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Thu, Mar 06, 2025 2:24PM • 36:10

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Raza photos, palm scope project, childhood memories, school experiences, Girl Scouts, family traditions, shopping habits, teacher recollections, friendships, after-school activities, parent involvement, education timeline, community connections, cultural heritage, personal growth.

SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Teresa Velasquez, Brittany Mendez

Brittany Mendez 00:02

Hi. Today is Wednesday, February 5, 2025 I'm Brittany Mendez, and I'm here with

Teresa Velasquez 00:12

Hi, I'm Teresa Velasquez, and I was a part of the palm school, project I attended there in the 60s,

Brittany Mendez 00:23

and we are conducting the first part of Teresa's foto voz and so we are going to go ahead and get started.

00:37

Okay, cool. Okay,

Brittany Mendez 00:39

so you said, this one? Oh, wait, also, sorry, my laptop. Also, when there's a lot of photos, it kind of takes a little while. You said, this is the one of the first pictures, correct?

Teresa Velasquez 00:52

Yes, I believe that probably was my either kindergarten or first grade picture. And yeah, I laugh because most of my pictures I have the bangs. My mom used to cut my hair, and I always had bangs for the longest time. And my cousins and I share dresses a lot. And think the next picture might be a dress that my cousin, two of my cousins, have their circle picture in that same dress where we would share clothes growing up with my my cousins, that's,

Brittany Mendez 01:40

you said first grade or you weren't,

Teresa Velasquez 01:42

I'm pretty sure it was first grade, either kindergarten or first grade.

Brittany Mendez 01:54

So this would just all be kind of like circa 1960s

Teresa Velasquez 02:00

Yeah, I was born in 61 so probably I went to Head Start. So maybe 65, 66 maybe, yeah, probably would have been about five, five years old around there, I'm sorry. Am I supposed to keep talking?

Brittany Mendez 02:49

Oh, no, you're fine. I'm sorry. Okay. I will probably just, like, whenever you tell me some things, I'll let you talk, and then I'll just type something up really quickly. It might not I'm actually doing a pretty good job, but I'll probably just type some notes really quickly and then just keep on talking or ask you more questions. Okay. Okay, cool. Um. So do you remember anything about like, or, I guess, like, if you could tell me, because you grew up, I'm assuming, like, in Rainey Correct?

Teresa Velasquez 03:31

Actually on East Avenue, I was just right down the street from the school, like a block and a half, maybe,

Brittany Mendez 03:39

okay, a block and a half.

Teresa Velasquez 03:41

I later moved...I later moved to Rainey when I was married in the 90s and but I grew up in the property where a Roy's taxi right at 90 East Avenue, right down the street from there, from Palm school.

Brittany Mendez 03:57

Do you remember like your first day of palm school at all, or just like your first day of school in general,

Teresa Velasquez 04:05

not particularly the very first, you know, way back then. But I do remember getting excited every year when school would start. I remember we would, you know, always get started with, you know, new clothes in August, right before school started. Because I think back then school didn't start till after September, but I remember it was always, you know, we were always going to get new clothes to start school with. And, you know, being excited about, you know, seeing my friends, yeah, growing up, yeah, it was exciting. Um,

Brittany Mendez 04:39

Um so you mentioned the thing about sharing dresses, like with your cousins and stuff. I'm curious about two things. One, where did you guys go shopping for, like, your dresses and your back to school clothes? And then also, like, um. Um, like, who got to choose the dresses? Like, would some, I guess, in relation to your other cousins, were you the youngest? The oldest? You kind of just get whatever was passed down.

Teresa Velasquez 05:15

Yeah, I was actually on the older side, so my clothes, I was the only girl in my family, too. So I would get the new dress, and then I would pass them on to my younger cousins, since I was the only girl, and I remember our family would buy a lot of clothes in the beginning of the school year like JC Penney's not. I don't know if it was JC Penney, Montgomery Wards. I remember going to Montgomery Wards a lot, and then I know there was a store called Newberries in capital plaza that my mom and her sisters would go shopping at. And then Sears, I know we would go to Sears there, on, on, I 35 and all that 40/41st street, or somewhere around there. It was a big shopping center there, and I remember, you know, them taking us shopping my my mom, since it was only my brother that's after me, so my mom pretty much took us most of the time when she would go shopping with her sisters and sister in laws, but they had more kids, so it was a lot like for them to take all of their kids. So we were lucky, because we always went with my mom, my brother and I, we, we got to tag along and, you know, go shopping, go on the shopping adventures. And then I remember there was a shoe store, I don't think it exists anymore, called Payless, and they always had a bargain deal where it was two pairs of shoes for \$5 so that was exciting, because, like, you know, Christmas and Easter, and, of course, the beginning of the school year, we knew we would get two new pairs because, you know, we would get our play shoes, and then our our church shoe, dressier shoes for the start of school, and then for Easter, and then the beginning of the school year. So we had our play clothes, and then we had our school clothes also. So, like, I would come home from school and change, and I remember my mom sharing with me that that was something that they did as well growing up. And I guess that maybe they got passed on generation to generation about taking off your school clothes so that you wouldn't ruin them and put in, you know, put your play clothes on. But where we lived, our cousins lived in the same property, so up until probably, maybe three years then they moved away and but, you know, I always had playmates to play with, you know, my cousins that we were all about the same age. Uh, one was older, and then two were younger. So, you know, I always had them close by to play with. You know, the older one I lost, we lost her to COVID, but the one that's my age that I graduated with, actually, she and I are really, really close, you know,

08:00

that's really...

Teresa Velasquez 08:01

Yeah, it was cool having the cousins all around. And then my mom's sisters, they lived in Montopolis, but they were all, you know, like they were all really close. My aunt that lived in on Montopolis topless didn't drive, so, you know, my mom and my aunt that lived on the property where we lived, you know, somebody always had a car. So we would, you know, drive to their house, and we'll, often times, you know, had dinner with them. Also, they'd cook a meal. And, you know, we'd share, you know, share dinner, whatever. I always talk to my aunt. I'm still real close to my aunt. She lives in Houston now that used to live in on Montopolis, how they used to make the food, you know, go further to feed all the family. She used to dice up that say they had a piece of steak, and she would cut it up really small or like, they would make rice, and she would add peas or carrots. To this day, I still do that, not to make it make more, but it's just that's the way I grew up learning how to eat the rice with the with the vegetables in it. And, yeah, it's so funny, because, like, the kids nowadays, they don't really care for

vegetables that much, but I learned to eat it like that. Like, even, you know, Carne Gisada always had, like, green beans so they would make more because, you know, feeding all the kids,

Brittany Mendez 09:16

that's nice. Yeah, I'm kind of, I guess, like, um, you know, you're really young here in this photo. I'm curious. Like, how would you describe, like, your younger self, like, when you're around this age, around five,

Teresa Velasquez 09:32

Probably playful, you know, just, I think, just being friends. I remember learning and being excited about reading. I specifically remember my first grade teacher. Her name was Mrs. Birch, and she was just I remember her being so caring and being real patient with us, you know, learning and teaching us how to read. And back then it was the you know, see Sally, run, run, run, run, run, run, repetitively, Dick and Jane books, and years later, when my daughter was learning how to read, I ran across some reprints of those books, and I was so excited. I was like, Oh, these are the books that I learned how to read with. So I even bought them for my daughter way later on, you know. But it was exciting. I think, you know, the building and the friendships and, you know, doing activities in class, creative things, arts and crafts, music. I remember going to music and PE and, you know, just the different types of, you know, experiences that we had, you know, in elementary school and just having fun. I mean, I remember school being fun, but also getting a lot out of it, you know, learning in those formative years. Yeah,

Brittany Mendez 11:01

one second,

Teresa Velasquez 11:13

that's the dress that my two cousins. I have two cousins that have a school picture with that particular dress on. My cousin Deborah and my cousin Felicia. Notice, notice the bangs. I still have the bangs. And then my brother, my youngest brother, he resembles me a lot. And I think his school pictures, we must my mother must have cut his hair too, because I swear, we have the same haircut. We have the same haircut and the big eyes. But I remember, always, too my shoe. I always remember my shoes being like those black, shiny patent leather, like my dressy I guess those were my school shoes. And then I guess on on PE days I would probably wear my tennis, I guess, but I remember Those black shiny shoes a lot.

Brittany Mendez 12:11

Let's see. Okay. I Hmm, so this is probably either, this is probably the second grade, or

Teresa Velasquez 12:29

what I'm thinking, maybe that other one was kindergarten, this may be first grade. Okay,

Brittany Mendez 12:37

let me go back,

Teresa Velasquez 12:42

because I'm trying to see, I don't see another one that would be second grade. Maybe that's first. This was second. Because this, this one, the one below, let's see one on the end here is with the red dress, that particular one, that's third grade, I know. And then the one where I'm with the glasses, with the P That's fourth grade, I know. And then that, that one is sixth grade. I was already in junior high. Oh, wait, that's okay. That's the one. Those are two different pictures. The one above that one is fifth grade. And I remember distinctly that one being fifth grade, that's third grade.

Brittany Mendez 13:37

Okay, so Fifth, Third, this one you said was

Teresa Velasquez 13:41

Fourth, that's fourth grade. Yeah, that was a beautiful dress that was, I remember that dress. It was a little thicker material, like a magenta and then it had this, like, real pretty black and pink and white vest on those barrettes and those curls. Notice the curls. I always wanted long hair, and that's pretty much probably the longest I've had it. We used to roll the flat curls with bobby pins so I could have curly hair, because my hair is straight, straight, straight.

Brittany Mendez 14:16

And then, okay, so that's for you said, Oh, why did it do that

Teresa Velasquez 14:19

yeah, that one is Junior High. That's sixth grade.

Brittany Mendez 14:24

So then this is first and then this is second, or

Teresa Velasquez 14:28

yeah, let's see first, second, third, yeah, that had to be first grade. Then this one, because I think I look younger in the the first one, it was right, then it was first grade. I mean, yeah, yeah, this would have had to be first grade. Wait, did I have a second grade picture?

Brittany Mendez 14:51

No, so it would so this is your third, fourth, fifth. That's fifth, fifth. Six, so yeah, so this is probably the second. This is probably first, yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 15:08

yeah, that probably is right.

Brittany Mendez 15:13

So that means this was in 19. Oh, wait, 1965 Correct?

Speaker 1 15:20

61, 60 4,6,5, probably 66 if I was 5. 1966 because, I was born in 61

15:42

go here. Oh.

Brittany Mendez 15:46

So in this one, you're probably six years old, yeah, and I was 1967, is there anything in particular that you remember about second grade, or anything that stands out that happened during that time period?

Teresa Velasquez 16:10

Oh, second grade. Second grade, not in particular can and I used to know all my teachers names, and for some reason I can't remember my second grade teacher. I know my third grade teacher's name was Mrs. Brownie, African American lady, and she was also my fifth grade teacher. I can't remember who my second grade teacher was. For some reason I'm going blank. Oh, I know it was Miss Herrera. Miss Herrera, yeah, so

Brittany Mendez 16:48

you don't remember anything about like your your class, your teacher, Miss Herrera.

Teresa Velasquez 16:58

I remember that classroom being in the very front of the building, right as you there was some stairs that you would go into the main part of the building. And her room was right as you go into the building, right to the right. That was her classroom in the wood, wooden floors I remember of that particular classroom. And then when I was in Mrs. Brownie's room, it was upstairs for third grade. But I get mixed up a lot on third and fifth grade because I had the same teacher she moved up, so I had her in third grade, and then I had her again in fifth grade. And I remember and during those grades, I think the like corporal punishment was coming around. I remember, like when we would do inappropriate things about the paddle, like they would take out, she would take out a little ping pong paddle, and like she would, we would have to put our hand up and she'd tap us on the hand. I think it was a novelty thing. It was like nothing, you know, outrageous, like spanking us or anything. It was like, you know, alright, settle down. Settle down, you know, we I think I remember it being more of a, oh, I want to get my hand, like everybody else kind of thing. But yeah, that's, I remember, you know, those kinds of things starting up around that time of year. And then I remember that particular class, when I had her in third grade, we used to have centers like, like study centers, like science, you know, art and math, I guess, and you know, the different centers within the classroom. And for some reason I had this thing about my hair, and my mom had bought me these plug in rollers, and she let me have, like a beauty salon, like a station, like a Play Station. And I took a little, those little Styrofoam, like heads, like molded things, and I had a wig at the time, because, I tell you, I really wanted long hair, and I never had long hair. So we used to put the curls on the on the My wig on the mannequin. And then the girls would come and the boys would say, like, if they liked a particular girl, they would say, oh, make her hair like that. Make her hair curly like hers. That was my beauty salon that I had in the third grade. But I remember it being kind of fun that that particular, you know, that that class,

Brittany Mendez 19:32

um, why didn't you never have long hair? Was it just not like

Teresa Velasquez 19:37

I don't know. I think, I think when I get, got into junior high. It started getting longer because I see some of these other pictures coming up. I don't even know it's just my mom always just had my hair short. But I know, I know I wanted long hair, but I just didn't have long hair, I mean, and even now, like, I got used to it being short because now can't stand it if it touches my neck, I'm like, ready to go get hair. Good. Can't stand it anymore. Yeah, I just got used to wearing wearing shorter hair. Then I was already involved, in this third grade picture, I remember in in scouts, developing a lot of friendships. I think some of them already had, like in second grade, the real start of my true friendships that I still have to this day, started around this time, also just developing real, real core friendships at this age.

Brittany Mendez 20:46

So getting into scouts was so getting you got into Girl Scouts at in the third

Teresa Velasquez 20:54

I was in brownies. I was in brownies in second grade, and then then I joined Girl Scouts. Okay, and our girl scout leader, she was our PE teacher, Mrs. Pat Swinson, and she was a remarkable teacher. I give a lot of credit to the job that I ended up doing within the school system. Credit to her, because she laid a foundation of experiences for me and my friends, of providing enriching after school activities for us, including Girl Scouts and square dancing. You know, we again, we develop really strong friendships at this age being a part of, you know, Girl Scouts and square dancing. And then my brother was in Boy Scouts and, well, actually, my two brothers, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. And it that's around the time that I remember my mother getting really involved, you know, as a den mother and a volunteer there at the school. She was, she volunteered a whole lot there at the school, and later became a parent educator within the school system and retired from AISD, as did I. Followed her after, after she retired, I took her job. Oh, wow, that's crazy. Yeah, yeah. It was a, it was a really strong legacy, yeah, yeah. Really, really, really impactful memories that I pursued in helping parents get involved with their children, and then also, later on, I worked with after school programming. I helped write grants to provide after school programming to a lot of kids, reaching out and writing grants for like, hundreds of 1000s of dollars for after school programming for children in East Austin, specifically,

Brittany Mendez 22:56

that's,

22:58

yeah, yeah,

Brittany Mendez 23:01

yeah. Um, so, I guess, like, um, so you started brownies in the second grade. Was that, like, you know, you're, I guess you did mention the PE teacher. Was that something that, you know, the like, your mom kind of, like, was like, oh, blah, blah, blah. Or, like, the PE teacher kind of introduced that to you, then you told your mother. Or, like, I guess, how did it all kind of start?

Teresa Velasquez 23:27

I don't remember specifically with brownies, but I remember meeting at somebody's house. I don't remember Miss Swinson being a part of the brownies. It might have been my friends, because I know my friends were in it, so then I joined it. But then the core foundation with Girl Scouts was through school with Miss Pat Swinson, because she was like I said, she was our PE teacher, and we established troop 76 which I was a part of for many, many years. I was staying in Girl Scouts from, you know, third grade up until probably sixth or seventh grade. In fact, when I went to Martin, when I left palm and went to junior high, that teacher transferred to the middle school, and I stayed involved, working with her, going to different programming for scouts up until junior high, which a lot of kids don't do. They, they start leaving, you know, after elementary school. But I was very close to her,

Brittany Mendez 24:27

wow, that's kind of crazy. Yeah, very beautiful, actually, yeah. So okay, just just to make sure I got this correctly, um, so for this specific photo, you were in the third grade. It would have been 1968, you would have been seven, or you did that incorrectly. I. Uh, yeah, third, 1968, seven years old, and then let me just so eight,

Teresa Velasquez 25:27

yeah, and then that that teacher for fourth grade. Her name was Miss Reyes.

Brittany Mendez 25:39

Wait, you said your third grade was

25:43

Miss brownie

Brittany Mendez 25:45

and then right,

Teresa Velasquez 25:56

Miss Birch, Miss Herrera, Miss Brownie, Miss Reyes and Miss brownie again. And one other thing about this, these times here, there were three Teresas always in the same class, starting at third grade. We were Theresa Velasquez, myself, Theresa Mendoza, one of my best friends. And then Theresa Pardo, well, then the next year, we were Terry M, Terry v and Terry p. So by fourth grade, by this grade, we were like, Oh God, they need to figure something out. So we became, you know, they asked our parents, well, what's another name they can go by? So I became Tess, because that was the name my mother called me Tess, T, E, S, S. So I became Tess, Terry Pardo. Stayed Terry Pardo, and then Theresa Mendoza was Theresa Mendoza. So we were Terry, Theresa and Tess at that point. And every now and then, I would run across somebody that went to school with me at that time, and they will still call me Tess that they remember me calling me that in in school.

Brittany Mendez 27:22

Oh, my God, that's crazy.

Teresa Velasquez 27:27

Yeah, yeah, every year. In fact, I recently ran across over the holidays, I ran across a girl that I grew up with. She actually lived on the same street and and they were a huge family. I think she said there were 14 of them, and we were joking around us, like, Yeah, whatever happened to so and so and so and so. All her siblings, every one of them, had a nickname. Her name was Linda Gonzalez, and always called her Pebbles. So when I ran into her, say, hey, Pebbles, but that's how we knew each other. You know, she knew it was me, because I still call her that, and we ended up having the same job and doing the same thing years later, we ran across each other and and, you know, we do we, you know, worked as parent educators at different schools. So it's funny that you know things that you remember growing up. And I said, Yeah. I said, How's 10er her brother? She had a brother name. We called him 10er, I don't know why, but his name was Mario, but a whole bunch of them, a one, one that we called him star. And I don't know what his real name was, either, but, you know, I was telling her, I said, Yeah, I remember all your all your siblings and all their nicknames growing up. When we started talking about, you know, square dancing. They were a part of the square dancing group at school and just talking about how fun. You know, those times were for us. I

Brittany Mendez 29:04

so when you finished palm school, you were nine. It was 19, 1970

Teresa Velasquez 29:19

no probably was. Those numbers probably are off, because I think by the time I went to middle school, probably 71,72 when I was in sixth grade. So however, back, that is, let's see what. Let's see. I finished there in 76 in middle school. So 75, 76 I was in eighth grade. Let's see 74,75 that was seventh grade. 73,74 that was six. Six grade, oh, yeah, these were all off those numbers. Well, maybe not

Brittany Mendez 30:09

before. Oh wait, 73 Yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 30:13

yeah, I think 73,74 I probably was sixth grade. So

30:18

73 6,7,8,

Teresa Velasquez 30:22

because I think I started, I had to have started freshman year, 76, 77,78-79,80, yeah, because I graduated in 80. So that would be around 76,77

Brittany Mendez 30:38

so this is 780 3/5, grade, 7878

Teresa Velasquez 30:44

79 No, this is 79,80 I'm all messed up here. 78,79 This is 12th grade, 11th grade, 10 grade, ninth grade, okay, yeah, let's see. Have to go backwards. 77,78 I would have been 10th grade. So 76,77 that was ninth grade. So how ever back that would be, yeah, I guess 75,76 would be eighth grade, 74 75/7

grade, 73 74/6 grade, so 72,73 that would be fifth grade, 71,72, 4th grade, let's see, yeah, because I'm a year I'm a year older because my birthday was after September the first so I had to wait a whole year so I would be a lot older than some of the other kids. Oh, yes, 70, 71, 3rd grade, I'm going backwards. Let's see 69, 70 would be second grade. And then 68, 69 first grade. And then so yeah, see, I didn't start till 68 probably first grade. It would have been 68, 69

32:34

Yeah, I gave you all those numbers. All wrong.

Brittany Mendez 32:36

So six, hold on. Let me re type this. Sorry,

Teresa Velasquez 32:45

but that would have made me.. I wouldn't have been eight. Let's see that doesn't make sense either. Why would I have started so late in school? But I know I went to kindergarten, so maybe that was the difference, because I graduated in 80. Yeah, they seem right. 67, 68 I guess maybe that was kindergarten. But I would have 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67 I would have been six at kindergarten? That doesn't seem right.

Brittany Mendez 33:41

Um, yeah, I don't know you also print you. Oh, I just remembered something. Um, there. I guess tomorrow, whenever we meet again, there is a printing view form that you were supposed to fill out. I'm not too sure what happened with the interviewer that was supposed to do that on Friday. We might just have to save a little bit of time to do that. It's pretty fast and simple

Teresa Velasquez 34:14

is that the paper that was in the satchel bag and was in a folder?

Brittany Mendez 34:19

No, no. It's like an online form before, okay, like, for example, what years did you attend from school and stuff like that. But, okay, hold on, let me I could probably just go. It's 3:55, and so if Yeah, I was just checking the time. Okay, so you said you graduated. You graduated high school in 1980

34:44

in 1980

Brittany Mendez 34:51

Okay, okay, I will figure this out. And then

Teresa Velasquez 34:56

I know it just seems, it just seems odd that I would be seven years old at kindergarten. I just, I don't know, but me, you know, maybe I was because my birthday, I know, was later.

Brittany Mendez 35:09

What is your birthday?

Teresa Velasquez 35:11

October 3, 1961 okay? And at that time, at that time, they had a thing. I don't know if it still exists, if, if you're not five on or before September the first, then you have to go to the next school year. So like everybody I went to daycare with or started school with, they're a lot older than me. If their birthday was before September the first. Okay, okay,

Brittany Mendez 35:38

yeah, let me figure this out, and then whenever I see you again tomorrow, I'll kind of tell you, like, Okay, I think this is what. And let's see if, okay, okay, I'm gonna stop sharing right now, and I'm going to stop recording as well. Okay, yeah, so I'm gonna start recording Vanessa and I are gonna restart again tomorrow on February six. So this is the ending of this video.