

Interview with Teresa Hernandez Schwartz

Interviewer: Nora Murphy

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Teresa Hernandez Schwartz (Interviewee): ...Them all up after I got married. With my mother and all the rest of the older women. We used to go to the basement to make that hot chocolate, stirring it from 5:30 in the morning till eleven o'clock at night.

Nora Murphy (Interviewer): Oooh.

THS: I mean, till 9:00 in the morning.

NM: Wow, four hours?

THS: And then we'd rush up and go to Mass.

NM: Gee.

THS: We used to do that every year for our Lady of Guadalupe Day.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And then of course we'd dance, you know.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And, uh, um...you, know, uh, the women. Because when the – when the women from the church had a – a...

Unknown, possibly Anita: A dinner.

THS: They wouldn't let us out in the – where they was serving.

NM: Oh.

THS: [Murmurs] The Mexicans stay in the kitchen washing dishes. So Miss DeAmber, Miss Adamson, Miss Greeley, and about three more ladies. They felt – I guess they felt bad for us, 'cause they told us that they wasn't going to, uh, they wasn't going to...um...they wasn't going to let us be treated like that.

NM: Oh.

THS: So they started the group, where they had all these Mexican ladies. Started a group for the ladies. And then, uh, we had a colored lady, Mrs....oh, I can't think. She's been – she's buried next to my fath – to my folks up there Mt. Calvary. She came in our room. And we used to have [murmurs], so way back then was when they started the Mexican fiesta.

NM: Oh.

THS: Uh-huh. Way back then, because we was all young enough that we couldn't – all of us girls was in there. And, uh, Mrs. DeAmber used to say – she used to be something else – her husband took pictures here in town for people. You know, wedding pictures and –

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Anyway, she used to say: "I don't like the way they treat you. They won't let you in their – in their, uh, groups. So we're gonna do a group ourselves."

NM: Oh.

THS: Okay.

NM: Now, she wasn't Mexican, right?

THS: No.

NM: Right? Okay.

THS: No, uh, Mrs. DeAmber, Mrs. Greeley, Mrs. Adamson, none of them was – was Mexicans. But because they treated us so bad, they decided they was going to form their own group with the Mexicans.

NM: So, did they form a group for the – the mothers, too, or just for the children?

THS: No, for the mothers.

NM: Oh, for the mothers to get together.

THS: Yeah, that was for the mothers, yeah.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And, uh, then this when they started – this was way, way before then.

NM: Right.

THS: But that's when they started making the – they started the Mexican fiesta, too. Uh, way back then, Loretta used to run it – Loretta Chavez.

NM: Loretta? Uh-huh?

THS: She used to –

NM: She's still there [laughs].

THS: Does she – does she still work there?

NM: Yes, she's still cooking.

THS: I didn't know if she did or not.

NM: She's the lead – she's the head of it.

THS: Oh, is she?

NM: I mean, she – 'cause she has all – everything in her mind, like how everything has to go, and how many...how many beans and how many pounds of pork and...she has that all memorized, so...

THS: Yeah.

NM: She's kind of in charge, yeah.

THS: I know what it's like, 'cause, see, uh, we used to clean all them peppers, Leo and I.

NM: Oh.

THS: Forty pounds of peppers.

NM: Oh.

THS: And the beans. Oh, my. We used to sit out on the back porch, Leo and I cleaned all the peppers and all the...

NM: For the Mexican fiesta?

THS: The next morning he would say – he would say, you know: "My fingers are kind of hot."

NM: Oh.

THS: I said: "That's because you're not a Mexican." [NM laughs] Yeah, we used to – we used to do that.

NM: The ladies told me they used to make the tortillas from scratch.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Yeah, now, you know, they buy the tortillas now.

THS: I used to make that bread from scratch, too.

NM: Oh.

THS: And, uh, they – one year they told us, they says: “Well, we’re gonna let all the...all the good women make the bread, and all the people that – and all the women that don’t know too much make the cookies.”

NM: Oh, for Our Lady of Guadalupe?

THS: So they looked at me and they said: “You make cookies.” [Laughter] And then, uh, the last year I went to help, uh, they went to put me to, uh, make burritos. I know how to make burritos. Anyway, somebody – somebody went and told Loretta that I was too slow.

NM: Oh.

THS: So, I said: “To heck with it; I’m going home. You do ‘em.” You know.

NM: Yeah.

THS: And they told Joyce Mace too, Monty’s wife, [murmurs], they told her the same thing.

NM: Oh, no.

THS: I mean, you know, they says: “You’re too old. You – you can’t make ‘em fast enough.” But we could do everything else fast enough.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Like wash dishes.

NM: Oh.

THS: In the kitchen.

NM: Sure.

THS: Mm-hmm. Yeah. We could do all of that, but...

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Oh, well.

NM: Well, you know, they didn't do Our Lady of Guadalupe last year.

THS: Because, uh, I asked them – I was gonna make cookies, believe it or not. [NM laughs] I had everything ready to make 'em.

NM: Yeah.

THS: And they decided that they wasn't gonna make 'em, because the other group that goes to church...had their own Our Lady of Guadalupe deal.

NM: Oh, like the New Mexicans.

THS: Uh-huh.

NM: That are –

THS: And they don't really associate with these other women.

NM: Oh.

THS: I mean, you – you notice that when they – they used – if you ever went to the basement [murmurs] hardly see any of them people down there.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: It was all the Mexicans that had been here for a long time.

NM: Right.

THS: So then they decided, I guess Loretta did, 'cause she's always been in charge of it, that that, you know, they'd make theirs at midnight, and it was too soon to make it – make it the next morning for us, but we used to go in there at 5:30 and start a batch of [unintelligible]. You couldn't burn it.

NM: Mm.

THS: You know, you had to be really careful.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Stir, and you couldn't stop it, you know?

NM: Wow.

THS: My sister-in-law done that for years and years. And I used to pick all the older Mexican people, like her mother, my mother, Mrs. Garcia, all of 'em.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And take 'em up to the church, so they could start making the chocolate. Mm-hmm.

NM: Wow. That's a labor of love.

THS: Yeah, it was [murmurs]. But that's the reason – I said: "Oh, me. And here I got all this stuff to make the cookies, and I won't get to make 'em."

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: I'll make some for my family this year. Still here, you know.

NM: It'll be another good Christmas. [voice overlaps with THS]

THS: Yeah.

NM: Yeah. I'd better get going now.

END OF TAPE