

## TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

ANGELO AND MARCELLA ELIZONDO

INTERVIEWERS:

GRANT MOOSBRUGGER AND RAMEDO SAUCEDO

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

Angelo Elizondo was born in Hidalgo, Nuevo Leon, Mexico in 1909. He immigrated to the United States at the age of three with his parents, who were seeking employment. He worked in the coal mines of Texas during the winter and the beet fields of other states during the summer.

Mrs. Elizondo was born in Taft, Texas in 1919. She worked in the beet fields while growing up and came to Minnesota in 1929.

In this interview, Mr. and Mrs. Elizondo first give a brief account of their respective families; talking about their parents and siblings. Next they relate the names and occupations of their own children. Mrs. Elizondo shares some interesting experiences she has had with apparitions in the past. Mrs. Elizondo does not believe these things are "superstitions". She also conveys the meaning of the "evil eye", and lists some remedies used to cure minor illnesses.

Mr. and Mrs. Elizondo both close by giving advice to the future generations. Each one stresses faith, respect and the importance of education.

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 ANGELO AND MARCELLA ELIZONDO

July 8, 1975

INTERVIEWERS:

GRANT MOOSBRUGGER AND RAMEDO SAUCEDO

Moosbrugger: This is Grant Moosbrugger interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Elizondo on July 8, 1975 at 247 E. Morton Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55107. This oral interview is conducted for the Mexican American History Project under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society. Do I have your permission to interview you so that this interview will become the property of the Minnesota Historical Society?

Elizondos: Yes.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell me something about your family history, Mr. Elizondo?

Elizondo: My father was born in Mina, Nuevo Leon, Mexico in 1881. My mother was also born in Mina, in 1886. I was born in Hidalgo, Nuevo Leon, in 1909.

Saucedo: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Elizondo: I have four brothers and five sisters.

Moosbrugger: Where do they live?

Elizondo: Most of us live here in St. Paul. One of my sisters lives in Minneapolis and a brother lives in Texas.

Moosbrugger: How many were there in the family all together?

Elizondo: We were eighteen in the family.

Moosbrugger: Were there some who died while they were growing up?

Elizondo: No, those that are deceased died when they were very, very young.

Moosbrugger: Do you know when your parents came to the United States?

Elizondo: In 1912 they went to Dolores, Texas

Saucedo: Did you live in another town in Mexico before you came to the United States?

Elizondo: I really don't remember because I was only three years old when we came to the United States.

Moosbrugger: Do you remember why your parents came to the United States?

Elizondo: They came to look for work.

Moosbrugger: Did it have anything to do with the Revolution?

Elizondo: No, it was just to find a job.

Moosbrugger: What was the first town that you lived in, in Texas?

Elizondo: Dolores, Texas, which is not too far from Laredo, Texas.

Saucedo: What type of work did your father do there?

Elizondo: He worked in the coal mines.

Saucedo: How long did you stay there?

Elizondo: Until 1918 when we went to Bridgeport, Texas, where there were some more coal mines.

Saucedo: How old were you then?

Elizondo: I was about nine years old.

Moosbrugger: How long did you remain in Bridgeport?

Elizondo: Until 1931.

Saucedo: Did you work while you were there?

Elizondo: Yes, I worked in the coal mines and we also worked in the farms. We would travel to Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming to work in the beet fields. In 1924, we went to Wellington, Minnesota to work in the beet fields, and then we returned to Texas. In 1933 we went to Lafayette, Minnesota, where we again worked in the beet fields. This was the second time that we came to Minnesota.

Saucedo: Did you work in the coal mines during the winter in Texas and then work in the beet fields in other states during the summer?

Elizondo: Yes.

Moosbrugger: When did you finally decide to remain in Minnesota?

Elizondo: In 1933.

Moosbrugger: Did all your family come to Minnesota at once?

Elizondo: Yes, we all came together.

Moosbrugger: Did your parents come too? Were they still alive?

Elizondo: Yes.

Saucedo: To what city in Minnesota did you come?

Elizondo: To Lafayette, Minnesota.

Moosbrugger: How many years did you spend in Lafayette?

Elizondo: We only stayed there during the summer.

Moosbrugger: Where did you go from there?

Elizondo: In November of 1933 we came to St. Paul.

Moosbrugger: So you came directly to St. Paul?

Elizondo: Yes, we lived here during the winter and during the summer we would go to work in the farms.

Moosbrugger: What was it that made you decide to remain in St. Paul?

Elizondo: In 1941, I started to work in New Brighton and then in Rosemont; then I worked at the Armour's Packing Company for six months. In 1943, I began to work at the American Hoist and Derrick and I worked there until 1974.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell me how you met your wife and about your wedding? Also about your children?

Elizondo: I met my wife here in Minnesota in 1933. We were married on December 2, 1938. Our oldest daughter was born on December 1st of the following year.

Moosbrugger: How many children do you have?

Elizondo: We have eight children.

Moosbrugger: Can you tell me their names?

Elizondo: They are Virginia, Maria Elena, Carmen, Francisca, Angelo Jr., Catalina, Lupe, and Antonio. Five of them are already married.

Moosbrugger: Can you tell me the last names of your married daughters?

Elizondo: Virginia Chavez, Carmen Santos, and the others are Becerra, Hanson, and Scott.

Moosbrugger: Do you have any grandchildren?

Elizondo: Yes, we have seven and another on the way.

Saucedo: What about great grandchildren?

Elizonso: We don't have any. Angelo's parents are the ones that do. They have 92 grandchildren, 135 great grandchildren and 11 great, great grandchildren.

Moosbrugger: Mrs. Elizondo, can you tell me something about your personal life?

Elizondo: What is it that you would like to know?

Saucedo: Where were you born?

Elizondo: I was born in Taft, Texas and was baptized in Corpus Christi, Texas. My birth date is September 25, 1919. My parents came to the United States in 1918.

Saucedo: Where were your parents born?

Elizondo: They were born in Penjamo, Guanajuato, Mexico, they traveled a long way to come to the United States.

Moosbrugger: What was your maiden name?

Elizondo: Bravo.

Moosbrugger: What were your parent's names?

Elizondo: My father's name was Juan Bravo and my mother's was Carmen Garcia de Bravo.

Moosbrugger: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Elizondo: I had four brothers and three sisters. Two of my sisters are deceased so now we are only two girls.

Moosbrugger: Can you tell me their names, ages and whatever?

Elizondo: Jesus lives in Riverside, California; Guadalupe lives with his family in Los Angeles, California; my sister Ramona Cabrera lives in Fresno, California; Jose lives in Vallejo, California; Leroy lives here in St. Paul. Leroy's

Elizondo: wife is my husband's sister.

Saucedo: When did you come to Minnesota?

Elizondo: In 1929.

Saucedo: Where in Minnesota did you come to?

Elizondo: We came to New Ulm where we worked in the beet fields. Then we went to Lafayette, where I met my husband. We would spend the winters in Chaska, in a hotel. We also were in Minneapolis. When my mother died in 1933, we came to live in St. Paul.

Moosbrugger: Which aspects of your Mexican heritage did you instill in your children?

Saucedo: What did you want for your children to develop in their ways of thinking?

Elizondo: I always wanted my girls to go into nursing and for my youngest son to become a doctor. He decided to go into drafting instead. Our other son went to school to become a bartender. Our dreams were for our children to go to school and have some sort of a career so that they wouldn't have to work as hard as we did, because we worked very hard.

Saucedo: Did your children ever work in the beet fields?

Elizondo: No, they never did.

Saucedo: We would like to know something about your children. Did they all graduate from high school? What types of jobs do they hold? What about your daughters and their husbands?

Elizondo: All our daughters graduated from high school. Catalina, who went to school the longest, works as an assistant secretary at the Centennial Building. another one was working for the State Department, but since she wasn't making enough money, she went to work for Univac. Virginia used to work at the Farmers Union as a bookkeeper, but she went to California and now she is working as a bookkeeper with the school system. Francis worked as a dietician at St. Luke's Hospital.

Saucedo: How many of your children still live at home?

Elizondo: Three because the other five are married.

Saucedo: Mr. Elizondo, how many years did you work at the American Hoist?

Elizondo: I worked there for thirty years and three months.

Saucedo: What did you do there?

Elizondo: I was a core maker for about twenty-five years.

Saucedo: When did you retire?

Elizondo: In 1974.

Saucedo: What do you do now?

Elizondo: I have a part time job as a janitor. I work sixteen hours a week.

Moosbrugger: Have you ever had some sort of interesting experience in your life?

Moos. Elizondo: Yes, in 1950, something quite spooky happened to me. I remember that the night was very still, when all of a sudden a woman appeared before me. Her hands were folded in a special way and they seemed to shine very bright. She began to walk toward me and I became very frightened. I screamed and screamed so that someone could come to my rescue.. When my husband came and did not see anyone but me, he told me that I must have been dreaming. He never did believe my story. Time elapsed and I went to visit a woman who told fortunes. I told her about the woman and her shining hands, and this lady told me that the significance of that incident was that the woman who had appeared to me had buried some diamonds somewhere in my house. She also told me that those diamonds were for me and that I was to look for them. My response to her was "Oh, no I'm not. I'm not going to be risking my life looking for those things". That was the end of that except for the fact that every time I relate that incident to someone, I get chills all over my body.

Saucedo: Did that occur here in St. Paul?

Elizondo: Yes, on Indiana Avenue.

Saucedo: What year did you say this occurred?

Elizondo: It was in 1950.

Moosbrugger: Do you remember your address at that home?

Elizondo: 208 East Indiana.

Saucedo: Was this close to the Neighborhood House?

Elizondo: Yes, very close.

Moosbrugger: Did this lady appear to you only once?

Elizondo: Yes, just once but I would see something like a bundle move around from the kitchen to our bedroom many times. My husband never did believe me.

Saucedo: Can you tell us something about the evil eye?

Elizondo: Well, many persons possess a very strong vision and seem to penetrate a lot of electricity. If they admire anything whether it be an animate, or inanimate object, they must touch it. One example would be a clay pitcher. If the person who possesses this type of vision looks at this pitcher and likes it because it is appealing to him but does not touch it, the pitcher will split into pieces. Another example is a person, child or adult. If this person who penetrates a lot of electricity thinks that a certain child or adult is cute or possesses some trait which attracts him and he does not touch the other person, the other person is most likely to get sick. Usually this sick person will become headachy and feverish and can sometimes die. No doctor will be able to cure this evil eye sickness except for the person who did the harm. Persons who possess this evil eye know when they have done someone harm because they get a terrible headache.

Saucedo: How can the evil eye be cured?

Elizondo: You use an egg and with it you move it around the person's whole body

Elizondo: saying several creeds. After that, the person's body temperature returns to normal and the headache and pain in the eyes disappears. I remember that once a lady was admiring my daughter Catalina but she never touched her. When we got home, Catalina was crying and her temperature was very high so I decided to cure her of the evil eye. Pretty soon she fell asleep and her temperature was back to normal. If the evil eye is done to a girl, the egg becomes a ball; if it is done to a boy it becomes elongated and looks like a crown. I truly believe in this evil eye sickness because it has happened to my children several times. There are many people who don't believe in it, including my husband, and often times they laugh at me, but I don't care how they feel because I do believe in it. There is still another instance which I would like to tell you about. My father-in-law lived with us for some time until he passed away. Some time later I could feel his presence in the house and I could hear him walking with his cane. This continued for a whole week until I could no longer put up with it. I was very frightened because I was alone all this time, so what I did was to pray, pray that he leave and rest in peace. He did leave and never came back. I suppose that you could say that he had returned to our home to fulfill a promise or something of the sort. I don't think that this is superstition; I believe that the spirits of the dead do return to fulfill some incomplete task. I also feel that the spirits of one's deceased parents return when their child is in need of them. I remember that at one time when I was very sick, I could feel my mother's presence. I could not hear her but I could feel her. My husband does not believe in this either but I am a firm believer.

Saucedo: Is it true that if someone makes a promise and is not able to fulfill it

Saucedo: because he dies, he will come back and find someone to fulfill it or else his soul will never find peace?

Elizondo: Yes, he won't rest in peace until he finds someone to fulfill it. I remember that my mother had promised that she would come to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church to light a candle, but she died in 1933 before she was able to fulfill her promise. Well, since she had not been able to fulfill her promise, her spirit went to Mr. Villagomez and asked him to come do this for her. He did and he told me that for a long while he had been unable to sleep because my mother would keep coming to him and asking him to come light the candle.

If I were to tell you about all the things that have happened to me, I would never finish.

Saucedo: Are these the worst things that have happened to you?

Elizondo: Yes, because they have frightened me tremendously. Many people laugh at me when I talk about these incidents and probably think I am crazy, but I believe that maybe it is due to the fact that we are very noble or that we are destined to do these things. I never would have imagined that my father-in-law would return and that I would hear his footsteps and his cane. Probably all my prayers helped him return to God and to rest in peace.

Moosbrugger: Possibly some people are more sensitive to these things than others.

Elizondo: I believe so. My brother Lupe has told me that my dead sister Maria has come to his bedside and told him to go with her. When Lupe's father-in-law "Don Ventura" was very sick in the hospital, Maria came to Lupe and he asked her, "How long do you think Don Ventura has to live?" She told Lupe not to worry, that he had only three days to live and that is exactly what happened. After three days, Don Ventura died. Lupe told me, "I knew

Elizondo: exactly what was going to happen to Don Ventura because Maria had told me." I say that these things occur in life to some people and there is nothing to prevent them. Like I said before, people just laugh when they hear these things, even my children.

Moosbrugger: It's really ridiculous for people to laugh at things they don't understand, isn't it?

Elizondo: Yes it is. My wife had a very rough life because her mother died when Marcella was only fourteen years old. Since there were eight children and Marcella was the oldest, she had to raise them. Yes, I had to take care of all the house work, worry about the cooking, take care of the youngest who was only a year and three months old, and aside from that, go to work in the fields. So, as you can see, my life was pretty rough. After all my brothers and sisters grew up, they moved to California, with the exception of Leroy and myself. Then my responsibility was with my children.

Saucedo: Did your mother ever take you to see a doctor?

Elizondo: No.

Saucedo: Who took care of you when your mother passed away?

Elizondo: No one. We were all alone.

Saucedo: What did you do in case of illness?

Elizondo: I'd remedy the illness by doing things that I had seen my mother do.

Saucedo: What was it that your mother did in case of fever or stomachaches, etc?

Elizondo: For a fever, she would spread a mixture of baking powder and shortening all over our bodies, cover us up so we could sweat and give us an aspirin. The body temperature would come back to normal. It would have the same effect as if you spread Vicks or Mentholatum all over the body.

Elizondo: In case of stomach-ache, she would give us either of these two herbs: "estafiate" or mint leaves. She would make a tea out of these herbs and we would drink them and the pain would vanish. It would not be until we were very ill and she could not cure us that she would take us to see a doctor. In raising my children, I continued with her practices and wouldn't take my kids to see a physician unless I couldn't do anything about the ailment.

Saucedo: Do you still use any of the herbs? If so, which ones?

Elizondo: Yes, I take a tea called "Don Enrique" which is good for the stomach, for the throat, and for ulcers. It also helps so that a person can cut down on smoking.

Moosbrugger: Can you buy it here?

Elizondo: That is bought in Mexico, down by the river.

Moosbrugger: It is called "Don Enrique", isn't it?

Elizondo: Yes. "Don Enrique" was a doctor who went to the "Sierra Madre" to experiment with plants and finally came up with a combination of herbs to form such a tea. That is why the tea was named after him.

Saucedo: Did your mother give you that tea?

Elizondo: No.

Saucedo: How was it then that you came upon it?

Elizonso: Well, it was recommended to me when I was very nervous. A friend gave me a cup to drink and it worked very well and ever since then I've had a lot of faith in it. It really calms my nerves and it makes me sleepy. The doctor had been giving me tranquilizers to calm my nerves but they didn't help at all.

Saucedo: How often during the day do you drink the tea?

Elizondo: Ever since the doctor told me that I had a heart ailment, I began to take it four times a day. I would drink the first cup with my breakfast, then with my lunch, again at suppertime and lastly right before going to bed. It would be as if I was drinking water.

Saucedo: Would you drink it hot or cold?

Elizondo: I would drink it as though it were iced tea, with a slice of lemon. It really doesn't taste bad.

Saucedo: Do you recommend other herbs for different ailments?

Elizondo: Well, just the mint leaves and the "estafiate" for stomach-aches and the tea I spoke to you about for nerves.

Moosbrugger: That tea can be bought in Mexico, can't it?

Elizondo: Yes, in Mexico.

Moosbrugger: It's a fine combination of medicinal herbs. The founder of this tea is "Enrique Salinas Garza". The address on the box which contains the herbs is "Laboratorios Malabar, S.A." Apartado Postal 1212 Monterrey, Nuevo Leon or Barbadillo 414 Nte., Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon. The price for 500 grams is 30 pesos or \$2.40.

Saucedo: The last question we'd like to ask you is that if you could write a chapter of a book to leave for your grandchildren or great grandchildren, what advice would you give them about life? Can we start with you Mrs. Elizondo?

Elizondo: I would say to them to have faith in God, obey and respect their parents who tried to set them on the right track, and to continue their education so that they can persue a career. I hope that someday, my grandchildren and great grandchildren hear this recording of their grandmother who is giving them as much sound advice as possible.

Saucedo: What about you Mr. Elizondo?

Elizondo: I would tell my grandchildren that their parents had been good children who

Elizondo: went to school and learned a lot from their education and that each one helped the others. I would like for all of them to get to know each other, whether they be cousins or relatives to each other, and to respect everyone of them as individuals. Those are my hopes.

Moosbrugger: Mr. and Mrs. Elizondo, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you both for this interview. Thank you.

Mexican-American Oral History Project  
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