

Tape 25: Interview with Pedro (Pete) Romero

Interviewer: Helen Krische

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Pedro Romero (Interviewee): When I got more information, then – then I was able to put it down, uh, as true figures.

Helen Krische (Interviewer): Okay, so you sketched all of this of the yards?

PR: Yeah, so that's – so that I would have something to kind of go by so that I could, uh, uh, relay the...the, uh...um...what I thought it looked like to the artist.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: The artist eventually, to do the painting.

HK: Mm-hmm. Okay.

PR: But, like I said, I – I got some pictures here, and...this – this is, uh, one of the pictures. Okay, let – let's go back to this.

HK: Okay.

PR: It was – I – I got some, I forgot to bring it – I got some pictures –

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: That I took with a camera.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: I forgot to bring 'em with me.

HK: Oh, those would be –

PR: I tell you what, I was running late, but...um, um, you – have you seen the – the picture of the buildings, well, what they looked like?

HK: The only thing I have are these that Buddy brought me.

PR: Okay –

HK: And let me scan.

PR: Okay, there – there – there is an artist's picture, of – the –

HK: Really?

PR: This artist, a guy by the name of Frankie Chavez.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: He – he'd, uh, he'd painted the, uh, what the building looked like.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: He got – he got a lot of the – he got a lot of the information from me.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: I was able to get it to him, and...lot of the people liked it, lot of the older people said that was pretty much what – what it looked like, uh, we – we couldn't, nobody had any pictures of it.

HK: Then.

PR: And I even went to the, uh, Topeka, to the Santa Fe, uh...railroad there, and they couldn't help me out, and I went up to, uh, the...what is it, the Kansas Historic...place in Topeka.

HK: Kansas Historical Society, yeah.

PR: I went there and they couldn't help me, I went to the City, here in Lawrence, uh, they – they was able to show me some maps.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Some, uh, maps back in the 1940s, but none of the maps had this, uh, Santa Fe yards in it.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: It showed the tracks, which ran – I think east and west –

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: But there was never a picture of – of this...of this, uh...Santa Fe yards.

HK: Yeah. That's great.

PR: Well, and like I said, this is what I kind of showed the artist what – what, what I kind of looked at. And then – and then here, here – back in 1951, the flood.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: It's an old, it's an old reprint, it's kind of bad but you can see the – the building.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: The building was under the water. And...if you can use any of these pictures I'd be glad to –

HK: So was this – this building, or – ?

PR: Yeah, yeah.

HK: Okay, so it's just –

PR: Um, I kind of wish I could have bought the, uh, the drawing. I mean, the drawing is, it's great, it's all in color –

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: It's uh, but this is the – gosh, I don't even – this was the building [murmurs]. This was kind of looking at the building like –

HK: In the back of it, yeah.

PR: Like this.

HK: Uh-huh.

PR: It was kind of looking in it. But, um, like I said, I'm – I really haven't got too much to, uh, I just thought I'd bring you what – what I had.

HK: Sure.

PR: And this – this is an old picture of the old Santa Fe depot there.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: At the time of the flood.

HK: The flood.

PR: Uh... [long pause, pages turning]. This picture here...this picture here, uh, was looking, uh, east about – about a quarter, about a quarter of a mile down these railroad tracks was where the – where the apartments were at.

HK: Oh, okay.

PR: The Santa Fe apartments.

HK: Okay.

PR: And...and...now, I – I'm sure you – you can look through some of these pictures, but I'm sure you've probably... [long pause, pages turning]

HK: Well, this is a different one I haven't seen. Now, this one I do have a copy of.

PR: Yeah.

HK: Yeah. Got a copy of this one. Um...this one I don't have a copy of. [Long pause, HK murmurs, pages turning]. Now where is this looking from, or...?

PR: Um, that is looking, um, east.

HK: Okay.

PR: Of – of the, uh, the Santa Fe, apart – this was all during the 1951 flood.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And the railroad tracks ran right up this way.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: They were up above; all that was flooded. It was funny because my parents, uh, the 1951 flood came and I remember we waited till the water went down and then we went back in, and tried to clean up the apartments.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: So we could move back in there. The Romeros, the mud [murmurs], that the water had left.

HK: Mm-hmm. So did you live in – in these buildings?

PR: Uh...yes. Um...I really would like to have had you see the drawing, the artist's drawing.

HK: Yeah.

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PR: [Murmurs] Um...

HK: Buddy is supposed to be making a copy of something, and I don't know if it's that drawing or maybe it's, is it? Okay.

PR: I have, um, I have a big artist's, uh, drawing at home.

HK: Uh-huh.

PR: And then the – the ones that I gave Buddy and Irene are – are the smaller –

HK: Okay.

PR: Are the smaller ones, but I got the big –

HK: Oh, okay.

PR: I got the big one and it's beautiful; I got it all framed up and all that. It's a real pretty picture. But, uh, if there's any way I can help you, I'd be glad to.

HK: Yeah.

PR: I real – like I said, there's not really much, too much that I got. I got a few pictures.

HK: Well, I might scan these.

PR: Yeah.

HK: And, do you know the names of all the people in them, or – ?

PR: Yeah.

HK: Okay.

PR: Pretty much.

HK: Yeah, I think that...

PR: I can't remember – oh, I got a sinus headache.

HK: I'll bet, so this weather is really bad.

PR: Yeah.

HK: Yeah. This one I already have a scan of. Yeah, I've been trying to get people to identify the people in the photographs for me, so [laughs] sometimes it's been successful and sometimes it hasn't, so...

PR: I – I got a picture here; these are my brothers, here.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Uh...I – I, I really like this picture here a lot because it's got so much detail about what – what the Santa Fe...what part of the Santa Fe buildings looked like. Um...we had to...okay...where is it, come on...there was a – this – this was the end of the building here.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: This is the end of the building right here.

HK: Okay.

PR: [Murmurs] And back in the back, in these two, I think it was corn, a cornfield. Now right up above here was the railroad track, the Santa Fe railroad track.

HK: Okay, and there's...the Santa Fe depot, is that –

PR: No, no.

HK: No?

PR: The – the Santa Fe depot was farther; I believe, if my directions are right, west.

HK: Okay.

PR: It was farther west. I think the train runs east and west –

HK: Uh-huh.

PR: I think so.

HK: Yeah.

PR: Well, anyways, uh, this – this was kind of a – it looks like it's corn.

HK: Uh-huh.

PR: And then back here, they, uh, somebody at one time had a – a corn...uh – uh, bin.

HK: Mm-hmm.

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PR: It was, I think there was about two of them. This is one of them, where they stored the popcorn. Popcorn. And then this – this was on the tracks, this one, the – the, um...I don't remember what it was called, tank or something like that [murmurs].

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: But anyways, uh...we had a water pump.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: We had a water pump right where...there – there used to be two, there used to be two units, this one here and then there's one right across, and – and this, the pump was right in between –

HK: Middle.

PR: Right between both of them.

HK: Neat. Can I scan this too?

PR: Yeah, yeah. You can – would you like to take the picture out of it? Take the picture out of it.

HK: It would probably work better. We were trying to do one inside a frame this morning and it just didn't –

PR: Yeah, yeah.

HK: So, um, Pete, if I could, this is a – this is a, uh, consent form, uh, for you to sign. Um, to do the oral history with. And it basically just says that you give all the rights to, um, the recording, to the museum, and a copy of it may go to the Kansas State Historical Society.

PR: Okay. Yeah, like I said, I'm not very good. I'm –

HK: Well, you know –

PR: On tape and all that.

HK: Yeah. We can just, you know, do an audiotape, that's fine too. And if, you know, if you ever want to stop during the interview, just let me know and we can just stop.

PR: So, what kind of questions would you ask me?

HK: Okay, well, I have a list of questions here that I kind of go down.

PR: Could you kind of go over them with me right now before –

HK: Sure. Do you want to look at 'em?

PR: Yeah, I'm – I'm not even properly dressed [laughs]. [Long pause] What – what if you don't know some of the answers?

HK: That's fine. Usually I just, you know, I don't really just ask question after question. I just kind of, we just kind of talk and, um, usually the information comes out, I don't even have to ask, because, you know, when people start telling you their story, then it's just kind of natural that a lot of those questions are already answered, so... But if there's any of them that you don't want me to ask you, that's fine too. So... You can just tell me: "I don't want to answer that question," and I [laughs] – that's fine.

PR: So, I guess the purpose of me coming here was to, you know, be interviewed and all that.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: But mostly I just kind of wanted to help you out on any old pictures of something that I had.

HK: Yeah, but you have – you have memories too, of –

PR: Yeah.

HK: Since you lived there, you know, you can, um, you have firsthand experience.

PR: Do – do I have to be – because I'm being – if I'm photographed, will – will it be shown with me in my old...[laughs].

HK: We don't – we don't have to run the camera, that's fine.

PR: Okay.

HK: We can just do it with the – I have a tape in here, so we can just do it with the audiotape.

PR: You know, one of these days, like I said, I'm not very good at this, but one of these days this is kind of what I – I – I wanted to do.

HK: Hmm, okay.

[Long pause]

PR: You know I – I'm kind of better when I'm by myself and –

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: I'm just writing notes down and thoughts [murmurs] and all that.

[Long pause]

HK: You have all your information down here, don't you?

PR: Well, yeah, I got some information, but like I said, I – I never did finish it. This is something that I wanted to do, and – and I never finished it. But, you know, at least I got – I got started a little bit on it, so, you know, I can pass it on to my grandkids and things like that.

HK: Yeah.

PR: But I – I really never, that's as far as I got. And, I mean, there's so much more. But like I said, sometimes, I'm – I'm better when I'm, you know, by myself and just jotting down, you know...

HK: Sure. [Long pause, pages turning] Okay. So I might just, um, scan this too. Just for information about your family. Would that be okay?

PR: Yeah, I guess so. Is – is everybody that's interviewed, are they gonna be used? I mean, are they gonna be, uh, um... [murmurs] Everybody that has an interview will be, uh... in the newspaper or whatever you –

HK: Well, not necessarily in the newspaper. What we'll do is that we'll keep a copy of the tape at the museum. And then we'll also send a copy of the tape to the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. And, um, then eventually out of this, I hope that we can do a story, like in the, um, the Kansas magazine – that's the publication of the Kansas State Historical Society – about Lawrence, because, I mean, things have been written about Topeka, things have been written about Kansas City in the Argentine district, but nothing has been written about Lawrence and the Mexican-American community that started here. And so I was trying to, um, get together enough information so that Lawrence, the story of Lawrence would be heard too.

PR: Yeah.

HK: And, um, because I went to – I went to Spencer Research Library up at KU to try to find information and they didn't have anything. And then I went to, um, to the Kansas State Historical Society to see if they had any information about Lawrence and they didn't, so it's kind of, um, Lawrence has been forgotten, I think.

PR: Yeah, it really has. Um –

HK: And then Buddy called me and asked me if I would do something for the fiesta, because it's the 25th anniversary.

PR: Yeah.

HK: So...

PR: Okay. I – I tell you what I'd like to do with this.

HK: Okay.

PR: Uh, I was kind of doing a project here with this person.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And... I told 'em that I would never use this.

HK: Oh, okay. That's fine.

PR: Until – until I completed this.

HK: Okay, that's fine.

PR: It was kind of a project between me and the other person.

HK: Okay, that's fine.

PR: Okay. But, okay, I – I would be happy to help you do this.

HK: Okay.

PR: Um, like I said, there's one or two questions that I may not be able to help you with.

HK: Okay.

PR: But I think my brother's getting interviewed too, so –

HK: Okay, alright.

PR: In the next couple of days, so –

HK: Okay.

PR: Yeah, so I'll be glad to help you with this.

HK: Okay. So...

PR: I – so do you ask me these questions or I write 'em down or what?

HK: Okay. Did you sign the consent form already?

PR: Oh, okay.

HK: 'Cause we need to do that before we get started. For –

PR: Okay. Ink?

HK: Ink. Yes. I have ink. [Laughs]

PR: Okay...interviewee, that'd be me?

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: You know what? My name is Pete. I go by Pete, but my real name is Pedro. [Long pause] Today's five...

HK: 23rd.

PR: 23rd, '06. I'd better put my last name down.

HK: I'll give you a copy of that before you leave.

PR: Okay. [Long pause] Okay.

HK: Alrighty. Fantastic. Oh, you need to put your name up here at the top.

PR: Oh.

HK: In that blank, there.

PR: Okay. Um, print?

HK: That's fine. [Long pause]

PR: Okay.

HK: Alrighty. Okay. So I'll just start out asking you a little bit –

PR: Okay.

HK: Um...uh, we can identify ourselves. Um, I'm Helen Krische, and...

PR: Uh...Pedro Romero.

HK: Okay. And, um, I'm gonna start this out by asking a question about your – your parents, where they came from, and how you happened – the family happened to end up in Lawrence.

PR: Uh...my – my father was from Veracruz. And my mother was from, um, uh, Mexico City.

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HK: Mm-hmm. And how they ended up in Lawrence.

PR: Oh. Uh...they – they wanted a better jobs. And they – they knew friends that had came to the U.S. and, uh, they heard that there was jobs here in this country, so that's – they came here to this country looking for – for jobs or work.

HK: Mm-hmm. Did he start – did your father start out working on the railroad, or...?

PR: Uh, yes. Yes. He, um...um...I believe that, uh, the, uh, U.S. government, uh, needed workers for the railroad, so, uh, they went down there to, uh, Mexico to find workers and they – they brought 'em over to this country.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: I think that's how my parents, uh, got into this country, with the help of the U.S. government.

HK: Mm-hmm. Do you know what year that was, or around what time that was?

PR: Um...[long pause]. I'm gonna say maybe, uh, 1917.

HK: Okay. I think that's one of the earlier families –

PR: Yeah, oh, yeah. The – the first ones.

HK: Yeah.

PR: And – and can I tell you more?

HK: Sure, yeah. Just, you know, we don't have to set, you just tell me whatever.

PR: Well, they, uh, my mother and dad both – I believe the year was 1917. And my dad was real young, and my mother was even younger. I think my mother was about 6 years younger than him. Uh, they married in, uh, 1921, I believe. Um...they raised thirteen kids.

HK: Wow.

PR: Thirteen kids, and that's...I think I'm probably about the middle – about the middle child.

HK: Mm-hmm. What were their names?

PR: Um...Gonzalo Romero and Avelina Romero. Um...[murmurs] my dad, uh...had one sister. And...his mother, uh, I believe his – his real dad died. So he – he had a stepfather by the name of, um...what's his name...God, I can't remember [murmurs]. Felix. Felix Chavez.

HK: Oh, okay.

PR: And that – that was his step – that was his stepdad. So, somewhere along the line, he – his real dad must have been named Romero.

HK: Did they, uh, did your father speak English before he came to the United States, or was that something that he – he learned while he was here?

PR: Um, it was something that he learned while he was here. He was – him and my mother were always embarrassed by – by their English. So they – they spoke to us, they spoke to us in Spanish.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: But, yeah, my – my dad learned – my dad learned English, but, you know, because he had, uh, you know, because he...his whole life centered around the English language. But, uh, he was more comfortable with the Spanish language.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: My mother – my mother never did learn, uh, to speak English very well. She would speak it, she would speak English, but, uh...she – she was never comfortable with – with speaking English, but we grew up, you know, both on, on...we grew up Spanish first of the language, then English second.

HK: Mm-hmm. So were all the children born in the United States, or were some of them born in Mexico before they moved here?

PR: No, we were all born in – in, we were all born in Kansas.

HK: Oh.

PR: Uh, we were all born in different towns, though, because my, uh, my dad, uh, would, uh, get orders from the railroad to go to different – different towns to help...with the – with the railroad tracks.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: So I think we lived, like, in Humboldt, we lived in Baldwin, we lived – I think we even lived in the Kansas City area for a short time. Um...but I guess mostly all our life was here in Lawrence. But we did – we did move around. But even though we – we did move around, my brother – my older brothers and sisters would – would tell me about some of the places we – we lived. Some of the towns we lived in, but I – I don't remember. The only place I remember here is in Lawrence.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: That's the only place I remember. But they did tell me, though, that we moved wherever the railroad sent my dad, wherever they needed.

HK: Mm-hmm. So did he just work exclusively for the Santa Fe railroad, or did he work for other railroads too?

PR: No, no, he just worked for the Santa Fe railroad. He – he worked on the crew – on the track crew. Um, it was rough, it was rough, they worked outside all the time. I remember as a kid, that my dad, I remember Dad coming home with his rain – his rain jacket on, and I remember during the wintertime, um, when it snowed they – they...called my dad. They would go after my dad to, uh, go to work to clear the tracks out.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And it was funny because at that time, they didn't have telephones.

HK: Yeah.

PR: So the only way that they could – they could get in touch with the men was somebody from in town, the depot, would go up there. And it must have been a good experience –

HK: Yeah.

PR: To go to these different, uh...uh...places where the men lived, because at that time I don't think that too many Mexicans had telephones. I'm pretty sure they didn't, so the only way they could ever get in touch was to go out there. So...

HK: Huh. Did he work – did he work all year long on the railroad?

PR: Yeah, he worked for 46 years. Um, there was a time, uh, probably back in the 70s or 80s, that he could have retired, but they – they lost track of his records –

HK: Oh, my gosh.

PR: They lost track of his records, so in – in order to, I guess get his full benefits, he had to work – he had to work 46 years.

HK: Oh, geez.

PR: But it – it was, it was a tough life on guys [murmurs]. I really admired my dad for – for...for working that many years.

HK: Yeah. Did he – did he just, did he have any other side jobs, or any other –

PR: No, no. Uh, he didn't. The Santa Fe gave him a patch of ground right beside the tracks, and, they gave the men, and the men would go out there and plant gardens.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And I remember as a kid, be hot out there and we'd be out there with our dad and help him plant tomatoes and peppers and sweet potatoes and all that. And it was funny because we'd be out there helping our dad and some of our friends, our age, would come down and want us to go play. Go play with them, but we couldn't do it because our dad wanted us there in the garden. My dad was pretty strict, a good man, a good...but he was pretty strict with us. We always – we always wanted to go play with our friends, but we couldn't ever do it.

HK: Yeah.

PR: And – and that – that was about the only, that was about the only side job that – about the only thing that he did, really. He didn't have a side job, not that I know of.

HK: Mm-hmm. How did – how did he, um, make out during the Depression years?

PR: Well, I – I think they did okay because they – they lived there at the apartments.

HK: Uh-huh.

PR: And the apartments were free.

HK: Uh-huh.

PR: They were free, I – they had water, but it was from the pump.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: They – their light was, I think it was from this little, uh...kerosene lamps.

HK: Oh, uh-huh.

PR: Kerosene lamps. Um, that was their light, um...their heat was with coal. They used to have the – the kitchen stove was, uh, coal-fed, the, uh, we had the potbelly stoves there, and that was our heat. I – I remember, I remember wintertime, boy, I don't see how we survived. I don't see how we survived, but we did. I remember as little kids, there was a bunch of us. Uh...as kids, we, at nighttime we'd get up there and huddle around the...that potbelly, uh, stove and stay warm, you know. Gosh I remember that potbelly stove being – being about as red as – as – that purse there. And, um...um, for...food, my parents raised pretty much everything that we ate.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Um, his job was always – I believe his job was always secure with the railroad, because they all – the railroad was the only transportation, you know, at that time –

HK: Uh-huh.

PR: So his, I think his job was pretty secure. Um, food-wise, everything, we – he, uh, raised chickens, uh...I think he even had a hog or two.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Um...for meat. For vegetables, he had this big garden and they stored a lot of the stuff.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: For the – for the winter time they [murmurs]. Canned tomatoes, peaches, um...pears. But, a lot of the stuff that they – that we ate during the winter time was – was canned.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: So – so but they always, they always had something, they always had something to eat. I remember we used to eat the heck out of chicken. [Both laugh] Chicken, chicken was always, chicken was always there.

HK: It's stable.

PR: Yeah, really.

HK: Yeah.

PR: I, uh, I'm really interested in completing this [murmurs], but like I said, I – I'm better, you know, when I'm – when I'm by myself and [murmurs] special things, certain things happened that bring me back to these memories.

HK: Yeah, sure.

PR: And I linger on these memories and I – I want to jot them down and to express the feelings that I had about that time, so [murmurs] complete that.

HK: Yeah. Yeah. And, uh, your mom, did she – of course, she made all of her – she made tortillas for bread and, um...

PR: Yeah

HK: Did she do a lot of sewing for the kids, for their clothing?

PR: Right, yeah. Uh...yeah, my mother, she did, um, she – she did all the cooking...she...did a lot of the clothing.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: I remember the girls, my sisters, would always get these real pretty flour dresses, you know, made from the –

HK: Flour sacks.

PR: Flour sacks and things like that. And, um...my mother, well – our – our main ingredients of food was instead of bread, we used to eat tortillas. So she made tortillas all the time.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: She made tortillas all the time. I mean, she made 'em, I think, in the morning, and she'd make 'em again in the afternoon, so we – we've always had [murmurs] tortillas. We ate a lot of frijoles.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Potatoes and things like that.

HK: So what would be a typical meal at your house?

PR: Um, a typical meal would be, uh...then?

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Oh, tortillas and frijoles. Potatoes. For meat, it – it was usually chicken.

HK: Chicken.

PR: So that – that was pretty typical.

HK: Did you have meat every day, or was it sort of a once or twice a week thing, or – ?

PR: Um, okay, I think it was maybe...I'm gonna say, I'm gonna go back about chicken on, you know, I'll go back, I think maybe chicken, maybe a couple of times a week. The – the rest of the time, uh, my parents bought a lot of, like, uh...bologna meat and maybe pork chops, whatever. I guess my parents would always get whenever on sale, the pork chops. But yes, we – we – we had our share of, uh...of good healthy food.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: We, I can never say we went hungry. I mean, you know, there was probably a lot of times we didn't like what was being served, but, I mean, it was there for us to eat if we wanted to eat, so...

HK: Sure. Did you – did you as a child go downtown much; did you go, like, to different businesses and...?

PR: Um...yeah, we – I tell you what, I lived there at the Santa Fe apartment till I was...I think it might have been the sixth grade.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And we all – we all decided, we all decided it was a...it was a joy to – to go into town.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And we – we'd go to the movies. Um...our, the school – the school was in town, so you know, we all went to New York School. And the Santa Fe – the Santa Fe apartment – well, we call 'em the Santa Fe yards. We did. Somebody else might call it the Santa Fe apartments, but we called it the Santa Fe yards. We, to get to – to the town, we had to go over the tracks. Had kind of a steep little hill, and that was the first set of tracks.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And between – in between that track there and other tracks, it must have been about, I'm gonna say at least five or six sets of tracks that – that we had to cross in order to say we were in town. Once we got past the tracks, we would say we were in town. [HK laughs] But, um, there – there was a road, there was a – a road where the – where the trucks and whatever needed to get back in there used it [murmurs], but we always used the – we would always get to town by crossing the tracks, either walking across the tracks or crawling, uh, crawling underneath the track, underneath the boxcars.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And a lot of times when we did crawl under the boxcars, you know, the engine would, you could hear it start and the train would jerk and [murmurs], but we'd get out. We were so used to – to crawling underneath the – the – the train tracks. The trains –

HK: Did anyone ever get hurt?

PR: No, nobody ever did. We did that a lot. That was, we probably did that as much as – there was always, there was always trains there, so we – we – we did a lot of crawling underneath 'em. And every once in a while you know the train wouldn't be there where you could stand up and where you could walk across the tracks, but a lot of times the tracks – the – the trains would be there, so we had to crawl, you know, crawl underneath 'em to get, you know, into town. Um, we did that as long as I can remember. Going to school, yeah, I don't know how we did it with our schoolbooks and all that. But, uh...we used to do it, and, oh...all – all of the stores that, uh, my parents went to, um, like I said, my – my parents raised a lot of the food that they needed. We were talking about the Depression. They – they did a lot of their – their food raising. But then, uh – uh – they also did a lot of, uh, grocery shopping.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Um, in town. In town I'm talking about streets like, um, uh...9th and New York...9th and – let's see – 9th and New York. At 9th and New York there used to be a little store called Johnson's Grocery Store. And then, um, let's see...and then there was another store, uh...another store...on 8th Street. We used to call one "The Little Store" and it was kind of a one flat deal. And then we used to call – we used to call the – the other store "The Big Store" because it was a two-story house [murmurs].

HK: So these were just little neighborhood grocery stores.

PR: Right, yes. We did – we did a lot of the, uh...one of the reasons why we went in town was to go to the store, or go to school, or go to our church, St. John's Church, which – which I think must have been, I'm gonna say, from the Santa Fe yard to the church, I'm gonna say it was about a mile.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: It might have been more, maybe a mile and a half. But we used to, we used to walk that...on Sundays. We would all walk down to – we all walked to church. And it would be cold [murmurs]. We used to go to the movies. Our parents would give us, like, what was it, fifty cents. You could – you could always see a movie and buy popcorn and all that stuff for fifty cents. And, um, other times we came into town was, well...we – we'd play baseball. We'd play baseball at the South Park. We'd play, uh baseball at the Municipal Stadium.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: It's right there, right off –

HK: Hobbs Park, yeah.

PR: Yeah. But we – we – we came into town quite a bit. We always envied the – the kids in the city. Yeah, we – we'd always envy them kids 'cause they – we were ashamed. We were ashamed to be living at the Santa Fe apartments because, you know, the Santa Fe apartments, um, uh...everybody, all our friends had – all our friends – some of our friends, now, the ones that lived in town, they had addresses.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: House addresses, and we didn't have one like that.

HK: Hmm.

PR: Uh...there – there must have been – there must have been an address for that. Otherwise how could we have gotten our mail?

HK: Yeah.

PR: But, um, we always envied our friends in the town because, you know, they – they, uh, they had – they had an address and all that, and all we were – we were just the, uh, the Santa Fe yards.

HK: So did you experience a lot of prejudice?

PR: Um...

HK: In Lawrence at that time?

PR: Myself...I didn't think so then. But now, I – I – I think I did. For one thing, you know, I go by Pete, but my real name is Pedro on my birth certificate. And I had thought about it years later and I said: "Why, how come I didn't keep my – my name Pedro?"

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And, uh...um...I – I really didn't experience a lot of, uh, a lot of, uh...racial things like that. I did notice it, you know, that the groups all kind of stuck, you know, the kids all stuck to themselves, the white groups would stick to themselves, the Hispanics would to themselves, the blacks to themselves and all that. But, um...I guess I did experience it, because, uh, it was always us. It was always us, it wasn't us mingling in with the other kids and all that. We – we were just...we were just as a group, like we knew we had to stay together.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: Um...[sighs, long pause]

HK: Is there – was there any difference between, like, the – the kids who came from the Santa Fe yards and the kids who actually lived in houses?

PR: Yes.

HK: Around on Pennsylvania – and New York Streets?

PR: Yeah.

HK: Those Hispanic children?

PR: Yes, yeah.

HK: Was there a lot of difference between the two, or...?

PR: Oh...

HK: Did you still hang together close?

PR: Yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah, we – we hung around them and, um...we always thought that they were better than us. But, I mean, you know, we all got along real good and all that, so – I really don't think there was too much, uh...difference. Only that, you know, they – they lived in houses and we lived in – in the apartment building.

HK: Yeah. How did school go for you? Was it...?

PR: [Sighs]. School to me was hard. School to me was hard, I was...I was pretty attached to home.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And it was hard for me when I had to go to kindergarten at the school, it was hard for me. I remember looking out the window, the school window, wishing I would go home. It was – it was, it was – it was scary for me, it was, because like I said, we'd always – we'd always pretty much, uh, um...stayed at the – the apartments.

HK: Mm-hmm.

PR: And then when it came time to go away, like being, uh, being home for the first time. But, I mean, you know, I guess all – all kids experience that.

HK: Yeah. Did you speak any English before you started school, or – ?

PR: Um...I did speak English. I – I, it's funny because – [tape cuts off at 47:18]

END OF TAPE 25