

Anna Amaya
Narrator

Abner Arauza
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Abner Arauza's Office, Moorhead, Minnesota

Anna Amaya - **AA**
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AbA: There is a form that would authorize or approve usage whether it's oral or a written or published project for the Minnesota Historical Society and/or the Hjemskomst here locally in Moorhead, but I don't have the form. So, what I'll do is if we continue, if we don't finish today, or if not. I'll bring the form to you *para que me la firmes* [so you can sign it] when I do have it. I just don't have it with me right now. That way, we can get going.

AA: That's fine.

AbA: I'm going to get started. Again, just to repeat... take as little or as long as you want for each one of the questions. If we don't finish, we can get together later on.

AA: That's fine.

AbA: First, for the record... Obviously, a lot of this information I already know about you, but I will ask it so that we can have it in your own voice, so don't think why is he asking me that? He already knows. [chuckles] Please state your name.

AA: Anna Amaya.

AbA: Your age and date of birth?

AA: Age is fifty-three. Date of birth is 7-7-1957.

AbA: Where were you born?

AA: Here in Moorhead, Minnesota.

AbA: Your education level?

AA: Two years of college.

AbA: What was your major?

AA: I didn't really have one. I just took my generals first, yes.

AbA: Also, the name and the ethnicity of your spouse.

AA: His name is Armando Amaya, and he is Hispanic.

AbA: Where does he work? What does he do?

AA: He works part time. He works on driving for Mujeres Unidas here in Moorhead. He's a van driver for their classes that they have for the Hispanics here.

AbA: Tell me the number of children that you have.

AA: Four children.

AbA: This question is not here, but I want to hear it anyway. Tell me how many grandkids you have.

AA: We have twenty grandchildren, ten boys and ten girls. The oldest is seventeen and the youngest is five months.

AbA: Wow.

The names of your children? I won't ask you the names of your grandchildren but how about the names of your children? [chuckles]

AA: My children are Armando Amaya Junior, and he is thirty-six, and Annmarie Zepeda, Fernando Amaya, and Monica Amaya. Monica Banton she is now.

AbA: Tell me their education level and their occupations, what they're doing, each of them.

AA: Armando Junior, he finished his school through GED [General Equivalency Degree]. We didn't know at the time. He just said, "Mom, my cousin is going to graduate. Do you want to come and see him?" We said, "Yes." To our surprise, he was up on the stage. He was going to school by himself and got his GED. Right now, he's a bounty hunter and he is... Oh, what do they call it? A bail bondsman.

AbA: So a bounty hunter, and not like animals but like people that skip out on bail bonds?

AA: Yes, Bail Bonds. If they skip their bail, he goes after them.

AbA: You've got to be really brave to do that.

AA: Yes.

AbA: Okay, so that's...

AA: That's my oldest, Armando. Then Annmarie, she works at Kmart. Let me tell you this: Armando has two boys. He has two children. Then Annmarie, she has five kids, and she works at Kmart, and she works part time at Mujeres Unidas, too. Fernando, he's got eight children. He's unemployed right now, but he just started a job working at a junkyard. He got laid off. He worked at GO Cars, so he is just waiting for GO to call him back. Then Monica, she has five children and she is adult foster care for my father-in-law.

AbA: Oh. Okay. Tell me about your parents.

AA: My mom and dad... My dad's name was Antonio Lugo. He passed away like six years ago. My mom is Cecilia Lugo. She's in a nursing home here in Moorhead. When they came up here, they came up here to give us an education. They, at that point, decided this was the best place for an education for their children. They started coming up to Iowa and here as migrants.

One year, this farmer said, "You know, you don't have to go back and forth. You can stay here and live here." My dad said, "I don't have a house. I don't have anything. We will just go back and forth." He said, "I will buy you the house and every year when you work, you can pay me." So the farmer, he bought my dad the house. Every year when my dad would work and my older brothers and sisters would work, he would take out so much money for their house. He bought them a house in Glyndon, Minnesota, and that's where we lived until my parents got older and they couldn't work anymore. So, then, I took my mom and dad and they came to live with me, because of health reasons for themselves, and it was too far for him to be driving. I took care of my mom and dad for like about six years. My dad passed away and I had my mother for another year. Then, my brothers from California came and they said, "She should be someplace else," so they moved to my oldest brother.

AbA: In California?

AA: No, here in Moorhead. She was with my brother for nine months. A whole bunch of stuff happened that was quite involved and everything, so at the end of nine months, they called us to the hospital and said, "Your sister-in-law can't take care of your mom anymore. You need to decide what you need to do." It was me and my two older sisters, and I said to them, "What do you guys want to do?" One of them said, "Well, I work," and the other one said, "I work." I said, "I worked all the time and I took care of mom. But since you guys took her out of my home, I don't know what to do." They needed an answer, so we put her in a nursing home, and she's been in a nursing home for the last five years. But every day or every other day, I go visit my mom. I go and I see her sometimes at nine o'clock, ten o'clock at night, but I'm there to see my mom. She's on dialysis now, which is really, really hard for us. I think I'm the one that goes and spends a lot of time with her. My sisters live out of town, so they only come and see her like on Sundays or maybe once a week or twice a week at the most. But I go see my mom almost every other day.

AbA: You said that your parents liked the area and wanted to raise a family here. Why?

AA: When they got here and we would go to school just part time, just the end of the summer or whatever, they saw how much education we were getting. You know, the education was so important to them. They didn't want us to be like them, migrating back and forth. They wanted us to finish school, to go to college, to do something with our lives. At that point, they said, "This is the best place." Even when we would go to Iowa from here, they figured this was the best place. They liked the place. They liked the way we were getting our grades at school, and this is where they made their home.

AbA: So their decision was driven by the family, your brothers and sisters getting a good education?

AA: Yes. During the migrant season, they worked every summer in the fields, but when school...we were here. It was like this was our place.

AbA: When was that? What year was that?

AA: I know my mom and dad have been here over fifty years. Actually, my parents were one of the first migrant families that ever stayed up here. They were one of the first families that ever made like—how can I say it?—a group.

AbA: An organization?

AA: An organization. They were one of the first families. There was only like maybe six families in their generation that stayed. Those six families were the ones that made that group.

AbA: What was the name of the group?

AA: I'm trying to think. I think it was Latinos of the North. I really can't remember. This was such a long time ago. They used to meet...it's now the Mexican Village. When I got married, the people that owned the Mexican Village, they were Mexicanos and they were my *padrinos* (god parents/sponsors) for my wedding. They were part of the group, the Garcias from Fargo, and there were like three families from Fargo and, then, my parents and, then, like another family from Glyndon that were in the very first organization.

AbA: So there were, actually, for that time, quite a few families around.

AA: Yes. Then, my mom, she worked for the first organization that started helping out the Mexicanos here, the migrants. She would work at the place where they would have clothes and they would have like a food pantry, and if they would have any jobs. That's what my mom did. My mom would do that. But every year, our house was full of people.

AbA: [chuckles]

AA: Every year. There was never a year that we did not have a migrant family or a family stay with us. If they came to our house and they were going to stay at the park, my mom would go bring them home. They were there until they found an apartment or they found a place to live.

AbA: Do you remember the name of that organization, the first one you said started to provide services?

AA: I don't remember what it was. I can ask my mom. Like I said, it was such a long time ago. Yes, I remember that she used to work with them a lot.

That's where I met my husband, as a matter of fact. My husband's family went there to get help and it just so happened that they started talking something about music and my brother was a drummer. They started talking about music and my mother-in-law said, "My son's a musician. They play." So my mom said, "Why don't you guys come on over and maybe with my son drumming and your children, maybe they can practice or something." That's why I met my husband. From that day, yes. My brother only knew how to play English music and my mom wanted him to learn our way, the Spanish, so she figured since they were Spanish musicians, they could teach him, but she lost two daughters in the process, because me and my sister both got married.

AbA: To the musicians? [chuckles]

AA: Yes.

AbA: Well, maybe she gained.

AA: Yes. To this day, my husband is still playing and our children are playing now, too.

AbA: Great. That was going to be one of the other questions, how did you and Armando became your own family.

AA: They were migrants. They would migrate every year. They would come back and forth. It wasn't until that year that they needed something and they went to where my mom was and that's how they got to know each other. I was fourteen when my husband asked me to marry him.

AbA: *Fourteen?*

AA: I was fourteen years old. He left me engaged for year. My dad was totally against it because I was my dad's favorite. There was eleven of us. I've got ten brothers and sisters. My dad was totally, totally against it, but my mom said, "If you want to marry her, you come back next year and you can marry her." The reason for that was because she told my dad, "If we don't let her get married through the church, the right way, he will come and take her." My dad took my mom and she didn't get to see her mom *for ten years*. She said, "I don't want that for my daughter. If

they want to wait and next year when they come back, we'll make their wedding." I got married here in Moorhead at the Catholic Church, at Saint Joseph's.

AbA: Interesting. So you had to wait a year?

AA: Yes. It was after the migrant season. They went to Texas. My mom probably figured in that year, he'll either get married down there and you'll forget about him. No, when he came back, we did all the process. At that time, the priest that was teaching at Saint Joseph's was from Mexico and down there, you can get married young. But we didn't realize that I was way too young. So what happened, we had to get the bishop from Crookston to give us that it was okay, that we were doing every thing right. We had to go to classes. Yes. So we've been married for thirty-seven years.

AbA: Wow. So he wanted to marry you at fourteen, but married you at fifteen?

AA: Yes. He left me engaged at fourteen. He was nineteen. I was fifteen and he was twenty-one when we got married.

AbA: So instead of a *quinceañera* (a coming out ceremony for 15 year-old Latinas), you had a real wedding?

AA: Yes. I got married. I had like my *quinceañera*. I had like twelve bridesmaids. I had a big, big wedding.

AbA: Wow.

You were born here?

AA: Yes.

AbA: Were all your brothers and sisters born here?

AA: No. My three oldest brother and sisters, my two sisters and my brother, they were born in Texas.

AbA: The three oldest ones?

AA: Yes, the three oldest ones. Actually, between my oldest sister and my third sister, my mom lost six children. There would have been seventeen of us, but she lost six children in between that time. So when she had the three older ones and she lost those six in between, that's when they came up to Iowa and, then, from there, they would come up here to Minnesota. From that time, they never went back to live in Texas. To me, that was a big thing that my mom and dad did, that they left all their roots, everything, to give us that education. That's why education to me is so important with my kids, because I saw how much my mom and dad wanted that education for us. I didn't finish my school. I went to GED because I got married and my husband

was a migrant. At that time, it was like you're not going to go to school. That's one thing my mom told me, "If you get married, I want you just to promise me to get your education, get your diploma." That was one thing I told her, "I will get my diploma." I went through the YES [Youth Exchange and Study] Program and I went through the GED and I got my GED and then I enrolled in Moorhead State and went to college for two years.

AbA: Great.

Where did your parents live in Texas?

AA: In Donna.

AbA: Donna?

AA: Yes.

AbA: Oh, okay. I've been there.

AA: Yes, yes. That's where they lived, in Donna, Texas.

AbA: Hot and sandy.

AA: Yes, very hot. The first time I went down there, I think I was like ten years old. I remember going down there and I was so scared, I wouldn't get out of the van. My mom was like "Get out." "I'm not getting out."

AbA: [laughter]

AA: She goes, "Why not?" I said, "There's too many Mexicans here. I'm not getting out." I was scared. I really was scared.

AbA: [laughter]

AA: I'd never seen that many... We were the only Hispanics in school. Actually, at that time, there was so much prejudice in the school that our time in school...

AbA: Here or there?

AA: Here. Our time was just terrible. But one thing my brothers and my sisters as we were growing up, said, "Whatever happens in school stays with us. You don't tell mom and dad nothing, because they gave up all their background, they gave up their family, they gave up everything to get us an education. No matter what we have to go through, we're going to show them that we're going to succeed by getting our education." We went through some really hard times at school, but my parents never knew because we never wanted to break their heart by telling them that, because we were the only Spanish people in the school, that we were getting

treated so bad by our classmates. It's something that my parents never knew until they were like...when everybody got married and left the house and, now, when my dad was still alive, we would tell them. He says, "Why didn't you guys ever tell us?" It's like, "Because we didn't want to hurt you. You wanted to give a good us an education. You guys sacrificed so much for us that we did the sacrifice..." But it wasn't until we were going to school that our brothers and sisters would tell us, "What things happen in school stays with *us*, just *us*, not mom and dad."

That's what made me, I think, a stronger person with my kids going to school. If I had problems with my kids going to school, I wasn't going to be like my parents. I needed to know. I would go to the school. I would go straight to the principal's office and make sure that everything that possibly was going to go right with my kids is going to go right. I had a couple of confrontations with the teachers and staff here.

AbA: Like what?

AA: Like when my son was going to school, my oldest son, he was suspended. Armando was suspended from school with three kids. All the kids would hang around my house, all the kids from town here. When he came home, it was a Friday. I got home and school was already closed, and he says, "I got suspended." I go, "Why?" He said, "Because me and my two friends were walking down the hall." I said, "And...?" He goes, "That's considered a gang." I said, "Excuse me!" He says, "Yes, we got suspended." All three of them got suspended because, at that time, no more than two Mexican kids could walk down the halls together; otherwise, they were considered a gang. I said, "Really?" Monday morning, I called in to work and said, "I will be in to work late." I went to the principal. I said, "I want to know why my son and these two boys are suspended." "They were walking down the hall and they can't walk like that. No more than two." I said, "Okay, this is what you're telling me?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Okay." I sat there. When the bell rang, I went back in her office. I said, "I want all these kids here suspended, all of them." She goes, "Why?" I said, "There's more than two white people walking down the halls together. That's considered a gang. In your eyes, that's considered a gang. In my eyes, that's considered a gang. Either you suspend all those kids or you un-suspend these three Spanish kids because they were walking down the hall together." At that point, I said, "I'm not leaving until you decide what you're going to do. Either these boys go back in school or all those kids get suspended." She didn't have a choice.

My kids were going through a really hard time in school, but, you know, I never let my guard down. To this day, my kids...I always tell them, "If your kids have trouble in school, you have that right to go in and fight for your kids." And they do. I mean they know there's some things going on and they go and they stand up for their kids.

AbA: What age was Armando at that time?

AA: He was in seventh grade. He was going to middle school.

You know, it wasn't until now that he's older that it was just something he told me and I'm like "What?" He says, "Yes, I used to get like a school suspension and they would put me like in this

tiny little room, like a little closet. I go, “Why?” He goes, “Oh, maybe if I said something wrong or if I came in late or something into class. They would put me in this little tiny room.”

It all happened because there was an article in the paper like about three years ago about this boy that was put aside for punishment.

AbA: I remember that.

AA: This boy happened to be my cousin’s son.

AbA: Oh.

AA: So we got into talking about this and I was telling Armando, my son, about this, and he goes, “Well, I don’t think that’s right. I remember when they did that to me.” That’s when it all started, but he never told me that that was going on with him.

AbA: Wow.

AA: Yes. He says, “I remember.” He’s the same way, you know. His kid...if anything happens, he’s right there at the school. He married a white girl. He’s got kids. His kids are like in all sports. They’re in everything. He says, “Mom, they have to be into that. They have to be in sports. They have to be into all this stuff because that way they don’t get picked on.” His kids are never picked on. His two boys went to Spanish immersion from kindergarten. They’ve gone to Spanish immersion. They know more Spanish than I do, the correct way. They really do. They can read it. They can write it. When they were little, they would come, “Hey, Grandma, can you help me out with this?” “Yes, okay, fine.” Then, when they started getting a little bit older, and said, “Grandma, what about this word?” “I’d have to say, “I don’t know what that is. In our language...”

AbA: [chuckles]

AA: But they showed them the correct way. The way we were taught, it was just listening to my parents. It was Tex-Mex.

AbA: What do you speak at home?

AA: English. Yes, we raised my granddaughter for ten years. She lived with us, and we never thought about speaking or teaching her Spanish, like just sitting there talking to her in Spanish. We always talked in English. So she knows what we’re talking about but she can’t answer us back in Spanish. I told my kids now, “With the little ones, you guys teach them Spanish, because that is something that is so important. It’s just so important.”

AbA: Are any of them teaching Spanish to their kids?

AA: My oldest one, Armando. Yes, well, because they're in Spanish immersion. But the other ones... sometimes, we talk in Spanish and the kids go, "What are you talking about?" That's when I tell my daughter, "You need to start talking in Spanish." They're all Spanish, except for my youngest one. Her husband isn't Spanish, but the other two, they're Spanish. I keep telling them, "Talk in Spanish when you guys are home."

AbA: So out in public, you speak...?

AA: English.

AbA: How about if you're out like shopping and you run into a Mexican family?

AA: It just depends on what they ask us. If they talk in English, we talk in English.

Actually, Monica, my daughter, she wrote that poem, "Colored." She was twelve when she wrote this poem. She wrote it because she was going through such a hard time in school being a colored person. She and this friend went to a restaurant, and their mom dropped them off. She said there was an older couple there like in their fifties, sixties. She said they were sitting there and when she and her friend started talking, this couple was next to them, and they started talking about Mexican people. They just started talking about Mexican people. They were like getting madder and madder within themselves, the couple. She said, "They finally just got up and left. They didn't even finish their food, Mom." She came home. She was surprised. She didn't know what to think of it. I looked at her and I said, "Monie." She said, "What, Mom?" "Just think of the power that you have." She said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "All you had to do was walk in the restaurant, sit down, talk to your friend, and this other couple that doesn't know nothing about you got up and left their food because you were colored, because you are a Mexican person. Think about the power that you have without even speaking to them, without even knowing who they were. Just *imagine that those people get upset. Can you imagine? You be proud of who you are always. Always, always be proud of who you are and what you are. You never, ever try to be somebody that you're not.*"

I named her Monica. When she was going to school, she would call herself Moh-nee-kuh. She said, "Mom, I'm Spanish. Why did you call me Mahn-i-kuh? That's a white name. Why didn't you call me Moh-nee-kuh like a Spanish name?" I'm like, "Well, I guess so." She would always tell the teachers, "My name is Moh-nee-kuh," and the teachers would get upset with her. When they would call her, she wouldn't answer. "Monica Amaya," and she wouldn't answer until they called her, "Moh-nee-kuh." Then, she said, "It's just like if I turn around and I call you by a different name, would you answer me?" I'm like, "No." She goes, "Exactly. My name is Moh-nee-kuh. Even though it's spelled like Monica (Mahn-i-kuh), it's Monica (Moh-nee-kuh)." So she went through a lot of issues with being... She wanted to be herself. She wanted to be the Spanish person that she is.

That's why she wrote that poem. She read it at the courthouse to all the commissioners one day. She said, "Mom, can I come with you." I'm like, "Yes." She goes, "Can I read my poem?" I was like, "Yes." When she wrote that poem, they put it in the newspaper and, then, they put it on like

a top radio show. Then, they started saying, “Well, this girl couldn’t have written it. It must have been her mom,” because of the way she wrote it. This was all her feelings. She was very good in writing. To this day, she’s very good in writing. I keep telling her, “Mohnie, you should really sit down and start doing your writing, because you have so much talent in your writing.” But with five kids now, I guess she doesn’t have the time.

Then I got a call from Atlanta, Georgia. Somehow that poem ended up down there, and they sent it to us on a plaque and they asked if they could put it a museum.

We said, “Yes, that’s fine.” But, we just thought that it was just a prank call. Pretty soon we get this plaque, but we don’t know what museum it’s sitting in. But we have her poem on a plaque.

AbA: Wow, that’s quite an honor.

AA: Yes. When she went in to the commissioners, everybody was just like... They were amazed that she wrote this poem. Like she said, “This was how I felt. This is how I feel.” She’s very creative with her writing.

One day, she came to where I work at Social Services. It was a year when we had a lot of transients in town. She walked in and she was waiting for me to get off of work and she goes, “Can I get a pen or pencil?” I go, “Yes.” So she sat down and comes back in like five minutes. She goes, “Mom, read this.” She wrote this poem about homeless people. I said, “Where did you write this?” She said, “Just sitting here watching those people that don’t have any place to go, and they’re homeless.” So I had some lady from Churches United come in, and I had the poem up on my wall. She looked at it and she read it, and she goes, “Where did you get that?” I said, “Oh, my daughter wrote it.” She said, “Can I get a copy of that to put at the shelter?” I said, “Sure.” I gave her a copy and she put it at the shelter.

AbA: Maybe she should put a book together.

AA: I have a lot of her writings. I have a lot of her writings that she has done...poems.

She wrote this poem for me at work and she just gave it to me. I just re-spelled everything, typed it up for her correctly and everything. Then, I showed it to some of my coworkers. Everybody goes, “Anna, are you okay?” “Like, yes, why?” The way she wrote the poem, they thought I had cancer or that I was dying because of the way she wrote the poem. She called it “Mom’s Passing.” I never looked at it that way, but everybody at my work took it that she wrote it because I was, you know, going to die. But it had nothing to do with that. I can tell you one thing with that poem, I’ve had my friends at work that they’ve lost their parents, they’ve lost their mom, their dad, their sister and all I do is just change instead of mom’s going—it’s called “Mom’s Going”—I put like “Sister’s Going,” or “Father’s Going.” I just take that one word out and I give it to my coworkers. There was one girl that lost her sister, and she had the poem with her sister’s picture on her desk. It’s a very powerful poem.

AbA: I’d like to read it.

AA: Yes, I'll bring you a copy and I'll bring a copy of that one poem she got, "Colored." I still have her newspaper clippings and everything.

AbA: Let's go back a little bit here in history. When your family first moved here, you weren't born yet, so, obviously, you're not going to remember some of the very first things. But of the things that you first became aware of, what kind of adjustments did your family have to make when they moved from Donna to Moorhead?

AA: I remember when we lived in Iowa, my dad used to work on a farm. He used to work with cows on a dairy farm. When that would finish, then we would come up here during the summer. I think the adjustment for my parents was learning to speak English and learning how to get along up here. I remember going to Hornbacher's which used to be a SuperValu near Walgreens where that Loopy's [Dollar] Store is. I remember that this farmer got him credit and I remember going to the store and this farmer got this credit for my dad. At the end of the year, the farmer would tell my dad, "Now we're going to go pay this." I think one adjustment for my parents was to learn English and just learning to be around different people, to learn English and to learn different ways. Things weren't the same. Things aren't the same like they are in Texas, the way they are here. I notice that even now. I go around in Texas and they pick me out just like that. When I walk in the store and I say, "I want to buy that," they're like, "You're not from here, are you?" I'm like, "No." They say, "You don't have an accent. You don't speak like that." They can pick us out really... just by opening our mouth and talking, they know that we're not from the south. They ask us, "Where are you guys from?" "Where you guys born?" I think that's where my parents had to do a lot of adjustment - just learning the English language and learning the ways of the people up here.

AbA: Give me an example.

AA: Well, back then, there was no Spanish Mass. They had to go to church. You know they were Catholic. They had to go to church and they would go to church in English, but they really didn't understand. This was so different for them. We do things different than a Catholic church here does.

I think for my dad it was like... When he would haul the sugar beets, like the writing, he didn't know how to write. When he hauled the sugar beets, I remember I would go with my dad all the time. They had to fill out paperwork. He didn't know how to write. Everything he learned, he learned by looking. He was an excellent mechanic, but he never went to school. He could listen to your car and tell you what was wrong with it where a mechanic would have to go put all the instruments on. My dad wouldn't. My dad could take a car apart and put it all back together, but he never went to school. He wasn't educated and neither was my mom. They never went to school. That's why education was so important for them for us to get it, because they didn't want us to struggle the way they had to struggle.

AbA: I'm curious...so how did he do the reports or the forms?

AA: They already knew him where he would go. So they would send down this clipboard and he would put the clipboard on there and they would just fill it out for him and bring it down and he would just sign his name.

AbA: Okay. So it was a lot of trust.

AA: Yes.

AbA: Both ways.

AA: Yes. The farmer, he trusted my dad with everything he had. Actually, the farmer wanted to adopt two of my brothers and my sister because they didn't have kids. They told my dad, "If you let us take them, we will give them the education. We will give them everything." But my mom said, "No." We lived right next door to the farmer, but my mom said, "No." In those days, even now, you're not just going to give someone your child even though they live right next door to you, you know.

AbA: Sure.

AA: My dad said, "Well, you know, we're right here. You can educate them," because he knew he couldn't afford college. The farmer was willing to put them through college and my mom said, "No, and she said no." So my dad said, "Well, I'm sorry, I guess we can't."

AbA: What experiences did your family have, obviously that you heard about because you weren't born but later on? What kind of experiences did they have in moving here, and what kind of adjustments? What did they experience when they moved here?

AA: I think it was just the culture shock that there were no Spanish people. That in itself was an experience. There weren't that many. I'm thinking there were five families, or six families. That was all. So that was a big difference. They had to adjust to a white culture, which was very hard, you know.

It wasn't like taking a driving test down in Texas. You go down in Texas... My dad didn't read but he had his license. Up here, you had to read. You had to take your test. I don't know how my dad did it to get his test to get his license, but he had his license. How he had his jobs... He used to work for the Silver Line [Boat] Company. How he got his jobs...

AbA: The boats?

AA: Yes. I don't know how... Maybe just because it was all just like general labor, they told him what to do. That was his job.

I'm thinking one of the main things was having them come up here and just not have a lot of Spanish people up here. I think that was really a big thing for my parents.

AbA: Do you or other members of your family keep contact with family in Texas? Or you don't have family in Texas?

AA: Yes, my mom has all her family. I think we only met one of my dad's brothers—two brothers. One lived up here in Wisconsin and the other one lived in Texas. I've only met them one time.

AbA: Each one of them?

AA: Yes. My mom, she still has her brother in Texas and her two sisters. When my parents lived with me, we always made a trip. Mando (nickname for Armando) would always drive. I would take all my vacation time and my sick time to do everything with my parents. So once a year we would go, or every other year, to Mexico to see my grandma, my mom's mom, and her sisters and her brothers. We would go as a family.

I have a lot of pictures of my kids growing up with my parents, because it was like they lived with us, so all our vacation and everything was around them. They went to the birthday parties. They went to where we would go with our kids. They were there. They kind of helped me raise my kids. When I got married, I was a migrant, too, because my husband would still come back and forth.

AbA: Oh, okay.

AA: Finally, one day, it just snapped. My dad would get off of work at five o'clock at this Silver Line [Boat] Company. By the time he got home, my mom had the car packed. She had food ready to go. They would take off to Texas to see me, and he would be back on Monday at eight o'clock in the morning.

AbA: Wow.

AA: I was so far away and I was the only one that was far away. All of a sudden, I'd open my door and there were my parents.

AbA: So on weekends, they'd go down there and back?

AA: A lot of times they went back. I think that's why I feel that it was my responsibility to take care of my parents when they got older because they did a lot of that traveling to see me. One time, I called my mom and I told her I had gone to the hospital and the next thing I know, she was there. She was there for the birth of Fernando.

My oldest son, when I had him, I didn't have anybody around. My husband wasn't there. My mother-in-law wasn't there. Nobody was there. He just went and left me at the hospital. That was it. I didn't see him until I was ready to be released. A fifteen-year-old kid with no support, *never*, ever knowing what it is to have a child or go into labor, and I was in labor for twenty-four hours,

and, then, just have my husband come pick me up. That's the way my husband was. They were brought up the Spanish way, the old way, you know.

The first seven years of my marriage, the first ten years of my marriage, they were the hardest years of my life. I didn't know how to drive. I didn't know how to go shopping by myself because my mother-in-law... When my husband would get paid, my mother-in-law, she would go and buy the food because we lived with her. I didn't know what it was like to go buy clothes. If I needed something, she would buy it. I never knew what it was like to go and buy something for myself or for my kids, for my family, for my little ones, because everything that they needed, she would buy. My husband would get paid and she'd take the check. We lived with them. So it was really, really hard.

Finally, one day, I said, "This is not the life that my parents wanted me to have. I promised my mom and my dad I was going to get an education. I promised them that if I got married, I was going to do what they left their home for, to get an education, to have a good job, to better myself because that's what they sacrificed for." Finally, one day, I just woke up and I told my husband, "You know what? With or without you, I'm going back home. You can stay with your parents, but I'm going back home. I'm going to go get my education." My husband didn't want me to go to school. He was so jealous, like, "You don't need to go to school. You're already married. You don't need that education." Like I said, it just took me a long time to really realize what I was missing. I just told him one day, "I'm going back home."

We came back here. We got a place and my husband got a good job with Steiger Tractors.

AbA: I remember.

AA: He got a good job and we got a trailer house not far from there. Not even a month into his job, all of a sudden, I heard a knock on the door and here's my mother-in-law and my father-in-law.

AbA: [chuckles]

AA: I'm like, "What are you guys doing here?" They go, "Armando called and said he wanted to go back to Texas, so we're here to take you guys back." I am like ... I was pregnant with my third...

AbA: Were they from Donna, also?

AA: No. They were from Crystal City.

AbA: Oh.

AA: So I was pregnant with Fernando and all I asked my husband was, "Let me go spend this night with my mom and my dad?" He wouldn't let me go. He said, "No." I'm like, "I just want to go spend some time with my mom and my dad if you're going to take me down to Texas again."

He was like, "No." So I called my mom. I said, "Mom, my mother-in-law and father-in-law are here and we're going to Texas, and Mando won't let me go see you." I didn't know how to drive. She's like, "Well, are you guys going to come over here and say, 'Goodbye?'" I said, "I don't know." Then, when we finally.... They said, "Yes." They just threw everything in their pickup. They just threw all my stuff in their pickup. They didn't.... Everything was just thrown in the pickup. I'm like, holy... We went over to my mom's and my mom made supper. I remember having supper with my mom and my dad. It was the hardest thing to say, "Goodbye" to them again, you know. So we said, "Goodbye."

I couldn't figure... I said, "Armando, why can't we just stay here? It's already late." He goes, "No, we gotta get going." My mother-in-law says, "No, we're going to get going." We were not even fifty miles out of town, they decided to stop and sleep! I'm like, "Armando, for that, we could have just stayed with my mom and slept there." He's like, "No." I didn't know that his brother was there and his brother had had like a restraining order from his wife here in town, so that's the reason that we left. When we drove those fifty miles, he was there in the motel, so we just stayed there.

We were down there like maybe, I would say, nine months and my husband still was very strict with me. I still didn't know how to drive, didn't know... I would say, "Can I call my parents?" He would say, "No. No, you can't call them." So there would be times I wouldn't talk to my parents like for two weeks, three weeks.

Finally, one day, he goes, "Do you want to go back home?" I said, "Yes." He goes, "Call your mom and dad. If they want us to go, they can come and get us." So I called my mom and dad. I said, "Mom, Mando said if you want to come get us, we'll go back home to Minnesota." They were there by the next day. They were there.

AbA: They drove through the night.

AA: Yes. My dad just got off work and my mom was ready. She was like, "You know what? Anna's going to come home with the kids, so let's go." So they took off to go and get us. My brother drove his truck. My mom drove the station wagon. When we were going to leave, I wanted to pack my stuff, and my husband says, "No. If you want to go back home, you're not taking nothing. My brother is going to stay in our house," that we were renting. He goes, "He's going to stay and everything is going to stay with him." I was so upset because I had babysat. I remember I had bought this rug. All I wanted was to bring my rug, because that was something I bought myself, the first thing I ever bought. My husband wouldn't let me bring it. I was crying and crying and my mom goes, "What's wrong?" I said, "I can't take my rug, Mom. I want my rug." So she and my brothers, they rolled it up and they threw it in the truck. She goes, "You're taking your rug. What about all your stuff?" I said, "No, Mando says it's all going to stay, because his brother is going to stay here in this house." She goes, "Oh, he's going to stay here?" I remember her going in my cupboard and grabbing all the flour and all the rice and threw it all over the house. She goes, "If they want to keep this house and they want to keep all your stuff, they can clean it." And she threw everything all over. My mom was so upset because I could not bring nothing with me.

Then, we get in the car and, pretty soon, here we take off and I'm just crying and crying. Mom said, "You've got to be quiet." I said, "Mom, I can't." Here, my husband told me, "If we're going to go back home, then my son is staying here with my mom because you're taking me back over there." So he took my son out of my arms, took him into my mother-in-law's house.

AbA: Ohhh.

AA: We drove maybe, I would say, a good twenty miles and I just cried and cried.

AbA: Was that Armando?

AA: Yes. I just cried and cried. My mom, she dimmed the lights and my brother stopped. She goes, "I'll be right back. You wait right here." She turned around. She took off. We were going like eighty, ninety miles an hour. She went back, parked right in front of the house. She walked in the house and she says to my mother-in-law, "*Comadre*, we forgot one thing." (*Comadre* means co-mother.) She grabbed my son, came back and opened the door and she gave him to me and goes, "Here. *Now* we're complete. Now we can go back home." And we came home.

But it took my husband a long time to adjust that this is not the way we were going to live, going back and forth or under like the way he was brought up real strict, you know that macho man thing and what I say goes. No, this is the way... Once we came here, little by little, he started noticing that, here, it's like everybody works. The wife works. The man works. And everything is more equal. Little by little, he started adjusting, you know. So that's when we decided to stay. We would go down and visit. We'd go visit his family and we'd come back up. We just decided to stay up here because he saw the difference and he saw the education that the kids were getting. That's when we decided to stay.

AbA: How old were you at the time?

AA: Oh, I think I was twenty. Mandito (diminutive or affectionate nickname for Armando) he must have been a year, two years old.

AbA: You were about twenty at the time?

AA: Yes. It was just a long process.

When I came up here, I thought, you know what, I need to learn how to drive. My kids were playing around and my husband had been out drinking, and we lived like in a one little bedroom house, and I had three kids and me and Mando. They were jumping around, playing around. We lived on Seventeenth Street. We had a pull out couch for the kids. I was telling them not to be jumping around. Armando and Ann were playing and she fell and she cut her eye, and her eye just started gushing with blood. I was only from Seventeenth Street to Eleventh Street, six blocks away from the hospital. Could I get in the car and drive her? No, because I didn't know how to drive. So I got in the car and drove a half a block to my friend's house and had her drive me the

rest of the way. At that point, I said, “This is not going to happen again.” That was the day that I decided I needed to do stuff for myself. I needed to learn to drive. I needed to finish my school. I needed to do things for me and for my family, because I couldn’t depend on my husband all the time. I never knew if I was going to end up with him or if he was going to leave me, whatever. So, at that point, I decided to learn to drive. So that next day, I started learning how to drive.

AbA: So you were twenty. How old was Armando?

AA: Twenty-five. He’s five years older than me.

AbA: So you had to make your own adjustments in moving here?

AA: Yes.

AbA: You were born and raised here so you actually didn’t start migrating back and forth until after you got married.

AA: Yes...but we migrated when I was still younger with my parents when they went from Iowa to Minnesota, but I never got to work.

AbA: Okay.

AA: I never had to work. Before I got married, I didn’t have to work either. All my older brothers and sisters worked, but my job was to help keep the house clean. That was my job. So when I started working as a migrant, it was after I got married. My mom told me, “What you didn’t do when you were at home, you’re doing now, working in the fields.” I remember planting onions from sunup to sundown for two dollars a row. We’re talking two dollars a row and it would take us half a day to do one row, because you were crawling on your hands and knees. You were putting the onions in this stupid row, you know. I remember that. It was like...and *piscando el chile* [picking green peppers]. I never had to do that when I was with my parents before I got married.

AbA: Did you also plant or just harvest?

AA: We just harvested. Then, in the winter time, when we were down in the winter time, he would work in the cotton gin.

AbA: Before you got married, you would go back and forth, but you wouldn’t go all the way to Texas? You’d go just to Iowa?

AA: Just to Iowa and from Iowa to here, to Minnesota.

AbA: Was there a reason why you went to Iowa and then return?

AA: Because there was that dairy farmer and dad would work on that dairy farm.

AbA: Because he had sure work, a sure job.

AA: Yes. When his job ended there and it was summer time up here, then we would come up here and my brothers and sisters would work. Then, my oldest brothers and sisters, they actually got to haul sugar beets, too. See, I'm right in the middle. I've got five older brothers and sisters and I got five younger brothers and sisters, so I was right smack in the middle.

[break in the interview]

AA: My mother-in-law, *ya se casó otra vez con uno de Mexico*. [My mother-in-law married again, to a man from Mexico.]

She still works picking pecans. He works on a farm, but she still does that, if there's work to do.

AbA: Down in Texas?

AA: Yes. Like if there is a job for them to do like in fields, she still works.

AbA: Would that be in Donna or Crystal City?

AA: That's close to Brownwood, Texas, in De Leon. It's a little town. It's called a pecan capital of the world or something. They have a lot of pecans.

AbA: What do you consider Latino cultural traditions? How do you define them or describe them?

AA: To me, it's like *quinceañeras* (Coming out ceremonies for 15 year-old Latinas), the Spanish music, just keeping the Spanish language, you know, in your family. Having the parties with the *compadres* and *comadres*. (Co-fathers and co-mothers. A special relationship as a result of sponsorship in ceremonies rather than blood kinship.)

Doing stuff with my parents. Like I said, even now, when we go down to Texas, you know... When my dad died that year, we were going to take my mom to go see my grandma. My dad said, "Mando, you drive. I'll pay all the *gastos* (expenses)." I said, "I'll take all my vacation time, Dad." He said, "Okay." But we had said that we were going to take my mom to go see Grandma. He died in August. We were going to go in November and he passed away in August. So when he passed away, my mom felt that our vacation was done. She was never going to see her mom again. When my dad passed away, I took all my brothers and sisters and I sat them at my house, and we opened up all the cards. With all the money that my mom got, I said, "Mom, you still want to go visit Grandma. You have this money. We don't have the money to go, but Mando will still drive. I will still use my vacation time. You can use this money. So you can go see your mom, if you want to go see her." She said, "Really?" I said, "Yes." So we did; we took her down in November, and thank God we did, because in May of that following year, my grandma passed away.

AbA: Oh, one last time.

AA: Yes. She was ninety-three years old when she passed away.

AbA: So the traditions in the family, the relationships in the family?

AA: The relationship is with us, with me, it's my mom's aunts, my mom's brother, his wife. Her brother has already passed away, but still going down there to see them, staying in contact with my cousins and, like I said, going to Spanish dances and going to church, you know. Now, they have a Spanish Mass. Just going to church and like celebrating La Virgen de Guadalupe (the Virgin of Guadalupe), celebrating all those traditions that we have. When we were younger, I remember doing that stuff, you know.

AbA: Have you retained any of those cultural traditions?

AA: Yes.

AbA: Which ones?

AA: Like celebrating La Virgen de Guadalupe, still going to all the dances. [chuckles]

That's something that you don't have very much up here, so that's my and my husband's treat. Whenever there's a dance, we always go. It has to be like if I'm sick or he's sick, we don't, but, other than that, that's something that still keep us...to go meet our friends, to go meet more Mexicanos. Otherwise, you know, you just see them once in a while in the store or if they have like a party or a birthday party. That's the only time you get to see them. When we get together like at the dances and stuff, you see a lot of people. You're like, "I haven't seen you for a long time. Where have you been?" It's like, "Oh, we've been working." But when it gets down to coming to a dance, that's where everybody knows that they can meet people that they haven't seen for such a long time.

Or at church, you know, after church, they have coffee, so you have time to go sit. You're not just going to church and come out. You have coffee. You've got time to go sit with other people that are there that you haven't seen or that you see every Sunday, but you've got that time to go talk to them.

AbA: So, relationships are more important than the time.

AA: Yes.

AbA: Have you made a deliberate effort to pass on some of these cultural traditions to your children?

AA: Yes. Like I said when we would go down to Texas, my kids always were with us. They were always with us. Like when we celebrate La Virgen de Guadalupe, when they do their first communion, their baptismal, that's real important. I've gone to baptismals where kids are just dressed up in a little suit. Not with us; with us it's their white gown, their white shoes, everything has to be pure. It has to be white. Or we do *quinceañeras*. That's something that we carry down. I tell my daughters, "Your kids are getting at that age, and you better start saving money for their *quinceañera* and teach them what is the *quinceañera*. It is not just this big party. It's not just this big dance and a party for this teenager. No, there are certain rules for the *quinceañera* and you need to teach your child" That's the thing of the *quinceañera*. Yes, we do keep a lot of traditions.

AbA: What traditions do they not want to accept?

AA: I don't know. I really don't know.

AbA: So they accept all of them?

AA: Yes. I don't think there's something that we haven't done like year after year after year.

When my son got married, my oldest son... When they got married, then they decided to go on a honeymoon like two or three years later, so his mistake was to tell his mom that they were going to go to Corpus Christi for their honeymoon.

AbA: [chuckles]

AA: I said, "Really? When?" He told me the date. I'm like, "Oh, really?" So I get on the phone and tell Ann, "Guess what? Your brother is going to Corpus Christi for their honeymoon." Well, you know what? When he took off, there was all of us. There was them, us, and my daughter, Fernando, all of us went with them to their honeymoon.

AbA: [laughter]

AA: You think the Greek wedding was... You should have seen us. It was just hilarious. You know my daughter-in-law, she's white. She goes, "I can't believe your parents came with us on our honeymoon." Like, they rented a room. We were right next door. Ann was right next door. We had a blast. She looks at it now and she just laughs. She says, "That was the most fun thing that we could have done. But, next time, we're not going to tell you guys." [laughter]

AbA: The relationship with your family obviously is very good and very tight.

How was it with neighbors going back to when you were still with your parents?

AA: With neighbors, when we lived in Glyndon, I can tell you my mom and my dad were so strict. We had the park right in front of us. We had a big park. We weren't allowed to go to the park.

If I had to go to the store which was two blocks away, I was timed. My mom says, "Okay, I need you to go to the store and get me some bread or get me..." whatever. "You have five minutes. If you're not back here in five minutes, you're in trouble." I would run to the store and be back in five minutes because, I'll tell you, my parents were very, very strict. I tell everybody, and everybody goes, "They couldn't have been that strict because you got married at the age of fifteen." I said, "Yes, but I got married at the age of fifteen because my mom didn't want it to happen that my husband would come and take me and I wouldn't see her for ten years. It wasn't because she just said it was okay for me to get married. It was to prevent what happened to her to happen to me, that I won't be able to see her for all those years. That's why she gave me consent in getting married, but as long as I got married the right way in church, everything. But my parents were very, very strict."

When we had to go to school, we left at a certain time and we had to be back by a certain time. My mom knew when school was over. She knew how much time we had to walk from school home.

AbA: How did they get along with the neighbors, though?

AA: The neighbors that my mom and dad had, the guy would talk to my dad and stuff, but it wasn't like we would play with the neighbors' kids. We were like more in our own little world. Just like I said, at that time, there was a lot of prejudice.

AbA: Did that show up at work, like with employers?

AA: With me or with my dad?

AbA: Both.

AA: I don't know with my dad. He never complained. He never said anything - that he was having a hard time. I think maybe it was the same as we wouldn't tell him about school. By telling something, they're going to feel bad.

But the thing with my parents, if they would talk to us in Spanish, we would answer them in English, so that's how my parents learned how to speak English, and that's how we learned to speak Spanish. When I got married to my husband, all I spoke to my husband was pure English and all he knew was pure Spanish. Little by little, I learned more Spanish and he learned a lot of English. Now, that's all he talks is English. He says that he remembers when he was dating, you know before he met me, they would go like to the movies, the drive-in and his brother would go and pick up his girlfriend. He said, "I would just go because I wanted to go to the movies, but I never spoke anything, because I didn't know how to speak English. I was embarrassed that if I said something, they would make fun of me." So he never spoke English. Now, that's all he talks. There's times that he'll say something or I'll say something in Spanish and he'll say something wrong in English and I correct him and he corrects me, you know. Now, that's all he talks is pure English. It's very rare that we talk in Spanish. We talk in Spanish like if we're at a

restaurant and we're talking about something that we don't want anybody else to know or if we're in a store and we want to buy something and we're talking about is it going to be worth it for us. Other than that, we always speak English.

AbA: How were the community services and health care, for example, for the Latinos who were settling here?

AA: I remember that at that time my mom... The food stamp program was where you had to buy the food stamps. You would pay so much money for food stamps and, then, they would give you a little bit of food stamps back. All I remember is just having my mom do that and like when they would go to the store pay on credit. The thing is that with my parents, when we came up town, if we were lucky enough when we were out on the farm to come to town with them, we never got to get down. We always had to stay in the car, because we were too many. So we always had to stay in the vehicle.

To us, coming to church every Sunday, our treat was to go to M&H and buy hamburgers, and, then, go to the park.

And, we knew that every Sunday, but, at the same time, we would stay at the Catholic Church all week. I remember staying at the Catholic Church all week. On Sunday, after church, they would us leave us there, and then we'd go home on the bus on Saturday, and on Sunday, the same thing. I used to cry. I used to *hate* to stay there. I would cry because I missed my mom and my dad so much, you know. That was how it was to take care of the migrant children at the time. So the parents could work, the kids stayed at the church all week long. They ate there. They slept there. They got schooling there.

AbA: What community services were available?

AA: I don't really know. I remember the food stamps. I don't know on the healthcare, how much healthcare there was. I really don't know.

I remember when we lived out on the farm, there was a couple times that my brother would be running all over and if he got hurt... I remember one time my mom said that my older brother was chopping wood and when he chopped the wood, he ran back so when the wood flew up and the wood came and hit him in the head. It sunk his skull in. He ran in and his head was bleeding and everything. My mom goes, "Let's take him to the hospital." The closest hospital was Ada, either Ada or Moorhead, because we lived out on the farm. My dad said, "No." He grabbed some *pinzas* [pliers] and he just lifted up his skull.

AbA: Oh!

AA: That's the way it was. He just ... *dame alcohol* (give me alcohol) and just put a rag around it, and that was it.

AbA: Wow.

AA: Yes.

AbA: So he just cleaned it out with alcohol and put a bandage on it?

AA: Yes. To go to the hospital we, literally, had to be really, really sick. Back in the days, it was like, oh, drink this tea, or *esta hierbita* (this medicinal herb), or take some aspirins.

We didn't even have an inside bathroom. We lived in a one-room house out on the farm. You walked in and all you saw was the stove, the sink, the table right there and all the way around were all the beds.

All the beds, you know. The bathroom was half a block away. Those were times that I remember when I was little. I remember those times and I'm like, how did I do that? How could we go outside to the bathroom. But that's the way we were raised. To us, it was all right. We were all together. We were all there. We were happy. Nowadays, if the kids don't have whatever they have, they're upset. They get mad. They're stomping. I always tell my daughters, "Shoot! You'd better straighten out that little boy because I will take him and I will straighten him out for you."

I remember my dad... I'll tell you one thing... my dad never, ever hit me. I never got hit by my parents. If I would see my dad hit my brothers and sisters, uh uh, I was not going to go through that. So I made sure that everything I did, I was really good in everything I was doing. If I had to clean up, do the floors, I did my floors. When I got married, I didn't know how to cook. My job wasn't cooking. My job was cleaning the floors, so I was really good at cleaning the floors. But when my husband asked me to make him eggs, I didn't know how to make eggs because I never had to cook. My older sisters would do the cooking with my mom. We all had our jobs. My sister that was younger, her job was the dishes. When they would go out in the fields, my mom, she would make *lonche* (lunch) and everything, but we had to have the dishes done. We had to have the floors cleaned. All of our jobs had to be done by the time they came home, so then my mom could cook and my sisters could cook, so we could all have supper. That's the way it was.

I look back at the time, to me it was kind of a hard time, a strict time, but, in a sense, it was a good time. It was a time to make me really think about life, to think about how life was back then to how I have it now.

I tell my husband, "You know what, Mando? I don't need my house." I don't want to end up like my mom in a nursing home and work all her life for this house that she doesn't even have. That's what I think. I'm selling my house and moving into an apartment. I've thought about this for a long time. I go see my mom every day and I see all these people in these nursing homes, how hard they worked for their houses and for their vehicles and where are they at? They're all in a half a little room and this is all they have in their life is what they have in this half a room. I said, "That's not going to happen to me. I'm going to sell the house. If we only have one vehicle, we only have one vehicle. You know what? If I have to work, I'll keep working, but that extra money instead of going into my mortgage for a house that I'm not going to take with me when I go."

I'll spend it on my grandkids. I'll help my kids if they need anything. I don't want my grandkids to suffer. I don't want them to need something. Like Fernando...he's got eight kids—well, seven. He's got so many kids that he has to live without to provide for his seven children, you know. I've seen him go without for himself and for Erica. That's what I tell my kids and I tell my grandkids, "Once you have a child, guess what? Your life ends right there, because, then, your life begins a new process. You're back here and you try to give everything to your children." I said, "I did that for a long time. Now, it's my turn to give to myself."

I can go to town and I'll be walking around in Wal-Mart and I can get whatever I want. You know what? There's nothing that makes me happy. I have everything I want. I tell Armando, "I have more than what I need in this house." When my daughter-in-law comes over, she'll go, "Oh, I like that." "Take it with you. I don't want it. I don't need it. I'm at work eight hours a day. I come home. Then I go see my mom. Then I come home and go to bed. I don't enjoy this stuff anymore. I'd rather have you and your children enjoy it, than me." Because, to me, it's like looking at my mom and just seeing how much she suffered for everything and how much she didn't have for herself because she was always giving to us. That's why I think I feel so responsible to give my mom everything that she needs now and she wants—and she doesn't want anything. She doesn't need anything. I always say, "Mom, what do you want?" "No, I want nothing, mi'ja (my daughter)." So as long as I'm there to be with her, that's what makes her happy, to see us go visit her, to tell her we love her, to tell her we care for her, to tell her that... I always tell her, "Mom, I'm here for you. Whatever you need, I'm here for you. If you want me to stay with you, I'll stay with you."

That's one thing I can tell you... My husband does not... If I don't go see my mom for three days, he's like, "Have you gone to see your mom?" "No." "Why haven't you?" "Well, I don't know. I've been busy." "You need to go spend some time with her." So he doesn't say, "No, you can't go see her. No, you can't be there." Or when my parents were here, he never said, "No, they can't be here." He and my dad got so close because they were drinking buddies all the time until my dad stopped drinking. But they were drinking buddies. My husband knew more about my dad than my brothers have ever known about my dad.

AbA: Wow.

AA: That's how close they were. My husband knows more about my dad than he knows about his own father.

He misses my dad like crazy because every day they were out in the garage for ten years that they lived with us. They were always together, you know. So, my husband misses my dad as much as I do because of that. I think that's why he pushes me to go see my mom because he knows that's all I've got left. He's got his mom and he's got his dad. And, I'll ask, "Have you called your mom?" "No." "Why not?"

AbA: Oh.

AA: His mom had a stroke, and because of her stroke, she lost her speaking. She can't speak. So it's very hard for him to communicate with her. So when we go down there, she tries so hard but she can't write either. So it's really hard for us to communicate. So when he calls, he'll talk to his stepfather, and then he'll give her the phone, and he talks to her and all you hear is like a child, "Ehh, ehhh." She wants to talk, but that's what she lost in her stroke, you know.

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