

Esther (née Gonzales) Mayes (1924-)
Schoolmate of Madelyn (nee Payne) Dunham
Oral history recorded November 5, 2013 (Run time 48:21)

Esther Mayes was interviewed on November 5, 2013, in her home, Wichita, Kansas. The interview was conducted by Kym Dickey, with Steve Cless as the videographer.

Esther (née Gonzales) Mayes (March 8, 1924-) was two years behind Madelyn Payne at Augusta High School, and remembers her, but knew Arlene and Charles, her younger siblings, better. Her parents emigrated from Mexico in 1914, and her family was one of the minority families living in Augusta when she grew up. She shares some memories from that perspective, and memories about two of her brothers who saw action and died during World War II, one of whom received the Silver Star.

00.00-00.	Camera, sound adjustments
00.00-7.27	Personal information: Esther Mayes's birth name was Gonzales, no middle name. She was born March 8, 1924, 89 at time of interview. She talks about her siblings, how her father worked on the Santa Fe railroad, and about how her parents immigrated in 1914 to escape the revolution in Mexica. Her dad transferred to Augusta in 1928. She remembers about the building of the levee, about her family home, and the flood of 1928, when two other Mexican families took refuge at their house. Dr. Garvin delivered a baby during the flood, then send food back by boat. Later they moved to Oak, and she attended Garfield Elementary
07.28-11.59	School memories: She remembers kindergarten, school and school activities. She graduated high school in 1942.
12.00-13.49	Memories of Madelyn, who graduated in 1940: She remembers Madelyn as a tall blonde. Regarding the well-known story of Madelyn eloping after the prom, she corrected one detail. It was not a prom; rather they were called Banquets. She remembers Arlene and Charles (closer to her age) as always smiling.
13.50-18.04	About Depression, war telegraphs: Esther remembers how her family made do with food from the garden, preserving (her mom learned from a "German woman" how to can). She remembers when her dad's got his paycheck from the railroad and how it went to pay the grocery bill. For two weeks work he earned \$12.00. Her father worked through the Depression as the railroads kept busy. She talks about her brother Frank who was killed in war and how one telegraph worker spread the news. She notes the importance of the newspaper and of reading to her family.
18.05-23.26	High school memories, marriage, early adult life: She remembers classes she took, being married right after she graduated, working at Boeing, sheet metal, and taking Ballenger's bus service back and forth from Augusta to Boeing. She talks about her husband and how they met when he was stationed at Fort Riley, at YMCA get-togethers on North Topeka (not dances). He was in Mechanized Cavalry in service. From Virginia. Went overseas in 1944. Was in England, went in after battles to

	clean up. Released in 1945, lived with parents on Oak Street. She talks about censorship, letters, and V-mails from her brother and husband.
23.27-33.24	Brothers, war service, awards, and sacrifice: She remembers her brothers Frank and Sus (sp?). Sus was older. She was especially close to Frank. Frank tried to join Marines but was color blind, so joined National Guard, activated in Dec. 1941. Sus went overseas right away (42, went through African Campaign, was a paratrooper, wrote letters home, was in Sicily, then England, and was being processed to come home when he was killed in the Battle of the Bulge, in Jan. 45. He made the jump into Holland, was wounded on the 29 th and died in a field hospital on the 30 th . Frank was decorated shortly after D-Day. He received the Purple Heart and Silver Star. He served in the 37 th Infantry, Company I. She talks about the battle in which he was killed. Both brothers are now buried in the Elmwood Cemetery, Augusta.
33.25-41.25	About children, discrimination: Esther had two sons, lost one a few years ago. She relates the story of a cousin who in 1936 was hired, then fired from a teaching job when they found out he was of Mexican descent. Later he moved to Mexico and had very successful career. She relates a story about discrimination involving Herman Reed, and a parent interfering with the class seating arrangement. This memory was from the 9 th grade, in 1939.
41.26-42.32	Questions about Stanley Dunham: Esther relates what she heard about Stanley Dunham. There seems to have been a general belief that Stanley was “a ne’er-do-well” and that was the reason Madelyn’s folks wanted to discourage the relationship. Also, Esther notes, her parents were very protective of her.
42.33-47.01	Final thoughts: It was a great time to grow up. She remembers learning to swim in the old Walnut River when it was clear water, in particular how drowning boy was saved by a Manuel Cabralles. She relates memories of her mother making tortillas every day, and the day a friend of Franky’s stole the tortillas for the day. The fellow (Louie) was later killed in war.
47.15-48.21	The video ends with some shots of Sus’s and Frank’s medals.