

Patty Chavez

Interviewed by
Jean Seager
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For Midway Village Museum

Jean Seager: Could you give me your name please?

Patty Chavez: My name is Patty Chavez.

JS: And where are you from?

PC: I live in Rockford, Illinois.

JS: Are you married?

PC: I am single.

JS: Do you have children?

PC: I do not have children.

JS: And your education?

PC: I graduated from high school and I attended Northern Illinois University and I graduated with a major in history with the concentration on America and I also majored in Latin American literature.

JS: And where do you work presently?

PC: I work at Phase/Wave.

JS: And what is your job there?

PC: I am a senior counselor. I supervise case managers that work in the shelter, that work with battered women.

JS: Doesn't sound like a history major.

PC: No it does not.

JS: How long have you been there?

PC: I've been there for 2 1/2 years.

JS: And how do you like it?

PC: I really enjoy it. I enjoy working with the community, with battered women. It's a very overwhelming and rewarding experience work, working there. I like it.

JS: Did you work anywhere else before that?

PC: Yes. I worked at La Voz Latina for two years.

JS: Were you born in the United States?

PC: I was born in Rockford, Illinois.

JS: Where were your parents from?

PC: My parents are from [Allende, Coahuila] Mexico.

JS: When did they come here?

PC: My father came to the United States when he was eight years old. My mother arrived after she was married. She was 29.

JS: So how did your parents meet?

PC: My parents met at [Allende, Coahuila] where they were both from. My mother, actually my father, they were from the same neighborhood so that's where they met. Everyone kind of knew each other at eight years old. My father would come and work in the United States and then he returned back to Mexico once or twice a year and he just began dating my mom. So they dated for 13 years.

JS: 13 years! That's a longtime to be dating.

PC: Back then it was a very long time and they married older. My mom was 26 and my dad was 30 and that was pretty old for people to get married back then.

JS: Was there any question about coming to the United States?

PC: No not at all. My dad since he'd been here since eight years old working with my grandfather, they knew that they had a better opportunity here. So my mother knew that when they were married she would have to come because there are better opportunities for them here than in Mexico.

JS: Do you think it's something she really wanted to do?

PC: I don't think it's something she wanted to do, I don't think she wanted to leave, but she felt she needed to in order to be with my father because she knew that he would be the main breadwinner and obviously she knew that he would earn more here and they would have more of an opportunity here, and also as well if they had children. But it was always difficult for her to leave her family, for both of them actually.

JS: Does she go home very often to Mexico?

PC: My mother, they would, we would go back to Mexico at least once a year. In the summertime or wintertime. During December, we go back once a year.

JS: Do you have siblings?

PC: I have four sisters and one brother.

JS: Are they younger or older than you?

PC: I am the youngest in my family.

JS: So did you all go back when you went back to Mexico, did the whole family go?

PC: We would all go back as a family to visit family in Mexico.

JS: Are your parents still living?

PC: No. My mother passed away seven years ago and my father passed away in November of 07.

JS: Oh, just last winter then. What did your parents, well you said your father was eight when he came here. Was your mother employed when she was living in Mexico?

PC: My mother was not employed when she lived in Mexico.

JS: What did your father do here?

PC: My father worked on the farms as a farmhand. He also worked in factories. He worked in bakeries, he worked in stores as a helper, any type of employment that he could get or he could obtain he worked.

JS: What do you think, did they ever talk about why they wanted to come here?

PC: My parents stated they wanted to come to the United States because for better living, it was a better pay, they had more opportunities.

JS: Both of them felt that way?

PC: Both of them felt that way.

JS: How did they decide upon Rockford? How did your father decide to come here?

PC: My father came to Rockford because his uncle told him there is great opportunity here. At that time manufacturing business was flourishing and he encouraged him to come. My father was working as a farm hand in [Levelland], Texas. My mother was with him there. They were already married, they had two children and my grandmother was

also with them. And my father decided that he needed to, in order to support the whole family, he needed to get employment where he would be paid more and it would be more steady and he would get benefits, insurance, for the whole family. So he migrated to Rockford and he met my uncle here. He worked until he got an apartment [and] a house and then he brought my family up. My mom and my sisters from Texas. And then he eventually bought the house across the street where they were living at and that's where we presently live at, where I live at.

JS: You live there?

PC: Yes. I lived there with my father until he passed away. My mom lived there until she passed away.

JS: So you live there by yourself then?

PC: I inherited the house. I live with my aunt, my dad's sister who has lived with us since 45 years ago. She never married.

JS: Had they, had your mother been in the country before she moved here?

PC: The first time my mother came to the United States was when she married and my father brought her to Texas to live with him.

JS: She didn't even visit?

PC: She never visited the United States before that. Despite the fact that we live an hour from the border, or they're from an hour from the border.

JS: Never came to America.

PC: She never came to the United States until then.

JS: How do you think she felt about the United States after she came here?

PC: I believe she struggled when she first migrated to the United States because she was so far from family. It was the first time that she had been far from them as well as the different traditions and customs that she found here. It wasn't so difficult when she migrated to Texas because they have such a large Hispanic population and presence there, but when she came to Illinois, to Rockford it was very difficult for her.

JS: Did any other family or friends come with either of them? When your father came you said he was eight years old. Was it his whole family that came at that time?

PC: No. My father didn't come to Rockford until he was 34. When he was eight years old and he came here, he traveled different states with my grandfather. He went to California to Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, Washington, Texas, Kansas, Missouri. He was all over the

United States. When my grandfather went he took my father so he could work and help with the household income because my father had five siblings that he also had to help my grandfather support, plus my grandmother.

JS: Your grandmother was living too?

PC: Um hm.

JS: And where was it in Texas that they lived you mentioned?

PC: My father lived in [Levelland], Texas. They settled, my mother and my father settled in [Levelland], Texas after they married.

JS: That's a long way from Rockford.

PC: It is very far away.

JS: Do you have family there yet? Is there anyone there, any relatives in that area?

PC: My family does live in Texas. They live in Eagle Pass, Texas, Houston, Dallas, Austin but they do not live in [Levelland], Texas.

JS: How about your siblings? Are they here?

PC: My brother lives in Canton New York and my sisters live in the state of Illinois. They live in Rockford, one sister lives in Sterling.

JS: Did any other family members outside of your grandparents and your father, did your grandparents know anybody else when they came here? Did they have other people here before they came?

PC: No, my father only knew my uncle.

JS: Did he help them get settled here?

PC: My uncle did help my, my dad settle in Rockford.

JS: How did he help them?

PC: My uncle helped them by finding employment, helping them find employment. My father eventually worked, obtained employment at Ingersoll. He worked there for about 35 years. My uncle also helped my dad find an apartment for him to live in. He also helped him find his way around, helped him buy a car, get to know the city.

JS: Did they live in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood?

PC: Yes, my father residing in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood on Cunningham Street.

JS: What did your uncle do? Was he employed here? You said he was employed, steadily employed here.

PC: My uncle had obtained employment at Ingersoll.

JS: Oh he was at Ingersoll. Okay. Did your mother work at all after she came here?

PC: My mother worked in Texas, when my parents were living in Levelland, Texas she worked also as a farm hand to help out my father. When she migrated to Rockford she only worked for two years at Green Giant in Belvidere.

JS: Where did you live growing up?

PC: I grew up in Rockford on Cunningham Street.

JS: And you still live there?

PC: I continue to live on Cunningham Street.

JS: What was your home life like?

PC: It was very different I feel from some other children in school. At home, how should I say, at home we, we spoke Spanish, we only ate Mexican food, we watched Mexican television, Mexican shows. Our culture was pretty much every day of our lives while we're at home, outside of school. We engaged with only the Hispanic community. We only socialized with them, primarily from those from our area of Mexico, those are from the state of [Coahuila], in that community.

JS: But then when you went to school how was that? That must've been quite different.

PC: It was very different of course because of the language, but also just getting to know the kids. Knowing they had different customs, traditions from myself.

JS: What school did you attend, elementary school?

PC: I attended St. Anthony's and then I continued on to St. Patrick's and then from high school I attended Boylan High School.

JS: You went to Boylan. You said you're the youngest. Are you quite a bit younger than your other siblings or are you pretty close in age?

PC: My sisters are pretty much older than I am. The youngest, the next in line, she's seven years, we're seven years apart, and my brother and I are four years apart.

JS: Your home life, if your siblings are that much older you must've been almost like two separate families. Were your sisters gone by the time you. . .

PC: My sisters, by the time I was 9, 10 years old, two of them were already out of the house and then by the time, before I graduated high school the other two were already gone and my brother left home to go to college when I was 14.

JS: Everyone got along well though?

PC: We all got along well because we had to. Besides the family, the children, my parents living at my home, my father had, well, my grandmother and my aunt lived with us and it was his responsibility to care for them especially since my aunt did not marry. My grandfather passed away many years ago so he gained the responsibility of caring for my grandmother and supporting her, so they also lived with us.

JS: And you had lots of Mexican customs?

PC: Yes. Celebrations, everything, food.

JS: What was your neighborhood like?

PC: Predominantly Hispanic. Between, usually there was either Hispanic or African-American families, but they were mostly Hispanic, all families that we knew that we grew up with, families that were part of from where we we're from in Mexico. When, I remember growing up there were only a few families, like everyone knew everybody compared to now there's so many people that we don't know. Before it was always just the same families and everyone always knew somebody.

JS: They did not, your parents didn't speak English in your home?

PC: My parents did not speak English in the home.

JS: Did they encourage you to?

PC: No, they did not encourage me to speaking English in the home. They felt I got enough English at school.

JS: Okay. Did they, were they fluent in English?

PC: My father spoke English very well but he had a thick accent. My mother did not speak English.

JS: Did she have a problem with that?

PC: My mother struggled with that, with not speaking English when we were younger. She used us as interpreters, but as we grew older it was a lot easier for her because we were able to interpret for her, more efficiently than when we were five or six years old.

JS: Did she find that frustrating, that she couldn't communicate?

PC: My mother found that very frustrating that she couldn't communicate sometimes to other people outside the home.

JS: Did she show any signs of wanting to learn English?

PC: My mother I believed did take a couple of English classes. She only obtained the basic English skills, words that she needed to survive or to make payments or just to communicate if she needed something at the store but she did not speak it fluently. Primarily she didn't study, continue to study because she had a home to take care of. It was the belief that my father was the breadwinner and she was in charge of the home and the children.

JS: Did you find in the neighborhood, the children in the neighborhood, were they speaking English at times or was it always Hispanic?

PC: The kids in the neighborhood spoke Spanglish, they spoke English and Spanish.

JS: Spanglish. How much school did your parents complete?

PC: My father only attended, completely, second-grade. He attended third grade for two days until my grandfather pulled him out so he could go work with him. My mother only attended until sixth grade.

JS: And your education, now you have a college education. How about your siblings?

PC: My brother, he has, will obtain his Ph.D. in philosophy this coming winter, in December he will graduate with his Ph.D. in philosophy. My sister has a bachelor's degree in accounting and my other two sisters have Associates degree.

JS: They would have been very proud of you. I bet they were very proud of you.

PC: They were proud of all of us.

JS: What kind of an attitude did they have about school then?

PC: My father was very encouraging in the sense of school or receiving a higher education, he always encouraged us. He encouraged us to continue school to college. I appreciate he gave us a choice. He told us I give you the best education I can give you until high school. Once we graduated, he paid obviously for all our tuitions, never asked for any assistance, financial assistance. And he said I give you the best education I can

give you. It's your choice if you want to continue. But he was very encouraging. He was like, if you need help with anything we can help as much as we can. He was always very encouraging.

My mother on the other hand was not encouraging towards the woman. She felt that we shouldn't continue our education. She always asked us, "What for?" you know "You're going to go to school and then you're going to find someone to marry and you'll be fine, you know. Why do you need school for? Just get a dead-end job as a secretary and you'll be happy and get married and have a family." So when I attended school she was not very supportive.

JS: How about your sisters either?

PC: My sisters actually went into college as adults after being, while they were married. Their husbands were very supportive and actually they attended college after my mother passed away. And my father was very very encouraging even after my sisters were already married and had children and he supported them said, good thing you're still doing it even though you are married and you didn't see it as a sense of, it's not an opportunity even though you are married.

JS: This must've been difficult for your father to, did he help you financially with school?

PC: My father did help me out financially when I was in college.

JS: And your brother?

PC: Yes, my father helped financially any of my siblings if they needed help with college but pretty much it was only my brother and I because at the time like I said my sisters were married. But he was very emotionally supportive, but financially he helped my brother and I out.

JS: And you all went to private schools when you were younger?

PC: Yes, yes we all attended Catholic schools.

JS: So you attended which church?

PC: We attended St. Mary's at one point and then we continued on to St. Pats.

JS: So you're Catholic?

PC: Yes.

JS: And you attended, what college did you go to?

PC: I attended Northern Illinois University.

JS: What was your first job?

PC: I first worked, my first employment ever was at Zammuto's drive-in on Kent St. I can't pronounce it.

JS: How'd they feel about you working, how old were you?

PC: I began working at the age of 13. They encouraged me to work. They said you know you don't have to but if you'd like to, go ahead, and since I was able to work at that age I did. And later they kind of liked that I did work because they paid for my tuition but I paid for my uniform and my books. So I was helping them out financially.

JS: Sure. What other kind of work that you do besides that after that?

PC: After I worked at Zammuto's I continued on to work at a law firm as a law clerk, not a law clerk as a file clerk, I'm sorry as a file clerk, at [Heyl, Royster, Voelker and Allen]. I worked there for a couple years and I also worked on campus.

JS: At Northern?

PC: At school. At Northern.

JS: How about your friends, who are your friends? Do you mainly have people that are in the same, Hispanic?

PC: All my friends either are Hispanic they are very much into the culture or they're not Hispanic that are very much into the culture. And they most likely speak Spanish.

JS: Are they, do you have a lot of friends here in Rockford or are they friends from college?

PC: My friends are mostly from Rockford.

JS: Why did you come back to Rockford?

PC: I came back to Rockford because my mother was diagnosed with cancer and since I am the youngest in my family and not married it was my duty to come back and care for her. And I felt, I did not feel it was an obligation even though some say it was culturally, but I wanted to come back and care for her. So my last year in college I took as few classes as I could to be standing to have the status as a college student and I started out with five classes and came down to one in order to be in Rockford to care for her.

JS: How long did you care for her then?

PC: I cared for my mother for 10 months. She had liver cancer.

JS: Was she able to be at home?

PC: My mother was able to be at home. She did receive chemotherapy until about nine months, and after nine months she was put in hospice and she lived for a month after that before she passed away.

JS: Hospice was something you decided together that she would do?

PC: Yes. Once we had to take her to the ER in the hospital her doctor told her she was basically at the point where chemotherapy was not helping her out anymore and we had a choice of leaving her at the hospital to be cared for in the cancer unit, or to take her home and spend time with us and we all unanimously decided that we wanted her at home with us because nobody can take better care of her than us. And after she came home my two aunts came from Mexico as well as some cousins to come and help out.

JS: Does, did your mother and father have, are there a lot of grandchildren?

PC: My mother and father had 13 grandchildren.

JS: Did you all stay pretty close?

PC: We continue to be very close as a family. We speak every single day pretty much. We get together very often, every weekend, every other weekend. In the summertime we're together many many times, especially during the week. We go to baseball games for the kids, any sports activities or plays we all attend, and I attend, it's my sisters, my aunt, my brother, sometimes cousins. We're a very close family.

JS: Your aunt still lives that you?

PC: My aunt still lives with me?

JS: Is she elderly?

PC: My aunt, yes, well she, she is, she's 65 years old. She still continues to work.

JS: In your neighborhood when you were growing up were there, was there any fighting with other ethnic groups?

PC: In our neighborhood even though they're primarily two different groups African-American and Hispanics there have never been any fighting or any arguments or situations between the two groups.

JS: Did each group kind of stay by themselves or did they mingle much?

PC: Both, different ethnic groups stayed to themselves, but there is a Hispanic store down the street on Cunningham Street called the [(Jarisco?) unknown name] and you would see many African-Americans there buying things, buying the Mexican corn or any other Mexican flavor. And you would hear people say, "Oh those are good corn, or good tamales, or good food," and it seemed like they enjoyed the food, enjoyed the culture, but we pretty much stayed to ourselves.

JS: So you met your friends through, the friends that you had were neighborhood or school?

PC: Yes my friends were either neighborhood or at school.

JS: Now you mentioned that your mother had a little trouble getting into American culture. What about your dad?

PC: My father did not assimilate very much. My father he, at work he worked with my, with his uncle and he worked also with his brothers and family friends and then my brother-in-laws began working there, my uncles and my cousins, was pretty much a big family. Family that worked there also.

JS: What did they do there?

PC: The majority of the family there, including my father, were welders. But they also have other family friends and family who worked in different departments. But a majority of them working welders.

JS: Were your parents open to new ways of doing things? American ways?

PC: My parents were not open to doing things the American way. If they had to they did but it was not something they preferred and they didn't.

JS: Did you disagree with them often about that type of thing? Like what to wear and what music to listen to or?

PC: At times we did disagree about what type of clothing or what type of music or just even going out by ourselves. We were not allowed to go out by ourselves as females, we had to accompany one another or be accompanied by somebody.

JS: Till you were how old?

PC: Until you were married.

JS: Was it difficult for them to see you go off to school then?

PC: My parents did have, even though my father did encourage me to go to college and continue my education, they had a very difficult time accepting me going far away or they thought it was far away but I had to come home every weekend.

JS: You are the baby.

PC: I was, yes. And they called everyday.

JS: Did you find that oppressive or was that okay with you?

PC: I found it to be very suffocating but I later as an adult I understand why.

JS: Did you get angry with them for that?

PC: I became very angry. I became very angry and resentful and I felt they were trying to hold me back, but I guess I wasn't able to balance that out as understanding that they saw it more as a family reason why they were being so protective and I saw it more as like "Well, you don't want me to be free. You don't want me to be who I am and you're imposing me, and to be how you want me to be, and you're obligating me to fit this mold and I'm not." So I would become very angry at times.

JS: When did that turn into appreciation?

PC: When I had to come home to take care of my mother I realized that the reason they were like, they I guess they were like that, as I called it, was because they wanted to hold the family together. My brother-in-law made a very good point at my father's wake. He stated that when we were caring for him, because he was in the hospital, he actually was in the cancer care unit, someone had to do be with him every single time of the day, even though they had nurses, one of us had to be there with him.

JS: Why is that?

PC: We felt, I felt, he needed us to be there. He needed one of us to be there at least every single moment of the day. I stayed the nights with him. I worked during the day. But my brother-in-law made a very good point that it's not, they kind of felt it was for selfish reasons that he wanted to be babied, but it was, I can understand that he just wanted to keep the family united, that it was because we're family, we had to be there. We should be there, we need to be there, and I can [materialize] that now, I do see that now, that that's the reason why. He's our father. We had to be there.

JS: Were you ever embarrassed by them, that they were different?

PC: I was never embarrassed by my parents. We have a very good sense of humor so we always made fun of each other, and we just always laughed at the differences but no, I was never embarrassed of them.

JS: Even when you went into high school?

PC: I was not embarrassed of them in high school because the friends I had also had this, I guess challenges that I had and they were experiencing the same thing I did. So I didn't feel like I was the only one. I felt like, well, we're all Hispanic, we're all going through the same thing, we all understand. This is just the way it is with the Mexican culture and just trying to assimilate and we would just make fun of it and just laugh at it instead of being embarrassed by it. But I did not feel, I did feel that in high school they didn't understand, those who were not Hispanic, I did not have very many friends in high school because there were not many Hispanics.

JS: Did they make you feel different?

PC: I felt like I was different in high school because I was very much into the culture. At that time I associated with, socialized with Hispanic people, I only listened to Spanish music, Mexican music, I did not listen to English music or mainstream music. I attended Mexican events, social events, so I did feel different. I felt very unattached from the main, the main class or student body. But I didn't care because, I mean they don't understand. They don't, they're not me, they don't understand where I'm coming from. It didn't bother me.

JS: Were there any customs or traditions, obviously there were many customs and celebrations that you continued all through your life. Can you tell me a little bit about some of them?

PC: We, everything is Christmas, well for Christmas and for Thanksgiving we would have turkey for Thanksgiving but we would always also had tamales and we would have rice, Mexican rice, and we would have frijoles rancheros, beans. We always had that and that was kind of different cause maybe you wouldn't expect us to eat tamales for Thanksgiving but that's what we eat and also for Christmas. It's very common that we eat tamales. We ate [Bunuelos], it's a type of a dessert. We made [Ponche] which is a type of fruit punch, but it's a hot fruit punch and you make it with fruit that's not very common in this area. It's hard to come by. Or it's usually more expensive because common to come by that fruit. But we also, we celebrate Christmas Eve. We don't celebrate Christmas Day. So we have dinner for Christmas Eve and we would go to midnight mass or [Misa de Gallo] as we call it and we come back, we open gifts and usually we continue to celebrate it until about five or six o'clock in the morning because that's how it's done in Mexico. And we, in Mexico we also celebrate down there, people put fireworks and stuff like that in celebration but obviously we couldn't do that here because it was winter.

And for New Year's Eve we'll also make tamales and we continue to make [Ponche] or make chocolate, what you call Chocolaté which is also warm, it was Mexican chocolate. And then there was different customs in the sense that you would wear anything red for good fortune and for love for the New Year. We would also as well each get 12 grapes and make 12 different wishes for the good year. We eat it separately and name this is

what I wish for. And then also as well we would have a sack or a suitcase and we need to walk under the door 12 times at midnight for good fortune and for good luck.

JS: Do you still do any of these things?

PC: We do not continue to do the 12 grapes event being or the suitcase thing, but we do continue to wear red for good fortune. We do continue with the food aspect of it because we love to eat so we do continue with the tamales and all the traditional foods. We decided, we always know what the menu's going to be and we get together and make tamales, we don't buy them we make them our own.

JS: How about superstitions? Are there any Mexican superstitions that your parents brought to this country and you still have?

PC: Superstitions, well we continue to have an altar. When my parents passed away and my grandmother we have an altar for them in our home. We have a cup of water to keep them present because they state that the soul's attracted to water so if you have water in the home that's going to bring the spirit be near us. So on their altar we have a cup of water to make sure they're close to us. When I was younger my grandmother, and I used to do this sometimes, always put a glass of water on my headboard and the reason she'd say is because at nighttime your body leaves, your soul leaves your body at night and for it to return in the morning you should put a cup of water. When there's lightning we will always turn off the TV and we also put sheets over the mirrors because the lightning's attracted to the mirrors, so we put sheets over the mirrors. It's just something we just do and we always turn off the TV and we don't use the phone.

JS: So you do observe some of the. . . ?

PC: Yes, we observe some. We do observe some. We don't pull our hair when we have obviously gray hair you don't pull on it because you'll get more. If you're pregnant you don't color your hair, you don't cut your hair because it's bad for the child. You don't wear black when you're pregnant.

JS: Did your parents feel that it was important that you remember your roots?

PC: My parents thought it was very important to remember my roots, especially my father. He would always tell us stories about things in you know his, as experiences here, what he experienced, what challenges he had, what challenges my parents had and my grandparents and my great grandparents had. He was, they're from a very humble background and he was also very proud of it but he also used it as a lesson for us to take advantage of what we had to move forward because he never had the same opportunities and he would just tell us, you know, like one day he had to eat armadillo because there was nothing else for him to eat. You know, be happy or grateful that you have what you have. You know, he's like "I didn't go to school. If I would've been able to have that opportunity I would've been a cop or a detective. But, he's like, since I was eight years

old I had to work on the farm or in a factory or work some type of job to help support the family.”

JS: And he wanted more for you, his children?

PC: He wanted more for the children. Both my parents, my dad wanted more for, well so did my mother, she wanted us to marry a good man and have a good life and have a good family.

JS: How often did your parents go back to Mexico?

PC: My parents returned to Mexico one time a year, at least one time a year.

JS: And you all went along?

PC: We all went as a family to Mexico with my parents when they returned.

JS: And your aunt also?

PC: My aunt would also accompany us, as well as my grandmother when she was alive.

JS: Do you always, did you always go back to the village where they grew up?

PC: We always returned to [Allende, Coahuila] which is where my parents grew up. We had some family in [Sabinas] which is an hour from [Allende]. We would go to [Sabinas] and [Allende.]

JS: Do you still go back there?

PC: I have not returned to [Allende] in seven years.

JS: Do you have, is there any particular reason or you just haven't been able to go yet?

PC: Before then I would go once a year but I had not gone back since my mother passed away. I just find it very difficult for me to go back.

JS: What about your siblings? Do they go?

PC: My siblings would go back. My brother would go once a year with my dad and my sisters would go there every once in awhile.

JS: When they return from there, did, how did they feel coming back from there? Did they feel they were leaving home or were they glad to be back? Do you remember?

PC: I thought they were glad to be back but at the same time it was very difficult for them to leave because like I said we were close to our family and they're in a different country. But they were glad to be home because they were used to their surroundings in their own accommodations but at the same time it was very difficult for leaving them because you never know what can happen.

JS: I'll bet your mother especially.

PC: My mother had, yes my mother had a very, very hard time with that, especially when her father was living. She had found it very difficult to leave him. My mom's sister and brothers still live in Mexico and I'm sure it was very hard for him to leave also because she was the oldest.

JS: She's the oldest?

PC: Yeah and my dad was also the oldest in his family.

JS: Do relatives come here to visit?

PC: Relatives, my relatives don't come here very often to visit for financial reasons. They don't, are not able to financially come here as often. If, the only person that may come about once a year is my mom's sister. We send out for her, we pay for her way, for her to come because we know financially she cannot afford it.

JS: Do you keep in touch with them in other ways? Do you call?

PC: Yes, we call them very often, we send cards and pictures and things like that. And when we go down there we drive since we were so close to the border, since we were so close to the border we drive to Mexico, we don't fly. And we always pass by Texas to see family members because we have Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Eagle Pass. And we stop by to see them and then we head down to Mexico.

JS: Do you stay for a while?

PC: When we go down there we stay down there at least two weeks. During the summertime we would stay there the whole summer or for a month.

JS: Did your parents, when they got here, did they encourage other people to come up here to move here, other family members?

PC: My parents did encourage other family members to come up and take advantage of the work that was available. We did have uncles come up and work periodically. My grandpa also came and worked here once in a while, my maternal grandfather, as well as uncles and cousins, they also came up and worked. Not many of them settled here, they was always returned back to Texas or to Mexico, but we do have a few that came up and worked.

JS: How close do you feel your parents were to Mexico?

PC: They were very close. They always referred to things back in Mexico. They always looking forward to traveling to Mexico.

JS: Did they see it as going home or did they consider this home?

PC: My parents considered that Mexico their home even though they lived here for many years and we were born and raised here, they considered it their home.

JS: Would you ever consider leaving this country and moving back there?

PC: I would definitely consider moving back to Mexico. It's a whole different, a whole different world.

JS: You would?

PC: I would consider moving to Mexico. If I was able to financially I would.

JS: When you marry and have children do you want them to, are you going to raise them in the same type of culture as you were raised?

PC: I do plan to raise them in the same culture I was raised in, definitely. The same traditions and customs, cultural expectations, yes.

JS: What do you hope for for your children in the future?

PC: I hope obviously to move beyond, to always hopefully be, how should I say this, I hope my children will obviously, will hopefully gain a lot more than what I did. And mean yes, I have my college degree, but I hope they do a lot more than what I do and what I accomplished. And I also hope that while they do that they also hold onto their culture and hold on to the language and hold on to where we came from. Because I mean the stories that I have hear, that I hear, that I have heard from my father and all that they share with me obviously I carry it with me and I hope to pass it on to them and hopefully they will hold on to that. It's going to be their choice but I hope they do.

JS: Okay this is the last question. How do you feel about the current debate in this country about immigration and immigrants?

PC: I feel mixed about the immigration debate in this country. I can see both sides of the debate. I understand both, both sides of the argument but coming from, being the daughter of a recent immigrant it's very difficult for me to say to I guess side with the more anti-immigrant sentiment or argument of the debate.

JS: Were your parents legal immigrants?

PC: My parents were legal immigrants. They became citizens in 1984.

JS: How did they feel about that when they became citizens?

PC: They were very proud of becoming citizens. It did not change things. I mean, yes, we're American citizens but they did not feel like they were betraying their country, or betraying who they are because they knew who they were, but they just felt it was because of something they needed to do, not because they wanted to do it, but because they knew they needed to do it.

JS: Your mother felt the same way as your father?

PC: My mother felt the same way as my father did.

JS: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

PC: Not much.

JS: Okay. Thank you.