

TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

JOSEPH E. ANAYA

JULY 25, 1975

INTERVIEWER: GRANT A. MOOSBRUGGER

This interview was conducted as part of a series on the Mexican American in Minnesota.

Joe Anaya was born in New Mexico, and came to St. Paul, Minnesota with his parents in 1939. He has been very active in two Mexican American organizations:

- 1) The Guadalupe Credit Union
- 2) The GI Forum

Joe worked for Brown & Bigelow Advertising Firm for seventeen years. He resigned from Brown & Bigelow in 1973 and is now working for the Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA), which is involved with helping minorities who are in business or are trying to start a business.

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview, edited to aid in clarity and ease of comprehension for the reader. The original tape recording is available in the Audio-Visual Library of the Minnesota Historical Society.

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH E. ANAYA

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INTERVIEWER: GRANT A. MOOSBRUGGER

Moosbrugger: This is Grant A. Moosbrugger interviewing Joe Anaya on July 25, 1975, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and School, and Guadalupe Credit Union Office. This interview is for the Mexican American History Project, under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society. Do I have your permission to interview you? Do you agree, that this interview will go on to the Minnesota Historical Society?

Anaya: Yes, you do.

Moosbrugger: Can you start out by telling us who you are and giving us a brief history of your background?

Anaya: My name is Joseph E. Anaya, I was born in the state of New Mexico. Our family came to the state of Minnesota in 1939, and we've been here ever since.

Moosbrugger: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Anaya : I have three sisters, two of them are residing in the cities here, and one is in Colorado.

Moosbrugger: What are their married names?

Anaya: I have one unmarried sister, Domitila Anaya, my other sisters are: Marcelina Vasquez, of St. Paul and Ermelinda Gonzalez, who lives in Colorado.

Moosbrugger: Did you go to school primarily in Minnesota or in New Mexico? What schools did you go to?

Anaya: Well, I started school in New Mexico of course, and then when we came to Minnesota, I attended school here.

Moosbrugger: Have you been in the armed services, and was that a significant portion of your life?

Anaya: No, not really.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell us some of the employment experiences you've had?

Anaya: Well, I had a few odd jobs at the beginning, but I guess my employment, what I call real employment, started in 1956. I started working for Brown & Bigelow Advertising Firm in St. Paul. I believe that I started in March of 1956. I worked in their International Division, in what they called their Domestic Export Section. I was promoted to Supervisor of that section after about a year and a half of employment. Later on, I was in charge of the Export Traffic Department. I also handled all the credits and collections for the Foreign Division. I stayed with Brown & Bigelow for seventeen years. Prior to my resigning from that position I was Marketing Manager for the International Division with Brown & Bigelow. In 1973 I left Brown & Bigelow to go with another organization by the name of Metropolitan Economic Development Association, and association involved with helping minorities who are in business or who are trying to get into business. We provide all types of services which are free of charge, for example; accounting, management technical assistance, loan packaging. We do some funding, or try and seek funding for them, for whatever type of business they want to get into.

Moosbrugger: Is that a private organization or a government agency?

Anaya: Well, it's more private. It's an organization that was conceived just a few years back with private funding. It's supported by all the major businesses in the Twin City area. All the monies to provide the services that I mentioned here, come from the private community. Although we do have a contract with the office of Minority Business Enterprise under the U.S. Department of Congress that is renewed on a yearly basis, to provide some of these services for minorities.

Moosbrugger: Has this been of any benefit that you know of to any Mexican American or other Latin Americans?

Anaya: Oh, definitely, we help them get started, just in the last two years we started three who have proven to be successful.

Moosbrugger: Three businesses?

Anaya: Yes.

Moosbrugger: You've helped them obtain funding?

Anaya: Right, we got them started, we got them the funding. In some cases we even got them the contracts.

Moosbrugger: You mentioned three successful ones. I suppose the nature of business is that for every successful start, there are some false starts. To get an idea of the total number there have been, how many Mexican Americans would you guess have attempted to start a business in the last two or three years?

Anaya: Well, I don't exactly know the number, but there have been quite a few that have come in.

Moosbrugger: To inquire, or try to get a business?

Anaya: Looking for assistance or trying to get in different types of businesses. The only thing is that sometimes you just can't help all of them. They are trying to create some of the businesses in a field which is too competitive. In order for them to cut into the market, it would be difficult. Especially without the proper financing and the capital that would be required to carry them for a period of time, until the business is established. In most cases, I guess one of the difficulties that we encounter, not only with, say a Mexican American or Latino, or even the other minorities, is a lack of equity to begin with on the part of our clients. Without sufficient equity on their part, it makes it difficult to try and leverage financing for them.

Moosbrugger: I suppose there would always be a certain amount of people with a dream, and with some hopes of starting a business. Perhaps their ideas are impractical, something that just couldn't be.

Anaya: Yes. We get a lot of guys who come in and they want to do certain things, they feel that if they can get a certain amount of money to start their business, they can make it really go. But when we get to analyzing and evaluating their proposal or business plan, and checking it thoroughly, we find out that there is really no market for the goods or their services. It's just not practical and therefore difficult to get any financing for such a project. In many cases, the clients that come to us with a business plan lack, for one thing, enough capital or equity to put into the business, and the other is that they also lack the knowledge and/or the experience for the type of business that they want to get into. No equity, knowledge, or experience in the business makes it rough to make the business successful.

Moosbrugger: If a person has a reasonable amount of capital to start off with, so that they are not totally penniless, and have a good idea, a workable idea; then your organization can help them get further money loans, and would help them arrange contracts, and help to endorse them. Is that correct?

Anaya: Right.

Moosbrugger: That's a good service.

Anaya: Right, we can provide assistance in putting the package together. Also, in marketing, we can provide accounting, management and technical assistance, where it's needed, and try to get the funding for them. If we feel the project is feasible and can be, or I shouldn't say can be in a successful position, there is never a certainty of a business being successful, but at least if it shows that it has a reasonable chance of success, then we'll go all out and help him as much as we can and provide all the services at our disposal.

Moosbrugger: It certainly is a reasonable position to do that. I know that you've been

Moosbrugger: active with the Guadalupe Credit Union. Could you tell us a little bit about when or how you got involved with the Guadalupe Credit Union, what position you now hold, and what positions you've held?

Anaya: I started with the Credit Union somewhat over ten years ago. I started working as Chariman of the Supervisory Committee. It was a three men committee, and our function wa to supervise the overall operation and activities of the Credit Union. We had to audit the books on a monthly basis and see that the operation was being...

Moosbrugger: Properly run?

Anaya: Right. We also had to see that all the other committee members, including the board members and the officers, were doing their job. After about, I think it was two or three years in the supervisory committee, I was elected to the Board of Directors of the Guadalupe Credit Union. Approximately one year later, I was elected President of the Credit Union. I held that title for three or four years, until the Treasurer and Manager, due to relocation of employment, had to resign the position. I resigned my position as President of the Credit Union and took over the job of Treasurer/Manager of the Credit Union. I've been the Treasurer/Manager for the last five or six years.

Moosbrugger: Who is Prsident now?

Anaya: Right now the president of our Credit Union is Jose Juarez.

Moosbrugger: I realize that the Credit Union was established in the late forties, and that you became active in the mid-sixties, around 1965. But I think you've been around long enough and probably know, or have heard tell of, how things were in the years preceding your getting active. What special needs for the parish, or for the Mexican American community, has this Credit Union provided? Have they met any special needs? Of what benefit has it been?

Anaya: Well, I think when the Credit Union first got started was in 1948. It got started in the old church at 186 East Fairfield Street. I believe at that time it was an essential part of the church, by providing the monies that were needed by many of the members who were having a difficult time, due to their language or something else.

Moosbrugger: Many of them may have been recent arrivals?

Anaya: That's true. Some were just arriving so that they could not readily go to a bank and get financing. I think that was one of the things that the Credit Union was able to do; was to provide these people with the financing that was needed and wasn't being provided, or at least they could not get it elsewhere from the regular lending institutions. Over the many years that the Credit Union has been in operation, it has helped and provided many services that were needed by the Mexican Americans here in the community, which they were not able to get elsewhere.

Moosbrugger: What direction is the Guadalupe Credit Union going? Is the membership stable? What's the outlook for the Credit Union?

Anaya: Well, at this point of time, we seem to have hit a certain peak, as far as membership, and as far as money. We don't think it's going to grow anymore, if anything I think it's gotten to a point where it will start going down. The support for the Credit Union came mostly from the older members.

Moosbrugger: Of the parish?

Anaya: Of the parish, that's right. Now the new generation, they don't seem to be interested in the Credit Union, or in joining the Credit Union, or saving at the Credit Union. The younger people are, of course, better off than our fathers were. They have their jobs. A lot of the young people have credit unions where they are employed.

Moosbrugger: They have the advantage of payroll deductions?

Anaya: Payroll deductions, so it makes it easier for them to deal with the credit union

Anaya: at the place of their employment. So I don't see the need anymore for, at least the need is not as great anymore for our Credit Union. If we're not going to be getting anymore members, we're not growing, we see no other way but to probably try and merge our Credit Union with a larger one that can provide more services, either that or phase out the Credit Union over a period of time.

Moosbrugger: That seems reasonable.

Anaya: Because I feel that, as time goes on, the Credit Union will definitely not grow anymore.

Moosbrugger: Due to the economic situation or our country now?

Anaya: Well, yes.

Moosbrugger: That's partly it?

Anaya: That's partly it. The other is that the cost of operationg this Credit Union has been increasing over the last few years. Our membership has not increased. You just can't continue an operation unless you increase members. Otherwise you are not going to be in business for long, especially with the oepration of cost increasing. So we have two choices that face us right now: merging with another credit union, and by that I mean that all our present members would be eligible to become members of another credit union, that would be subject to, say another credit union willing to take us in; and it that's not possible, or if the membership would not want to merge, then the other alternative would be to phase out the Credit Union over a period of time, in other words suspend some of our operations, so that eventually we just phase it out completely.

Moosbrugger: You were active, I believe, in a group by the name of GI Gorum. Could you tell us a little about that job?

Anaya: The American GI Forum, it was a national organization. It got started in St. Paul around 1948. I think it was about the same time the Crèdit Union got started. It came about when a gentleman by the name of Dr. Hector Garcia,

Anaya: from Corpus Christie, Texas came to St. Paul. Dr. Garcia, was founder of the American GI Forum in Texas. From there, it just sprung all over the country. They had GI Forum all the way from the east coast to the west coast. Well, anyway, Dr. Garcia came out here and talked to us about starting a GI Forum in St. Paul. The two principals that were involved in organizing the GI Forum in St. Paul were Arthur Coronado, Jr. and myself. With Dr. Garcia's assistance we got the first GI Forum started here in Minnesota. At the time that the GI Forum got started we had a Ladies' Auxiliary and also what we called a Junior GI Forum. The Junior GI Forum was composed of youngsters. The GI Forum, Ladies' Auxiliary and the Junior GI Forum were really successful at that time.

Moosbrugger: Does GI refer to General Issue in the army, people who were ex-service men?

Anaya: Yes, there was one exception, although the majority of the members in the GI Forum were Ex-GI's, the American GI Forum did not restrict membership to only GI's. It was what we like to call a family organization. That means that any relative of a GI could join the American GI Forum, or the Auxiliary, or the Junior Forum. So it was not restricted to GI's.

Moosbrugger: What was the purpose of that organization?

Anaya: It was partly a social organization. I suppose maybe I shouldn't say partly, I think the major part of it is the social organization. I guess the function was to try and help or provide services and do good for the community in which it was located.

Moosbrugger: Was the membership of the GI Forum both local and nation wide, was it primarily for Mexican Americans? Or did it welcome anybody?

Anaya: It was started for Mexican Americans. It was predominantly Mexican American. I would say probably ninety-nine percent was Mexican American, although it wasn't restricted to Mexican Americans, anyone could join. But it was predominantly Mexican American.

Moosbrugger: Did Dr. Garcia, come into town to help get somebody to organize the GI Forum, or did he live here for a period of time?

Anaya: He just came here for the purpose of organizing the GI Forum. In fact he was going across the country doing just that. So, there were GI Forums organized in all areas of the United States.

Moosbrugger: How Long, and how big, did the GI Forum membership get in our local chapter?

Anaya: Well, I think at one time the men's forum had over fifty members, well over fifty members. The Ladies' Auxiliary was much smaller, but in the Junior GI Forum we had as many as eighty some members, close to one-hundred members. It was working really good.

Moosbrugger: Were there boys and girls in the Junior Forum?

Anaya: Yes, boys and girls. Most of them were between the ages of twelve and eighteen years of age.

Moosbrugger: Talking about the Men's Forum, how often did you meet? Did you have a regular meeting day?

Anaya: Yes, we met on a monthly basis.

Moosbrugger: Where did you meet?

Anaya: Our meetings were held at the Neighborhood House, the old Neighborhood House which was located on Indiana Street, in the Old West Side. We got permission from the Director of the Neighborhood House to use the facilities for our meetings.

Moosbrugger: In addition to having meetings, would you plan picnics, and things like that?

Anaya: Yes, we had many social functions like picnics. We also had dances to raise funds for different types of projects, like needy families. We assisted some migrant families through some of the functions that we had.

Moosbrugger: Besides Art Coronado and yourself, who were some of the other extremely active members?

Anaya: We had Jesse Velasquez, Lupe Velasquez, there were so many of them, I can't think of their names, there were quite a few active, that were always in there.

Moosbrugger: How long did that organization stay active?

Anaya: Well, it was active for several years. Then all of a sudden, I can't explain the reason, maybe it was the lack of interest on the part of the membership, but slowly they started staying away from meetings, and it just died. Although we felt it was a good organization.

Moosbrugger: That would have been in the mid-fifties?

Anaya: In the fifties, right.

Moosbrugger: Joe, in conclusion, if you were to give advice for the future, advice for posterity for those who are going to follow us, what's your pet philosophy or advice?

Anaya: I guess if I was going to give any advice at all, one of the things I would stress most of all, would be education. One should get as much education as possible. I think that with education comes the other things: a better way of life; you raise your economic standards. I think without education, it makes it that much harder. I'm talking from experience now. I know that if I would have had the opportunity to get a better education, that I would have been much better off today, especially economically. I would have been able to get a much better job, or a chance for advancement. So, I guess I would stress education most of all.

Moosbrugger: Prepare for the future?

Anaya: Right.

Moosbrugger: Very good. Thank you very much for the interview.