

Sylvia Garcia
Narrator

Abner Arauza
Interviewer

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Moorhead, Minnesota

Sylvia Garcia **-SG**
Abner Arauza **-AA**

AA: This is Abner Arauza interviewing Sylvia Garcia in Moorhead, Minnesota for the Minnesota Historical [Society] Oral History Project. I am interviewing her on the campus of Moorhead State University in Yolanda Arauza's office. It is December 22, 2010. Sylvia, good morning. And thank you for agreeing to do this interview. I'll get started by asking some warm-up questions, if you would call it that. One is, give me your name?

SG: My name is Sylvia C. Garcia.

AA: And "C" stands for?

SG: Castro. My father's name.

AA: Okay. And your age and date of birth?

SG: My age is fifty, born 11-11-1960.

AA: And you were born in?

SG: I was born in Crystal City, Texas.

AA: Okay. Famous town.

SG: Yes.

AA: [Chuckles] And your education level?

SG: My educational level, at this point, right now I'm working towards my master's degree, MLA [Master of Liberal Arts], at Moorhead State University, Moorhead [MSUM].

AA: Okay, and your bachelor's [degree], what was the major?

SG: My bachelor's degree, actually, that was one of my accomplishments, personal accomplishments in 2007. I graduated from MSUM with a degree in American studies.

AA: Okay. You know, I want to take a minute here, because your background is really unique, especially among the Latino population in the area. Tell me a little bit about what you've been doing or had been doing for the last few years.

SG: Okay. The last few years—being Hispanic, Mexican-American or Latina, all the above [chuckles]—the last few years, actually, [I'm] excited of the new future and goals that my family have and myself, but the last few years, maybe I should start from the beginning and when we arrived here.

AA: Okay.

SG: If that's okay, Abner? Do you want me to do that?

AA: That's fine. That's fine. Yes.

SG: I think it for me, probably just to put it in order, is in going back in history, I'm the first generation born in the United States. My parents, Baltazar and Juanita Castro, are from Torreón Coahuila, in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico. I was born in Crystal City, like I mentioned earlier, Texas, in 1960. And so we moved to Minnesota, in particular, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, in winter of 1978. And the purpose for that reason was that, because I was a migrant farmworker. We migrated to Ontario, Oregon, and Payette, Idaho, for many, many years, and worked the fields during the summer and harvest in the fall. So my family, before I got married, we basically lived seven months out of the year in Ontario, Oregon. A very young age, probably were there seven months out of the year. So for many years we migrated with my father.

And so then that came to, actually, with Minnesota Migrant Council that my husband and I were eligible. Because we were married by then, very young, in Texas, that we decided to get out of the stream of migrant farm working, so then we moved here in the winter of 1978 and we lived in Detroit Lakes for two and a half years. He graduated from DL Tech [Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes] and I actually graduated from one year administrative assistant/secretarial educational training. I was very young. And actually, since I didn't finish high school, I was able to finish my GED at the same time.

So then, two years and a half later, we moved to Moorhead, Minnesota. So we've been in Moorhead, Minnesota over thirty years. And since we arrived here our family goal was to stay in one area so we didn't have to migrate anymore and work the hard labor. Actually, I was a child migrant farmworker. And so then what we did, we set our goals, the family goals that we wanted our children—at that time my daughter. Veronica was born in Carrizo Springs [Texas] in 1977, summer of 1977, and she was just a few months old when we moved here to Minnesota, so she's basically a native of Minnesota. My son Josue was born in 1982 in Moorhead, Minnesota, at Saint Ansgar Hospital, which is no longer there in Moorhead. So we made our family established here in Moorhead. We became homeowners a few years later after renting our first home, and we still have that home—it's been about thirty years—by Concordia College. And so, from that time on, our main goal, Israel's and mine, was to get our children the best education possible.

AA: Yes.

SG: It doesn't mean that Texas didn't have it, but our experience was different, being a migrant farmworker. And we didn't know, we didn't have the direction. You know, where do we go? And not even from our families; they knew education was important, but we had no idea. So we were learning as we were growing together, my husband and I, in raising our children. So we stayed here. Our goal was for our children to go to college. And it just happened that we were close to Concordia College, so both are graduates from Concordia College. And then Israel and I continued our education in the process of building or establishing our careers in Fargo-Moorhead. And we continue going to school, night classes, evening classes, just like everyone, American people do these days.

AA: Yes.

SG: Financially, for financial purposes. So in between us building our careers, we were going to college. And at one time we had four people, the whole entire family, attending college. And that's when I decided that it was too much financially and stress, that I needed to focus back to the family. So I decided to get out of that—the classes, attending the college courses—until at least Israel had gone back almost full time. And still working three jobs, I remember, and going to college. So when he accomplished that, a year later, then I came back to finish my bachelor's.

AA: Yes.

SG: But prior to that I also went to Moorhead Tech [Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Moorhead]. So I do have a degree in small business accounting.

AA: Okay.

SG: So I built it from secretary to small business accounts, which actually got my foot in the door working for the Fargo-Moorhead Convention and Visitor's Bureau [FMCVB] in 1982, actually.

AA: Yes.

SG: Josue wasn't even a year old that year. And they hired me as a third person administrative assistant. And the reason was because of my, actually, Vince Lindstrom—originally from Detroit Lakes and Lake Park area, a Norwegian gentleman—I think he was intrigued in terms of how young I was here and totally different culture. You know, from the South, Texas, being bilingual, coming here and raising, I had my second child already. And we wanted to be part of the community and part of the American culture here. And so I went into work, they hired me. And I think he was more intrigued, Vince Lindstrom and Joanie Endersbee, I'll never forget them, they were able to call me and say, "Yes, we want you to work here." And so I started from the grounds up there.

AA: Mmmm.

SG: It was an opportunity they gave me, which I didn't realize until years later. That it was like, wow. You know, I was young, in an entry level position. And so I was able to build my career with them for twenty-five years. From administrative, payroll, audits, budgets, up to department establishments, to destination marketing, sales and marketing, booking business from fifty all the way to five thousand delegates into the community, Fargo-Moorhead. And as my career evolved and Israel's dream job, he has two technical degrees as well. His first one was general diesel mechanics in Detroit Lakes Tech, then in Moorhead Tech he has an associate's degree in electronics. But because of our children still being young we didn't want to move.

AA: Yes.

SG: So his career, if he wanted to continue in that field, we would have to move the family.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I think we committed that we were not going to do that. So he had to really rethink, you know, how important the family is. And our goals were, from the beginning, that we wanted the best education for them. So then what he did, he started going back to school part time, had contracted summer jobs, worked for North Dakota Job Service for quite a few years, worked with a lot of social services organizations, contracted jobs while he was attending college. And then, ultimately, he found what he always wanted to do is become a social worker.

AA: Right.

SG: Which he accomplished that at MSUM. So the last thirty years in Moorhead, Minnesota have been worthwhile in terms of our involvement, not just myself, but my children and Israel's. It all starts, again, I shouldn't say settlers, but particularly for us, our guidance was always our faith, our church.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, Saint Francis Church. And they opened the doors not only it is open for the public in your faith, but also we were able to participate in a lot of their committees. Actually, Israel was one of the key people that started the Hispanic ministry there, that they hired him the first time to do that. Very successful. And then his career started changing, and so his involvement wasn't as much anymore because of his involvement with his family now, and our changes, going through the teenage years of our children in high school. Always challenging.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: But our church, we always go back to Saint Francis to see all the people from there, and how they got us involved to actually be part of the community. And I think that coming back from my parents don't speak English, his parents didn't speak English, so like most first generations in the United States, you know, you have to learn Spanish at home and English at school.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so our involvement in the community has been a great experience. Me, myself in particular, I became quite active in the community with a lot of issues, probably what, fifteen, twenty years ago with the population increase of minorities, in particular Latinos.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, with the police departments, with the city government. And I got involved, not necessarily at that point to say I'm going to be politically involved; I wanted to be involved to see what really was going on. I didn't want to read it from the paper or what people would tell me. I wanted to show them that after so many years, you know, and involvement, that stereotypes are really easy to be defined from other cultures, especially if it's not your own, so my involvement was to make a difference. Hey, you know, we're human beings, we're the people. We're not natives of Minnesota. Going back to my father, he migrated, you know, my father, he just passed away last July a year ago and he made it to be a hundred years old and six months.

AA: Whoa.

SG: Baltazar.

AA: Was he still in Crystal City?

SG: Yes. Yes, and actually we eventually moved him to Austin, Texas.

AA: Okay.

SG: With my brother, my oldest brother Rudy, because I have two brothers; an older brother, me in the middle, and then my youngest brother. His name is Baltazar, Jr. But he would and I wish now that I would have had time to hear *his* stories. Because he came here with his family, Guerrero's and Rodriguez's and some of them were born here—my dad wasn't, he was part of the extension of the family of second marriage. But he still would come here in the summer, visit us to be with the grandkids in the summers, when they were able to and healthy enough to travel. And I'm glad they were able to do that. Because he would sit here and just talk to Israel, actually more, about his experiences coming here.

AA: Hmmm.

SG: And we're talking about very historical, because of him being a hundred years old and also a World War II veteran stationed in Germany for three years, Army. And so he actually connected with the Lopez's here, younger than him. But I wish I would have been in those conversations. I think they used to do the Peterson farm. And my dad would go sit there in the summers, he would come and visit.

AA: Just east of Moorhead?

SG: Yes. They're no longer here. They were east of Saint Francis, the Saint Ansgar Hospital now.

AA: Okay.

SG: It was the community, yeah, health [center], and they've closed it now. But apparently they had great conversations of what was then when they used to come here and were migrant farmworkers.

AA: Yes.

SG: But he always did it. And he always worked it, and his ability of life is good. You know, "I want my family to have the best." So he worked whatever he could, and he was a hard worker, well-admired and appreciative. And so maybe his wealth was not money, his wealth was his friends and his health.

AA: Relationships.

SG: There you go. All types of relationships. Going back to him, I'm sure he had, he never shared a lot, but now things that we look back, it's like, oh, that makes sense.

AA: Yes.

SG: When we, a little story. When we used to migrate back then, you know, we didn't have GPS. We learned how to read the map.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: We learned how many gallons it took. [Laughs] And you probably can relate to that.

AA: Sure.

SG: And we would learn how, especially because my dad didn't speak English. I shouldn't say very, very light, but he never really used it. So at a very, very young age my brother Rudy and I were the interpreters as far and we probably were four or five years old.

AA: Wow.

SG: Because we were the ones that had to go into the gas stations and ask for directions and all that.

AA: Yes.

SG: And going back, we just go, whoa. You know, we were so young and we did all that. And, you know, maybe that's what has defined us or me in particular of the actual experiences that started from birth until now.

AA: Yes. Sure.

SG: And so we look back and then we go, I remember my dad would never go into restaurants. He was very quiet, very distinguished, tall, his, you know, Baltazar Castro. And I believe that Castro, actually, the name originated from Portugal.

AA: Okay.

SG: You know, it would be interesting to see some of the ancestry there. But very distinguished, tall gentleman and quite experienced throughout because of all of his travel with the Army. And he also actually worked on the West Coast as well, and so quite interesting. But he would never go into restaurants because he wouldn't, I don't know, he just didn't, and now we think, my brother and I, is that back then is when colored people were not allowed to go into restaurants when he was growing up.

AA: Right.

SG: You know, so I think for him to say, "Well, you know if I'm not wanted there or I'm going to be asked to leave . . ." So I think it kind of just stayed with him.

AA: Yes.

SG: So he would allow us to go in and we would order. Because we never stayed in the restaurants, we would order takeout or whatever. And then we would, I don't think there were McDonalds at that time. [Chuckles] I think it was truck stops and gas stations.

AA: [Laughs]

SG: And so we would come out, and I really think and I wish now I would have asked that, you know. I'm sure there was a lot of historical memories there from him. He was, like I said, a good person. So I think what has defined me is my family first, where I came from, my immediate family, my husband and I and my children, and so it comes to the point of now, you know. And I don't know, Abner, do you have any other questions that I might have missed?

AA: Oh yes, a whole bunch of them. [Chuckles]

SG: Okay.

AA: Give me the name, and I know you've mentioned it.

SG: Alright, sure.

AA: But for the record.

SG: Sure.

AA: Give me the name and ethnic origin of your husband, your spouse.

SG: Israel. Israel, he is from Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico.

AA: Okay, and Torreón is?

SG: Torreón, Coahuila is from Piedras Negras, I remember, because my dad is from there. We used to take train rides from there. We would get on the train in Piedras Negras or a motor coach.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I was young and we used to go to a little ranch, a farm or little ranch, they called them *ranchos*.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I think it would take about, hmmm. I don't know, two and a half, three hours?

AA: Okay.

SG: But I have no, probably, I remember going by Monterrey, Parras, you know, but that was years ago.

AA: Okay. How many children do you have?

SG: I have two.

AA: Their names?

SG: Veronica, she is thirty-three right now. And Josue is twenty-eight.

AA: Okay. And their education and occupations?

SG: Veronica is currently graduate from Concordia College, she is in the Twin Cities, Minneapolis. She works for Hubbard Broadcasting in Saint Paul.

AA: So H-U . . .

SG: H-U-B-B-A-R-D.

AA: Okay. Hubbard.

SG: Broadcasting. And she is an administrative assistant or administrative manager for the manager, and for the executive director of sales and marketing.

AA: Okay.

SG: And Josue.

AA: Yes.

SG: Josue, he's a graduate from Concordia. And actually, I should mention, Veronica, she double majored at Concordia in Spanish and communications [with an emphasis in] PR [public relations] and marketing. And Josue graduated in general Concordia College liberal arts, he graduated in communications. And Josue is currently working with a management company, locally. And I don't know the name of the company. He just started less than a year ago. Josue is our, I would say Josue is twenty-eight going on eighteen.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: Life is good for him. And we allowed him, you know, we allow our children to do that just because of our upbringing, being so responsible at a very young age, hard labor, so I think we do that to our children. But he is managing some properties and businesses, that he was hired. And he's really actually enjoying his passion, his music. He has a wonderful voice and he knows how to play the guitar very well. I know his dream is to become, you know, his career will be in music.

AA: Good. Tell me, again, the year when your family settled in the area. And what were the factors that influenced you to settle here?

SG: It was winter of 1978. And really the factors were that we, the community, in terms, one of the major factors was because of Minnesota Migrant Council. There was an opportunity for us, and we took it. And the educational and technical training. And why we stayed here because, you know, at that time there were a lot of families that came here because of Minnesota Migrant Council that they left. Quite a few did leave. And they would come back to do the work in the fields still or the sugar beet industry. But we stayed because we wanted to make a home for our children, establish their identity of whom they were. And again, we saw the opportunities of all the wonderful colleges and technical [schools], and what we had to offer here.

AA: Yes.

SG: Major factor. And also employment—outside of agricultural.

AA: And were you familiar with the area before then?

SG: Yes. I was. I was familiar with it. Because I did when I was thirteen and fourteen years old we stopped going to Oregon and Idaho and at that time it was customary to have *contratistas*, people, men—at that time there were just men.

AA: Contractors or recruiters?

SG: Yes, contractors. Recruiters for migrant farmworkers.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I think it was starting to be because we were able to communicate more with other families that there were better opportunities in Minnesota to work in sugar beets only.

AA: Mmmm.

SG: So my father decided to come here. I was thirteen years old. We did it two summers. And I think we did it one more summer and three summers probably we ended up, we first came here but we ended up going to Olivia, Minnesota and Hector, Minnesota, southwest of the Twin Cities, and we worked there. And I remember the farm, it was Mr. Johnson. I can't remember his first name. We worked there, so I was familiar for this region. I know there was a huge concentration of migrant farmworkers during the summer. And I think they started . . .

AA: Around Olivia or here?

SG: No, it was more here.

AA: Okay.

SG: It was more here, but we would come here to visit and do things but not as much. We came to Minnesota, like I said, Olivia and Hector. But we knew of it because of my father, as I had mentioned earlier.

AA: Yes.

SG: I mean, we're talking way back. I'm sure that's when they were using the short, the hoes, hoeing beets, they did the short, what is it called? The hoes, you know the short hand . . .

AA: Sure.

SG: Yes. And so he talked about it, and my cousins, his nieces, would talk about it because they were older when they used to come here and work. So I was familiar with it but I never lived here until I came in 1978 to start DL Tech and then Moorhead Tech.

AA: Were there any adjustments that your family made when you were settling here?

SG: Oh, yes.

AA: Any that kind of come to mind?

SG: Yes. Yes. Oh yes, there were a lot of adjustments. In particular, you know, you don't think of those things until years later, but one adjustment was definitely weather. Weather very cold, a lot of snow, the climate. The adjustment was, again, our food. Remember the old Hornbacher's store across from the new one in Moorhead? They barely had even chili peppers, jalapeños, or, you know, general things that we took it for granted in the South that we grew up with; it was part of our food culture. And so that was an interesting adjustment. A lot of the ingredients we couldn't get, you know.

AA: Yes.

SG: So I remember my family would send us boxes either with family or friends that would come in the spring, you know, things that we normally wouldn't have here.

AA: Yes.

SG: I mean, as simple as chili powder, you know. But now, of course there were adjustments for that. And also an adjustment was not being with our family. We grew up with our family, grandparents, and growing up with cousins, going to communions, to confirmations, going to graduations, quinceañeras (debut, introduction to society, formal celebration for 15-year-old Latinas), weddings, you know, you're always part of the celebration.

AA: Yes.

SG: And that was an adjustment. And that's probably why we were drawn to Saint Francis church because we needed to continue our faith, and then it was even better because they shared the interest of our beliefs and our religion. And so adjustments, yes, there were definitely a lot of adjustments. One of them is I always see my daughter just like any other families that have settled here. I think every generation changes for the better, but you do lose some of the traditions that really it's part of the adjustments, I think. But adjustments that we learned, you know, to work through it, and we've been here over thirty years. And I love the seasons, I really do. I love winter. People think I'm a little, you know . . .

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: So over thirty below, I will say something, you know, I always will call home Texas though, even though I've been here longer than there. [Chuckles]

AA: [Chuckles] Well, there's that connection.

SG: Yes. That family connection, yes. [Chuckles]

AA: What experiences can you recall that your family used—maybe mom and dad—what experiences did you have in the process of making that transition from one community to another one that was very distinct?

SG: Oh, yes. Commitment. Family. Commitment, family, faith—you always go back to your roots. And what contributed to those roots was my family, going back to my grandmother.

AA: Yes.

SG: My mom and dad, my brothers, always going back to who defined you. Who are you? Not saying that we haven't changed, and I see my children's next generation changing; they are going to forget some of our upbringing.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so I really think that it was our commitment, Israel and I's, our commitment to survive in a very white cultural dominant population. We didn't know where we were going, we just, first of all, we needed to survive. [Chuckles] You know, the weather, we needed to survive that; we needed to work to give something to our children like my parents did.

AA: Yes.

SG: And we wanted to get educated and be part of the community and hopefully make a difference, not because of the color of our skin, but it goes back to your roots, you know. You know, who are you? Who defines you and your family? And you always go back. And I do see my son is very quiet, but my daughter, she's had quite an experience here. And I always say that she was our little, she had to deal with the American, white, dominant culture. Friends from school, from church, educators and then at home we were expecting her to still continue some of our, of whom we were and where we came from. So that was quite a challenge for her.

AA: So the experience at home was different than the experience at school.

SG: Yes.

AA: Beyond the normal duality that exists for any student.

SG: Yes.

AA: So what you're saying is that the culture and traditions had something to do with that?

SG: Yes. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Even though we did introduce—and great pictures of it that I'm going to probably send you—Israel and I were very protective of our children, our family. Very protective of our culture.

AA: Yes.

SG: We celebrated, we experienced it at home, from food to faith to entertainment to music, movies, our beliefs, basically. And friends that came in, their friends and educators who would come to the house, we would I actually think we had to change our persona, you know. And I think they kind of knew that when they were outside they had to be a different persona.

AA: Yes.

SG: Not hiding it that their last name is Spanish and they look Latino, but at home I was very protective. Even with my colleagues at work. I wanted to learn the American culture. Maybe that's why my degree was in American Studies, because I wanted to learn different cultures other than Chicano-Latino, which I experienced it, but I wanted to learn the Scandinavians, the Germans, Jewish, I wanted to know other religions. And because of my career, where it was taking me, I needed to sell a destination. That I needed to know the population of people, who got here first, why did they come here.

AA: Yes.

SG: We all have the same reasons. The only difference is that we all have a different, you know, people's skin color, and we don't lose really our Spanish, our roots.

AA: Yes.

SG: But I did introduce *piñatas* at parties, birthday parties with my children's friends, and they loved it. So that was kind of like breaking. [laughs] I should say the piñata breaking kind of that wall.

AA: Yes.

SG: It's like, okay, let's test this. [Laughter] And yes, we have great stories and great pictures and I probably should send you that. And gradually, you know, I was very protective of our beliefs and who we [be] came even though a lot of people in the community were kind of curious, too. But it just depended whom they were that we would, our church probably was the most closest, they knew who we really were versus the general population of people.

AA: Sure.

SG: You know, so definitely we were, and so I think that my daughter was probably like many daughters here, too, from other cultures and generations that she, she was not, you know—without us knowing, obviously. You know, kids these days, they do behind [laughs] you know, what we don't see won't hurt us.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: But we were very protective of her. You know, we wanted the best for her. No boyfriends.

AA: Yes.

SG: We finally let her go to her first prom in the eleventh grade, and I'm glad we did. We were more protective of her. No sleepovers.

AA: Wow.

SG: Yes, not going there or here, and Israel and I would always have to chaperone. We were very, very protective of her. We were very concerned because of the fast pace that we saw in the American youth development, you know. And Israel, you know, he came to the U.S. when he was nine years old. He was able, his family got the green card and all that. So he was . . .

AA: Did they come to Crystal City at that time?

SG: Yes, Crystal City, to work at Del Monte.

AA: Okay.

SG: His dad did. Not in the factory but in, they used to call it what, I still hear it -- *la riega* (the agricultural irrigation) or . . .

AA: Okay.

SG: They did the planting and the harvesting, the tractors . . .

AA: The irrigation in the fields.

SG: Yes. Yes, they did all that. And actually, that's what my dad did, too, during the off season there. They never wanted to work in the factories, so yes, definitely. Israel, very strong Mexican man culture is like: this is my family and I'm going to protect it. And I was always the person who would have to learn or try to teach him to balance it. And our church taught him, too.

AA: Yes.

SG: You can't do that because she's going to run off and we'll never see her again, so we can't do that. We've got to do something differently.

AA: Yes.

SG: And it was challenging. Boy, was that challenging. I feel for families that, you know, of different backgrounds, even the Kurdish coming in, the new Americans coming in, you know, all that. I could just feel that, you know. But you need to learn how to measure and balance it to be successful in the community. So she was quite, at times, rebellious. And I think more because we, you know, here is our beliefs, here is our culture, here is this is who we are, don't forget who you are. You can be out there and identify yourself with them but you've got to come back.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so that was challenging. And with Josue it was different. Josue was different. I think we kind of learned, I mean, to be honest, teaching and learning, it's by experience. [Sighs] Any book could write about it, you can relate to it, but you've got to go through it. And so she had

some challenges in school, too. But we're fortunate that she finally realized that we were family. But years later, I think with age, she actually thanked Israel and I. Saying, "Thank you Mom and Dad for doing what you did in terms of being tough [laughs] with me and saying, 'You're Mexican-American, you know, don't forget that. But it's okay to get involved with other cultures and other communities.'" And now she really and I think what really defined her was when she, with Concordia—excellent for her college—she was able to go for six months to live in Mexico City.

AA: Okay.

SG: So she *really* experienced it, the history, and learned, and she did an internship there. And she still has really close ties there and she goes back there and visits. So that really I think that's when she really said, "Okay, from since I've been here and my family, it is different environment than going to another culture."

AA: Sure.

SG: American, dominant white culture. And she finally said, I think that's when she said, "Wow, okay. I understand who I am."

AA: It fell in place.

SG: Yes. [Chuckles]

AA: So the experiences that she had, this was in junior high and high school?

SG: The most difficult times for her were junior high, yes. Junior high.

AA: And we're talking related to being Latina, the culture, and?

SG: Yes. Yes, it was, but Israel and I were involved. We were very involved with them, as much as we could, because we were so busy with either taking classes or working all the time.

AA: Yes.

SG: So yes, she had some concerns. And that's when a huge population of Latinos we had here.

AA: Oh.

SG: And like any other culture, even American white culture, that we all take different directions, you know, different areas. And I really think ours was because we were not immediate with my family in the South, in Texas or Mexico, that we kept the religion involved, our faith.

AA: Sure.

SG: I think that really helped us guide her.

AA: Yes.

SG: Come back. You know, those are issues: one in particular that I remember in junior high, I was pretty upset and Israel was, too, that we did find time to go and talk to the counselor. Because apparently at that time in junior high there was a rumor that a young Latina was going to cause a fight with a white American gal over, you know, junior high, you know, love.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: Or boyfriends or girlfriends. You know, normal.

AA: Yes.

SG: But I think they were too sensitive, not saying my daughter's an angel, but they pulled all the Latinas—the Hispanics, the girls—out of classes to have a conversation with them, which, you know, it would make sense. But I was confused. Like another mother was, too, that she went with us. Leilani Fernandez, I don't know if you remember her.

AA: Okay, yes, I know her.

SG: You know, we went together and said, "Okay, we need to go in there and let them know we are the parents and we don't want anyone coming in. How can someone outside the family or the experience or the knowledge of our culture is going to direct my daughter." That's what we were there, that's why we were here.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so we did. We went in there. And they were very receptive, they were very good. I think it was the school principal who was, was it Dr. Topper, I think, Mrs. Topper?

AA: Colleen?

SG: Colleen, yes. And so we did go in there. And I can't remember the counselor's [name], I can see him, the counselor's name. I think he's retired since then. We went in there and I told them that I did not appreciate what they had done. If it was a rumor, I understand their concern about safety. I said, "I just want to let you know that just because . . ." And yes, my daughter was not even involved in it. And Leilani, because it just happened, they were friends, really close friends at that time, it was a rumor, and it could have happened or not and they had pulled everyone out. And I said, "I just want you to look at it differently." And my perspective was that if a German student was getting involved in a fight with another female, a Scandinavian person, culture, are you going to pull all them out? You know, it didn't make sense to me. In terms of, I think, you're stereotyping. And they were. And I do feel really, but I didn't go in there to be politically correct, I went in there as a parent. And with my experience and knowledge that I wanted to let them know, don't do that again. You call me or Israel and we'll be here and we'll deal with it, but

there's, I don't want anyone counseling my daughter of what the culture is all about, because you don't know.

AA: What was the school's reaction?

SG: Very good. Very receptive. They never did it again. They were, because it's your involvement, your honesty. I'm not here to make your life miserable and I don't want you to make my life miserable. To be honest, we are different. I am different.

AA: Yes.

SG: The way I speak. And I'm very fortunate that I know two languages and identify with many people and cultures. And so they were receptive, they were. The only difference, Abner, was that she was raised here. And at that time we had a lot of new migrant farmworkers settling. What was that in late 1980s, early 1990s, mid-1990s, probably.

AA: Okay.

SG: Because she graduated in 2000 from high school. So yes, so it was late 1990s, you know.

AA: Sure.

SG: In junior high, and so there was a difference. There was a difference. I'm not saying, you know and I think they just felt that for the best of the school, in the interest of the students, that they felt that was the right approach to do. But, you know, they probably had not experienced that before.

AA: Yes.

SG: So I do understand where they're coming from. I wasn't there, you know I just wanted them to understand where we were coming from. And they were very receptive with us, you know, at that point.

AA: How long have you lived at your present address, your home?

SG: In Moorhead, by Concordia College, on Fourth Street and Twelfth Avenue, we bought the home there 1982. And we moved just a few blocks, so we rented for a few years on Ninth Avenue. We liked the neighborhood, and because Riverside was their school for our children.

AA: I remember.

SG: And so they went there.

AA: Yes.

SG: And now it's part of Concordia Language Village.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so that was one of the reasons. And we bought that home, that was, I mean, every year has been a great year. It depends how you look at it, going back, but that year I got the job, I graduated from Moorhead Tech, Josue was born, and then I got the job with the FMCVB, and then Israel was working. And then he bought the house, small house for us, so we've been there in the neighborhood for that long. In just the last few years I started delivering tamales to my neighbors, because I figured out that, oh, they love the food. They're waiting for it this week! [Laughter] Christmas holiday, and they do eat them!

AA: Yes. Now you said that you had been down by Olivia. And you were living there year-round?

SG: No, no, summer. Summer. We got there in May after school was done and we would leave in late July, so it was a shorter migration versus going to Ontario, Oregon and Payette, Idaho. Here it was just thinning and hoeing beets.

AA: Alright. So when you said that you came to Moorhead, where did you live before, that you considered your year-round home?

SG: Ninth Avenue. Ninth Avenue in Moorhead.

AA: And before Moorhead?

SG: Detroit Lakes.

AA: Okay.

SG: We were there two and a half years.

AA: Okay.

SG: Detroit Lakes. We were there for the purpose of D.L. Tech, you know, and we always knew we were going to move. I don't know. And the reasons we moved to Fargo-Moorhead were because it's larger and also because there was a larger Hispanic-Latino community at that time.

AA: Yes.

SG: Late 1970s. And actually, I moved, I missed that. I worked as an intake receptionist for migrant farmworkers for Minnesota Migrant Council in that time period for two years.

AA: Before the Minnesota Migrant Council?

SG: I worked for the Minnesota Migrant Council before the Fargo-Moorhead Convention and Visitors Bureau.

AA: Oh, okay. Okay.

SG: And then I was laid off in 1981, because when I graduated from D.L. Tech that was the reason they hired me, Minnesota Migrant Council here. And there used to be the Arvid Benson Building—it's no longer there, it's Walgreens now. We had our offices there for Migrant Council, Juan Rangel.

AA: Okay.

SG: Saraí Rodriguez, they hired me. And they hired me, I worked in the Arvid Benson building, I remember, because they still had the furniture store. I bought my first color TV from them. And we worked there. I worked there until I graduated in 1979, summer of 1979, so I started working there 1979. And then I was laid off in 1981 and that's when the [Ronald] Reagan administration came in. There were a lot of federal budgets cut.

AA: Yes.

SG: So a lot of the entry level positions were eliminated. And that's when then I had Josue, 1982. And that's when I started working for the Fargo-Moorhead Convention and Visitors Bureau, after I graduated from Moorhead Tech in small business accounting. And yes, so it's been like a smooth, you know, kind of. You never know; long term goals always become short term goals. I don't know.

AA: [Chuckles] The older we get, the faster that moves.

SG: Oh, my god. Now I wish I was forty. I could have been doing grad school now!

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: And I still have a few years ahead of me here.

AA: Yes.

SG: Instead of wasting time. And I love college, education, knowledge. I love it.

AA: You've kind of answered this next question. You answered the question, now tell me why. You said that you still think of Crystal City as your home.

SG: [Chuckles]

AA: So you're thinking of Moorhead as a temporary place to live?

SG: You know, the older that I'm getting now, I'm thinking about retirement—and I shouldn't, I still have a few more years. [Chuckles] But again, I always call home Texas.

AA: Yes.

SG: Even though we have started new roots here with my children, this is my children's roots.

AA: Yes.

SG: That we helped grow with them. We planted the seeds here for them. And Texas, my mom is still there. My brothers are still there. My aunts and uncles are still in Mexico in Piedras Negras, Eagle Pass. We try to go home at least twice a year, and easier to call it home, you know. So I wonder if that's going to change because my dad passed away a year ago, and so I wonder, you know, what's going to happen. Crystal City is a dying city. It has been for the last twenty years and it's getting worse and worse. It's very sad to see it. But my mother now is in Austin, Texas with my older brother. She's eighty-seven years old. But she's yes, I don't think she'll be going back there. She needs home care now. And so she will, she still wants to go back to where we were raised in our home, our house.

AA: Mmmm.

SG: In the next year or two years, they're probably going to sell it. So what is going to be? You know. And so we've created here, for over thirty years here.

AA: Yes.

SG: And now that I've had time, the last two years after I left FMCVB has really brought [me] back to focusing [on my] life again. It's like, what have I done, where have my twenty-five years gone? Yes, we've had this discussion already, but what difference do I want to make? Back to the community, the state, or the region, to my family, back again, that I was did it, but I was too busy. So now it's my time. What do I want to do? And I've told Israel, you know, we have an apartment there, he's looking at buying because the market is good, buying a home there instead of wasting it in rent.

AA: Sure.

SG: You know, but it's not, we don't have two houses because it's a necessity. We don't want to live homeless in the Twin Cities, so he has to have an apartment.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: It's not like we have a summer home here. It's because we need to [chuckles] you know. And I don't want a summer home or a cabin anymore; it's too much work cleaning two houses. Too much. So I told him, "Israel, we are involved. Even though we've scaled down the last few years here in Fargo-Moorhead, our children seem to come here for the holidays."

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, and so that's telling us that this is our home now. So maybe I see ourselves retiring here, but do go South for the winter if it comes to that point, but I see ourselves being more here, because we have the availability of health care, we have the availability of continuing education, volunteer opportunities, involvement, and it's large enough that it gives us that, but it's not like the Twin Cities, Minneapolis-Saint Paul. I love going there, visiting and working there, and it's a whole different culture, too.

AA: Yes.

SG: The driving is different, too, to start with, but I love that. And because of my travel that I did for the FMCVB, I traveled all North America and Mexico for that purpose. So I'm well-seasoned, I should say, in travel, in dealing with different groups of people and cultures.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, large cities, small cities, I've been just about Canada was one market, all the provinces. So definitely I was able to experience everything. And I always wonder that maybe I should go back to Texas. Maybe I should make the first step and say, "Okay, I'm going to go look and move to Texas in a year and then Israel can follow." But I think we have vested so much in our community that it will be healthier mentally and for our well-being to retire here, so I don't know.

AA: So in your mind and your allegiance, South Texas is your home. In practice, and for all practical things, Moorhead is your home.

SG: Yes. Yes. That could change, you know.

AA: Sure.

SG: Once they sell that house, we're not going to have that base anymore.

AA: Yes. There will be something that cuts off.

SG: Yes. And I'm sure a lot of people like yourself have experienced that.

AA: Yes.

SG: And you go, wow. Okay. So now we need to be here. Well, look at it. My parents did it.

AA: Yes.

SG: From Mexico.

AA: Sure.

SG: [Chuckles] Even though it's close. You know, they did it. And now we did it for our children. And who knows where my children are going to end up. I have no idea.

AA: Sure. But as of now you maintain contact.

SG: Yes, with family.

AA: With Texas and Mexico.

SG: Yes, still. And my daughter does, and my son does not.

AA: Hmmm.

SG: For Josue, this is home. This is home. Because I remember, years, years ago, you know, we're humans. Once in a while we'll go, okay, our families are growing up, our parents are dying. Israel's parents died very young. And you go through that stage, okay, what are we doing here? We need to go back. There's work there.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I won't forget, Josue told us, he was in junior high, Josue. He said, "Dad, what are you talking about? You want to go home? This is home."

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: [Laughs] So that was kind of like a rude awakening for Israel. Oh, okay. And now that he moved, five years ago, after he graduated from here, he couldn't get a job here that he wanted, a career in Fargo-Moorhead, but he was in high demand in the Twin Cities. He had the opportunity in Texas to go there, but because we still had our children here and this is our home base for them . . .

AA: Sure.

SG: He didn't make any moves until the kids were totally okay, you're done with college, you've started a career, it's up to you what you're going to do. You know, but we'll keep the home here. And I've got to go and work.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, I'm not getting younger anymore. So that's what he did. That took a lot of courage, because he would never do it, and he's very happy and we're doing a lot of traveling, but we do what we have to do.

AA: Well, say you stay connected to South Texas.

SG: Yes.

AA: There's different ways that that can be defined. One of them is the area, you know, the culture and so on, and then specifically family or relatives.

SG: Yes.

AA: Do you stay in touch with your relatives?

SG: Yes.

AA: About how often?

SG: Not as often as probably the first ten years. We would go at least when the children were growing up, we went Easter vacation, because that was their break, to celebrate Easter there. And then we would go during this time period there during the holidays. So we kept those traditions. Veronica, we made her *quinceañera* where my goal and dream was, to take her back where she was born in Carrizo Springs and where *she* was baptized in Carrizo Springs. And that's where we celebrated her *quinceañera* celebration, the fifteenth birthday with all her cousins. Actually, all her cousins, the boys and young men, they were part of the fourteen. You know, traditionally, she's the fifteen, so you have fourteen escorts or whatever you call them.

AA: Yes.

SG: *Damas*.

AA: Yes. Maids.

SG: Yes. They were *all* relatives.

AA: Wow. [Chuckles]

SG: Even though my family is small. But my grandmother had fourteen, fifteen children, you know, and so a huge family, cousins and all that. And so again, going back, my daughter, "Mom, I never knew I had all these cousins!"

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: Because here she would hear her friends saying, "Oh, I went my cousin's whatever communion or confirmation or . . ." We never did that here. We would always go home and do it if we could at Easter or winter.

AA: Yes.

SG: So I think those were the memories that she'll always remember and she still talks about it. And I still have her dress from *quinceañera*, and I'll send you some pictures, too. But I know my church, Saint Francis, wanted me to do it here, but it was time for me to take her back to our

family, Israel's and mine. My grandma and grandpa, they couldn't make the trip here anymore. And so we did that. And so that was something special for her and the family.

AA: Now, you're from Crystal City.

SG: Yes.

AA: But she celebrated her *quinceañera* in Carrizo.

SG: In Carrizo, yes. Because in Crystal City—long story short there, I could tell you a lot of stories . . .

AA: Okay, keep going.

SG: Israel and I got married very young. We actually eloped. And that's a whole other story, but we'll be married thirty-five years in March. We at the church in Crystal City, I think, I still remember him. Father Smith.

AA: Yes. Sherrill Smith.

SG: Do you remember him? They tell me he was a nice guy. But Israel, we loved, well, long story short, I was underage and being a citizen of the United States, and Israel took me to Mexico and they wouldn't marry us and . . .

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: It was quite an adventure; I could tell you a whole story there. [Chuckles] And it was daring for me to do it. And so then Israel went to speak with Father Smith there in Crystal City, if they would marry us by the church. My parents and his parents were pretty mad that we were doing it, so they were not participating at any means, of us.

AA: Yes.

SG: So we had to do our own stuff. So he went in there blankly. And of course, Israel, he's always naïve, dumb, "I go in there, he doesn't know me. And I said, 'I want to get married,' and Father Smith said, 'No you're not.'" [Laughs] So he just said he doesn't have good memories there. He said, "Why would he say that?" And eventually being involved in religion, with the church ministry and all that, he kind of realized why.

AA: Sure.

SG: So it was not a good experience for us, that moment. We got married by his name is . . . Justice of the Peace at that time, his name is . . . famous author, he was with La Raza Unida .. Gutierrez.

AA: Jose Angel Gutierrez.

SG: Yes. [Chuckles] He did.

AA: Okay.

SG: And we didn't know what we were doing. So he married us. And so then my parents had to sign off on me, you know, legal papers. Okay, let her go. And I think he convinced them to do it. And so then I think that comes back to our family, our careers, our faith that we didn't want to experience going back. And we didn't know who the priest was there, you know, when Veronica was fifteen. We did it in December. We started because we were involved with Saint Francis, it was actually Father Mike Sullivan, and he wrote letters, so I was getting we were more prepared. You know, that we were Eucharistic ministers, we were involved, all that stuff, so they wouldn't question us.

AA: Yes.

SG: So it was a very, very nice ceremony. And I actually did a lot of research and brought it back to its tradition as much as I could to what *quinceañera* was, and not the commercialized one. And so I wrote up a lot of history on it and gave it to the people at church, so we did the ceremony. Israel and I participated in the ceremony. So it was very special. And because she was born there and baptized, I wanted to keep that at least, you know, up to that point.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, this is part of you, too.

AA: Sure.

SG: That's one of the reasons. And Crystal City was probably, you know, to think about it, I was a migrant child farmworker, so we were there five months out of the year only. And we were actually migrant-schooled, we were not part of, I mean, the regular school and the migrant school. [Chuckles]

AA: Yes, that's true.

SG: And I'm going, oh, my gosh, you know. And actually we had classes in the area where they had the concentration camps.

AA: At the airport?

SG: Yes. [Chuckles] And like, okay. Well, at least it was clean. But if walls could talk, you know. And I'm going, wow. You know, going back. But that's why. Personal reason, maybe. [Chuckles]

AA: Yes. Very good. But it sounds like it was very traditional.

SG: Yes. Part of that, yes. Yes, it was.

AA: The ceremony itself.

SG: Oh, the ceremony, yes. It was very, brought it more traditional, educational awareness to general population. I think that's why Father Mike and Sister Theresa Wolf wanted me to do it here in Moorhead. She wanted me to do two. She said, "Just a ceremony." And I said no. At that time I actually was taking some classes and working and it was a busy life and tried to coordinate here to go there. So it was small, but it was all family and close friends.

AA: Yes. Which language do you use at home?

SG: At home, Spanish. *Israel y yo* [and me]. The kids, English.

AA: Okay.

SG: Now, one of the things that I look back on, one of the things, language, is because my parents did not speak the language at home and we had to learn English at school. My experience was like we were not allowed to speak Spanish at school in Crystal City.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so it was just part of okay, accept it or leave it, you know.

AA: Yes.

SG: So we did that. We had to learn a lot of things. Actually, you know, you couldn't go to the bathroom if you didn't ask them in English.

AA: Yes.

SG: So I always say we never had, I remember having a black and white TV—never cable at home, black and white TV, old TV—and I learned it from TV.

AA: English.

SG: English. You know, the children's programs and stuff.

AA: Sure.

SG: Without even knowing. And we had to learn. Like I said, we had to learn quick, because we were, and maybe it helped because we were in Oregon and Idaho. We worked with the Japanese farmers, I remember.

AA: Oh.

SG: It was very interesting. I would love to go there and look at the history. We try to go there. We have cousins there, Escobar's that live there. So because of migration, my parents took cousins and her nephews there and they settled there in Oregon, Ontario. So the last time I was there about fifteen years ago for a wedding, brought a lot of back memories. Beautiful part of the country.

AA: A lot of what memories?

SG: Beautiful part of the country, lot of mountains, lot of trees, but we did everything there. We lived there, like I said, more than in the South.

AA: Yes.

SG: So when we came it was November, you know. And to school we had long, I remember going to school late, until four or five o'clock, because we had to make up the hours.

AA: Oh, I see.

SG: You see, because we weren't in school there in the fall. And then we had to leave early, you know, March, April, I can't remember. But it depended on the season, because they started changing the harvesting, the chemicals, the machinery they used, you know, started doing different planting seasons, their harvesting. But when you're really thinking about it, is we were in our own community as a migrant farmworker.

AA: Did you live out in camps or in town or?

SG: Israel lived in one. Because when his father came to work at Del Monte, they had camps there in Del Monte. And Israel lived there and he could tell a lot of stories there. But he was nine years old, so he clearly remembers more. I was born and raised there, so as a migrant . . . Technically, he was not a migrant farmworker, you know.

AA: Israel.

SG: Yes, or his family. They worked at Del Monte. They established there.

AA: Okay.

SG: But they started for years working at, or living in that camp. They did. And he still has close connections and relationships with the children of those families.

AA: Wow.

SG: And it's different than my relationship with migrant farmworkers.

AA: Mmmm.

SG: Because we all kind of went different directions. Wherever the labor was needed, you know. And we're just reconnecting on Facebook.

AA: Oh! [Chuckles]

SG: [Chuckles] So it's like, oh, my gosh! I said, "So now I have more time." It's like, whoa, we could, yes.

AA: Okay.

SG: Yes, going and talking, back to history and all that, so yes. So we had our own little community, the migrant farmworkers. We had our home. We lived on West LaSalle Street.

AA: Okay.

SG: But we were not able to get involved in activities. Music, cheerleading, other things, because our timing. We weren't there when we could participate. So we never had that opportunity to do that. So then you had the people that were there year-round or different fields of work.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so we always looked at it also, I don't want to say it, but they made us feel like they were a little bit upper, higher class, than we were, because I couldn't go in and try to get a job at a grocery store because I probably wasn't part of that community.

AA: And when you say "they" are you referring to other Latinos or white?

SG: Other Latinos, yes. Crystal City, you know . . .

AA: Okay.

SG: The establishment was because of labor work with Del Monte, the factory and field work. They used call *la criba* (the onion ones), I remember.

AA: The sorting and packing sheds?

SG: Yes. Yes. There you go, yes. There warehouses and the coolers and whatever. So people stayed there year-round and worked.

AA: Yes.

SG: But there was quite a few that were migrant farmworkers that traveled.

AA: So the class distinction was more by jobs, more economic.

SG: Yes. Yes. And possibly even educational. You know, I didn't finish high school there.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, even this summer, working with migrant education, Title I, in Southwestern [Minnesota], I ended up kind of recruiting, going and identifying families where my last working in the fields [was] in Olivia, Minnesota, Hector. I kind of go, whoa, you know, I'm back here, a full circle.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: And so [chuckles] it was kind of like, quite a personal experience. But going back, looking at that now, because one of our missions with this organization is advocate to them how important college is, school and all that.

AA: Yes.

SG: And which I'm thriving on that one with them right now. But I'm done with that, because that was a six-month commitment. Now I go back in May. And so then it kind of reminds ... it's, I'm trying to remember; now I'm trying to.... questioning. When I was in Texas, was there a difference of programs, that we were funded because we were migrant population?

AA: Yes.

SG: Who were the educators? What were they teaching us in class versus the regular class?

AA: Because they were separate classes.

SG: Yes. Oh, we were separate buildings. We *never* really integrated with them, because we were there morning until, you know, four or five. And my older brother, Rudy, my eldest brother, he knows more about it, because he started to email me and I'm saving all that of his experiences, too.

AA: Hmmm.

SG: And he's, yes. It's just kind of interesting.

AA: With regard to the language . . .

SG: Yes.

AA: You speak Spanish at home between you and Israel.

SG: Always.

AA: English among your children.

SG: Yes.

AA: How about when you go outside the home? What do you and Israel speak?

SG: English. English we do for respect of the community.

AA: Okay.

SG: You know, maybe I'm wrong, but I've been successful with it. [Pauses] I mean there's a whole new, my way of thinking, but in general is right now, the reason why we taught our children English only at home we still listen to Spanish music. At that time there was no Direct TV so we didn't have Spanish stations. Now we do. But going back, because of my family, how I learned English, my education, and I didn't finish high school there, so I really don't know much of what would have happened with my education being there. Israel and I always said we would speak to them in English because we hoped that they would have a better opportunity in school.

AA: Yes.

SG: And they would have an advantage that I didn't. Or Israel just started learning English literally when he got here in the late 1970s. He kind of had the ability because he studied it in Mexico.

AA: Okay.

SG: So he kind of understood it, but he said, "I literally learned it here." So we were in a dominant English community.

AA: Yes.

SG: We wanted to make it easier for our children when they went to school. And at least they would have an advantage, I felt. Now, one thing I would change would be that I wish I would have raised them bilingual.

AA: Yes.

SG: And they are bicultural, but not bilingual.

AA: Yes.

SG: Veronica did study Spanish. She speaks it very well and writes it very well because she studied it. And she was the eldest, so she still had that participation with families in Spanish.

AA: Yes.

SG: But she speaks it and writes it very well. And so I wish I would have done that more to Josue, because Josue will understand it but he does not speak. He knows of it but he won't speak it. So that's one of my regrets, that I should have kept that language. But he listens to the music, you know.

AA: Okay.

SG: And he likes to watch films, foreign films in Spanish, you know. But I wish I would have done that because looking back now I see that. You know, how do you identify bilingual? And I just smile when students graduate from college and they're bilinguals.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I go, oh, yes. And they're the ones getting the jobs. Seriously, you know, in terms of because of whom, you know, their background.

AA: Sure.

SG: And I accept that. And now I wish I would have done that to my children, that I would have kept the language more. Veronica has it, but we still speak English at home with them.

AA: Okay, you say your parents and Israel's parents don't speak much English.

SG: Well, Israel's parents did speak zero.

AA: Not at all?

SG: Right.

AA: So how do they communicate with his grandkids?

SG: That was really, really difficult. Very difficult. They managed it. They did. And a lot of translation going on. I'm fortunate that my parents were here the summers when they were growing up.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, and so they had to understand some of it. That's what I'm saying, they understand it. Veronica does, because she had more of the interaction, but Josue did not.

AA: Identify some cultural traditions that you consider Latino cultural traditions. How do you define them?

SG: How I define really, it's a lot. A combination of belief, religion, you know, that all comes with it. Our food.

AA: Yes.

SG: Particularly our food. It tells a story. It really does. And one of them really is the language, which my children or my son is probably, you know, has lost that already. Family, again, commitment to one another. Yes, keeping the family together, culture defined, it's so many aspects in terms of how you define the culture from your beliefs, your background, history.

AA: Yes.

SG: Religion.

AA: What are some of the traditions, Latino cultural traditions that you've kept or you've maintained?

SG: Well, so far, this generation with my Veronica, we did the *quinceañera* for her. Again, we're going back, it's very, very strong, is our food. I mentioned to you earlier that this week, starting tomorrow, start putting our traditional *tamales* together.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: The *buñuelos* (a dessert pastry that looks like a deep fried white flour tortilla), enchiladas, red enchiladas with *queso fresco* (fresh cheese, usually white; sometimes made from goat milk). They'll be making the rice. It seems like for our, and most cultures, but I know ours is just, it's a lot to do with food and how we keep the tradition. We've started a new tradition here, being in Minnesota, in American culture here. We've blended, you know, with different traditions, of course.

AA: Yes.

SG: Seems like we go back to the traditions that I was raised with and Israel, and now my children, and actually they're the ones that requested that. They said they didn't want turkey or ham, they said just do that. And so I'll be doing that. And maybe they'll continue doing that, because they're going to help this time, they said, but who knows. [Chuckles] They come back when it's ready to eat and that's fine. But Veronica's fiancé Loren loves them, so he wants to come and learn how we do it, which is a good sign.

AA: Yes.

SG: Because Veronica said, "Oh, let's have Loren because he really wants to know." So he wants to come and he'll be here. And then Josue's girlfriend, she's going to be in the Twin Cities with her family, but she was disappointed because she loves to eat them and she wanted to know how, too.

AA: How to make tamales.

SG: Yes, tamales. Yes. And so maybe the tradition will continue, but our tradition is that, it was very difficult. We did do some *posadas* (means lodging; a re-enactment from December 16 to 24 of Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of shelter) for Christmas holidays, but it's very difficult, you know. And we're satisfied just to go to Mass, you know, and it's not the Midnight Mass anymore.

AA: Right.

SG: Because it's late and cold and, you know, we don't do the . . .

AA: Explain the *posadas*.

SG: Oh, the *posadas*. God, it's been years. But we did them in Saint Francis. And you start the beginning of December, if I'm correct, and well, the *posadas* you start at every home, and you have prayers and celebrations at different homes and you start that.

AA: Yes.

SG: And of course you always have entertainment and food and all that. But we haven't done that in years, you know. And I think we ended up doing just, you know, with a celebration of Guadalupe. [December 12, the festivity of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, Our Lady of Guadalupe.]

AA: Okay.

SG: The first weekend in December usually it happens. And I know Israel went to a Saint Paul one and here I didn't hear anything about what was going on in Saint Francis, because they used to do that, too, as well. But you kind of adjust depending on the *posadas*. I mean the tradition in Mexico is totally different than how you do it in the U.S., you know. And everybody does it differently now. You kind of adjust with, really, with American culture and time, you know. So yes, it's been years that we haven't done it. So those are the things that we're losing.

AA: Yes. Veronica's friend Loren.

SG: Her fiancé.

AA: Oh, okay. Wants to learn.

SG: Yes.

AA: So apparently Veronica talks about it in a good way.

SG: Yes, she does, and Josue does, too. I think maybe all those years that we kept saying, "This is who you are, you know, this is who we are. Community might not accept you or do, but this is who you are, you've got to be strong." It makes you stronger. But first, you know, remember I was protective.

AA: Yes.

SG: Kind of wanted to test the waters and see. Because I want to be respectful in terms of not shovel it into their face. And I don't like people asking me to either. If it was in a conversation, you want to learn, yes. But not just because, you know, just in general, I don't like to do that.

AA: Yes.

SG: But Veronica does talk to him, yes. I've noticed she's started talking to him about traditions. And she gets emotional sometimes. She's so funny. I said, "Over Christmas lights?" [Chuckles] She said, "We don't do that until a certain day . . ." Because my father's birthday was, we started our own, my father's birthday was January 6th, the three wise kings, that's why his name was Baltazar.

AA: Oh, okay.

SG: And we would always keep the Christmas tree, all the decorations, until the day after January 6th. And so my daughter called the other day. She said, "And we never put anything up until . . ." Well, we did it right after Thanksgiving Friday, you know, that's our tradition that we started here, putting up the Christmas tree and Christmas lights, whatever. And then she knew, without me telling her, well, she heard the stories. I need to keep it up because that's the way my mom would do it for dad, because my dad's mother would do it, too, because he was born on January 6th.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so my mom would do it and then I did it. And now my daughter told him, "Loren, you put them up too early because it was good weather [laughs] in October." "Oh, I'm sorry, Veronica, do you want me to take them down?" "No," she said.

AA: [Laughter]

SG: "But we must keep them up until January 6th, after Grandfather's birthday." [Laughs] So I think we kind of started, you know? So yes, I'm looking forward to being in the kitchen and have them enjoy food. [Chuckles]

AA: What other cultural traditions have you passed on to your children?

SG: Cultural traditions. I'm going to go back, religion, faith. Our faith.

AA: Okay.

SG: Catholic.

AA: Yes.

SG: Family. Music—still music. We still listen to it. Basically, I know they're going to lose some they will be losing some as the generation goes on, because I definitely have lost some coming, my establishing here, but always reminding them, you know, who they are.

AA: What type of relationship did your family have with neighbors or employers, church, schools?

SG: My family? Because of our early participation with Saint Francis and community projects that we were asked to be involved, and we always had this attitude where they're ... my attitude, and I think Israel's was, too, that we were involved to learn more about the community and its culture, but also share parts of ours to them. And so there were some bumps on the way. And professionally, not our faith, religion, we never had issues there, of course, but professionally we have. We have. Educational, no. In my education, no, but for my children, yes. They did have . . .

AA: Yes.

SG: We talked a little bit about it.

AA: Right.

SG: But it always comes too back of remembering our roots, who defined us. It's just a bump in our journey, let's learn from it. Let's teach them, you know, who we are. Show them.

AA: What were some of those bumps?

SG: Oh, you know, the bumps were probably career advancements, career opportunities. Israel got educated, I mean he has three [degrees], two technical and a bachelor's in social work and he could never get the job here. And he tried. He tried for a long time, and they were always contracted jobs with no benefits. And he came to the point, they're not hiring me, you know. They're always hiring the next person or, you know. We've always said, we get educated, we get experience, we know who we are, we've established; you know, maybe they'll give me the opportunity. I don't think they, he feels strongly they did not. And he's pretty open-minded about it.

AA: Yes.

SG: And there were some, you know, and since you wonder, okay. So that's why he made that move to the Twin Cities. Take it, it's a larger community, more need, more demand, and the other thing that Israel advantage had that, there's not a lot of male social workers. And he would have loved to have worked here in the school district, but they would always hire someone that never had it. So it was kind of interesting.

AA: Sure.

SG: So it comes to the point, well, they don't want me and I've got to move on. So he did that. And for me, the twenty-five years of career I've had, oh, what an experience. But there's always

been that maybe it's me, my personal feeling that you always have to prove yourself twice.
[Chuckles]

AA: Yes.

SG: Especially if you're a female, a minority, and you're bilingual. And it's always interesting, yes. And possibly, possibly if my goal is, I don't know, when I finish my master's, my thesis could be in that particular area, you know, that I'm putting my thoughts in writing and all that. But not to be critical, but hopefully there will be an awareness in terms of what people say in your environment. Oh, I still, you know, a lot was said. I'm still going to teach you how to speak English.

AA: Yes.

SG: [Chuckles] I mean, that's discriminatory, you know. You're going, okay. [Chuckles] Write that down. [Chuckles] You know. But you kind of go, okay, hmmm. You know, you kind of joke about it, but it is offensive. What was the other? You know, little commentaries like that. It happens, it does. And I think you've known and experienced it, you know. Not with your students. And it's like, hmmm. You know, you wonder. Really, it's people speaking the stupidity things they really don't realize they're saying. You know, so it does happen. And I've experienced that in those twenty-five years. Oh, I can tell you a lot of stories there. And that's just one. One really good one that came, one of our ... was running for legislator, his name was Brian, I think he only finished one term and then he didn't run anymore. Young man, came to our home, Israel and I. And he wanted to tell us about why he wanted to become a city council [member] in Moorhead and all that.

AA: Hmmm.

SG: And I'll never forget, and I don't think he'll ever forget that conversation. Because I get tired of people who say, oh, we're here for you, and all this B.S. I say, been there done that, you know, just be yourself. I don't need this.

AA: Yes.

SG: And we were having a discussion. Young man, and quite talented, and he wanted to talk to us about who we were, what we want, and all that. And then he told me he was not prejudiced. And I said, "Well, Brian, can you define prejudice?" And he kind of told me, you know, general encyclopedia or dictionary prejudice. And I said, "Well, I'll tell you. I am prejudiced. And you have to experience it to define prejudice. I can tell you right now, if I see a gang of black guys coming towards me, guess what I'm going to be doing? The same as you would be. I would run into my car or my house and lock the doors if I felt this threat. But because of my being experienced in prejudiced situations—and believe me, it's been generations—I have the ability to go, wait a minute. Critically think, wait a minute. Why am I doing this?"

AA: Yes.

SG: “I’ve experienced it *myself*. So inside of me, I’m a human being—I will be.” I said, “So I clarify that right away with our experiences that I go, wait a minute, no. So if you tell me you’re not prejudiced, you’re not telling me the truth, because you *are* prejudiced. It’s okay to say it. The only advantages that we have is that we’ve experienced it and we understand—totally understand. And no one is going to tell me,” I said, “And I can relate to them.”

AA: So, to put it in perspective, did acceptance or not acceptance, as in the case of the bumps, as you called them, by the larger community, by the host community here, did that affect your family’s decision to settle and to stay here in the community?

SG: Yes. With my studies that I’d been doing, American culture, history, and my continuing education, always, always reading and talking to other groups of people, this community is very collective. Meaning they are more accepted, acceptance of other communities. And that has to be with the Scandinavian culture.

AA: Yes.

SG: We almost have the same belief. And looking back, my neighbors, church people.

AA: Yes.

SG: Not saying, you know, some of them always have that stereotypical. But I really think, with my experience and knowledge, and I think it was the acceptance of the host, this community, and because deep down we believe in the same family values.

AA: Yes.

SG: And Israel and I, we were very young when we settled here, came here, and we were determined to make it work. So it’s a lot about, again, family commitment, determination. You see something negative, what do you do?

AA: Yes.

SG: I’ve learned not to burn bridges. I have learned if it takes me a lifetime, I will make a difference to that person that was negative or that particular organization or something through the back doors with my tools in place in educational attack, maybe.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know. But, oh yes, I’ve experienced it. And it will be interesting to see my children, as they get older, they’ll talk to me or us about their experience. They’re not there yet. They’re not ready, I mean, even my daughter marrying a wonderful young man in the Twin Cities area, it’s going to be a whole different culture, too, you know, the families.

AA: Sure.

SG: You know, so that's another story, another book, to see how she deals with all that. And how we're going to deal with it, you know, because it is different. The way we eat and the way we entertain, the way, you know. [Chuckles] Jokes we say. [Laughs] So it will be interesting!

AA: But you don't talk about it yet.

SG: No. She, no, they won't. They're very strong willed, both of them. Very, my daughter's *very* strong willed, so no, she won't yet. Now I'm hearing little stories, like she's going back to some of our cultural beliefs and roots, you know. So that's satisfying.

AA: Something that you deliberately passed on or she just picked up from family and others?

SG: I think it's Israel and mine's way of keeping that together.

AA: Okay.

SG: That she's picking up. I don't want to say we enforce it. Yes, we reminded her who she was.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, I mean, not literally doing it, but kind of like, slap in the face, hey, you know, wake up. You're Mexicana.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: You know. [Laughter]

AA: Do you feel part of the larger community?

SG: Yes. I do.

AA: How?

SG: My involvement in probably the last fifteen years. Not the first fifteen, some years, because we were developing our commitment to the community. But yes, I do, I do feel part of the community. I took the opportunities with my career, with the FMCVB, my involvement with organizations, non-profit and profit organizations and corporations that, even now, I can still go in someone's office, government office, and they'll still remember what I've done for them. Work, commitment, respect. And they'll return that favor.

AA: Good.

SG: My daughter, I'm not trying to say my daughter, when she graduated from Concordia, and she was eleven years with Minnesota Army National Guard and she was stationed two years in Iraq. She only came home once, so it was quite a whole history for her there—her own history making. But she couldn't it's a matter of relationship and partnership and communication with

your involvement in the community, but you also have to prove yourself. And I always felt that our family had to prove ourselves over and over, and still doing it. But she couldn't have just gotten a job. And so because of my involvement in the community with Morrie Lanning—and of course, it helped that Veronica was in Concordia and graduated from Concordia—that I called Morrie and said, Morrie, Veronica is looking for a job, blah, blah, blah. And we're not asking for."

AA: Morrie Lanning?

SG: Morrie Lanning. When he was, he's legislator. And I said, "We're not asking for favors, but she's just another name on another resume." And he made calls and she got an interview and it was up to her. And she got the job working for the House.

AA: Okay.

SG: You know and so it was . . .

AA: For the House of Representatives?

SG: Yes. And that was my, not just mine, my family, the commitment we did with the community. This is who we are, you know. We're ready to give back, but we need guidance, help. So he placed some calls. And he's well respected in the Capitol, and so they said, "Would you please look at this resume?" And they did, and they called her in and she got interviewed and she got the job. So she kind of has learned that's what I'm saying, is those are my tools that I have developed that. And that's something that I want to teach in the future to people, you know.

AA: Yes.

SG: Don't forget where you come from, but you've got to be part of a community. And there's going to be bumps, big ones and small ones. But don't give up. And she really realizes that. So those are little things, you know, but it would have not happened if I would have come in here and demanded, "I am . . ."

AA: Sure.

SG: You know, "I have the right . . ." No. No, it doesn't happen. You need to play the game here. And it's not always good either, because it's you know, with Israel, I mean, he played the game right but it just didn't . . .

AA: Still didn't work out.

SG: Yes.

AA: How satisfied are you living in the Fargo-Moorhead area?

SG: Very strongly satisfied. Again, community, the opportunities. With the Fargo Air Show, Dick Walstad, business owner, retired, and Jenner Schroeder, they sort of adopted me more and more the last three years, because they feel, yes, I'm doing a lot ... I create a lot of volunteer work for them, but in return, they're kind of guiding me. You know, they're personally, professionally, they are there, you know, saying, "Okay, you want to go back to school, you want to do this in the next ten years," or whatever. They're saying, this is what you're going to do." So you need those leaders.

AA: Yes.

SG: Partners in the community to do that. And I'm very fortunate that I have that relationship still.

AA: And you've taken care to develop and maintain those relationships.

SG: Oh yes, you have to. I'm very good at networking and I take it back, you know, three, four, or five years ago, that we have to survive, you know. So I think a lot of that contributes to who I am today. And if I can do it, you know, I would say in my school papers in Crystal City they say I only went to seventh grade. And I have developed all this, so education, knowledge, very important for me. And it might not make me a million bucks, but it's something that is personal, and for my family, and hopefully to contribute something back to humanity.

AA: What is the ethnic composition of the Latino community in Fargo-Moorhead?

SG: Hmm. Define that more. Clarify that more.

AA: In terms of numbers, I guess just the population numbers.

SG: Statistics and all that?

AA: Yes, demographics. But also the ethnic community in terms of Mexicano, Puerto Rican, Colombian, Guatemaltecos.

SG: Well, Fargo-Moorhead, it's declined.

AA: Yes.

SG: A lot of it has to do with, well, the first ones were migrant farmworkers coming, a huge population. Now the pattern is they're in Southwestern Minnesota because federal regulation has changed of identifying a migrant worker and family.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so it definitely has changed a lot. But with North Dakota State University, they do attract a lot of South American and Mexico future educators that come in and do that. They do

have a huge population, but they come here and they leave. They get their 4, [year degree] they get their PhDs or they go somewhere and then they go back to their native country.

AA: Yes.

SG: So their goal is different than a lot of people migrating from the South coming here. You know, usually I still feel that it's still looking for the hard labor, you know, the restaurants, the hotels, agricultural. You know, they still do that, but to my knowledge here, the population, I don't see it as much anymore. It used to be in the summer you would see a huge, but not anymore, because that's kind of known because of the migration pattern, but now settling here of Latinos or from other parts either the West or East Coast, Cubans, or from South America, I don't see a lot myself anymore like I used to.

AA: Yes.

SG: You know, grocery store or at the shopping store, I don't anymore.

AA: In the past, what issues have you seen in the community that affected Latinos throughout the years?

SG: Throughout the years it always had to do with the profiling.

AA: Yes.

SG: It doesn't matter, I don't care how much education or training they got, they were always going to profile a Latino. Yes, and we experienced that ourselves, too. Especially when an incident happens, you know. Media is always going to be there. And it has changed with a lot of the health initiative and issues that programs started, grants that came in a few years ago.

AA: Yes.

SG: With Yoke-Sim [Gunaratne], you know, the Culture Diversity Project and all that.

AA: Yes.

SG: Knowledge came out of it, but you're going to profile, not just for Latinos but for Native Americans and Other. And now even Kurdish or Somalians and all that, because of Lutheran Social Services bringing the population here. But it's going to happen. But profiling, I still feel that it's still there. And the stereotype and the prejudice is still there, but not as visible as it was probably many years ago. I'm always interested in terms of knowing what, I'm always involved, I still get communications on the state level and city and county of what's going on. I'm hoping that I make a difference and say, hey, we're still here. You know, we're all human beings. But I don't think for myself ... yes, you know, I've experienced it throughout my years here, but it's been part of your life, my life.

AA: And there's some changes, as you mentioned. Which issues continue to exist today?

SG: In terms, in terms of towards minorities?

AA: Of the issues that you were, yes.

SG: The issues . . .

AA: Specifically Latinos.

SG: Yes. Okay, Latinos . . .

AA: Which very often are the same for some of the other cultural groups.

SG: Yes, they are, in general. You know, I really think there's still the profiling.

AA: Yes.

SG: Not necessarily saying the police department or the sheriff's department, but as a community in general.

AA: Yes.

SG: And you look, I mean, dominance blondes, blue eyes here, you know. White American cultural dominance, so there's always going to be, you know, if someone comes in and new community here but I think our population, I'm kind of curious to see what the census says. I know we've grown population-wise. Not Moorhead in particular, but we have grown tremendously almost thirty thousand from the last census year community-wise.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I'm curious to know the census in the next couple years when it comes out. You know, have we grown or have we stayed, and it's interesting to see our newcomers coming. I know we've had migrations from small towns closing down, farmers, but they tend to migrate to a larger community like Fargo-Moorhead for health care reasons and education reasons, too. So I'm kind of curious to see then what the population of Latinos is but it all depends on the economy, too, what is going on.

AA: Yes.

SG: What is the demand? You know, if the economy is not going good again, are we going to see more migrant people coming here, looking for work? Would that change again the attitude of the community? Of the communities that are established, is there any new community from the last ten years? They haven't really experienced what happened maybe fifteen, twenty years ago. You know, so it's interesting to see all that. But I myself have been really busy, involved in a lot of volunteer work at the state level and regional and locally. I'm still out there, I still want to get involved, be there. And so I haven't had any bad experiences lately in this community.

AA: Mmmm.

SG: And I'm fortunate that I go to the Twin Cities, and definitely there's a huge [Latino] population there. And I'm always looking at my environment, how healthy it is. Obviously, it's a larger destination and they have larger issues going on.

AA: Yes.

SG: But here, right now, for me personally right now, that I've been too involved actually within the community and the state, that my goal, being involved in those situations is to remind decision makers, policy makers that we're here. We're going to need those facilities, we're going to need that service, not just in general, the majority of the population, but the minority population.

AA: Yes. And that the needs are unique.

SG: Right. That we are . . .

AA: Okay, you're telling me that there's a difference between one group and the other.

SG: And I cannot speak for all Latinos. I speak of what the basis, the culture, family values.

AA: Yes.

SG: The needs are going to be different than right now, for instance, elderly. I'm curious, we're waiting for the studies from the census of the population. Because I'm not, my volunteer work, working for the state, is not just for my region, it's for the whole state.

AA: Yes.

SG: So it will be interesting to get all those statistics and see what's going to happen. Because a population of minorities, in particular Latinos, what are the needs for health care? It's going to be for their well-being, for them, and it's different than it would be for me versus a migrant farmworker, so there's a lot of venues that it's happening. It could be people that have settled, but like for my mom, you know, we're doing home care. She was here last winter with me four months. She loved it.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: She thought that it was beautiful but she thought it was crazy living here, because I kept shoveling snow.

AA: That's true. [Chuckles]

SG: And so that was an experience for her. She took pictures back of all the mountains of snow, showing to her friends. She thought it was like winter wonderland for her. But, so what I'm saying is that still traditionally, we respect that we need to take care of our parents. So how is that going to change in this particular situation? You know, like I'm experiencing it with my mother right now, which we did with my dad, was. Traditionally here, we just go to a nursing home, but because is there going to be a demand that we're going to do more home care? So what are the eligibility requirements? Who are the population [that are] going to need it?

AA: Yes.

SG: So they're looking so I'm really, really excited that they're looking at, I'm on a committee of diversity in policy making, so my role is to understand the basis and where we're going. So yes, definitely, that's the way I want to make a difference. So there will probably be bumps on the road there, too. Because every community has different needs and I want to make sure that our voices are being heard of what we need. Can't promise anything, but at least be heard. [Chuckles]

AA: Keep trying.

SG: Yes.

AA: Describe the relationship of the Latino community to the majority community in Moorhead.

SG: In my perspective, in my way of seeing things, it definitely could get, we could work on it more. Again, there is a very small portion of minorities here, yes, so definitely there needs to be more continued maintaining that commitment of relationship, you know.

AA: Yes.

SG: Always being optimistic and looking for that relationship that needs to be maintained throughout. Sure.

AA: What is it like?

SG: Right now? For me, personally, it is again about maintaining the relationships and participating in the community. For me, it's fine, all the years that I contributed to it, that I feel satisfied with it, me personally.

AA: Yes.

SG: Israel might say something differently, but for me, personally, I feel the life satisfaction of where I'm at right now. And who knows what's going to be the next ten, fifteen years.

AA: Talk to me about the state or the condition of Latino education in this area. Whether it's K-12 or college or . . .

SG: I have not been involved a lot in the community education level just because my children are not involved anymore.

AA: Yes.

SG: But what I had heard is, well, experience from my husband, he feels that it's, particularly for Latinos, it seems like the educational level, if they get into an issue or they're not learning as fast as the educator wants them to do they tend to do that secondary school. What is it called?

AA: Alternative learning center.

SG: Alternative. And he was always against that, because he feels that they needed that participation with the larger community. And once you take them out and you put them here, you know, are they going to be as successful, or is it just another number? He was very strongly against that. And so I know because of working with migrant education, Title I, this summer, statistically, and working, appointed to this Minnesota Board on Aging, specific for diversity and policy making, was Latinos are still lacking in education. They're a higher percentage in dropouts. Not going even ... one of my goals was to get the GED.

AA: Yes.

SG: Because they're still dropping out of high school. So that's the national level. Imagine what is every community is going to be different depending on what resources or programs we have available. And so my personal feeling, I think in this community there still needs to be greater emphasis on education in minorities, particularly in Latinos. I really, really feel, I strongly believe that we need to prepare the community for the future.

AA: Yes.

SG: We're going to the community's going to be changing whether we like it or not. We need to be there and that means educating everyone including minorities and Latinos to the best education that we can offer. And the community here maybe I feel they need to emphasize more on it, the K-12.

AA: Yes.

SG: And that also involves parent involvement, definitely. The family involvement and their children's upbringing and education.

AA: Tell me about that change that's coming.

SG: The change in the next well, maybe because I'm being . . .

AA: Which change and how.

SG: Well, I don't know. Maybe I was studying too much philosophy here. [Chuckles] And going through this wonderful life cycle of mine and having all these opportunities. Personally, I mean, I think because it's been two years since I left FMCVB, and people if I would have been still there working at this facility, this question would not. I wouldn't even bother with this question you just asked me, because I was content with what I was doing. I'm busy, busy lifestyle, have money to pay the bills, now it's like *oof*, you know. Now I'm finding myself to go to a different career. But it's been challenging.

AA: Yes.

SG: Because of the job market, the economy, government, everything's happening. Just because of what I feel that in the next ten years, not only here but the whole U.S., we're going to go through these changes even because of the threats we've been having. I mean, Fargo-Moorhead is totally different, but we have a lot of, how do I say community leaders that have died or passed on, you know.

AA: Yes.

SG: Leaders that were involved in the development of the community from business to community awareness to involvement of issues that we encountered throughout the last twenty years. Those leaders are not, they're slowly not being here. They're starting to die off. Like Seawarden or Litton, the Bergens. And even though they were leaders for business development and community, like the Schlossman's—their sons are still here with West Acres—they were farmers.

AA: Hmmm.

SG: You know, so you start looking. Okay. The hospital's changing, changed. Sanford. You know, are the colleges still going strong, you know, educational? I mean, it all starts from the base, how we're going to grow. So in the next ten years, because of the economy, are we going to have more migration coming in with different minority groups? Is the demand going to be here? What is the need? That's just my perspective. And I feel non-profit organizations are going to be more I feel more in demand.

AA: Yes.

SG: More independent consultants. We are changing how society is going to be changing. The economy is changing, I feel.

AA: Are there situations or incidents that call attention to the delivery and acceptance of public services?

SG: Well, for example, it's just happened that my mother was here last year.

AA: Yes.

SG: In winter. Eighty-six she was then. She's a Type II diabetic, no English, totally set into her own beliefs and culture and a very strong lady. And I think society made her that way. She's not afraid to say what is in her mind. [Chuckles] She doesn't care. And so, but I planned it that I wanted good health care for her. Obviously, she has Medicare/Medicaid because of the years she worked here and because of my father being a World War II veteran, too. I talked to my family doctor and I asked him if he could see my mother when she was here three, four months. Because she's a type II diabetic and the whole history, and he said, "Absolutely." So I did experience it was interesting to see that I put into place, I said, "Okay, I need this service, the guidance. I'm not an expert on diabetes and all that stuff and she's eighty-six." So I did call my doctor, and he said, "Oh, absolutely, set up the appointment." Very . . . my mother wanted to take the doctor with her back to Texas.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: Maybe twenty, thirty years ago, even during her era, it probably didn't happen.

AA: Yes.

SG: I don't know. And so it was a great set up, every four weeks she had to go in and see him. The first month she had to go in twice. What I did was because I'm an adult and she's an adult, I wanted her to experience the whole medical service providing at its best, so Israel actually, my husband suggested, "Don't go in there, because you've done it." And I said, "I really don't want to do the translating/interpretation, I'm tired of it and I don't know the medical field anymore—or I never did." And then he said, "Well, why don't you tell them that you need service."

AA: Translation.

SG: Translation service. So when I called in when I called the doctor, actually, I kind of told him the whole thing and the story and he said well, actually, he offered it, too. He said, "Actually, you know, if you like, I will put in a request to send in a translator, interpreter." And I said, "Oh, that would be great." So that way they can go in, and she'll be part of owning her appointment, not me telling her what to do. And so every time we did that, they scheduled someone to come in, and I was very impressed with the service they did with medical health care.

AA: Yes.

SG: The doctor was excellent, did every health examination he could just to know her and had a communication with her doctor in Texas. And so we set it up really, really nicely and then he sent a nurse twice a week just to check her vital signs and stuff because I was kind of nervous, you know. I didn't know what to do, if anything would happen, rather than call 911. But she was the healthiest ever, and that's because we maintained that communication with the health care providers.

AA: Sure.

SG: Me, the nurse, and just balancing everything, and then her life. She really enjoyed that. So the service of the community in that purpose was excellent. I did call social services to see what they could do for her in case anything would happen. I was just preparing myself for the unexpected, if she needed to go to a home care. But she would not go to a nursing she would not. Definitely not. You know. And I said, “Well, when it comes to a point, you know, we have to be ready.” And she would not want Meals on Wheels to come and serve her there. She’s strong enough to do it, even though it’s dangerous now.

AA: [Chuckles]

SG: You know, so those are the little things that I learned. And then they offered her all that. I was impressed with Clay County’s social services. They did call several times and offered all those services, but my mother declined it. And so they did another follow up and I said, “No, my mother has declined it.” You know, so they were there to offer that service. The only thing that I would have been concerned was that’s just happened that she was going to stay home with me now, and I’m going to college or busy and have to leave, I would need someone to come and stay with her that would speak Spanish.

AA: Okay.

SG: And there’s not a lot of health care providers that would do it, so that would have been a huge, huge barrier, language, because of the trust. I would not be there. Not me, but for her, if a stranger would come in.

AA: Right.

SG: And not know the language. So that was kind of an interesting awareness like, oh, okay. So yes, the service so far that I experienced temporarily with my mother and health care was good. Other general community services I feel that I’m satisfied at this point.

AA: Tell me about the community organizations that in any way touch the lives of Latinos.

SG: Mmmm. Well, I would definitely . . . when you say community organization, of course, the churches, all churches have done that, first. And the healthy initiative, is that the right organization? It’s still here, the healthy initiative project [Moorhead Healthy Community Initiative].

AA: Okay.

SG: Who was in it? Who started that one? Oh, I can see her. She’s still in Fargo.

AA: Diana Hatfield was . . .

SG: Diana Hatfield, that’s her. Right. The other organization was the Cultural Diversity with Yoke-Sim [Gunaratne].

AA: Yes.

SG: And those were brought in because of the concerns we had with the wellness of our community with minorities.

AA: Yes.

SG: Particularly Latinos at that time. And the only organizations that I wish they would have gotten more involved would have been like the Kiwanis, the fraternal groups, Lions, you know, more the community organizations.

AA: Yes.

SG: And that is one of the things that I'm looking into working my summer job that I have in Southwest [Minnesota] is getting involved with those groups of people.

AA: Yes.

SG: I just feel that they need to have more awareness of the organizations, in particular, migrant education, because they, it's a community that will guide you. You know, so that is the area that I wish that they would have been more involved with minorities, in particular Latino, like when they had the Kiwanis Pancake Feed.

AA: Hmmm.

SG: You don't see a lot of again, but it's not part of our culture, but *we* went. And it was because I wanted to introduce my children to it, you know. So yes, those are the three that come to my mind right now.

AA: What role would groups like Mujeres Unidas and Centro Cultural play in the life of the Latino community?

SG: Of the Latinos. Mujeres Unidas, I don't think is as active as it was when Sister Carmen had it. Their mission was more for the women in particular. I believe it made a difference at that time for the young women and the women itself, and it was Sister Carmen that really started it, that started the program, Mujeres Unidas.

AA: Yes.

SG: I haven't heard much about it anymore. You know. And then the other one, the cultural center?

AA: Centro Cultural.

SG: Centro Cultural. I never got involved with it.

AA: Okay.

SG: I never did. I never understood their mission. People Escaping Poverty, but I think Duke [Shemp] is no longer there, you know, and he was a lot involved. He and the organization, People Escaping Poverty as an overall community.

AA: Are Latinos involved in political activity in the past and now? How?

SG: Yes. Well, they have. Like Sonia was, she [was] a school board member, was a school board member, she did it. And I know she had been appointed to several state committees by the governor in Minnesota. She's one of them. And I know well, my husband, Israel, ran for city council.

AA: Yes.

SG: And so there has been, you know, but not as much. You know even with experience with Israel running for city council, that was a *huge* challenge, that we knew, but we wanted to do it. Even parts of the community [chuckles] you could tell which community, way south of Moorhead, were more the conservative, close the door on you.

AA: Wow.

SG: [Chuckles] Oh, they'll still do it.

AA: But you went to knock on doors.

SG: Oh yes, they were not voting for you because you are a Latino or you're a minority, you know, very conservative.

AA: Hmmm.

SG: You're going to run into that here still in the community. So that was an interesting experience with that. So you really know who your neighbors are, you really, really do. And then we had a lot of great neighbors that came in and said literally, one of our neighbors was a huge Republican even though city council was not it wasn't supposed to be political, you know, Republican, Democrat or Independent.

AA: Yes.

SG: But he would come, "Israel, I've known you for years and you're my neighbor and I know who you are, I'm going to vote for you. Even though I know you're not a . . ." [Chuckles] You know, so some honesty came out of it.

AA: Yes. Yes.

SG: So it was an experience, you know, community awareness. I'm very glad that the people that put their names out there to run for and I know Sonia tried to she ran for county commissioner.

AA: Yes.

SG: The challenges were going to be there of who she was, female and being a minority, you know. And then who she was running against was well known, you know, Wayland. Grant Wayland, he was chief of police and is now county commissioner, so but I'm glad they're doing it. I hope not just for Latinos, for other minorities.

AA: Yes.

SG: Or even females, I don't think there is a lot out there yet here.

AA: Describe some of the realities of integrating a long established community with the more recent arrivals. Now, it's a two-part question.

SG: Yes.

AA: One of them is you touched a little bit about it earlier when you were talking about the Latinos who have been here and were born and raised here and those who are arriving new. But, also, other ethnic groups that are arriving as a new population.

SG: Here, this community?

AA: Right.

SG: Okay. I'm not going to, I think I kind of talked a little bit about it earlier. In the community, I will be honest with you, in the last couple of years. Before then I was so busy because I traveled a lot with my previous job; I was gone like sixty, seventy percent of the time, involved in my career and my position. But here in the community, new Americans, that I call them, I myself have not been involved in the last few years with it.

AA: Okay.

SG: In general, in the state, because my summer job took me to Southwestern Minnesota and I traveled to Mankato and I traveled to Rochester, I traveled all over that, where the majority population of new immigrants, new migrants were coming in, but my area was well, not necessarily, but the majority was Hispanics, Latinos.

AA: Yes.

SG: I did come across with new Somalian population coming in, into certain regions of the state, in particular, in Mankato. This is just my concept general—because of my actual experience, I was in the field—that there has been some friction between Somalians and Latinos.

AA: Yes.

SG: And I don't know why. But there, that could happen here, too. But there's a huge Latino population in Southwestern Minnesota right now. Huge. More than it was here in Fargo-Moorhead.

AA: Wow.

SG: Pattern is changing because of the demand. And so with Lutheran Social Services and other organizations bringing in Somalians—not as much as Kurds because they have been here for quite a few years—they're having some concerns. And that's kind of interesting to see. It could be because of the cultures, they still have the family values and all that, but I think the Somalian population could be that, how protective they are of women, you know.

AA: Yes.

SG: And versus the Latinos, and I don't know the whole history, but that easily could happen here if the new immigrants continue arriving and depending, the population, on Latinos, I don't know. Like I say, I'm waiting for the census to see what is the population. Do you know?

AA: No. No, I don't.

SG: Last time I saw it was like 2.9% and that was the last census. That's very ... I mean, it's defined, but, you know. So I have no idea.

AA: One final question.

SG: Oh, yes.

AA: Let's say you had a friend from somewhere else, South Texas, who had lived here fifteen, twenty years ago, was familiar with the area, but has not been here in the meantime. And calls you and says, "Sylvia, I'm thinking of moving somewhere, maybe Moorhead. What's it like now?"

SG: Mmmm. Well, first of all, my friend, I would ask, why do you want to move? What is your reason for moving?

AA: Yes.

SG: And depending on he or she, the answer, I would highly recommend it. But be prepared to get involved. Be prepared for climate changes. Be prepared to continue your education. Very important to survive.

AA: Yes.

SG: You need that involvement, that relationship with the community. What type of work are you looking for? You know, depending on the demand. It doesn't mean that, you know, if they were migrant farmworkers, well, obviously, you can't come during the winter. I would highly suggest you start in the spring or summer, then test it out, and then stay for their well-being.

AA: Yes.

SG: But employment in our region is one of the best, you know, but it's hard. Because you have to come in here and I really think that and as you're a professional, like a professor or something, you can come in and work, but you almost need to be part of the community to even have an opportunity to succeed. So if you're coming here thinking you're going to get a job like that. Yes, you probably can get one at Wal-Mart and typical jobs that people don't want, you know, at the grocery stores and stuff. I would definitely encourage her to come and be here, but I would question her on all these other things, you know. Be prepared. You know, if you're coming here just because. No. If you're coming here to settle, experience it, then yes, come and do it. And you'll have those opportunities if you work, if you're a part of the community.

AA: Is there something you want to share about your history here in Moorhead that we haven't covered yet?

SG: I think we've covered just about everything. [Laughter] I think my whole story. I don't know what the next chapter is going to be, but I'm still even figuring it out with my master's program and what do I want to do. I think I want to make a difference in the community, for the community in general as a whole, not a particular group of people. But especially, you know, and I shouldn't say especially, but of who I am and hopefully use that experience for all population in the community.

AA: Well, thank you very much.