, he's [you know, he's yeah]. Some make it, some don't. Unfortunately he passed away at an early age. Other brother, pursued different things. He couldn't[??] he joined the Navy. He loved it. [Was, well that's going to be a career man]. 12 years in there and went, became a submariner. And who now[??] wants to go in the sub? You know, underwater and trapped in this metal tube. But, he learned all the things about the submarine, how to run it [evidently] because they had nothing else to do down there. But you read the manual on a certain part of the sub, [the little electronics, and mechanics and motors]. At the time it was nuclear. Yeah. How does this work? What that happens if it malfunctions? How do we get out of here when we're, you know, 1000ft deep or, you know, you go like, and you're under the ice and you're traveling for months silently underwater. Yeah. You gotta learn the systems so you have time to learn them and study them. He loved it. [I couldn't do it]. [inaudible] but put me in a tight spot. My older brother, like you said, pursued the medical field and, unfortunately, Vietnam. Just. But he came out and still was trying to get back into it. And he did, partly, but it was, I think, too traumatic. What he had to deal with that he pursued other things and, you know, became a real estate guy and, did quite well, [he's been doing quite well]. But. Those things in education, started at an early age. And, as you, as a person go from elementary to junior high to high school, it's. Yeah. Some people say, [yeah school is good yeah]. And, what you'd do nothin or what you'd learn? Eh, nothing. Well, then why in the hell did you go to school if you didn't learn nothing. But I, I took an approach that you didn't learn anything. Nothing. You know so I had to give them a little quiz. Oh, yeah. Then they open up or they learn. Then they find out that they learn, and then they don't stop talking about it. [Eh there you go]. But it was good, it's fun. So. It's a. And families need to understand how it works. You know, this doesn't come to you overnight. You have to have an interest for career[??].

Audrey Maier [03:03:02] [Yeah, you have to have passion too, to do that, and.] [inaudible].

Oscar Colunga [03:03:08] Now, as a as a child kid. Yes, we went to church religiously on Sundays and some holy days. And. Of course Christmas, Easter. Easter was, well, lent

during the Easter season, the church, there was a event. A time where they would cover all the statues in purple cloths. And. I don't understand why or there was explained to me as a kid. But then on Easter they had the the mass. Several masses at Easter, the early mass and then the later in the morning mass. Because, you know, they have different schedules for the mass. But in the afternoon and Easter there was a, event. I guess it may have been a common thing in Mexico and some of those Latin South american countries. That. A mock up[??] of, [Judas] and we called him the [Camacho]. It was a figure of, of a man a large figure. And it was like a pinata that was, suspended on a wire across the street between the church and a building. Across the street. So the whole town would come out and line the street and there were some, you know, a priest would say some things about it. And that would symbolize the, you know, because Judas is the one that turned in jesus to be crucified as, you know, criminal. But, in order to get even, I guess they they developed or came up with this, you know. We're gonna get rid of you. So, it was this figure and the men would bring him out, he was bigger than life. This, I don't know, ten feet or something. He looked big to me. But it was kind of papier maché type of a thing. It was all painted in black. But he was loaded at the time. We, you know, can't see it, but he was just loaded with fireworks, firecrackers from head to toe. And a certain time they would light it and the whole thing would just start popping and blowing. And hey everybody starts, you know, cheering and laughing. And the thing would just and they would dangle it. So he's going up and down, exploding all over, you know catch fire and he is in the middle street suspended so there was no harm to any of the surrounding area. But it was an event that was kind of interesting because after that then the families would disburse and so maybe go to, you know groups, to have a big Easter meal. Afternoon meal, you know, barbecues and, you know, all kinds of, you know. People made their own, you know, families brought potato salads and, you know, fruit salads, beans, rice, tortillas, meats, barbecued meats, a lot of them poultry. Breads, you know, all kinds of, it was a like a feast and it was fun, it was fun. That went on for a lot of years. And then there was other events. Independence Day, the 16th of September. [speaking spanish]. The 16th of September is Mexico's Independence Day. People say, cinco de Mayo, Cinco. De Mayo, you know, they celebrate it and everybody. I think it's, a event where I don't know who made it such a big event. I think the the the beer companies, you know, it's a drinking event in mexico, but. Well, Cinco de Mayo, was a small battle between the mexicans driving the french. So many countries invaded Mexico, the Germans, Portuguese, the French, the Spanish. But, the Mexican had gone through all these wars and the French were the last ones and they fought in the town of Pueblo, where they moved or they pushed the French all the way out to the ocean, to the sea, and they got in their boats and left. So that's Cinco de Mayo, it's another day of celebration but it's not a great big. But [speaking spanish] is when they liberated and became a [sole] country. They kicked Spain out, the Spaniards were there for a long time that's why a lot of surnames are from Spain. But that time as a celebration, big parade, they choose a queen and a court of princesses, and then the vendors, the people in town would set up booths. The the families would construct a little wooden booth, and, the women would, you know, they would specialize some with rice and beans, other's tamales, other bakery goods, different things. And it was fun, it was carnival. There were eggs [speaking spanish]. There was music and dancing and the music was local guys that learned you know, play music. Mariachis. That's why music. And I see kids here, learning an instrument because maybe they want to become a mariachi and form a band. You know? But anyway, they would have these, local, guitarist. And horns and, you know, it's very festive and of course, a lot of beer and, tequila for the men. And, get a little wild. But it was a very small, confined place and they had a big stage for dancing. Just the girls in town. No professionals. Just. And they were taught folk dancing from their parents or relatives of some sort make their own dresses, costumes they call, but their own dresses. So it was a big deal for families that participate and, of course, they needed a committee.

And the committee had chairman or the head of the committee and maybe four other, town members, church members as a committee to organize the food vendors, the alcohol, the entertainment. Get together, you know, what groups are going to play music at what time, the dancers and so forth. And, unfortunately, at, this was before I was born, I was told by my parents and, my grandparents that, at one time, my grandfather, was chosen to be the chairman. So then he had to find the co-chairs. You know, local man. Volunteer, organize them, and then get the schedule. And at one point my mother and, a couple of her sisters, were even running for queen and if you don't make the Queen, you became the princess, the court. And that was a big deal because you could ride in the parade, you know, and be shown off and all pretty and, you know, like they do now, you know, the rose parades and any parade you have. You know, and of course, the chairman and his committee would go ahead because, you know, let people know who they are, platform that they organized this whole thing and put it together and then comes the court and then comes, you know, kids in bicycles or hot rods or lowriders or, you know, just, maybe a fire department or, you know, something but, it was a fun. And that went on and on and on and for years. And everybody would look forward to Easter and the 16th of September. Those events were as a child and, of course, the kids, as you get older, you, you know, your cousins, you, you run and hide from the crowds because the adults are partying and, you know, there's food and booze and music and dancing so, you know, you just kind of I don't know it was fun. All my cousins I love my cousins. All of them. They were good, the girls and boys and but it was a very social and Colton being a small town and South Colton, even smaller than as a community, everyone knew everyone and the families and their kids and so forth. And you know who the bad ones were and who the good guys were. And, you know, so it was a, time to kind of run free and yell and play and do all that without being screamed at by your parents. Their partying, you know, they're having a great time dancing and drinking and so forth. And that went on for years, like I, you know, tell you the truth, I miss it. I mean, as an adult, I could probably get back into that, and [you're like god man that was fun]. You know, those are fun times. And there was no I mean, no one was driving around drunk or anything. They were confined. We were confined in a small area in Colton at the time. And so, you know, the police were there. You know, its 1 or 2, in the whole town probably. Maybe 1 or 2 cars but, you know, they they were busy doing their thing, too. But. The times, at that time, even before and because I'm being told stories of what they were doing and what was happening. And then it comes time where you're born, and then you are starting to get involved and see this. You go like, man, this is fun, this, you know, how often do you see a parade, you know, and Colton, you know, they weren't so in 4th of July parades or, you know, big events like Christmas parade or anything like that. But it was this is the only parade in town at the time. Of course, you know, cities now. Like here in Solvang, there's a parade for everything, and it's a short one[???]. Not even a whole mile length, I think. But, goes around the block. We're a small community, but, in the same thing. Just local people get involved and they get into a truck or a car and they wave at people and people just wave back, and there's decorations and, you know, but at the time when you're a kid, it's a big deal. And I remember it vividly just. And of course, after all that. You know, that's like the morning after for the adults. Don't bother me, kid. You know, everybody's kind of on their own. The kids. You know, it's been, you know, things. You have things already made, you know, for Mexican households, there's always the tortillas there or there's some food. Salads, potato salad's a big one or macaroni salads were big. Beans and rice. Some mole. Chicken mole, which I love with rice and, you know, so forth. So there was always something to eat at the house. There was a time when I mean we we look at those items and they're inexpensive. Potatoes, rice. You know, and tortillas were handmade [and you know]. So that kind of food was available. But those events just brought the community and the kids and everybody together and just have a great time. It was fun for years and years and years. We just enjoyed them and I don't

know when it died out or how it died out. I think, as the generation got older, passed away. You know, the interest in those things faded. And, I don't I don't think they're happening to this day anymore. The Easter [Camacho], the Judas, popping and burning the fiesta, 16th of September. Those I don't believe are exist as a community event. And but again, that was entertainment. That was I mean, no TVs, there was radios and it was again, right after the war that I remember all that, you know, that. Probably, you know, seven, eight, nine years old, something like that, That you start to remember more things and understand them. You know, when you're four and five, eh you're just being carried around and. You know, [you know things are scary]. You know, there's big people around making a lot of noise, you know, they'd stay close to mommy, you know. And. But later, you know you enjoy it. And those are the same kids, your your cousins, your friends are the same ones you go to school with. And you know, so everybody knew everything about the culture and who we were and and so forth. And it was fun, I mean, that's I just loved it. You know, riding around town in a bicycle that my father had found somewhere and, [just get it to him] and just spray paint it with a gold paint. I thought it was hot stuff, you know? I can ride around town from one neighborhood to the other. You know, I just enjoyed it, you know, see my friends and ride the bike and, you know, not walking. You know? So it was. Those times were fun. It was, even have. Moved[??]. Separate our cousins on a Sunday afternoon where after church and everybody meets at grandma's house, everybody eats and has and the men standing around. The women are talking. So that's kids being bored. We'd separate in two groups and one group would try to get the other group, [dirt clogs] go hide and seek or, you know, climbing a tree or crawling in a trash can and, you know, just running around having a good time. You know, there's it was fun, which I enjoyed I thought it was a blast and I'm learning things, too at that time about my cousins, you know, guy, you're playing pretty hard here. You know, he, you know, and, others that were a little bit more casual and a little more gentle and, you know, I don't want to throw this at you. You know, but, I think we all had fun growing up as kids. And again, that [stigmatism] about the clothing, you know, they says well, you know, you're gonna get dirty, you're gonna get in trouble. So you know, get in trouble. Let's do it. You know? But it was, it was a great time and it was a fun time. And, you know, of course, as a kid you don't have the stress of paying bills or raising a family or anything you're just running around having a great time, you know. Until you get caught doing something. That you don't think is wrong, but parents say it's wrong and so, yeah, you deal with it, you know.

Audrey Maier [03:19:56] It seems like it was pretty easy for you to, like, get around the neighborhood just on your bike. Did that change once the freeway went in? Because before it was easier to cross the train tracks?

Oscar Colunga [03:20:07] Well, the freeway was there and there was not a lot of traffic. I mean, we were rural. We're 65 miles east of Los Angeles so like I said, there was ranchers out there, dairies, the orchards, the citrus orchards. So. And the only traffic was between. L.A. and Palm Springs. Indio. Beaumont, little communities, very small communities. I remember, you know, my we had cousins, my dad had cousins living in Palm Springs. And. We thought they were very rich, they lived in Palm Springs where the Actors, the movie stars went and had swimming pools, and he was a landscaper so he owned a company, a landscaping company to take care of these rich people's houses, estates. And, I don't know what they call them now, they've grown. But, very few I remember it's just desert hills out there and a lot of desert land. Now it's, you can't afford no one. I mean, it's very, you know, communities expanded. The wealthy went out there, Palm desert. Palm Springs, grew. Eisenhower Medical Center [went in] President Eisenhower had, a place out there. A lot of presidents, a lot of actors, movie stars. But anyway, he had, we would drive out there periodically to see him on the weekend. And, seemed like a long long

distance, about 45 miles but traveling at that time between Colton and Etiwanda or Cucamonga to the west seemed like a long drive down Foothill. Route 66 became known. Well, we're going east towards Palm Springs. Seemed like a long ways. But they had a big house, they had a lawn they had and I thought, man, they're rich. And but their kids were the same age as ours, as my brothers and I so we'd go out there and just fool around in the yard and play outdoors there in the desert. And I wouldn't know even for where to find it now it's all one big big community out there, everything's out there.

Audrey Maier [03:22:44] So you'd be driving on, like, the highways, but it wasn't like the I-10 yet it would be like highway 99 or like [what you were saying for route 66.]

Oscar Colunga [03:22:51] Yeah. This was. No, this would be. There were several ways of getting out there. There was, the highway ten was there, but, there was also the 66, which was you had to go over grand Terrace into the Moreno Valley area, which we call the Canyon Highway or Canyon way of going. Which was isolated and desolate, there was nothing going on. There was a road and it's still there. Reche Canyon Road that would go over the hill, pigeon pass down into, Moreno Valley. But the highway 66, now with all the people, that moved out to the east had expanded from a two lane country road to a four lane high volume commuter and I mean, same with a ten It was just a two way road. Now it's expanded because of the freight and the amount of traffic that went out there. So it's changed, it's different. It was, like I said, very rural at the time. We weren't riding horses, but, automobiles were there. Like I said, this is in the 50s.

Audrey Maier [03:24:13] But you can, like, cross the road on your bike.

Oscar Colunga [03:24:16] Well, the. Between Colton, South Colton and North Colton. There was an underpass that they built before that yes. We had to you know, get up to the railroad tracks and then cross the railroad tracks. So you avoided, you know, going through this through the highway. And which wasn't busy. And it was a because where we lived in South Colton, I could cross the railroad tracks very easily and but anything on the southern side of the tracks. What's considered South Colton. We lived right on the edge because the train in the freeway splits Colton between north and south. And we were barely at the very end of that cut off and. But it was considered one area of South Colton because the freeway the [train] dissected. That's where the dissection line became on the north side of the of the freeway became the North Colton. And the south side of freeway became South Colton. But the railroad track had been there as just I mean, it's still there. The the distance between the highway and the railroad track, they parallel each other. But there's a there's a buffer space in there where there's still people living in there which is considered the South Colton area. So, yeah, I could ride everywhere around there. I could cross the freeway, in another area where there were stoplights. On [La Cadena]. No, no, not [La Cadena], Valley boulevard I think it's considered Valley boulevard, where the high school park was. So. And there they did put a overpass for people to go from one side of town to the other side of town without having to cross the freeway since then they'd built the overpass in South Colton between north and south. So the railroad track runs above it and then the ten runs along side of it on top of it, so you can go under it to go back and forth. So there was two passages to go back and forth, you couldn't because the trains were being so long, it would just people would just sit there for a long time waiting to cross and the freeway became more and more congested with time. So that helped a lot so yeah. I can ride my bike in two different directions, but most of the time I didn't have to go to North Colton. It was everything was in the south but then when we did move then I could get back over to South Colton without having to cross the freeway or the railroad tracks. I could go under them which there's still those passages are still there. But being a

small town, I mean, the, the the area of Colton was large, but it wasn't developed. It wasn't populated the cemetery was up in the what we call the sand dunes, which now is San Bernardino County Facility, which is a great big facility. It's taking up all that space between Rialto and Colton and across the street from that is the old Hermosa Cemetery. Which again, to get to that cemetery you do have to go under a overpass an underpass or overpass. Underpass under the freeway because of, you know, those funeral ceremonies have to get up to the the cemetery. There was back way to if there was a long way, but this was closer, easier, faster. But the town itself, at the time the city itself was small. Now it's expanded out it really did have a lot of looking at the maps and the territory that encompass the city of Colton or the area, but it wasn't developed. There was no, I mean, no one was living out there moving out there other than the families that settled there originally. And then gradually in time, like I said. Department stores came in and grocery stores came in, you know, fast food. Well, not fast. Well, now there's fast food, but at time, there was one burger place. [The big G]. Which was right off of the highway. The ten where. And like I said, there was a service station at one end of town there was another service service station at the other in the town. One on the east side, one on the west side, so travelers could get off the freeway to fuel up, have a burger or malts some fries, whatever. Get back on the freeway the ten. And head on the way, whether they were going back to Los Angeles area or out to the palm Springs area. And that was it. Everything else was pretty rural. The cement plant was a big, iconic thing. When you saw that, you knew you were in Colton or getting close to it depending on how far away you could see it from. And it was big, it was tall, you could see it from a long distance. I haven't paid much notice to whether how big it is or how much they've taken out of there, but a lot of cement was taken out of there and but once you saw it you know you're home, you know, there it is. I think a lot of towns, a lot of cities have landmarks. Similar, might be a mountain or maybe something that reminds you, like coming out here when we go to visit and, once I hit the the coast, I said, ah there's the ocean. All we have to do is go along the freeway here and the highway one and one and, you know, we're on our way and then once we get to Gaviota and the pass on the highway grade[??], you know, like, there it is I could see the valley from here. Because you're up high and you descend down into our setting as valley and say, well we're home you know, and, Solvang is just you know, a couple of miles back up the street here. But, that cement mountain was the same, similar thing once you saw it, you knew you were home, you know, or damn close to home, you know? But those times there, there wasn't much out there. It was. I mean, I thought there was as a kid, you know, and then we'd get to driving and you have freedom to explore more. I was curious, I explored everything, you know, all of the hills, noocks and crannies. I'd hunt rabbit in Reche canyon up in the hills. Now there's houses, schools. I mean probably a highway, right? I don't know, they built a high school out there they got houses there. I haven't been there in years and years, so i, I know where it's at, but going into it, I'd probably get lost. You know? So. [inaudible] Loma Linda was just a small little community of people, now it's big. Redlands was just, orchards out there and just a few families scattered within the orchards that were there. Now it's a big population. It's very beautiful, very, you know. Redlands. Victorian houses and the orchards, I think most of the orchards are gone. The big ones. So they're developed and. You know, warehouses and, things that. But. You know, prior to all that, it was all open. You know, you can go out there and. Get lost. Drive a little country roads and there's no more of that. But, time goes by.

Audrey Maier [03:33:05] Okay, well, I think that's perfect place to end.