

Tape 26: Interview with Erminia (Ermie) Gauna and Kitty Pacheco

Interviewer: Helen Krische

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Helen Krische (Interviewer): I'm gonna ask you a little bit about, um, your parents and, um, when they first came here, do you know a lot of information about that?

Kitty Pacheco (Interviewee): Did you get any of those dates? What dates did you come up with?

Erminia Gauna (Interviewee): Oh, just the dates of [murmurs] –

KP: Oh, when they were born –

EG: And died. Let's see, well, Daddy was...let's see, Daddy was, um, born in 1882.

HK: Okay.

EG: And he died in 1953. Then Mama came – was, uh, when she came, she was 18. In 1891.

HK: Oh, okay.

EG: And she died in '51. Those are the ones that I had in the Bible.

KP: But do you remember when they were – when they came here to the United States?

EG: Well, they came and – to the – uh, he worked on the railroad in Ottawa, 'cause that's where Paulita was born.

KP: Okay.

EG: Our sister, Paulita.

KP: So, the one – the blind girl.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: So, she died in 1934, I think. Way back.

EG: She died in '41.

KP: Oh, '41? Okay.

EG: 'Cause I remember we were in grade school [murmurs]. She was older, so she would have been, she was still living – well, she was born in Ottawa. So that's when he was working, Dad was working on the railroad.

KP: That's when they first came.

EG: And then they – yeah, that's when they first came into Ottawa. And, uh – no, I take it back, 'cause – 'cause he went to –

KP: They were in Michigan at one time.

EG: Michigan, where Harry was born.

KP: Okay.

EG: And then –

KP: Then came back to Lawrence.

EG: No – no, see, Paulita was first [murmurs] was the very first.

KP: No, Paulita was first and then Harry.

EG: And then, Harry, yeah.

KP: And then –

EG: Well, they must have been in Michigan after they went to Ottawa. And then they came to Lawrence.

KP: That's correct.

EG: 'Cause they had this [unintelligible].

HK: Mm-hmm.

EG: They came from Mexico, and then Ottawa, as far as I knew. And then they went to work.

KP: In Michigan –

EG: For some reason, his job took him to Michigan. And, uh, then that's when Harry was born. And then they came back to Lawrence, and then we were born.

KP: We were born in North Lawrence.

EG: She just found out the other day that we were Sandgrass.

KP: Sandgrass. I didn't even know it [laughter]. Do you know about that organization?

HK: Yes.

KP: I would like to –

HK: Organization? I didn't know there was an organization.

KP: Yeah, there's an organization. A – a lady friend of mine, Vivian Commons, we work at the church; we were working at a funeral dinner last week.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And we were talking about it, and she says: “Are you gonna go to the – ” or, she said: “Did you know about the Sand – uh, Sandgrass Reunion?”

And I said: “What's the Sandgrass?”

And she says: “Oh, that's for us people that were born in North Lawrence.”

I said: “Well, I was born in North Lawrence.”

And she says: “You were?” And we were born on the same block.

HK: Oh, my gosh.

KP: On Lyons.

EG: I can't believe that.

KP: Vivian Commons.

EG: I can't believe that.

KP: I always thought that was so funny, 'cause we've known Vivian for years. Her – ah – her daughter was married to her son.

HK: Oh.

KP: To Vivian's son. So we, you know, we've just known her for many years. Well [laughs], and then she was telling me that in June the 3rd, they have a reunion in North Lawrence at – at the, um, what school? Lincoln?

EG: Lincoln.

KP: Lincoln.

EG: Well, it's not Lincoln anymore.

KP: The one that's –

HK: Ballards?

EG: Ballards.

KP: The one that's in Woodlawn, in North Lawrence. Woodlawn. And she said they have this reunion every year, and it'll be June the 3rd and she says people come from all over –

HK: I'll be darned.

KP: And so, I planned to go, but, uh, she's gonna give me some – some times and all that. Because that's the same day I've gotta be a hostess in Ottawa at the apartments [murmurs].

HK: So, do you have any idea, so when your parents first came to Lawrence, do you know what year that was, or...?

KP: Well, it had to be before she was born. And you were born in '20...um...

EG: I was born in '27.

KP: You were born in '27. So they got here around '25 or '26 because Harry was born in '24.

EG: Yeah.

KP: And he was born in Michigan.

EG: Yeah.

KP: And you were born in, let's see, in '27, so it had to be in the middle there.

HK: And Paulita was born...

KP: Well, she would have been born way before Harry, so...

EG: 'Cause when she died she was 21 years old.

KP: Yeah. She had two children. She was – she was blind, and she married an older gentleman, and he, um, had grown children. But she – they had two little children, a boy and a girl. And then she died, and my mother took in the little girl and her – one of the older children of her husband. Took the boy in Wichita, so they got separated, the two kids.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: She was – when she died, she was very young. She died right after the little boy was born. ‘Cause Cecil was first and then Harry. So that would have been in – between ‘24 and ‘27. So I would say about ‘25, ‘cause I know Harry always talked about coming as a baby, so...

HK: Okay.

KP: It had to be in between there and when they came back to Lawrence.

EG: I know we’ve been here all the time.

KP: And then we were, of course, born here, so we didn’t know of any other –

HK: Uh-huh. Do you know what region of Mexico they were from?

EG: Let’s see, Daddy was from [murmurs]. Daddy was from Durango.

HK: Okay.

EG: And Mama was from, uh, [Place Name].

KP: [Valles?]. Wasn’t she from Valles?

EG: No.

KP: ‘Cause I remember –

EG: That was her –

KP: I know that was her maiden name, but I thought that was a state or something.

EG: No. She was from [Place Name]. It’s in the Bible, I think.

KP: It’s in the Bible, okay, so...

EG: [Place Name].

KP: Alright.

EG: [Place Name].

KP: Okay. See, I don’t know if [murmurs] –

EG: And, uh, Daddy was from Durango, so...

HK: Okay.

KP: When Daddy came here, he was a young man in the army in Mexico. And he actually was upset with the Catholic Church. So, he just decided that he was gonna leave Mexico and leave the church and came here and became a Baptist.

HK: Okay.

KP: So that's all we know, is Baptist, because that's what we were born.

EG: [Murmurs] the First Baptist Church of Lawrence. What was it?

KP: That one they destroyed. It's gone now.

HK: Ah, okay.

KP: Was it on 9th and Kentucky, or...? I don't remember.

EG: One-way street –

KP: There was a – there was an old Baptist Church and had the big white pillars.

EG: Well, let's see, the Round Corner was up here, and – and...church was down the street.

KP: So that would be 10th.

EG: 10th? I always thought it was 9th. It was a Baptist church right on the corner.

HK: That would be 8th, I think.

KP: Was it 8th?

HK: 8th or 7th, probably 8th.

EG: It's gotta be there.

HK: I think it's 8th.

KP: Mm-hmm.

HK: Yeah.

KP: Maybe that parking lot. There's a parking lot there.

EG: Yeah. Because I remember we used to walk from, we lived at 801 Pennsylvania. And we used to walk to church all the time, so...It wasn't very far. At least we didn't think so; we were young.

KP: We didn't – it wasn't far for us.

HK: Did your dad speak, uh, any English at all when he came?

KP: No, not when he came. No. I don't think. I don't know for sure, but I don't think so. Maybe a few words, but –

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: He learned English, he more or less taught himself. [EG murmurs] Because he spoke pretty well, with quite of an accent, but he spoke pretty well. Now Mother understood completely, she understood well, because she couldn't speak and say anything in English, not expect her to know what you were saying, so...But she had a hard speaking the language.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: She would say a few words –

EG: I think she just didn't want to.

KP: I don't think she wanted to, right.

EG: 'Cause I remember when we went to enroll in school, uh, Fanny Torres was one of the – the young ladies in our neighborhood there. She was a young lady. And –

KP: Served as an interpreter.

EG: Served as an interpreter for all of the – all of the Mexican people.

HK: Hmm.

EG: And that's when she enrolled us in school. She enrolled you as Elizabeth.

KP: She put my name down as Elizabeth – she translated my name to Elizabeth from Felicitas. That's quite a translation, but she did. And, uh, we – we got rid of that right away.

EG: And then she put mine as H-e-r-m-i-n-i-a. And my –

KP: Her-minia.

EG: Yeah, like Herminia. Or Mina or something like that. And, uh, of course it was wrong, and Mom got home, see, she couldn't – she could not speak, but she noticed that right now. She said: "That is not right. That is not..." So she grabbed me by the hand and we go back to the school. Change the name.

KP: You tell 'em, that's wrong. Change the names.

EG: And then when she seen hers, Elizabeth's [murmurs], for Kitty.

HK: Uh-huh.

EG: Felicitas [murmurs]. And she said: "Oh, no, no, no." She was getting really angry 'cause that was wrong, see?

HK: Uh-huh.

EG: So she paid attention to stuff like that.

KP: And she, of course, could read and write. And she could read Spanish because she taught Spanish when she was a young girl.

HK: Oh.

KP: She taught Spanish. In fact, she had little books and she tried to teach us. Well, I learned something, but Ernie just refused. [HK laughs] She was rebellious.

EG: But I – I learned a lot.

KP: Yeah, later on. But she – but she had these little books like See Jane [EG murmurs], See Jane Walk or See Jane Run and all those little books, well, they were in Spanish too.

HK: Oh.

KP: And she had some of those, I wish I had 'em, those little books. But, um, I do have some of Daddy's, uh, Spanish hymnals, 'cause we used to sing, you know, songs.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: Hymns.

EG: I've got some of them, of Daddy's. But then when they stole the trunk, Daddy's trunk –

KP: Oh, that's when we lost those little books.

EG: Everything was in there.

KP: Somebody stole the – we went to Daddy's funeral when he died.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: Uh, we lived on New York Street and Daddy was living with us after Mother died. And, uh, we all went to the funeral, that's when you didn't lock the doors.

HK: Yeah.

KP: And he had his room in the basement. He had a room fixed up with a shower. And we came home and I didn't even go down there, you know, when your daddy dies, we were so close to him and – I didn't even go down there, I don't think, for days. And somehow, I went down there and realized all his stuff was gone. So, somebody had come in while we were at the funeral.

EG: And why they would just target his things –

KP: Yeah.

EG: I don't understand that.

KP: Just his things. So, we – we kind of had a suspicious of who it might have been, but you can't just go accuse anybody and I always thought maybe some day it would come up in a garage sale, or, you know, 'cause that trunk had – it had the little serapes, see Daddy was a – was a – came from an Indian tribe. [Tribal name] Indian tribe in Mexico, up in the mountains. And when he was born, they evidently couldn't take care of him; they brought him down to this family and their name was Garcia. That's how we ended up with the name Garcia.

HK: Oh, okay.

EG: That's why his middle name is Estrada.

KP: So his name, middle name is Estrada – Angel – and they just had Angel on there. Later on, I guess they...

EG: Well, but...afterwards he always signed it Estrada.

KP: I know, but I wonder where that came from. I don't know where that came from. But the story was that he – they left him in this little serape. And that little serape was in that trunk. So that would have been –

EG: And so was our grandpa's, uh, Daddy's – or Mom's dad's – little outfit that he wore. [Murmurs] They were in there also.

KP: They were in that trunk and – and those things were gone. And I – I truly always had this suspicion of Eddie.

EG: No, I thought it was Teresa.

KP: Teresa. So, see, you wonder where that would be – who that would be handed down to.

EG: Wasn't even where it ended up at. And it had his Bibles.

KP: And his Victrola.

HK: Hmm.

KP: He had this old big Victrola. See, when we were little we learned, um, the music that he enjoyed was waltzes, Sousa, and – and, uh, classical music. He loved classical music. He had all these records in this little – and all that was taken.

EG: That record, you know, the big fat one –

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: They were real, uh, Paul Whiteman orchestra. I remember some of those. And some of the waltzes. Strauss. And –

EG: Very, very little Mexican music.

KP: I don't even know if I remember him having any.

EG: He had this [unintelligible] Chihuahua that Mom used to dance to.

KP: Well, that was a musical.

EG: Yeah.

KP: None – none of these, uh, what you consider Mexican songs.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: He never had any of those. But it was just music and mostly – mostly classical. And, uh, a lot of waltzes.

EG: Mom would get around in – in our little house and she'd dance, and Daddy would say: "Mija loca." You know –

KP: Crazy woman. [HK laughs]

EG: 'Cause he never, I don't think, I never even seen him tapping his foot at anything.

KP: No, no.

EG: He just sat and listened and listened. But he, I never seen him tap his foot or anything.

KP: But he made noises. I remember sitting on his lap, when he made the noises of different instruments.

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: And entertained me that way.

HK: Huh.

KP: All these different instruments, he'd name them and say: "This is what this sounds like," and then he'd make all these noises for me. He did that.

EG: I never seen him tap his foot or anything.

KP: No, no. Not – not act like he wanted to dance or anything. But Mother did. She danced with those little cas –

HK: Castanets.

KP: Castanets, and she would dance.

EG: She had this full skirt, I remember, seeing her dance around in it.

KP: In fact, we went to a party, I remember, one time at the Nunez house. I remember going to a party there at the Nunezes. With what's his name? What was his name, Pablo?...Pablo's parents. I don't remember.

EG: Oh, Soledad.

KP: Soledad. We went to their house, and I remember we had food, and then there was dancing and Mama was out there dancing with those things.

EG: That's the only time I ever seen her out in public.

KP: She was performing for everybody. Yeah, I remember that. And – and we were just in grade school. So she had to be in her – she died when she was 60 and I was 23. So, let's see, she was – she was in her what, forties? She was –

EG: Actually, she was young, but to us she looked old all the time.

KP: Yeah, well, to us.

HK: Yeah.

KP: You know, the kids. In fact, kids at school thought she was our grandma.

HK: Oh, really?

KP: Well, see, we were –

EG: She wore her hair real severe. Well, you know, a little back like that and a little knot back there.

KP: But she *was* older than all the other mothers. The mothers took the kids that we went to school with. She seemed older.

EG: Well, yeah. Well, to us she seemed. She probably wasn't really, because –

KP: Well, she was what – 39, I think, when I was born.

EG: She was only 60 when she died.

KP: Yeah.

EG: She was only 60 when she passed, so she couldn't have been –

KP: That's true. Yeah, she was.

EG: The way she dressed, I guess, and the way she kept herself, she just –

KP: When she was little, real little.

HK: What – which of the railroads did your father work for? Was it the Santa Fe?

KP: Santa Fe.

EG: No.

KP: Wasn't it Santa Fe?

EG: No, uh, Rock Island.

KP: Oh, I didn't know that. I don't remember him working on the railroad, but I guess he didn't after we were born.

EG: He did.

KP: He did?

EG: Uh-huh. When we lived in North Lawrence.

KP: In North Lawrence? I just remembered the – the big garden.

EG: Yeah.

KP: He had a big garden, 'cause we lived in North Lawrence with a big yard.

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: He had this huge garden and – and I'd go with him in his little wagon and we'd sell cabbages and all that stuff. I remember that.

EG: I never went.

KP: She wouldn't go, 'cause I was [HK laughs]. I used to go with him. He carted me around in his wagon. And he sold, um, vegetables. And he worked for the WPA.

HK: Oh, really?

KP: You know, the WPA that was here?

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: Well, I remember they'd come in a truck and pick him up early in the morning, there on 801 Pennsylvania, where we lived there, on the corner. And they would, 'cause the men would gather at that corner, and there was the Chavezes and, uh...Jimenez, I guess. Martinez. And – and Daddy. And they all would come to the corner and – and they'd pick 'em up there. And his mom would fix him a lunch and he would keep on all day long and they went to Lone Star, and they built all those, that dam and they built, um, those big tables and picnic tables type things.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: They worked there. At Lone Star. And for pay, he didn't get paid, but he got this money order type thing.

EG: One of those scrip – Script?

KP: They called them money orders at that time.

EG: I didn't know that.

KP: 'Cause that's what he called them, money orders. And then we would take it to Lippman's Shoe Store, and we'd get our shoes, and this was in September.

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: But every month he'd get a – a money order that he could take to the grocery store, which was Carter's, right there by where we used to live, it was about three – what is that on 8th and New Jersey?

EG: [Murmurs] New York.

KP: 8th and New York, that used to be a Carter's grocery store.

HK: Hmm.

KP: And we used to take that money order –

EG: They called them Mexican [murmurs].

KP: And then we would, and that money order lasted you for a month. You just left it there, you'd order, you'd buy stuff and they'd just keep a mark of it somehow.

HK: Kind of like a debit card.

KP: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

HK: Just keep taking.

KP: Yeah, so that's how he got paid for his working in the – at Lone Star.

HK: Oh.

KP: But they never saw money. No, that was the WPA. But besides that, of course he always had a big garden. Always. Our backyard was just garden [laughs] I remember there was a little path to go to the outhouse, out by the alley.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: But other than that, it was garden. Well, Mother had flowers, so she had a lot of flowers for the front part.

EG: The front was her part.

KP: But all the back was – was, it was just a path to go through the garden.

EG: Over there on [murmurs], on Pennsylvania Street.

KP: On Pennsylvania. 801 Pennsylvania

HK: So – so he basically made a living, like, selling fruits and – or, vegetables in the summer?

KP: And –

HK: And working on the WPA.

KP: And working on the WPA.

EG: And we picked potatoes.

KP: And then we picked potatoes when we were little.

HK: Was that for the Heck – Heck farms?

KP: For Heck and Shoskey. Shoskey, what was the other family? I wanna say Shoskey. [EG murmurs] Yeah, we picked for them, too, but Heck was most of it – Heck and his son, ‘cause it was father and son, they both had farms.

EG: And they used to come pick us up, too.

KP: And they’d come in a big truck and pick us up.

EG: The whole neighborhood would go pick potatoes [laughs]. So that was a summer job.

KP: Yeah.

HK: Yeah.

KP: Little later than that, I remember the – the troops going through there with the big trucks, all those German soldiers –

HK: From the POW camp.

KP: When they were staying at the concentration camp here, POW camp, and they would come by our house there in this big truck with the wooden sides, and they’d be standing up, and they’d be singing German songs. And I used to think that was so neat. They were real, they seemed real happy.

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: And I dated one of the soldiers that worked, that was in the Army, that was one of their guards.

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: And he would bring me those big fat sandwiches of ham on this homemade-type bread.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And he said [murmurs] “They eat awful good there.” And so they were eating good, ‘cause I ate some of that ham and it was good [laughs]. He used to bring me a sandwich of it. But...those, the – the soldiers, they lived good.

HK: Did you grow up at home speaking both Spanish and English?

KP: And English, yes. Well, we spoke, of course, Spanish when we were born, from our parents. But we went into school, kindergarten, and you're just nothing but English.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: So, we considered that our first language because that's what we learned, English at school, and then the Spanish just kind of faded out, because, you know, we spoke with Daddy and of course we spoke it with each other all the time.

HK: Yeah. Did you, were you punished at all at school if you spoke Spanish, or...?

KP: Oh, no. We didn't speak Spanish at school.

EG: No, just English.

KP: It was just English.

EG: They put us in [murmurs] Fanny Estrada. She's the one that, uh, took us, Mom, to the school to enroll in kindergarten and put us in there. And there we were, sitting there and looking around and everybody talking up a storm. Then we could just speak Spanish, 'cause that's all we talked at home [murmurs].

HK: Mm-hmm.

EG: And then we...

KP: And we picked it up fast, you pick it up fast.

EG: Before you know it, you're talking English.

KP: Yeah, I don't even remember the transition, because it was just English. That's all I remember.

EG: That's all I remember too. And then we didn't associate too much with the Mexicans because...

KP: Everybody was Catholic.

EG: Everybody was Catholic but us.

KP: See, so that kind of made us different.

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: And – and my parents wouldn't let us go to their house, and they wouldn't let 'em come to our house. Of course, we played at school together.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And...but, we were just, were not allowed. There's nothing about going to spend the night with some friends, you know, like they do now, kids. You didn't do that then. I don't know of anybody ever doing that. [EG murmurs]. But, um, we got along at school –

EG: Chores to do when you got home. But it – it was – it was strange, the way that children pick up the language.

KP: Oh, a child can pick up that language easy.

EG: [Murmurs] You don't even know how you...

KP: I grew up to – when I went and moved to California when my husband joined – rejoined the Marine Corps, he was in the Marine Corps and got out when we got married in '46, but then went back to Korea and all that, so he went back in and we went to California. And I found out that, um, they needed interpreters over there, so I ended up taking some college courses.

HK: Oh.

KP: And I worked as an interpreter for years for the courts. Spanish interpreter. But that Spanish that I learned at home when I was little, it helped a lot because you learn a lot of the idioms, you learn a lot of the little things that you just say –

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And you know, that – that you just know. So that helps a lot, when you're translating.

HK: Yeah. Um, your mom at home, did she make your clothes or did you purchase clothes, or...?

EG: Made our clothes.

KP: Made our clothes.

EG: I remember the little flour sacks.

KP: She used to bleach 'em. She had this big tub out in the yard, and Daddy fixed it for her out there, and she would bleach these flour sacks, you know, that had – they were faded, but they were on there, the letters were on there. [HK laughs] I remember I could see 'em. But it didn't bother us, because everybody was poor.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: At least it didn't bother *me*. The only time it bothered me was afterwards, going to junior high school, when the girls wore nicer clothes and, you know, and they were wearing, um, bobby socks and, um...

EG: We had to wear those stockings, they're made out of God knows what. I don't know what they were made of.

KP: Those brown stockings.

EG: Brown.

KP: Kind of brown stockings, and we had to wear those. And we would roll 'em down, we'd get to the corner and out of Mother's sight, and we would roll 'em down because we wore those garters.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And you could just roll 'em down, down to around your ankles, and we had these donuts. [Laughter]

EG: We probably looked worse than we would've if we would have just left the stockings up.

KP: We did that.

EG: Oh, boy. Had them big old donuts around our skinny legs.

KP: And I would have done anything for a pair of bobby socks. I thought, all, you know, [murmurs], and Naomi.

EG: Yeah, all those girls –

KP: Those girls, they always wore these beautiful little white socks and – and little pompoms on their shoestrings. I remember all of that, but I just envied it, you know, because I wished I could have that. But we didn't.

EG: Oh, well. We survived.

KP: We survived. And we didn't get in trouble.

EG: Yeah, that was the main thing.

KP: You can't get in trouble when you don't get to go anywhere.

HK: Yeah. Yeah.

EG: Mom was so strict.

KP: She was very strict. We couldn't walk with the boys, coming home from school. We had to cross the street and walk on the other side. And we're coming home from junior high school, going all the way down 9th Street to Pennsylvania to go home, and – and we'd have to walk across the street, 'cause she – she better not catch you, and you know, she would walk up and meet us sometimes.

HK: Oh.

KP: So you never knew when she was gonna be there –

EG: No.

KP: At the corner, so we just always had to walk across.

EG: And those crazy boys, they'd throw smoke bombs at you.

KP: And they'd chase you.

EG: And what are you gonna do, you know, you know you're gonna laugh, and –

KP: And you're gonna have fun. We were having fun, but...

EG: Looking around to see where Mama was at.

KP: Yeah, we was always afraid Mama would see us.

EG: She was always, she was very strict with us.

KP: I always told everybody, there's no way we could have gotten in trouble, 'cause we didn't go anywhere, to get in trouble.

HK: Yeah.

KP: You went to school – we couldn't even go to the ball games afterwards.

EG: No.

KP: You know, the parties you have after this, you go to the ball game and all that stuff. We went to school, and you'd better be home a few minutes after. She allowed you so much time to walk home.

HK: Huh.

KP: And we even came home for lunch. From – from junior high school, which was over here on Vermont and 9th.

EG: 9th.

KP: 9th and Vermont, you know, and – and –

EG: [Murmurs]

KP: Those three buildings, yeah. We walked from there to 801 Pennsylvania, so it was down...

HK: That's quite a ways.

KP: Yeah. We went for lunch. We went home for lunch. That was – they didn't serve lunch in school, I don't think.

EG: No. Some of 'em would just bring sack lunch.

KP: Everybody brought lunches, but we never did. Don't know how come. I don't know. We didn't, we went home.

EG: I don't know why we didn't bring a sack lunch. Cause [murmurs], she stayed for lunch and she was a well-to-do little girl. They had the cleaners here in Lawrence.

KP: [Name, murmurs] She was considered our rich little girl.

EG: Yeah.

KP: 'Cause she had, like, I remember her – a snowsuit, she, you know, those one-piece snowsuits you had. It was turquoise. Beautiful. And I remember she wore that with a bonnet to match and everything, you know, in the winter.

EG: And she had a muff.

KP: And a little muff. Little white muff. And we thought she was just a princess. I wonder where she is now.

EG: And then when we got older, uh, she used to invite us to her house. She had a playhouse her dad built, a playhouse.

KP: Yeah. Her mom would fix Kool-Aid and cookies.

EG: And she invited us, I don't know how come we got invited, 'cause –

KP: Well, we were in the class. She invited the whole class.

EG: Yeah, but they were, uh, the Mexican kids didn't go.

KP: No, you're right. I don't know. We – we always got invited.

EG: We got invited.

HK: Hmm.

EG: Where we used to go. And, um, very nice, like I say, there was a playhouse, so cute.

KP: She had a little playhouse.

EG: And they served real food. [Laughter]

KP: Yeah, we got to eat all those good things, you know, that we didn't get at home.

HK: Yeah. How did your family fare during the Depression years?

KP: Well, Daddy was buying a house in North Lawrence. And I think it was \$900 or something like that, but – the house. He got it down to \$300, that's all he owed on it.

EG: That's all he owed on it.

KP: In '29 when I was born, and when the bank foreclosed on it. \$300 and he lost his house. So that was...

EG: That was a lot of hard work for him.

KP: It was a lot, and you know, \$300, there's no way you could find \$300, you couldn't beg, borrow or steal it. There was just no place, and nobody that you knew that you could get \$300 from. And so, he lost the house. So that's what the Depression did to us, you know, and then of course he went to [clears throat] come to – into Lawrence proper and, uh, rented the little house. What was it, 801 Pennsylvania – \$5 a month?

EG: Something like that.

KP: And 50 cents for the water bill, I remember that. Because we shared the faucet with two or three other families.

EG: Other families.

KP: I think the Martinezes and the Chavezes, and I – and us. We shared that one water faucet.

HK: Oh, gosh.

KP: [Unintelligible] to have water.

EG: Just the pipe would, you know, that little –

KP: Between our house and the Martinez house.

EG: Nothing fancy, just a...

KP: Did you ever hear of the El Tampico?

HK: Uh-uh.

KP: On 801 Pennsylvania Street, a little tavern? That was our house. Became a tavern and then eventually they knocked it down and now there's nothing there.

HK: Hmm. [Murmurs]

KP: They – they knocked down all those houses in there.

EG: [Murmurs] and the house was gone.

KP: Yeah, they knocked down several of those houses.

EG: Oh, and the Martinez's house. Ours, Martinez and Chavezes were all knocked down.

KP: They're still – it's still vacant there now, I think, last time I drove by.

HK: Hmm. So, what – what did you do for, um, healthcare? Was there any health care available at that time?

KP: The only thing we had, was at school, we had a school nurse.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And I remember she'd look at our teeth and check our eyes or whatever, but nothing ever came up, never saw a dentist. First time I saw a dentist, I was married and I was pregnant and I had a – a...tooth that was giving me problems, and it created a – a bag, or cyst.

HK: Abscess.

KP: Abscess. And so I had to go in and have it, um, lanced. My doctor lanced it. Until after the baby was born, which – my daughter – and then I went to the dentist, that was my first dentist trip. So when we were little, we didn't have, even though they did have these cards and I remember they would mark –

[EG and KP overlapping voices]

KP: Cavity or –

EG: Cavity or anything. Our teeth were pretty good though.

KP: I guess we were. You see, we didn't have sweets.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: I mean, sweets were a treat. Maybe on your birthday you got a cake or a pie. Mother's favorite, uh, lemon –

EG: Meringue, raisin, lemon pie.

KP: Or lemon meringue.

EG: That was all she ever –

KP: But that was our treat, for maybe a birthday or a holiday.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: But, uh, we never had desserts. We never had salad dressings. We had this platter of vegetables on the plate – on the table, and you just help yourself to radishes or green onions, stuff that Daddy grew.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And we ate a lot of – we ate very little red meat because if she got a pound of hamburger, she made a stew out of it or something for all of us. We never had *a* hamburger. You never had *a* steak. Well, steak, forget it. [Laughter] We never had an egg. We had, like, fried potatoes in a – in a pot, and then she would break a couple eggs over it, and that's what the whole family ate, these potatoes with an egg on them.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: Or green beans, or...stuff with egg on them.

EG: [Murmurs] like they do nowadays.

KP: Yeah. That never happened at our house.

EG: We couldn't afford 'em.

KP: And never any desserts, so see, we grew up on all these good veggies and –

EG: And then we had that whole milk from that – I don't know – that man that used to come around and sell Mom the milk [murmurs].

KP: Trying to think of his name. What was his name...?

EG: Mr. Cannon.

KP: Was that his last name? [Murmurs] He came around in a horse and buggy.

EG: Yeah. He dropped off milk. And he had that little tin container that Mom always had for the milk. And –

KP: But at times, when we didn't have that, we didn't always have that. At times we had that powdered st –

EG: Oh.

HK: Oh.

EG: We got – she got it from the commodities, that lady.

KP: The commodity. She used to give us things like –

EG: See, Daddy had the – the veggies all the time. So they would barter, I guess you'd call it. And, so this lady next door, the Martinezes, and, uh, she always had cartons for some reason.

KP: She had cheese. She had cheese, and she had raisins.

EG: I forgot the raisins.

KP: Raisins.

EG: And, uh, those pies –

KP: That we'd trade.

EG: She would trade vegetables for – for what she needed, a little sugar. She'd trade –

KP: Remember during the Second World War when we had stamps?

EG: But they all [murmurs] like that.

KP: Remember that?

HK: The rations.

KP: The rations?

HK: Uh-huh.

KP: The stamps? Well, we got our share of stamps, but we didn't have the money to go buy the meat or anything, so we'd give those – Teresa got a lot of those stamps, and the sugar, and, you know, a lot of things that we didn't really use a lot of. The only thing we used sugar, like Mama would make, she made anything out of tomatoes. She made tomatoes, regular tomatoes, and she'd jar, you know, she'd put everything up for the winter. And she would make tomato jam, tomato ketchup, she made everything [laughs].

EG: She used 'em all up.

KP: But she used everything up, 'cause Daddy had all this excess stuff.

HK: Uh-huh.

EG: And we had piccalillis.

KP: And piccalillis, she made out of green tomatoes. She made a lot of stuff like that. They had, Social Services, I think, had a kitchen.

EG: Yeah.

KP: And they had, I guess a place where she went there and – and they did –

EG: She taught you how to can.

HK: Hmm.

EG: And preserve stuff. She went. She was the only Mexican that ever went.

KP: That's right, that's right. 'Cause she was –

EG: Mom was very...frugal.

KP: She was frugal.

EG: Frugal.

KP: Very frugal.

EG: And she would just make –

KP: If a blouse didn't fit her any more, it was fixed for me [laughs]. I got, I was at the bottom. I got all [laughs] all the leftovers. [HK laughs] Remember our winter coats? And she would – she

would buy a winter coat, like at a – at a thrift shop, and she'd come home and redo it for us, you know. Those were our coats. [Laughter] We – we must have been [laughs]...

EG: Looked like something [laughs].

KP: But she could sew. She was a good seamstress.

EG: I think I took after her. In fact, some of the ladies would ask her to sew.

KP: But she was –

EG: All they did was the embroidery stuff, and Mama didn't. She just –

KP: She made everything from scratch.

EG: Made shirts, for Daddy and for my brother, and dresses for us and her aprons, her ever-loving aprons.

KP: She always had those aprons.

HK: She liked aprons, huh?

KP: She always wore an apron.

EG: She had one all the time.

KP: Out of those flour sacks.

EG: And, you know, we used to go – Daddy would go down here to the...[murmurs].

HK: Uh-huh?

EG: And that's where they had [murmurs] the sacks. I remember when I used to go over to the store, I call it the store, but it was to get our flour.

KP: It came in twenty-five-pound bags.

EG: Yeah, and you could see the sacks all packed up, and you could pick what color, and they knew Mom, they knew she made dresses and stuff out of 'em. So they let her pick out what she wanted.

KP: She would have never bought anything that big a print. She always bought these little prints, or little plaids.

EG: But mostly little prints, like rosebuds. Little flowers and things. I'm glad she didn't like –

KP: She didn't like gaudy colors. She didn't like bright colors. She liked – which is opposite, because most of the Mexican population –

EG: Yeah, they all like –

KP: They like the big, bright colors. But she – not her, she – she wanted pastels, you know, pinks and blues and greens.

EG: [Murmurs] looked like clowns.

KP: She would just, she was something else. She put rickrack around those aprons.

EG: Yeah.

KP: Remember the rickrack? I remember running away from her one time, she was after me for something. And I came out – I came out of the house and she was chasing me, so I went around the house. She was chasing me. Well, she chased me around once, and she was coming around, and I kept on going. Well, she stopped and waited for me. [HK laughs] And all I remember was all those flowers. When I hit her apron. When I hit her apron and she caught my head under – under her legs here somehow, she beat me something terrible [laughter]. I never ran away from her [laughter].

EG: [Murmurs] You big dummy, what did you stop for?

KP: I just kept running. My mistake. She says: “Are you gonna run from me again?” “No!” And she – she would hit the – hit you in the back, you'd end up with wart – welts on your – on the back of your legs.

HK: Uh-huh.

EG: She was the one that did all the discipline. Daddy never touched us.

KP: Daddy never touched us. He was so sweet. He was – he was just good. About the time he came home, it was all over, you know.

EG: She wasn't – she wasn't one of these moms: “Wait till your dad comes home.” Uh-uh.

KP: She didn't wait.

EG: She fixed it right, and then there.

KP: And if – and if we, the two of us a lot of times got it together, because if we didn't tell on: “She did it,” or she'd say I did it, well then we both got it. So it didn't do any good.

EG: So, we both got it just in case.

HK: Were you both born at home, or...?

KP: Mm-hmm.

EG: Uh...we had – she had a midwife.

KP: There was a midwife. She lived over on Pennsylvania Street, 800 block on Pennsylvania about the middle of the block, her name was Petra. But I don't remember the last name.

EG: No, that – that was for you. But for me, there was a...a white lady who lived a block from where we lived.

KP: Oh, well, for me it was Petra.

EG: I know it was that lady.

KP: That Mexican lady. She was a real old lady. Well, I don't know if she was or not, but anyway, Daddy probably [EG murmurs] – but anyway, when I was born it was storming and real bad rain in April.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And Daddy walked all the way across the bridge down to Pennsylvania Street to pick her up, to bring her back, so by the time they got there, I was born, but then she had to cut the cord and all that. But, so that was a hard time for Mom. 'Cause we couldn't afford – couldn't afford doctors and stuff.

EG: And the only reason that they didn't call this lady that – I forget, but I used to know her name, but I don't remember now. She passed away. When I tried to get my birth certificate, she forgot – she forgot to record it.

KP: Record it.

EG: In Topeka and I had a [murmurs], and she'd already passed away when I was gonna go and take a trip to Mexico. I was, uh, married, and of course had had [murmurs] no certificate. They didn't know I existed in Topeka. I said: "Oh, boy." So I had to get Daddy's Bible, and people that she knew, and...

KP: It was just a mess.

EG: Finally, I got it. It took me about four or five years.

KP: My goodness, yeah...

EG: The people had already passed away.

KP: Yeah, well, even Doña Petra had probably already died.

EG: She'd already passed away too.

KP: But – but they had mine. She had recorded mine, or somebody had recorded it.

EG: Had to be.

KP: Mine was in Topeka.

EG: But that lady in North Lawrence, she didn't. And, uh...I tell you, I had a terrible time. [Murmurs] but I finally got my birth certificate.

HK: Growing up in Lawrence, did you experience any prejudice?

KP: You know, I've heard that a lot, and we've discussed that. We've heard friends of ours, and you know, even relatives now, that have – had experienced all of that. And we never did. I don't know why. Maybe somehow, I think maybe the fact that we were Baptists...we were kind of, we were kind of away from the other Mexican families when it comes to, like, celebrations and all this, all these church socials, fiestas and [murmurs] we didn't belong to any of that. The only thing I remember was that dance group. [EG murmurs] Some lady came and talked Mother into letting us do it, and of course we were ecstatic, 'cause it was – it was dance, you know, we loved that. And so, but I – I like we're not in the picture, so evidently she didn't let us come [EG murmurs] to get the picture taken.

EG: I remember we – she made skirts for us.

KP: And she made skirts and blouses, she made these beautiful blouses, embroidered all that stuff on it. And, but, oh, I must have been five or six and you must have been six or seven. I mean, we were little –

EG: Oh, yeah, Yeah, we were little. Well, it couldn't have been too young, because I remember that we –

KP: Who was there in our age group?

EG: 'Cause I remember her making us the skirts, and –

KP: I remember the little – the little blouses.

EG: I said: "Oh" –

KP: And we went and – and we'd go to practice, she'd take us to practice. And, uh, and we danced for a group. We either danced at KU or somewhere we danced. We went to dance.

EG: Well, someplace they took us to dance.

KP: I think it was at KU. Like, for some reason...

EG: 'Cause, see, there's Theresa.

KP: Who was our age.

EG: Juanita. And...both Juanitas [murmurs].

KP: Well, I know we were in grade school.

EG: It was in grade school.

KP: Yeah, well, see, they're grade school age.

EG: See, that's about how old we were. About ten. There was Clara. [Murmurs] 'Course, she's older than I am. She was older than – she was older than you, so she was older. But we were this age, probably. Yeah, we were probably that age.

KP: But I remember those little skirts and that's the only thing I can remember that we had anything to do with the – with the other kids socially.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: 'Cause we, of course, never had anything to do with them. But no – we, I didn't feel any prejudice. Uh, as I – when I grew up and got married, and I left home and went to Ottawa to live with my husband for not even a year, 'cause our daughter was born and then we came back to Lawrence to live and Ernie was married and living here, and my brother. And we used to party and go to different places and I – I don't know if you knew of the Skipper Williams family.

HK: Yes, I've heard of them.

KP: Williams. Well, he was our best friend. And we went to the country club, you know, for dinners and – and my husband and I were with him. And, uh, Jan, and we used to go to all these – we'd get on the plane, he had a plane, and we'd fly to Oklahoma, or we'd fly to Nebraska, we'd fly to Colorado. We'd go to these games, for the KU games.

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: And with him, and we never felt any prejudice anywhere.

EG: He'd come to my house, and I'd cook for 'em, and we had parties.

KP: We had parties at our house, we were always at our house. Other friends, we had a lot of, at that time, of course he was, uh, already an alumni from KU. And he had all these, uh, uh, friends that were, like, he brought Wilt Chamberlain to KU. And so, we were all just friends, 'cause we

all [murmurs] football players and...yeah. And we had a lot of fun. And this was...what, in the 50s?

EG: And we had that big bus.

KP: In the 50s.

EG: Uh-huh, yeah, in the 50s. Had that big bus [murmurs] like a party bus.

HK: Mm-hmm.

EG: I guess football players and Skipper Williams had it. Man, I'm tell you, these guys. Come knocking on your door [mimics knocking sound]: "We're here to party!" [Laughter]

KP: We lived on Massachusetts Street then. And Skipper would come to the door, and we'd already be in bed. And he'd come to the door and he'd just stick his hand in with his empty glass, ready for another drink. [HK laughs] And we'd get up, next thing you know we got busy going, and we're having a good time. And he had a, uh, a cabin out at the Lone Star lake. And we'd go out there what he called "roughing it." We'd go out there and he'd take the maid, and take the kids, 'cause they were – his kids were little. Shawn and [clears throat] Todd. At that time his name was Odd. Do you know Todd Williams?

HK: Mm-hmm.

KP: He runs – works at the athletic club or something. Well, his – his name was Odd, like his uncle Odd. But when they found out that he was retarded –

HK: Oh.

KP: They changed it to Todd. So, he used to be Odd. But when he was little like that, you – you couldn't tell – [Tape cuts off at 47:28]

END OF TAPE 26