

Interview with Teresa Hernandez Schwartz

Interviewer: Nora Murphy

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Teresa Hernandez Schwartz (Interviewee): So...

Nora Murphy (Interviewer): So, um, did you know Father John Cousins got installed?

THS: Yeah.

NM: Yesterday.

THS: Uh-huh. That's what Monty said.

NM: It was very beautiful, yeah.

THS: Says the archbishop was there.

NM: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

THS: So, yeah.

NM: The church was packed, full of people.

THS: Was it?

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Yeah. He said it was at the 4:30 Mass.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Yeah. Did you go to it?

NM: Yeah, I don't usually go to 4:30 Mass, but, um, I just wanted to support Father. He's not a spring chicken, you know, he's...

THS: That's what that – that's what Monty said. Do you know he's been there at Haskell before? I thought that I had heard about him.

NM: Oh, yeah.

THS: Yeah. 'Cause he said he was at Haskell for a while.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So. But...he's – he says he seems to be real nice.

NM: He is really, really nice. I wish you could – could meet him.

THS: Yeah. Well, maybe one of these days.

NM: Yeah.

THS: But Father, uh...what was his name that was here before, he lives up on the hill now.

NM: Oh, Father Curtis?

THS: Ah, yes.

NM: I'm gonna move this closer to you, 'cause the machine is going.

THS: Okay, yeah. I – I'm sorry, but this goes on some Sundays, as you know, just –

NM: It's a busy day.

THS: Yeah.

NM: Did your son come today, this morning?

THS: Yeah. And my grandson was here, too.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: You know, they just popped in and out.

NM: Yeah.

THS: And so, she came to some – think she only comes every other Sunday.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And then Anita was gonna have to work 12 hours today, but she decided she didn't want to, because she's already worked. She worked 12 hours and then she – she got, well, she went to work at 4:00, got off at 11:00, went back to work at – before 7:00, and then got off at, uh, 3:00 and then worked four more hours, so...

NM: Gee whiz.

THS: Yeah. So...

NM: How many kids do you have?

THS: Four.

NM: Oh, four.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: So there's Anita, and –

THS: And Andy, Anna.

NM: Andy. Anna. They all start with "A"?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Who's the fourth one?

THS: Well, except Richard. Richard.

NM: Oh, Richard [laughs].

THS: Yeah. He doesn't, uh, start with "A".

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Yeah, he called me yesterday and he says on November the 12th he's gonna have a knee replacement.

NM: A knee replacement. Oh, that – he's not that – he's not very old, is he? Is he in his –

THS: Oh, yeah.

NM: In his 50s, maybe, or...?

THS: He's, uh, Andy's 61. And Richard's 18 months younger than he is.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: So yeah, they're – 'cause the girls are gonna be 55 in December.

NM: Oh, really?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Okay.

THS: Yeah. Anita's thinking of retiring.

NM: Well, she's young enough; she could have a second career doing something else.

THS: Yeah. She wants to go get a job, where she can have insurance.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: But Monty said today that if she went ahead and, uh, took disability, well she – she can. She's got that, uh, um, myasthenia gravis.

NM: Oh, she does. Oh.

THS: And so she – he said if she wants to take it, she could get, uh, her retirement from Frito Lay and then get retirement, you know, disability.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So, I don't know. She's – he's gonna talk to her and see.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Sorry, I started to put a tablecloth on the table this morning, and this is as far as I got.

NM: Oh, yeah, well, it looks just fine.

THS: Well, everything is stacked up there. I'll clean it off before I [unintelligible].

NM: So, what, did you have any more stories for me today?

THS: Well, um...did you hear about the – of the...prisoners of war that was right – right there?

NM: Visitors of war?

THS: The prisoners.

NM: Prisoners?

THS: They had – there was prisoners, a camp right there.

NM: Oh, prisoners' ward. Oh, no, I don't know anything about that.

THS: Yeah. Well, it was right in front of the railroad tracks. And, of course, we was down that little hill from the railroad tracks. We used to sit there and watch 'em play basketball and ping pong and all that. They used to be out there, yeah. They had their barracks and they had a fence clear around it; it's right there, just at the end of 11th Street.

NM: Oh.

THS: That's what that was.

NM: Now, was this during World War II?

THS: Uh-huh.

NM: And these were Germans?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Oh.

THS: German prisoners.

NM: Uh-huh, but you could just see them through the fence?

THS: Yeah, we used to sit on the railroad. Not all of us, just, you know, certain ones that wanted to see. Sit on the rail – rails.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: And watch 'em [NM laughs] play ball.

NM: What do you know?

THS: And then we used to, um, watch the circus come in.

NM: A circus.

THS: Uh-huh.

NM: Where did that set up?

THS: Uh, it would come in on the rail – on the – on the railroad.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: You know. I mean, not the railroad, but yeah, the railroad. And, uh, we could watch 'em unload the elephants and all these fancy-looking girls and –

NM: Oh.

THS: You know, and all that stuff. Yeah, we used to sit on the rail and watch them whenever they came to town. Yeah.

NM: Where would the circus set up; where would they set –

THS: Right up here.

NM: Really?

THS: Where I had to pick rocks up for years and I'm still picking, now I don't get out there anymore.

NM: In your yard?

THS: Mm-hmm. That was a parking lot.

NM: Oh, your yard was the parking lot for the circus, and the circus was a little bit north?

THS: No, it's right up there.

NM: Oh, a little bit east?

THS: Yeah, where the park – next to the park.

NM: Really?

THS: You know where that glass house is?

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Well right on the other side of the creek.

NM: Oh.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: So, you really haven't moved very far.

THS: No, uh-uh. No. It's – it's, um, we used to...well, when we moved here, Leo started to plant, so there was rocks – I have picked rocks up just since the last couple of years, when I haven't been able to. Used to pick boxes of 'em, and then Andy would take 'em up to his house and put 'em in his driveway.

NM: Oh, really?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Big rocks?

THS: Well, no, you know what they put in the parking lots.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: Mm-hmm. About that size.

NM: Just gravel, uh-huh.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: So, there was all these rocks because it used to be a driveway. Oh.

THS: No, it used to be a parking lot.

NM: A parking lot, I mean. Yeah.

THS: Uh-huh, right there.

NM: Uh-huh [laughs].

THS: So, yeah, the garden was full of 'em. Leo plowed the ground up, and you could see 'em [murmurs].

NM: Oh, isn't that funny.

THS: Mm-hmm. But, um –

NM: And did you ever go to the circus when you were a kid?

THS: Uh-uh.

NM: No?

THS: We didn't have any money.

NM: Oh.

THS: Yeah.

NM: How much did it cost?

THS: Ah, I can't remember.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Just – we never went to it, because we couldn't afford it.

NM: Right.

THS: We could sit far away and watch 'em, you know.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: We could sit over there just as you get off the railroad tracks coming down 11th Street.

NM: Yeah.

THS: We used to sit up in there somewhere and watch 'em.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: But we, of course they had a big tent, we couldn't see anything.

Anita: Mom, are you cold? Do you want your jacket?

THS: Uh, no. [Murmurs]

Anita: I'll bring it to you.

THS: Yeah. Um...any – would you like to have something to drink?

NM: No, I'm fine.

THS: Okay.

NM: Thank you.

THS: Yeah, there's water, and –

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And Dr. Pepper.

Anita: [Murmurs] Excuse me.

THS: What's the matter? Oh.

Anita: No, I'm just waiting for the thing to [murmurs].

THS: Oh. Anyway, uh, we used to do all of that, yeah.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: I mean, you know, the circus would come park their car – the rail cars right in front of our house, so we would see all the elephants, because after they got 'em off, they would go to Massachusetts Street and have a parade.

NM: Really?

THS: And so, we used to watch – watch 'em unload the elephants, and all these fancy girls with their feathers on and everything, you know. Yeah.

NM: Were there big crowds of people to –

THS: Not –

NM: Come to the –

THS: Not – not when they was here, 'cause we didn't go to Massachusetts Street.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: We – we watched everything just off of sitting on the railroad track.

NM: So, but, was there, like, a tent where people would come to see a show, or was it...?

THS: Well, there was a tent, yeah, down here.

NM: Did they get a lot of people to come to the tent to see the show?

THS: Well, if you had money.

NM: If you had money [laughs].

THS: Yeah, we didn't have any money.

NM: Right.

THS: So, we would just sit far away and watch people walk in. We couldn't see any of the – of the tricks or anything that was going on.

NM: Yeah.

THS: You know, but we did see them unload all the – everything. Their wagons and –

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: And the clowns, and everything, we...

NM: So, when you were talking about the, um...the prisoners of war, and you were saying they were over there, were – are you – are we still talking about your parking lot here? Like outside your house, or were they –

THS: No.

NM: They were further down.

THS: I'm talking – I'm talking about in front of La Yarda.

NM: In front of what?

THS: La Yarda.

NM: Oh, La Yarda.

THS: See, there was two rows of houses like this; they faced each other.

NM: Yeah.

THS: The water pump sat right in the middle. And, uh, then the railroad was here. It was just about from here – wasn't even as far as from here to the Fields house.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: It was closer than that. 'Cause it just went up the hill.

NM: Oh.

THS: We used to slide down that hill when we got back from school, instead of going clear around.

NM: Ah.

THS: A lot of times, we didn't do that too much because we would dirty our clothes.

NM: Yeah.

Formatted: Spanish (Spain)

THS: So we didn't, uh...but no, we used to see the prisoner camp. You know, you come down 11th Street

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Do you know where that path is? Where that – you ride your bicycles and walk?

NM: Right.

THS: Okay. When you go to the end of the, uh, there's the [unintelligible] – there's the City garage there.

NM: Yeah.

THS: Okay. You just go that way, and, uh, there's buildings right in there. Just right off the 11th Street.

NM: Right.

THS: That's where the – that's where they, uh, put their, uh...they built fences. Real tall fences, you know.

NM: Isn't that something.

THS: And they would bring 'em in on a – on a – on a, not a boxcar, but they'd bring 'em in on a regular passenger car.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: The train, and then they would unload 'em there.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: There was quite a few of 'em.

NM: Hmm. Gee.

THS: We thought it was kind of fun, you know, sitting up there watching 'em playing ball.

NM: Very unusual.

THS: Well – 'cause we knew that they was prisoners of war, you know.

NM: Uh-huh. Now, how old were you then?

THS: I was, uh...oh, my, let's see. Well, it was during World War II.

NM: Right.

THS: And I was born in 1930.

NM: Okay. So you're, like, in your teenage years.

THS: Uh-huh.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Yeah, some –

THS: Did you know anybody that had to go to war?

THS: Yeah, my brother did.

NM: Your brother?

THS: And my sis – and my brother-in-law did. And then my other brother, but he didn't go to war. He just joined the Navy.

NM: Oh.

THS: Uh, but my brother Joe, he was up there.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And my, um, brother-in-law, he was, uh...he was right in the middle of the – of the shooting, and they shot him in the leg, and he fell, he couldn't – couldn't move, you know, he was there. And the – he said the Germans was coming with their rifles and their bar – bar –

NM: Bayonets?

THS: Bayonets, yes. And they would, uh, stick 'em to make sure that they was – that they was dead, you know, and he said he heard 'em coming. So what he did, he said, he pulled one of 'em, a dead one, over on top of him. So, he says they came along and – and, uh, stuck the one on top of him. And that's the only way that he got saved, and he was able to get out of the war.

NM: Wow.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: He came home.

THS: Yeah.

NM: Did Joe come home?

THS: Joe came home, yes. Um, they both came home. Joe – Joe was, uh, in the Air Force. And, uh, he was on the ground crew. And, uh, he said that, uh, the Germans was coming. And, uh, the commander told ‘em to all go up, you know, with their rifles, you know, and fight. And he said that they was just young kids in his, uh, in the squad...uh...

NM: Squadron?

THS: Squadron, yeah. My mouth isn’t just right today. And so, he says that the commander told him, he started to run back. And he says the commander told him to shoot him.

NM: Oh!

THS: And he says, he told my mother: “Mom, I couldn’t shoot him. So, he told me, he said: ‘If you don’t shoot him, I’m gonna shoot you.’” ‘Cause they didn’t want ‘em to run back, you know.

NM: Yeah.

THS: They wanted ‘em to go forward.

NM: Right. And it started a panic if somebody runs back.

THS: And he says: “I wasn’t,” so they put him in the brig for six months because he didn’t – he wouldn’t do that.

NM: Wow.

THS: And we didn’t know where he was at. We – we thought maybe he was dead somewhere, ‘cause we hadn’t heard from him. He used to write all the time to Mom, but he hadn’t wrote for quite a while. And so my mother got, uh, this lady that was Spanish, she was [laughs], you know, Mexican, that knew how to speak English.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So, she went to her and asked her if she would go to the Red Cross and find out, you know, something had happened to him. And so, she went, and, uh, then, uh, they got – they got – he got permission to write to my mother and tell her that he had been in the brigs for six months.

NM: Oh, gee whiz.

THS: ‘Cause he wouldn’t have shot that – he wouldn’t shoot that –

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Young kid. But he says: "I can't [murmurs] shoot him or anything." I mean, he said: "I felt like running back."

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: You know.

NM: Yeah.

THS: You're scared.

NM: Oh, of course.

THS: You see all these people coming after you.

NM: Right. It seems so immoral to shoot one of your own.

THS: But he wasn't hurt. When the war was over, he came home.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And my brother-in-law came home too, but he was hobbling for quite a while after that.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Wasn't able to do that, but yeah. [Murmurs]

NM: Do you remember any shortages during the war, or things that were different? Did you have to get those coupons, or...?

THS: Yeah.

NM: Yeah?

THS: Mm-hmm. We had a coupon book for sugar.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: And coffee was really hard to get.

NM: Oh.

THS: You know, they would just give you one, I think, every month.

NM: Oh.

THS: But of course, we wasn't used to drinking coffee. We drank milk all the time.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: We got it from the farmer down here at the corner. Down 11th Street at the railroad. He had some apple trees, so we got the apples too.

NM: You did? [Laughs]

THS: In fact, he said: "Don't pick my apples. I'm selling 'em." [NM laughs] But that didn't make any difference till he put a bull in the pen.

NM: You did what?

THS: He put a bull...

NM: Put a bull?

THS: A bull – a bull.

NM: Oh.

THS: Mm-hmm, you know.

NM: Yeah.

THS: Not a cow, but a bull.

NM: Yeah.

THS: Uh-huh.

NM: In with the apple trees?

THS: Yeah, well, we had to get in there to get to the apple trees. [NM laughs] So he put him in there so that, uh, we would stay out of there, but you know, we'd get in there anyway. And then when they got after us, we would just run as fast as we could. [NM laughs] And jump over the fence, yeah.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: We went to get milk there, from the farmer. And he used to say: "Don't pick my apples," you know. On the way home, we used to fill our pockets with apples.

NM: Oh.

THS: Mm-hmm. But that was a lot of fun.

NM: Yeah.

THS: You know, he didn't want us – he said: "I sell my apples."

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: You know, there – oh, and Peter, his folks moved from Quenemo to Lawrence to the La Yarda, and they lived there for a while. And then they moved back to Quenemo. And they lived in Quenemo for a while, and then they moved back to Lawrence.

NM: Now, who was Peter?

THS: Romero.

NM: Oh, okay. Pete Romero?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Oh, he went back and forth to Quenemo?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Okay, and is that the same village that your parents came from?

THS: No.

NM: No.

THS: My, uh, parents came from Topeka.

NM: Oh.

THS: His parents came from Quenemo.

NM: Oh, yeah, okay. Sorry.

THS: Yeah. That's alright.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: I can't talk today anyway, for some reason [NM laughs]. My mouth is...sticking together. Anyway, uh, yeah, they – they didn't live in La Yarda all the time.

NM: Yeah.

THS: In all them pictures that you see, um, all them people – did you ever make it to Watkins Museum?

NM: Um, you know, I went over there, but I didn't see the pictures of – I got distracted, so I'll have to try it again.

THS: They said they were on the third or the fourth floor. I don't know, though they're not on the first floor.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: But all them people that are there...

Anita: Here's those, Mom. Some of 'em are originals, and I have copies of – that's the one that's in the Watkins Museum.

NM: Oh, oh. This one?

Anita: Yeah.

NM: Yeah, wow.

Anita: And some of these are originals, but I do have copies of most of 'em.

NM: Mm-hmm.

Anita: Um...so, um, I mean, if you want to take a copy, that's fine; I wouldn't take the original. But, like, that's 1951, when the – when it flooded.

NM: Yeah.

Anita: And...

THS: Is that where La Yarda was?

NM: In the –

Anita: Yeah.

NM: Are those the boxcars?

THS: Yes. Yeah. Them are the boxcars, mm-hmm. Them are pile of they call 'em ties. They're the ones that they put on the railroad tracks –

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Underneath the rails.

NM: Right.

THS: That's what my – my dad and all them used to do. Um...

NM: Wow. So, here's one with houses in it.

Anita: Okay, here you go.

NM: So that's north of 11th and Haskell, 1951 flood.

THS: This is a...[murmurs]...it goes this way. Hmm. [Long pause] This is right here on 11th Street. Uh...this goes like that [murmurs]. I don't really know what that is, right there.

NM: The building?

THS: The building, yeah, but that's the boxcars.

NM: Oh.

THS: And this is

Anita: Isn't that Poehler's?

THS: Poehler, no, uh-uh. No, I don't know, really, what that is. Um...well, these I don't remember. Oh –

Anita: And then there's some more.

THS: We had it upside down. That's where the German camp was.

NM: Oh.

THS: See? We had it upside down.

NM: So...

THS: See, there's another –

NM: Are those the buildings the barracks where the Germans lived?

THS: Yeah.

NM: Oh.

THS: See, there's more buildings on there too.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: I think there's the same ones.

NM: Uh-huh. What do you know?

THS: We was looking at it upside down, that's why.

Anita: I'll look through the other ones, Mom, to see if there's...

THS: Okay. I don't know what she's got there. That's my sister's house. And this is...this is my mother's, my mother and my dad.

NM: Now, is that at La Yarda, or a different place?

THS: No, that was on Rhode Island Street.

NM: Rhode Island? Uh-huh.

THS: Yeah. And this was too – that's my mother, my sister, and, uh...that's my – this is my niece, my brother's daughter, when she made her first Holy Communion. And that was my mother and dad.

NM: That's you, there?

THS: Yeah.

NM: Oh.

THS: Most of these pictures I think are from Rhode Island [murmurs].

NM: You're so cute. Wait – Rita Hernandez, Avery, and Grandpa and Grandma.

THS: Yeah.

NM: Oh, so – that's Rita.

THS: Oh, that's Rita?

NM: It says –

THS: Oh, I guess it is. I thought it was –

NM: On the back, it says Rita Hernandez and Avery.

THS: Yeah, it was Rita. I – I remember that.

NM: Awful cute.

THS: It was Rita. [Long pause] Let's see...that's my niece. That's my...that's my mother. And that little lady was blind. She couldn't see anything. But she could make it over to my mother's house and, um, visit my mother. I think this is – this is my dad and my grandmother, here.

NM: It says the little girl might be you, but I don't know. Do you think that's you?

THS: No.

NM: No, you were bigger than that in the Rhode Island house. Yeah.

THS: No, that's not me. Mm-mm.

NM: Maybe it's a different little girl.

THS: This is my sister, my other sister, my two cousins; one of them was a nun. This one was the one that was a nun, right there.

NM: Oh.

THS: She went on to be a nun. This is my folks, this picture.

NM: Oh.

THS: I don't know – did she show you something in here about –

NM: Um, there was a picture of a group of people from La Yorda in that book.

THS: Oh. Okay, then she knows, 'cause she... [long pause, murmurs]

NM: You're not in this picture, Teresa?

THS: No.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: I was too young.

NM: A wedding or something.

THS: Mm-hmm. See, the '51 flood, um...see the railroad?

NM: Yeah.

THS: That's where the men used to sit and watch to make sure that the water didn't get over.

NM: Oh.

THS: For the trains to go in. And this is, uh...hmm. [Murmurs]. This is the Santa Fe depot.

NM: That's –

THS: It was an old Santa Fe depot, and they knocked it down and they built a new one.

NM: Oh.

THS: After the flood, because they couldn't leave the other one, 'cause of that water all inside of it and everything.

NM: Right. Yeah, the one that's there today is, like, 1950s sort of architecture.

THS: Yeah. We used to play across from there. We used to play in the sand piles. They had sand piles there, and we used to get up and – that's the only pleasure besides, you know, we used to go up on the great big old sand piles and jump all the way down. [NM laughs] Mm-hmm. Yeah, so...but, uh...I didn't realize that that was, you know, some – but that's, you know, boxcars, there. Just right across from La Yarda.

NM: Yeah. Anita showed me a picture of some girls, and...let me find it.

THS: She did? Okay.

NM: Yeah.

THS: I don't know where she got that book.

NM: Yeah.

THS: Ordered it or something. She's always wanting, uh, you know, to go back into history. Then I lost the paper with the DNA. Now I gotta go talk to [Roger Rachel?] and have her send – I thought I was a Mexican, but we was – we're Indians, wasn't it?

Anita: Yeah, but they were –

THS: Mexican-Indians.

Anita: Mexican-Indians. They were from the United States side.

Formatted: Spanish (Spain)

NM: Oh.

Anita: And then when they took Texas over, then they got pushed back. There's – those are the only last of the originals that I got, Mom.

NM: Oh.

THS: Okay.

Anita: So, those...

THS: Yeah. That's me.

NM: Oh, that's you as a baby.

THS: Yeah.

NM: The baby picture, or the girl picture?

THS: Both.

NM: There's two pictures. Oh, they're both you. Let's take a look.

THS: Did you find that one about the – the girls in the –

NM: Yeah.

THS: She's looking for – oh, you found it. Yes. Oh, yes. Uh-huh. She's got the little boys, see the water? They told us that the bridge – they had this old bridge, and if you got on it during the '51 flood, you could stand on it and you could – it, you could, uh, feel it moving back and forth.

NM: Oooh.

THS: Uh-huh.

NM: Oooh, that sounds creepy.

THS: See, all of North Lawrence was flooded. And so, um...and so first we was being girls, we had to go and see. We get on this bridge and –

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Feel it swinging back and forth. We got off of it in a hurry.

NM: You went and got on there, wow.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Look at this adorable baby picture, that is so cute.

THS: Yeah, that's me. [Laughter]

NM: Looks really cute.

THS: Yeah, here we are – all are. And that's Jenny, Mercy, Alberta, um, Gladys, me, and Toni. Yep. The boys was – I think they was the Romeros. You know. Yeah, but, um, Peter and them, they – they went to – they moved to Lawrence and then they moved back to – to, uh...is that different from the – from the Santa Fe depot.

NM: Oh, yes, very.

THS: It was a lot different then.

NM: Different, yes.

THS: Yeah, they had to knock it down, 'cause there was water all over the inside of it. Mm-hmm. But, um, [murmurs]. I [murmurs] my next-door neighbor, Leroy Grummett. He had to go in to get people out of North Lawrence, 'cause North Lawrence was completely flooded.

NM: Wow.

THS: I mean, and people, you know, they told 'em to get out, just like they told us, and –

NM: Right.

THS: And they wouldn't get out. And so, he had a boat, and he would take the boat across and he would get across all right, but on the way back, it would take him halfway to Eudora.

NM: Just the current, huh?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Wow.

THS: So, anyway, uh...but he – he volunteered to do that and for the longest –

NM: Now, who was that? Who did that?

THS: Leroy Grummett.

NM: Leroy Grummett.

THS: And for the longest time, his picture was at Lawrence Memorial Hospital, before they put that other front in.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Where the – where the pond, or the fish in there, the kids used to call it fishing. [NM laughs] But, where you throw a little money in.

NM: Yeah.

THS: So they built that.

NM: So his picture used to be there, like, in honor of him for doing all that brave work?

THS: Yeah. Yeah, his picture was in there for a long time.

NM: Huh.

THS: But, uh, you know. It's...it was fun, you know. Like I say, we didn't need to go out and find somebody to play with.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Or somebody to walk to school with. We – we always had a big crowd.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So.

NM: Tell me again, what were the names of all the kids in your family?

THS: In my family?

NM: Yeah.

THS: Okay. Um, the...there's my sisters. In California.

NM: Okay.

THS: And, uh, this is my other sister. And them are two of my cousins. That one's the one that was a nun.

NM: Now, what are your sisters' names?

THS: Um, this one's named Carmen.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: And this one was named Soledad.

NM: Soledad.

THS: Uh-huh.

NM: Wow.

THS: And then, uh, I have, uh, Pete and Joe and Chino and Jesse.

NM: Chino?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: What, is that short for something?

THS: Yeah. His name was Gabriel.

NM: Oh.

THS: But he had such curly hair, everybody called him Chino, which means curly hair in – in English.

NM: Oh, it does?

THS: Yeah.

NM: Okay.

THS: He had real curly hair.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And so, everybody used to call him that because it was so short –

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Instead of calling him Gabriel.

NM: Yeah. Did you have a nickname?

THS: Uh, no, my – my, um, brother that, uh, you know, was two years older than I was, uh, he couldn't call me Teresa. So, he called me, uh, "Chita."

NM: “Chita.”

THS: Uh-huh. ‘Cause my mother...and, you know, when I said the other day that – about them sprinkling water all over? My grandmother used to keep us up on all that.

NM: Mm.

THS: Even when we was real little.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: She used to sit us and – and pray the rosary, and tell us what used to go in, you know. What used to go in that little place where we used to live in Topeka. You know, where my mother got up and watered the floor every morning –

NM: Yeah.

THS: And all that, yeah. My grandmother kept us up on that when we got a little bit older. Then we didn’t, you know, where we came from.

NM: She told you how it used to be?

THS: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

NM: And she told you about old-time Mexico and the hacienda?

THS: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

NM: Those must have been good stories.

THS: Yeah, it was.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And, uh...you know, other than that, I don’t, uh, but anyway, that was her.

NM: Wow.

THS: That’s my dad and that was my grandmother.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Um, he brought her over. He would not leave her when he came to the United States, and he would not leave my aunt and my two cousins. He brought them over as his daughters.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: It's a wonder they didn't think that he had too many daughters all the same age. [NM laughs] You know, because they was, you know, they was just about the same age.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: And there was four of 'em, you know. All them four right there.

NM: Uh-huh. Yeah. And so then you were born here.

THS: Yeah.

NM: Uh-huh. And then, um, who else was born here; any of the boys?

THS: Uh, Pete and Carmen and Chole was born.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: In Mexico. Then they came to the United States when – when, uh – said that they had lost the hacienda.

NM: Yeah.

THS: Because they was coming through and killing all the – all the men that was any – anybody at all, you know. And so then, uh, they came back to the United States and Joe was born in Kansas City. And then they went back, because they thought that they'd go and dig the – the money out, but there was no digging money up, because it wasn't worth the paper it was printed on.

NM: Oh, yeah.

THS: So then, uh, Chino was born in Mexico, so there was, uh, Carmen – it was Pete, Carmen, Chole, and Chino. And three of us was born here. Joe was born in Kansas City, and Jesse and I was born in, we call him – well, we called him "Nutty" all the time, for Natividad.

NM: Oh.

THS: Till he went to work at the schools, and then the teachers refused for the kids to call him that.

NM: Nutty. [Laughs]

THS: Yeah. They didn't – they didn't like it. They told 'em that they – they had to call him Jesse.

NM: Okay.

THS: Or Natividad, 'cause his name was Jesse Natividad.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: But, yeah, there was a big history, but...

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: It's, uh...I didn't know that that was Rita. I guess it was Rita. Huh. And that hasn't been too long before my mom and dad passed away.

NM: Mm.

THS: 'Cause, um...she's married. I mean, she's married on – on this – yeah, she's married to – you can tell that, uh...

NM: That's a cute picture.

THS: I mean, she wasn't married there in the picture –

NM: No.

THS: But she – she was married later on.

NM: Right.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: So, when did your mom and dad pass away?

THS: My mom and dad passed away, let's see, the girls was, uh, in junior high.

NM: Oh.

THS: One in high school.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: Um...they asked me – my dad had – my dad was always falling. He had high blood pressure. He was falling out in the yard, and the neighbors would call me and tell me, you know: "Your dad has fallen, Teresa." So, I kept getting in the car and go right up there and get somebody to come pick him up, and – and, uh, he kept telling me: "Put us in a nursing home. Put us –"

NM: Oh.

THS: I said: "I can't do that." I would go in the morning, give my mother an insulin shot, and my dad would fix 'em some – for them too, he would fix 'em some eggs and toast for breakfast. And then my sister-in-law, Jenny, would take lunch, and then I would take supper in for her. And, uh, uh, put my mother to bed.

NM: Aww.

THS: You know, she was always in bed anyway, but I mean, you know, got her ready for bed.

NM: Uh-huh.

THS: And, uh, he kept telling me, he says: "Put us in the nursing home."
And I kept saying: "I can't do that. I can't do that."
He says: "You got four kids. You can't. And your husband's working. You can't not...leave 'em all the time and come over here every day, day after day." You know, they was living on, uh, Rhode Island and –

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So finally, I went up there one day, and he says: "Look, I have asked you and asked you to put us in the home. And you don't listen to me."

I said: "I can't do it."

He said: "Yes, you can. You can do it." And so, my – my brother in Topeka, his wife had a sister that's a nun, and St. Joseph, uh, nursing home.

NM: Oh.

THS: In Kansas City.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And so, he was over that afternoon, and – and they told – and my dad told 'em:
"See, we keep telling her to put us in the nursing home. She just won't listen to us."
He said: "You know, [Aunt?] Rita works in the..." Her – her, uh...her name really wasn't Rita any more, 'cause she was a nun, you know, and they change their names.

NM: Right.

THS: And so, he said: "I'll call her." So he gets on the phone and calls her. Within an hour they was over at the house [NM laughs] Her and another nun.

NM: Problem solved, huh? Wow.

THS: And so, they signed the papers. He – my brother was there too. They signed the papers and they said: “We’ll be ready for ‘em tomorrow.”

NM: My goodness.

THS: And my brother said: “Alright, I’ll bring ‘em down.”

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So, I was gonna drive, and he said: “No, I don’t want you to drive.” He said: “I’ll drive.” So, him and my sister-in-law drove us, and then we took my mom and dad. Two weeks later, my – well...a week later he – my dad had a stroke.

NM: Oh.

THS: So they put him in Providence Hospital.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: And then, uh, they sent him back to the...to the nursing home.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And, uh, he died a week later.

NM: My goodness.

THS: Two weeks after.

NM: Wow.

THS: Mm-hmm. So, I got the feeling that he probably knew that he was going, and he wanted my mother in a... ‘cause I had had her here when she had broke her hip. I had had her here for about a month and a half, here at the house, and – and she didn’t want to be here, because she says: “You’re taking the kids’ bedroom,” you know. We only had three bedrooms, you know, the boys and the girls and then ours. And, uh...we, uh – Leo says: “We have to bring her home from the hospital.” Him and I slept out on the back porch, next to the birdfeeder. It was so cold.

NM: Oh! So that you could talk privately.

THS: Yeah. Yeah. So that my mother wouldn’t be worried that we was – that we didn’t have a place to sleep. [NM laughs] Anyway, he – he died two weeks later. We was all there.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Except my brother, he – my sister-in-law was a diabetic, and she forgot her pills, so he was on his way home when we called him and told him that Dad had passed away.

NM: Oh, yeah.

THS: He felt bad, so bad, because we had been there all night. We went in there about two o'clock in the afternoon, stayed there all night. All of us, you know. There was no chairs, there was two chairs in there. The rest of us was – sitting on – on...my mother's bed, where she was laying, on the opposite bed.

NM: Oh.

THS: You know. And, uh, some of 'em was...uh, leaning against the windowsill.

NM: Yeah.

THS: You know.

NM: Yeah.

THS: And the – the boys, some of 'em was sitting on the floor.

NM: Oh, goodness. Yeah, yeah. A full house in that room.

THS: Mm-hmm. And so then, when he passed away, I asked my mother, I says:
"You want to go home with me? I can make room for you now."

And she says: "No. They take me to Mass every morning; they take me to the rosary every afternoon."

NM: Uh-huh. Was your mom a religious woman? Mm-hmm?

THS: And she says: "I don't want to go home."

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: She didn't know – speak English, I mean, a word of English. She just – all she learned how to say is: "Nurse, bedpan."

NM: Oh.

THS: She was a diabetic, and so, you know, that's all she learned.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Uh-huh. But, uh, Rita would go over and see her, pretty near every day.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And then, um, you know, they would let us know. And when she got real sick, they let us know. We was all there in the end, you know, when she passed away.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Um, the doctors told us: "She's got pneumonia. If we go ahead and clean her lungs out, she'll last two weeks. If we let her go, uh, she'll be gone in three days."

NM: Mm.

THS: And, uh, so then the kids says: "Well, you're the one that took care of her. You make up your mind what you want to do."

NM: Oh, brother.

THS: I said: "Well, we're all family."

They said: "No, you – you talk to the doctor. You tell her what you want to do."

I said: "You know, I can't do that."

They said: "Yes, you can." So, I went in and I talked to my mother; she was still talking.

She said: "Let me go. Your dad's already gone. Don't do anything to me."

I said: "Mom, I can't do that to you."

She said: "Yes, you can. You got your kids, you got your husband. Go ahead. Let me go."

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So, I told the doctor, I said: "She wants to go. She doesn't want to stay."

He said: "Well, that's fine." She was gone in three days.

NM: Wow.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Just like he said.

THS: Yeah, just like he said. She was gone in three days.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: So then we sold the house, and we used all the money for...to pay for both the funerals.

NM: Mm-hmm, sure. And were they buried through St. John's?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Both at St. John's.

NM: Where – where did you meet Leo?

THS: Uh...he used to go to church. And I didn't think much about it, because he was in the service. And I always thought he was a [laughs]. He – he was – I always thought that he was really thought he was really some – somebody, because his shoes was always so shiny. [NM laughs] You could see yourself in them, you know? And he caught up with me. We used to go every Saturday; a whole bunch of us girls used to go to the Meadow Acres in Topeka.

NM: Meadow Acres. Uh-huh.

THS: That's a – that was a nightclub.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: And it was close to Forbes Fields. So, all the guys from Forbes Fields used to go over there.

NM: Oh.

THS: And we would dance all night long, and about a half an hour before we left [unintelligible], the dance was over, we would sneak out and go.

NM: Okay.

THS: Yeah. And get out, and – well, then they'd – our folks says: "You gotta go to Mass." So went to Mass and he caught up with me, and he – he started making a conversation. I didn't want to listen to him [laughs]. I was tired; I wanted to go home and lay down, 'cause I had to go to work on Monday.

NM: Oh, no.

THS: And – and so he says: "How would you like to have a cup of coffee?"

I said: "No, I don't wanna have a cup of coffee. I wanna go home."

So he said: "Alright." So then the next Sunday, it happened again. Then the third Sunday, I thought: "Gosh. If he – if I don't go have coffee with him, he won't leave me alone." So – oh, sorry.

NM: That's okay.

THS: Anyway, uh, we went to have coffee, to the Deluxe Café there on Massachusetts Street. And so then he asked, you know, he started asking me questions:

“Do you work? Where do you work? How long have you been there?” And all this stuff, you know. I was so tired, I didn’t even care what I was saying. Well, Monday morning comes. I come out with my friend Jenny to go across the street to have coffee on our coffee break. And who should be out there [NM laughs] but him and his friend Gene.

NM: Oh.

THS: He says: “We came to take you for coffee.”
I said: “I only have fifteen minutes.”

He says: “Well, it won’t take long.” So the next day, he was there again. With Gene. The third day, it was him by himself [laughs]. Gene wasn’t with him. [NM laughs] Anyway, then, uh, the next day, he was there, till they changed shifts when he – when he had to go on days, he wasn’t there, because he would change shifts every other week.

NM: Oh, okay.

THS: Mm-hmm. Midnight shift, and then the 4:00-12:00 shift, and then day shifts, so, um...then every day he was out there, and the ladies down where they was sorting the clothes out in that big room:

“Guess who’s out there? Guess who’s out there?” [Laughs]

“I don’t know who’s out there,” you know? [NM laughs] So, then finally we decided that we, you know, we started going together, and when we went to the Meadow Acres, we went together.

NM: Oh.

THS: Yeah, we took all the rest of the girls, but we went together.

NM: Did Leo like to dance?

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: He did?

THS: Yeah. He was a good dancer.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Yeah. And so, you know, uh, then after that it was just...you know, you never got married way back then. I guess you – you know, I was a Mexican.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And he was German, you know. You didn’t get married out of your race.

NM: Mm.

THS: Way back then.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: You know, it was – it was hard. You should have heard my dad.

NM: Really?

THS: Yes. But Leo had a way that he – people most – most people would like him, you know?

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: And so, after that, Dad – Dad began to where he was pretty good with him. And then, uh, when we moved out here, Dad used to come out and help him, you know, clean weeds, the weeds out of the garden and all of that.

NM: Mm-hmm.

THS: Yeah. But...we was married 57 years.

NM: Oh, my goodness.

THS: Mm-hmm.

NM: A good long time.

THS: It is. It's a long time.

NM: Well, I'm gonna have to get going.

THS: I'm sorry, I – you don't – I was talking so much, I don't know what you can use out of there or not, but, yeah.

NM: Oh, yeah. That was great. I enjoyed hearing your stories. I – I can't come for the next couple of weeks though. I've gotta go do something else, so...

THS: Okay, that's fine.

NM: Maybe in November I'll swing by, see what you're up to.

END OF TAPE