

Obama Kansas Heritage Project

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Interviewer: Kym Dickey, Teresa Baumgartner

Interviewee: Esther (Gonzales) Mayes

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Note: Q1. Kym Dickey; Q2. Teresa Baumgartner

[Indistinguishable introductory chatter]

Q1. All right. We're here with Esther today. I'd like you to please state your full name, today's date, and where we're filming this interview.

EM. My name is Esther Mayes. This is November the 5th, 2013, Wednesday -- or Tuesday. Tuesday.

Q1. And where are we filming this interview?

EM. At my house on Athenian in Wichita, Kansas.

Q1. All right. And what was your maiden name, Esther?

EM. My maiden name was Gonzales.

Q1. Do you have a middle name?

EM. No. I think there were so many of us that they ran out of names.

Q1. Okay. And what were your parents' names?

EM. My mother was named Lupe. Do you want her maiden name or --

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. It -- it was Arritola, A-R-R-I-T-O-L-EM.

Q1. All right. And what was your father's name?

EM. Frank.

Q1. Frank. And when were you born?

EM. I was born March 8th, 1924, before any of you were a gleam in anybody's eye.

Q1. And how old would that make you?

EM. 89.

Q1. 89 years old -- or young -- years young. And where were you born at?

EM. Marion, Kansas.

Q1. And how many siblings do you have?

EM. Now or had?

Q1. Well, have had.

EM. I have one brother left only, and then I had four sisters and two other brothers.

Q1. And they're all passed?

EM. Yes.

Q1. Okay. And what was your father's occupation?

EM. He worked on the railroad, Santa Fe Railroad.

Q1. The Santa Fe, mm-hmm. And your mom, I imagine, stayed home and took care of kids?

EM. She had to. With eight children, you'd -- I mean, besides, then, I mean, she was an immigrant. She hardly spoke English when they came in there when --

Q1. Uh-huh. When did they come to America?

EM. When or where?

Q1. When.

EM. In 1914.

Q1. In 1914.

EM. And you know, now they always say they come for a better life and everything. My dad came to escape the Revolution in Mexico.

Q1. Uh-huh. And did he move to Marion --

EM. No.

Q1. -- right away or --

EM. He -- they crossed the border, and at that time it cost \$2 to cross the border, and you came in and got a work permit.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And they went to El Paso. They lived in El Paso. I had a sister born in El Paso, and then they went to Deming, New Mexico, and from there they came to -- to Marion, Kansas.

Q1. Okay. And what year did you move to Augusta?

EM. In 1928.

Q1. In 1928. And what brought the family to Augusta?

EM. Well, my dad was transferred. He worked in the railroad in Marion, and they transferred him, and he had a choice of Florence, Kansas or Augusta, and he picked Augusta, because the schools would have been better for us kids.

Q1. Uh-huh. And what did he do for the railroad? Do you know?

EM. He laid track, and then he was -- he was kind of a maintenance man for the switches. Back then, you know, they had -- they had to move the tracks, or the switches, for the trains, and he was kind of the maintenance man, kept the weeds out of them, and he just did manual labor.

Q1. Uh-huh. And your nephew, Steve, had said something about when it was cold or snowy and icy outside --

EM. He had to go to work to take -- keep the ice off of the switches.

Q1. Uh-huh -- that they lit some kind of balls or fire by the --

EM. They were torches.

Q1. Torches, okay -- and to get the ice off so that they could move the tracks.

EM. Uh-huh, yeah.

Q1. Uh-huh. And can you tell me where you lived at in Augusta?

EM. Yes. It was 200 School Street, but it's where the dike -- levee is now, and the -- they built the levee in 1937. We lived there until 1937, and then the City bought the -- the property.

My dad was buying it from a family named Deshirley, and of course, this was during the Depression, and they were very good to my

dad, because a lot of times he couldn't make the payment, and they didn't insist, and it was a big house. It had four rooms upstairs and four -- five downstairs.

And when they had the flood in 1928, which was a very bad flood, we had just moved there, and the Mexican families that lived -- two of them came to our house, and one of the ladies was going into labor at the time, and I can remember this just as plain -- one of the men swam to -- into town, into Augusta. We were across the tracks --

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. -- and Dr. Garvin came back in a boat with this man and delivered that child.

Q1. And then, Garvin -- Dr. Garvin was who Garvin Park was named after.

EM. Right, uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And then, the next day, he sent -- I -- I think Dr. Garvin did it -- he sent the boat back with food for us, and that's the first time I ever tasted peanut butter, (laughs) but I can remember tasting that peanut butter, and -- and that's all I remember about that flood. I don't remember the water going down, or what happened, or anything.

Q1. But a baby was born, and you got to taste peanut butter.

EM. Well, my mother became that child's godmother.

Q1. Oh. So after the flood -- or after '37, when they sold the house to the City, where did you live at then?

EM. Then we moved to 236 Oak Street.

Q1. 236 Oak, uh-huh. And you went to school, grade school, at Garfield School?

EM. I started in kindergarten there, and my teacher was Ms. McCoid (phonetic).

Q1. Ms. McCoid?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Mm-hmm. And what do you remember about Garfield School?

EM. Well, I remember that our class -- the building was kind of shaped like this, -- and our -- our room was the first one, and then, of course, they weren't -- you had to go out to go to another room.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And then, they had first and second divisions. The brighter kids were in the first division. Can you imagine them doing that now? And the -- the slower learners were in the second division. And that -- you know, that says I was in the first division: that paper you -- I showed you.

Q1. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

EM. And well, I remember we had a little band in kindergarten, and we went to different other schools and played our little instruments. I played the blocks, and there was sticks, and triangles, tambourines.

Q1. Do you remember any of the songs that you played or --?

EM. No.

Q1. No.

EM. No.

Q1. What did -- what kind of things did you do at recess time?

EM. Well, we got to go out on the playground when it wasn't too cold or the weather was nice and played tag.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Swing on the swings and the --

EM. We didn't have any swings there.

Q1. No swings. The merry-go-round?

EM. No. No, not there.

Q1. No, no, no. Did you get to play --

EM. And we had -- we had a rug, you know, where we took our naps. I don't know whether they still do that or not. And then we had -- they brought in milk in a little -- half-pint bottles, and it was 15 cents a week, and you got a little half-pint of milk every day.

Q1. Uh-huh. Did you go home for lunch?

EM. Yes.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. Well, of course, in kindergarten I only went half a day, but --

Q1. So --

EM. But I -- like I said, we lived on -- at School Street, which was on the other side of the tracks, and I can remember that my -- I

had a sister that went to junior high, and she was to pick me up and take me home.

Q1. Walk home with you?

EM. Mm-hmm. And one day, she didn't show up, and I stood, and I waited, and I waited, and I watched all the other kids go by and everything, and so finally I just started walking, and I -- I found my way home by myself. That was the first time. After that, she didn't have to come by.

Q1. Did she get in trouble?

EM. No --

Q1. Okay.

EM. -- but of course, I -- when I told my mother what happened, you know, she said, "Well, hide, so when -- so when Lupe gets home, she -- she won't know you're here, and she's -- she'll think she did something wrong." But anyway, it all worked out fine. After that, I was able to find my way home by myself.

Q1. So what grade did Garfield go up to?

EM. Kindergarten, first, and second, and then we went to third grade -- we went to -- it was called Lincoln School then, and it was that big old stone building. I think they built the junior high there eventually --

Q1. Oh, uh-huh.

EM. -- but it was called the Lincoln Building. And then we had third, fourth, and fifth grade there, and then we went to junior high, which was at 12th and State Street.



Q1. Oh. There was a junior high at 12th and State?

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. See, I live right next to 12th and State.

EM. Yeah. That was where I went to the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade there --

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. -- then ninth grade to high school.

Q1. To the high school.

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. And where was the high school located at that time?

EM. On -- it would be Cliff Drive and State Street --

Q1. Okay, where the junior high is now.

EM. -- and Clark -- end of Clark Street.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. The junior high's there now?

Q1. Uh-huh. Middle school, I guess, is what they call it these days.

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. So you went to -- what year did you graduate from high school?

EM. 1942.

Q1. In 1942.

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. And I know that Madelyn Payne, the President's grandmother, had gone to grade school at Garfield and then graduated in 1940.

EM. '40 -- 1940.

Q1. '40, uh-huh. Did you know her?

EM. I can remember seeing her, and that was about it.

Q1. That's it. And --

EM. She was tall, blonde. I can remember when -- see, we didn't have a -- a prom. They said she got married the night of the prom, but we didn't have proms. We had banquets, and the junior class paid for the senior class banquet, so it had to be after one of the banquets that she got married. And of course, the story was that her folks didn't know it. She eloped and --

Q1. Mm-hmm. And you said Nina June told you a little secret?

EM. Nina -- Nina June told me that, that -- said if her -- Madelyn's folks had found it out, they'd had it annulled.

Q1. So they weren't for it at all. Not at that young age, I'm sure. And then, you said also that you remember Arlene?

EM. Arlene and Charles a lot -- lot, because they were near my class.

Q1. Uh-huh. And what do you remember about them?

EM. Well, I remember they had big round faces, and now I think of it, they were just like happy faces, because they were always smiling. Then, that -- that's about all I -- I remember about them.

Q1. Do you remember where they lived at?

EM. No. I think they lived on the north end of State Street, but I'm not sure.

Q1. Okay. And -- let's see. In 1929 was the Black Friday and the start of the Depression. What do you remember about that?

EM. About the Depression?

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. Well, my dad was a proud man, and he would not have accepted any -- he wouldn't have asked anybody for help is what I'm saying.

He -- they had a big garden, and they raised everything. My mother -- when they first moved to Marion, an old German lady took her under hand and taught her to bake bread, and to can, and make jellies, and so we had this big garden. My mother would can everything, and we had an old pear tree, and she canned those old pears. I hated them, but I wish I had one now. And she made watermelon preserves. I mean, anything to -- to keep food on the table, you know. And she baked -- always made her own bread, and --

And I remember my dad -- we -- we got to go up and pick his check up at the Santa Fe Depot, and then we would pay the grocery bill, and I remember once that check for two weeks -- it was \$12, and I don't think the railroad was unionized then. I think it didn't -- I'm not sure, but I don't think it got unionized until Social Security came into being, which was, what, in '36, I think. And then, my dad -- the -- he didn't work under Social Security, it was Railroad Retirement Board --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. -- and I think that's when the wages got better.

Q1. But he -- but he was able to work all through the Depression and --

EM. Oh, yes. The railroads -- that was the only way -- or one of the ways that things moved. There was a lot of trains went through Augusta. And I can remember during the war -- you know, when the war started, there was troop trains night and day going through Augusta full of servicemen.

Q1. Uh-huh. Did people, like, line the streets to see them off or --

EM. No.

Q1. They just went through.

EM. But it's like I told you, that day when my brother Frank was killed, we had a little ol' telegraph operator. His name was Cy Young, and he had a -- the telegraph office, Western Union, was in the corner of that hotel, 5th Avenue Hotel, and would he get the message, and he would go running down the street, tell everybody, "Frank got killed. Frank got killed." Well, everybody knew it before my folks did. And the lady that managed -- she and her husband managed the hotel -- she came to the house and told my mother that Frank had got killed. Then, when we got the message from Sus (her brother), it was at night, and it came in at the towers, the Santa Fe Tower, and then he contacted my dad's boss, railroad boss, and he came to the house at night and told -- told my dad -- my folks.

Q1. Things were a lot different back then.

EM. Yeah, uh-huh.

Q1. So --

EM. But then, you know, we had no ways of communication like we do now.

Now, my dad always had a -- we always had a newspaper in the house, and I -- I don't know. He just wanted us to -- to read, and to this day I read a lot.

Q1. Oh. To keep up on current events and know what was going on?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. So when you were in high school -- we'll go back there for a minute. Were there -- what class -- was kind of classes did you take in high school?

EM. Well, it was home economics, civics, algebra, and I took Spanish so I could learn to read and write it. I spoke it fluently then, but I wanted to learn to read and write it, which I did. And of course, American history, world history.

Q1. Mm-hmm. What was your favorite subject?

EM. History.

Q1. History. Me too.

EM. I wasn't any good at music, so I didn't -- didn't have any music.

Q1. So did you get a job at any time?

EM. Yes, I -- I got married, you know, right away after I graduated, and -- but I did work at Boeing and -- for a while.

Q1. When was that?

EM. Oh, that would have been in, hmm, 1944.

Q1. So were you one of the Rosie the Riveters?

EM. Sheet metal, mm-hmm.

Q1. Sheet metal, mm-hmm. And were you living in Augusta at that time?

EM. Yes, because my husband was in service.

Q1. And how did you get back and forth?

EM. From -- to Boeing?

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. There was a bus service. Ballinger's had the bus service, and they ran the buses. I don't remember now what it cost, but I don't think it was very much.

Q1. Okay. So you got married after high school, you said, in October of 1942?

EM. Yes.

Q1. And what was your husband's name?

EM. Eldon. Eldon Mayes.

Q1. Eldon Mayes?

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. And what kind of work did he do?

EM. Well, when he got out of the service, he was in the dry cleaning business, and he -- he did that until 1963, and then he went to work as a salesman for -- selling dry clean, and laundry supplies, and industrial chemicals.

Q1. Mm-hmm. How did you two meet?

EM. Well, he was stationed at Fort Riley, and the Y -- YMCA had get-togethers for everybody, and it was on North Topeka upstairs. They'd have just friendly get-togethers. I don't think they had any dances or anything, we just --

Q1. Was that in Wichita?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And I met him there.

Q1. Met him there. And how long did you know him before you were married?

EM. I met him in June and married him in October. He was a southern boy with lots of charm. He was in Virginia.

Q1. He was from Virginia?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh. And -- oh. And so he ended up at Fort Riley, because he was in the service?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh. What branch of the service was he in?

EM. He was in the Mechanized cavalry.

Q1. Mechanized cavalry. And then, you said he went overseas?

EM. Yes, he went overseas in 1944.

Q1. Okay. And where was he, like, stationed out there?

EM. He was in England, and then -- he was in mechanized cavalry, and they went in afterwards, after all the battles were over, and

kind of cleaned up, but I mean, he wasn't in any serious battles or anything.

Q1. Mm-hmm. And so when he came back, what year was that?

EM. In 1945.

Q1. '5, uh-huh.

EM. July of 1945.

Q1. And where did you all live then?

EM. We lived in Augusta with -- with my folks, mm-hmm.

Q1. With your parents. And was that still on Oak Street?

EM. Yes.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Were you able to, like, correspond with him?

EM. We had the V-mails. You remember -- ever -- did you ever see one of those?

Q1. No. What's a V-mail?

EM. Well, they took a picture of -- of one. I've got one from my brother. We should take it out. And it was censored. If there was anything they shouldn't -- like their location or anything, it was marked out. It was just a little picture of a letter they sent. But he -- he -- he was able to write letters also. And I -- I remember he wrote one letter, and he was on Maginot Line, which was in France, and he said, "I'm drinking a Coca-Cola on the Maginot Line." (Laughs.)

Q1. Probably seemed a little surreal to him.

EM. Pardon?

Q1. I said it probably seemed a little surreal to him.



EM. Yeah, to be drinking a Coca-Cola over in the middle of France.

Q1. Uh-huh. So World War II began -- began in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland --

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- and you were probably about 16 years old then. Do you remember hearing about that, or --?

EM. Oh, yes. Like I said, we always had a newspaper and then radio. We had a -- I don't know where he got it, but Frankie brought a radio home, and it -- it had to be in the 30s when he brought that, and it was called -- it was an Atwater Kent, and it was about that long (indicating) and about that high (indicating) and it had an old speaker on it, and we would gather around that and listen to Edgar Bergen, and Charlie McCarthy, and Red Skelton. But it seemed like we always had a radio.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So at that time, did you think that the war would have -- impact your life? No.

EM. No. It -- I -- I didn't think about it until my brothers went into the -- the service.

And then, Sus was home on leave when Pearl Harbor happened, and we didn't have a telephone, but he went into town and used the telephone, and they told him to get back to -- he called his camp, and they told him to return immediately.

Q1. Okay. So let's talk about your brothers Frank and Sus. What can you tell me about them? Did they graduate from Augusta?

EM. Well, you know, I -- I -- I don't remember Sus as well as I did Frank, because Frankie was -- we grew up together, you know, and --

Q1. Sus was older then?

EM. Yes.

Q1. Uh-huh. Okay.

EM. And Frankie used to sit us down and read Shakespeare to us and -  
- just there'll never be anybody like him. And he would, you know, just talk to us, tell us about things that were going on and everything.

And like I told you -- and maybe I shouldn't say this, but he's the one that made me a Republican, because, like, it was right in the middle of the Depression, and my dad had a little old sha-- house that he rented for \$3 a month, so you can imagine what kind of a house it was, and these people that lived in it, they called it then on the County, and they got commodities. They got flour. They got -- I think they got sugar, and they got corned beef. And the reason I can remember the corned beef -- this was during the Depression -- they would come over and sell it to my mother, the corned beef, so they could go to the movies on Wednesday and Thursday, because they had double features on Wednesday and Thursday, and they could go for 15 cents. And they -- and we ate a lot of corned beef and cabbage, because -- and it was -- you -- they had the -- the welfare, the entitlements then, and they had the abuse then as they do now.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So were you able to go to the movies?

EM. Oh, yes, but we had to go to Sunday school. If we didn't go to Sunday school, we didn't go to the movie. On Sunday afternoon, we went to the matinee, and -- but we -- if we didn't go to Sunday school, no movie.

Q1. So -- and --

EM. And I don't care how much we cried and begged, you did not go.

Q1. What church did you attend?

EM. We went to the Methodist, because it --

Q1. The Methodist Church.

EM. -- because it was where all our friends went, and it was closest to the house.

Q1. (Laughs.) That makes sense, especially on cold mornings.

EM. We just went to Sunday school.

Q1. Hmm. Well, let's talk about -- when did -- you said -- did Frank join the army?

EM. He and Martin Mahannah, which Martin Mahannah's dad was superintendent, the Mobil -- Socony or whatever it was, Flying Red Horse, then.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. They went together to join the Marines, and they took Martin and wouldn't take Frankie, because he was color blind, and so he -- he joined the -- the Guard, National Guard, and they activated the Guard that December of 1941.

Q1. All right. And then, so when did he go overseas?

EM. Frankie -- or Sus went overseas right away. He -- he probably went in -- in '43. Well, I know he did. Uh-huh, '43. And Frankie went overseas in '43 also. No, Sus must have gone in '42, because he went through the African Campaign, and -- and then Frankie went in '43.

Q1. Okay. Do you want to talk a little bit about Sus -- what Sus did?

EM. Well, he was a paratrooper, and I -- he was really good about writing home -- writing letters home. And of course, you know, then, they couldn't tell where they were or about any of their battles or anything, and he went through the African Campaign. He went through Sicily Campaign, Italy, and then that's when they sent him -- he was -- the war was kind of winding down, and he -- they sent him to England, and they were processing him to come home, because he'd been over so long, when the Battle of the Bulge happened, I think in -- in January of '45, and that's when he got killed. He made the jump into Holland and was killed there.

Q1. And he was decorated?

EM. No, he wasn't, but he died in a field hospital, because he -- he was wounded on the 29th of January, and he died on the 30th, but he did die in a -- in a field hospital.

But no, Frank was the one that was decorated. He -- at the Battle of St. Lô.

Q1. Okay.

EM. It was shortly after D-Day.

Q1. And there's -- I -- I read some of the accounts of the battles that your brother Frank went through. There was a month, in July of '45 I think it was --

EM. Well, he would -- you know, the -- those cartoons used to say you got a -- a Purple Heart if you had a headache.

But anyway, he -- he was wounded on the 18th of July in a skirmish, and he did get a Purple Heart then, and that's when he got the Silver Star. Then, he was killed on August the 2nd.

But I don't know how true this is, but a -- the guys -- see, it was the 37th Infantry Company I, and they were -- most of them were all out of Augusta, Wichita, this area, and one of the soldiers came and told us that the battle where Frank got killed, they had been pinned down all night long and most of the day, and they were out of food, out of water, and Frank says -- he was the second lieutenant. He had gotten the battlefield commission in July, and he told them, he said, "I'm getting you guys out of here." A sniper was shooting them, and he said -- Frank said, "I'm going to get you guys out of here," and he stood up, and when he stood up, the sniper saw him and shot him, killed him. And when -- the rest of the guys, they saw where the sniper was then, and this fellow told us -- he said, "Every one of us took a shot at that sniper."

Q1. Well, I believe it just from the historic account that I had read about him in July.

The reason that he received the Silver Star was because his commanding officer was killed --

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- and he jumped in and took control of the troops --

EM. Yes.

Q1. -- and -- and got them out of a really tough situation then too so --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. -- it was very heroic indeed.

EM. Yeah, he was. But that's -- that's the kind of guy Frankie was.

Q1. So -- and you said that Frank was buried in France.

EM. In France. And

Q1. And Sus was --

EM. Was in Holland.

Q1. In Holland.

EM. -- in Belgium. Belgium. It's Gillian (phonetic), Holland.

Q1. Uh-huh. And do you want to talk about what your dad --

EM. And my -- my dad wanted their remains together, so he -- their remains were brought back to Augusta in 1948 -- May of 1948, and they are in Elmwood Cemetery.

Q1. What part of the cemetery?

EM. It's out of the first gate where you go in and just right over to your right about -- oh, I think about three plots back. All my family is there.

Q1. Do you have any questions?

Q2. Excuse me. You mentioned that -- was it Frankie was so good about writing letters?

EM. Mm-hmm. Well, both of them were, but I -- you know, the boys, they were a long ways from home --

Q2. Well, sure.

EM. -- and I think they were all homesick. I had a --

Q2. Do you have any -- did any of the letters survive time? Do you have any of them?

EM. Well, like I said, I have that V-mail from one of them.

And this is interesting: In that one letter Frankie wrote, he said -- he told about how rough it was and everything, and he says, "Don't believe everything you read in the newspapers or hear on the radio." True. True today.

Q1. Still today, that's exactly right. Or on the internet.

So did you and Eldon have any children?

EM. Yes, we had two boys.

Q1. Two boys?

EM. Two sons, uh-huh. And I lost -- we lost one boy six years ago -- seven years, soon to be seven.

Q1. And then, your other son, does he live near here?

EM. Yes, he lives here, works at the library.

Q1. Oh. So you passed on that love of learning to him it sounds like.

EM. (Laughs.) Well, he's a history major and a civil war buff.

Q1. And I think Steve had told me about a cousin that lives in Rose Hill that wrote a book.

EM. A who?

Q1. I don't know if it was a cousin or --

EM. That lives where?

Q1. In Rose Hill. Robert Garcia.

EM. It's a -- well, my mother's sister was married to this man, John Garcia, and there were three children from that union, and then the -- my mother's sister passed away. My mother raised -- well, had one of the -- my cousin and sister, and my mother kept him until he remarried again, then he remarried and had all these other children. They called us cousins, but really we're -- you know, we're no blood related except for the three.

Well, I'd like to tell you a story about Augustine. He's the one my mother kind of raised. He always called her Mama Lupe, and he went to school in El Dorado, graduated from El Dorado High School, and then he went to Pittsburgh State teacher's college and graduated from there. Then he got a job after he graduated at Cassoday -- you know where Cassoday is?

Q1. I do.

EM. A spot in the road -- teaching. The school board found out that he was a Mexican, and they told him, "We cannot have you."

Q1. What year was that?

EM. In 1936 during the Depression.



Well, he was so crushed and knew that he could not probably find a job, and he went to Mexico that day, and he became an executive with PEMEX, which is Petróleos Mexicanos, PEMEX Oil Company. The government owns it yet to this day. He became an executive. He -- because he was bilingual, had a degree, and he was head of the Olympic basketball -- or coached the basketball, Olympic men and women's. He helped. He went to all the Olympic Games in Montreal, Munich. He was in Munich when that happened over there, and -- but, you know, when he would come to visit, I could just tell by looking at him in the way he would pick up everything and just read every word of it he was still a little bitter that that happened to him, but then at times he'd say that was the best thing that ever happened to him.

Q1. (Laughs.) Uh-huh. Well, I mean, discrimination of any kind isn't -- do you ever feel like you were discriminated against, living in Augusta?

EM. No. I like to say I'm an American with Spanish heritage. No, I never was.

Q2. Do -- did you observe anything growing up in Augusta that was -- it -- it's kind of interesting, because you may -- you probably know the story of Herman Reed.

EM. I went to school -- he was in my class.

Q2. He was in your -- oh. Well, we should have you tell us what you remember about him. But, you know, it wasn't his classmates, but apparently it was the adults --

EM. Uh-huh.

Q2. -- who said, no, he can't be the captain of the team.

EM. And he became the captain.

Q2. Right. And so -- but did -- did you notice in -- in any setting any discrimination --

EM. Yes.

Q2. -- Against Mexican people? And -- and was there much of a -- you said there were two other families you knew of during the flood when you first moved there, but --

EM. Well, there was about seven Mexican families that -- they lived in what they called the Section, and it was railroad houses. But when we were in the eighth grade -- we were always -- in school, they put you alphabetically, you know, and of course, I was G. I was with Grady and Gordon. But that one year, this teacher -- his name was Andy Murphy -- in eighth grade, he decided he was going to move everybody around, you know, different. We weren't to sit alphabetically anymore, and Herman Reed sat behind this girl, and she went home and told her parents, and her dad came to the school and raised Cain, and they moved her, so she wouldn't have to sit -- I don't want to mention any names, but I told this story to one of the -- this girl's sisters, and she said, "Oh, yeah." She said, "I can see my dad doing that." She said, "That's the kind of man my dad was." She said, "Oh, yeah," and then one of them remembered it.

Q2. What do you remember about Herman?

EM. Let's see. That would have been in 19- -- Let's see. We were in the -- we were in the eighth grade. No, we were in the ninth grade, because it was in high school. Mm-hmm. So it would have been, what, 1939?

Q1. Uh-huh.

Q2. Did -- do you remember spending any time with him or working with him in school or -- Herman.

EM. Did what?

Q2. Did you -- were you friends? Did you --

EM. No. He kind of -- he stayed to himself, you know, but he was very -- I -- I think real nice, and he made something of himself too. He went on to play professional football.

Q2. Sure did.

Q1. Do you remember -- I haven't checked it out completely, but do you know if Frank and Stanley Dunham were in the same outfit during the war?

EM. No, I imagine Stanley went in through El Dorado, because --

Q1. Did you know him?

EM. No.

Q1. No.

EM. All I know is what I heard about him (laughs).

Q1. Did you -- did -- well, did you have an opinion about him then?

EM. No.

Q1. No. I know Mary Frances Lawrence had told us that she didn't like him, so --

EM. Well, that's what I've -- I heard from different ones, you know, that he was a ne'er-do-well, and that's why his -- her folks objected. I think her folks kind of protected her a lot too and --

Q2. Is there -- is there anything -- any -- any great stories about growing up that we didn't ask you about that you'd like to tell us?

EM. Well, I can't -- can't --

Q1. Did you have any holidays or birthdays or --?

EM. It was -- it was -- it was just a great time to grow up. I think today kids miss a lot, because we -- we learned to swim in the old Walnut River, and it was -- it was clear. You could look from the bottom, stand there and -- and my brother Frankie taught us to swim, and he would take us out in that deep water, and he'd say, "Sink or swim." We swam. (Laughs.)

And I can remember once there was a boy drowning. It was the dam. The water ran over the dam, and this young kid got under that water and couldn't get out, and there were people -- we were up on that bridge over the old Walnut River watching him, and this Mexican man, he took off his clothes and jump -- went around and jumped in and got that boy out from under that water, saved his life.

Q2. Did you know the man? Did you know who it was?

EM. Yeah.

Q2. Who was it?

EM. Manuel Cabrales was his name.

Q1. Oh, Cabrales.

EM. Uh-huh. He -- and well, the boy that was down there drowning was Dale. I can't even think of his last name now. But anyway, Dale always told the story himself, you know, that -- he said, "I know that he saved my life." He said, "I would have drowned, because nobody was making a move to help me and --"

Q1. Were there any special traditions that your family had when you were growing up?

EM. No, but let me tell you a story.

My mother made tortillas every day, and that was at -- at noon, she fixed a Mexican dinner, because my dad, you know, ate that, and then in the evening it was -- she fixed American food. But anyway, she made this pile of tortillas, and my brother always had a bunch of kids, because we had a big yard out -- they'd always gather there at our house, and this one boy, his name was Louie Myers -- my mother would make the tortillas early, you know, so the kitchen would be cool by the time my dad come home, and she set them on the -- set this pile of tortillas, and they were wrapped in a tea towel, and Louie come in the house and grabbed those and run down the road with them, because he -- he loved them (laughs). And so anyway, there was no tortillas for lunch that day.

But anyway, later on, he asked Frankie, he said, "Is your mother mad at me because I did that?", and Frankie says, "No. She said she wasn't mad, but she wants her tea towel back." (All laugh.)

And -- and Louie Myers was killed in the war too.

Q1. I bet your dad wasn't very happy about not having his tortillas for lunch.

EM. No, my dad was easygoing. He probably didn't care, and my mother probably had the homemade bread that we -- she always made.

Q1. He didn't go hungry? (Laughs.)

EM. No, huh-uh.

Q1. And neither did Louie apparently.

EM. No.

Q1. So did your mom teach you how to cook?

EM. No, she wouldn't let us in the kitchen. She was -- of course, we did it on purpose too. Like drying dishes, we'd clatter them, you know, and she said, "Get out of here before you break my dishes." (Laughs.) And anyway, she wouldn't let us in the kitchen half the time, because we got in her way, and she liked to -- she didn't have the time or the patience to mess with us.

Q1. What other chores did you get out of that way?

EM. But anyway, to this -- I like to cook, and I did learn how to make Mexican food.

Q1. Ok. You were good.

Q2. Yes.

A. Is that it?

Q1. Yes. You're a star.

[END]

Note: Chatter and questions follow end of interview at [40:17]. Video moves to showing view of both brother's medals and ribbons.