

May 4, 1991

TAPE SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW CONDUCTED ON APRIL 26, 1991

Interviewee: Maria Rodriguez Lopez  
2023 1st Street South  
Nampa, Idaho 83651

Interviewer: Patricia McDaniel  
1920 Harrison Blvd.  
Boise, Idaho 83702

Tape 1: Señora Maria Rodriguez Lopez is a Mexican American from Pharr, Texas who has lived since 1945 in Idaho. She is the daughter of a farm worker, but, except for a brief period, she has not worked as a farm laborer. Her husband, also a Mexican American, did not work as a farm laborer. He was in the Army and served in the Army during the Second World War and the Korean War. Señora Lopez was at first nervous and reluctant about this interview, but became more comfortable after the initial visit and as the interview on tape progressed. We were alone during the two visits, and as there were no interruptions, everything went well.

Side A:

4: Arrival in Idaho - Señora Lopez came to Idaho with her father to marry Isidro Ramirez Lopez. The wedding was on January 22, 1945. Señora Lopez had not been to Idaho prior to this and was nervous. She gives a brief history of her early relationship with her then future husband.

18: Wedding - Married in Aberdeen, Idaho, in a civil ceremony on a very snowy day. Married later in the church while stationed in France.

59: Husband's work in Rupert, Idaho - He was a guard of German prisoners of war. He had a good relationship with the prisoners. He was funny, and the prisoners appreciated his humor.

90: Life in Rupert - The Lopez lived in a small house and entertained themselves by going to movies and spending time together.

105: Family history - Pharr, Texas - Señora Lopez's father came first from Mexico in 1913 and worked with a farmer/rancher. He married his wife in Mercedes, Mexico. The first five children of this marriage died during the flu epidemic of 1918. The succeeding children, all born afterward, survived and are still alive.

141: Schooling in Pharr, Texas - Sra. Lopez completed the ninth grade. She describes her suspected illness with tuberculosis and her stay in a sanatorium. This was in 1942. She later returned to the sanatorium to work as a nurse's assistant.



151: Work in the sanitorium - Sra. Lopez earned \$20 a month and had room and board provided. She explains that the working conditions were not good because nothing was done to protect her from possible infection with TB. So she decided to return home to her parents. She then worked in a cannery.

195: Early years with husband - Husband reenlisted in the Army, and after short stay in Washington was sent to Fort Riley, Kansas. When they returned to Idaho, Sra. Lopez worked in contract work in the fields harvesting vegetables, etc. She describes the advantages (few) and disadvantages (many)

There was a time spent in France. Sra. Lopez returned to Texas to be with her father after her mother died. Sr. Lopez remained in Nampa to work. Upon her return they rented a small house in Nampa.

255: Husband's first serious illness - He suffered from pneumonia and spent two months in a sanitorium in Gooding, Idaho. Señora Lopez describes the hospital as being clean, well staffed, and her husband received good treatment. She travelled there by bus for visits, and would stay in a small room that was provided.

310: Life in Nampa - Husband became employed as a clerk in a grocery store in 1957, the Nampa Food Center. He remained at that job until he retired. During this time the family bought a small house in Nampa.

Señora Lopez employment in a food processing plant - At first, in 1967, this was not a steady job. It was dependent on the potato crop. Sra. Lopez talks about working in the "trim room" where she trimmed potatoes for french fries. She would look for flaws in the cut potatoes. She continues with her description saying that she preferred working on the inspection line because it was easier and cleaner.

The work force was made up of different ethnic groups. With seniority, one could remain on the inspection line.

Side B:

414: Señora Lopez explains that she did not like working on a packing assembly line. The work required heavy lifting, and she could not do this well.

Question of advancement - it was difficult to advance up in position. There were "lead ladies" who were in charge of lines. Only men were supervisors. Education and skill was needed for supervisory positions.

446: Working conditions after union came in - The union came in and changed wages, seniority, benefits. Sra. Lopez joined the union and paid dues. Before the union, if one didn't like the work



he or she could just leave. With the union meetings were held. Union representatives talked to management about complaints, accidents, and working conditions. Eventually Right To Work became law and things changed. The union lost some of its power. Fairness issues arose.

505: Husband's work at grocery store - Husband continued to work at the grocery store. He developed a good relationship with the owner, Bob. Eventually, Sr. Lopez became the store manager and remained so until the store closed.

518: Illness of husband - Señora Lopez explains the long battle Sr. Lopez had in securing his social security and disability. A specialist stepped in to help him receive his benefits. There was a long hospital stay - husband never did recover from his illness.

559: Life in Nampa outside of work - Children worked as laborers because parents wanted them to know what the world was really like. Children did not like this work.

All three children graduated from high school. Sra. Lopez talks about her children's schooling and work. Son goes to Mt. Hood College in Portland, Oregon, and become involved in theatre. Daughter, Anita, doesn't go to college. She begins working right after high school for a law firm. Daughter, Sandy, does go to college at Portland State. She eventually goes to work for INTEL. She still works there.

638: Children's early education - Children did not experience any discrimination. The oldest child, Anita, had mostly other Mexican Americans for friends, while Rick and Sandy had friends from both ethnic groups.

Other signs of discrimination in Nampa - Sra. Lopez talks about signs that were posted in different bars in particular that said no Mexicans were welcomed. She explains that her brother in law did enter such a bar and confronted the issue with the owner. It was explained to him that the sign was to keep illegal aliens out. It was felt that they caused all the trouble with fights and drunkenness. Discrimination was only against those who were not from Nampa.

There was no other signs of discrimination, not in education, nor at pools, nor in home buying.

669: The Lopez buy a larger home - Sra. Lopez describes watching from her kitchen window as a Mexican family is evicted from its home because of default on payments. The Lopez were able to buy this house. It was in disrepair, but they fixed it up.



Tape 2

Side A

4: Family life - Decision making was a joint process. Mr. Lopez would consult with Sra. Lopez on buying a house, and had her name on car registrations even though she can not drive.

Family rules - Discipline was mostly done by the father. He set the rules for the girls when they began to date. Sra. Lopez accompanied her daughter, Anita, to dances. There were different rules for the son. Daughters didn't seem to question nor mind the difference in the rules.

70: Celebrations - Christmas tree was decorated while children were little and husband was alive. Daughters did not have quinceñieras. Christmas Eve was celebrated with food, especially tamales. Sra. Lopez explains that she learned the process of making tamales from her mother in Pharr; it was much different then than now. New Years Eve is celebrated with buñuelos. Señora Lopez describes a wedding in Pharr; many decorations and music played by an orchestra. The wedding of the Lopez daughter, Anita, was held in a Catholic Church. The reception had food made by Sra. Lopez and her friends. It included traditional Mexican foods.

Today - Señora Lopez lives alone in the house that she and her husband bought while their children were still young. Anita and her husband and family live just outside of Nampa on five acres of land and want Señora Lopez to come to live on their land in a new trailer.