## TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

## WITH

## ROMALDO JIMENEZ

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

Romaldo Jimenez, was born in 1912. His home state is Jalisco, Mexico. He left Mexico when he was fourteen years old in 1926. His father died when he was seven. He had two brothers and one sister, but he has lost contact with them. Mr. Jimenez, worked for the railroad in Texas and in Kansas from 1928 to 1933. He came to Minnesota in 1933 to work in the beet fields, but didn't like the work. He started working for other farmers and then started renting land to plant his own crops. He is the father of thirteen children.

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 ROMALDO JIMENEZ

JULY 26, 1976

INTERVIEWER: GRANT MOOSBRUGGER

Moosbrugger: This is Grant Moosbrugger interviewing Romaldo Jimenez. Today is July 26,

1976. Do I have your permission to interview you for the Minnesota

Historical Society?

Jimenez: Yes.

Moosbrugger: When did you come to Minnesota?

Jimenez: We were in different places. First we were in Fort Worth, Texas, then Kansas, from 1928 to 1933. It was during the depression in the United States. I was working on the railroad and they laid me off. Then we decided to come to Minnesota. We arrived in Walters, Minnesota on March 19, 1933. We worked in the beet fields from March until May 3rd. We proceeded with difficulties for sometime, and finally things got better.

Moosbrugger: Did you stay in Minnesota then?

Jimenez:

No. We worked the beet fields that summer. In the winter, we went to Manly, Iowa. We returned to Minnesota in the spring. We returned to Manly for two more winters. Then we stayed in Minnesota. We were still working the beet fields, but I didn't like the work at all. Beet work is the hardest work the Mexican can get. I was looking for an opportunity to work on my own farm, and I found it. A farmer offered me a straight salary of twenty-five dollars a month, plus fifteen acres of beets. Those fifteen acres were my start. I made six-hundred-forty dollars on the beets. Then I bought everything I needed to plant onions. I rented some land in Hayward. Then we went to Easton, because they didn't want to rent me the land in Hayword anymore. So I rented twenty acres from Henry Stevermen, in Easton, in 1943. I lost some of the

Jimenez:

onions, because there was too much rain. With the onions that were left, I still got a good price for them. I only had six trucks full of onions. But what I made with those six trucks, was enough to live on. Then one year, in 1947, we had very good luck. I planted twenty acres, of the twenty acres, only thirteen were good and I got a good price for the onions. I made twenty-one thousand dollars. After I paid all my bills, which were three thousand dollars, I had eighteen thousand dollars left. I wanted to go back to Mexico, but my wife didn't want to go because the children were born here. Then after that year, we kept going down and we were broke again! All we had was a 1947 car, which we had gotten new on our lucky year. I bought the car for \$2,350, this was because I bought it in the Black Market. I had to sell it for twenty-five dollars!

Moosbrugger: In 1940, and the fifties, did you have your own farm?

Jimenez: No. I rented the land, because I wasn't planning on staying here. If I could have gotten lucky again, I would have gone back to Mexico. But my

family started growing, and leaving, so here we are!

Moosbrugger: If you would have gone back to Mexico, what part of Mexico would you have

gne to?

I didn't have any certain place in mind. My home state is Jalisco. I left there when I was fourteen years old. When I left my home town, I went to the state of Tamaulipas. I went to Tampico. I later went back to my home town to get my mother, to take her to Tampico. She would come and go, the last time, she decided to go back for good. I had two brothers. I don't know them anymore, because I haven't seen them. My middle brother went back with my mother and that was the last time that I saw her, or my brother. I saw my oldest brother again, because he came to see me here in Minnesota. I left Mexico in 1926, from Tampico I came to the United States. It was about forty years, before I went back to visit. About three years

Jimenez: ago, in 1973, I went back to visit.

Moosbrugger: Did you visit any of your family when you went to Mexico in 1973?

Jimenez: Well, I didn't see, or know, any of my relatives. I had two brothers and one sister. My father died when I was seven years old. For years I didn't know or hear from them. My wife went to Mexico once before. The second time she and I went to Mexico, we visited my wife's family. I don't know anything about my family.

Moosbrugger: You have a big family here in the United States. Are you happy with them?

Jimenez: Yes. Look at the pictures on the wall, that's the only treasure I have saved.

Moosbrugger: What were some of the difficulties you have or had here in the United States?

Jimenez: Finding a job to make a living was hard. If you don't work, you don't know what it costs to live. I worked to make money for my family and home. I never had the opportunity to save money in a bank. When one didn't need something, the other one did! Imagine, I had to buy thirteen pairs of shoes every month, or month and a half! When we all gathered at the table, their favorite food was tortillas and beans. Their mother made tortillas, and they would pick them up like they were playing cards. People who don't have a family, really don't know what life is all about! I have been lucky. When all my family was at home, I would take the ones who could work with me to the fields. My name has never been on the "welfare" list. Now that I am disabled, I went to "welfare" to get food stamps. For two months, I got forty-two dollars worth, for ten dollars. They even took that away. I never depended on "welfare." What I earned, I have paid in state taxes.

Moosbrugger: You have earned everything you received?

Jimenez: I sacrificed myself for my family; so that they can be worthwhile to the country, or better yet the government, that they serve, in one way or

Jimenez: another. Anyway, I worked to raise my family. I paid everything I had to pay. I worked and showed them how to make a living. I am happy, because I know that none of my family has ever been in trouble with the law, or in prison.

Moosbrugger: You have taught your children to have respect for work and how to make a living. What are some of the values you taught them?

Jimenez: I taught them how to work, so that they can earn a living.

Moosbrugger: But isn't there something else, like respect for their parents, or the church?

Jimenez: Yes. That's all I can say. That's all I have left. The day I reach the final point, I will be six feet under the ground. But they will still be here.

Moosbrugger: Nevertheless, you have had rich expereiences.

Jimenez: It can be said that I have had many experiences. But I can't make reference to it. I know it, because I lived through it. If I had more time, I could remember everything.

Moosbrugger: Your philosophy is very beautiful. You have lived for your family. When you die, your life will continue in your children.

Jimenez: I was an orphan, and my story is very sad. My joy is that I overcame all obstacles and sacrifices that I had to make for my family. From where I came, only I know.

Moosbrugger: It has been a pleasure talking with you, and hearing some of your experiences and philosophy. Thank you very much.