

Palm_School_Palomares_Hortencia

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SPEAKERS

Paulina Serrano, Hortencia Palomares

Paulina Serrano 00:00

Good morning. Today is Sunday, December 15, 2024 My name is Paulina Serrano. I am interviewing Hortencia Palomares in Austin, Texas for the Travis County oral history project. We are at the University of Texas at Austin campus. Thank you. Ms Palomares for agreeing to this interview. The raw, unedited recording of this interview will be archived at the Travis County archives, where it will be available to anyone who wishes to access it. As we said earlier, if there is anything you do not wish to talk about, we respect your wishes. Also, if there's something you want to discuss, please do make sure that we know it and we discuss it. Please also let us know if you need to pause the interview today, we are talking about your life experiences, particularly as it relates to the palm school. We'll also discuss your relationship to the community education and political part your to your relationship to community education and political participation. And if you're ready, Miss Palomares, let's begin. Can you please tell us your name and your relationship to palm School?

Hortencia Palomares 01:13

My name is Hortencia. Palomares and I attended palm school in Austin, Texas from the beginning in the fall of 1959 to the spring of 1965

Paulina Serrano 01:28

and what can you tell us about your childhood?

Hortencia Palomares 01:32

My childhood consists of first coming to the United States as an immigrant child with my parents. I was three years old when we immigrated from Tampico Tamaulipas, Mexico. And we immigrated through the port of entry was Laredo, Texas, but we went, we skipped through Texas, and we went to Chicago, Illinois. And so I spent a year, maybe a little more than a year, in Chicago with my family. My sister, who is four years younger than me, was born in Chicago, and then shortly thereafter, in probably

another year and a half, we decided to come to Austin. So I came to Austin. I was, I was about five years old by the time we got to Austin, and we ended up living with my aunt Augustina Buenteo and her husband Thomas Buenteo in the Santa Rita neighborhood of Austin, and we lived with them again, probably about a year before we finally moved to our own home, which was on Third Street. And that home was it was on the corner of onion and Third Street, which is just a block from comal Street, and it was actually owned by the Barron's tortilla factory that was there, and he was well known, and Mr. Barron was well known in the community because of his tortilla business. And then, and that was around 1959 July 59 actually, I think it was when we started living there, and that is the reason that I ended up in the palm school district, as opposed to the Zavala school elementary school district, which where I would have gone if we had continued living with my aunt. But the dividing line at that time was comal street, so we lived just one block west of comal, so I ended up at Palm school.

Paulina Serrano 04:05

Can you tell us a little bit about living with your aunt and then, versus when you moved to your own place, did your aunt have children that you did you have cousins there? Yes,

Hortensia Palomares 04:18

yes. The one of the reasons we moved to Austin was because my tia was here. My aunt was here. Her husband was a few years older than her, and he was also from Tampico, but he had immigrated here even way before we did, and he had come to Texas, and he was actually working for the governor at that time, the Texas governor, Alan shivers. So he was, comparatively speaking, he was a little bit well off. And then he, like I said, he was a little bit older, and he. He then married my my aunt, who was also from Tampico, and he met her in Tampico, and then brought her here to live their life here in Austin. And so, yes, I we lived there for during that time when we first arrived, because she was the only family that that we, that we had here, and so living with my cousins, it was a full house. It was a full house. I think they were already four or five kids, children, let's see 1,2,3,4,5, 5, kids. Already. So, yeah, it was, it was crowded, but we, my aunt and uncle welcomed us. So we were, you know, we lived, you know, pretty well, and we were happy there, and they provided almost everything for us. They threw a birthday party for my sister, who turned two, the one that had been born in Chicago. She turned two there, and we celebrated in the backyard earlier that year, in 1959 I celebrated my sixth birthday. I turned six in January, and we didn't have a party, but I have a photo of me on their porch on Santa Rita Street in that house on Santa Rita street with me when I turned six years old. So it was a good experience with my with my aunts and my cousins. And actually, I have to kind of amend what I said earlier. We actually moved across the street for a very short period of time, across the street from the from my aunt and uncle, and it was a garage, actually, our neighbor's garage. And of course, that was too small, and there were two of us, two, you know, it's just me and my sister, but we lived there a very short time before we moved to third street next to Barron's tortilla factory.

Paulina Serrano 07:06

Was it difficult when you left your your aunt's house?

Hortensia Palomares 07:11

It wasn't because really we were probably about maybe four blocks from her, so it was not far from where she lived. In fact, like I said, we the only it was a Mexican American community, Santa Rita.

There was a Santa Rita courts across the street from where my aunt lived, and and then Zavala Elementary was where a lot of the Mexican American kids were already going to school. And so with my family, my parents, not really knowing the city, we just naturally, or they just naturally thought, Okay, well, when the time comes, then you know, Hortensia will go to Zavala Elementary. And because our third street house was not that far, like probably about four blocks. We just thought, Okay, we'll just walk. It wasn't that far. Zavala will be my school. And then, as it turned out, it was not. So, I was six when we lived in the in the Third Street house. And an interesting story related to that is that when it came time for me to go to school, my parents and I walked and my little sister, we walked over to Zavala to what we thought was registering for the first time, because I was six now and I was supposed to go to school. And we entered Zavala school, and we actually went and just sat in the first classroom that we saw, and we waited for somebody, and my parents really didn't know what the process was. And so then they someone came and talked to us and my parents. My father did speak English already. My mother was did not speak English. I did not speak English, but my father told them, Well, we need to register her because it's time for her to go to school. And so they asked us, probably to fill out some paperwork, or asked us where we lived and and that's when we learned that we were not in the district. So then we had to walk all the way to palm school. Is the school that was in in my district, and we registered there. So that was just shortly before, before classes actually started. And then so during that summer, we after we found out that palm. Was my school. Then during that summer, they had what they call this, I believe it was like an orientation type where we go to school. I think it was a week where the children would go to school half a day, so we could kind of get ready and be ready for the first grade, for a whole day of school, you know, once September rolled around. Because at that time, what I recall was that school actually started the Tuesday following the Monday of Labor Day. So that was kind of the what it was. It was usually September. It was in August, like, like it usually is now for the start of most schools. So yeah, that was went to that little summer school orientation, and it was still summer. So right after orientation, then there was a palm swimming pool, palm pool. And so we would go to the My parents would take me to the swimming pool there that summer.

Paulina Serrano 11:03

And the registration was for palm school?

Hortensia Palomares 11:07

The registration was for palm Yes.

Paulina Serrano 11:10

And all of the, all of the first time children went to the orientation, or everybody that who had already been there before went to the summer orientation?

Hortensia Palomares 11:18

Just the children who were coming in for the first grade,

Paulina Serrano 11:21

and your cousins then stayed at Zavala, and you went to palm school, correct, okay, and for and did so you mentioned your dad, your father spoke some English, or mother Spanish, and you didn't speak English,

Hortensia Palomares 11:38

Correct.

Paulina Serrano 11:40

So where what was, what was the the dominant language then, was Spanish at home,

Hortensia Palomares 11:44

yes, at home, it was Spanish and but here's another you know something about me, and that is that before, I guess it was around age four, or maybe between age four and six, my mother actually taught me to read in Spanish. She taught me the Spanish alphabet, and she taught me how to sound out the words words, so I was already reading, but in Spanish, so I feel like I had the concept of a written language and and so when I went to the first grade for the first time, I don't know how it is now, but I looked up at the top of the classroom, the top of the Across the Blackboard, and I saw the alphabet, the ABCs, you know. So the ABCs were very familiar to me, with the exceptions of the Spanish alphabet, which contains the Enya and the A and the you know. So what I saw was like it was, it was familiar. So I didn't think it was, you know? I thought, Okay, well, you know. So it gave me a little confidence. I guess even though, when I was hearing it spoken, I didn't, I couldn't understand. But I think that because I had a concept of a language, already a written language, and and I already could read in Spanish, and obviously it was just small words. And, you know, like for children, I wasn't reading major texts, but, but I felt like, you know, I was already reading, so I felt that that gave me kind of a little head start, I think, at least for me, because I think I, I feel like I picked up English pretty quickly by the second grade, I I was speaking English and I could read Second grade level written materials and books and all the different things that second graders were doing. And it also helped in the second grade that I had Mexican American teacher. My teacher was Mary Grace Herrera, and Miss Herrera was, she was a wonderful teacher. She lived in the neighborhood too. She lived on Third Street, and she her family was from Mexico, and they were, I'm not sure about her. You know her history, but I do know that she that her family used to bring tutors and also music teachers to the US to teach their children and Miss Herrera was was born here. With her siblings, but they were taught by Mexican teachers, and they were taught how to play the piano. So they were, you know, they were, I don't know, learn, learned people. You know, they were educated, and that's probably why they became what she why she was able to attain a higher education and then become a teacher. And her sister was also a teacher. Her sister was Consuelo Herrera, who later married Mr. Mendez, and Consuelo Mendez is the name of Mendez Middle School here in Austin. So that school is named after Miss Herrera sister Consuelo Mendez. But yes, second grade was great. First grade, you know, all I can say is, you know, I, I was just absorbing, absorbing what I could, because I already had the ability to, you know, to read the alphabet and to read words. And then I, I did. I feel like I by the third grade, I was doing very well. And then by the fourth grade, I believe that that's when there was that was the beginning of like where students could, based on your grades, you could earn, you could be on the honor roll. So I was on the honor roll fourth, fifth and sixth grade, I was always on the first Honor Roll to mostly on the first honor roll. Yeah. So we,

Paulina Serrano 16:46

we heard some information yesterday in one of the interviews that came up that there were individuals who were paid to come to people's homes and teach them, either Spanish, and I don't know if English, but do you do you recall any anything that like that during your animal elementary school years?

Hortensia Palomares 17:08

No, no, the students. Are you talking about the students? No, no, I don't. The only thing that bring that comes to mind is like Miss Herrera that her family was bringing in mentors and teachers, especially like music, you know, to learn, you know, cultural activities, because they valued that, and probably maybe because it wasn't available here for them, because they were, she was from the generation, my mother's generation, and maybe she was a little bit older than my mother, you know. So they were from the generation that came from Mexico, you know, or, you know, just earlier, earlier than, than, than my parents, obviously. So like I said, we when we immigrated, it was 1956 and I was three years old. And then Austin, then I was five six,

Paulina Serrano 18:13

we you mentioned your parents and your mom and, you know, going to get registered. Can you talk about your parents and the role that they played in or the role education played in their lives, and how important it was for them that you and your sister at the time, when you started palm school, would go to

Hortensia Palomares 18:35

school? Okay, my father, even though he was born in Mexico, he had parent. He had a mother. He was mostly raised by his mother, my my grandmother, Josephina, and even though he was the next to the youngest of his family. For some reason, my grandmother made it possible for him to go beyond the sixth grade in Mexico. And as I understand it, he probably went to high school and maybe even one more, you know, one more step beyond that, not necessarily like what we call the university here, but it was kind of like post high school and after so he went, He got a full education, yeah, whereas my mother didn't, my mother went to the sixth grade, and she says she struggled. It took her three years to complete the sixth grade, but the sixth grade was kind of the goal to complete the sixth grade. But yeah, my father, because I think of that background of his background, he received more education than than other other people, maybe from his time, from his generation, from his neighborhood, and may have been the his incentive for coming to the US. I think that that's, you know, he was always to me, seeming to be looking for more opportunities. And one day he did tell me, when I was older, that the reason that he came, that he decided to immigrate with my mother and me, at the time, at the beginning, was because he wanted a better life for us, but the better life included getting an education, because he believed that education was a vehicle, you know, or was a way to better yourself, you know, And to have a better life, but he saw the opportunities like many other Mexican immigrants, and so before I was born, he was in the Bracero Program. I'm not sure you know what you know what motivated him, or where, how it was that he became that he found out about that program. It may have been that Tampico, the city where I was born, may have been one of the point, you know, points in Mexico where Braceros could could where they were being recruited. It could have been a recruitment part of the recruitment city. Maybe it was a recruitment city, but he saw it as an opportunity. So he and

his brother were in the Bracero program in the 40s. And again, for him, it was an opportunity to work in the US and to make dollars and to send money back home to his mother and to his family, and he was one of the younger ones. And so yeah, during World War Two, while the US was going through that my father was doing his part, the way I see it, or the way he's he talks about it to help in the in the war effort, and he worked on he his story is that he worked wherever they took him, and wherever there was work. And the type of work that he did was a lot of farm working. So he told me that he picked crops, you name it. He picked them and he picked them from coast to coast. He just went all over the United States. And having had that experience, he also realized, once he got familiar, you know, because they would take him six months and then take him back, back to Mexico six months, they would do six month intervals. And in one of those times, he realized that there was also work beyond field work. And one of the things that he found that interesting to him, I guess, and it appealed to him, was working on the railroads. You know, they actually like LA tracks and railroads were being built still beginning, I mean, continuing from the 30s, you know, the US was experiencing, you know, the railroads, building of railroads, and the development of that going on in this country, in the US. So he found work. He found work. And then during those travels too, he also realized that there was work in like factories, and he ended up in Chicago. And Chicago, he worked in the mills, a corn mill, and so he did some of that kind of work too, besides any other type of small work that he could get, but then he would go back home. But he talks about that as an adventure, but all of that, I think, added up to his experience of being in the US and seeing opportunities like the land of opportunity and all of that was already kind of behind him when before I was born. But I think all of that contributed to him wanting and asking my mother, you know, if she would immigrate. Yeah, that the family would immigrate. That was my parents and me at the time.

Paulina Serrano 25:05
in 1950s?

Hortensia Palomares 25:08

Yes. So he did the Bracero program in the 40s, obviously. And then by the 50s, yeah, he was, he was ready to to immigrate to the US. And while he was here in one of the times that he was here in the US and Chicago, working in one of the mills, he had an accident where he was almost kind of thrown into this gigantic silo or vat of corn and and he was kind of like picked up by a machine, and almost, you know, thrown in there. And the he was kind of dang by his foot. And so he had this terrible accident. And, but he was saved, and he he lived. And he had a cousin here, kind of a distant, or not very distant, but a cousin who was kind of considered by the family at the time, like a lawyer. I found out later she was actually a notary public, but for the for the family, it was, you know, she was very informed, and apparently she had been here earlier than my father. So I feel like we have these connections. There must have been this connection between Tampico and Chicago way before I was born, way before my father, even, you know, came to the US. But she helped him. She helped him get a lawyer and and then the company paid him the equivalent of about, at the time, about \$1,000 for his injuries. And with \$1,000 then he sent, he sent money home because my grandmother was just about to lose her her house, I guess, for not paying the mortgage or whatever. I think she was buying the home. And with that money, then he was able to buy her house and then build more houses for all the rest of his brothers and sisters, including one for himself, in case we ever came back. Because that was still that was still there, that was still an option, that we would come to the US, but we might go back home to

Mexico, to Tampico, but so he had all these houses built. Those houses still exist to this day. This was in the, you know, in the 50s, yeah, in the family. In the family they belong to, yeah, cousin. I have cousins that I probably don't recognize or know about to this day, but they live in those homes still. But that was, that was another, and with that part of that money, then we were able to to immigrate. He was able to pay for all the paperwork it cost. It cost to, you know, to do paperwork, to try to come to the US as an immigrant, to immigrate. So part of that money was spent on that. And so then he was able to bring me, you know, my mother and me to the US in 1956

Paulina Serrano 28:40

Do you have any memories of Chicago?

Hortensia Palomares 28:42

A little bit, a little bit. My memories there are that we lived kind of in a in an apartment. It was because, obviously, it's a big city. I don't recall, like single family homes with yards and all that. And so there were people living in apartment type setting. I had a little tricycle, and I had like a big stuffed animal and a ball. Those are my toys. At the time. I was little. I was three, we had to my mother bought a from from a friend, a little snow suit is what I call it. It was matching checkered brown with a little hat, the coat, the pants and little hat, because it was extremely cold in Chicago. We were right by Lake Michigan, and we would go on the on the lake, sometimes on on a boat, motor boat, and we would, kind of the water would splash on us sometimes. But had that little coat on, I think we have a photo of that, of me. That little coat. In that little coat ensemble, there was this park called river view. And there was a kitty Park. Well, it was a big kind of it had a roller coaster and, you know, like, like a carnival type thing. It was called river view. We actually lived in the South Side of Chicago, which is now I hear about, I didn't know at the time, but now we hear south, south, south, the South Side of Chicago isn't was not a nice place to live. Maybe it was nicer, maybe it was okay, or not as bad when we lived there. But my father did get robbed coming home from from work. But they, they stole his his wallet, and they he was bringing home some food wrapped up. It was like sausage, barbecue, sausage, Polish sausage at the time. And my they used to talk about how delicious it was, and so that my father got, you know, just kind of got assaulted. Well, not assaulted, but he was robbed. And that they, they thought maybe he was carrying money in there, trying to, you know, that maybe to secure the money, he was carrying it in there. So they kind of opened it up, no money. So that was our supper apparently. We lived across the street from from a Catholic school, and so at that that year, I was four years old, and one really good memory that I have, that I think that would, that's kind of been part of my identity, I think, is that it was a, you know, as a Catholic school, and I would see the nuns, and then I would see the kids. It was fenced. It was a fenced area, but I could see, I could see the kids across the street, and I remember asking my mother that I wanted to go there. And she said, Well, that's a school. And so then I asked her, Well, I want to go to school. And that was a reason I wanted, I think first it was because I thought it was maybe a playground. They were playing outside, you know, with the ball, whatever. But to me, I equated that with I equated school with something, you know, positive, something good, something fun. I wanted to go to school, so I was ready to go to school in the first grade. I mean, I was ready to go to school at four years old, you know, but I couldn't because I was too young, you know, you had to wait back then there was, I didn't even know about kindergarten, but most schools here did not have a kindergarten the kindergarten level, usually if kids went to kindergarten in Chicago and in Austin, it was because it was

at a church in in Austin, that's the way I recall back then. So elementary school here was first grade on up, but in Chicago, it was, yeah, I wanted to go to school.

Paulina Serrano 33:27

And that church across the way, did you go to church there? No,

Hortensia Palomares 33:30

no, we didn't go to church there. I'm not even sure what church we went to. I don't have memories of that, but I remember, you know, my parents had good friends there. There was a time when we had photos, a lot of photos of my father with friends and and then the photos that we took going on Lake Michigan, you know. And then we would take photos in those kind of, those booths, old fashion booths, where you just kind of play around, and little, little photo, you know, just for photos with, you know, you would take it in the in this booth. So those were kind of fun to do.

Paulina Serrano 34:22

And your mom, did she when you said you wanted to go to school, and as you came to Austin and got to register at Palm school, was she, what was her views on education, and what was she like?

Hortensia Palomares 34:38

Okay, my father, my mother apparently agreed with my with my father, and as she would tell me later, you know she she believed education was important too, because it took her so much effort. Effort, you know, to finish her education, but a lot of it had to do with her situation. Was that she was sick a lot. She said that she grew up kind of sickly there, there was, there were a lot of mosquitoes in Tampico, it's kind of a tropical kind of climate there, and so people would get malaria. She called it a different name, but I looked it up later, and I said, Mom, you had malaria, you know. And so she would have to take these doses of, you know, whatever medication that they would give her. So she was sick a lot, and so that's why she missed a lot of school, and then had to kind of make it up, but she wanted to go to school. She told me that that she, when she was a young girl that she wanted to be a nurse in her family, no there, as far as she has, you know, told me there was no one that had any kind of higher education. Most of her family was, most of her family was in the they were panaderos. They made bread, you know, sweet bread, pan dulce, conchitas and all pan Francis, you know. So the that was her family, her mother, her mother was in that business. And I think that business went back generations, maybe, so they were in the bread making business. As far as I know my grandfather was. He was like a security watchman type person, but he was older, and he died early in my mother's lifetime. I think she was a teenager. And what was his name? His name was Renato Juarez and and her mother, my grandmother was her name was Concepcion Perez and my grandmother is actually from Queretaro, and she ended up coming to Tampico, and that's where she met, you know, her husband, and then, as far as I know, He was from Veracruz. But Veracruz is borders. Tamaulipas and Tampico is only separated by a river, and so Veracruz is right there. Tampico and Veracruz are right there. So you know he

Hortensia Palomares 37:56

and he says that, that he was born in a town that really didn't have a an official name, as far as he knew, but he says, Yo naci en el pueblo donde esta el arbol donde se rasquan la espalda you know, it

was like, let's, you know that where, where they scratch a scratching tree. So that was kind of where he said he's from, from Veracruz. I don't know. I've never, I've never really explored the family tree from that side of the family, a little bit on my father's side a little bit more, but, but getting back to my mother, my Yeah, my mother, I think she valued education, so she had it in her, you know, also. So I think she and my father made a good team, because they realized that education was good and it was important to them. It was important, and I was the oldest. And besides my husband being a liberal, liberated man, I think my father was too for, really, for his, for his generation, because he so my father was raised by a mother that he just adored, you know, and then he was so respectful, and so, You know, to my mother when we were growing up, he would say, "Tu mama es la que manda" It's, you know, it's your mother. She's the boss. Go ask her. And then my mother would say, "well, go ask your father". You know that story. But no, my father was very respectful to my mother. And then. I think my father was also influenced by that. We were all girls. The children that he had, we were all girls, and I was the oldest of five girls. So he grew up with women and and I think that influenced him, and I think that that's one reason that he didn't hesitate, or didn't think beyond, you know, any kind of gender with any kind of gender bias. He thought, you know, Hortensia can go, can go to school, Hortensia, you can get an education. Hortensia, you can go to college, you know. So I grew up with that. So I think palm school was the beginning of that. And they, you know, they, they raised us to, you know, to, you know, to know that, or to realize that school was, you know, was a good place. School was valuable. So I feel like I grew up with them, exemplifying that, or telling us all the good things about school.

Paulina Serrano 41:16

Were there expectations of your parents? Did those revolve around you getting an education?

Hortensia Palomares 41:24

I think so. I think so. Yeah, because as early as I well, as early as as the earliest times, you know, I really like school. And I think the other thing that kind of shaped my identity was that

Hortensia Palomares 41:46

my father so by 1962 1962 so we got to Austin in 1959 but by 1962

Hortensia Palomares 41:57

my father found a job here on campus at the UT, UT Austin campus, and he started out as a bus boy at the Texas union. That's another story that he tells us, but he he ended up securing a job here, and went from bus boy, and then, you know, kind of moved up and became a cook. And so he worked in Texas union. And then later, in later years, he moved to to the jester center, and was a cook there for many years. He he spent 23 years he worked at UT, Austin, 23 years, and most of those years, almost all of the years he was a cook. One year he worked for the College of Pharmacy, and he was, I think he did deliveries. Can again, this is the old days, 60s. I don't know what he transported, you know, but he worked for the College of Pharmacy, but he He enjoyed his job. And so that was 1962 and I was, how old was I then nine, eight or nine when he first started working here. So he would bring me to his job sometimes, and he would make me a sandwich, you know. So I was surrounded. I was among students, UT students, and then as I grew up, I would just come visit him on campus. I would catch a bus and come visit him when I was in high when I was old enough to catch a bus. Do

Paulina Serrano 43:53

you remember the first time you went to work with him?

Hortensia Palomares 43:57

I don't remember, I really don't remember that. But I remember later, when I was a little older enough to be able to catch a bus to come to campus, he would make me a sandwich, again, ham sandwich. And that was my favorite, you know. So he then after that, he would, you know, he would not after that, but all the time that he was working, he would come home and he would tell me he's he would tell me, like, there's a lot of young ladies, señoritas que se estado condo you know that they're getting an education. You can too. So that was, you know, early on he was telling me that, and early on I was on campus visiting him, and so that was part of something that I grew up with, kind of lucky. I think he was lucky. You know, part of my life experience. Uh, that my father kind of laid the foundation there. Everything kind of is, you know, intersected, intertwined in there. But yes, education was just a big piece of my growing up. And yeah, it started with at Palm school that my parents were very involved. And I remember thinking, well, they would, my mother would walk me to school, almost, you know, all the time until, I think, she walked me to school up until the maybe the third grade or something like that. And then at and then after that, she started she she looked for neighbors, other other girls in the neighborhood that were a little bit older than me, still at Palm and then she would ask them if they wouldn't mind me walking with them. So I always had somebody to walk with to school, and it wasn't even a long walk, because by that time, we lived closer to palm school and and, and so I would walk, they would walk, and they didn't mind walking with me, and I didn't start walking by myself until my sister started school, and she was four years younger than me, and when she started school, then I walked her. So I took care of her while, you know, walking her to school. But, yeah, my So, but earlier on, in my earlier years, my mother was always there, you know, and sometimes I was like, you know, like, why are you here? You know, a lot of kids just run to school because they live nearby and or they had other brothers and sisters and, you know, but, you know, sometimes I thought that, but then I kind of shake it off, and because I was very respectful of my parents too, and I realized they were just, you know, being good parents. I really did think that, like they're doing good my parents, you know, are, are good parents, so they want for me to be safe. You know, it was about safety. And then one time though, my father, so they would come to all my programs. I was involved in a lot of programs. By the third grade, I was elected princess of my classroom, you know, and then all the princes of all the classrooms, then there was a vote taken as to to see who would become the queen.

Paulina Serrano 47:55

Was the vote of like students voted,

Hortensia Palomares 47:59

I think it was, I don't know. I'm thinking it was, but I really don't remember. And I'm thinking it was kind of popularity too, that's what it was, too. But in the classroom, the students did vote, and so they voted for me, and then I got to select my prince, you know, and that's when I was telling my mother about yesterday. I didn't select the little boy that you know had kind of professed his love to me. I chose another one because I was kind of embarrassed of this. I was little kid, like, I don't understand this, but he likes me, you know, and I don't like that. So I chose somebody, another, another young who what

was his name? The one I selected. His name was Luis Trevino. The one that liked you, the one that liked me, his name was Joe Flores, yeah, and he was really cute.

Paulina Serrano 49:04

So before we get into actually, you at Palm school. So you, you know, you express this desire of going to school in Chicago. And so you, you go with your parents to get registered in the summer. And so the first day of school comes. Do you have any memories of that first day?

Hortensia Palomares 49:23

I do the first day of school. I we needed an interpreter. My mother needed an interpreter, and so did I. So I was right next to her. She was holding my hand, and my first grade teacher was Miss Beverly, and so I they brought in another young, a young girl to come and interpret for my mother, because and she was Mexican American too. But she could already speak English. She was from the neighborhood too, and she so that she interpreted. I don't exactly know what it was that they talked about, maybe what time school was out, or something like that. Maybe my mother was asking questions. I don't know, but there was an interpretation experience that that I recall. But I was little, and I was kind of shy, you know, kind of with my mother, kind of like still holding her hand. But other than that, I, you know, once I got into seating, you know, you know, I don't know if they placed us in a seating arrangement or something like that, but, but I ended up kind of, that's when I looked up and saw the alphabet there, and it was like, Okay, I'm I'm comfortable with this. I'm fine. So I didn't cry, or I wasn't like, you know, like children sometimes cry for their parents. I was ready to go to school. I was happy to be there.

Paulina Serrano 51:02

Do you remember? Do you have any memories of being weighed when you went to school,

Hortensia Palomares 51:07

of being what weighed? Weighed like my weight? I remember that, yes, being weighed, yeah, and my weight was always like, I was kind of a skinny child, real skinny, and I wasn't sick or anything. I was in malnutrition or anything, but I was very thin, very thin child. Yeah, so, but yeah, I remember being weighed, yeah, and they would include that weight on the report cards that was included there, and your height also, yeah.

Paulina Serrano 51:42

And do you remember who, who would conduct that?

Hortensia Palomares 51:46

No, I don't remember. No, I don't have a vivid memory of that.

Paulina Serrano 51:53

No, in terms of the day to day activities in the classroom, do you have any memories of favorite subjects? Of what sort of, or can you recall what the day would look like when you were at in school?

Hortensia Palomares 52:09

Okay, first grade was kind of a little bit of a just

Hortensia Palomares 52:16

went too fast. I think I just remember that, you know, the the alphabet. I remember some of the children around by the second grade. I remember actually reading, you know, reading the Dick and Jane books, and, you know, being able to to read, you know, the simple words. So that was kind of a day to day, and then going to going outside, you know, to to recess, going to lunch, to the lunch room. So that was kind of second grade. And in second grade, by the way, I that was the year that I got the chicken pox, and I had to miss, I don't know how many days, but like, several days, probably not a week, but it was several days, and I remember being really upset about that, because I didn't like, I did not like to be absent. That was kind of my, my thing. I wanted to be in school. So by the time I got to the third grade, let's see, in the third grade, typical day was the same thing, but I feel like we were by the third grade, we were learning just a lot more. There was it stopped from being, you know, like little kid to a little bit older kid.

Paulina Serrano 53:57

Do you remember the subjects?

Hortensia Palomares 54:00

I don't really remember the subjects, but we had, you know, we had had a good teacher, Miss Jordan, and I was trying to think back, but I think that was the grade that we I don't remember the subject, but I think that was a grade that we had a we got to see John Glenn orbit, orbit the Earth. That was, that was the year that would have been 62, 63 somewhere around there. So that I was in the third grade, and that was a year I was the princess.

Paulina Serrano 54:46

Did you watch that event at Palm? At palm? Yes. Do you remember?

Hortensia Palomares 54:50

Yes, I remember that it was an important like a world event. It was something that you know, that they want, that the the. Teachers wanted us to witness because it was, you know, it was a his historic. It was historic, yeah. So I do remember that. Remember that and actually seeing the old TV, you know, with the actual like the earth and

Paulina Serrano 55:22

what, what kind of impact an event like that had on you.

Hortensia Palomares 55:28

I don't really feel like there it was a big impact, but what I what I recall as the years passed by, was that, just that. It was an important event that it was worldwide. It wasn't just something that we used to watch on TV. Although we really didn't watch TV, we didn't always have a TV, not that early on. But you know, when you would hear about big events that that was on TV, so, so that was one of them, and that it was a historic thing. So So I remember the historic nature of it, but that's about it.

Paulina Serrano 56:18

And in terms of thinking about like history, did you learn about Mexican American experiences in Texas in Do you remember any of that being on the curriculum at Palm No,

Hortensia Palomares 56:34

no, that's something that I kind of look back at, that it wasn't there. I'm going to take a drink.

Hortensia Palomares 56:55

By the time, I want to just kind of say this first by the time I was in the fourth grade, just to kind of help answer your your question about a day to day by the fourth grade, I do remember subjects. So I remember studying geography, and I remember especially studying about Japan that made me want to go there. So, you know, that was really, really nice. And also, by the fourth grade, I think that's when we well, at least me, I realized that, that there were groups of students, and I think they we were, we were selected or tracked, or, you know, select. It was a way of selecting, like the smartest kids were going to be in a certain with a certain teacher. Because I think there were maybe three, 3/4 grade teachers or four, you know, I forgot how many, but usually there were three, three teachers in every grade, and the one teacher that had all the smart kids supposed to be smart as kids were, it were in Miss Raia says class, and then in the fifth grade they all the smart kids were with MS England, and then in the 6/6 grade, all the smart kids were in Miss Houston's classroom. So those of us that were making the honor roll, we knew what teacher we were going to get. So I knew where I was going to be. So and I felt like, fourth grade, oh, okay, I'm in the smart group now. I'm with the smart kids. That was kind of fun for the longest time, until, you know, until later in my in my life, I fourth grade was kind of interesting, because I remember for the longest time. I remember all the kids who were in the classroom. I remember where they sat, I remember what they were wearing. This is so weird, but and I told my a friend of mine, she said, Why are you remembering that? I don't know. It was just a strange memory. I don't remember that now you know my memory in the fifth grade, there were some impactful events that I can talk about in the fifth grade, that was 1963, 64, 1963-64

Hortensia Palomares 59:54

that was the year in the spring that I became a naturalized citizen. My father became a citizen. In and he studied for the citizenship exam. And I was 11 at the time. Well, I was 10, and then 11 in the spring. So my father studied for that. He went to classes at Pan Am, which is the Pan Am Oswaldo Cantu Recreation Center. He went there and studied for the citizenship. And so then he had to pass the test. Once he passed the test, then he was ready to be sworn in as a citizen. And he had to go to the the it was the the Supreme Court. I guess it's the district court here in the, in the in Austin, and at the time it was on Eighth Street, I believe. Anyway, so they asked my father if he had any children who were not citizens, and they let him know that any of those children would audit could automatically become citizens. And so I was it. I would I was his only child who was not a citizen, and so I got to go with him and become a citizen. I did not have to study for an exam. Because I think the assumption is that we were already studying the same questions that my father was being asked about, how many stars on the flag? You know, how many stars and stripes who was a president? You know, things that we were already learning, that you know, the the Pledge of Allegiance, and all of the things that citizens, you know, naturalized citizens, have to learn to pass the naturalization test. So I automatically became a citizen in Feburary.

Paulina Serrano 1:02:00

what did that mean to you?

Hortensia Palomares 1:02:04

It was important to me. It was it because it was important to my father and because we were close and, you know, we, we talked about this, you know, I mean, we just, we had conversations. And so I was like minded, you know, I was of like mind with my father and my mother. And so, yes, it was,

Hortensia Palomares 1:02:32

it was like an honor, you know, it was okay. I'm a citizen now, I felt like it, you know, the officialness of it was, was very honorable to me.

Hortensia Palomares 1:02:46

It was, I felt, you know, pride, you know. Now, now I'm a US citizen, you know. And I remember having to, you know, raise that we all had to raise our hand and swear, you know, to the oath and, you know, and all that. So all of that was like, yeah, it was like, it kind of hit, you know, kind of hit us, you know, sentimentally, very positive, though very positive, and then my father, then after, after we did that, it was just, you know, it was just me and him. Then we went across the street to a restaurant, and we celebrated, and it was an Italian restaurant, and I'm like, okay, and my father knew about, you know, all these about food, because he was a cook, but that's when he, I mean, it wasn't that he hadn't taught us that. But I remember being feeling, I'm in kind of a formal setting. I'm kind of like, this is very important. This is an important celebration. And, you know. And he told me, yes, you know, the fork is here and the knife is here, and you know. So it was like etiquette. It was an etiquette situation, too. And then had a spaghetti, or whatever it is. I forgot what we ate, but it was a salad. So a salad and, you know, in some other kind of Italian meal, but it was, you know, it was an important moment, an important moment for me and my father. So that was February, 1964 1964 and so I still have my naturalization paper, you know, it's, it's a certificate this big, so there's no, well, I have a small card. They no longer make those kind of like, still looks like a green card. You know, it still looks like. Like, the, yeah, the cards that I recall people would have, like my parents before they became citizens, and me too, I think we had a card. And, you know, there's a certain kind of stigma associated with a green card, because you're, you're registered alien. You're an alien, you know. And I remember, think, you know, thinking about that later, but at that time, I remember people would say, oh, yeah, you're a registered alien. Well, you know, in a way, that was good, because we were legal, not illegal. But on the other hand, alien, that word kind of got to me. You know, even even young, I did not like that. But the little card that I got showing my naturalization, I went to San Antonio to get that, and I still carry that. So if I had to prove that I'm a citizen. I can do it. I don't know if other people who were born in the US, who, you know, carry that around. I mean, the only thing regular, I mean, someone who was, was born here, carries is a driver's license, but we, most people, do not carry around a citizenship, proof of citizenship. Yeah,

Paulina Serrano 1:06:30

the closest thing, I think, is the the passport card. Now that's a proof of proof of citizen, yeah, but nobody,

Hortensia Palomares 1:06:39

yeah, I have a passport, but I don't carry that around. Yeah, but yeah, that was an important event in the fifth grade, the spring of the fifth grade. The other thing in the in the fifth grade was the assassination of President Kennedy. That was a big event. That was the fall of my fifth grade year, and what I recall in that is that so our classroom, we were in the fifth grade, and our classroom, where it was situated, down the hall, was sixth grade, 3 6th grade classes. And so then those of us that were kind of sitting close to the door, I remember there was oh and we were our classroom was right next to the girl restroom. So there was a restroom there, and then there was another classroom over here in the corner. Remember hearing crying. There was a lot of crying, because I was a girls restroom, these sixth grade girls, they were, I felt like they were, like, older and taller and bigger than me, but they were like, Oh my gosh, you know, they're, they're, you know, they're the older girls well, and they were, they were all crying. And they were went to the restroom, you know, to dry their tears and all, I mean, they were wailing. They were crying really hard, really loud, and so we were wondering. We kind of just kind of peeked out there, and then, I don't know exactly how we found out, but we found out that the reason they were crying was because President Kennedy, Kennedy had been assassinated. The news had just come out that he had been assassinated. Yeah, that's how we got that's how I got the news. Or, I don't know how the girls got it. Sixth grade girls got it probably because maybe their teacher told them, you know, they were older too. I'm not sure, but, yeah, but that was an event that kind of the way I felt was like, I mean, it was sad. It was sad because we had been when I lived with, with, with my aunt. I remember hearing about, you know, the presidents and all that. So that was kind of my first, you know, first kind of memory of, okay, you know, there's a there's presidents, and then there's, you know, there's a governors and all that. But that was kind of the extent of it. But in the, in the sixth in the when Kennedy first ran, then I remember that most of the Mexicans, Mexican American community, you know, were, were supporting John F Kennedy because he was Catholic. A lot of it was because he was Catholic, but supposedly he was, you know, he was a good person. He was kind. So lots, lots of people were supporting him. They would, I remember they were Tamaladas. I kind of remember that. I don't know who did them, but I remember hearing about that Tamaladas for in support of to gather where there were votes, and, you know, money to give to, to John F Kennedy.

Paulina Serrano 1:10:06

So were they? Do you remember where they were taking place? Was it at Palm?

Hortensia Palomares 1:10:13

No, I think it was, I think it was probably Parque Zaragoza. What farther east from my neighborhood? I ended up, kind of living closer to to the interstate to I 35 that's kind of where I spent, know, most of my most of my life, with the exception of of Santa Rita, that was east. But the neighborhood I lived in was, it was a Mexican American neighborhood, but it was very close to downtown. It was always like it was, it was the most central East Austin, Mexican American East Austin neighborhood that there was, and that's where I grew up, right next to I 35 always close by. That was the other thing. My mother always made sure that we were close. We were as close to the school as possible, and she also wanted to for for her children, for me and the rest of my sisters, to go to the schools that were considered better schools. So palm was considered a better school than salva LA. Zavala, because of what had been experienced, because of what they saw and they witnessed, and I think also because, because there was this kind of understood, but not really verbalize, that the school where the white kids would go were

better schools than the Mexican schools. And there were, there were schools that were considered these. This is the school where Mexicans go, you know. And these are the schools where white people go, and these are the schools for the black community. And everybody kind of knew that at that time. By the time I went to palm, they were not that. Palm used to be predominantly schooled. A school for white kids, because the community where I lived was previously also occupied by white families. But by the time I went to school, a lot of the families had left, and that's part of Austin's history, because when the the when the city started changing with I 35 kind of cutting through, cutting through the town, cutting through, through the city, the heart of the city that actually segregated Mexican and black East Austin from the from West Austin from where so a lot of the families, white families who had previously lived in houses that I ended up living in later, left, left the community. When my husband was going to school at Palm there were a lot more white families and white kids, and he, you know, he went to school with them. He know he grew he grew up with them, and he later, later met them again at in the junior high that we went to, and then he later they also went to the to the high school that we went to. But when I came in to palm in 1959 they were practically gone. White families were practically gone. And the highway, as I recall, was built, or at least the piece that was near where I grew up, near my home, near the my neighborhood, was completed in 1962 1962 and because before that, it was called East Avenue and and we live right there. We live right on I 35 and Third Street. We moved from, from uh. Other third street to another house on Third Street. But I 35 kind of, you know, separated the neighborhood, and it, it really did change the neighborhood for us, not for the better, but, but, yeah, but so. But by the time I went to palm there were very few white kids, and I always told my husband, I said, Can I count them on one hand? I think maybe I don't even need my whole hand, because there weren't that many. Yeah, there weren't that many anymore, although I was friends with this one girl, and the reason that I was friends with her was because Miss Herrera, my second grade teacher, kind of suggested that, that I, that I go play after school with Brenda, you know. And Brenda lived on San Marco Street, real close to my house, and she said, go, go after school and just kind of hang out with her. And she, Brenda was being raised by her grandparents and and so Brenda was kind of, I mean, they were, they were, well, to do, you know, the grandparents, and she had, I mean, and the house was nice, and she had giant box of full of toys, you know, and so I would go see her and, and the reason Miss Herrera, as you know, suggested I go play with her, was so that I could kind of brush up on English. And that was, that was right. It helped. It helped to do that. But, like I said, By the second grade, I was already comfortable, mostly comfortable with speaking English. And I just it was kind of seamless, I think, because I don't remember, like, Okay, I got it now, but yeah, by the third grade, I was fine. I was excelling in school, so I was right on track. I was never behind that, I think, anyway, but yeah, Brenda was one of the families there.

Paulina Serrano 1:17:13

Do you remember Brenda's name? Last Name, yeah, Andrews. Brenda Andrews, yeah.

Hortensia Palomares 1:17:20

And ironically, my parents ended up buying the lot that included that house where I used to go play with print. You know, that was really interesting. So my parents bought there were two houses on one lot, and they so we ended up living in the little one when Marcos and I got married, and I said, this is the house that I used to come to long time ago, you know. And, you know, like, I said, Yeah, and it was fun going to be with her, because I could play with all the toys that, I mean, we had, we had toys, we we

had all the necessities. You know, I would, I would consider myself from a low income family, poor family. We did grow up poor, but we always, my sisters and I always felt like we had everything that we needed in life. We had, you know, we had home, we had, we had clothing, you know, we had food, we had, we had, we did have toys. So all the necessities were there. We never lacked, like we never went hungry or anything like that. But my father was very low paid before he started working at UT, but once he started working at UT, then we were better off. It wasn't like he was paid highly paid, either, but he kind of moved up, and he ended up staying here 23 years. And for him, it was, it was like steady. He before that, he had in Austin, he had done construction and labor, that kind of, that kind of job, and so roofing, and he worked for Orkin underneath the homes and all this, these kinds of small jobs. But it wasn't until ut that he got benefits, you know, and was able to, was able to provide, you know, a little bit better for us that we thought, and for him, it was good because he didn't have to be out in the rain or the cold and the elements, you know. And he thought this, this is a good job for me. But like I said, he would come home and he would tell me, you know, there's he. You can go to school here. And you know, these young ladies are, you know, because he would converse with young people who were from Mexico, who were students here, yeah, because they were more, I think they were more Mexicanos, you know, exchange students coming from Mexico at UT before they were Mexican Americans. That's my view. I really think that that was that my estimation is pretty close there. But so, yeah, so he would say, Mira Habla con la senorita when I said Ma estras van, I said, and Fer meras Still, the, the gender specific, you know, type of careers, you know, and, and I thought, yeah, I could do something like that. It could be a ma estra or, you know, or, or nurse, you know, those kinds of types. But, anyway, kind of getting back to so that was an event in the fifth grade. And the other event in the fifth grade was the Beatles that we recall. The Beatles were, you know, made their presence in the US and, you know, and my friends and I kind of did a little pan of mime where we, kind of, you know, shook our heads like the Beatles and Panama. And it was, it was fun. It was fun to do that. So did

Paulina Serrano 1:21:29

you have a radio in at Palm that you listen to? I

Hortensia Palomares 1:21:33

don't know exactly what, how we did that, but there was, I think it was like, probably records. I think somebody brought a record, because it was kind of a special performance that we did, the four of us, my friend Anna, who's going to be interviewed this afternoon. You know, she, she was one. She was my best friend at the time. She was in the fifth grade with me. And I asked her the other day, I said, Anna, do you remember we pantomime the beat, you know, to the Beatles to a song, and we don't remember the song now we got, you know, but, I said, but we were, like, shaking our heads like that, like, like, you see the caricature of The Beatles, you know, and we were pandemic a song. But that was a big event, because we saw it on TV. We saw them on TV. By that time, I did have a TV and I was one of the, I don't know, however, millions of people who watched the Beatles for the first time ever. And that was a big, big thing. Music was important. MUSIC We at Palm we would have saw cops before the Beatles. They were saw cops and they were, usually were in this was after school. And I was like, I guess third grade, but third and fourth, I guess. And it was in there was a portable building behind palm, and we would go there to the portable and they would play the PE teacher was the one who sponsored that, and she would play music. And we just take off our shoes. We were in our socks, and we just kind of dance around and have fun. And at that time, the music was not the Beatles yet, okay, it was Elvis

Presley. It was, you know, who are the other ones? Chubby Checker, the twist. We were doing the twist. You know, I remember doing the twist early on. So those are so hops at Palm school. At palm school too. I was by the fourth grade. I think it was a fourth grade I'm not quite sure, but I joined the choir. I was real involved in the choir, and it was a lot of fun. We learned, those of us who were in the choir, we learned, one of the things that was kind of special was we we learned the same songs throughout all the schools, the school, all the schools in the district, in the school district, learn the same Christmas songs. And then in December, then we would go to what is now Palmer auditorium, and we would all sing all the Christmas songs in this special program. So they take us. It was a field trip. We just sang all the real beautiful, you know, Christmas, Christmas songs and and it this was all, all the schools, all the elementary schools in Austin would do that.

Hortensia Palomares 1:24:58

So that was, that was kind of. On. So that was part of it. The other thing that I did at Palm was, since my parents were always, you know, involved and wanted me to,

Hortensia Palomares 1:25:17

you know, to really enjoy everything, they also encouraged me to to go to the symphony. There were, there was a sim Austin symphony, and the the symphony would give four programs every year. And so what the school did is they had this or in conjunction with with the symphony, is they would, they would ask if you, if you wanted to go to a symphony performance. Then it was 25 cents. So and there were four. And so they gave us this little card that had little slots for four quarters. And so my parents made sure they put four quarters so that I could attend, you know, four different performances of the symphony during the year. Not every kid got to do that \$1 it was a lot of money back to even, you know, even, you know, for lots of families, \$1 was a lot to to, you know, to give a kid for an extra curricular but it was an extracurricular. Well, my parents made sure that that I could, you know, participate in that because my father loved classical music, you know, and and my father introduced us, to me, and my sisters to, you know, to kind of a variety of music, but classical was one of them, you know, all the so he believed the symphony was a good thing. And it was beautiful. It was really beautiful. It was a cultural event. So I think he, he believed that. He didn't say that, but now I know that's what it was. My father also introduced me to, to country music, you know, and then I introduced him to, you know, to rock music, because by the time I was, like, teenager, then that's when we were, you know, dancing and, you know, listening to all, you know, well, the Beatles started it, and then all the, all the rock bands after that, and all the different bands. And I just loved we were kids, right? And we would watch all these shows American bands stand just to know who the latest, the latest musicians and new, new performers, you know? So we kept up with that. My friend Anna and I, she had Beatle cards magazines with all the information of all these different groups, you know, and so, yeah, so music was, was important too.

Paulina Serrano 1:28:12

Was that Anna Macia? No,

Hortensia Palomares 1:28:14

I know. I know med luck, okay? Med luck, yeah, she's married to med la now, but she was South set, though. The other thing we did because we were in the choir was we had when we were in the sixth

grade, we, those of us who were in the choir, I think it was a choir. We got to go to the cafeteria and decorate a giant Christmas tree for the whole school. And then then there was a program just for the sixth graders. And that was a time that we for the first time this we're six, we danced with a boy, you know. So that was a big deal, you know. But we were like this, you know, far away, like this, and we just kind of do this. But the boys were acting very chival rest, you know. And we were like, Okay, we're grown up. We felt all grown up, but we danced to the Jingle Bell Rock. So, so that was fun. That was, that was, that was a good memory. I just remembered something else that, you know, it's another memory, when at lunch time, there were chimes there with these little chimes, kind of like, like a xylophone, and they were on the wall there, and every time. And so we we'd go through the the line, you know, then get our food and go sit down once the whole classroom was seated. Then someone from our classroom would go to those chimes on the wall, and they had a little you know, they would. Ring the chimes, you know, and and when the chimes would ring, that was a signal for everybody to be quiet, because we prayed. So it was, it was a prayer. And so everybody would kind of stop. Kids were silly too. They would, you know, they would stop in mid air, or, you know, mid food, it was. But that was interesting. We besides doing, you know, the I mean, I mean, in other words, it was a religion, and in school that later, you know, was phased out. But it was, I guess, there was the assumption that everybody was, you know, the same religion, or the same, you know, of the same beliefs. And so that was kind of interesting for me later to think about that like there was prayer in school. Was

Paulina Serrano 1:30:54

that, were there other instances of religion other than that? Lunch?

Hortensia Palomares 1:31:00

No, no, not that I remember. But you know, this is kind of thinking later, wait a minute. You know that was not allowed later, because it's the religion is not supposed to be there in school. And yeah, the assumption was Christianity. And what about other people? But I guess in general, most people there, or if they were from another faith, then we didn't know. They didn't tell us. We just didn't know about that and but, but I did know that people were from, I mean, kids, they were Catholic and Baptist and Methodist, because and Church of Christ those four. But I only know that because in the neighborhood where we lived, those churches were there. And we, for a time, I went to Catholic, a Catholic church. We would go with my father, and that's where I would see a lot of the kids, the young kids from palm and but where we lived at the time, there was a church of Christ right across, right across where we live, right across the street. One block down was a Methodist church right next door to us. Well, two houses from us, this corner was a Baptist church, and so we had 123, churches, and then the Catholic Church was up on the hill by the green and white photo. We would go up that, that hill where green and white groceries, and then go to Guadalupe church at the time. So we kind of knew where everybody, or the kids, they were Methodist or Baptist or Catholic, yeah, so only because it was, you know, it was a it was a neighborhood, and people knew each other. We all kind of knew where everybody lived, their parents. People would yell across the street, you know, have a conversation. So, yeah. So that was a part of the when we were going to palm

Paulina Serrano 1:33:22

you mentioned the I 35 and in the way that it impacted the community, and you mentioned your neighborhood. Can you talk a little bit about or your experiences with or memories of your

neighborhood during the construction, and then, as it as it pertained, to get going, like to school. And did it impact the going to school for you and then for your sisters later?

Hortensia Palomares 1:33:53

Yeah. So, as I recall, it was under construction when we lived on Third Street and and brushy actually, we were right on I 35 our house was right on the frontage road of I 35 and then the other Cross Street was Third Street. And so I remember the construction going on, and one of the reasons I remember it is because there's a photo of my mother. And I don't know who took it, my dad, probably, but I'm not even sure that I'm in the photo, but I remember this photo. We have it still. And the photo is underneath the Fifth Street Bridge. So the bridge had already been built over Fifth Street. Fifth Street is where the railroad tracks run when they intersect fifth and we. And I 35 frontage road, and we live Third Street, so it's right there. So my mom is pregnant with my fourth sister, and she was born in 1961 so that's why I kind of, you know when I sort try to sort out the dates in my head. So it was around that time. So she was born in 61 and so by 62 is when, around that time is when I remember it was being built, and then they finished building it. And where my mother took the photo, it was still rough underneath, you know, like there were still rocks. There was no concrete underneath the bridge yet, so it was just like rough white rocks. And then they finally did finish it. And then we started hearing the the noise. You know, it wasn't a lot of traffic, obviously, it wasn't back then, but it was different and and it was no notable noticeable, because we weren't used to a lot of cars passing, passing, you know, and we were Just like, one block away. So I remember, too, that at least two, two boys who went to palm school, they tried to cross the bridge. You know, they they actually went down into and try to cross, and then go up into palm, right where palm is. So imagine that going down there, and one of them got hit by a car. He lived, he, you know, he was, I guess he was okay. It would he wasn't injured that badly, but he was injured. He was injured. And so that's one of the memories of that. The other memory I have is that I remember having when I started walking my little sister to school. She we had to cross the bridge, over the bridge, and then we could look down and see the trap, you know, see that so that that for a little kid, I mean, I was still a little kid, even though I was older than my sister, for a little kid, that was kind of scary. That was a little bit scary. Before that, it was called East Avenue, and I don't have a lot of memories, vivid memories of that, but it was called East Avenue. And I do remember the that that the Mexican American older folks, that they would call it La callancha, because it was the wide street. And I don't know who calls it that anymore, but it was like a ancha, and that name stayed when it became a highway in a regional highway 35 but it was called La caia, but it was East Avenue and but East Avenue didn't, didn't have the same I guess, because it was not a highway, it it still felt like a like a neighborhood street, but it was on chat, so, you know? And of course, there was traffic flowing north, and then there was traffic flowing this way, but it was a wooded area. There were lots of lots of trees, lots of lots of trees and and grassy areas and all that. So it was a big change from that to just asphalt and concrete and all that. So that was a big change. And then going over the bridge, which is kind of scary to me, looking looking down like two little girls crossing there and and the kids too. I mean, it was like, Okay, we were not going to fall, but, you know what? If kids played around and, you know? But that was kind of the little bit of a fear that I think parents may have had, I don't know. And part

Paulina Serrano 1:39:27

of, part of your experience, then, you know, you speak about taking your your walking your sister, and I'm sorry, what was your sister's name?

Hortensia Palomares 1:39:37

My sister's name is Peter, Maria Guadalupe, the youngest? No, she's the next one after you. And then, yeah, so she's four years younger than me, and then I, the one after her is six years younger than me. The one after her is eight years younger than me, and the one after her is 11 years younger than me, yeah, and the one that's 11. Years younger than me, is the one that went to palm all the way to the fifth grade, and after that, they she had to go to Baker.

Paulina Serrano 1:40:07

And what was it like going to school with your sisters? Well,

Hortensia Palomares 1:40:11

it was, it was good. I felt well, I had already kind of been like this, so it was just even more. I felt like I was a big responsibility, like I was the big sister, so I really had to take care of her, even though I couldn't actually be next to her. But I, I, I felt like I had to care for her. I had to, you know, worry about her and, you know, and just be sure that she was safe when she first entered school, I remember like it was a big, big event for me. I don't know about her, because she doesn't remember. And I said, you know, when you went to school, I was telling her recently, I said, I iron your dress. We wore dresses. Okay, we wore dresses. We couldn't wear pants. But I said, iron your dress so perfectly, because I wanted you to be so perfect, and comb your hair and I put these little barrettes on you, just so you would be so cute going to school, you know, you'd be dressed so well in your little socks and shoes. She said, You did that for me. So, yeah, it was me. It was me, not mama, because mama, mama trusted me to do that too. You know, it was kind of a since I was the oldest, yeah, I took care. A lot of it wasn't, it was an overly, you know, super responsibility. But I felt that. And I actually felt my life changed a little bit too. At four, when my sister was born, I really felt it. I'm a big sister, you know, I have to take care of her. I have to be responsible. No one told me that. But, you know, I felt that way, and I've always kind of, we joke about it. We laugh about it with my sister. I said, Yeah, I grew up at four. At age four, I grew up because I was a big became a big sister, and she was, you know, I mean, I was four, that's kind of a little gap there. And she was, she was a baby. Did she have

Paulina Serrano 1:42:18

the same excitement to be at school. She

Hortensia Palomares 1:42:23

did. She did, yeah, because she and I were the closest, because, you know, we're the the closest, you know, the two oldest kids. So she, she and I are, you know, we were our best friends at home and at school, yeah, but yeah, she loves school too. She, she, she had a lot of the same experiences that I did. I mean, because we've talked about it through the years, she had Miss Herrera as her second grade teacher. Also, you know, because by that time, I think my mother may have asked for her to be placed there, if possible, for her to have Miss Herrera and, and the school did, since I already kind of knew the family and Miss Herrera probably said, Yes, let's do it or push for it, you know. And so yeah, she had Miss Herrera and and she had a great experience that you know from what she tells me and we talk about now, yeah, and

Paulina Serrano 1:43:30

by that time at home was it was English and Spanish spoken in the home. No,

Hortensia Palomares 1:43:38

we have always spoken Spanish. To this day, we speak Spanish to our mother. We switch to each other. I'll be talking to my sister. She'll be sitting there. Mama will be here. I switch to English with her, and my mother understands a lot more than she claims that she does. So I mean, it's not like we're trying to hide anything from her in our conversations, but, but we'll switch. It's just for us. It's a matter of respect. It's just respect. Spanish, speaking Spanish to my mother is a respectful thing to do and but she still is not really comfortable with English. She can have a conversation. She can speak to the doctor or, you know, at the store or whatever I mean, she can she can do it, but in a way, she's like some of the elders that they didn't need to. They did not need the older generation, for the longest time, did not need to speak English if they didn't have to. You know, that's kind of the way a lot of elders that I recall. A lot of them were home makers, so they didn't, you know, they just at home. It's Spanish.

Paulina Serrano 1:45:07

Was that facilitated by the community?

Hortensia Palomares 1:45:10

I think so. I think so, yeah, well, at least that was my experience. I don't know how it might be in other communities, but in Austin, it was because later, when I was became an adult. One of my first jobs was working with seniors, and I remember speaking Spanish to them, and it was the elderly were mostly Mexican American seniors. I was 24 and they were already in their 60s and 70s, so we just would speak Spanish to them, and that's one of the reasons I got hired, or that it was necessary to have a bilingual person, because Spanish was expected. So I think it kind of was in my neighborhood anyway, which is interesting, because this is Austin, you know, we're, we're north of San Antonio. I kind of always see, think of San Antonio as a cut off where, you know, that's the north, most northern part where Mexican Americans tend to live. Then you go south, you know, it's Mexicanos, but Austin is like we were, such as, you know, a small, a small, you know, minority of as far as Austin, the Austin population demographics, there weren't that many Mexican Americans in Austin for the longest time, for a long, long time, even up to the 70, even up to early 70s, I think. And that was reflected, I think, when I came to UT, Austin, they were like. The statistics at the time were that they were like 900 possibly between 900 -1100 Mexican Americans. But included in there, we weren't sure if they were from Mexico and other Spanish speaking, central South American countries, because they kind of lumped us all together at that time. So you didn't know if they were like, you know, from the US or but they were considered that was Mexican population or Mexican origin at UT. So we did not, we kind of said 900 at the time, and I think we were 11% of the population in Austin, kind of what I recall, yeah. And then it grew. Kept growing and growing.

Paulina Serrano 1:47:57

And at Palm school, what was, what was the language spoken?

Hortensia Palomares 1:48:00

Oh, it was English. It was English. Yeah, I didn't experience too many. I had heard that sometimes when kids would speak Spanish, that they were punished and we were not encouraged to speak Spanish. But I was, I was never punished. And, of course, I spoke Spanish to my parents when they would come, oh, you know, and, and maybe it was because of that, because we were translating, so it was kind of like acceptable, but most of the other kids, my you know, my fellow students, they spoke English, but at home, they spoke Spanish, yeah.

Paulina Serrano 1:48:51

Did the language vary among students? You know, you said you the classrooms were divided, like there were three classrooms per grade. Were there children that didn't speak Spanish or English in those classrooms?

Hortensia Palomares 1:49:04

Mostly no, that they were mostly already English speaking kids. I think it was because I was a newer student. I was a new I was an immigrant. I was newer to to this city, well, to and to the country. And most of the kids that went to palm had already been here. Their families had been here, you know, at least one more generation than me. So I think that made the difference. So they were already maybe their families were already speaking English, and maybe they spoke Spanish to their grandparents, but their parents probably knew and were better acquainted, you know, with with English and and you also, I also remember that some families who had already been here, you know, more generations than mine. Um encourage their kids to speak English, and some of them even discouraged Spanish period in order to fit into the you know, to the to the country and to acclimate and to you know, to acculturate and assimilate. And my family wasn't like that, you know, because my family, I grew up with my parents telling me to be proud, you know, to take pride in being Mexicana, Mexican from Mexico. We used to hear some families or some kids would say, don't tell them you're from Mexico. It's embarrassing. It was an embarrassment to be Mexican from Mexico, but I didn't grow up with that, you know, and whoever tried to kind of tell me that I just it just kind of, you know, kind of flew by, because I was proud of being having been born in Mexico. There was no shame in that for me. But I was also proud to be when I became a citizen. So it was an equal sense of pride to me, like I'm both. I can be both of these things. I mean, for me, it was, it was that.

Paulina Serrano 1:51:34

Did your parents keep up with events or news from Mexico?

Hortensia Palomares 1:51:41

From Mexico, no, not that much. Not that much. Sometimes my aunt would save some newspapers and also and then give them to us. And sometimes my same aunt would save, like, a whole year's worth, like, you know, 12 issues of Mexico that's gonna see, though, and it's all about, it's like a National Geographic, but Mexican, yeah, and so I got a lot from that. It was just really interesting to to read all that. But as far as news, no, no. I feel like I wish I would have learned, you know, more of Mexican history. You know who, who the President was, who, what politics were going on. Of course, I was, when I was an adult. I was thinking like that, like I wish I knew, but also i I wish I had known, like, What songs do kids sing? You know, little kids. You know, I feel like I wanted that too, even though I was getting, you know, the American school system experience, but I wanted to know what, how they

actually learn, you know, to read and to read, you know, more difficult books. However, I, I kept up with with Spanish. I I, I could read, you know, I, I mean, since, because I started reading. So Young, I kept reading. And so my mother did read a lot of what they call novelas, written their little books, little magazines. It's mostly magazines, but there are novelas, and so I would read those too. So I kind of kept up with with reading and reading at more difficult levels and and adult levels, and, you know, everyday kind of levels I never, I don't think I mastered, you know, I mean, obviously I didn't last, you know, the the Spanish that you know, high school or university level would you know? You know, would learn that students learn that? However, I did very well on, on, you know, in I took Spanish just to make sure that I took Spanish classes during, you know, in junior high, I took one, and then in high school, I took another one, but it was just like, too easy, right? But I wanted to make sure that I kind of like what I didn't get from my my mother was like the grammatical part, you know, the conjugation of verbs and things like that, right? And so I felt like I had kind of missed that. So that's why then I took Spanish in school. But. Yeah, I'm not sure that that really worked for me. Because I, I felt like, well because, because I, I did so well, so, so I passed it. But it's like, okay, I really should be doing something, you know, more higher level here. And so when I got, when I when I got here to UT, I placed out of 30 hours of Spanish. And so right away I was in the upper division courses, you know, now those were hard because now we were reading Juan Rulfo and Gabriel, you know, Marques and, you know, and that's when I finally felt like, oh my gosh, you know, I need to go to college for this, you know, I so I didn't take a lot of those because they were, they were very, very difficult. And by that time, I wasn't too, you know, too interested in in that I should have been, because I do like literature, and I wanted to learn more about Mexican literature. Obviously, it's, you know, it's beautiful, it's good, you know, to know that. And I, we did get, I did get some of that during the my Mexican American studies degree program that I did. We took Dialectology, and then I took the upper division level courses. I did get a lot, but I felt like I wanted some more of that, but I didn't I was too interested in Mexican American studies, because I really wanted to know about my roots, and I was part of the Chicano movement. So when I came to UT Chicano Movement, was it, and it was reaching back to find our roots, things that we had not been taught in, you know, in school. But since the Chicano movement was was going strong, you know, that I became part of that. I was also want to add that. So when I was in at Palm, we we dance. We also danced in PE, the PE teacher, which teaches dances. And they were, one of them was, what, some of them were, square dancing, you know, square you know, like country western, you know, and the other one was a Hawaiian dance. It was kind of Polynesian, you know, they go like this, and then you dance. And then another one was the Schottische, you know, the chotis, which in Spanish is chotis, but you know. So that was kind of like German. And then we also danced the May pole, and this was all at the end of the year, but we prepared throughout the year for these dances. And sometimes we would go to other schools, like we went to Zavala one time, and I went and danced with my partner. We were little, you know, we were all young, and we danced and performed for them, and then they danced and performed for us. The May pole was beautiful. Are you familiar with that the may pole has you dance and then you twirl. The May pole is kind of like threaded around braided, like braided and and just some nice music. I mean, the music was wonderful because I liked all sorts of music, but I didn't think about this until later. Like folklorico. Nowadays, we have folklorico in the schools. You know, we have music that, you know, Spanish language, music, even some of the Christmas carols, you know, are done, you know, during the posales and things like that, but we didn't have that. And, you know, in retrospect, I always wondered, why didn't we have that? And here with this whole school full of Mexican American kids who are not getting anything having to do with, you know, with their culture, with our culture,

because we have it now, and that's why I can think about that now and then during the Chicano Movement, though, we really, you know, push for for bilingual education, and also for the teaching of our culture and heritage our history in the schools, at least where they were Mexican American kids. Yeah, and so when, when Sanchez Elementary, you know, was built, then that's kind of when that started. And it's not coincidental that part of it was driven by the teachers who were hired there, who were a lot of them my friends, the majority of them my friends, who were here at UT in 1970, 71, 72 early 70s, and who were studying, they were in education. They were studying to be teachers. And a lot of them were hired at Sanchez, and at least at Sanchez then they started with the folklorico. So that was mid 70s. That was 1970s you know. And I was in school in the 59 to 65 and none of that. It took another whole, I don't know, another decade, or, you know, decade and a half, for things to change because of the Chicano movement and us pushing for those kinds of things, and bilingual ed too.

Paulina Serrano 2:01:07

And prior to, prior to the movement at Palm, or at Palm, really, there any other instances of, you know, cultural awareness, or any sort of teaching of Mexican American history?

Hortensia Palomares 2:01:22

No, not for me, not at Palm I mean, we sang some songs, but to me, they were a little bit, you know, like, I mean, it was like, No, it doesn't sound right, because it was like, Harabe Tapatio, but, but it wasn't. It was in English, and I didn't know that. I didn't know that because I didn't know the Harabe Tapatio later, wait a minute, we sang that song, but it was in English, and it was almost like comical, and making fun of, you know, it was a Mexican song. It was kind of it, you know, yeah, just comical. And so, but I didn't know that at the time. I didn't think of that. Yeah, we studied Mexico. But again, we there was really nothing that I remember that was cultural at Palm, not Mexican culture, Mexican American cultural having to do with, you know, with with my culture, just those other ones. I mean, the maple was beautiful, and the shot is, was, was nice. We danced these dances, you know, but nothing there was, there was no folk, logical. There was no, no Dia de los Muertos. Dia de los Muertos didn't come till late 70s in Austin. Nobody, no one in Austin knew about Dia de Los Muertos, but I was involved in the with some of the artists who brought that, and a lot of them I had known previously at UT. So all of that started, you know, Chicano art and the murals, you know, the Murales and the the women artist, El sur oste, the Chicano, Chicano and Chicano artists, yeah.

Paulina Serrano 2:03:13

How do you well, we, we heard yesterday a little bit about how some of the women serving lunch were speaking Spanish, making sure children ate. How did the palm school fit in with the broader Mexican American community, like people who from the community, who would work at Palm school and take care of the children, and did it have an impact in bringing in any sort of cultural, kind of like cultural practices.

Hortensia Palomares 2:03:50

I don't recall that happening. You're right. There were, there were some the ladies who worked in the cafeteria. Yeah, they did try to help the kids. I remember that they serve lunch was served, but a lot of the kids at that time could also bring their lunch, sack lunch and and I do recall some kids kind of going outside and eating because they were embarrassed, because they were eating tacos, bean tacos,

probably bean and cheese, and that was an embarrassing thing to eat tacos, so it was a big deal, and it was considered better to eat lunch there. My parents weren't embarrassed by that, but they did feel like I should eat the cafeteria food, and so they encouraged that for me, and this

Paulina Serrano 2:04:52

was sorry for interrupting the feeling of embarrassment. Is that coming from the. Other children, or is it the administrators that are discouraging bringing your own lunch?

Hortensia Palomares 2:05:07

was mostly the kids. I don't, I didn't, I didn't see instances of the administrators telling them anything, but the kids themselves felt an embarrassment, like it was embarrassing to bring a sack lunch, because that meant you were really, really poor. And then the fact what was, you know, the ingredients inside the taco, if it was beans, that was even more embarrassing. You know, for a Mexican kid, I did recall that, you know, some kids that, that I considered who were very poor also didn't have shoes. Even at that time they they did, they would come barefooted and with kind of raggedy clothes. And so it's like we knew that they they were really poor, that they didn't their parents couldn't provide for them, and they, you could tell in their clothing, you know, it wasn't clean. They weren't clean. So those mostly boys. I remember the boys doing that, and they ended up, like, missing a lot of school, and yeah, and you know, they're Yeah, they're just pants were dirty. So I do recall that a lot in my in, in my school, so they ended up being being embarrassed and and so that's why, sometimes they just, like, ended up not coming to school. We sometimes we didn't know where they went. Maybe they went to another neighborhood, another school maybe, I don't know, you know, or some of them just stopped going to school. I don't know if they really stopped going to school that early, but sometimes by junior high, by the seventh or eighth grade, we did see there were dropouts. They just didn't go I don't know how, how the school district handled that, but there was, there was a drop, drop out. There was a lot of drop out, yeah, and girls too. I remember girls just didn't want to go by the seventh grade. They didn't they didn't want to go to school. They decided, no, I'm like, just not. And the parents, a lot of them, were like, Okay, that's you just won't go to school.

Paulina Serrano 2:07:38

Do you think that was an out of necessity or out of the way that they experience the school?

Hortensia Palomares 2:07:44

It was the experience. Yeah, it was the experience. You know? I mean, even though I had a good experience myself, I did witness the students who didn't have a good experience. I remember, like, personally, for me, I remember playing, there was this game where you run to the center, there's a line there, you're outside, and then you run and get a ball, a small ball like this, like a kick ball, and then you try to hit the person across, you know, we called it dodge ball, and if you hit somebody, then they're out. But if they hit you, you know that, then you're out. You know that kind of thing. For me, I was like, I was a skinny little kid, and they were sixth grade boys. I don't know why they put us with to play with six great boys, but they were bigger, you know, and tougher and all that. And I would just, you know, it was like they wanted to hit me really, really hard, and I was this smaller child, so I just kind of let them hit me a little bit, and I would get out. But we were playing it with a dress on, okay? And we were playing boys and girls, and these bigger boys, some of them who had repeated the grades too, so they were even

older than sixth grade. That was That wasn't great. So and then the girls, if you fall down, then you know, you were embarrassed. If you know, your dress went up, or, you know, something like that. So the girls were, a lot of the girls were embarrassed, you know, and they were always kind of like, just, it was just an embarrassing thing. So that happened to a lot of girls, and American

Paulina Serrano 2:09:41

was it? Were there other instances, did all the girls have to wear dresses or and then, were there other ways in which girls were treated differently than boys?

Hortensia Palomares 2:09:52

Oh, we all had to wear dresses. We all did. Yeah, the only time we. I that I remember wearing pants was when it was, like a really, really cold day, like, you know, below freezing temperatures. Then what my mother would do is we would put pants underneath our dress, walk to school, take the pants off at school and kind of put them aside there and then put them on in the afternoon, if, if it was cold enough, otherwise we couldn't wear pants. Couldn't wear pants at all. For me in my school years, it wasn't until my 12th grade senior year that Austin ISD allowed girls to wear pants to school. That was that was it 12th grade, then we could wear pants. And I rebelled. In the 11th grade, I wore pants and they sent me home, and then I wore pants again. And the counselor was like, "Hortensia, you're a good student. Why? Why are you doing this?" I'm like, "because, because I, I feel like I should be able to wear pants to school. What's the difference? You know?" And she said, and the counselor is like, she's she said, "I'm gonna let you in on a little secret next year, the rules are changing. You can wear pants next year." This is 1971 so 1970 71 that was my rebellious time at school, wearing pants. That's what I rebelled against. I mean, wearing dresses. I just wanted to, you know, I mean, we liked wearing the styles. You know, in the seventh grade we were with all the new styles, the boots and, you know, all the styles that came with a with a with the new music and the Beatles, bringing in the beetle boots and the, you know, the turtle necks and those kinds of things keeping up with all that. But yeah, so a lot of yeah, my experience may have been a little different than some of the other kids, but I think all in all, the group of students who were with me, like from the first, were at Palm from the first, you know, between 1959 and 65 um, their experiences, I think we're generally good. We're generally good as far as well, first of all far as education, I think we, we were taught the necessary, the necessary teachings and the things that we had to learn that were required by, you know, by by the plan, the lesson plans, and all You know that teachers were supposed to teach us, at least for me, I, you know, I absorbed everything. I liked it. I just, you know, just kept up with everything. I was curious and I was, I would go beyond, you know, doing things and I was involved in so much. Because, again, I love being there. I really did love being being in school. I was a safety patrol girl, you know. I volunteered to feed the fish in the morning, you know, I, I volunteered to run the little students store. So I was always kind of doing this and that stayed after school, came in early, yeah, did all the it was fun. It was fun for me. But I did, I did witness, you know, what I call like, kind of sad situations where it was because of, because we were Mexican American, because of our origin, that, you know, kids did suffer. And I did see kids getting paddled, you know, and then the girls, because they wore some girls wore petticoats, it kind of flared out like that. They would pick up their petticoat like that and in order to spank them otherwise, you know, so that's that's embarrassing too. I didn't wear petticoats, and I try not to get I didn't get paddled. I try to just be a good student, which I generally was, but it's not like I didn't see and witness things where students were, I would say, yeah, they were mistreated because of their their backgrounds, and because maybe they

weren't learning as quickly as me, or in my husband's instance, you know, he. He He didn't have a mom to guide him. Or maybe, you know, people, their dads or parents, didn't have a job, you know, good job to support them. So whatever was going on in the neighborhood, you know, kind of translated over to school too. And here's the thing, so palm school is right kind of right, where it's situated. Its geographic area is just important. And we were just like, right on the other side of that. And this is there's this thriving neighborhood, Mexican American neighborhood, and we were so close to downtown, so it was like we were so centrally located, but palm was too right there, but we walked everywhere, and it was just a vibrant, kind of and thriving neighborhood. Everybody knew each other. The kids knew each other. You know, we all went to palm park for movies. We would go to palm pool for swimming in the summer. There was just, you know, it was a hub of the school. Was a hub for us. And I guess strategically, it's just its place minutes where it's at, you know, just kind of intersected with with everything else going on just one block, you know, across across the highway. In this case, it was across the highway. And for for the rainy street people, it was just right there, across across the street too. Yeah, and Rainey wasn't we didn't feel a separation with from Rainey at the time, either or we didn't feel a separation from those who lived on Eighth Street or seventh and eighth Street, Ninth Street, there was all this community all along I 35 that fit into palm school.

Paulina Serrano 2:17:12

Do you have any memories of Juarez Lincoln or the dairy and you can you mentioned the pool? Can you talk a little bit about that in relation to, like, the proximity to palm and how that may have shaped the students?

Hortensia Palomares 2:17:30

Oh, yeah, so many kids. I mean, that was where they lived in the summer, the pool, you know, that was just and they would go, I mean, they must have had, we must have had calluses on our feet. We, we would go barefooted, to to the to the swimming pool, even though we live, you know, one block or or maybe sometimes more, and to to the pool. And, you know, often we I mean, there were kids that went there every single day and stayed stayed a long time. I didn't go every single day, but I went often. You know, when I got a little older than I would walk with my sisters alone or just with friends, and we just walk across, and then superior dairies, yeah, we it was right next door. I don't have a lot of memories from that, just that it was there, and I think it provided the milk for, you know, we for for lunch, yeah, and right across, right across palm and across the the superior dairies. There were homes. There were actual homes and houses. And I still remember, there's still two trees there some sort of pine trees. They're still there. I remember them back then. I remember them throughout the years. I looked at them two days ago. They're still there. So and then right across palm is there was a Baptist church. I think it was, I forgot what the name of it was. I'm not sure if it was Ebenezer, but that was a church after it was a church for many years, and then it became like a halfway house for men who were rehabilitating, you know, from alcoholism. And so the church, it was still part of the church. It was part of their their work to. Help these men, and they would actually live there. They had like cots, and they and they all cook and support each other and all that. And then they had a little a thrift store. And so my mom ended up working at that little, actually, not working volunteering, volunteering at the thrift store. So when my friend and I would go over there to see them, we would hang out. We kind of roam the whole church. And it was in my young eyes, it was huge. And we would just go through all these nooks and crannies, and, you know, upstairs and downstairs, and the place where they baptize people, you know, and so

we had lots of fun just kind of roaming the building, because it was mostly the bottom part that was used, and the church was no longer in use, but it still belonged To whatever church organization was, you know, was running the, the new phase of it, it the, this new, this new phase was called Operation Brotherhood and the and so my mother was at the little store, but then she also ended up helping to cook the food for for the men who were staying there. And so I have a brochure that has, and I'm in one of the photos too me and my sisters and my and my mother. I kept that. It's all kind of like, yeah, then later, I don't know exactly when later it became Juarez Lincoln. So my connection Juarez Lincoln is this when I first started, when I first came to UT in 1971 that fall, there were discussions being held about Juarez Lincoln becoming a full fledged University, and they actually refer to it as the first Mexican American University, accredited university in the country, although there's some debate about another Jacinto Trevino being the First, but they call it colegio, and this was University. I don't know there was difference. I'm not sure what all the history is, but Juarez Lincoln was already they were, they were already planning, and it became accredited by the Antioch system. Antioch University. I forgot the whole name, Yellow Springs, I think it is. And I forgot exactly where, but so it did become an accredited, full fledged university. But while they were follow, following that accreditation, then they started discussions on the curriculum, and that's when I became involved. I was invited to come be part of that I was a freshman here, but yet, you know, they I was invited by somebody to come to meet, a meeting, and then I became part of the committee. And of course, by that time we I was already fighting for Chicano Studies here at UT in 71 the fall of 71 so I just didn't see a you know, it was seamless for me to to get involved with Juarez Lincoln, even though I knew that Juarez Lincoln was really going to be a master's degree program. It was not a bachelor's program. It's going to be masters. And the idea was for the students who are graduating from UT, for example, or or from other small college, you know, like Saint Eds or other colleges that they they could go right into a master's program. And it was the University Without Walls concept that that they were talking about, where you could get credit for having already done work, worked someplace, and then you, you write your your your papers, you know your essays, or about your experience based on what you've already done. You've already done a practicum, in other words. So I love that idea. But here I was, you know, I was still a freshman, but I was kind of helping to plan the curriculum. I have a lot of I have not a lot, but some of the papers from that time that I kept, I kept a lot of things from my time in my involvement, but yeah, I was part of that committee that helped plan the curriculum for Juarez Lincoln

Paulina Serrano 2:24:57

and how did so, how do you think? How do you think? Your work with Juarez Lincoln. Well, having gone to palm, worked with Juarez Lincoln, how has that like helped shaped you to the person you are today?

Hortensia Palomares 2:25:14

I think what it did was it continued what I had, I guess what my parents started with me Long, long ago. So it it was a continuation of my transitioning, just evolving to not transitioning, but more evolving in my educational journey. I think my journey, you know, has been one highlighted mostly by, you know, by education and the importance of education, because in the in the Chicano movement, you know, we use the Plan de Aztlán and Plan de Santa Barbara as our, you know, documents that we, we followed, and one of the, you know, the major ideas in there is that education is, I always say this. Education is a vehicle, you know, to improve, improve our lives, and that we, you know, with education, we can do

anything, and I always kind of earlier on, you know, when, when, when I was admitted to UT, it was, it was just such a exciting period, you know, because things were changing here I was now at a major university, I was able to come here, but I also wanted for this experience to to be one that I could use to help others, because that was my other thing, not just help myself. I mean, yes, I wanted to better myself, but at the same time, I wanted to make sure that others would also, you know, I could bring them with me or help them. So that's why we fought so hard for Mexican American studies, so we could learn about our culture, and with that, also knowing about and taking pride in in where you come from and who you are. And the more education, the more you are, informed you know, and educated, you know, the more you can do for yourself and help others too. When I first came to UT, also, I was in Project Info where we went. We didn't recruit, but they would take us to different parts of of Texas, mostly Texas, and we go talk to high school students and tell them about our experience and encourage them to apply to, if not UT, at least to college period. And so that's one of the things that I did early on. But just being involved in in everything, I think all of these pieces kind of just kind of came together, you know, to, yeah, I mean, that's they're part of my identity that shaped everything. And I think just all my, my schooling, you know, from from the first grade to, you know, to college. You know, I, I feel like I, I've put that to to work that I know, at least in the Chicano movement, because I equate Chicano movement with my education. And, you know, it's all it's all one. And in the in the same is that we, you know, the, yeah, the Chicano movement was, you know, for me to, I guess, just to, you know, people have asked, What do you do with that. Well, you know, every day I lived it, I think that's kind of what I'm trying to say, that I've lived it. I've every day is like, we we live that experience and we help in any job that I've had. I felt like, Okay, I'm gonna I'm gonna be helpful, and I'm gonna help somebody, you know, better themselves, or help them, you know, point them in the right direction, get point them to resources so that and but I continue to believe that the being educated and is a pathway, you know, to that. So in all my jobs, I feel like that's what I what I've done, and not not just in the jobs, just in the other things that we were involved in after UT, after my involvement at UT, then I feel like I kind of took all my learning here, and then I was ready to apply it in my neighborhood. And so I joined the East Town Lake citizens neighborhood association in 1978 and I joined the group that that was fighting against the controversial boat races in Austin, there and be. And because of that struggle in that fight, we were able to convince the city council to do to allow us to beautify the East Town Lake area, which is now called Lady Bird, east of 35 and before that, it was just a neglected area. And so that's where I feel like I put my education to work. And so I asked that, even though I'm from that neighborhood, I had been away because I was in school. But then when I finished and graduated from here, then I feel like, okay, now, you know, neighbors, my gente, my people in my neighborhood, put me to work. Now I have a little bit of education. What can I do to help? And so what I ended up doing was writing the proposal, taking all the people's suggestions and ideas and putting them all on paper and putting down exactly what it is we want this time we were going to plan, we were going to be in control of this, and this is what we wanted, and we and so I wrote that proposal, and we, I presented it to the city council, and we were awarded, I forgot how many millions, but we we were awarded money. And they did it, not us, but the city decided to to put money into redeveloping that that area, which is in East Austin, and for the first time, it's like regular neighbors, Mexican American neighborhood, people, you know, planning their own, you know, their own development, doing something for themselves. But I'm the one who wrote it, and so I got to read it to the city council, and they ended up approving what we wanted. The neighborhood wanted was 500 new trees, which we got, trees you see there? 500 of them are because of the neighbors doing that. Picnic tables, barbecue pit. There was not a hike and bike trail on that side

of I 35 there was, we got, what else did we get, lighting, we got restroom. We got irrigation, we got foliage on the you know, our idea was a little bit like San Antonio walk. That's like, or Zilker over here I was. So there were lots of good ideas. So that's where I feel like I put my education to work. So, so it was, it was a journey, a trajectory, that led me, you know, from palm to kind of where I am now.

Paulina Serrano 2:33:21

Do you think it was at Palm that you that you already had this kind of political?

Hortensia Palomares 2:33:27

No, it wasn't no. The...my political consciousness didn't come until I was one of the big, the biggest events, I think that that helped that consciencia was the was the assassination of Martin Luther King, and that happened when I was in the ninth grade, and we had a wonderful teacher in that that was, I was at Martin junior high at the time, but I had a wonderful teacher who allowed us to to express ourselves in writing. And so we wrote poetry and essays and things like that and and so it was since then that I kind of like, okay, things are not right. It wasn't that I wasn't aware of things because I was I try to keep up, because my father kept up with things. My father would read the paper, read the newspaper, and we would discuss, I was always discussing world affairs. My father was kept up with everything. Even in his limited, you know, his own limited education, he kept up with everything. You know, so, but that was, that was a an event that happened to me, and then, and then in high school, I remember reading books about the Vietnam War, and so that kind of helped shape some of my views that, okay, this war is not. It's not right. And so we read some things and and then the other thing was that by that time, by probably 11th or 12th grade, I remember hearing about the Brown Berets in in California and some of the work that they were doing. And then I heard about Brown Berets here in Austin, and so all of that kind of helped shape me before I attended UT. But then by the time I got to UT, the Chicano movement was in full swing, so it was just perfect timing. I think they had the Mexican American Studies Center started in, I think in 1969 officially, and it what. There was no degree program. It was just two people

Hortensia Palomares 2:35:53

and, and, well, here, here's another thing so that helped shape me, too. When I was in high school, I joined this program. I joined this program so that I could work half time, part time, go to school part time, and then work in the afternoon. And the reason I was able to get that pro get into that program was because I was learning how to type, and I could type very fast and then take short hand. So I was being geared toward, like secretarial school, you know, Secretary, which was fine for me, because I thought, okay, I can, can earn some money. This is okay. I can get a job at an office, maybe a state office, because I was kind of the thinking then. And so the job where I ended up, and mostly they would place you the teacher, our teacher would go talk to different area, different state offices. And so that's why we thought, okay, this is this is good, this is cool. And but one of the state offices happened to be UT, and so, so my teacher said, okay, and it was like we had to go through the process of interviewing, writing our resume, going to an interview, but the job was really already ours. There was an understanding, there was an agreement, but we had to go through the process. We and it was a learning experience for us. So my and the teacher came with us. He accompanied me. So my job was at the Institute of Latin American Studies here on campus. And so I got that job working in the afternoon. I was in the 11th grade and and so then after I got the job, then I would just get off from

school and come on the bus. And then it was located where the petroleum engineering building is. Now that's where it was. And it was not a building. It was a house. It was a Victorian house. It's gone now, but Dr Stanley Ross was the director of it. And so I got this job, and I just did little, little things, you know, just learning, but getting off of the bus on Guadalupe and walking down 26 Street, which is now Dean Keaton, was like, I was looking around, and I'm like, I can be here. Of course, my father had already been telling me I can be here. I can be a student here, and this just, you know, just solidified it even more. But so, so being among the students, just walking down the street, just walking down, you know, I could see myself here. Well, I went back to my my teacher, and I told him, I said I found out. Well, I told him, I want to go to I want to go to college. And he told me it was a mistake. I was making a big mistake because I was that meant leaving the program that I was in. And I'm like, No, I wasn't real confident yet, but I told him that this is what I really wanted to do. So I stopped the program. And the other thing that it meant was that, and the reason I had to that I realized I had to stop the program was because I needed more classes to be able to apply to UT because I was not on a college track. No one had told me that. No one told me that in Austin high because I, you know, I don't know that. It's just one of those things that we were not ex... Mexican Americans generally were not expected to go to college, but I had it in my head, because my father, you know, so I had that kind of confidence. And so, so I quit the program, and I started taking more classes. And then then I applied to UT, and then I got admitted, and and then as soon as we I got here, like I said, the Chicano movement was going on, and there were Chicanos here MAYO. MAYO was was, was an organization. So I joined MAYO right away. And then I got involved with the farm workers movement. Got involved with bilingual Ed, the desegregation of schools here in Austin. What's going on? Police brutality issues. I got involved with that. Juarez Lincoln? So I was involved. When did I go to school? When did I go to class? But, and that's that fall is when I when I met, well, what? Here's a little back story of so when I worked at the Institute of Latin American Studies, I was just still a teenager, I went upstairs curious to see what was going on in the building, in the house. Dr Paredes was there, Dr Americo Paredes was there. And there was a two person office that was the center for Mexican American studies. It was housed inside or under the auspices of the Institute of Latin American Studies. And so I went and asked Mary, Maria that I just met, had met, and I asked her, "What do you do here?" And she said, "Well, this is a Mexican American studies" and so she told me all about it. And she says, yeah, and we're looking to see it's just, she said, It's just Dr Paredes, you know, and me, I met Dr Paredes again. I was a high school student, but that that helped me too, because it kind of sparked something in me, and that's really when I went back to my teacher and told him I wanted to go to college. Who's Dr Paredes? Dr Americo Paredes, you know. And so during the spring, I mean, the fall of 71 when I entered here is when I joined MAYO. And one of the big issues that we were, that they were putting all the efforts in, was to create a Mexican American studies degree program, and I thought that's something that I would like, and so I invested my personal time fighting for that. Because for me, it was something that I wanted. So I feel like I wanted that, to fight for it. And Dr Paredes was at this meeting, one of the MAYO meetings, and he told us they had, I wrote about this in another in a paper that he he told us he had just, he had been having discussions and meetings with the administration at the time, and that the administration, the administrators, were just like, No, no, we're just, I think they had thought about phasing it out, even though it had just started. And so he said, If you all want it, if you students want it, then you're going to have to fight for it, because I don't think I can go any any further here. And so that was my story about Dr Paredes. And again, part of the my journey and trajectory in education, you know. And so then in 72 when, when we got the program, I was in the sit in in front of the the where we were protesting in front of the Board of

Regents. And at that time, the Board of Regents would meet on second floor of the main building. And so we had this big sit in. We were really, you know, it was, it was a big, big demonstration. And so they finally met with students, not me. I was, you know, they met with some of the seniors and people who were leaders of MAYO at the time. They met with them and they, you know, they hashed it out. I don't they need to be interviewed. If they haven't been interviewed, the people who, who, who formed part of the art committee that went to talk, because they said, Send us some student reps, and we'll talk to them and see what we can do. And out of that meeting, we were able to to get Mexican American studies. So first thing I did. Switch my major from Latin American Studies to Mexican American studies, ethnic studies, ethnic studies, yeah.

Paulina Serrano 2:45:07

And so you know, thinking about your kind of just as you lined out your trajectory and how it starts at Palm school. And so what does palm school then mean to you?

Hortensia Palomares 2:45:22

Okay, so I think one of the reasons that this project is being done, I think, is because of the recent, more recent discussions about what's going to go on, or the future of the palm building and the future of the the grounds, or the the the land on which palm school sits. So my husband and I, you know, when we heard about the discussions being that were taking place, we decided to get involved. We wanted to know more. And then we found out that there was a the the county and this and the city, where and other entities involved in, I think it's the greenway, you know, other development agencies or environmental or groups too, who want to develop that area. When we found that out, then we wanted to to be part of that. And then we found out that there was going to be a steering committee that was going to be selected to be a part of that, to guide the planning. I think the first part was that, because palm school is a historic building. Then that was the first part to make sure that that is a historic building, that it would not be ever demolished, that it would not be destroyed. So I think that's been settled, that the building is historic, so it will not be demolished. And I think they will demolish the cafeteria part, which is right next to superior dairies at the time, but the actual building itself is historic, so, so that's going to be stay intact. The inside has changed. I've been in it, but, but there's also development along Waller Creek, so that's part of it. But when we heard about that, we felt like it kind of brought everything back to us. It kind of brought things kind of little bit full circle for me and my husband, because you know, palm school is where we started. And palm school, you know, it was there all our lives. We passed by it. We would drive by it. We continued for a long time when the swimming pool was there. We continue to go there. People continue to take their kids, their grandkids, go to they would go to the park. So we felt like so here's an opportunity now to, you know, to be a part of its future. You know, we were part of the, you know, it's its history, it's past. Now we can be part of its future. And so I applied, but then I, I took my name out, but my husband's on the steering committee, but I'll still be involved. I feel like I'm gonna, still gonna have input. But what I what I envision, was this, that there was a community that that fed into palm school. You know, palm school served this community, but this community was part of palm school, and this is several generations, or at least two generations, of students, at least in my time, but Mexican American kids, children and parents and so geographically, physically, it's still there in the middle, in the middle of our city. You know, I think even if you really think about Austin and. If you look at the history of Austin and how its history of segregation of its people, that's one of the reasons. And the highway is still segregating people. There's still now,

there's gentrification going on, all sorts of major changes that have impacted the Mexican American neighborhood. Here, we have an opportunity for this palm building to represent something better than it the city might have done or the county. We have the opportunity now that the building is, I think, secure, we we can do something more and beyond to bring that history. But I want to, I want to be part of that vision that to have an input into what will happen at Palm school. Now, strategically, it's right in the middle of our city. It it had a lot, you know, it impacted a lot of people's lives. It's right there where the city gets separated, and it's our city is still separated, still segregated by I 35 but here it is. He sits right there, right on the other side of I 35 city has changed so much around it, but several generations of people came from palm and they went on to become, you know, contributing citizens of this city. Many you know became involved. Maybe we were not famous, but, but a lot of us, you know, continued in our education that started at Palm, and, you know, became contributing, you know, people who contributed to the to this, this city. So if we can do something to contribute, you know, to palm, and then palm can contribute back again, especially with the involvement of those who who gave it life for a long time. And the generations that I represent are here now. You know, some the older generations, they're gone now, but some of us are still here, who started, you know, in the 50s and 60s, and here we are at this crossroads, really at a crossroads, literally at a crossroads, because palm is right there. I'd like to have, you know, I'd like to contribute it some ide..., to contribute some ideas of what, what can be done there. So it's It's historic. It's part of our history. It's part of my history. It's part of the history of the city. It's part of the city's policies, how it's treated its citizens, but I think now there's a chance, there's an opportunity to, you know, to you know, to kind of come back full circle and do something positive that the whole city can enjoy. So we're looking at possibly a museum, Mexican American museum, you know, a heritage, some kind of heritage, you know, but that it, it can serve the whole city, but not to forget the people you know, who who contributed to it and whose lives you know revolved all around it. So I'd like to be a part of that, and I think contributing here to this conversation, I believe this is at least my experience of what palm school meant to me, and in retrospect, I get to see it now. Here it is, 60 plus more years since I started, since I was a child, starting at Palm school. I mean, that's a lot of decades, but we're still here and and and, and the building still there. So, you know, that's meaningful to me. That's very meaningful. So I see this project, I understand this project. First, it's, you know, part of it is the history, but the other part is a. Um, it's about culture and heritage and and the fact that we, we, we should, all you know that the palm school development should,

Hortensia Palomares 2:55:22

should take into account, you know, the people who, who, you know, who are part of it. And that's kind of why I'm here, and that's why i i I enjoy talking about it, and I don't mind you know, at least sharing, sharing with what I can, because it's going to be part of that, and I plan to be part of that, the history of which...

Paulina Serrano 2:55:49

Thank you so much Hortensia.

Hortensia Palomares 2:55:53

you're welcome. I enjoyed Thank you.