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Ned and Emma Duran

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by
David Washburn
in 2002

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Discursive Table of Contents—Ned and Emma Duran

Tape 1

00:00:17

Background. Born in Colorado, raised in the town of Walsenburg, in southern part of the state. Mother worked in department store. Raised on stepfather's farm outside of town, work with herd of sheep. -- Experience at various Conservation Corp camps during the Depression. Sent money home to assist the family. -- Attending grammar school in Colorado. Stopped attending high school in the tenth grade to enlist in the CC camp. -- Siblings' backgrounds. Older brother worked for the WPA. Brothers worked in the mines near Walsenburg (mining town). Later worked at Richmond's shipyards. -- Mother's background. Was a post-mistress for many years, worked in a department store as Duran grew up. -- Ethnic make-up of Walsenburg: Slavs, Italians, Hispanics, Anglos. "It was all mixed." -- Baseball league. Teams from different mining towns in southern Colorado would play each other. -- Description of the town Walsenburg. 5,000 habitants. Industries were mining, farming, and raising sheep. Large immigrant population. -- Foreign languages in Walsenburg: Slavic language, Italian. Recites some Italian words and sayings he remembered learning. -- Spanish spoke in the home and on the street. Differences in Spanish from Colorado and Mexican Spanish. They do not share many words and sayings.

00:17:45

Different ethnic groups lived in separate parts of town. -- Childhood memories growing up in central Walsenburg, games he played. -- Life on stepfather's farm. Rode horses from an early age. -- Joined the Army in 1940. Enlisted in the First Cavalry Division. -- Getting to town from the family farm. Riding horses on the weekend. -- Food his family served: potatoes, chilies, beans, pasta. Lived off the farm during the Depression. -- No traditional Mexican foods. Did eat flour tortillas and tamales, but did not learn of tacos or enchiladas until he came to Richmond. "Not until I came out here, did I start thinking about it."

00:32:00

Why Duran joined the Conservation Corps. During the Depression his family had very little money, lost thousands sheep. Duran enlisted in the CC to generate income for his family and keep out of trouble. Served in Mesa Verde National Park, Rocky Mountain National Park. -- Enlisting in the Army's First Cavalry Division. Stationed in Fort Bliss, Texas. Was promoted several time. -- Racial discrimination in the Army. Anti-Hispanic bigotry existed. Racism in Texas. "There used to be signs in Texas—No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed."

00:47:45

Earning promotions in the Army. Worked well with horses. -- Discusses segregated black units in the Army. -- Discusses racial classification of Hispanics. Was taught that Hispanics were Caucasian. Army counted Duran as white. -- Mentions how a large number of Hispanic soldiers were awarded metals during World War II. The Purple Heart Battalion. -- Thoughts on segregation in the Army.

Tape 2

00:00:15

Recruited by the Kaiser shipyards. In 1944 Duran was recruited from Colorado to work in the Portland, Oregon, shipyards. Later came to the Richmond shipyards where his brothers were working. -- Finding work in Colorado. None existed, so Duran went to Portland. -- Why Portland? Was familiar with the city-stationed there during the war. Thought it would be nice to live there as a civilian. -- Stayed in dormitories at the Portland shipyards. -- Discusses how he was recruited. Kaiser opened an office in Duran's hometown. Paid his way to Portland. -- Moving to Richmond. Duran's brothers sent him money to make the trip from Portland. Stayed in war housing off Cutting. -- Impressions of Richmond. Crowded. -- Worked as a boilermaker at Kaiser. Discusses various jobs he had after the war. -- Richmond's population and ethnic make-up. -- Description of war housing apartments. -- Richmond's Hispanic community. Met people through the church and friends. Attended St. John's Catholic Church in El Cerrito, and later St. Mark's in Richmond. -- Met Latinos through work at the Kaiser shipyard and various jobs. Did not make long term friends at work.

00:15:30

Motivation for going to church. -- Meeting his wife in Richmond. Getting married. -- Names of several nightclubs in Richmond during and after the war. Drinking at bars. -- Discusses the owners of Richmond/El Cerrito bars and their reputations. -- The It Club in El Cerrito.

00:32:00

The clientele at the It Club. -- The Miami Club in El Cerrito. Shows with female impersonators. -- Going to movie houses. -- The Rio Theater in Richmond. Showed Spanish language films-Mexican movies. -- Wife discusses Mexican movies at the Rio. -- Moving into various neighborhoods in Richmond. Southside to lower Macdonald, Atchison Village, Easter Hill, to near 23rd St. -- Public housing. Lived in several public housing projects before buying a home off 23rd St. in the 1950s.

00:46:05

Work after the shipyards. Duran was a carpenter for various construction firms. Built homes in El Cerrito. -- Working at the Richmond Post Office. Taking the Civil Service exam. -- Work for the Post Office provided stability, good pension. -- Employment opportunities in post-war Richmond.

Tape 3

00:00:20

Colorado Club. Reunion of Richmonders who's home state was Colorado. Held social events at rented halls. 35-40 members, all were Hispanic. -- Latin American Club. Small group of people who socialized at local houses and rented dance halls. -- Fraternal Order of Eagles. Belonging to the El Cerrito Eagles Hall. -- Participation in the Veterans of Foreign War, and Disabled American Veterans, Sons in Retirement. -- Brothers returned to Colorado after World War II. -- Duran stayed in Richmond, had been away from Walsenburg since entering the CC camps in the 1930s. -- Mother's background and influences on Duran. -- Mexican holidays. In Colorado Duran did not participate in the kinds of celebrations held in Richmond. -- Buying a home in Richmond. Received federal assistance. Neighborhood was predominantly white.

00:16:15

Discrimination and restrictive covenants. Duran did not sense that people discriminated against him. -- Changes in the neighborhood. People moving out of the city. -- Eating at Gonzalez Restaurant, other Mexican eateries. -- Stereotypes of people of Mexican descent, their food. -- Little involvement with Richmond's longtime Mexican community. -- Wrap-up of interview, closing remarks. -- Emma Duran's employment background. -- Ned Duran's promotions at the post office, retirement. Career provided economic security for his family.

TRANSCRIPT

Interview with Ned Duran

Interviewed by: David Washburn

Transcriber: Cameron BensonSmith

[Interview 1: 11-05-02]

audited by Shannon Page, 12-1-04

1-00:00:00

Washburn:

Ned, we're going to start off by talking about where you're from a little bit, and some memories you have of that. When and where were you born?

1-00:00:16

Duran:

I was born in Longmont, Colorado, and I was raised and reared in Walsenburg, Colorado. And then from there, my mother was working in a department store, and I had a stepdad, and he was real abusive, so my mother left him. And I had another stepdad, and we had a farm in a little place they call North La Veta.

1-00:01:01

That's off about eight miles west of Walsenburg. And he had a farm, he had his sheep. He had ten thousand head of sheep between him and his brothers, and I was reared there, and I worked as a—I was a kid then, but they used to have us in lambing season, and I used to go to the mountains and stay with the shepherd, and in the summertime, out in the mountains, that's where they used to send the sheep, you know? Mountains, from after lambing season, and that was where I stayed from June until about October, come down from the mountains and the lambs were already pretty big so they could be sold. So that's what I've done mostly, and naturally worked on the farm, planting and hay season.

Then from there I went during the Depression, in 1936, I went to the CC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps. I stayed there; I was in Mesa Verde National Park first, eighteen months, got out and I went back again, and I spent another one in the Rocky Mountain National Park in Estes, Colorado. And from there moved to Grand Junction Monument. And then from there we went to—I quit again, and I went back again to the CC camp six months later, and we were at Lincoln Park in Grand Junction. And then from there, they told me I couldn't join the CC camps anymore. During that time, it was a help for the family. We used to get thirty dollars a month, paid, and our family used to get twenty-two dollars, used to get about eight dollars for yourself. That was doing, helping the family. A lot of these CC camps, well, it took us out of trouble too, let's face it, you know? And then from there, I couldn't join the CC camps again, so I joined the army in 1940. I joined the First Cavalry division in El Paso, Texas.

1-00:03:03

Washburn:

Well, during your childhood in southern Colorado, can you tell me, you went to school and you worked?

1-00:03:23

Duran:

Yes, we went to school; we used to go to school.

1-00:03:23

Washburn:

What can you tell me about your times at school?

1-00:03:23

Duran:

I went to Washington School right off in town, and I went as high as the fifth grade there, and then from there, I went to the farm and we had to go to the school in the farm, which was a one-room school, and the teacher had to teach from first to eighth grade. And I went to high school from there. And, in high school, I only went as far as the tenth grade, and then for on account of, like I said, the Depression, that's when I went to the CC camps. My mother didn't know that I had gone to the CC camps. She heard from me from about a week later, where I was at [laughs]. But I was helping them anyway, you know? The best way I could.

1-00:04:52

Washburn:

So you grew up in your house with your stepfather and your mother?

1-00:04:58

Duran:

Yes.

1-00:04:59

Washburn:

And what can you tell me about your siblings?

1-00:05:01

Duran:

Oh, my siblings, well, my brother, my oldest brother, was working as a supervisor in the what-do-you-call-it, WPA [Works Progress Administration]. And my other brother worked out here in Nevada. But, when they came back, my sisters, they were all there, my two sisters, and I was reared with one of them, the youngest one, and the other one too, she was the oldest one, and then we came—. My brothers, after the war, they used to be coal miners, they worked in the coal mines. That's coal-mining country where I was from, Walsenburg; there are a lot of mining camps around there.

1-00:06:01

Washburn:

So you had how many siblings?

1-00:06:09

Duran:

I had two brothers and two sisters.

1-00:06:13

Washburn:

Two brothers and two sisters. And did all of you guys work to support your family as you were growing up?

1-00:06:19

Duran:

Well, my brothers did work, you know? My mother worked. She worked as a—fact is, she was a—when I was born in 1917, she was the first postmistress in a little town called Garcia, Colorado. She was a postmistress there. And then when I was growing up in Walsenburg, she was working for a department store, called Katz Department Store, selling clothes, stuff like that. She always worked pretty well. And my brothers were all miners then. And then during the war, they came down here and worked at the shipyards.

1-00:07:11

Washburn:

So the mines really kept a lot of people employed?

1-00:07:15

Duran:

Kept people alive there, yes, coal mines. And then I think they closed them. I don't know when they closed them. I don't remember now. But they don't dig for coal anymore there.

1-00:07:30

Washburn:

How would you describe the people who lived in your town? I mean, if you were somebody trying to describe your town to somebody, how would you describe it?

1-00:07:45

Duran:

Well, there were all people of different nationalities. Like, they're all miners, you know? Slavs, and Italians and Latins in there and all that. And they got along fine. We got along fine. It was a regular different—people got along fine, they never had anything wrong with them, nothing like that, because fact is, the people, some of them, there were Hispanics that were policemen, Hispanics that were judges. So, it makes us all one thing then. Melting pot, in other words, it was all mixed. But we got along fine. Naturally, us young kids, we used to get in a fight with each other, that's true, you know? We'd fight, but we never fought like they do it now. If you got beat up by a boy, then it was all right, you took it like a man. But they don't do it like that now; you get beat up, you're liable to get shot.

1-00:09:12

Washburn:

Sure.

1-00:09:14

Duran:

See, there used to be more of a gang—we used to have gangs, sure, but you know what our gang was? We used to play in the summertime, we used to play baseball against each

other, the different mining camps. Walsen mining camp, Cameron, Turner, they had kids playing baseball, we would go out there and play baseball with them too, from towns.

1-00:09:38

Washburn:

So each town was--?

1-00:09:41

Duran:

Each mining camp.

1-00:09:47

Washburn:

I'm still trying to picture the town. Would you describe it as a mining town? As a mining camp? Or did it have a different, more diverse economy?

1-00:09:59

Duran:

It had more deals there, yes, not only mining camp. Like a regular town, they had all kinds of restaurants, and they had bars. And most of them were making—the market mostly was from the sheep, or market from the farms that was there, that's all. Just a small, five thousand people is not a very big town, you know? They were all there, and that's all I can tell you about that, that I know of. That I remember, anyway.

1-00:10:47

Washburn:

So, because of the mine, you've described that there was this kind of a diverse group of people who were there.

1-00:10:56

Duran:

Yes.

1-00:10:58

Washburn:

Where did all the people who lived there come from?

1-00:11:02

Duran:

Well, they came from Italy, Slovenia, Slavs, you know? I don't know if they came from Czechoslovakia, or Yugoslavia or anything like that. And they come from Mexico too, and the only thing, we had two families of black people, that's all. And we got along fine, just like I said.

1-00:11:42

Washburn:

But were these people first generation, or were they people from Italy and from Slovakia and Mexico?

1-00:11:51

Duran:

Well, I think they were.

1-00:11:52

Washburn:

They weren't born in the United States?

1-00:11:55

Duran:

I don't know. Maybe they were, they come from back East someplace, I don't know. But some of them were from the old country, yes. You know, they came in as citizens, I guess, I'm not sure. Let them come in as immigrants.

1-00:12:13

Washburn:

So can you remember how people dressed?

1-00:12:19

Duran:

Oh, no, they dressed just like we dress now. They never dressed in the costumes that—they dressed in Western dressing, like we dress now. I never had anything different. Same old thing, I remember that. That was a long time ago, but still I never saw nobody dressed like a Slav or anything. I couldn't tell that, you know? [Chuckles] The people that lived there, just like I said, they got along fine and used their own, the way they were raised. Using their own ways of living, but we just didn't do anything.

1-00:13:24

Washburn:

Do you remember hearing different languages spoken in town?

1-00:13:28

Duran:

Oh yes, Slavonian and Italian.

1-00:13:31

Washburn:

Well, can you tell me about them?

1-00:13:35

Duran:

Yes, I used to hear that. Fact is, you learn a few words—I learned a few words in Italian there. Good night, "Buona notte." Good evening, "Buona sera." Good morning, "Buon giorno." "Chè cosa fà"? What are you doing? My stepdad used to speak it very fluently too, and he knew that. And he told me that they would say, "Chè cosa vite vutu per la colaziona, questa mattina." And that's Italian. "What's that"? I said. "What did you have for breakfast this morning"? he said. "Polenta." You know? Stuff like that.

1-00:14:24

Washburn:

That's great.

1-00:14:25

Duran:

Say thank you, you say, “*prego*”—no, to say thank you, you say, “*grazie*,” and then you’re welcome, you say “*prego*,” see? Slavonian I didn’t catch that, but my brother did. He knew a little bit of it.

1-00:14:46

Washburn:

What about Spanish spoken in town?

1-00:14:49

Duran:

Oh, Spanish was spoken very much in the house, yes.

1-00:14:53

Washburn:

What can you describe—when and where would you speak Spanish?

1-00:14:58

Duran:

We’d speak Spanish in the house, speak Spanish outside, too. All of us used to speak Spanish, you know. But mostly us kids, mostly what we used to speak was English. In the house, we used to—that’s why we can’t speak the real Spanish. I had to take Spanish in high school to learn, and that’s Castilian Spanish. And the Spanish we speak now, it’s a slang of whatever—we don’t understand a lot of words that Mexico speaks about, words, things that we didn’t know anything about or we just knew them in broken Spanish. Like, in Mexico now they say the railroad track, “*carro ferrocarril*” and we used to say just “*troque*”. Bus, “bus”. The bus. See? And they have a different name for that. Like a truck, they have a different way to say truck too. So a lot of the words that they come over here and ask us, now do we have this, or we have that—what is it? Am I right?

1-00:16:19

Emma Duran:

Because of some words, yes.

1-00:16:23

Duran:

Some words come in, see? Do you have a certain tool, what is it? So we don’t understand that. We talk Spanish, I mean we speak Spanish with a different deal, the slang of Spanish, I guess, I don’t know. We understand most of it, but we don’t understand a lot of the words that they speak about, like the Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans.

1-00:17:49

Washburn:

[discussion deleted] You described that there were Slavs and Italians and Mexicans, and Spanish-speaking folks; did you guys have your separate areas in town that you lived in?

1-00:17:52

Duran:

Yes, in a way. Most of the Slavs used to work in the little camp they used to call West Walsenburg—Walsen camp used to be there, was mixed with Spanish and Italians there.

In fact, the Italians there were mostly on the west side of town, and we were in the center part of town, Spanish, you know, most of them around the center part. All used to be. That's the part right there. The only part that I knew of.

1-00:18:24

Washburn:

So would you say all of your neighbors around you were Spanish-speaking for the most part?

1-00:18:32

Duran:

Yes.

1-00:18:33

Washburn:

So what can you describe to me about what it would be like to, say, sit out on your porch on a given day and see what the neighborhood was like? Can you describe a little bit of that?

1-00:18:48

Duran:

I can't describe very much about that, because when I was a kid we never did sit out on the porch or something like that, no. We used to sit on the porch and watch traffic, that's all. You know, see what's going on. But mostly we used to play. We used to play a game when we were kids called Catty. We'd get a piece of broomstick like that and make two points, and then another stick about that big, we hit this, and hit the stick, and hit it way out there, and who you were playing against, you mark a line right there where you hit it from. You could guess how many strides you can make it, and after twenty strides, twenty, you run. That's what we used to play. We used to play Kick the Can. We used to play Run Sheep Run, games like that. That's what we used to do mostly in the evening. But after we grew up, and everything like that, we used to hang around the courthouse at night time, watching the girls pass by, that's all.

1-00:20:03

Washburn:

Who's we?

1-00:20:05

Duran:

Well, us young guys. The young boys, young like us, you know? We used to stick around together, in a bunch. The boys, all of us. Not all of us, but some of them. There used to be a few boys that used to stick together all the time, see? But after I got on the farm, what I did was ride horses on Saturday and Sunday. I used to go out on the prairie, ride horses out there. Come back, ride around.

1-00:20:50

Washburn:

So was your home in town, and then did you move out of town?

1-00:20:54

Duran:

Yes, we moved out of town. We moved out of town to the farm, yes. I was about nine years old then.

1-00:21:02

Washburn:

Is that when you started riding horses?

1-00:21:06

Duran:

Oh, I started riding horses when I was about seven, because I used to come to see an uncle of mine in Garcia. I rode horses there. Like in the cavalry—that's why I joined the cavalry, because I like horses. We broke green mounts in the cavalry, until 1942, they dismounted us. Well, I joined the army in 1940. In the First Cavalry division, we had nothing but horses, we used to have horse shows, in the peacetime. Fact is, I have a couple of ribbons that I'll show you after you leave, that I won equestrian riding. But I used to ride them bareback back home, then. A kid. I didn't mind that.

1-00:22:20

Washburn:

So would you say horses were a big part of your life since you were a child?

1-00:22:26

Duran:

I think so. I think it would be, yes. After we went to the farm, yes. And before that, too, when I came to see my uncles over yonder, in that part of town. But they're part of this Walsenburg, southwestern, Garcia, Colorado.

1-00:22:48

Washburn:

So was that the case for all of the kids that lived in Walsenburg?

1-00:22:55

Duran:

No, just the kids that lived in the farms used to take the horses. See, they were kids that lived in the farms, and they used to go to town on weekends, like we used to sometimes, you know. But not all the time, we didn't have time.

1-00:23:16

Washburn:

Did you ride your horse into town?

1-00:23:18

Duran:

Oh, no.

1-00:23:19

Washburn:

How would you get to town?

1-00:23:21

Duran:

Oh, walk. We used to walk to town. Fact is, we used to ride our horses on Fourth of July. We used to go to a little place called La Veta, Colorado, which is not far from there. No, we did ride to town once in a while, but not all the time. We used to hitchhike to town, eight miles. Sometimes we used to walk eight miles. We used to take either the highway, because one of the main highways from the United States passes through there, which is 160 from LA all the way back East. Highway 160 goes all the way down there. And the other one from Raton, Highway 25, it's 25 now, went from Texas all the way up to the northern part, to Denver and stuff like that. One going east and west, the other one going north-south. That's where Walsenburg was, like an axle that crossed right there.

1-00:24:25

Washburn:

There's a lot of traffic there.

1-00:24:28

Duran:

Oh yes, quite a few, trucks and stuff like that.

1-00:24:32

Washburn:

Ned, what can you remember, you described that you used to speak Spanish in the home sometimes and in town, a little bit. What kind of food do you remember eating at home?

1-00:24:46

Duran:

Soul food, man!

1-00:24:47

Washburn:

Yes?

1-00:24:49

Duran:

Chile, beans, potatoes, anything, sure. Pasta.

1-00:24:58

Washburn:

This is in Colorado, when you grew up?

1-00:25:03

Duran:

That's in Colorado. On the farm, we used to eat vegetables all the time. We had orchards, we had apples. My mother used to can a lot of stuff for the winter. We had hogs that we killed in November. We had sheep. We'd eat lamb, goat. We had everything. We even had goat milk. One thing with the farm, see, during the Depression, we didn't have any money on the farm, but we had our eats. They used to give us staples. They used to give us flour, stuff like that. My stepdad—we used to plant wheat in the winter. In the summer, get the wheat, take it to the mill and grind it, and that was our cereal. Pure wheat

cereal. We had corn. We used to have blue corn. We used to make, like the Indians, we used to make this, what do you call it, honey?

1-00:26:31

Emma Duran:

Atolé.

Duran:

Atolé.

1-00:26:34

Emma Duran:

That's all I know it by.

1-00:26:37

Washburn:

Atolé.

1-00:26:38

Duran:

Atolé, like a soup, and you drink it, see? Hot.

1-00:26:43

Emma Duran:

Like a broth.

1-00:26:44

Duran:

Like a broth, yes. Blue. Blue corn.

1-00:26:47

Washburn:

I'm interested in that. So you said that you ate some more traditional American Indian food?

1-00:26:56

Duran:

Well, no. Not more traditional American Indian, mostly we ate what I told you now, beans and potatoes and the vegetables. We used to eat all that stuff, and corn.

1-00:27:14

Washburn:

I guess I should ask a different question. I mean, was that a regional kind of food for that area? I mean, why would you eat that food in southern Colorado and somebody else wouldn't eat it?

1-00:27:29

Duran:

I don't know.

1-00:27:31

Emma Duran:

We don't know anybody that wouldn't [laughs].

1-00:27:34

Duran:

I don't think they wouldn't, no.

1-00:27:36

Washburn:

Did you eat any traditional Mexican foods?

1-00:27:42

Duran:

Like tacos and that stuff? Never heard of them. There was a Mexican guy that used to go in a little cart and sell tamales. And that's the only food I remember eating, tamales. When we came down here, we didn't know what tacos were or what enchiladas were or nothing. Because we never ate that. Like I said, we ate chile beans and potatoes and all that stuff. That's all we ate. That's the staples there. And my mother, well, they learned how to cook a lot of—by the Indians over there, too. They had mixed—they had the Indian deal, too. Corn came from the Indians, I think, if I'm not mistaken. Corn. Corn on the cob. We used to plant our own peas, we used to have our own garden to raise strawberries and all kind of fruits. We used to have, on the farm, we used to have barrels full of delicious apples. Full, you know? Get an apple and go to school. Take three or four apples. That's all we used to have, but as far as traditional Mexican food, not until I came out here that I started thinking about it.

1-00:29:00

Washburn:

What about tortillas?

1-00:29:01

Duran:

Tortillas that were made out of—not out of corn. They made their own tortillas like they do now, flour tortillas. My mother used to make them. Fact is, my mother used to make bread, too. My mother used to make bread, used to bake bread, bake donuts. She was quite a cook. She did all that. Pies, cakes. When I was a kid, we used to make cakes on the farm, too, my sister and I. I still make little cakes and pies now. I learned that.

1-00:29:37

Washburn:

But you did eat flour tortillas?

1-00:29:40

Duran:

Flour tortillas, yes.

1-00:29:44

Washburn:

And, did you eat lots of rice at all?

1-00:29:48

Duran:

Well, the only time we ate rice was, my mother used to make rice pudding. That's it right there.

1-00:29:56

Washburn:

Do you ever remember eating at restaurants in town that were either Mexican, Italian, or Slavic restaurants? No?

1-00:30:11

Duran:

I never knew they had Mexican food in town, to tell you the truth. Hamburger joints, they had quite a bit of them. That's where we used to eat hamburgers. There was a place they called Mac's Hamburgers, "Known from coast to coast," they said, because all the truckers used to stop there and eat their hamburgers, see? Mac's Hamburgers.

1-00:30:46

Washburn:

So, let's talk about your decision to—actually, so before you moved out here—I'm trying to, because we've met once before, and I kind of know a little about the timeline of your life—you enlisted in the army before you came out here?

1-00:31:08

Duran:

Yes, in 1940.

1-00:31:10

Washburn:

And you went into the army after living in Walsenburg. So what can you tell me about your decision to enlist in the army?

1-00:31:20

Duran:

Well, the decision's like I told you a while ago, I was in the CC camps in Grand Junction, 1940, and I couldn't join the CCs any more because they told me I'd been there too long. So I didn't want to go back and work in the mines or stuff like that, because I used to see those miners all crippled up, you know? I didn't want to work in a mine, and I didn't want to work on a farm! So I said, "Hell, the only thing I can do is join the army."

1-00:31:53

Washburn:

Well, then let's talk briefly about your decision to go into the CC camps.

1-00:31:57

Duran:

Well, that was a decision right there, because there wasn't any money during the Depression, and the decision I made was that we didn't have anything, no money; I had to take care of everything. Obviously I didn't take care of everything, but I was disgusted about the thing of no money, no nothing. We were lucky to get fifty cents. One of my brothers—what he was doing, he was working at a barber shop, shining shoes, and he

used to give me fifty cents once in a while, something like that. I was lucky if I had fifty cents during the Depression right there. See? And school everybody got—I says, “Nah, I’m going to the CCs.”

1-00:32:43

Washburn:

So how did you find out about the CC camps? It stands for Conservation Corps, right?

1-00:32:49

Duran:

Yes. There were people that asked if you wanted to join during that time. Fact is, Roosevelt is the one who started that Civilian Conservation Corps for kids to keep us out of the streets, which was a good deal. We went over there, we worked at erosion work. Fact is, what I did in the CC camps, I would work in the kitchen as a cook, you know, cooking. I was an officer’s orderly; I used to set their own tables in the morning, for the officers and the foremen. Because they had foremen that went out to take the gangs out to work on the field. And the foremen used to stay there, and the officers; they were army retired officers in charge. They used to pay me eight dollars a month more to take care of their mess hall, and feed them, putting the tables out, and food for them and everything. I was getting eight dollars a month extra, which was something my family was getting. Because during the Depression now, my stepdad and his brothers, they all lost the whole ten thousand head of sheep. That’s when they went broke. They lost them all, they lost everything.

1-00:34:28

Washburn:

How did they lose them?

1-00:34:30

Duran:

Well, the Depression, everything broke down. I don’t know how they lost them, because I don’t remember a thing, but they didn’t have anything, you know? Fact is, there was such a big company and they used to call them, its name was Regillo. Used to call it the Regillo Livestock Company. And they lost all that, and the money they had. I used to see their ledger, when I was a kid. But they lost everything, so the only thing they had was just the farm. That’s another reason that I went to the CC camps, to help them out. First they were getting twenty-five dollars a month. I was only getting five in this camp, which I needed just to buy my cigarettes and stuff like that. And then they raised it to eight dollars, and they got twenty-two. And then in the CC camps, like I say, I was working extra to make extra money for myself. I was getting eight dollars a month from the officers.

1-00:35:47

Washburn:

So how long were you in the CC camps for?

1-00:35:52

Duran:

I was in the CC camps, let's see, first I stayed eighteen months, and then I stayed six months in another camp, six months in another, six months in another, off and on. You know? Because I'd get out, and I didn't want to work outside. And once you get out, you have to wait six months in order to rejoin a CC camp. So I went up by Mesa Verde, the Rocky Mountains—I went to three camps, three different camps, for about three years or so, see? Because I even lied about my age the first time I went. I wasn't even eighteen. I lacked a few months before I joined the CC camps. And there was a guy ahead of me, and they asked him, "When were you born?" He said, "I was born May, 1917," or no, "I was born in August," and it was in May, and they said, "You can't go, you're not eighteen." So then they looked at me. I went in there and they asked me, "When were you born?" "April 10, 1917," I said. See, I lied; I was born in September. I couldn't have gone either, see?

1-00:37:14

Washburn:

So you were there, three different camps for three years?

1-00:37:19

Duran:

Three different camps is a long time. They told me I couldn't join any more. I had been in the CC camps too long. So I joined the army.

1-00:37:28

Washburn:

Tell me about that. How did that decision happen?

1-00:37:35

Duran:

It happened in the camp. I just made up my mind: that's it, I'm going.

1-00:37:40

Washburn:

But why the army and not something else?

1-00:37:42

Duran:

Well, I tried to join something else, the marines.

1-00:37:46

Emma Duran:

What he means, honey, is why not other employment or something?

1-00:37:51

Duran:

Oh no, because I didn't want to do anything else. Like I said, I didn't want to work in the mines or on a farm. I just didn't want to do that. So I got hurt. In the CC camps I got hurt. My leg here, I was tied with a rope on a truck, and the rope broke and cut my legs here. And I tried to join the marines, and they told me I couldn't join because I hurt my muscle. And then I tried to join the navy, same way, so I said, "Nah." I'm going to the army.

1-00:38:31

Washburn:

And this was in what year?

1-00:38:33

Duran:

1940.

1-00:38:39

Washburn:

So tell me about your time in the army. Where did you serve?

1-00:38:42

Duran:

I served in Fort Bliss, Texas. First Cavalry Division, from '40 to 1942, when they disbanded the cavalry and made it into—they dismantled it and they transferred a thousand of us cavalrymen to reactivate the 91st Division in Oregon, which is the Pine Tree Division [the 91st division shoulder patch bore a pine tree]. So by that time, I was already a corporal in the cavalry. See, the cavalry in the old army used to get a certificate from the Department of the Army telling you you were an NCO, corporal, so and so. So when they transferred a thousand of us, I transferred for more pay. So they transferred us to Medford, Oregon, 91st Division, and I jumped from corporal to staff sergeant, as a platoon sergeant. And we stayed there, and we had—I forgot to tell you about in '41, we had one of the biggest peacetime maneuvers that had ever happened before. That was 1941 in Louisiana. They call it Louisiana Maneuvers. The 3rd Army was at that. The cavalry rode nine hundred miles of horse riding. I was sore all over the place [laughs]. And we had to go up to the swamps for the water for the cavalry, for the horses. Your horse was number one. It's up to you, you were expendable. The horse wasn't. They treated the horse better than you [laughs]. Which is true, you know?

1-00:40:53

Washburn:

So you made your way up to platoon sergeant eventually?

1-00:40:58

Duran:

Yes.

1-00:41:00

Washburn:

And what did you enter as, just as an enlisted man?

1-00:41:04

Duran:

When I first joined the army?

1-00:41:06

Washburn:

Yes.

1-00:41:07

Duran:

Just as a private. An enlisted man. And then I made private first class.

1-00:41:13

Washburn:

How did you move up? Can you describe the level?

1-00:41:17

Duran:

Just by soldiering, doing the things I'm supposed to do as a soldier.

1-00:41:21

Washburn:

I mean the classifications for it.

1-00:41:24

Duran:

The classification was as a corporal. When I moved up as a corporal, from first class, I moved up because first, I used to take care of the commander's horses, and they made me corporal. I broke remounts for corporal too. And then from corporal, like I said, they transferred us to reactivate the 91st Division, and I jumped a step, I jumped what you call buck sergeant; I went up directly to staff sergeant. That's a platoon sergeant. And my MO as a platoon sergeant was a munitions sergeant. The ammunition and pioneer platoon, that was what my platoon was.

1-00:42:25

Washburn:

So you moved up from private to private first class to corporal, to buck sergeant—

1-00:42:30

Duran:

No, not buck sergeant. I jumped buck sergeant.

1-00:42:32

Washburn:

Oh, so from corporal to platoon sergeant?

1-00:42:35

Duran:

To platoon sergeant, yes. And I got discharged as a, we used to call it technical sergeant, but now they call it sergeant first class. That's two rockers and three stripes.

1-00:42:48

Washburn:

You know, the first time we met, in Sal's barbershop, we had talked about Texas and some of the racism in Texas.

1-00:42:59

Duran:

Oh yes, there was a lot of racism in Texas.

1-00:43:01

Washburn:

What can you describe about being Spanish-speaking, about being Hispanic, and being in Texas?

1-00:43:07

Duran:

In the army?

1-00:43:09

Washburn:

Yes.

1-00:43:10

Duran:

All right, I'll tell you what happened. In 1940 when I joined, the 1st Cavalry was composed of nothing but people from Oklahoma and Texas, you know, very few Mexicans were there then, Spanish. So I went up there and I—people coming in in 1940 went in there, and this guy strutted up and said, "Oh, look at the shit-eaters coming in." They used to call us shit-eaters. See? So I told the kid, I said, "How long you been in the army?" He says, "Two years." "Well, I'm going to tell you something, in a couple of years, you're going to take orders from us shit-eaters! We're going to teach you how to ride horses." [chuckles] So it's true, we had a bunch—before I know it, and then two years time, there were three or four of us that made squad leader right off the bat, because of our soldiering. I guess we did—well, like me, they used to put me in as a guard when the commander of the post, or the commander of the division passed by, I was at post number one, and I was supposed to salute him and do the things I'm supposed to do. See? And they used to put me on post number one, because I was number one on that. As a sentry.

1-00:44:50

Washburn:

Do you think they called you shit-eaters because—?

1-00:44:53

Duran:

Because we were Mexican. This guy, the people from Texas were fighting the Alamo yet. There used to be signs in Texas in restaurants, "No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed." See? Or some of them said, "No Soldiers Allowed," either. No dogs or soldiers allowed. Which was—that's us, they're talking about Mexicans. They had that in Texas. Fact is, in my own home, my own state, in northern Colorado, they were against Mexicans over there too.

1-00:45:38

Washburn:

How is that?

1-00:45:40

Duran:

I don't know. I guess because a lot of Mexicans used to go over there and work on the farms at Longmont there. That's how they knew. Fact is, they even had, like I told you at Sal's barbershop, we were coming in the CC camps to go to Denver, me and this friend of mine, and we stopped at Longmont, and we went over to this little restaurant, and we had something to eat there, and we ate. The next morning, we got up to have breakfast, and the waitress told us, "We can't serve you." "Why?" "Because you're Mexicans." I said, "What do you mean? We were just here last night." So anyways, we said, "We want to talk to Tony Gallegos. We'll see your manager." So we saw the manager, I told the manager, "Look, we were born and raised here, what the hell? I even was born in this town, Longmont, and you're doing a thing like that?" They served us, you know. But that's what they did then. They used to do that. Because that's when a lot of Mexicans were coming in then, see?

1-00:46:53

Washburn:

Well, how did the waitress know you were Mexican?

1-00:46:56

Duran:

By looking at us, they knew that.

1-00:46:58

Washburn:

Well, you said people dressed pretty much the same?

1-00:47:06

Duran:

Well, we dressed the same, but there were—

1-00:47:08

Emma Duran:

Complexion.

1-00:47:12

Duran:

Complexion, and the way—

1-00:47:14

Emma Duran:

The dark complexion.

1-00:47:18

Washburn:

Weren't there Italians and Slavs that had dark complexions, too?

1-00:47:21

Duran:

Yes, but not as dark as us, though, no. And Slavs weren't too dark.

1-00:47:31

Washburn:

And so, if they called you shit-eater in the cavalry, how did you make your way up from private to sergeant first class?

1-00:47:43

Duran:

Because we worked up. You worked for it. You soldiered. Like when we were taking recruits, my platoon sergeant used to show the other recruits, he'd say, "Trooper Duran, when the horse passes, go over there and show them how to vault on a horse." A guy come up on the horse like that, and I run across and hit the ground and vault the saddle, see? Another guy riding the horse. Soldiering: that's what made your deal. If you were a good soldier, you would get promoted. If you did your job, you were promoted. Like when I made corporal, same thing. I got promoted because I was taking care of the brigadier general's horses. He got a string of horses, and they played polo. I took care of them, I had a corporal, and—made me corporal, and I had three or four assistants. Three or four first class, take care of the polo horses, put them up, the {playguns?} and everything. And then they put me down there breaking remounts. That put me up to corporal, you know? So that's what; you soldiered, you had to work your way up.

1-00:49:22

Washburn:

Do you think you had to work harder because they called you a shit-eater than if they didn't call you a shit-eater?

1-00:49:27

Duran:

No. No, just like I told that guy, "You're going to find out that you're going to take orders from us in no time." Which he did. There were three of us. There was a guy by the name of Morales from Arizona, Figueroa from Arizona, and myself. Squad leaders right off the bat [laughs]. After they found out that we were good horsemen and everything like that, they changed their minds, see? People change their minds. Fact is, the 12th Cavalry, they transferred a thousand from the 1st Cavalry Division to the 12th Cavalry—no, from the regiment, each regiment, 8th Regiment, 7th Regiment, 12th and 24th Regiment Cavalries. See that's a whole division. They transferred a guy from the 12th Cavalry and he was my first sergeant in the 91st Division, by the name of Limerick, Irishman, and he picked his first sergeants. He picked me and everything like that, and I asked him, "How come you picked me, knowing that I was a Mexican?" "Your name, Duran, fooled me." See? So anyway, he said, "What do you think of me now, you're a ranking sergeant?" I was ranking sergeant after him. If he took off somewhere, I'd take over as first sergeant. That was it right there. But, they changed their minds right after that. The only thing that was separated then was the blacks.

1-00:51:26

Washburn:

Tell me about that.

1-00:51:28

Duran:

They were separated. The blacks were mostly—well, the 92nd Infantry Division was all blacks from Arizona. And the Transportation Corps was mostly blacks who drove the trucks, because they used to take us, the infantry, load us in a truck and take us to the different places. When the war broke out, I'm going back again, when the war broke out in '41—

1-00:52:09

Washburn:

Well, actually I want to ask you, are you going to talk about the black cavalry division?

1-00:52:15

Duran:

No.

1-00:52:17

Washburn:

I wanted to ask you about that really quickly.

1-00:52:19

Duran:

I didn't know anything about that.

1-00:52:20

Washburn:

Well, if they discriminated or talked badly about the Mexican folks who were in the cavalry division, why didn't they separate them as well?

1-00:52:36

Duran:

I don't know. I couldn't tell you that. Because we were under the—I was taught that we were Caucasians too. Where did that thing come—like I told, like I told the kid in San Jose one time I was waiting for him there, he was right there at the grocery store, I was taught that there was only three races: white, yellow, and red, all right? My school taught me that. So this kid was saying something about, he asked me about the "brown race." I said, "What's a brown race?" "You guys." "Where did you get that from? You're going to San Jose State here?" He said, "Yeah." "Where did you get that, brown race? I never heard of that. I've heard Caucasian, black, and yellow. That's all I've heard of," I said. And naturally the red, which is four races. Where did this black come from?

1-00:53:48

Washburn:

Brown.

1-00:53:49

Duran:

Brown. See? Where did it come from? Who started that crap about the brown? And I was taught that we were all Caucasians, Hispanics and all of that [laughs].

1-00:54:07

Washburn:

Well, if you were Caucasians, why did the folks in the cavalry division treat you differently, then? Or talk to you differently?

1-00:54:17

Duran:

Well, because just like I said, the people from Texas and Oklahoma, they didn't like Mexicans. They didn't know. I'll tell you what happened. I was in the office when I first went in there, and the clerk was asking me about things like that, you know, and he says, "What's your nationality? What's your race?" I said, "White. How come you put Mexican there? There's no such race as Mexican."

1-00:54:54

Washburn:

Who put Mexican there?

1-00:54:58

Duran:

The clerk. So my commanding officer come up there and he heard about it and he said, "Hey, that's wrong. He's the white race. You're talking about nationality."

1-00:55:08

Washburn:

Right.

1-00:55:13

Duran:

And that's it right there—I told him, "There's no such thing as a Mexican race, what's the matter with you? See, the captain is right."

1-00:55:26

Washburn:

But it does seem like they did divide in Texas, whites, blacks, and Mexicans.

1-00:55:31

Duran:

That's right, they did, but they couldn't help but have the Mexicans among them either, you know? Because we were under the white race. And look at this, who won the more medals during the Second World War, of the 36th Division, and the 45th Division, and the Medal of Honor and all that stuff? More Mexican kids won the medals. Most of them, except Audie Murphy and them, naturally, you know? But read the history of the 36th Division and the 45th Division, and all of them, the 1st Division. Look at the 442nd Regimental combat team of Japanese. They call it the Purple Heart Battalion. There you go, see?

1-00:56:30

Washburn:

Or the Tuskegee Airmen.

1-00:56:34

Duran:

Sure.

1-00:56:35

Washburn:

Did you think it was fair or appropriate that the cavalry was divided into white and black regiments?

1-00:56:44

Duran:

Well, I never thought—

1-00:56:45

Washburn:

At that time, what did you think?

1-00:56:47

Duran:

I never thought about it at all. Just that—I never was taught about blacks, because back home there weren't very many blacks, like I said. But, I had my platoon sergeant, I had my squad leaders; one kid was from Georgia, another one from Alabama, and another one from New Mexico or something like that. Squad leaders.

1-00:57:31

Washburn:

Oh, these were white guys?

1-00:57:32

Duran:

Yes.

1-00:57:33

Washburn:

Okay, from the South?

1-00:57:33

Duran:

From the South. My squad leader from Georgia was a big guy, blonde-headed, you know? Okay, one time, the Transportation Corps were going to take us out on the trucks, and our commanding officer told us that we were supposed to ride, the platoon sergeant ride in front in the cab with the truck driver, and that's blacks, see? Transportation Corps. And the assistant, because they had an assistant truck driver, drive in the back. But they had their own orders, which is logical, that the assistant truck driver ride in the truck with the driver in case something happens to the driver. So this white kid, squad leader, he was from Georgia, and naturally they hated blacks, you know? So he started getting smart with the assistant truck driver because I was supposed to go in the cab. I said, "Wait a second, that's none of your business. Just go over and sit as a squad leader. This guy has his orders the same as we have. So we obey his orders more, because it's more logical. What am I going to do if something happens to the truck driver? I'll ride in the back with my boys."

1-00:59:08

Washburn:

So where did you ride?

1-00:59:14

Duran:

I rode in the back, sure.

1-00:59:16

Washburn:

Yes. Well, that's really interesting, the differences in the way people were treated in the army.

1-00:59:30

Duran:

Oh sure, there were. And you know which president took the discrimination from the army? Truman. He said, "They're all soldiers, they get together. They live together. They have to live together. They fight together, so what the heck?" So he broke the deal there.

1-01:00:04

Washburn:

And do you know when?

1-01:00:09

Duran:

That was after I left the army, yes.

1-01:00:27

Washburn:

[discussion deleted] We don't have to talk about the army any more, but, those are really interesting stories, because people point to the army as being a place where a lot of people from a lot of different places were thrown together.

1-01:00:39

Duran:

Sure.

1-01:00:40

Washburn:

And so some barriers were crossed.

1-01:00:44

Duran:

And one thing with that, people finally learned how to live together in the army.

1-01:00:51

Washburn:

You think?

1-01:00:54

Duran:

I think they learned how. Now they live together. And they protect each other in combat. Come on, they have to! I was—I don't think there's discrimination in the army now like there used to be.

1-01:01:20

Washburn:

You've told me a lot of great things about the army, but I think we need to move on and talk about your decision to come out to Richmond. What can you tell me about how you made the decision to come to Richmond?

1-01:01:42

Duran:

Well, my brothers were here, for one thing, working at the shipyards. And I got out in November of '44, and I couldn't find a job back home at all, so what I did, a friend of mine—Kaiser was looking for people to work: they used to send people out to look for people to come to work in the shipyards, or in Portland, Oregon. So this friend of mine and I, since I was stationed in Oregon, I liked the town of Portland very much, so I went to work in Portland, Oregon, for Kaiser. After my friend who went with me, his brother passed away. The fact is, his brother was a soldier that got wounded at the beachhead in Anzio in the 36th Division, and he passed away. He had a plate in his head. Well, I remember he passed away, and the buddy I was with in Oregon went home. So I was by myself over there. So I wrote a letter to my brother here that I wanted to come here.

1-01:03:09

Washburn:

When you got out of the service, you went back to Colorado to look for work?

1-01:03:17

Duran:

Yes. Because my mother was still--

1-01:03:19

Washburn:

And what happened?

1-01:03:21

Duran:

Well, I couldn't find any work. To tell you the truth, when I came out of there, I was drinking too much, and my mother was worried about me. She used to tell me that she'd rather see me die in honor on a battlefield than die as a drunkard. So anyway, that's what I hoped when I went to Portland, Oregon, and I came back here where my brothers were at.

1-01:03:46

Washburn:

So did you move out to Portland with your friend?

1-01:03:59

Duran:

Yes, we had to go. We had to stay with the—they had communities, Kaiser had houses over there where people could stay, you know? Barracks or something like that. But, I didn't care much after that.

1-01:04:19

Washburn:

It was your friend from your town, too?

1-01:04:23

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:04:23

Washburn:

Why did you and your friend decide to move to Portland?

1-01:04:28

Duran:

Because that's what I told you, that Kaiser was looking for workers to go down there and work in the shipyards in Portland.

1-01:04:33

Washburn:

I know that, but why Portland rather than Richmond?

1-01:04:38

Duran:

Because I was stationed in Portland and I used to go down there all the time. I was stationed in Oregon, and I thought I would like it as a civilian, but I didn't [laughs], see? So I came here in about February, no, about December, I think, of '44.

1-01:05:03

Washburn:

So you knew Oregon much better than you knew California?

1-01:05:06

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:05:07

Washburn:

Where did you guys stay when you first moved out? Who was the friend that you went with, do you remember his name?

1-01:05:15

Duran:

Yes, Cordova. Leandro Cordova was his name.

1-01:05:21

Washburn:

Where did you guys stay when you moved to Portland?

1-01:05:25

Duran:

Well, they had, what do you call those? Kaiser had, what do you call those things?

1-01:05:35

Washburn:

Were they like dormitories or something?

1-01:05:40

Duran:

Dormitories for the workers, yes. They used to eat there and everything, feed us. We had our own rooms. So I came to California and I started working in the shipyards here. Yard Number Two, I started working as a boilermaker.

1-01:06:06

Washburn:

But let me ask you before you move on to Richmond, because I still want to learn a little bit about Portland, because I actually don't know that much about Portland. How did you guys hear about work in Portland?

1-01:06:21

Duran:

Well, as I told you—

1-01:06:23

Emma Duran:

They had scouts. They had scouts that went out looking for workers.

1-01:06:28

Washburn:

Well, you have all these people living in the United States, in the West at least, and they all find work in Kaiser, and people are interested to find out the exact way you found out.

1-01:06:38

Duran:

Well, I found out exactly how I told you. Kaiser, who used to make the shipyards, he sends people out to recruit workers for the shipyards. That's the way I got recruited from Colorado, from my hometown, to go down there.

1-01:06:57

Washburn:

Can you describe the recruitment process, how you learned about it?

1-01:07:03

Duran:

No, I can't describe that. We just went over there and signed to work, to go over there: "Would you like to work in a shipyard?" and we signed and that was it.

1-01:07:12

Washburn:

Well, that's what I mean.

1-01:07:13

Duran:

And they paid our way down there.

1-01:07:16

Washburn:

That's what I mean by recruitment process. Where did you go in town to find out about the shipyards? Did they have an office, or some guy was going door to door?

1-01:07:24

Duran:

No, no. In town, they had a deal there. You know, hiring hall that they had there, that's all. And they paid our way down there, see?

1-01:07:36

Washburn:

Why do you think they were recruiting in such a small town?

1-01:07:41

Duran:

I guess I'd say that's where they found the jobs, I guess, I don't know. I couldn't tell you that. So I worked in Oregon maybe not even a month, about a month, I guess.

1-01:08:01

Washburn:

So they paid for you to go out there; did you go out by train?

1-01:08:10

Duran:

Yes, they did, they paid our way down there. They paid our fare to Oregon, see? Kaiser was looking for people to work in the shipyards when the war was really going strong. We weren't—because I got hurt in North Africa. That's when I busted my knee. They sent me back here. That's why they discharged me, they didn't want me in the army any more [laughs]. November of '42.

1-01:08:44

Washburn:

So let's talk about how you moved from Portland to Richmond.

1-01:09:01

Duran:

I came here, I called my brother and said I wanted to come here, to send me some money to Portland. So my oldest brother sent me forty dollars to get bus fare, and that brought me. And I stayed with him on Cutting Boulevard in the housing there—forty-nine hundred and fifteen, I think it was. So anyway, I started working at the shipyard right away as a boilermaker. And I worked until the close, and then like a darn fool I met a girl

here, and I had to get married. I fell in love, you know? And it happened that my wife was only seventy-two miles away from my hometown [laughs].

1-01:09:57

Washburn:

[laughs] That's interesting. So how did your brothers come out to Richmond, then?

1-01:10:04

Duran:

I don't know how they came out, because I was in the army. I guess they came out with the same thing to work in the shipyards too, I guess. I don't know that. They came in '42, or no, in '41, I think. Forty or '41, I think.

1-01:10:26

Washburn:

So what were your impressions of Richmond when you first moved here?

1-01:10:30

Duran:

Oh man, it was really crowded. Full of people! Because she was already here, she was already working the shipyards herself, at the gas rationing board, isn't that right?

1-01:10:49

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:10:51

Duran:

And I worked as a boilermaker there until the shipyards closed. After the shipyards closed, I got into the GI Bill, and I started working as a carpenter. I got my GED test here, passed it. I worked as a carpenter. I got to work at the overpass in Cutting. I worked for {Maudlin and Kahn?} in San Francisco, the sewage disposal plant. I worked for them in Oakland, building a school there. I worked for the Pinole Estates. And then I joined the post office.

1-01:11:45

Washburn:

Well, I'm interested, you said it was crowded. Where was Richmond the most crowded?

1-01:11:52

Duran:

Downtown, right downtown there.

1-01:11:55

Emma Duran:

Actually all over.

1-01:11:55

Duran:

All over.

1-01:11:56

Emma Duran:

Actually all over. People from all over the country came to work in the shipyards.

1-01:12:02

Duran:

Texans, Okies, blacks, and everything coming here. It was really a lot of people. But the natives even said it themselves, they got overrun [laughs].

1-01:12:18

Washburn:

What can you describe about the home, the apartment you and your brothers lived in on Cutting?

1-01:12:25

Duran:

It was regular housing that we had there. Government housing that we had there. Government housing. About two stories, you know? Isn't that right, hon?

1-01:12:39

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:12:41

Duran:

That's the same thing of housing, that they used to furnish the apartments for you there. Put the stoves in, everything. You didn't have to buy any furniture. They were already furnished. You know?

1-01:12:58

Washburn:

So it sounds like the transition, the moving into town, was rather easy?

1-01:13:04

Duran:

Yes, it was. See, there was a lot of housing right there. All over {Bubird?} there, on the south side, Stockton, and over there on Cutting Boulevard, the housing there. On the other side, there was nothing but—there was a lot of housing out there on the south side. They had to—Kaiser built a lot of houses there, apartments, you know? Easter Hill, not Easter Hill, but Atcheson Village here. He built that. See, that's what made Richmond so big, because all the people came in and they stayed. They didn't go anyplace, they stayed here.

1-01:13:53

Washburn:

So, you know I'm doing this community history of the Latino community?

1-01:14:08

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:14:10

Washburn:

When you moved here, where you lived, as I've learned, there weren't too many Latino folks, or Hispanic folks who lived over that way.

1-01:14:19

Duran:

No, there weren't very many that lived where we lived, no.

1-01:14:23

Emma Duran:

No.

1-01:14:24

Washburn:

On the south side?

1-01:14:24

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:14:26

Washburn:

So when did you find out about the Hispanic community here in town? How did you meet people?

1-01:14:37

Duran:

Through the church, isn't that right?

1-01:14:40

Emma Duran:

Yes, probably. Well, through friends, you know, that we had met there.

1-01:14:44

Duran:

Friends.

1-01:14:46

Emma Duran:

Word of mouth, so to speak.

1-01:14:50

Washburn:

Well, describe something about—which church did you go to, and what can you tell me about the church?

1-01:15:01

Emma Duran:

First there was St. John's. St. John's first, then St. Mark's.

1-01:15:05

Duran:

St. John's first, in El Cerrito, yes.

1-01:15:09

Washburn:

You went to St. Mark's eventually?

1-01:15:12

Emma Duran:

And then now St. Cornelius.

1-01:15:14

Duran:

Now St. Cornelius, that's right. Because we didn't—and then you meet a lot of Latinos—naturally, I met a lot during the war, working.

1-01:15:32

Washburn:

Working where?

1-01:15:34

Duran:

Here in the shipyards, and working in different places, or in the neighborhoods, like that, you know. We had a couple of neighbors on Fifty-Sixth Street, didn't we, hon? Ramirez?

1-01:15:45

Emma Duran:

That were Latinos, you mean?

1-01:15:48

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:15:52

Washburn:

I remember speaking with one woman about whether she spoke Spanish in the shipyards, or met other Hispanic people in the shipyards, and she said she never did. She said it wasn't something you did, because you were so busy. How did you meet other Hispanic people in the shipyard?

1-01:16:09

Emma Duran:

Well, like in your breaks, in your lunch hours.

1-01:16:15

Duran:

Yes. Or you work in the same gang, doing the same job. That's the only way.

1-01:16:22

Emma Duran:

But you don't do much during your work.

1-01:16:24

Duran:

No, you don't.

1-01:16:26

Emma Duran:

So it's during your breaks and during your lunch.

1-01:16:29

Washburn:

Did you have any friends that you made that you kept after working there?

1-01:16:36

Duran:

That worked with me? I don't remember any.

1-01:16:40

Washburn:

And so how was it joining St. Mark's and going there for the first time? What can you remember about joining the church, and who you met there?

1-01:16:56

Emma Duran:

We just went because we believed that we had to go to church on Sundays—

1-01:17:06

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:17:08

Emma Duran:

And that was our parish, and that's where we ended up.

1-01:17:12

Duran:

We met, naturally you meet them when you go to church. You meet people you go to church with. There was a family that we met that were very good friends of ours. They were the Garcias, Danny Garcia. That's when we met Mickey, I guess mixing them up like that. That's the only way you meet friends.

1-01:17:37

Emma Duran:

But you knew Danny Garcia before St. Mark's.

1-01:17:39

Duran:

Really?

1-01:17:41

Emma Duran:

Yes, we were neighbors.

1-01:17:43

Duran:

Oh, we were neighbors on—

1-01:17:46

Emma Duran:

Thirteenth.

1-01:17:48

Duran:

Thirteenth and Cutting, that's right, yes. Because we lived at Thirteenth and Cutting.

1-01:17:52

Washburn:

When did you two meet? How can you describe when you guys met?

1-01:18:00

Duran:

I used to be—I used to know her cousin. I met her cousin at Louie's Club. We were in the CC camps together, and I met him here. Then, he lived on Huber, and he took me to the house that she was staying with him. That's the way I met her. I didn't know her. When I first met her, I was pretty well polluted. I used to drink a lot, because I felt bad about my leg. I wore a brace, on this leg. So anyway, I met her, and I'd been around so long, you know, with different girls and all that, so I told a cousin, and a friend of ours I was staying with, "I want to marry her." And they said, "What do you mean, marry her?" They knew me. They knew me, that I was a playboy I guess, or something like that. They said, "No, she's a good girl, man. Don't marry her." So I bet the boy five dollars, the other boy, that I was going to marry her. So her cousin and I, I asked her, and she didn't know anything, so her cousin and I went to see the priest. I wasn't a Catholic then, went to see the priest at St. John's, and we asked him about getting married. He cussed my whole family out because I was Protestant. Remember I told you that? [laughs]

1-01:19:57

Washburn:

Yes.

1-01:19:59

Duran:

Well, anyway, so they come out, and I told him, I told Johnny, his name was Johnny, well, Lee was her friend—I told him, "Let's tell him that we went and saw the priest already, you know. Just for fun." I hadn't seen him yet. I hadn't seen the priest yet. But we just said that before we went to see the priest. After she accepted, we went to see the priest.

1-01:20:27

Emma Duran:

I didn't even know what you were talking about.

1-01:20:30

Washburn:

Well, what year was this?

1-01:20:32

Duran:
1944.

1-01:20:34

Washburn:
So how much time did you have in Richmond before you met her? From moving here before you met her?

1-01:20:43

Duran:
About a month. Just from December to January, yes.

1-01:20:49

Washburn:
Well, we had talked before about you going to bars, and stuff like that

1-01:20:55

Duran:
Oh, yes, that was the time then.

1-01:20:57

Washburn:
That was the time?

1-01:20:59

Duran:
Yes.

1-01:21:01

Washburn:
So let's take a moment and talk about the different nightclubs, because Richmond had, it seems like it had a very lively nightclub scene, from what I've heard at least. I'd like to learn your impressions about things. Where did you go to drink normally?

1-01:21:22

Duran:
All over.

1-01:21:25

Emma Duran:
Mostly?

1-01:21:27

Duran:
Mostly at this thing that you have here that I told you about, the Esquire Club.

1-01:21:32

Washburn:
The Esquire Club.

1-01:21:33

Duran:

There. I used to go to Base Hit once in a while. I used to go mostly to Louie's Club in El Cerrito.

1-01:21:41

Washburn:

So can you describe what it was like to be in Louie's Club? What did people do there?

1-01:21:48

Duran:

Friendly. Friendly people.

1-01:21:51

Emma Duran:

Nice place.

1-01:21:52

Duran:

Nice place. My nephew, my niece's husband was a bartender there.

[tape interruption]

1-01:22:27

Washburn:

What we were about to talk about was the night life in Richmond. You had said that you had gone around to a bunch of bars, and you were just talking about Louie's Club. You said people were friendly, but what did people do in the bars? Did they shoot pool? Did they play cards?

1-01:22:33

Duran:

Oh, no, drink, and have drink and conversation. That's all at Louie's Club. But, there was one here called—what was the name of that bar there? They used to shoot pool there. They had bars to shoot pool and drink. The Harbor, they called it.

1-01:22:57

Washburn:

The Harbor?

1-01:22:59

Duran:

Yes, and the Base Hit is another one in south Richmond. On Cutting, they used to have Oscar's, and the Elkhorn was another one.

1-01:23:15

Washburn:

Do you think people drank a lot? Did people get pretty drunk, or would they just have one drink? How would you describe it?

1-01:23:26

Duran:

Oh yes, they drank quite a bit. Yes. In fact, I was even one of them. I drank quite a bit. We used to drink a lot.

1-01:23:35

Washburn:

How would you describe drinking quite a bit? What would you drink in a night?

1-01:23:42

Duran:

Beer. We'd drink anything. Like, we'd maybe go to a bar and have a cocktail or two, three. Maybe more. We used to go to—like I told you about that fish house, Azevedo used to own a bar right here on—that's the way I met him, small bar over here on, oh, I couldn't tell you—on Tenth and Macdonald, right around there. There's nothing there now. Just buildings, you know. But, they used to own one. And then he opened the fish house on San Pablo. It's called the Broiler. George Azevedo. He had that and he had a steak house by Thirteenth. On one corner, a steak house. That was a good restaurant. Oh, the best.

1-01:24:48

Washburn:

Well, do you remember the bars being mixed-race bars?

1-01:24:53

Duran:

Oh, sure.

1-01:24:55

Washburn:

Who went to the bars?

1-01:24:59

Duran:

What do you mean?

1-01:25:01

Washburn:

Men, women, older?

1-01:25:02

Duran:

Yes, men, women, older men. Women used to go there. And, I don't know, very few blacks went to the bars that I know of. They had their own places on the south side district They used to go to—

1-01:25:25

Washburn:

On the north side, you mean?

1-01:25:27

Duran:

No, on the south side, over there by Twenty-Eighth and Cutting, around there.

1-01:25:31

Washburn:

They had their own kind of bar on the south side?

1-01:25:34

Duran:

They had their own kind of bar, yes. They had their own bars. They used to go. But they used to go to different bars like that. Most of the bars I went to were in El Cerrito.

1-01:25:49

Washburn:

Why did you like the bars in El Cerrito more?

1-01:25:55

Duran:

Well, I was close to there, and I worked there, you know. After I got into the post office, I worked in El Cerrito. I used to go to Louie's Club because that's a place we used to live so close to. I never came to these bars until afterwards, when I was—when I first married her, that's all, we would stick around, El Cerrito. Afterwards, we did come in. Not all the time.

1-01:26:29

Washburn:

Well, the other day, you mentioned something about some guys, a group of guys running a bunch of bars. Some Italian folks, I think you said.

1-01:26:41

Duran:

Oh, yes, out there in El Cerrito.

1-01:26:43

Washburn:

What can you tell me about that?

1-01:26:45

Duran:

The only thing that I can tell is that one of them was Bones Remmer. They used to call the place over there "No Man's Land," it was county, the El Cerrito city didn't have anything to do with it. Right there where the Eagles' Hall is. You pass by it, on Carlson? I don't know if you drive through there or not. They used to call it the Wagon Wheel. And then they used to have, on Central Avenue, there was a place called {Pichardt?}. He used to have his bar there. Vic Figone used to have the Six Bells. Phil Molina used to have the Moana Club. And the It Club was Walt Gatto. Fact is, Walt Gatto used to have—the It Club, they used to bring a lot of these Hollywood celebrities there, years ago. They used to have, right there where the plaza is, they used to have a dog-racing track there.

1-01:27:58

Washburn:

How did you know about these different guys? How did you know about these guys' names and who they were?

1-01:28:07

Duran:

Because we used to talk with them. I never talked to Bones Remmer, just by hearsay, that's all I'd say about it. Pichardt the same way. But I knew Vic Figone pretty good. His sons own the El Cerrito sanitary deal, pick up the garbage.

1-01:28:37

Washburn:

Would you describe these guys as kind of like mobster, gangster types?

1-01:28:42

Duran:

Maybe. I don't think Vic Figone was. Well, maybe he was, I don't know. But Pichardt and Bones Remmer were. Pichardt sold his place here, and he opened, I forgot the name of the bar, of the nightclub he opened in Reno. It was right by the river there. I forgot the name of it.

1-01:29:03

Washburn:

But Bones Remmer was his name. And was he pretty famous around Richmond?

1-01:29:10

Duran:

Yes! Around El Cerrito, he was famous.

1-01:29:15

Washburn:

Or El Cerrito. Did he go out with bodyguards?

1-01:29:21

Duran:

I don't know. Just that I know his name, that's all. It's hearsay, in other words, you know?

1-01:29:28

Washburn:

Somebody was telling me about the It Club the other day. What do you remember about going into the It Club?

1-01:29:36

Duran:

The Gatto.

1-01:29:38

Washburn:

What?

1-01:29:40

Duran:

Walt Gatto was his name. I knew him real good.

1-01:29:42

Washburn:

What can you describe about the It Club?

1-01:29:47

Duran:

It was a regular club. Fact is, they used to have eats there. Remember?

1-01:29:56

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:29:58

Duran:

Yes, they used to have a restaurant to eat. He used to bring famous celebrities there, from Hollywood, years ago.

1-01:30:08

Washburn:

This is during what time?

1-01:30:12

Duran:

Oh, I don't know, about '44, '43. I mean, '45. 1945-'46, like after I got there, yes.

1-01:30:31

Washburn:

So why did the celebrities come to the It Club, do you think?

1-01:30:34

Duran:

He used to invite them. He used to bring them in. He used to have a floor show there, Walt Gatto.

1-01:30:49

Washburn:

Describe to me what the floor show was like.

1-01:30:51

Duran:

Dancers, and singers. I never did go—we went once, one time, but that's about all. We had dinner there, didn't we, hon?

1-01:31:05

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:31:07

Washburn:

Well, what was the floor show like that you saw?

1-01:31:11

Emma Duran:

Dancers.

1-01:31:14

Duran:

Dancers.

1-01:31:14

Emma Duran:

That's about it.

1-01:31:15

Washburn:

But what did they dance?

1-01:31:18

Duran:

Chorus dancing, just like anything that you see in shows like that. Singers, like Tony Bennett and like that. He used to bring those people in there. And then at that Louie's Club, Six Bells was another one that—we used to eat at Six Bells, too?

1-01:31:47

Emma Duran:

I don't think so.

1-01:31:48

Duran:

No, that was a bar. Vic Figone's place. Phil Molina's was a bar, too.

1-01:31:54

Washburn:

Was it expensive to get into these places?

1-01:31:57

Duran:

No. The only expensive was whenever Walt Gatto used to have a show like that, you had to pay a cover charge. Naturally, you know, get the people there.

1-01:32:18

Washburn:

A woman once described the floor show there as being kind of racy, that women wore skimpier outfits.

1-01:32:30

Duran:

Yes, well, just like any show.

1-01:32:34

Emma Duran:

Some, but not real skimpy. But some.

1-01:32:39

Washburn:

It wasn't like a strip joint?

1-01:32:41

Duran:

No, no, I don't think it was. Maybe he did have some, I don't know. We never went to all of them.

1-01:32:47

Emma Duran:

We never went to all of them. Just the one we saw, they weren't.

1-01:32:51

Duran:

We used to go eat at Louie's Club. They had a restaurant there. We used to go eat at the fish house.

1-01:33:04

Washburn:

Would you see the same faces in all of these clubs, over and over again?

1-01:33:11

Duran:

Yes. The clientele was the same clientele most of the time.

1-01:33:18

Washburn:

What kind of clientele was it?

1-01:33:20

Duran:

Well, doctors, bankers, at Louie's Club. Anything. Real good people. Matter of fact is, my doctor that operated on me used to go to Louie's Club all the time.

1-01:33:33

Washburn:

But yet, you were not a doctor.

1-01:33:38

Duran:

What?

1-01:33:39

Washburn:

You were not a doctor, and you were going there?

1-01:33:39

Duran:

No.

1-01:33:42

Emma Duran:

Average people went there.

1-01:33:43

Duran:

Average people went there.

1-01:33:45

Emma Duran:

We were average.

1-01:33:50

Duran:

Any kind of people went there. Average people used to go there, meaning workers or any kind. You know, carpenters, mail carriers. Everybody used to go in there. And like I said, doctors and business people used to go there.

1-01:34:06

Washburn:

How did you dress when you went there?

1-01:34:10

Duran:

How did I dress? [laughs]

1-01:34:11

Emma Duran:

You could go any way, it was casual.

1-01:34:15

Washburn:

It was casual? It wasn't like, come in suits and ties, something like that?

1-01:34:18

Duran:

No. The only time we used to go, when I was working at the post office, I had to wear a tie and a suit, yes. But I stopped there. I could go in like this. Same way at the It Club, anyplace. It wasn't a regular club that you had to dress with a tuxedo and a tie, black tie, and all that. Anybody could dress any way they wanted to.

1-01:34:46

Washburn:

But it sounds kind of—

1-01:34:49

Duran:

Just a regular mixed people, with different kind of walks of life. People of walks of life, you know? Makes no difference.

1-01:35:00

Washburn:

But it sounds kind of fancy that there were movie stars coming in there.

1-01:35:04

Duran:

Yes, they used to have that, sure. I don't remember—because we never—I think they used to have a black tie. I think, because I know Walt Gatto, fact is—

1-01:35:17

Emma Duran:

No, we never went to the black tie events.

1-01:35:21

Duran:

We never went to the black tie like that, no, never. But we never went all the time, either. We went once in a while. Like I'd get out of the post office in the evening, you know, I'd stop by and get my drink or two at the It Club to talk with Walt, see?

1-01:35:41

Washburn:

Do you remember a place called the Miami?

1-01:35:49

Duran:

Yes, Miami Club right here in Richmond. Remember, honey?

1-01:35:56

Emma Duran:

I wasn't a bar person then.

1-01:35:59

Duran:

She wasn't. I was. The Miami Club, right in—

1-01:36:02

Washburn:

What was the Miami Club like?

1-01:36:05

Duran:

Same thing.

1-01:36:07

Washburn:

Well, it seems like floor shows were pretty popular to have at that time?

1-01:36:12

Duran:

They used to have a band that would come in from San Francisco play right there for dancing, stuff like that in the Miami Club. Fact is, Jack worked there too, didn't he?

1-01:36:25

Washburn:

What kind of music would they play at the Miami Club?

1-01:36:27

Duran:

Regular music. Forties.

1-01:36:29

Washburn:

What's regular music?

1-01:36:30

Duran:

The forties. Old-time music, like we like now. The forties music. Big band, in other words. That's the kind of music they had.

1-01:36:41

Washburn:

A woman described that over there at the Miami Club they also had female impersonators sometimes.

1-01:36:49

Duran:

Yes, they had that. That's right.

1-01:36:51

Washburn:

What can you tell me about the female impersonators?

1-01:36:53

Duran:

I don't know. I never did see them.

1-01:36:55

Washburn:

But you knew they were there?

1-01:36:57

Duran:

Yes, we knew they were there.

1-01:36:59

Washburn:

Why do you think they had female impersonators? Was that a popular thing to do? To have female impersonators?

1-01:37:05

Duran:

I don't know. I guess so. They used to have a lot of things. They used to get that from San Francisco. You know San Francisco had a lot of bars with female impersonators and all that stuff. And they used to bring some here, I guess. I don't know.

1-01:37:23

Washburn:

The woman said they had female impersonators, and I asked her, was it a gay club? And she said, "No, it wasn't a gay club."

1-01:37:38

Duran:

No. No.

1-01:37:40

Washburn:

So why were there female impersonators there?

1-01:37:41

Duran:

I don't know. People used to hire them to come and—I guess the owners used to put them in there. I couldn't tell you why. I guess to make money, I guess. To get to have people come and see them, like you go to see a circus.

1-01:38:03

Emma Duran:

An attraction.

1-01:38:05

Duran:

An attraction.

1-01:38:08

Washburn:

Do you remember there being at that time an openly gay bar in town?

1-01:38:14

Duran:

No.

1-01:38:16

Washburn:

No?

1-01:38:18

Duran:

Never was. Never.

1-01:38:19

Washburn:

Seems kind of earlier for that, too.

1-01:38:23

Duran:

It was too early for it, yes. It was. Because gay bars just started popping up not very long ago.

1-01:38:30

Washburn:

Yes.

1-01:38:32

Duran:

In Oakland and San Francisco, you know.

1-01:38:35

Washburn:

So, it's interesting to talk about the nightlife and entertainment. What other things do you remember doing for entertainment when you got married, for instance?

1-01:38:48

Duran:

We used to go to the picture shows. Theaters. We used to go to the Vista Theater in El Cerrito, remember that?

1-01:38:57

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:38:58

Duran:

All the time. We used to go there all the time. We used to live close. They used to have a deal where you win something. Remember, honey? They used to have a card that you win money or something, remember?

1-01:39:27

Emma Duran:

No, I don't.

1-01:39:36

Washburn:

When would you go to picture shows?

1-01:39:38

Emma Duran:

On weekends.

1-01:39:39

Duran:

Weekends.

1-01:39:41

Emma Duran:

It was a pastime.

1-01:39:50

Washburn:

I learned recently about the Rio Theater over here on—

1-01:39:55

Duran:

On Cutting Boulevard.

1-01:39:57

Washburn:

On Cutting Boulevard.

1-01:39:57

Duran:

Not on Cutting, on—

1-01:39:59

Emma Duran:

On Macdonald. Up Third or Fourth and Macdonald.

1-01:40:05

Washburn:

What do you remember about the Rio Theater?

1-01:40:11

Duran:

They had different shows. They had Mexican shows, different stuff.

1-01:40:24

Emma Duran:

It was just a theater. Some nights they had just a straight movie, and another night they would have a Mexican movie.

1-01:40:30

Duran:

Another one that we used to go was over here at the Uptown.

1-01:40:36

Washburn:

They had Mexican movies over there too?

1-01:40:37

Duran:

No.

1-01:40:38

Washburn:

No. Well, did you guys go to see the Mexican movies at the Rio?

1-01:40:46

Emma Duran:

I did.

1-01:40:49

Washburn:

Yes?

1-01:40:50

Duran:

Me and my sister-in-law did.

1-01:40:52

Duran:

She did.

1-01:40:53

Washburn:

You didn't? Well, Emma, what do you remember about going to the Rio Theater?

1-01:41:03

Emma Duran:

Nothing. It was just that we enjoyed Mexican movies, so we would always plan to go if we could. And we enjoyed it.

1-01:41:13

Washburn:

How did you follow who the actors were in the Mexican movies?

1-01:41:23

Emma Duran:

We didn't have to do that, because we would just go, okay, for instance, if they had a guy that was a good singer, like Pedro Armendariz or whatever, then we would go and see that. We wouldn't go to every Mexican movie. It had to be somebody that we wanted to see.

1-01:41:49

Washburn:

Whose name you recognized?

1-01:41:55

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:41:57

Washburn:

Because it seems difficult to imagine how people knew what was a good movie and what wasn't a good movie.

1-01:42:07

Duran:

They would advertise it.

1-01:42:09

Emma Duran:

Well, you just took your chances. You know your tastes, and from the title, you know whether you want to see it or not, you know?

1-01:42:19

Duran:

And the advertisers.

1-01:42:20

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:42:21

Washburn:

Well, I saw the advertising in the paper, and they didn't have much more than just the Rio Theater, the name, and the movie.

1-01:42:28

Duran:

That's all.

1-01:42:29

Washburn:

That's all. That's not much advertising.

1-01:42:31

Duran:

No, but in a theater, that's the way the theater used to advertise.

1-01:42:35

Washburn:

Well, you guys lived over here more on the south side of town, right?

1-01:42:53

Duran:

We lived on Huber. And then we lived on Thirteenth and Cutting. And then we lived on Sixth Street.

1-01:43:05

Emma Duran:

Fifth.

1-01:43:07

Duran:

Oh, Fifth Street. And we lived at Atcheson Village, and we lived on Easter Hill, that's on South Twenty-Eighth Street.

1-01:43:19

Washburn:

You lived in Atcheson Village?

1-01:43:21

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:43:22

Washburn:

What was it like moving from the south side over here down into this more of a Hispanic kind of district?

1-01:43:34

Duran:

It was no different.

1-01:43:35

Emma Duran:

It was no different. No.

1-01:43:34

Duran:

It was no different.

1-01:43:37

Emma Duran:

I mean, since we spoke the English language and the Mexican language, we felt right at home anywhere.

1-01:43:45

Duran:

That's right.

1-01:43:46

Washburn:

But did you notice the change in the neighborhoods? Were the neighborhoods different?

1-01:43:50

Emma Duran:

No. No. And then we've lived here, gosh, forever [laughs]. We've lived here since 1955.

1-01:44:19

Duran:

1955 we moved here.

1-01:44:22

Washburn:

Well, when did you move into Atcheson Village?

1-01:44:25

Emma Duran:

My gosh, I couldn't tell you.

1-01:44:27

Washburn:

About when, late forties, early fifties? Mid-fifties, that kind of thing?

1-01:44:34

Emma Duran:

I cannot tell you. I don't know.

1-01:44:37

Duran:

We moved so many times I couldn't tell you. I know we moved from Easter Hill in '55.

1-01:44:48

Emma Duran:

We moved from Easter Hill here, that we can tell you.

1-01:44:51

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:44:54

Emma Duran:

In 1955. We lived in Easter Hill about two years, so we lived in Easter Hill in '53.

1-01:45:04

Duran:

So we lived in Atcheson Village, '51-'52.

1-01:45:11

Washburn:

Well, Ned, what do you remember about Atcheson Village? What do you remember about the homes and what it was like to live there?

1-01:45:20

Duran:

No difference.

1-01:45:22

Emma Duran:

No difference.

1-01:45:24

Duran:

No difference at all.

1-01:45:25

Washburn:

Did you think you were moving into a big home? Did it feel like a big home?

1-01:45:31

Emma Duran:

No, it was an apartment.

1-01:45:33

Duran:

Apartment houses. Because they had apartment houses, two-story, with bedrooms upstairs. We lived on Chancellor Avenue, didn't we?

1-01:45:49

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:45:50

Washburn:

How do you remember applying to move into Atcheson Village?

1-01:45:53

Emma Duran:

I don't even remember, except I guess when we went to pay our rent at the place where we were at the time living, they probably advertised it, and that's how we knew. I don't know.

1-01:46:05

Washburn:

Were you living in public housing already?

1-01:46:09

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:46:11

Washburn:

Where? Over on Huber?

1-01:46:12

Emma Duran:

Yes, that was public housing.

1-01:46:14

Duran:

Everything was public housing, until we moved here. Every place we moved was public housing. So you can't—

1-01:46:29

Emma Duran:

The people are the same, you got along the same.

1-01:46:33

Washburn:

So you've lived in so much public housing that you can't—

1-01:46:36

Duran:

Can't tell what's two years or nothing, you know? At my age, I don't remember [laughs].

1-01:46:49

Washburn:

Well, let me ask you, who do you remember thinking was responsible for creating the housing? The public housing?

1-01:47:01

Emma Duran:

We had no idea.

1-01:47:04

Duran:

I don't know if it was the government or Kaiser, I don't know. I don't know if it was the government. Who was it?

1-01:47:16

Emma Duran:

I don't know.

1-01:47:18

Washburn:

You've told me that you worked in the post office afterwards?

1-01:47:25

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:47:26

Washburn:

After the shipyards, you said you were a carpenter and then you worked in the post office?

1-01:47:32

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:47:33

Washburn:

How long were you a carpenter for?

1-01:47:37

Duran:

Four years, until I made my journeyman.

1-01:47:41

Washburn:

Did you work for a big company?

1-01:47:43

Duran:

Yes, M&K, Maudlin and Kahn, Utah Construction Company. Swinnerton and Wallerburg—what was it, Walburg and Swinnerton? [Swinnerton & Walburg]

1-01:47:54

Emma Duran:

Walburg.

1-01:47:55

Duran:

Walburg and Swinnerton companies. I worked building homes in El Cerrito with Slip Madigan. You know who Slip Madigan was?

1-01:48:08

Washburn:

No.

1-01:48:10

Duran:

He was the St. Mary's [College] football coach. That was the time when St. Mary's was a football team, a big one, you know? Slip Madigan made it into national. And after he retired as a coach, he got a contractor's license and started building homes in El Cerrito. Navalier Avenue, or Onscott Avenue, I worked with him there, for him there, I mean.

1-01:48:45

Washburn:

So were a lot of the folks who worked for him, had they worked in the shipyards before?

1-01:48:51

Duran:

I don't know. I couldn't tell you that.

1-01:48:53

Washburn:

How big were your guys' crews? Were they pretty big crews? The crews on the construction site.

1-01:49:04

Duran:

Well, construction site, there were big crews, like big companies. Like Maudlin and Kahn at the sewage disposal plant right off the Embarcadero right there in El Cerrito, I mean, San Francisco. We worked there. They had two crews. They had night shift and day shift crews, so that was a big crew. Building Portola Junior High with Swinnerton and Walburg, that was a big crew. Big construction companies, big deals, like Pinole Estates. The little ones, there were only three or four carpenters building homes. I mean, Slip Madigan was a small contractor like that.

1-01:49:53

Washburn:

So do you remember it paying pretty well, working for the contractors?

1-01:49:57

Duran:

Oh, they paid pretty good, it was a pretty good deal. Carpentry was paying pretty good.

1-01:50:04

Washburn:

Did it pay comparable to what you were earning at the shipyards?

1-01:50:07

Duran:

Oh, about the same, yes.

1-01:50:14

Washburn:

Because a lot of people say after the shipyards, they had a hard time finding work.

1-01:50:16

Duran:

That's right.

1-01:50:18

Washburn:

Would you say that applied to you also?

1-01:50:22

Duran:

Well, in different places, no, because I worked, fact is, I worked—carpentry is a seasonal work, and then to make, when I joined the post office, to make ends meet for myself, and to make a little more money, I took part-time jobs like working for Richmond Recreation Department, under Ivan Hill. I worked driving a taxi at nighttime so I could make ends meet. I worked as a server in El Cerrito for Buzz Dyer, he used to have a restaurant that used to serve, what's that?

1-01:51:12

Emma Duran:

Prime rib.

1-01:51:14

Duran:

Prime rib. I worked at that part-time while I was working, because the El Cerrito post office wasn't paying very much then.

1-01:51:26

Washburn:

So it sounds like you had to do—

1-01:51:27

Duran:

Part-time jobs to make ends meet.

1-01:51:29

Washburn:

To make ends meet.

1-01:51:31

Duran:

And then she started working, and that's the time when—

1-01:51:36

Washburn:

Well, how did that finally end? When did you finally have to stop—why did you finally have to stop working a bunch of part-time jobs?

1-01:51:49

Duran:

After I started getting pretty good money, working. She started working, too.

1-01:51:52

Washburn:

Doing what?

1-01:51:53

Duran:

Post office.

1-01:51:54

Emma Duran:

Yes.

1-01:51:55

Duran:

Post office started paying good money, and she was working. And we had to raise a, you know? I started working at the post office at five o'clock, and come out at one. My girls would go to school, I was here by the time when they got out of school.

1-01:52:20

Washburn:

So did you have to take a civil service exam to start work at the post office?

1-01:52:28

Duran:

Yes, I did. And I had to take a 10 percent—because I was a 10-percenter.

1-01:52:34

Washburn:

What does that mean?

1-01:52:36

Duran:

Disabled veterans just got in about 10 percent off.

1-01:52:41

Washburn:

Ten percent off what?

1-01:52:43

Duran:

From—

1-01:52:44

Emma Duran:

It gives you a 10 percent advantage.

1-01:52:46

Duran:

Advantage on tests that you take.

1-01:52:49

Washburn:

Oh, they give your score 10 percent more?

1-01:52:50

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:52:53

Washburn:

Did you have to study for the exam?

1-01:52:56

Duran:

Oh, yes. It used to take two or three hours. You had to go through what you call a train scheme. That's when you had the little cars, the little thing, and you have to throw a thousand cars to different trains: Ogden Line, Port Line, Barstow Line. See, the trains, the post office dispatcher used to put this mail for the train, at the stations where the trains would pass by. Like little towns, you know? They used to grab that mail bag by the hook while the train was passing by. So the clerks used to work in the passenger trains, they used to throw their mail there. We used to throw it to them, and they used to throw it to different trains for the cities that passed by. A dispatcher, you had to learn, well, figure you have to learn each little city that went through—say for instance a Port Line that's going up north, and the line going to Sacramento and stuff like that, back going east, and the line going to LA and all that, and those little towns there. Barstow, the same way. You had to learn how to throw to the trains for that. And then you had to learn—that's what you call the train scheme. You had to learn what trains do all that stuff. And the only thing you can miss out on 900 cards was only one or two.

And then we had to throw the mail around the routes, you know, like the clerks, we used to throw mail to different routes to different parts of the city. The routes, maybe we had eight routes, ten routes, or something like that, more, quite a bit. Each station—when I started in Richmond, then El Cerrito, and San Pablo, were all together, El Sobrante. Richmond used to take care of all their stations there. So you have to know the schemes of the—El Cerrito, you have to know the schemes of San Pablo, the scheme of El Sobrante. Dispatching like that. Mail carriers grab and put it in their own pigeon holes that they have for the mail in different—because the case is built at different streets; the street you start on, the numbers of each street. Like Garvin Ave. Like Garvin Avenue here. 1900 Garvin, 1901, 1902. It's marked right there on the—have you ever been to the post office {in Richmond}?

1-01:56:10

Washburn:

Yes.

1-01:56:12

Duran:

You should try and get in there. Did you get inside, where they show the scheme?

1-01:56:14

Washburn:

No, I've never seen the scheme.

1-01:56:18

Duran:

Where the clerks throw the mail to the routes?

1-01:56:20

Washburn:

I understand it's very difficult, though.

1-01:56:22

Duran:

You have to learn a lot, yes.

1-01:56:24

Washburn:

So if you didn't get the job for the post office, what do you think you would have done instead?

1-01:56:30

Duran:

Oh, I don't know.

1-01:56:32

Emma Duran:

Stayed as a carpenter.

1-01:56:34

Duran:

Stayed as a carpenter, I guess. It's the only thing I could have done.

1-01:56:37

Washburn:

Would that have seemed as stable or as good of a job as working for the post office?

1-01:56:44

Duran:

Well, like I said, you used to get paid, but when it rained, you didn't work. And if you didn't work, you had to go to the unemployment office and get your unemployment checks, see? And the post office was steady. You weren't getting very much, but it was steady. Steady pay. You used to get your little paycheck anyway, regardless of rain or shine. The carpentry, man, in the winter time—and you had a heck of a time, too. You

might be working for one company, and you finish the job, and you have to go out looking for another company, looking for a job. That was too much, so that's why I stopped as a carpenter. In other words, for post office, you work for a future deal, like now. I could retire. You know? A government retiree. Retirement.

1-01:58:06

Washburn:

Sounds pretty stable.

1-01:58:07

Duran:

Sure, and a carpenter, what are you going to retire—who's going to pay you? The only one that could pay you at carpentry is the union. That's what your retirement is from, the unions. I'm very happy that I retired from the government, because the government pays me my annuity every year; I have a good Blue Shield health plan for my wife and I, you know?

1-01:58:39

Washburn:

Yes, it sounds very stable. You started the post office in what year?

1-01:58:49

Duran:

1952.

1-01:58:54

Washburn:

Was it mixed race in your post office, also?

1-01:59:01

Duran:

Oh, yes, sure. In fact, one of the councilmen in Richmond, Nathaniel Bates. He and I worked in Richmond post office.

1-01:59:12

Washburn:

I don't know Nathaniel Bates.

1-01:59:14

Duran:

He's a councilman.

1-01:59:16

Washburn:

Is he a black man?

1-01:59:17

Duran:

Yes.

1-01:59:17

Washburn:

Yes. So they were hiring all sorts of people?

1-01:59:22

Duran:

Sure, the blacks, we worked together there. It didn't make any difference.

1-01:59:26

Washburn:

Even in the fifties?

1-01:59:27

Duran:

Sure. That's the time we were there.

1-01:59:30

Washburn:

Because people say after the war, because jobs were scarce, people would hire a white person over somebody of color.

1-01:59:54

Duran:

I don't know about that.

1-01:59:56

Washburn:

You don't know about that? What did some of your other friends do that you met here, for work? I know your wife worked in insurance. Do you remember any of your other friends having to leave Richmond because they couldn't find work?

1-02:00:13

Duran:

No. A lot of friends worked for Chevron. They worked for different factories here. Sure. Who did Danny work for, honey?

1-02:00:39

Emma Duran:

Stillford.

1-02:00:42

Duran:

Stillford Chemical. They worked for all that.

1-02:00:48

Washburn:

I have to change this tape.

1-02:00:58

Duran:

Just forget it, we're going--.

1-02:01:00

Washburn:

Well, how about we go for maybe twenty more minutes and then we'll stop?

1-02:01:03

Duran:

Okay.

1-02:01:04

Washburn:

Because we've talked for quite a while, and it gets pretty tiring to talk for this long.

1-02:01:13

Duran:

Yes, it does.

1-02:01:14

Washburn:

But, I only want to talk about a couple other things, and then we'll stop. Actually, I'm going to ask him about the clubs, and you are—

1-02:01:39

Emma Duran:

I'm going to go eat an orange or something. I'm not a club person.

1-02:01:40

Washburn:

You weren't in any of the clubs? No, no, no, about like the Colorado Club and this kind of thing.

1-02:01:46

Emma Duran:

Oh. Well, we only participated in their social functions. We didn't belong to any—

1-02:01:52

Duran:

No, no, we didn't pay any dues or anything.

1-02:01:54

Emma Duran:

Yes, we only went to social functions.

1-02:01:56

Washburn:

Well, that's what I mean. That's still something that's, I think, pretty interesting. Thanks for your patience. You've been really, really patient. It's been really a pleasure. So, I want to ask you just about a couple other things before we stop.

The first time we met, you told me about a few clubs that you belonged to, and I wonder if we could talk about those again? You had talked about the Colorado Club, and the Latin American Club. What was the Colorado Club?

1-02:02:59

Duran:

What was it? Just friends getting together, that's all. Just a regular get-together club. Just people from Colorado get together, see friends, you know. The hombres you knew and everything like that.

1-02:03:15

Washburn:

So, who belonged to the club?

1-02:03:19

Duran:

Just people that you know from your home state, from your hometown. Home state. Most of them were from my hometown.

1-02:03:30

Washburn:

From your hometown? Most were from Walsenburg?

1-02:03:36

Duran:

Yes.

1-02:03:35

Washburn:

So did you keep in contact with all these people from Walsenburg over the years?

1-02:03:40

Duran:

For a while, not very long, though. Fact is I have some that live over here in Oakland and Hayward that I haven't seen for a long time, San Francisco. I think they are all passed away, friends of mine. Most of them have. I have one here that lives in Fairfield, that we were reared together. We speak to each other once in a while, talk on the phone.

1-02:04:10

Washburn:

So what would you guys do, for get-togethers?

1-02:04:17

Duran:

Dances, maybe have dinners or something like that.

1-02:04:22

Washburn:

Would this be at people's houses?

1-02:04:28

Duran:

No. No, it was at dance halls. You didn't go to people's houses.

1-02:04:33

Washburn:

You would rent out a dance hall?

1-02:04:34

Duran:

Yes, that's what they'd do. There were certain people that were running it, that's all. We just used to go down there and join them, that's all.

1-02:04:45

Washburn:

And so was it all Hispanic folks from Colorado who were part of it?

1-02:04:50

Duran:

Yes.

1-02:04:52

Washburn:

Oh. That's quite something, that you stayed in contact, as a community.

1-02:05:00

Duran:

Yes. Well, friends, that we were raised together. We grew up together. You know? Friends, that we knew each other, knew the families and all that. Because my friends were all about my age. We grew up together. That was Colorado, right there.

1-02:05:29

Washburn:

What kind of music would you play for the dances?

1-02:05:33

Duran:

Just regular big time music. Big band music.

1-02:05:37

Washburn:

Big band.

1-02:05:39

Duran:

Forties. Fact is, there was a kid by the name of Hurtado. He used to own a band. They used to call it—he owned a band, and they used to play all over Colorado, and he came here to San Francisco, and was playing here. His uncle was my brother-in-law, Hurtado. The last time I saw him, I saw him at the Miami Club. He had his band playing there.

1-02:06:19

Washburn:

Would they play big band music? Or kind of Latin music?

1-02:06:25

Duran:

No, never heard Latin music in Colorado. They were all big band music. Latin music just wasn't popular, that's all. But "La Bamba," salsa, and all that, we didn't know anything about that.

1-02:06:42

Washburn:

So how many folks were in the Colorado Club?

1-02:06:46

Duran:

Oh, I don't know. I couldn't tell you. Maybe thirty-five or forty. That's all.

1-02:06:54

Washburn:

So it wasn't too big, then?

1-02:06:55

Duran:

Oh, it was just small. And the Latin American Club was only a few. There was only about twenty, and we used to meet at this man's house in El Cerrito.

1-02:07:12

Washburn:

The same man's house, every time?

1-02:07:17

Duran:

Yes, and then we used to rent a hall to have a little get-together. So we did.

1-02:07:26

Washburn:

That sounds nice. So they were both just social events?

1-02:07:29

Duran:

It was social. It was a social deal, yes. Wherever we used to go dancing ourselves someplace, dance hall or something.

1-02:07:42

Washburn:

So would you see these same folks from these clubs in different spots?

1-02:07:46

Duran:

Yes. Like after I joined the Eagles, we used to go dance and eat dinner at the Eagles' Hall.

1-02:07:53

Washburn:

What's the Eagles?

1-02:07:55

Duran:

Fraternal Order of Eagles. That do nothing but—it's a world-wide deal. FOEs they call them, just like the Elks and stuff like that.

1-02:08:12

Washburn:

But the Eagles is not just a Hispanic thing?

1-02:08:15

Duran:

Oh no, no.

1-02:08:16

Washburn:

It's everybody?

1-02:08:17

Duran:

Yes. It's all over.

1-02:08:18

Washburn:

Yes, but I mean the one here in Richmond.

1-02:08:20

Duran:

Yes, we got the El Cerrito Eagles and the Richmond Eagles. San Pablo Eagles. See? It's a fraternal organization, that's what it is. Help—all they do is community work, you know, for people. We go for the Max Baer Fund, Heart Fund, diabetes, we raise money for them. It's a world-wide deal. It's even in Canada.

1-02:08:50

Washburn:

Well, how would you compare the Eagles to the Latin American and Colorado Club?

1-02:08:54

Duran:

Oh, man, you can't compare them.

1-02:08:56

Washburn:

Well, I mean compare what you did each week.

1-02:08:59

Duran:

Oh no, the only thing, the Eagles is bigger and we've done more work for charity and anything else. Latin American Club, that was just to get together to have a little fun or so.

1-02:09:18

Washburn:

It was pretty informal?

1-02:09:20

Duran:

Yes, sure. Fact is, the Eagles right now, on the first of the month, they have breakfast. They have birthday dinners for people, birthday come around a month, you know?

1-02:09:39

Washburn:

Do you still go to those?

1-02:09:40

Duran:

Yes. I used to go quite a lot. Fact is, I served as a chaplain, a chair. My wife was a secretary of the auxiliary. Then I belonged to the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars. I was commander of the Veteran Wars 6422 in El Cerrito, a charter member. My wife was auxiliary president, and I was commander in 1973, '74, something like that. I was in the Eagles and the VFW. I belonged to the VFW; I belonged to Disabled American Veterans.

1-02:10:37

Washburn:

So you belonged to a lot of different clubs.

1-02:10:41

Duran:

I belonged to the SIRs, which is Sons in Retirement. All the old fogeys that are retired meet once a month at the Galileo Club for lunch. We only pay for lunch, then that's all. We don't pay any dues. See, all this—you belong to different clubs like that, you get to meet different people, you know?

1-02:11:09

Washburn:

Sure.

1-02:11:10

Duran:

You get mixed with different people that you have seen and everything like that.

1-02:11:15

Washburn:

Were your brothers part of the Colorado Club and Latin American Club?

1-02:11:22

Duran:

No, after they left here they went home, and my oldest brother was county assessor there, and my other brother was a policeman there.

1-02:11:34

Washburn:

Why did they go home?

1-02:11:36

Duran:

I think they wanted to go home over there. They didn't want to stay here. Then our mother was over there too, so they went and stayed with my mother, I guess. I don't know.

1-02:11:47

Washburn:

It's just interesting why they went home, and you stayed.

1-02:11:53

Duran:

I was always away from them anyway. After I went to the CC camps, I was. And they are all gone, except me. All my brothers and sisters are gone, my mother.

1-02:12:07

Washburn:

So it seems like they had much more of a life in Colorado than you did.

1-02:12:15

Duran:

Oh yes, sure, they did. My oldest brother was born in 1900, so when he died he was ninety-two years old. You know my mother died at 104?

1-02:12:32

Washburn:

No! That's great genes.

1-02:12:35

Duran:

That's right.

1-02:12:37

Washburn:

So you and all your brothers ended up working for the government in the end, huh? County assessor, police officer, and post office.

1-02:12:45

Duran:

Yes. My mother worked for the post office. Like I told you the other day, she was the first postmistress in Garcia. She worked for the post office. That's when I was born, in '17. She had that little post office. Small, little building there.

1-02:13:04

Washburn:

She worked there in the nineteen-teens?

1-02:13:06

Duran:

1917 and '18, yes.

1-02:13:08

Washburn:

Do you think her working in the post office affected your decision to apply to the post office?

1-02:13:13

Duran:

I don't know. I don't know. Just one of those things that happens, I guess. She worked for the post office, and she worked in a department store. See, my mother had a pretty good education. She graduated from some school in Albuquerque. My grandpa sent her down there. She used to say that when she went to Albuquerque, she went on a covered wagon out there [laughs]. Years ago, I figured it out, I said, "Man, that was a long time ago." 1800 and something. During Wyatt Earp days! [laughs]

1-02:14:07

Washburn:

So, you don't think her working in the post office affected your decision to work in the post office.

1-02:14:15

Duran:

I don't think so, no. It just happened, that's all.

1-02:14:19

Washburn:

Was she excited when you started working in the post office?

1-02:14:23

Duran:

No. No. She didn't work very long, see? She didn't get—I don't think she even got any pension from the government. I know she didn't.

1-02:14:38

Washburn:

Yes. You know, one of the things we didn't talk about—we talked about what life was like in Colorado, but we didn't talk about holidays such as Cinco de Mayo, or Sixteenth of September.

1-02:14:56

Duran:

I don't think about those.

1-02:14:57

Washburn:

Do you ever remember celebrating that in Richmond?

1-02:14:59

Duran:

No. In Richmond, they used to celebrate it, yes, but fact is, we didn't even know what it was all about. I didn't. Back home there was no Cinco De Mayo and stuff like that when we were kids.

1-02:15:11

Washburn:

Or Sixteenth of September?

1-02:15:15

Duran:

Yes, Sixteenth of September, no. Through history, we read it, yes. I read through history what it was, you know. In fact, I didn't even know that some of it had to do with Napoleon and all that. I didn't know that. Cinco De Mayo and Sixteenth of September. There's another nineteenth day, what's that? The blacks celebrate the nineteenth day.

1-02:15:52

Washburn:

June Nineteenth?

1-02:15:54

Duran:

June Nineteenth, yes.

1-02:15:57

Washburn:

I think it might be emancipation.

1-02:15:57

Duran:

That's right. There you go. So, we didn't know anything about the other.

1-02:16:07

Washburn:

Well, I'm interested, your wife said you guys moved into this home in 1955?

1-02:16:16

Duran:

Yes.

1-02:16:16

Washburn:

What can you tell me about buying the home here?

1-02:16:22

Duran:

I got it through the GI Bill.

1-02:16:24

Washburn:

You got what through the GI Bill?

1-02:16:28

Duran:

This home. Ninety dollars. I paid ninety dollars down. It cost me \$11,500.

1-02:16:38

Washburn:

Was that a lot of money for you at that time?

1-02:16:41

Duran:

Well, yes, it was, but we were working then and we could afford the payments and all that. It's paid for now. It's been paid for for a long time now. So we've been pretty fortunate.

1-02:17:00

Washburn:

Sounds like it.

1-02:17:01

Duran:

We've been. Now I've got my army pension. It's 100 percent disability. They gave it to me after all. I've had about ten operations on this knee after I got hurt.

1-02:17:18

Washburn:

Well, why did you guys decide to move into this home here? Why here and not somewhere else?

1-02:17:23

Duran:

Because this is a fine home that we liked, that we looked around. We were going to El Cerrito, but like the damn fools, we didn't do it. See, we all make mistakes. I could have bought a brand-new home in El Cerrito for eight thousand dollars. Brand-new built. And we came around here and bought this for eleven five. [laughs]

1-02:17:50

Washburn:

It was less.

1-02:17:52

Duran:

I could have bought it for less over there in El Cerrito, yes.

1-02:17:55

Washburn:

Oh, you could have bought it for less in El Cerrito?

1-02:17:57

Duran:

Yes, eight thousand, nine thousand dollars.

1-02:17:59

Washburn:

And this for eleven thousand five?

1-02:18:00

Duran:

Eleven thousand five.

1-02:18:02

Washburn:

Well, why do you think you bought here and not in El Cerrito?

1-02:18:04

Duran:

I don't know. Just a mistake we made, that's all. We liked the neighborhood here, I guess. We were the only Hispanic people living here at one time, except the one on the corner that was, too. The rest of them were all different nationalities.

1-02:18:28

Washburn:

Mostly Anglo?

1-02:18:30

Duran:

Anglos, yes.

1-02:18:33

Washburn:

Do you think—

1-02:18:35

Duran:

Got along fine.

1-02:18:36

Washburn:

Everybody got along all right?

1-02:18:37

Duran:

Sure. We got along fine because we knew, we lived among them so much, you know, could face it.

1-02:18:48

Washburn:

Well, I mean, at that time, I think it was illegal, but people talk about certain neighborhoods, when people sold homes, they wouldn't sell the home to certain people because they wanted to exclude them from that neighborhood.

1-02:19:03

Duran:

Yes, that's right, they did. That's right. That's true.

1-02:19:05

Washburn:

But you don't seem to think that that applied to you guys?

1-02:19:09

Duran:

No, no.

1-02:19:11

Washburn:

Why not?

1-02:19:12

Duran:

Because I don't think I was ever discriminated against afterwards. I never was. I had good friends. Fact is, the friend of mine that I know, that he sends me a Christmas card all the time, is George Miller. I see him, he talks to me all night.

1-02:19:35

Washburn:

He's a congressman?

1-02:19:35

Duran:

Congressman, yes. We knew his dad. We used to go to Gonzales' Restaurant, you know, his dad would be there. The old man Miller. My kids together, she used to buy my kids candy. I know [John] Nejedly. He was a senator from Walnut Creek. Fact is, I've got a picture of him and I and this {Manuel Acosta?} together, took a picture together at the Eagles. See, that thing there. I wasn't, I never have been discriminated against or anything like that in my neighborhood, no. Fact is, when I was working at the post office, that Walt Gatto was a good friend of mine. Louie Figone, he used to go to the post office and bring me a fifth of whiskey, and rye, gave me things like that. Because most of the people, the Hispanics, of Mexican descent and all that, I get along with them, but most of the friends that are in El Cerrito that are over there—

1-02:21:18

Washburn:

Were they Anglo?

1-02:21:18

Duran:

Louie Favero, and Louie Nacole and all that.

1-02:21:19

Washburn

Well, you said you were the only Hispanic folks who lived in this neighborhood when you first moved in.

1-02:21:27

Duran:

That's right.

1-02:21:28

Washburn:

Why did you move into this neighborhood and not one where there were other Hispanic folks?

1-02:21:32

Duran:

I don't know, we never got to, we just didn't like it, that's all. We just liked the neighborhood. That's all. I never tried to follow the trend of Mexicans all together, no, I was my own deal. I knew what I wanted. Now, it's gotten full of Mexicans here now, see? The neighborhood while I was here. One person lives across the street right there, Davis. Her and I are the oldest ones here now.

1-02:22:07

Washburn:

When did that start to change? When did the white families who lived here start to move away?

1-02:22:16

Duran:

Oh, my gosh, I don't know. About three years ago, or four. Four, no more than that. Only about seven years ago they started getting homes farther down, away from the city, you know. George Miller's house was just on Nineteenth and Garvin right here someplace, old man Miller. Nello Bianco was over there on Roosevelt Avenue.

1-02:23:02

Washburn:

Have you ever wanted to move away yourself?

1-02:23:06

Duran:

No, what for? Why are we going to pay off a house, sell it, and go get another one, and start paying bills? This one, I don't have any bills, no house bill, just taxes and that's all. It's paid for. Nobody bothers me here. They treat me good, I treat them good.

1-02:23:31

Washburn:

Well, why did other folks move away?

1-02:23:34

Duran:

I don't know. Because they wanted to, I guess. I couldn't tell you that. They didn't move away because there were Mexicans coming here. There weren't any Mexicans coming here. They just moved away because they wanted to. That's the way I understand it, I don't know. Because it's nothing—there's a lot of Mexicans that are scattered all over Richmond now.

1-02:23:57

Washburn:

So maybe they wanted a bigger home or something like that.

1-02:23:59

Duran:

They want to go out to the boondocks, I guess, you know, they want to be out of the city limits or something. And another one, maybe for taxation too, you don't know. Some of them, people across the street, they passed away, and his grandson is the one who is living there now. People over there are the same way that was in the corner. I had a good friend of mine across the street by the name of Code, on Gaynor.

1-02:24:37

Washburn:

When you lived here, and you said you ate over at the Gonzales restaurant, would you walk over there?

1-02:24:47

Duran:

No.

1-02:24:48

Washburn:

What would you do?

1-02:24:49

Duran:

Drive.

1-02:24:57

Washburn:

Was that a popular restaurant to go to?

1-02:24:59

Duran:

It was popular enough, yes. It was on Tenth Street.

1-02:25:05

Washburn:

Would you say that that was the only—

1-02:25:13

Duran:

No, no, there were other Mexican places. There was one on Macdonald Avenue where I made friends. We used to go down there and eat, too. Right there on Cutting Boulevard, there was a friend of ours. We see her once in a while. Her name is Juanita Quintero. She had a Mexican restaurant there, too. They had one over here on Twenty-Seventh, Twenty-Eighth and Macdonald. Name was Rosa, she had a Mexican place there.

1-02:25:50

Washburn:

But you said earlier—

1-02:25:53

Duran:

La Ponce, La Perla, we used to go down and get some stuff.

1-02:25:59

Washburn:

And you even said earlier, though, that in Colorado you didn't eat this kind of food.

1-02:26:02

Duran:

No, we didn't, no.

1-02:26:03

Washburn:

So, why were you going to Mexican restaurants then?

1-02:26:05

Duran:

Because—I don't know. Because we like it, I guess, now. That's the only thing I can think. Just the same as the Chinese food. We never had Chinese food in Colorado. And we go to eat Chinese food now. See?

1-02:26:23

Washburn:

Yes, that's interesting.

1-02:26:30

Duran:

Sure. People eat, I don't know, whatever they go to, I guess. A lot of people, maybe they don't go eat steak in steak houses, nothing like that, but fish houses or anything like that. They just go to Mexican houses and that's it.

1-02:26:50

Washburn:

But I think it's a good point that you make, because I think people like to lump people of Mexican descent all in one thing, you know.

1-02:27:00

Duran:

Yes!

1-02:27:02

Washburn:

And they say, "Oh, you go to a Mexican restaurant because you're Mexican and that's your kind of food." But in reality, this isn't what you were used to eating.

1-02:27:10

Duran:

No, that's right.

1-02:27:11

Emma Duran:

We went all over.

1-02:27:12

Duran:

We went all over. We didn't go to anything like that.

1-02:27:18

Emma Duran:

Even at home, at our house, we have beans maybe once a month. You know, we eat the potatoes, the meat, the whatever.

1-02:27:31

Washburn:

More American kind of fare, yes? Yes, that's a good point. What would you say to somebody who would think that or would say to you, "Well, you eat Mexican food because you're Mexican and that's your kind of food that you eat." What would you say to that?

1-02:27:50

Emma Duran:

We never encountered anybody that said that, so—

1-02:27:54

Washburn:

Oh, no, I mean, hypothetically. Just like in an imaginary—

1-02:27:57

Emma Duran:

So I wouldn't know what to say, you know. I would just say, "Hey, we're just average."

1-02:28:04

Duran:

We're just eating what we want to.

1-02:28:05

Emma Duran:

We're just average, yes, we eat what we want, when we want, you know?

1-02:28:06

Duran:

That's right. Because the spice of life is variety, isn't it? That's it right there for us.

1-02:28:21

Washburn:

So what can you tell me, I mean, you guys know that I'm trying to write a history of the Latino community in Richmond, and yet, I'm meeting you guys, and you weren't—

1-02:28:38

Emma Duran:

We don't fit the mold.

1-02:28:41

Duran:

We don't know nothing about it, see?

1-02:28:41

Washburn:

You weren't as involved in the Mexican community that was here.

1-02:28:44

Duran:

No.

1-02:28:45

Washburn:

But you seem to have been involved for a while in the Hispanic community that came from Colorado.

1-02:28:53

Emma Duran:

Well, only at social functions maybe once or twice a year. That's it.

1-02:28:57

Duran:

That's social. Social functions. That's right.

1-02:28:59

Washburn:

How often did the Colorado Club get together?

1-02:29:03

Emma Duran:

Only once, I don't know.

1-02:29:05

Duran:

On Christmas.

[End of Duran Interview 1, 02:29:09]

[Begin Duran Interview2, 00:10:36]

2-00:00:00

Washburn:

I understand people down by A street and B street, that area, they've written about that as being a Mexican section of town, a Hispanic section of town. Did you ever go to social functions down there?

2-00:00:19

Duran:

No.

2-00:00:19

Emma Duran:

Nope.

2-00:00:20

Washburn:

Or go to do anything down there?

2-00:00:22

Emma Duran:

No.

2-00:00:24

Washburn:

The Rio Theater was down there, though.

2-00:00:25

Emma Duran:

Yes, but that's it. That's as far as we went.

2-00:00:29

Duran:

We just went to the Parallel, that's all.

2-00:00:33

Emma Duran:

Yea, we went to the Parallel occasionally.

2-00:00:35

Duran:

Yes, occasionally. Not all the time. We went over there just to buy food to bring home.

2-00:00:41

Washburn:

Where?

2-00:00:42

Duran:

The Parallel.

2-00:00:44

Washburn:

Oh, ready-made food.

2-00:00:46

Duran:

Yes, take-home.

2-00:00:49

Washburn:

But you wouldn't do any shopping down there or anything like that?

2-00:00:51

Duran:

No. All the shopping was on Macdonald Avenue.

2-00:01:05

Washburn:

Oh. But yet, you've stayed in contact with people, Ned, like—

2-00:01:07

Duran:

People that I made friends with.

2-00:01:09

Washburn:

Like Sal Chavez.

2-00:01:10

Duran:

People that I made friends with, yes, we have stayed in contact with them, yes.

2-00:01:16

Emma Duran:

But they are few and far between now.

2-00:01:17

Duran:

That's right.

2-00:01:20

Washburn:

Who else other than Sal Chavez did you meet here? Tony Avila said he remembered you.

2-00:01:26

Duran:

Oh, he does?

2-00:01:28

Washburn:

Yes. How did you meet him?

2-00:01:31

Duran:

I don't know, just—

2-00:01:32

Emma Duran:

At a bar probably! [laughs]

2-00:01:33

Duran:

At a bar, yes. Could be at a bar. When did you see him?

2-00:01:39

Washburn:

I just called him on the phone.

2-00:01:40

Duran:

Oh, you did?

2-00:01:41

Washburn:

Yes. I might go over there in a little bit and talk to him.

2-00:01:44

Duran:

Oh, where does he live? Thirty-Seventh?

2-00:01:49

Washburn:

Yes, Thirty-Seventh.

2-00:01:51

Duran:

Oh, I know where it's at.

2-00:01:51

Washburn:

Yes, Thirty-Seventh, exactly.

2-00:01:54

Duran:

You know where, I told you, Emma?

2-00:01:55

Emma Duran:

I don't know.

2-00:01:57

Duran:

I told you that at Roosevelt, you know, when we were going to Pino's house?

2-00:02:05

Emma Duran:

Oh, yes.

2-00:02:06

Duran:

They live on Thirty-Seventh on the left.

2-00:02:08

Emma Duran:

Yes.

2-00:02:13

Duran:

I haven't seen Tony for a long time.

2-00:02:14

Washburn:

For every person that you have stayed in touch with who is Hispanic, do you have just as many friends who are not?

2-00:02:24

Duran:

Are not, that's right. That's right, yes. We have many friends who are not.

2-00:02:31

Washburn:

Would you say more of one or the other?

2-00:02:35

Duran:

About the same. I think we have more than Hispanics. Wouldn't you say, hon?

2-00:02:42

Emma Duran:

I don't know, honey.

2-00:02:42

Duran:

Yes, I think we've got less Hispanic friends. Because of the clubs we belong to, I think that's why.

2-00:02:56

Washburn:

The Eagles Club?

2-00:02:57

Emma Duran:

Yes, but we're not active any more. At one time we were very active, but we're not active any more.

2-00:03:03

Washburn:

Sure.

2-00:03:04

Duran:

You were secretary of the Eagles, weren't you?

2-00:03:07

Emma Duran:

I was treasurer.

2-00:03:08

Duran:

Treasurer of the Eagles, yes.

2-00:03:10

Emma Duran:

For years. But now we don't—I mean, we do go to some functions. We go to breakfast on Sundays, on the first Sunday of the month if we're able. But we don't go to any functions in the evening, because it's too dangerous for us to be out when I can't see that well.

2-00:03:32

Washburn:

Sure. Well, I think that's it, you guys, we've been talking for quite a while. Thank you so much.

2-00:03:38

Emma Duran:

Okay.

2-00:03:39

Duran:

And thank you.

2-00:03:40

Washburn:

You have a wonderful story to share, and it really helps to enrich my idea of what was going on in Richmond at the time. It really does.

2-00:03:52

Duran:

That's right. I think Tony Avila can help you more on that deal, too.

2-00:03:56

Washburn:

Well, sure, I think he can.

2-00:03:58

Duran:

He was born and raised here, I think.

2-00:04:05

Washburn:

I hope you don't think that I have one—I didn't enter this project hoping to write one story about the Hispanic community, and meeting folks like you really helps to—and I don't think it's just me because of my background, I think other Hispanic people may think the same thing. So, meeting with you has really helped to give a more diverse picture of what was going on.

2-00:04:31

Duran:

Well, I'm sure glad that we tried the best to help you out on that. Maybe we might not remember a lot, but you know.

2-00:04:46

Washburn:

No, you've done very well.

2-00:04:48

Duran:

At our age, we forget.

2-00:04:52

Washburn:

[laughs] You've done very well. I want to remember one more time, Emma, you worked at the gas rationing board in the Kaiser, and then--?

2-00:05:02

Emma Duran:

And the shipyard, too.

2-00:05:02

Washburn:

And the shipyard too, and then you worked--?

2-00:05:05

Emma Duran:

Cal Farm Insurance. Then, at Mechanics Bank.

2-00:05:10

Washburn:

How long were you at Cal Farm Insurance for?

2-00:05:12

Emma Duran:

Almost ten years.

2-00:05:14

Washburn:

Wow.

2-00:05:14

Emma Duran:

Then seventeen at the bank.

2-00:05:16

Washburn:

Doing secretarial work for them?

2-00:05:18

Emma Duran:

Cashiering.

2-00:05:19

Washburn:

Cashiering for the insurance, and then at the bank you did window work?

2-00:05:24

Emma Duran:

Teller work at first, and then I was supervisor for a while.

2-00:05:27

Washburn:

Oh, you worked as a supervisor? How long were you working at Mechanics Bank for?

2-00:05:31

Emma Duran:

Seventeen years.

2-00:05:32

Washburn:

Wow. So you had a lot of seniority there, I bet.

2-00:05:36

Emma Duran:

Well, there were some with more, but seventeen years wasn't bad.

2-00:05:41

Washburn:

And that's where you retired from?

2-00:05:43

Emma Duran:

Yes.

2-00:05:43

Washburn:

That's great.

2-00:05:47

Duran:

When I retired, I was running Fairmount Station [post office] in El Cerrito.

2-00:05:54

Washburn:

Yes, actually I didn't ask you about gaining seniority in the post office. Did you work your way up?

2-00:06:03

Duran:

Yes, you had to go, well, I was a carrier, then I went as window clerk, working the window, and then I made what you call level six, took care of the window clerks in the main office, and then they put me at the Fairmount Station, and I was running the Fairmount Station there with one clerk, so that's it right there. Then I retired.

2-00:06:32

Washburn:

So you became a supervisor?

2-00:06:33

Duran:

Something like a supervisor.

2-00:06:37

Washburn:

And how long did you work for the post office? I think that was from—

2-00:06:43

Duran:

Well, including my army life and everything like that, four years in the army, thirty-five years.

2-00:06:50

Washburn:

Oh no, just for the post office, though, here.

2-00:06:52

Duran:

But including your age and your number of years, it would be the age of sixty-five or fifty-five.

2-00:07:02

Washburn:

So you were for thirty-five years?

2-00:07:03

Duran:

Thirty-five years, yes. I retired in '79, at the age of sixty-two, see?

2-00:07:10

Washburn:

And you said you went into the post office in the fifties?

2-00:07:13

Duran:

Yes.

2-00:07:16

Washburn:

And then you retired in '79, so that's twenty-something years.

2-00:07:19

Duran:

No, including my army time.

2-00:07:24

Emma Duran:

I think he means excluding that.

2-00:07:24

Washburn:

Excluding that.

2-00:07:26

Duran:

Excluding that?

2-00:07:27

Washburn:

Yes.

2-00:07:30

Duran:

Let's see, 1950 to '79, that's twenty-five, twenty-nine years.

2-00:07:44

Washburn:

Great.

2-00:07:44

Duran:

And four years in the army.

2-00:07:46

Emma Duran:

You keep wanting to add that four years. I said, "Excluding".

2-00:07:51

Washburn:

But why do you add the four years?

2-00:07:54

Duran:

Because that was included in the credit.

2-00:07:57

Washburn:

The credit?

2-00:07:58

Duran:

The credit they gave me for retirement, see? Because in the army that was known as a federal worker too, you know.

2-00:08:09

Washburn:

Sure, right.

2-00:08:11

Duran:

That's right, the same thing.

2-00:08:14

Washburn:

Did you work at that post office for—did you know at some point, your retirement, you were going to get a better package, so you worked a little bit longer?

2-00:08:21

Duran:

Well, let's face it, it was more for security, security for you and your family. Like you know that you are going to retire with a pension, instead of just—I would have been more leaning to the Social Security pension than anything else. Now, what do you get out of that? Not much. This way I'll get—I'm a triple-dipper. [laughter] Social Security, post office annuity, and my disability from the army, that's all including government work, you know?

2-00:09:16

Washburn:

Yes.

2-00:09:17

Duran:

Army work and all that.

2-00:09:20

Washburn:

Did you think about the stability when you entered the post office? Was that one of the reasons?

2-00:09:26

Duran:

I already had my disability when I did the post office.

2-00:09:27

Washburn:

No, in the fifties, did you think about that as being a reason why you wanted to work there?

2-00:09:33

Duran:

Well, that's the only job I could do, because I couldn't work as a carpenter any more after my leg was hit. I worked because I had to, with a brace, but after they took my brace away, I couldn't walk on the top any more. So the post office was security for me. All right?

2-00:10:03

Emma Duran:

Yes.

2-00:10:05

Washburn:

Well, great, I'll pack up then.

2-00:10:07

Duran:

And then I had a great wife.

2-00:10:09

Washburn:

[laughs] That's added security, right?

2-00:10:11

Duran:

Yes.

2-00:10:12

Washburn:

[laughs] Definitely added security.

[End of Interview]