

TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

ARTURO ZAMORA

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

Arturo Zamora, one of eleven children, was born in Benjamin, Texas in 1925. At the age of six he moved to Minnesota with his parents, where they did agricultural work, until going to work at Wilson Meat Packing Company in 1945. He has continued to work there up through the time of this interview. He has raised his family in Albert Lea. He has been active in community affairs. In addition to his employment at the Wilson Company, Arturo has opened and manages a Mexican restaurant in Albert Lea.

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 ARTURO ZAMORA

JULY 15, 1976

INTERVIEWER: GRANT MOOSBRUGGER

Moosbrugger: This is Grant Moosbrugger interviewing Mr. Arturo Zamora, at La Casa Zamora Restaurant in Albert Lea, Minnesota, on July 15, 1976, for the Mexican American History Project. Do I have your permission to interview you for the Mexican American History Project?

Zamora: Yes.

Moosbrugger: Could you start by telling us your name, where, and when you were born?

Zamora: My name is Arturo Zamora. I was born in Benjamin, Texas, on January 30, 1925.

Moosbrugger: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Zamora: There were eight brothers and three sisters. There are only six brothers left now.

Moosbrugger: Can you name them starting with the oldest?

Zamora: The oldest is Jesse; then Ophelia; Arturo; Joe; Pauline Oscar, now; Daniel; Johnny; Jacob; and Louise McCarthy.

Moosbrugger: Are any of them living in Minnesota now?

Zamora: Seven are in Minnesota and one in Phoenix, Arizona.

Moosbrugger: One in Phoenix and the rest in Minnesota. Did you move to Minnesota right from Texas?

Zamora: Yes, we moved from Texas in 1931, to come and work in the sugar beets.

Moosbrugger: What towns did you work in?

Zamora: Cloquet, Minnesota.

Moosbrugger: Was it 1931 when you settled in Minnesota?

Zamora: Yes, that's the first time we stayed here. Then in 1940, we went back to Texas in the winter time. We came back to Minnesota in the spring.

Moosbrugger: So, just for one year, in 1940, you decided to try Texas again? Then you came back to Minnesota and stayed?

Zamora: Right.

Moosbrugger: What town did your father settle in, in 1940, when he came back?

Zamora: In Hollandale. We bought a farm, which we still have. Then in 1945, I got married. I started working at Wilson's, and I have been there ever since.

Moosbrugger: Who works the farm now? Any of your brothers or yourself?

Zamora: No, we just rent it out.

Moosbrugger: Then you had some of your schooling in Minnesota, or was it mostly in Texas?

Zamora: Most of my schooling was in Mason City, Iowa. We used to go to Mason City, Iowa every winter. That's where I had my schooling, the little that I have.

Moosbrugger: Are your folks still living, or did they pass away?

Zamora: My dad passed away, but my mother is still living. She lives right behind my house.

Moosbrugger: Right here, in Albert Lea?

Zamora: Yes.

Moosbrugger: Are your brothers and sisters living elsewhere in the state, or mostly right here, in Albert Lea?

Zamora: One of them lives in Austin, one is in Hollandale, and one lives in St. Paul. The rest of them live close to town.

Moosbrugger: You got married in 1945. Who did you marry? Can you tell us about your family?

Zamora: I married Jenny Gaska. She was born and raised here. We have five children: three girls, and two boys. Two of the girls are married, and one boy is in the service in Korea. He is finishing four years in the Air Force. The other one just graduated from high school. He is the one that we have at home.

Moosbrugger: Where are your sons and daughters living now?

Zamora: One of them is in Minneapolis, one is in Maryland, and one of them is in South California.

Moosbrugger: You have a son in Missouri, then of course, your youngest son is still at home. Do you have any grandchildren?

Zamora: Yes. We have two boys and two girls. Freddy and Lisa Jimenez, and Bobby and Denise Rodriguez.

Moosbrugger: Are any of your grandchildren living around here, or are they out of town?

Zamora: No, they are in California and in Minneapolis.

Moosbrugger: Do you get to see them once in awhile?

Zamora: Yes.

Moosbrugger: You have been about thirty-one years, now, at Wilson's. Have you changed jobs from time to time at Wilson's?

Zamora: Yes. About twelve years ago, I moved from the hog-kill chain to piece work on a production basis. It's a better job and it pays better.

Moosbrugger: Regarding social life, have you been active in any clubs in town?

Zamora: Well, the only ones that I have been involved the most in, are; LULACS and Club Azteca. I also belong to the Knights of Columbus, here in town.

Moosbrugger: What year was it, approximately, that you started with Club Azteca?

Zamora: It must have been in 1947.

Moosbrugger: Then LULAC kind of took over after that?

Zamora: Well, they decided to go nation wide with LULAC. So most of the guys from here that belonged to Club Azteca, went with LULACS.

Moosbrugger: That would have been what year?

Zamora: About 1960 Or 1961.

Moosbrugger: Do you remember any of the old timers from the forties and early fifties that belonged to Club Azteca and are still around here, now?

Zamora: Well, there are just a few left. Do you want their names?

Moosbrugger: Yes.

Zamora: William Villareal, Jesse Zamora, Acosta, Joey Ibarra, Joe Rosales.

Moosbrugger: Have you been in the Knights of Columbus long?

Zamora: About four years.

Moosbrugger: Maybe we can mention your restaurant. You have a very nice restaurant here in Albert Lea. Can you tell me how long you have been in the restaurant business?

Zamora: It'll be seven years on November 9th, this year. I always had an idea that I wanted a Mexican Restaurant. It was kind of hard to convince my wife to go along with me, but she finally gave in and we opened the restaurant.

Moosbrugger: You never had any experience in this before?

Zamora: No. We didn't. We started from scratch.

Moosbrugger: Did you get any help from the family?

Zamora: Yes. My three brothers and I helped each other. That's the way we are still doing it.

Moosbrugger: Have you been in the same location all seven years?

Zamora: Yes, we have.

Moosbrugger: How about the Mexican heritage? This is primarily a Mexican Restaurant. Does the Mexican heritage play a significant role in your family life in any other way, besides the fact that you have a Mexican restaurant?

Zamora: Well, at home, we still like Spanish music and records. We like to go to Mexican dances whenever we have the chance.

Moosbrugger: Do you ever get back to visit Mexico or Texas?

Zamora: Yes. We go back there almost every two years. We have a lot of relatives in Texas and in Mexico on my dad's side, so we go back and visit them once in a while.

Moosbrugger: I guess your family, especially yourself, since you have been active in organizations, like LULAC and Club Azteca, have taken part in the observation of National Fiestas, like the Fifteenth and Sixteenth of September, so that your children know what they mean?

Zamora: Yes, we do. When my girls were at home, they always took part in the parade and the dances and songs that we sing.

Moosbrugger: Do you ever use the language in the home?

Zamora: Well, not too much. Kids here don't speak it. I have three of them that speak it, the other two don't speak it. They don't use it, I mean not that much, around here. But when we go to Texas, they try to pick it up from their cousins that live in Texas.

Moosbrugger: Have you had any experiences with discrimination in Minnesota? Do you have any significant feelings that people have mistreated you, or any of your family, for reasons of Mexican heritage?

Zamora: No, not really. I mean, there are some people, but we just ignore them. I don't think they mean it. They don't know what they are talking about. There is nothing that I could say, to make a case out of it.

Moosbrugger: Nothing that can make life miserable?

Zamora: No.

Moosbrugger: Did we remember to mention where your parents were from?

Zamora: No, we didn't. But my mother was born in Texas, some place around McEllen, and my dad was the only one that came from Mexico, some where around Piedras Negras. I don't know what town.

Moosbrugger: Thank you very much for the interview.

Zamora: Thank you!