

Palm_School_Velasquez_Teresa

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SPEAKERS

Annette Rodriguez, Teresa Velasquez

Annette Rodriguez 00:00

Today is Saturday, December 14, 2024 My name is Annette Rodriguez, and I'm interviewing Teresa basket Velasquez. And you also go by Terry in Austin, Texas for the Travis County Oral History Project. We're at the University of Texas at Austin campus. Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview. Thank you for having me. 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's anything you don't wish to talk about, we respect your wishes. Also, if there's something you want to discuss, please make sure we discuss it. Please let me know. Also, let us know if you need to pause during the interview. Today, we're going to talk about your life experiences, particularly as it relates to the palm school. We'll also discuss your relationship to the community education and to political participation. So if you're ready. Ms Velasquez, let's begin. Sure. Can you please tell us your name and your relation to the palm School?

Teresa Velasquez 01:16

My name is Teresa Velasquez, and I attended my entire elementary upbringing at Palm elementary school. And I also just lived a block and a half away, down the street on East Avenue.

Annette Rodriguez 01:32

What year did you start at this palm?

Teresa Velasquez 01:34

Oh, my God, I should have prepared for that. Was probably mid I was born in 61 so probably 65-66 I started there. When I was I was told I started with the Head Start program. And remember all my teachers names. Had a pleasant, very pleasant experience there at palm school.

Annette Rodriguez 01:56

And did you have siblings who also went to the palm?

Teresa Velasquez 02:00

Yes, I have two brothers. My brother Roy attended, he was a year and a half behind me. And then our younger brother, he's 10 years behind me. He was actually in the last class of the students that went to that palm school, and at second grade, he moved to what is now Sanchez elementary school.

Annette Rodriguez 02:19

So you remember the neighborhood before you started school?

Teresa Velasquez 02:23

Oh yeah, we I was born, born down the street. Like I said, our family had a business there, and it was part of my neighborhood. And even when I got married, I moved around the corner to Rainey Street and live there. And that's when my daughter, my daughter, was born when I lived in Rainey street. So

Annette Rodriguez 02:44

tell us about the neighborhood. Oh, it,

Teresa Velasquez 02:47

it, just it. It was interesting, because there was always a lot of action, because we were, again, the frontage road of interstate 35 so there was cars and traffic, and, you know, just all kinds of things happening all the time. And our family business, they were open 24 hours. So it was always something going on. The house where I grew up, it was actually part of the we called it the compound. There was the big house, which was the primary residence where my grandfather lived, and it was also the headquarters to the family business. Our family owned Roy's taxi, and we're in business here in Austin for 75 years, and we actually lived my dad, myself, my brothers and my mother lived in an adjacent building in the back. They had a laundry mat down on the bottom, and we lived in an apartment, kind of house up in the back, in the back on the property. And then another uncle and his family lived on the other side of the garage. It was a big garage that kept maintenance on the taxi cab, so there was always somebody to play with, because I had a ton of cousins. I believe I have 29 first cousins on that side of the family, so there was always somebody to play with. And then, you know, we had several friends down the street, but we weren't really allowed to go too far, so we had just friends that lived along that street until late, way later on as we grew up, riding our bicycles to the corner and then back to the property, but we always had to be careful, because it was a lot of high volume traffic, with the taxi cabs coming in and out of the the the property. I always tell people I learned to drive backwards before I learned to drive forward, because I had to maneuver my way out of the the back of the property to get out. But yeah, things have changed in that neighborhood a whole lot, but it was always excitement going on

Annette Rodriguez 04:45

growing up when you remember playing in the neighborhood like with all your cousins, did you all play within the compound? Were you able to play on Rainey street or on

Teresa Velasquez 04:56

no we played within the compound. We. Back then it was just gravel, because, again, there was not a lot of grass because all the cars and maintenance of, you know, oil and all that. But we had, they had eventually made a cement in the background, in the backyard, and we had swings. So, you know, we would play on the swings and play, you know, Red Rover, Red Rover, and such games, but it was always a lot of fun. Again, being really close to our cousins growing up, we it was a big porch in front of the big house, and it was concrete the front porch, and there were several stairs that would lead down to the sidewalk. And I remember at times, getting, in the summertime, wetting it down, and we used it like a slip inside. I'm surprised none of us cracked our head open, because we would wet it all down and then we, you know, bump down on the stairs. But my brother was a dare devil. He was always, you know, the one to do everything and anything, but it was like I said, a lot of fun growing up.

Annette Rodriguez 06:04

Did other neighborhoods kids come?

Teresa Velasquez 06:10

Oh yeah, yes, yes. A friend that grew up on my same street recently passed away, and I went to her service, and when I went up to her sister to give my condolences, she hugged me and said, Oh, Terry. She says, I remember your slumber parties. And I'm like, Yeah, that was the one thing, you know, my mom would allow people to come, but we really didn't get to go to other people's houses. But you know, I remember, you know, just going, just to their house down the street from ours, which was a few houses away. But, you know, it was just a lot of fun. We, like I said, rode our bikes and had our cousins to play with, so we really didn't have to have a need for leaving the property. But you know, we knew a lot of people because it was always all the drivers you know, would, you know, play with us or give us, you know, pick pecan we pick pecans in the backyard. And, you know, just play around with us all the time. So it was interesting meeting all the different people.

Annette Rodriguez 07:13

Yeah, when you, when you mentioned pecans and pecan trees, it's, it's make me wonder what it looked like outside. Like you're you're mentioning the con, the gravel your family made, but thinking too like what the smells were, what kind of flowers, what kind of trees Did it smell like the frontage road?

Teresa Velasquez 07:33

I remember smelling a lot of oil and gasoline. My dad was primarily the person that was responsible for the upkeep of the taxi cabs, and then later on, my brother, that's after me, my brother, Roy. And so there was always a lot of grease everywhere in the backyard, and that it would the garage was actually right next to where we lived, but there was some, you know, there was grass in the front of the big house. So a lot of times, like I said, we played in the front yard, but, you know, we played out there, you know, just learned to run, I think, in the rocks before anything. I think my probably, my feet are so callous from all those days of walking barefoot, I said, Now I couldn't walk barefoot for anything. My feet

are very sensitive these days. But no, we just had a lot of a lot of fun growing up. I remember also just probably being more mischievous than anything. We would be curious, and probably my brother was the instigator of those opportunities. There was a crawl space under the big house, and I remember we'd go and go on treasure hunts under the big house. Probably not supposed to, but I remember specifically crawling under there, and, you know, looking for treasure. I don't recall anything interesting that we found, but besides a lot of dirt, but that was one thing that I remember doing as a child, crawling under the underneath the big house, but, you know, it was just interesting. And there was also a more of a yard type on the side of the house, where there was more of a place for, like, a backyard too. That wasn't so concrete like the rest of the backyard, but it was a lot of fun.

Annette Rodriguez 09:20

And so, did you all play in the taxi cabs at all? Did you or were you kept away from where all of the no

Teresa Velasquez 09:27

we, like I said, my brother was a dare devil. His thing was to take the seats out because, you know, people, the passengers would often spill chains and stuff in their pockets. So he was avid about removing the seats and looking for treasures people would leave behind, a lot of change, a lot of times, washing the cars. Mentioned about the laundry mat that was underneath. I remember as children, it's no wonder that nobody got electrocuted. We would find the keys to turn the machine. On him. We'd stick my brother in there and watch him with the with the washing machine agitating in there, and then we throw him in the jar and just watch him go around and round and round. But like I said, I mean, he'd be wet, and we'd be putting him into the dryer. But you know, that was our that was, you know, free play all the time. My mother would tell us stories, because my mother was a dispatcher when we were very, very young, and she would have us as babies in our infant carriers there. There was like a sink in where the office was, and she said, I just had y'all there while I was working, and I had to feed your grandpa. So in between calls, she would run to the kitchen and make a meal for my grandfather. And you know, it was just our life. That's the way it was. My dad would be again working on the cars or driving, because He also drove a cab for many, many years. So, you know, it was just that was just normal, normal normalcy for us growing up where we were around all the taxis, and our uncles, our great uncles, were also drivers, and so we got to spend a lot of time, more than any of the rest of the family, getting to know them really well. So yeah, it's it was cherish memories, because I I still to this day, I go visit the cemetery and take, take and change flowers for the extended family, my grandparents and make my rounds when I change my mom's flowers, I go to visit the great uncles as well. So just vivid memories because I knew them. I mean, I got to see them every day. Unlike a lot of the other cousins that I had, we were just closer to them than I think, anyone, and also have a lot of gratitude to getting to know my grandfather, because we lived in the same place he lived, and he got to share a lot of his values about, you know, he always said, get a get a good education. You know, that's he knew that was important, because he he had to work from a very young age and didn't have the opportunity to finish school, so he knew the importance of a good education and getting a good job and, you know, being dependable person to strive for success. So I think a lot of my values in working later in life I got from him, and just the strong voice from him about the importance of it.

Annette Rodriguez 12:28

Can you tell us more about your grandfather? Maybe what you know about how the business was started, maybe some of those values you're talking about.

Teresa Velasquez 12:38

Yeah, on some of the articles that I've read and things that he's told me he had to help his parents. He was in construction, and it was during the time of the Depression when a lot of those construction jobs went away. So because of the need of being hungry and needing to help raise his brothers, he had to think of something for work. So he had an idea. At the time, there were several cab companies, but he thought he'd give it a try. And he borrowed he went to the city and found out what it was going to take to get started in the business. He had purchased a 1928 model, a or p I forgot, Ford, and he found out that he needed to buy a permit with the City of Austin, and then he knew he was going to need gas, so he went to a friend about Barrillo Reyes, is what I'm understanding. I'm not sure if I pronounce this man's name correctly, but he borrowed money, the \$5 that that's the story, and he paid his permit to the city, and then he put gas with the rest, and he was in business for 75 years, serving the people of Austin with the taxicab business and provided opportunity for many, many, many people in the community to have jobs, and helped a lot of people along the way with various things, and he got involved in politics. He saw the need for getting Hispanics involved in politics and giving their voice. He sold a poll tax to help people encourage them to get involved in sharing their voice and with local politics. And, you know, I believe he left a profound impact on the community by doing that.

Annette Rodriguez 14:29

Was he also involved in mutualist as or other kind of political organization.

Teresa Velasquez 14:35

He was actually a founder of LULAC. He brought open LULAC Council 85 and I'm actually a member of that council to this day because I don't want to see it dissolve. My mother was actually involved as well. And the ladies LULAC Council 202, and during my teen years, I was, I don't remember our council member, but I was a member of the youth LULAC here in Austin, and served on the committee to host a state conference here. So it was a enriching experience being being involved and going to conventions and meeting a lot of friends from different parts of the state, and we would go to national conventions. I remember our whole family went to a national convention in Washington, DC, and got to see a lot of the historical sites there, which was way older. But I just thought that was profound as well, just getting that experience, to see the nation's capital, Lincoln Memorial, just all kinds of places. And it was just really rewarding to have that opportunity and do a lot of things, also in giving back to the community with scholarships. My mother's Council, I remember, would have a booth at Austin Aqua festival every year, and that was a primary fundraiser where they provided scholarships to people in the community and did a whole lot.

Annette Rodriguez 16:00

So do you remember the LULAC organizing or events when you were a child?

Teresa Velasquez 16:07

Oh, yeah, we we often had, you know, events, the the ladies I remember, not so much my grandfather's, because I was probably too young to remember back then, when he started. But a lot of

the ladies LULAC, they would meet at different of the members homes, and, you know, we become friends with their children. And one of the ladies was my mom's friend through high school, and I recently picked her up and took her shopping. She's a little disabled nowadays, but she had been wanting to look for a certain particular kind of shoe, and I picked her up the other day. She still lives in her house on Hartford road. She said she'd been in her house 55 years. So, you know, it's just rewarding to still have those connections of people that were friends with my mother and growing up and doing things with other people in the community and giving back. Do you remember the fundraisers? Oh, yeah, like I said, Austin Aqua festival. They would sell tamales. They'd get together and have Tamaladas and, you know, sell, to take orders and sell tamales, and trying to remember some of the other things. But we'd have, just as an activity, they would have little picnics on Wednesdays. We'd go to West Lake beach with their families. One of the other members was Los Villasenor, who her family owned mission funeral home. And again, they stayed friends over the years, for many, many years, and just, you know, just doing various activities.

Annette Rodriguez 17:44

So when we think about your childhood, give us a sense of what it was like going from your house to to the palm school. Did you walk to school? Did you you start? You saying you started in Head Start. So fairly young. Yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 17:59

Yeah, really young. Even all through school, I would always joke around. I was like, I'm probably the kid that lives the closest to the school, and the parents drive and drop her off a half a block away. It was very dangerous, because it was a high volume of traffic area right at East First Street, which is now Cesar Chavez and I 35 frontage road. So it was just, you know, really, really dangerous of us being able to cross what we didn't. We couldn't do at the time. We couldn't just cross East First Street at the time. We had to cross toward East Austin and then cross over the bridge and then cross back. I don't know why, because, I'm assuming, because the majority of the students were coming from the other side of I 35 that were attending palm school, and that's the way the cross guards were crossing the children. But I don't know why, but I know they drove me around to drop me off at the corner. I often laugh, and when I think about that, my days there, I believe, I think I had the same teacher in third grade and fifth grade because she moved up, but I was one of the teachers little special students, and she had a lot of responsibility that she would give me. And I remember her handing me some money and saying, Go next door to superior dairies and I'm going to buy the class a treat, you know. So she'd had me money. I said, if my parents only knew the teacher was sending me to walk next door when they didn't even let me walk to school. I think that was funny and just ironic that the teacher had that responsibility and given to me to walk down the street next door, but it was a lot of fun, just great memories growing up. Did you tell your parents? Oh, I'm sure I did, but a lot of times, I think my mom was always in school. I remember my mom was very actively involved in, you know, getting getting us, you know, the things we needed at school. She didn't work. She did a little work with the Roy's taxi, but we were. Her primary responsibility of getting involved in, you know, doing stuff with us in school. We were involved in a lot of things with scouting. I was a Girl Scout through elementary and up to middle school, and my two brothers were in Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, and you know, my mom was always there. I remember getting in trouble in fourth grade, and I the teacher says, I'm gonna go tell your mother I don't know what I had done. And I was like, Oh, please don't. Please don't, because I knew my

mom was downstairs in the office doing something. And I was just like, Oh, my God. But, you know, she was all, she was just, I just always remember her being there, and I think when my younger brother was at Sanchez, that's when she got approach to if she would be interested in working with the schools, and started and work. Worked there as an employee for 18 years, and when she passed, the school district did a proclamation honoring her years with supporting, not only as a volunteer, but an actual employee of the district. So she gave many, many, many years of her involvement with the school system with us growing up, we also were involved. A lot of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. We our PE teacher was actively involved in square dancing, so she formed a square dancing group, and many of us were siblings, so she would come and pick us up and drive us to school before school started. I don't know how she fit us all in her little car, but she'd pick a lot of us up, and we'd go to our portable, our gym was in a portable, and we formed the early bird square dancing group. And those were some of the just greatest experiences.

Annette Rodriguez 22:01

Tell me more about the early bird square dancing group, so about if you remember her name, and then also how it was decided that who was going to be in it, how she would pick you up.

Teresa Velasquez 22:14

I think, I think she had it open to whoever wanted to participate, and those of us, I guess that couldn't get there, you know, because it was dangerous to go that early. It was dark outside. Still, she'd fit, however many kids would fit in her car, I would assume, I don't remember, but she would buy us, you know, juice and pastries, and that was be our breakfast, because we'd have to hurry up and get to class. Her name was Pat Swenson. She was our PE teacher, and her husband actually was the head honcho of Boy Scouts. He was over the capital area of Boy Scouts, and real involved. And so we often did a lot of camping trips at Bucha State Park and Bastrop, pedernales State State Park, and McKinney Falls, and just did a lot of things, a lot, lot of times together. He would take the boys down, and they would camp in tents, and the girls we would get in a cabin, and then at night, they bring the boys up to the girls cabin, and we'd have a square dance. And it was just a lot of fun, just great memories. And a lot of the kids that participated were still friends, you know, 50 plus years later, one of the girls that I met through Girl Scouts, she ended up marrying one of my cousins, so We're family now, but it was just great, great memories. We would we were very active in being able to go to state conventions, square dancing and national conventions. We would go on chartered busses. We would show movies after school and charge a quarter or whatever to come in and watch the movie. We'd sell popcorn and pickles, and on Saturday mornings, we baked cupcakes and went and sold cupcakes at the local HEB on Cesar Chavez, which was back then, East First Street. And we nickel and dined it literally, to be able to afford to charter a bus to take all these trips. We went to El Paso San Antonio, Dallas, Beaumont. We went as far as Kansas City, Missouri, on one trip, and it was just great experiences. My mother went with us. Miss Camacho and Miss Delgado. Were other parents that I recall that would go with us on these trips. I remember specifically on one of the trips our principal, Mr. Gordon Moore, we had paid for his opportunity to go on the trip, and I was the one selected in the assembly, per se, I remember Ms Swenson announcing Terry Velasquez, where are you? I was the one that got to present the principal the ability to be able to join us on the bus to go on one of the trips. He was an actual sport answer as well. He and his wife, but we would go to local dances too. I remember going to McCallum High School and even a place here, the Women's Center. It was here on the campus somewhere, but

we were, we would just, we were taught different steps. And when we would go to an actual live dance, we just had to know we would mingle in with, you know, other adults. And there we were. We just do our steps and dance, so the do si doe and the Cotai doe, and therefore everything else. But it was great memories. Just really, really great memories doing that.

Annette Rodriguez 25:43

Do you remember what it was like when you started to learn square dance? Had you all danced at home? Did you have music at home?

Teresa Velasquez 25:51

We had a lot of music, but different kinds of music. Music was a big part of my family, but never square dancing. What was a lot of folk dancing. Other things that I remember with Miss Swinson is that we would have a May Fest at the end of the year in May, and she would teach the different grade levels, different songs. And I remember one specific was it was a routine they did on skates. She taught skating, and then they would wear the rain jackets, the yellow rain jackets, and dance with an umbrella. And the song they would skate to was rain drops keep falling on my head. And they would do our little routine, dancing to that song, and just other, you know, may Fest, they was a pole in the middle, and everybody held a ribbon. And they did some kind of dance. You know, every year she would have this huge event when all the grade levels participated. And that was just a big, great thing that she did as well. She, you know, I know she was the one who coordinated that. And being the PE teacher, she was teaching us a lot of folk dancing and songs. I don't recall the music teacher's name, but, you know, it was just a lot of tradition. Remember learning, you know, all, all of a lot of folk, folk music and dance in elementary school that stayed with me.

Annette Rodriguez 27:13

Yeah, and it sounds like your parents were very supportive of all of this. Oh yes, and helping you to raise funds to go on the train.

Teresa Velasquez 27:22

Yes, like I said, my mom was always there. My dad made sure that my mom was always there for us. He, you know, did his best to provide for us driving a cab. It was not always easy, but we never knew the difference. You know, growing up, you know, we didn't know we didn't have a lot we were I remember in school, a lot of children wanted free and reduced lunch, and the teacher would pass out the lunch cards, and I would get upset, like, Oh, how come I don't have a lunch card. And my mom says, Well, you don't qualify. So I remember taking my lunch to school a lot, and I know in second grade, my teacher, Miss Herrera, she would often take her lunch, and we would share. We would swap Campbell Soup. Well, what kind did you bring today? Or what kind did you bring today? And just remember, you know, got introduced to tomato soup, eating tomato soup as a second grader, and grilled cheese sandwich, but it was just great, you know, just a lot of fun, fun memories growing up.

Annette Rodriguez 28:25

So you remember the the meals that were being prepared in the schools versus what yours looked like?

Teresa Velasquez 28:33

Well, I mean, I at times, you know, would have a lunch card because you would have to buy like I'd had to buy mine or, I mean, I think at one time we were on reduced lunch, but because I wanted to be like everybody, I wanted a lunch card. And I remember one specific friend, she was in the same boat as me, and we remained friends. You know, throughout her life, she passed in 2015 and I remember, you know, just having conversation, like, come everybody else has a lunch card and we don't. But you know, that's just the way it was. You know, you had to qualify for free lunch, and those are the children that got the lunch cards, unless your parents paid for it. And, you know, to buy a lunch card. But you know, it was just we didn't know the difference.

Annette Rodriguez 29:19

So when you were packing a lunch, what was your mom's packing your lunch for you?

Teresa Velasquez 29:24

Oh, it was usually a sandwich. And again, we had the thermos in our little lunch boxes with a different kind of soup and a sandwich of some sort, yeah, and a drink, yeah. But like I said, it was it was fun. I thought it was fun because I always looked forward to seeing what my teacher was bringing so I could swap with her.

Annette Rodriguez 29:39

Are there favorites? You remember

Teresa Velasquez 29:45

that was one of my favorites, the tomato soup and the grilled cheese sandwich? It's still one of my favorites.

Annette Rodriguez 29:52

Yeah, so let's talk about your time at school. Tell us what it what the building felt like to you. Do you remember? Member, your your first memory of walking into the building. Had you been there before with your siblings?

Teresa Velasquez 30:06

No, I was the oldest of my family. But I remember, in my primary grades, I was probably I, I guess it was the basement. It was down on the bottom floor. Miss Birch was my, my teacher that I remember first and, you know, reading Dick and Jane and, you know, run Sally run books, I guess maybe that was first grade. And then there were a lot of stairs. I remember, you know, getting to the next level. And I remember there was an incinerator. They actually burn their trash. And that was just fascinating to me, to, you know, get to take the trash out and see the flames when you would open the incinerator and toss out the trash there on campus. And then I remember the custodian his office was down like a real narrow stairway. I had broke the heel on my shoe one time, and they sent me to the custodian to help me repair my shoe, but he did it and off to the class I went. But, you know, just things like that. Then the the cafeteria was kind of a connected building. I guess maybe it was built later, so there was a little walkway to the to the cafeteria, and then the office was right in the front of where you see the front of the building, right there to the right, I mean, to the left, as you walk in to the building.

Annette Rodriguez 31:35

So you remember those stairs, the incinerator, the folks you remember like the custodian and other staff were there. They people from the neighborhood that you knew?

Teresa Velasquez 31:46

No later, I ended up meeting the school secretary, my brother and one of her sons were best. They're still best of friends. And his daughter, I mean, her daughter and I went to school together in middle school, so I got to know them better then. And they also attend our church. She's very actively involved in her name was Gloria Ramirez. That was our school secretary, and I know her and my mom were friends because my mom was a volunteer there all the time. But other than that, I don't recall. I mean, I remember all the teachers names, but I don't recall them being part of the community at the time,

Annette Rodriguez 32:28

in in both the like sort of hallways, wandering around before and after class and in the classrooms. Are you all speaking primarily English, Spanish, a mix of the two?

Teresa Velasquez 32:42

I only remember speaking English, but I know there were children that spoke Spanish, but very few that would only speak Spanish. I remember just everyone you know that I, I went to school with growing up that only we only spoke English,

Annette Rodriguez 33:00

and were there rules about that, or was that just sort of where it was culturally at that point?

Teresa Velasquez 33:07

I think it was just culturally, culturally like that. I know there were like newcomers that would come and move way later. I probably was in fifth grade, where I remember a couple of new kids coming in that only spoke Spanish, but every everybody else that I remember growing up with spoke English, but I'm still friends with many of them, many of the people that I grew up with, and we stay in contact now thanks to Facebook, you know, kind of check in with each other here and there over the years, attend my class reunions when I can. But it's always great to, you know, reflect and share and see each other when we when we have the opportunity.

Annette Rodriguez 33:51

What are some of the Golden memories that you all share with each other from the times you shared?

Teresa Velasquez 33:55

well, the square dancing and the scout experience and the bonds that we made back then, one of my friends I met in Girl Scouts, her and I are really good friends. In fact, she married my cousin. But we have a group of five of us. We're called the Fab Five, fabulous five, and we get together as often as we can. Unfortunately, not so much nowadays. We lost one on 2015 and I knew her as well the same amount of time, and they too, lived across the street from each other on Holly street. But you know, just reflecting back on the great experiences that we had as children growing up, her parents both worked

really hard all the time, and she was one of the her and her brother, or another couple of the kids that that Miss Swinson got to pick up, and so we had the same experiences. So it was great.

Annette Rodriguez 34:56

Have you all done any square dancing?

Teresa Velasquez 34:59

No, I always wonder, if we were to go to a dance, would we remember any of that? But they say it's like riding a bike, you know, just get there and get out there and do it. But no, we haven't. We haven't.

Annette Rodriguez 35:12

What about the tell us more about the Girl Scouts and some of the activities you all did together.

Teresa Velasquez 35:20

Oh just, oh, let me think Girl Scouts. What do we do? What do we do? God, just, I just remember baking a lot, and again, you know, being out, oh, selling girl scout cookies. That was a big thing. I remember now that I, you know, I remember going even on Rainey Street. I was allowed to go. I think my, one of my brothers probably had to go with me. But selling girl scout cookies to get my my Girl Scout badges, every year, you had to sell a certain amount of cookies to be able to get your badge. And then the ultimate goal was to get the opportunity to go to camp Tex lake at the end of the year and go in the summer. And I believe I got to go one or two times to that, but that was always exciting for me. You know, I think about the Casa Girl Scout Cookies nowadays. I think it's like five or \$6 a box when they were like 50 cents or a quarter, when I was selling them. Just it's crazy. It's just crazy. But, you know, that was always exciting and a big thing for me. Have a little cousin, her, daughter's now a Girl Scout, and she was selling some fall products, and she brought, she delivered them to me the other day, and I had a banner, because my daughter also had the opportunity. She attended the newer palm school in our neighborhood, now in South Austin, and, you know, had the magnetic car banner that said, Girl Scout cookies for sale, and a poster, and I was like, Okay, well, on the book to to learn about your badges that you could earn. I said, Well, I hate to get rid of it. It's like, you know, great stuff. And so I passed it on to my cousin's daughter so she can use that as it might be a little outdated, but it was stuff that my daughter used in Scouting as well growing up.

Annette Rodriguez 37:00

Do you remember the feeling of knocking on doors because you're saying you you got driven to school. So it must have been a really different experience to be able to walk down Rainey Street, knocking on doors and being able to meet your neighbors, tell us about like the sidewalks, the traffic that your neighbors.

Teresa Velasquez 37:23

I don't remember sidewalks a whole lot, but I remember taking, I think we would take the wagon, because, you know, he had these boxes of cookies, and my brother would be my helper going. So I wasn't really too afraid of going and knocking, because I know it was close to home. That's another thing about being raised around the Roy's taxi. Because even way later as a young adult, you know, when I'd be out, you know, some of the drivers would roll down the window. "Does your dad know

where you're at?" I said "no, and he better not find out", because everywhere I went, you know, back when sixth Street was real popular about going out, I was never afraid, because there was always a cab at a corner if I needed a ride home, you know, I just take me home, because they all knew where I lived. So, you know, I don't. I never had that fear. And even later on in life, as I became involved in working with the school district, many of my jobs were making home visits in East Austin, and I was never afraid, you know, like, why? These are my neighbors. These are people I grew up with. And I remember specifically going on a home visit with a principal at Allen Elementary School. And the teachers a real little bitty thing, and she gets gives instructions to the school office and says, "This is the address we're going to be at if we're not back in 30 minutes, send the police there". And I'm like, why are you going so afraid? That's like, I go to this house because, you know, it's a troubled youth. And I'm like, I'm there all the time by myself. Don't be afraid. You have to just, you know, stand your ground and, you know, just go like you're a guest. You know, just don't be intimidated by you know they're gonna sense your fear, and you know what good is that gonna do you? But I never was really afraid. I did have an incident where a dog burst through the screen door, and it was a pit bull, and I had a Mexican dress on, and it grabbed me by the dress, and I screamed so hard I was backing up and I fell off the porch, but the dog was tied up from inside the house. But it was just I knew he had me, and I didn't know if he was biting me or what. And that was the the scariest home visit I ever made. Was falling off the porch, and the family said "oh come inside" and I was like, I'm not going in there with that dog. But, you know, they just felt so bad because the dog had burst out like that, and I mean, he busted through the fence, I mean, through the screen of the front door. But I was never afraid of going on homevisits, you know, to homes in the community. I mean, that that was my stomping ground. It's where I lived, where my neighbors lived, where my friends live. So. Was never afraid of that,

Annette Rodriguez 40:00

and your family was such an anchor in the community.

Teresa Velasquez 40:04

Yeah, yeah. I mean, like I said, we, I have found out over the years that many people that you run across for especially native Austinites, they'll ask you, are you a member of the Velasquez from the velasquez's, and I go from Roy's taxi, and so, "oh my, my dad worked there, or my uncle worked there, or my grandpa worked there". It was always some kind of, even to this day, some connection in some way, like a gentleman I met here earlier. You know, I ended up knowing his brother for years. He was like an uncle to me. So it was just something that we were a part of strong roots to the community.

Annette Rodriguez 40:46

Do you feel like that those roots to the community and your mom's real participation in your education gave you a sense of how important education was to your family? Oh

Teresa Velasquez 40:58

yeah. Oh yeah, it my mother didn't go to college. I did for two years, and I had every opportunity. I graduated top 10% of my class at Austin High School, but my dad was very old school. You know, it was like the girls, you know, you're gonna protect the girls. And I wanted to go away to Southwest Texas, which is Texas State at the time, and he had reservations of me leaving home, you know, a young girl going out, you know, like that. And, you know, I just, you know, I was kind of the rebellious

child, and I just said, well, then I'm not going. So, you know, later I had a lot of regret, and, you know, not pursuing my my finishing school. And always think, you know, see people, you know, that are up in age, and they it's never too late, or maybe someday I'll, you know, I'll go back and finish. I might be 80 years old. I'm already 63 don't have a lot of time left, but I better get on it if I'm going to do it. But yeah, it's always just really important. And as I was sharing earlier, I think my grandfather left such an impression on us growing up being that he only had a second grade education and had the need and the strive to provide for his family. I just think back now that how amazed he would be of seeing where our next generation of kids are and what they're doing. We have so many that have finished school. My niece is a Doctor of Physical Therapy. Her brother is I keep asking him what he does, but he works in New York with finance. He helps people with their investments. So he's got a good head on his shoulder. He graduated from with his masters here from University of Texas. We have several in education. A cousin of mine in Dallas just got his masters in theology. He's a Baptist minister. His sister just graduated from East Texas Baptist, and she's pursuing her degree in uh.. I forgot anyway my daughter is a teacher, third generation, and she also works now with after school enrichment at her campus. She works at Oak Springs Elementary School. So

Annette Rodriguez 43:24

So education has always been this critical thread in your family. Can you tell us more about those your your earliest understandings of why it was important to your family? Do you remember doing homework after school. Do you remember your parents telling you spend time, you know, listen to your teachers. Do you remember your grandfather imparting words.

Teresa Velasquez 43:50

I think my brothers and I always valued school. We liked school. I mean, we didn't like missing school because we had so much fun with our friends, I mean, and I think I don't remember any of us struggling academically. We had every opportunity to pursue our school, but you know, I just had to put my foot down and say, I'm not going. But like I said, it was just, you know, my own detriment to myself. But my youngest brother did complete school. He's actually in his 32nd year as an educator. He works at Bowie High School, and he's also football and baseball coach. And you know, it's just remarkable just to see the involvement of, you know, my siblings and myself, and, you know, our family and education, and just, you know, shooting for the stars and reaching their goals and doing what they want to do. Just, it's just amazing. Just Just seeing we have one that's, he's an aerospace engineer. He lives in New York. It's just. Yeah, remarkable. And his brother is forgot what his degree was in, but he has a band, and he posted something on our family page, and he said that people from 122 countries listen to his music. It's just amazing. You know? It's just amazing. We, like I mentioned, we have a family page for keeping up with activities and so forth and again, strong ties with our immediate family. You know, my dad had 11 brothers and sisters, so I had 29 first cousins, and getting together at Christmas time was always a big thing, because that was only day out of the whole year that my grandfather would take off and not work. So he would prepare, and he would come down and he he wear it, red was his favorite color, and he'd come down wearing some kind of red jacket or sweater or something, and he carried this like velvet satchel in his hand. And he'd come down, and he was the one that that would distribute the mound of gifts. Because everybody gave gifts to everybody, no matter what you could afford it or not. I mean, there was gifts for everybody. And he would call us, you know, by name or nick name, because he had a lot of nicknames for everybody. And we'd holler out, grandpa, don't throw it.

Don't throw it. We go, you better be ready and catch it. And he'd go tossing it from one end. It was like adjoining rooms that had, like French doors in between and then a banister of where His room was. And we'd all, I mean, there would be so many of us everywhere, you know, we just, oh, and we had nicknames myself, my cousin Judy and my cousin Jeanette, my late cousin Jeanette, we were crane, bulldozer and steam roller, because we were big girls, right? So we he would interchange us all the time. So we never knew which which one we were. But we know he was talking to one of us and my uncle Bobby. He always teased him. We called him narison. Narison you know, if he saw Bobby, or we tell him it's Bobby's gift, and he just toss it out into the, you know, the crowd of people. And you know, we did that for years and years and years. And the thing that he would be carrying in the little pouch was coins, silver dollars and 50 cent pieces. And that was his way of sharing his history of his business and how he started. He would do trivia games with us and ask us "what, what did the colors of the Roy's taxi signify?" And so we'd all run to our parents like, "I don't know what come the the colors of the Roy's tax". He was very proud of his heritage. They were representing the colors of the Mexican flag, so things like that. "What was the first phone number, you know, of the Roy's taxi", you know, again, you know, 25134, you know, we just would learn these things. "And what were some of the addresses that the family lived at, and who was the first dispatcher?" You know, just teaching us things like that. Those were the trivia games that he he would, he would play these games, and that's that was his way of educating us about the business, where we'd all run to our parents and say, you know, what was this? And what was that? So I had prepared some, because we are fixing to have our family party, this coming on the 21st and teaching again, our little generation that's coming up. I always try to do a little something. A few years ago, I wrote just a, you know, tradition, family traditions, a little something that I wrote for our family about my memories. And I think last year I wrote, you know, again, chronological, fill in the blank, kind of trivia, kind of trying to do the same things like he did, you know, once upon a time, there was a somebody that was born, that was a father to Roy Richard Gilbert Challa, you know, all these names, and they'd have to think about it. And, you know, his birthday was on, you know, again, "when was grandpa's birthday", "January six", you know. So that was, that's my way of continuing the generation of those little trivia things where I have, like, it's like a long scroll and everybody at the party. That's how we get everybody engaging in, again, carrying the tradition of of passing those same things down to everybody, so that the next generation knows.

Annette Rodriguez 49:21

So he was an educator and a historian, yeah.

Teresa Velasquez 49:24

And, you know, it was interesting because he only had a second grade education, but he was a very wise man. He he was very true to his word. There's a lot of newspaper clippings that reflect on his strong sense of I get the most satisfaction of helping others, and I think that resonates with my whole family.

Annette Rodriguez 49:56

Do you remember the taxi company sponsoring things for the school or engaging with that?

Teresa Velasquez 50:01

Oh yes, oh yes, probably over the years. But like I said, I don't recall specifically, but I know they did a lot of work in the community with nursing homes Valentines. That was one of the drivers that would coordinate giving special Valentines to some people in nursing homes and doing special things like that. To this day, at our family gathering, we have everyone bring things for the homeless, and we put together some bags to help the homeless, things like toiletries, socks, hand warmers, crackers, water bottles, you know, just things to get them meeting. You know, some people will put some money in there just to help them get by. And over the last couple of years, I donated them to I take the kids. I had some shirts made that say "Velasquez family Christmas", and we have those kids that could go with us, because they don't all fit in the car with all the boxes of stuff Sunrise community center out on Manchaca. And I know there's a lot of controversy right now, of they're trying to close it down because of a lot of drug activity in the neighborhood, so I'm not sure we're going to actually, actually participate with that this year. But other things that we've done is send letters to servicemen overseas. That's one of the stations that we have for the little ones to address Christmas cards. And then we also have done Christmas cards for rehabilitation centers that our family has been a part of, and I go drop those off as well.

Annette Rodriguez 51:46

So can you share some of your trivia questions with

Teresa Velasquez 51:51

us? Let me see these are just random that I had started preparing. So So let's see. Well, they're not in order, but I'll just start here. "Name the Velasquez brothers, the sons of Roy senior". And so that's one of the questions, and it would be the answer would be "Roy Junior, Gilbert, Carlos, Richard and Bobby", which is Robert, but everybody knows them as Bobby. And then another question is, because she's part of they were part of the family. "What is the maiden name of the two African American sisters that worked at Roy's for many, years", "Tony and Marilyn Monroe", that was their name, and they were a big part of the family. We considered them as our aunt. And another question was, "for how many years was Roy's taxi in operation?" So most of the kids know it was 75 years. "What was the last date that Roy's taxi signed off the air," "August 8, 2006" and actually have the clipping of that article that was in the newspaper on the front page about it closing. And "how many children did Roy senior and Alicia have?" "11 children". Those are my dad's siblings. "What type of business was located, where Carlos and Irene currently live?" This was, I guess these. I wrote these, not for this year. I'm realizing now, because we haven't been there in a while, it was a laundry mat downstairs from where that was, where my uncle lived, "where was Roy? Senior, Grandpa Roy born". He was born in "McNeil, Texas", and "what was the name of the old man?" That's how he was referred to at times, his black and white border collie. His name was Sam Bo the dog. He loved his dog. "What were the names of the two night clubs that Roy senior bought". He went into the nightclub business because he said in one of the interviews with him, his sons were spending a lot of money going out and going out, so he figured he'd give it back to the family, keep it in the family. So he bought two nightclubs, the Capricorn ballroom and the El Tejano Ball Room. And then what was? "What does the L stand for in Mary L Estrada's name?" That's the oldest sister. Her middle name was Louise. Mary Louise. "What was the name of the national organization that Roy senior formed locally here in Austin?", which was LULAC. So those are just some of the, some of the questions that I had prepared. I've got more. But

Annette Rodriguez 54:46

and will you be handing out the silver dollars too?

Teresa Velasquez 54:50

I still have my actual last silver dollars of the year that he passed. And I won't, I won't part with them. What we do now is. Yes, we asked each family to bring a lotto tickets or gift cards, and so we put them in envelopes, and whatever number you pick, that's, that's the prize you get for playing. Last year we played bingo. I have a old bingo with the balls, and so we played bingo. Last year, my brother informed me that Texas is playing so our family party is turning into a tailgate, so or I don't know if we're gonna play games or watch the game, so I don't know what'll happen this year. As I age, it gets harder, because it's like, my mom used to be the one that always coordinated the family party, and when she passed six years ago, I guess I inherited that job. So it's always like, Oh, what are we doing? I'm like, I don't know, what are we doing. And several of us went to watch my little cousin play basketball. She plays for Austin High School, and the game was in Buda, where my nieces go to school, and there was a lot of family there that night, and somebody asked something about the Christmas party. I said, oh, there's enough of us here. Let's have a committee meeting and decide so we're having barbecue. So I just sent a message out on the family page and said, Okay, those that want to contribute for me, send it to my cousin Craig and the rest of us. Can, you know, put a sign up sheet to figure out what you're bringing. So little by little, are trickling in, signing up for things so there'll be plenty of food. There's never, never a lack of food when it comes to family gatherings, even way back growing up. I mean, there was always tons of food, tons of food, all the time.

Annette Rodriguez 56:33

What were the family gatherings like?

Teresa Velasquez 56:34

oh, they were just interesting. Um, again, the whole family every Christmas Eve you knew you didn't make any plans with any other part of the family. You were there at the Big House on Christmas Eve because that was big important to my grandfather, so we all knew. I mean, it was just that's, that's where you went. I mean, it's changed. We don't do it on Christmas Eve anymore, now that everybody has their own families, their in laws and so forth. And there were so many at one time we outgrew the big house, and we started renting a hotel. We had to have the parties in hotels, because we were just so many well, then that got expensive, and we started, you know, having committees and, you know, collecting money throughout the year. And it just got, you know, a lot of burden on everybody. So now two of our uncles have a ranch, and they have, like, a enclosed facility. So we have it at my uncle Richard's ranch. So everybody knows that's where it's at. So just this past week, there was a tailgate Texas Game, I guess Texas Georgia game, and we were there. So they took all the boxes of all the Christmas decorations, so we put the tree up. We didn't have a lot of ornaments, so I have an idea. I think that'll be an activity we can do. I'm going to just buy some light balls, and everybody write their name and add the like. Every member of the family could add their their ball to the tree to help, help spruce it up a little, just to get more things. But, you know, things get lost over the years, we used to do the family little ornaments and have them, but everything gets misplaced and lost over the years. So

Annette Rodriguez 58:06

do you remember when you were at home school, what those Christmases were like and and, you know, at those ages, were you making decorations for trees? Were you doing crafts for the holidays?

Teresa Velasquez 58:18

Yeah, we did, like I said, some of our cousins lived on the property, so we were a lot of us, and I remember it was really close to Christmas, and we didn't have a Christmas tree, and we went out and got one. And I just remember all of us on both sides of the tree dragging it, and it was so big, and the ceilings in the big house were like 14 foot ceilings. Well, that tree was so big, we had to get somebody to come cut because it was so big. And, you know, get it to stand. And, you know, we didn't have that many decorations because the tree was so enormous. And so, you know, we would be given, you know, craft paper and tinsel, and I guess that little silver stuff that icicle. So we would just throw them. I just remember throwing a lot of that on the tree. But again, every year it seemed like it was a different tree, because even way young, I remember the aluminum tree, and I would be mesmerized just sitting there watching it had a color wheel that would turn the tree different colors as the colors rotated on the on the color wheel. I'd give anything to have one of those trees. And I hear they're real popular now. They're, like, very expensive, but I remember when, you know, one year having that aluminum tree in the big house that was really, really neat to watch.

Annette Rodriguez 59:36

And did you all decorate your house too? Or, oh yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 59:39

oh yeah, oh yeah, it's amazing. We always had, you know, a tree in our home. And now my mother had started tradition. That's her fate. That was her favorite holiday as well. I have six Christmas trees in my home now, tradition I've tried to keep up since my mother's passing. I take care of my father. Who turned 88 in November, and every year it's getting harder and harder because it's just so much. We have a shed in the backyard that's nothing but Christmas. And I tell everybody, it's like, I know I'm crazy, but I bought a new tree this year, but I'm passing the old one to my stepson, so his kids are coming into town, so he came out yesterday wanting to get it, but it was so wet yesterday he didn't get to take it, so he'll be back tomorrow to pick it up. But you know, the trees that I've transitioned and got rid of, I pass them to family and replace the tree, but we have six trees in my house right now. Yeah, it's like, Yeah, it's crazy.

Annette Rodriguez 1:00:42

That's when I would love to hear more about your mom and how you talked about how Christmas was her favorite. Oh, yeah, holiday. But also, you know how she was, you know, at your young age, with all of your siblings coordinating, probably birthday parties, probably things for your for the generation above her. Tell us more about her?

Teresa Velasquez 1:01:04

She was just awesome, even up until she passed, it's very hard to talk about her. I

Annette Rodriguez 1:01:24

take your time.

Teresa Velasquez 1:01:27

She was my rock. She was very strong, very strong willed. She was a really, really giving person. Even up until her death, she was a cancer survivor, a 14 years battle with cancer. And on September 10, 2018, I had taken her to get a chemotherapy treatment, and she was fine. I mean, she was just a go getter oftentimes toward the end. I mean, it was 14 years of routine visits to get chemo, so I just dropped her off. I had my daughter sick at home that day, and I ran to run an errand, and I said, I'll be back. And so you know, what time should I be back? And she calls me and says, "Oh, they already started on me. You know, it shouldn't be longer than 30 minutes". And she was on oxygen at the time, and she had been struggling with some health issues. Her cancer had come back at metastasized from breast cancer to into her lungs that was inoperable, and she was having a lot of fluid retention around her heart. And we had home health care at the time, and the nurse had had a conversation with her that morning and said, you know, you need to be taking your medication, your withholding a lot of fluid. And you know she had her schedule, her social schedule. "I can't, you know, I have my circle of friends on Wednesday and the girls birthdays on Friday". And you know, she just want to coordinate. And, you know, do what she was going to do. And everybody knew my mother, there was no arguing with her, because she was going to have the last word. And up until her, you know, dying day, literally, you know? She said, All right, you know, because I told the nurse to say she has to take the medication. She said, "All right, I'll take it on Tuesday and Thursday, but I'm not going to take it on Wednesday", you know. And that day she just, it was just too much for her. She ended up going into cardiac arrest as we were leaving the oncology office, and she's getting off the elevator, and I can see she's gasping for air, and she grabbed my arm, at my forearm, and said, "Something's wrong". And I could see, you know, but she often did that. A lot of times, her oxygen, too, would be twisted. And, you know, I try not to panic, and I was trying to, you know, get it straight. And as time went by, it was like, going by really fast. She said, "Something's wrong. Get help". When she said that, I was like, Oh my god. So I burst into the main lobby and grabbed the first person I saw, Phlebotomist is coming out of the lab. And I said, she can't breathe. And so, well, she has oxygen. I said "she can't breathe". And I go over to the counter, and I'm tapping the counter, "call 911, she can't breathe". And, yeah, I mean, it was just, it was just really long and hard, but she had been without oxygen for several hours, and she had always said that she didn't want to be a vegetable, she didn't want to be on a machine, and she died at 7:02 that evening, and but she left the legacy helping people. She'd give the shirt off her back to anybody. She helped get her sisters through school. My grandfather had left my grandmother at a point when she was a high school just right out of high school, and she got a job with the highway department right away, and just always worked hard to help her family. Then she got the job with the school system. Worked many years, and when she was getting ready to retire. I had already been working also with the school system, and the principal had approached me like, "why don't you apply for your mother's job?" Because I was a teacher assistant at the time and and he knew I would go to all the conferences on parent engagement with her, so I had a lot of the training that she did, and anytime she was doing something, there I was right, you know, right alongside her, doing everything. And so I knew the job, and I didn't have the qualifications, because at the time, it required a college degree, but it also had a clause and or years of experience. So I had to, you know, get my portfolio out and go and challenge the school district to honor me and give me the job. And did it for 32 years after she passed, but it was really important for her to encourage parents to get involved and stay involved with their kids, because I think she saw how important it was for her and how enriching it was for her to have that opportunity to

be at her children's side and the growth and benefit that she got from it, she wanted that for other parents. And you know, in the Hispanic culture, a lot of times, you know, it's like, oh, los mujeres deben de estar en la casa. And, you know, had that experience with the family that I worked with, and I tried to get a parent to go present at a state conference with me and the parent, San, "pues no me deja mi esposo". Well "yo quiero hablar con el", you know, I want to speak to him and explain to him why you're going and, you know, I want, I want other parents to hear your your story about the challenges you have of supporting your husband at home, but also being there, and the importance of being there for your children. And he was like, That's it. "Was, what's going to happen to the other three? "You know, the kids that she's, you know, who? "Who's going to watch the kids?" And I said, Well, say, tell you what, let's make a deal. She had four boys. I said she can bring one of them with her, because I could use a little boy too to share his experience with after school program. It was about after school classes and enrichment programs. And so he agreed. He agreed to let her go and the oldest son. So every year for the next three years, she got to go to this conference and help present about her involvement with the school system. And every year one of the other sons got to go. Until her last year, the youngest one had never had the opportunity. We stopped, I think we stopped going and presenting at that conference. But it was just like full circle, you know, giving these parents the opportunity and sharing their stories. Because these parents came from all over the state of Texas, and some from the Rio Grande Valley, and they knew the same challenges that that parent faced about their husbands not wanting them and telling them, oh no, y'all belong at home, you know, doing the ironing and the cleaning and so forth. And, you know, this parent was like, You need to stand up to him, you know, you need to say, you know, I need to get, you know, validation for my work as as a mother too, but I don't have to do it just in the home. And that parent ultimately got a job with the school district, and she worked for many years helping with after school programming for pre K students, along with many other parents.

Annette Rodriguez 1:09:06

I'm thinking about your mother's legacy and how you know you convinced this woman to become part of this conference, and then she continued to be part of it. Do you remember your mom when you were in school, sort of going to school board meetings, or how she did that balance? How did she decide that she was going to be a part of LULAC and a part of your school?

Teresa Velasquez 1:09:33

Well, LULAC was part of the family, because my dad was also involved in LULAC as as was his father. So, you know, he had a good understanding of and the importance of, you know, getting people involved. He never, really, you know, had any any interference with her involvement, but she was a good advocate, also for getting parents to go to city council and advocate. There was a need for a bridge for students to attend Allen elementary school. And I think it was Boggy Creek. I think that's the one that's over there. And they advocated, and they got the bridge built, and, you know, had the ribbon cutting ceremony and everything, and then advocating for after school funding. Also, that was the one I came on. We there was some monies with prime time after school. It was the city funded for after school programming for students. And because of my experience at Palm and what I got out of after school classes with dancing and square dancing and Girl Scouts, I feel like it was a legacy, you know, my mom get involved with, you know, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and PTA, you know, advocacy for families getting involved and staying involved and speaking their voice, because that was one thing. My

mother was not shy about giving her voice. And, you know, working with the schools, you know, in that same community, and lost my train of thought that getting and going to city council and advocating for those funds, because it was very competitive at the time, what schools got the funding, so we would have to write grants of the need for the community, of what school you were at to get The funds. And it was sometimes up to \$28,000 and you know, a lot of times our school was the top rated school that would get the funding. Well, it was so popular and so enriching to what it was providing for students 21st century after school programming, and that was federal funds that were in hundreds of 1000s of dollars opportunities. So, you know, we got involved and started going to other community meetings and seeing, you know, my principal was a real advocate and supporter of those opportunities, and had me going with him to meetings. And, you know, taking parents and advocating. Well, our school wants that money too. So we were one of only four schools that had both 21st century and prime time funding. And, you know, we provided, I mean, a range of opportunities for kids. We bought violins, you know, with that federal money, and we had Suzuki violin, you know, kids would perform. We had parents teaching boy you know, they were, they became Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders. We had fo club ballet, fo clarico. We had cooking. We had a class called Book cooks, where they would read a story and then prepare a meal pertaining to the book that they read for early young readers. We did a lot of parent opportunities. I did programs with Reading is Fundamental, where the books would be provided like sometimes there were like, 12 week courses where the parents would come and learn activities to do with the children after reading a specific story. That was part of my other job as a parent educator, but it was just a whole lot of opportunity and giving opportunities for parents to go on some of these trips with the students. We would try to align it to the academic school day, where the teachers would give us a list of units of study that the students were doing in class, and we would try to tie the after school enrichment to the regular school and have an extended opportunity, for instance, of all fourth graders study the Texas unit at fourth grade. So we charter busses with that money and took students and their families to the Institute of Texas culture in San Antonio, where the parents would be alongside learning with their students. We did. The fifth graders were studying novel voyage of the Mimi. And I took a group of teachers to the Institute of Marine Science at Corpus Christi think, and we prepared what we were going to do when we took the students. And at the time, I was expecting and I was put on bed rest, I couldn't go, but I had one particular student that her dad wouldn't let her go, and I really didn't want her to miss out on the opportunity. So it was a Spanish speaking gentleman, and I had to convince him to let his little girl go. And so I gave him the opportunity I said "porque usted no valla con ella" and they went out and did you know their activities that we had prepared for them? And when I went to the campus a couple of days later because like two day event to greet the students and their families, the gratitude that I got from that gentleman stays with me. He couldn't thank me enough for giving him that opportunity to share with his daughter. I. Uh, but that's what it was all about. Is enriching not only the student, but their family too, to have those learn, learning experiences. You know, yeah, they can go to the mall and buy a toy for their children, but take them to a museum, you know, go, you know. Yes, you can go to Six Flags, but make it about a learning opportunity and just teaching parents how to tie the two together. And you know, just a lot of those parents still connected to a lot of those parents ended up getting jobs with the school system because of their volunteer efforts of being there with their children.

Annette Rodriguez 1:15:43

Do you feel like the your your mom's participation at the Palm school was the seed of some of this?

Teresa Velasquez 1:15:51

I know it. I know it, it, it was, she was there, like I said, she was there all the time, volunteering and going, you know, she would go on those square dancing conventions. I have a picture I'll share, where she's on the bus, trying to get off the bus, asleep. And, you know, just the relationship she met with other parents, and the strong ties and the trust, you know, like I mentioned about my dad, not many, you know, letting his little girl go off and, you know, but you know, I would go and, you know, go off with the teacher, and go on the camping trips and, you know, just all these enriching activities, because my mom knew that these teachers could be trusted, and she was right there alongside them and and saw the importance of her involvement with us growing up that she wanted to share with other parents.

Annette Rodriguez 1:16:45

Do you remember her encouraging other parents to get involved too?

Teresa Velasquez 1:16:50

Oh yes, yes, just all the time, you know, and telling them, you know, stand up, you know, you know, "dile a tu esposo que tiene que estar alli con sus hijos". And you know, she would tell them, you know, stand up to your husband and tell them, you know, your kids need you just as much as the family at home, you know, because she knew the importance of of them being there with their children and them learning how they can enrich their their child's education. And I think it was important, like, for women, you know, she just had this sense of, I think, because she saw my grandmother kind of fall apart, you know, when her husband left her and sit in she would tell stories about, you know, yeah, she would sit and cry. And I want her to be stronger than that, you know, my mom was real, like, you're all determined to be that kind of woman, and she certainly was,

Annette Rodriguez 1:17:42

yeah, she have a role in the PTA,

Teresa Velasquez 1:17:45

Oh yes, just, just advocating all the time, all the time, even, like I said, even when I was at Palm and later on at Sanchez and in middle school as well, we had an incident one time, I think, at Martin and my brother was getting picked on. His complexion was really light, as was my mom, and I was, you know, Mas morenita, and so I fit in him, but my brother didn't, and so he was getting picked on a whole lot. And so she went to the school, and, you know, like trying to get to the bottom of it, and, and she ultimately moved him to, O Henry, because there was just a lot of, you know, picking on him and so forth, but he was, I mean, that was probably the best thing that ever happened to him, because he's just a lovable person, you know, he is, and he was just like my mother. He'd give you the shirt off his back, but he established such great friendships with the students that he met at O Henry, and by the time we both met up at Austin High. I mean, he was like, he knew everybody, and he still does. I mean, we go somewhere. I was at a funeral the other day, and I met this gentleman that was related to the person that had passed away, and I introduced myself with my last name, and he says, Oh, I know bubba. That's what I call him. I couldn't say my baby brother, so I said, my bubba. And the name stayed he's Roy the third, and his son is Roy the fourth, anyway. And he said, Yeah, you know, I work at the store down the street from his house. I said, Oh yeah, Bubba is my brother. But you know, everybody

knows Bubba everybody. But like I said, he's very, very skilled at his work too. He learned mechanic working alongside my dad, and he still does. He worked, retired from the Travis County with Sheriff's Department, and he went into the limousine business after the cab company closed. And did that for a while, and now he does kind of the limousine, but he does like personal transport. He picks up people like airport. He has certain clients that he works with, but again, just a strong sense of, you know, being a friendly person. Person, and you know, doing for others. And you know he'll do anything for anybody, as well. My younger brother, he has a sense of being there and being a good role model for young men with his involvement in sports and is, you know, his dedication to education, and he's raising two young girls, and they're both very athletically inclined and both very academic scholars. One his oldest daughter is fixing to graduate this year, and so they've been doing college visits, because that's just something that you don't even talk about. It's just understanding, yes, we're going to college. It's just choosing where. But, you know, it's just always been instilled in us at an early age that you're going to go to school and you're going to get education, you're going to work hard and and you're going to do for others. That's just, that's just the way it was, from the old man, you know, Grandpa Roy, to our parents to now and now passing it on to our kids.

Annette Rodriguez 1:21:04

I'm thinking about, you're saying, how, how Roy the third, I think, was the was the one that took up mechanics, right? And so I'm thinking about everything you learned at home, right? These, sort of, all these skills you learned at home, the the ethics you learned at home, the morality learned at home. Do you remember what the school curriculum was like, sort of, what the what the lessons were inside the classroom, what you were learning about history or about language, and what stories you were reading early

Teresa Velasquez 1:21:41

Early on, like I mentioned, you know that when I first learned to read, reading the Dick and Jane books, and then I remember struggling a little with math myself. My brother's a math teacher. I mean, he, he excels. My youngest brother excels in math. But, you know, just a difference in what we you know, specialize in history, was always really important to me. I don't know if it was because of the family history, but that's just something I have interest in. But other than that, I don't recall a lot of you know the specific curriculum right now. That's not coming to mind for me in elementary school

Annette Rodriguez 1:22:23

Science classes or science fairs or that sort of thing,

Teresa Velasquez 1:22:27

Not in elementary school. Later on, I did, but I remember as far as like reading that we would get the book mobile would come, and I guess that was like our traveling library. I know the school had a library, but I remember getting excited. I think it was either something that they were giving us books. I don't recall, but I remember, like a big van, type of or bus, would come and park in the back parking lot of the school at Palm and we would go on the book mobile. And that was always exciting. But, you know, getting books and and then checking out books and reading through school,

Annette Rodriguez 1:23:07

we've heard some and some of the research about the library being limited to certain kinds of students. Do you remember any of that with the library

Teresa Velasquez 1:23:17

from palm school?

Annette Rodriguez 1:23:19

Yeah, if there was access issues, like all these certain students could use it.

Teresa Velasquez 1:23:24

No, I always had the opportunity to check out books and bring books home. I don't recall there being a limit. And then I remember the Ruiz branch library in the community. I don't know at what point that that library was open, but I remember accessing and having access to going and checking out books there. My brother was recalling yesterday, I had a conversation with my youngest brother, and he recalled about, and I didn't really remember that Parks and Recreation was also on on the campus of palm school, and there was a lot of like tetherball and other kinds of, like enrichment, other activities. And he mentioned tortilla making, that there was a cooking class that would come and he remembers making tortillas there at school in one of the classes, and then the ties to Lincoln Juarez he goes, I remember going to that building across the street. And I remember going there. I don't know what, what it was that we were going to, was it like cultural enriching activities, but I remember going there to the Lincoln Juarez University across the street.

Annette Rodriguez 1:24:40

Yeah, it's so interesting to think about, like, what materials you all have that tortilla making is fast? Liz, yeah, we haven't heard before, yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 1:24:49

yeah, he remembered it real vividly, but I don't recall that. But like I said, he was 10 years younger than than I was, but I do remember Lincoln Juarez And going. I don't remember what we did there, but I remember having the opportunity to go there.

Annette Rodriguez 1:25:05

Do you remember what your classrooms look like?

Teresa Velasquez 1:25:10

Yeah, because I have pictures, you know, I have a lot of pictures, and real, vivid memories. I recall that in third grade, I assume we had like centers, like learning centers, and at the time, I've always had short hair, but I think I was wanting long hair, and my mother had bought me a wig, and I had curlers and everything, and it was like a little plug in hot curler of some sort. And the teacher let me have a station that was a beauty salon in my class, and one of the items that I brought today was one of my best friends that passed writing about my my beauty shop Center and the third grade, because we would have the styrofoam mannequin for the wig, and the boys would come tell us, like how They wanted the girl that they liked we want he they wanted the US to fix their hair, and I would put my wig on, and we would pick make flat curls or curlers with my hot curlers. But that was one of the things the teacher let

me have my own center in class. No, it was regular third grade. Yeah, it was just like, but we had learning centers, I remember where you could go and, like, maybe have math center with math manipulatives or science, you know, engaging activities, but I had, mine was a beauty salon.

Annette Rodriguez 1:26:37

Did you have favorite subjects?

Teresa Velasquez 1:26:39

Favorite subjects. I know math was not one of them. I always liked reading and writing, and I liked music class. I remember vividly. I don't know why I don't remember their music teacher's name, because I remember everybody else's name, but I don't recall a music teacher's name, and I remember songs like singing with her. You know, "this land is your land, this land is my land." Just remember those traditional songs of learning in elementary school?

Annette Rodriguez 1:27:06

Are these songs you would sing at assemblies or together or just

Teresa Velasquez 1:27:10

I think both. I think both. Another thing I recall was when the first landing on the moon. I remember being in an assembly in the cafeteria and watching it on TV. And that was just remarkable. Just back then, you know, just the excitement of everybody seeing the spaceship, you know, just launch into orbit. And it was just amazing, you know, because that's something that was new. And, you know, we had never seen that before. I remember that specifically as an assembly in school. Now, in Palm school.

Annette Rodriguez 1:27:48

Can you describe that day in Palm school to us like how they called you to the assembly if you knew it was going to happen?

Teresa Velasquez 1:27:55

Yes, we were, we were prepared. We were prepared that, you know, that's what we were going to the cafeteria for. But it was just, I mean, it was like the whole cafeteria was full of kids, and I was kind of like, in the middle, I remember, but, you know, it was hard to see. I think we're probably watching. I don't even know if it was a like, what do you call those pull down screens or on the TV? I think it was on a TV. But it was like, Are we all supposed to see that? But I just remember the excitement of everybody, you know, the teachers, the students, you know, like, oh, you know this is happening. You know this is happening, but that's all I remember of that specifically for that day. Did people cheer? Did people Oh yeah, everybody was just excited, you know, just cheering and, you know, just yeah, you know, yay, you know, just seeing it all happen right before eyes on TV. Because even back then, I think TV was fairly new, and if you had a TV at home, you were lucky. Because not I remember, not all my friends had a TV, but we were lucky. We had a TV at home. Probably had one, but you know, nowadays you got, you know, six TVs in a house. It's like, but, you know, just, I just remember, you know, us being fortunate to have a TV at home.

Annette Rodriguez 1:29:10

Was it tough to get all the kids back to class after that assembly?

Teresa Velasquez 1:29:14

No, everybody had rules, and you knew you better stay with your teacher in line. And, you know, we all knew or we were supposed to go and stay, stay. You know, on track. I don't, I don't recall a lot of discipline issues with students. I remember that same teacher, Miss brownie. She was third grade and fifth grade, so I get the two two grade levels confused at times, but if we got out of line, she had a like, a tennis now, what is that? Ping pong, Pa paddle. And if we were cutting up in class, we had to go and put our hand at the front and that she would paddle us on the on the hand. I said, If only my parents knew you were doing that. But it was just, it was like a little nothing. It was just like, you know, get, get your, you know," get your act together, or else". But I think I was a novelty to get to go up in, you know, it was just like a fun thing, you know, like, oh, you know, Miss Brownie said, go to the front. But, you know, it was just, you know, a little nothing. And I think discipline at home, my mom was always in charge. My dad, I don't ever remember him raising his voice to us at all. My mother, all she had to do was raise her voice and we'd start crying. So they never really had to hit us or spank us or anything, because we knew mom raised her voice. It was like you're in trouble and in church, oh boy, you better be quiet. Because we, you know, I had two brothers, and they'd start this, you know, my mother would just look at us like that. We all, we all knew the look, you know, you better "portase bien!" you know. So, we all, we all knew that. But everybody, everybody would joke around with me. It's like, yeah, they knew my mother meant business. Because even other people's kids like, Oh, your mother, oh, they're that your mother's got that look, you know, so and I laugh because, like my daughter, I'm a what is a helicopter mom? Like, I hover over my my daughter, she's 28 years old. I said, all I need to know is that you wake up safe every morning and that you get home every night safely. I don't care how old you are, it's like, I just need to know that you wake up every morning and you get home at night safe, and we tease her because I tell her, 1,2,3, and you're, you're, you know, you better answer if you're okay, because I'll start calling her friends and all their mothers and I they all know it. So she better answer what? I'll go one, two, because she took me off the tracking, you know, where I could track her. I've already tried twice, and she just enables it once, I, you know, I just said it'd be easier for you if you left it on that way. I don't have to bother you. Because, like, sometimes, like, you know, she usually checks in on her way home, and sometimes I don't hear from her. I was like, "Are you staying after school today?" I'll text her, "Yes, mother, there's a school dance tonight". This was yesterday. And you know, she'll, she just text me back, but I don't care. I don't care how old you are, like I said, you just let me know you're okay. But you know, young girls and going out, it's just different. You know, like I mentioned earlier, you know, I was never afraid go out on sixth street and because I always knew there was safety. You know, at every corner it was a taxi. Now, you know, it's just like you just never know people put stuff in your drink and, you know, just the change of society now to then. I just try to share with her. Said, Just be wise and make good choices. I said, You just never know it's like it may not be choices you're making. I said, it's a crazy choices other people are making that could get you hurt. I said, just always check in and let me know that you're okay. I said, any of you get in a situation where you don't feel safe, I don't care what time it is or where you're at. I said, I will be there or I will get help to you. So, you know, it's just, that's just the way it is. But you know,

Annette Rodriguez 1:33:07

you all, you witness the change of rainy street over time.

Teresa Velasquez 1:33:11

Oh yes, I actually lived in a rental property that my family owned on Rainey Street. It was I lived at night, or I grew up at 90 East Avenue, and directly behind it, I lived at 91 a rainey street when I was married, and my former husband had two children, and they were young, and it got to the point where the traffic was increasing. You know, my stepson was young, and he'd like to play football out there. And it just got really, really high volume traffic going through there. And, you know, oftentimes we would go at Town Lake and take walks and, you know, take the kids down where they had more area to play. But then I was expecting my daughter, my 28 year old, and it just got unsafe. And we kind of outgrew the house because it was a duplex, and so we bought our first home and moved to South Austin at that time. But it was, it was funny because, again, I lived right across the alley from my parents, and, you know, my husband, I, you know, we were young, we go out, and, you know, I get a call from my mother, "where are y'all?", I'm like, "I'm married, I'm with my husband", but you know, that's just the way it was. You know, they better know where you're at, and then you're okay. And I was a grown married woman, but you know, that's even now, like, I'm 63 years old, and sometimes, you know, I take care of my dad and we share a house and and he gets upset because I'll go run an errand and go to run to Walmart, like nine o'clock at night. It's no big thing if I need something, there I go, "Well, let me know when you get there, and let me know when you're coming". I was like, "I'm fine, dad. I'll be all right". But that's just the way we were, we were raised. You know, I talked. About the younger generation going off to college in other states. I said, I think about the tiniest ones. They're the ones going off, like ones in Penn State, sola, you know what? Other ones living in New York by herself. I'm like, it just gets me my daughter, when she was going off to college. I said you have a 300 mile radius where I could be, I can get to you within an hour and a half. Poor thing, she was very limited. But luckily, she chose Texas State, which I can be there in 20 minutes. But yeah, it's just crazy.

Annette Rodriguez 1:35:31

So You learned that from your parents, keeping a close eye.

Teresa Velasquez 1:35:37

Yeah, very close. Very, very close. My brother say, let her grow up. Everybody teases her, you know, let her grow up. Was like, you know, she she goes out and does her thing, but you know, she was here today. She brought me over here today, and she happened to go out last night. And I was like, don't forget, I've got to be there at 11:15 "I'm coming. Mom, I'm coming". But I love her, yeah, but like she's she's got a heart of gold too. She's a pre K teacher. This is her fourth year, and during her first year teaching, I was just so impressed she was selected as teacher of promise, because she goes above and beyond, you know, and I think she gets that from my mother seeing the work and the hard ethics that my mother had and I had on her life, she gives 120% to her children in her class. She works at Oak Springs Elementary School, which is across from Housing projects, Booker T Washington. And you know, it's challenging, you know, socioeconomic neighborhood, and she just wants to do so much and give opportunity for her babies. She calls them her babies. And this year, she had an opportunity. She ran across some book and a little stuffed animal that Kohls was selling and (stomach growling, and maybe I shouldn't have had that lunch). There was a \$9 deal where it was a Rudolph, the red nos reindeer book, and then a Rudolph, a stuffed Rudolph, or Santa Claus. And Santa Claus is coming to town, and various books like that. And she said, Oh God, I wish I could afford to buy for my 17 kids.

And oftentimes, you know, I'll help her, you know, give Christmas or Valentines or Easter to her class. But as her class has grown, it's like, not always easy. So she posted something on Facebook to the family or her Facebook friends, and within an hour, all the kids were adopted, and she called me crying. She says, Mom, she didn't even take an hour. Everybody just wants to give and above and beyond. So now they're not only getting the book and the stuffed animal, they're getting gloves and something else I forgot. Just, uh, like the bags are full already with just people wanting to give, you know, to her project that she did. But last night they had a school dance, and this was the whole school, and she said, Well, mom, they didn't even have any decorations. So, you know, there she is. "I stayed after school, and I put balloon arch and this and that the other and just, oh, you should have seen the kids. They were all dressed up". I said, "Well, did you dance with them?" So on the way over here, she started to show me. I was like, I'm driving right now. But you know, just involvement that she has in her love for what she does, and I think that's important too. You have to love your career that you choose, because then it's not a job, it's just, it's just fulfilling yourself. And I think to me, that's what my mom's story was. It was what she got back from doing the work that she did as myself. You know, you get back so much more than you give a lot of the work that we did was helping families with social services, connecting them with resources for clothing, food, shelter, and, you know, getting them through tough times, as well as the academic component, it was a lot of the social needs of the family and your life is just so enriched by being able to do that and offer that support to families during a critical time in their life.

Annette Rodriguez 1:39:31

Do you remember you were talking about the kind of socio demographics of your daughter's school? Do you remember what the makeup was during your elementary school years, of your neighborhood, you mentioned the Monroes earlier, and I keep wanting to ask you more about them too. But do you remember the makeup of the neighborhood as you were in elementary school?

Teresa Velasquez 1:39:53

Primarily it was Hispanic neighborhood. I mean, just everybody I went to school with was primarily Hispanic. There were two Anglo families, the Hiles family. They lived right on the corner of East first street and I 35 on the other side of I 35 and they went to school. It was a big family, and then it was one other family. I believe their last name was Miller, and they lived near Anderson drug store, which was in close proximity to the school as well. And those are the only two other other families that were not Hispanic that I recall going to school with. I don't recall any African American students at all going to school at Palm while I was there.

Annette Rodriguez 1:40:41

And you but and then the Monroes were an African American couple who lived in the neighborhood. No,

Teresa Velasquez 1:40:46

my uncle, this was later, way later, after my grandfather had passed, my uncle and my dad were running the business, and one of the sisters happened to be working at a, I believe, at a donut shop or something. And my uncle just approached her, I guess he liked her friendliness, and said, you know, you looking for a job? Yeah, I have a job for you. And that's how one of them started working. And then before long, the sister came and started working there, and they worked their God, over 20 years, 20

plus years, yeah, but even a lot of the drivers, you know, you just stay in touch. I mean, they become family because they were around, like your entire childhood. There was one lady, Judy Collins. She was a driver. She ended up owning her own taxi over the years, and I happened to run across her. It was right before our Christmas party, I believe, two years ago. And I knew the party was coming up, I said, Hey, why don't you come? You know, because she starts asking about all the brothers and the family, and so my brothers and everybody, and I said, Why don't you, you know, we're having the Christmas part of the family gathering. It'd be great, you know, opportunity for you to see everybody. And that was the year I did the T shirts. So she drove out there to the country and showed up at the Christmas party, and we gave her an honorary Velasquez family t shirt. And I understand now I had, we were just talking, you know, I wonder what happened. You know, we have, we don't see Judy around anymore. She retired. She sold her taxi, and I believe she's in a assisted living now, but you know, she's just aged out and not able to work. But you know, you just grow these bonds with these people that you know, the they worked hard to provide a living for themselves, but she didn't have family, and you know, nobody to take care of her. And that's another thing in the in the culture, you know, we take care of our family. Somebody I ran into here just recently, oh, so I cut my hair the other day, she was from Nicaragua, and she says, "I just don't understand how people today put their parents in nursing facilities" I said well, "not everybody's privileged enough to have somebody to take care of their elderly family". "This not in my country. We don't do that. You know, you take turns, and everybody takes us so well". It's part of my culture too. But at some point, you know, you just can't, if you know, for various reasons. But you know, when my dad, my mother, already had cancer, and when my dad got diagnosed with non Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2013 they had been running tests on him. And I said, that's going to be my deciding factor. I was not ready to retire. But I said, if my dad's sick, you know, I was always already taking off and flexing my schedule to take care of my mom. I said, if my dad's sick and he gets diagnosed, then that's going to be the the push for me. I still had two, two years on my grant that I was working under, but I wasn't happy. I was doing office work at that time, and I belonged in the school. You know, that was just my thing, being around kids and their families and shoveling papers and going to meetings that just wasn't fulfilling my life anymore. And when he got diagnosed, I said, Okay, it's time to walk away and take care of him and my mom, and that's what I did in 2013 Well, at that time, maybe it's 27 2015 I don't know the year, but I stepped away, I retired, and my daughter was a senior in high school, and I got to be a mom to my daughter and be there for her, because in her elementary years, I was so busy working as a single mom, I wasn't always there. You know, when I could be going to PTA, but my mom was active member for me. She was on the campus advisor Council on the PTA at the New palm involved for me, in my place with my daughter. But as a senior, I got to be she was a cheerleader at Akins High School, and I got to be there for my daughter her last year in high school. And I don't regret it at all. And you know, like I said, I was there taking care of my mother and my father, and still continue to do that. You know, every day, get up, make him breakfast, check his sugar, check his blood pressure, make sure he takes his medication, make his meals, take him to his doctor appointments, and, you know, it's a full time job. And, yeah, that's what we do. And it's just, it's just crazy that a year after my mom passed in 2019 I was diagnosed with breast cancer. And, you know, having seen my mom be so strong when she was sick, I just knew it was like, this ain't taking me. I said my mother fought it. And I just recall when she first got diagnosed, I was a mess. I was like, started crying Oh, what are we gonna do? And it's like this ball and like crazy. And I remember her grabbing my arms just, I don't know if I can cuss on those on the thing. What the hell are you crying about? I'm the one that's sick. That was just my mom. I'm like, okay, okay, but you know, it was just

like, Okay, we're gonna get through this. Because mom said, you know, she's gonna beat it, and she she did for 14 years, and you know, I just had to bite my lip and deal with it. And five years she went into remission, and five years later, she got it back, and it was in her lungs. And when she called me, I was in the middle of a training session at communities in school with my boss, and I went to the bathroom, and I was like, Oh my God. I was just like a hot mess, like I felt like it was like ripping my heart out, because I knew I had to be worse than the first round, and I didn't dare go home. I just had to let all this emotion out, because if she got after me crying the first time, I said, I didn't dare go ball and crying because she wasn't having it. So I went to my cousins. I said, "my mom's sick again. It's worse. It's in her lungs," and she's, "that's okay, you know, she's, she's done good all this time. She's gonna be okay". I'm like, okay, okay, okay. When I got sick. It was like, you know, I did. I don't think I shed a tear when I got diagnosed, because it was like, Mom's not having this, you know, Mom's gonna get me through it. And you know, my dad, you know, he instilled a lot of faith in us, and said, you know, you just got put in God's hands and you're gonna beat this. And I did. I Yes. Now at the end of this month, I will complete my five years of therapy and I'll be done. Yeah.

Annette Rodriguez 1:47:53

That's beautiful. That's beautiful. Five years

1:47:57

incredible. Yep,

Annette Rodriguez 1:47:59

yep. One of the things we haven't talked about is, is the place of your faith and the church and your family, which had a real central place. Yes, from the time you were a child,

Teresa Velasquez 1:48:11

Yes, very, very young, our family belonged to our Lady at Guadalupe, and my dad's siblings actually went to school there. I had asked my dad, you know, prior to this, if he had attended palm he said, No, he went to Metz and John B wynn and the younger siblings went to Our Lady of Guadalupe. My parents were married there in the church. We were baptized there. I was married there. My dad was an usher for more than 30 years until he couldn't walk to to do the job anymore, and it's always been, you know, very central focus of our family of faith about 15 years. Let's see. In 2012 one of my aunts passed away, and we started doing a family rosary once a month, and we would alternate homes of praying the rosary and then having a family meal. And we did it up until COVID and and it got difficult, and then we were doing the streaming, and what is it, face timing, and I forgot how the other term is, but we try to keep it up as as best we could, but it kind of just dropped the ball, but we're trying to get it up and going again. And that's one thing we certainly do at our family gathering. And you know at Christmas is we do the rosary the first thing before our meal. But we try to do it like on special occasions, like I always try to host it for my dad's birthday. And, you know, year before last, I had hired a Mariachi, oh, don't spend all that money. I was like, Well, do it for us. It's like, we want we don't hear the music, you know. Again. Up the Music also is a big part of our family. But, you know, church is just a central point. Our grandmother was actually her birthday was on the Guadalupe, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. So December 12 is always special, you know, to my dad, because that was his mother's birthday. And again, I I try to be the one to upkeep the cemetery and not forget those that have gone before us and change out their

flowers. You know, as I do my mom's, I go make my little round so said the people probably think, like, God, how many family members does this lady have? Because I put all the flowers in the back of my truck and, you know, take the old ones out and replace them. And then I, you know, some of them still look good, so I'm looking for extended family. I was like, oh, so and so doesn't have flowers. Let me move these over there. But, yeah, it's just, you know, trying to keep, keep it up and not forget,

Annette Rodriguez 1:50:38

where are they all buried?

Teresa Velasquez 1:50:40

Primarily at our assumption cemetery. Yeah, when my mom passed, it was just, Oh, my God, an enormous amount of flowers. And it was just so many flowers. So it had been raining, but I don't know who we had go pick up all the flowers and load them in the back of my dad's truck, and that's what they did with all the flowers. They went and filled up all the whole family's plots of beautiful flower arrangements. Just filled the cemetery just with so many flowers.

Annette Rodriguez 1:51:33

Yeah, when you were young, do you remember going to Mass on certain days. Do you remember catechism and how that fit into your school life?

Teresa Velasquez 1:51:45

Yeah, I remember, you know, again, on special masses, like, you know, the virgin de guadalupe going, I think we would go at midnight, and it would be like the long mass, you know, Midnight Mass at Christmas, and all the people and all the food and just you know, craziness, but also over the years, just, you know, again, mostly special occasions. But we, we did go to church as children. Our catechism was primarily, I remember going to Cristo Ray. We didn't go to our home church for CCD because our friends and our cousins went to Cristo Ray, and one of my uncles was really involved there, and because I wanted to be with my friends going to CCD, that's where I did my first communion at Christian Ray, and my kids on yellow was actually at Cristo Ray, so it's still part of the the neighborhood, you know, and the friends and the families, again, it's just like we're all one big church. It doesn't matter if you're at Guadalupe or Cristo Ray and Santa Julia because my mother, after retiring from the school system. She ended up working at San Santa Julia, so yeah, church was it didn't matter which church. It's just that you belonged

Annette Rodriguez 1:53:12

to have different like, can you describe for us your church clothes versus your school clothes? And you and your friends that were in the same church that would see each other palm.

Teresa Velasquez 1:53:26

I have a story about clothing, because I was the only girl and I was the oldest of my family. I always got, you know, new dress. We got new clothes at Christmas, new clothes when school started and Easter, and we got a dress and then a change of two clothes, especially at Easter in the spring. And so I'm sure, you know, the appropriate clothing for church was something special. But there was one particular dress I had, like a white bib and some button gold buttons here, two of my cousins have their first grade

picture in that same dress. They often pass the clothing. You know, amongst the cousins. And my mother and her sisters did the same thing. And my other aunt, my dad's sister in law, when they were expecting, they would, they would inter swap the maternity clothes. But as children, I laugh, because when I got my cousin Felicia, first grade picture, she's wearing the same dress. My cousin Deborah, she has the same dress. I was like, Oh, y'all pass that dress. I was like, I must have been styling when I was little, because everybody wore my clothes. But it was just funny, you know, because that's just the way it was to

Annette Rodriguez 1:54:36

You were able to follow the dress over the different gen.... Did your mama or other women in your family did? Were they seamstress?

Teresa Velasquez 1:54:45

My aunt Doris. My aunt Doris sewed, and she was one of the ones who lived on the compound where we live, but they eventually moved to Holly Street and Holly street 1908 Holly was a family home my Dad, let's see up to up. To her husband, Gilbert, they were all born in that house, and it's still in the family. My uncle, my dad's brother, that is after him. He just passed in May, May the 16th, and he was born and buried. I mean, born and died in the same house. It's still part of the family that that that house,

Annette Rodriguez 1:55:21

and so you still have family members who are there in that house.

Teresa Velasquez 1:55:23

Yes, his wife still lives there, and then her children alternate and take care of her. They had five they have five children, and so they all take turns taking care of her. But yeah, they at one time, put it up for sale. But she's not ready to leave. She will not leave her house or her children try to take them to their homes. And what, her son actually built a home, and, you know, had accommodations for her and my uncle, and they did move for a little bit of time, but it wasn't home. She missed her home, and no, she went back.

Annette Rodriguez 1:55:59

So that home will probably stay in the family a while. Yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 1:56:04

it, it was, I just recall it being a really, really tiny house. And growing up, those were the cousins I was closest to. They like my sisters. And you know, when we got into junior high, we would call, you know, you know, call a cousin, you know, to talk to them. And of course, you know, you just had the wall line, or whatever the the big phone. There was no cell phones back then. And I would call that talk to one of my cousins, Jeanette or Judy, and my uncle would answer, "no, they went to Six Flags. And no, she's not here. She's at AstroWorld". Or, you know, he'd always joke around, but, yeah, it's just, it's interesting to see the house, because they've had, you know, added additions to the home, and they have a pool in the backyard. It's a central place for a lot of family gatherings. My uncle was big on, you know, having conjunta music at every gathering, whatever it was for he had his little we call, I don't

know the appropriate name for these men, but his house band was taco nacho, that's how I refer to them. But, you know, they came and serenaded him on his death bed, and it was just, you know, just touching.

Annette Rodriguez 1:57:13

Did you all grow up with conjunto in your house?

Teresa Velasquez 1:57:16

You know, just growing up, I don't recall conjunto so much. But my grandfather liked easy listening, big band music. And I remember he had a record player, and often played a lot of the, you know, big band Glen Miller, and you know, that's what he listened to. And in our home, my other grandfather, my mother's dad, he was a country music fan. So we had a lot of country, like old country music in our home that we listened to, and a lot of conjunto also, because we would have family reunions or we'd have a live band play. So music was a huge part of growing up, and even, you know, over the years, as my parents retired and aged, they became part of a conjunto group, and in their later years, did a lot of traveling to conjunto festivals, and developed such great friendships with people all over remarkable caring, loving people. One one particular person that my mother and father connected with was a cousin, and she lives in California, in Santa Rosa, California, and she's a go getter. She does she she knows people all over the world. I mean, she travels a lot, her and her husband, and through her, she met all these, you know, wonderful people that we, even after my mom's passing, have stayed in touch with. You know, we'll call them, or they'll call my dad and check to see how he's doing. And you know, they're just great, great people that my parents had the opportunity to build these friendships with. And then my uncle Gilbert, that passed, he he hosted a lot of he and his son coordinate at the Fiesta patrias of Austin for many, many years, over 40 years in East Austin, at Fiesta gardens. And they would bring bands to play, a lot of conjunto bands. And, you know, these people would follow and come and, you know, that was just part of us growing up, because he'd always have, you know, the puestos and opportunities like, you know, that was just what we did. The family always having music around.

Annette Rodriguez 1:59:38

Is there ever a song you hear or can hear, and it can take you right back into being in fifth grade or third grade, whether it's a conjunta or a country song,

Teresa Velasquez 1:59:49

I think it's mostly like the patriotic songs that take me to elementary school, the songs that that I learned through scouting and in class. That have more connection to elementary school. And I think that's important, because a lot of kids don't know those old traditional, you know, American songs. And I remember having a little booklet. It was like, just because my mom was a den mother, the little boy scout little booklet and had all these, you know, things in it, and learning the funeral that I attended this week was a military funeral, and learning how to fold the flag, you know, those patriotic things that not everybody gets that experience to learn. And it was just remarkable because the grandchildren to this gentleman that passed away, his boys are his grandsons are avid Boy Scout, and they presented the flag to his youngest grandson, and he was just like, wow, but his job at school is to raise the flag every day, so it was very symbolic for the little boy to receive the flag from his grandfather's funeral, and I just think that's also important thing that we are not sharing with our children nowadays. Just feel like

there's a void in that, I think, because of sports and also the involvement with scouts growing up like my youngest brother, you know, every game, you know, they play the national anthem and so forth. It's just, you know, something he grew up with also. But I think his daughters, they're involved in sports as well, so they're learning it. But I don't believe as many children these days are learning those, those old, traditional patriotic songs.

Annette Rodriguez 2:01:38

Do you remember at Palm school, the raising of the flag that saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

Teresa Velasquez 2:01:44

Yeah, every day, every single day. And I don't recall if it was an intercom system that we had, but I would assume so. But yeah, I know we, we had the raising of the flag, and, you know Safety Patrol. And you know all the traditional, you know activities,

Annette Rodriguez 2:02:07

what is Safety Patrol? Safety

Teresa Velasquez 2:02:09

Safety Patrol were the young men that were like a was like a red stripe crossing, kind of assistant to the crossing guard. They helped the crossing guard get the kids across the street. And they were kind of like the official. They had a little badge, like, if you went out a door, you're not supposed to. There was a safety patrol telling you not. You can't go out that door. You know those were the the keepers of the school? Were they the older kids? No, I think it was just whoever was responsible enough to take that task at school,

Annette Rodriguez 2:02:44

where any of your siblings are you ever safety patrol?

Teresa Velasquez 2:02:48

I don't think I was ever in safety patrol. They didn't I might have been the one of the ones trying to get out the wrong door. Yeah, I don't recall.

Annette Rodriguez 2:02:59

Do you remember how you learned the rules, like, how did you know the expectations about which doors or don't run? Or,

Teresa Velasquez 2:03:09

I think the teachers did a really good job of setting setting the boundaries and explaining to us what was allowed and what was not allowed. I remember at Palm school we had, what was it called, the fire escape to the back of the building, there was like, this long aluminum slide. And that was always like, fascinating, like, let's go check it out. But we knew better. It was just that was for emergency purposes only. And, you know, it was always like in the back of my mind, like, oh, try going down that slide over there. But, you know, we just, I think, understood we would have drills, I remember where we would, you know, get on our on our knees, and put our hands over our head and get against the wall for you

know, I guess weather preparation. I remember those drills, those safety drills, and I'm assuming we probably did go down that slide just as practice, but it was very, very like no horsing around kind of thing they made, they made sure that we knew it. This wasn't for fun. This was in the event of an emergency, only because to me, I would just recall it being like, very high, very high up. But yeah, I remember that slide. It was all shiny, shiny aluminum.

Annette Rodriguez 2:04:39

You don't remember the day you got to go down it, but you probably know. I'm sure

Teresa Velasquez 2:04:44

I did like I said, it was probably like a practice activity at one point, but I think I knew I'd get in trouble if I tried to do it when I wasn't supposed to.

Annette Rodriguez 2:04:57

Yeah, do you think of the school as? No. Were thinking about those rules and horsing around and the safety patrol. Do you think of the school as a as a quiet, strict school or a fun school? How would you characterize

Teresa Velasquez 2:05:13

I think it was a place where it was fun. We were family. We were, I mean, deep rooted friends to this day. I mean, I have a lot of friends that I establish friendships with there, and I think we knew better. We I think we our families were all like on the same page as far as discipline and expectations, because a lot of us belong to the same church, and I think our families had the same values as what was expected and what was tolerated and what wasn't. So we knew better. And, you know, that's just the way it was. It was like there was a limit to how much horsing around. You know, we would stay after school, but you had a place to be. Better get to it. And, you know, you better be where you're supposed to there was no like, you know, going off here or there or anywhere you if you were supposed to be in scouts, then get to scouts. If you're supposed to be in dance, then get to dance. You're supposed to go to the Rec or whatever, you know, that's where you needed to go. So primarily, those of us that were involved, we were involved in the same things, you know, it was scouts or square dancing, and that, that's just where you were, you and and you had your sibling to, you know, you had you couldn't get off track because your sibling go tell on you, because we were both in the same, you know, in the same activities.

Annette Rodriguez 2:06:48

Do you remember any of the teachers or the staff? Any of them going to your church too? No,

Teresa Velasquez 2:06:56

I remember my fourth grade teacher, Miss Reyes, she took us, I believe, to her house. She actually lived in close proximity. I believe they lived on the same street. Maybe I'm getting confused of going to miss Winston's house, but I know Miss Reyes lived. It was off of mopac and 45th Street where Miss Swenson lived, and she would take us at the end of the year to have, like an end of the year celebration, to go swim in her pool. And Miss Reyes lived on the same street as Miss Swenson. But other than that, I don't recall any other teacher living in the community in East Austin at all.

Annette Rodriguez 2:07:37

Tell us about those swimming parties.

Teresa Velasquez 2:07:40

Oh, it was a lot of fun. I don't recall if it was Girl Scouts or the square dancing group, but like I said, Probably both, because we were inter changed a lot. But yeah, she'd take us all and, you know, feed us a meal, sandwiches or pizza. I don't even know if pizza was around them, but anyway, we we eat and have drinks and, you know, just swim and swim and swim and just have a lot of fun. I was fascinated. She she was into birds, and she had a lot of bird cages, bird houses, bird houses in the back of her yard. And I remember her telling us the certain kind of bird that would come and feed in her homes, but in the homes in the back, but I don't recall what they were, but, you know, I was just like, God, how many bird houses this lady have? But you know, they were tall metal poles and the little houses own backyard, along the pool. But yeah.

Annette Rodriguez 2:08:37

Do you remember a lot of birds in the rainy area that were people having pets, and

Teresa Velasquez 2:08:45

not particularly the I do remember a neighbor down the street on East Avenue. She had a big, I think it was a Doberman pincher, like a big, big dog, and he would get out on occasion. And his name was Bandera. I don't know if it was a female or male dog, but I was terrified of that dog. And they'd come Cha the the sisters would come chasing the dog up the street and get him and holler, you know, get him. I wouldn't go outside when I knew that dog was loose, because I was always afraid of that dog. It was a big, big dog. We always had dogs growing up, but we had little, small dogs inside dogs. But I remember one of our dogs got out and was a little bitty Chico, and he got run over by one of the taxi drivers, and he felt so bad because we were devastated, I mean, devastated. And the driver, I remember, his name was Johnny Malaya, and he felt so bad. He felt so bad because we were so heart broken that our dog had been killed, but our dog was like, just little bitty ole thing, and he didn't see him, so he just happened to get out me in the wrong place at the wrong time. But we always had a dog. We had one, one dog. It was a white poodle, and my mother would tell it, it "go, wake up the kids", and the dog would come and just, you know, we put the covers over our head, and the dog would be, you know, trying to lick us. And, you know, but the dog would be waking, waking us up, because my mother would talk, "go, go, wake up the kids", yeah, but we always had a dog, even, even now I have a dog,

Annette Rodriguez 2:10:21

and your neighbors had pets too or not a lot of them.

Teresa Velasquez 2:10:25

Those are the only neighbors that you know, I recall that had one. Yeah, there was another family that lived down the street, and we're a big family, the Gonzalez's. And I always thought it was so funny, because they all had nicknames. Every one of them had a nickname, and Mario was in square dancing with us, and his nickname was Tenor. His sister that was in my grade. Her name was Linda. She became a parent, parent engagement specialist as well. I worked with her years later, and they called

her Pebbles. I still call her Pebbles like even when I would see her at meetings. Hey, Pebbles. I mean, I just grew up that that's what I called her. And they had a brother, and he wrote a condolence on the other neighbor, Judy, that passed away recently, and I don't know what his name was, but they called him Tuta. I don't know what it stood for, but that's what they called him. And then they had another brother, again. I don't know what is if his name was Star, but I know they called one of them Star, but every one of those kids had a nickname. And I thought that was just, you know, really funny, because, you know, we, we stay friends all the year, all these years later, well, they, they, they moved away. They moved to, I believe, Del valle, but, yeah, Pebbles and I ended up working together, you know, and then Judy, Judy, she lived next door to them. She did the same type of work that I did, but she worked for communities and schools for many, many years. And, you know, it's unfortunate, she had some heart problems and passed away very unexpectedly. But those were the neighbors that I grew up with, just the two of them, the Villanueva girls. There were three girls, and then the Gonzalez family.

Annette Rodriguez 2:12:22

And they all went to palm school too, yes. And were they in the square dancing? And

Teresa Velasquez 2:12:29

Erica, Judy's sister was in Girl Scouts with me. And then Mario and Linda, Pebbles and Mario, I believe they were in square dancing, both of them, yeah, but the other siblings, I don't recall the other siblings being in it, but yeah, they were, they were good friends.

Annette Rodriguez 2:12:51

And your nickname, again, I'm trying to remember steam roller.

Teresa Velasquez 2:12:55

It was steam roller, crane or bulldozer, one of one of them. But we were all interchanged all the time, but we knew. We knew who he was talking to, yeah, but another story with my name, when you were asking me earlier in third, fourth and fifth grade, there were three teresas. So we were Teresa Velasquez, Teresa Mendoza and Teresa Pardo. So the next year, they stick us all in the same class again. So we became Terry M, Terry v and Terry p by fifth grade, they did it again, stuck us all in the same class. And the teacher was like, we had the same teacher because we had the same in third and fifth grade. So she said, enough of this. We got to figure something out. So Terry Pardo became Terry Pardo, Terry P, Terry M became Theresa M, Theresa Mendoza, that was my best friend, and then I became Tess. My mother had a nickname for me. She called me Tess. So I see people sometimes that knew me as Tess, "hey, Tess", but only really. My mother called me that. And my family, my mom's sister still called me Tess, or Tita she called me Tita also, but Tess was a name that I used in school in the fifth grade.

Annette Rodriguez 2:14:20

That must be really sweet to hear now. Oh yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 2:14:22

oh yeah, because they know, you know, that was my mom's name for me.

Annette Rodriguez 2:14:29

Can you think of any times that were difficult at the Palm school? It feels like they they were really attentive, your your mother's participation in the school your extracurricular activities. Were there any difficult times at the school?

Teresa Velasquez 2:14:49

Not that I recall. I just, like I said, I have just pleasant memories of my time at Palm school. I again, the foundation for this remarkable friendships, long, lasting friendships. And you know, I'm very fortunate that I had those opportunities.

Annette Rodriguez 2:15:09

As the palm school was was being shut down, your brother was still there. Do you remember what the what the infrastructure was like, what the building was like if it had changed.

Teresa Velasquez 2:15:23

I recall that the new building was already in preparation, because I remember even 10 years prior to that, we were given as students the opportunity to give our input of plans for the new building. Like, what did we want to see in the new building. And I remember, you know, being asked that, you know, like, we, oh, we need an elevator, because we're used to all those stairs. And right away I was like, oh, yeah, now, now I'll get in an elevator. But that was something that I remember, and, you know, wanting it to be more than one story, which Sanchez is two-story and parking. I remember making sure that, suggesting that there be enough parking, because I recall it palm it was very limited parking, that old side parking lot along East Avenue, and then one in the back for teachers. But I remember that there was never really enough parking. Just, I don't know, just, I just saw it. Remember it being very limited. So sharing that and the new plans that I wanted it to be plenty of parking, but I remember being asked about our input into the new school.

Annette Rodriguez 2:16:35

Do you remember how old you were and who asked you?

Teresa Velasquez 2:16:40

I was probably in fifth grade, and I don't know if it was administration or if there was a committee, I don't remember. I don't remember, but, you know, I thought it was exciting, you know, that the new school was coming. I knew I wouldn't go to it, but I just like, Yeah, this building is pretty old, you know, I remember it being a little drafty, you know, at times. But and then I remember the wooden floors, you know, they creek when you walk down the hall. But the stairs, I remember them being concrete, the stairs. So they were pretty solid. But other than that, I don't remember a lot more about the school itself.

Annette Rodriguez 2:17:29

You were saying it was drafty sometimes. Do you ever remember it being hot, like

Teresa Velasquez 2:17:34

in the summer? Not specifically no.

Annette Rodriguez 2:17:39

I'm probably thinking of this last summer. We just

Teresa Velasquez 2:17:44

Yeah, yeah. I think I probably would have contributed to making sure that they had a gym, because that was something that I saw the need for. Because we were limited. Our gym was in a portable. And you know, even though Miss Swenson provided as much as she could for us, but I mean, to a certain point, certain things you could do inside of a portable. But I remember learning to work on the uneven parallel bars. And there was a teacher, I believe there's a school named after him, Jerry Clifton. He was quadriplegic, but I would be mesmerized on the ability that this man had to come and, you know, do his thing on those bars. But, you know, I remember, you know, doing gymnastics. And, you know, at the time, what was it, as heavy as I am, you know, being able to flip and, you know, having access to floor mats and in all of that, and doing, like I said, you know, tumbling and gymnastics, even though in the confined space of the portable that we had opportunity to learn those things in our gym.

Annette Rodriguez 2:19:01

Yeah, it sounds like you all had a I don't know if that was he a gymnast? Was he visiting, or did he teach?

Teresa Velasquez 2:19:08

I think he taught there. I think he was a teacher there, yeah.

Annette Rodriguez 2:19:12

So it sounds like you had a lot of opportunities. You had a lot of sort of equipment, even if the space was portable, you still had all of that. And did you remember your your mom, ever being involved in saying, let's raise more money for floor mats or ?

Teresa Velasquez 2:19:31

No, no, like I said, I don't feel that we were deprived of things like that, because I remember there being mats and so forth. And, you know, the bars for us to utilize, even in the confined space that we had,

Annette Rodriguez 2:19:47

yeah, I think there are schools now that wouldn't have, yeah, parallel bars,

Teresa Velasquez 2:19:51

yeah. Well, the other thing too that Miss Swenson's daughter, that something that she specialized in, I believe she attended Texas State University at the time, and ended up going into having a gym of her own, and operated a gym of some sort. And I remember her taking us. Miss Swenson took us to Texas State to go and see gymnast perform. And you know, just having that again, that college visit per se, way early on in elementary school, her taking us to go and check out what her daughter was learning. Yeah,

Annette Rodriguez 2:20:33

so the teachers, at least Miss Swenson and maybe Miss Reyes seemed really involved. Oh yeah, oh yeah. Were there other teachers who were?

Teresa Velasquez 2:20:44

I think Miss Brown, she was African American, but the one with the paddle, she just loved us. All you know, we felt her love, even though, you know She took out her paddle on occasion. She did, probably did it for our own good, and it was just a fun class, like, I loved having her in third grade and again, getting to have her again in fifth grade, there was one teacher, she was a little more stern. I don't know if she was my home teacher, but I remember, like, I guess maybe we went and visited other classrooms, and I had one particular teacher that was a little bit more stern. Ms Adair, that's the one I got in trouble with, and said, I'm gonna go call your mother. And I was like, pleading with her to not, but I remember her being a little bit more stern as an educator than any of the others over the years.

Annette Rodriguez 2:21:35

And what grade did you have her?

Teresa Velasquez 2:21:37

Like I said, I think maybe she was probably a fourth grade teacher, but I went to her for like, language arts or something. She was never my homeroom teacher. I probably went to her maybe fourth or fifth grade,

Annette Rodriguez 2:21:51

yeah, and with Mr. Brown. Do you remember what she taught you? What was so fun in her class?

Teresa Velasquez 2:21:57

Well she's the one that let me have my little beauty salon, but she just taught, you know, all subjects across the board. But I think she just made it fun, you know, she just, she just let us engage in, you know, learning. It was just a fun time. Their chalkboard, yeah, we had chalkboards and, you know, going to the board and riding with the chalk and all of that. But, you know, we had some. I remember specifically a couple of kids would get out of hand and, you know, but she, she managed to stay control of the class. You know, even though we had a couple of them, you know, that were just, you know, off the chart.

Annette Rodriguez 2:22:47

Were these younger teachers or ?

Teresa Velasquez 2:22:49

No they were all to me that I remember Miss Birch, my first grade teacher was older. Second grade, Miss Herrera, was older. Miss brownie, she was kind of middle age. I guess Miss Reyes was older, and Miss brownie again, yeah, don't recall them being young at all, any of them.

Annette Rodriguez 2:23:14

And do you remember sort of, if you took us through your day, right, getting up early, right and getting to school. If you took us through your day, what would your day look like, and would you ever navigate the neighborhood in addition to going to get ice cream

Teresa Velasquez 2:23:34

to in regards to palm school?

Annette Rodriguez 2:23:36

Yeah, yeah. Do you remember?

Teresa Velasquez 2:23:39

No, like, I said we didn't have a lot of, like, free time, because it was always our parent being right at our side to walk us to school or get in the car and we're going to drive you half a block down and leave you, you know, in the back parking lot at the school. And they sat there till you walked in. So there was a really a lot of opportunity to, like, get off track. Yeah, it was just never opportunity. And like I said, when we would come after school, we we could ride our bikes, but we had limits to how far we could ride. We would ride to the corner, which was like three houses over, and back, there was a, I think, a day old bread place, and they had like a, like a drive through kind of thing, and so we could turn our bikes around and go back home, and then our property was, like, multiple lots, so we had a lot of property within where we lived, so just maneuvering around the taxi cabs, but yeah, we didn't, we didn't veer off. We knew we could go, like, as far as Judy's house, which was the villanuevas down, down the hill, and that's it. We couldn't go past there. And then we didn't really, we didn't bear off to Rainey street either. Then we had an alley behind us. But we never, we never went in the alley at all. Yeah,

Annette Rodriguez 2:24:58

so you weren't hanging out like at the pharmacy. No, did you ever want to?

Teresa Velasquez 2:25:07

I think by the time I was in middle school, I kind of wanted to do other things. But again, it was all routine. My dad would drive us to school. I remember, I didn't want to go get dropped off in the front of the school in a taxi. So on the first day of school, said, let's pick up Jeanette and Judy, my cousin that lived on 1908 Holly so which was passed past the school. And so my dad drives to go pick them up. I said, well, that way they won't know who's getting up who The car belongs to. So we all get in the car, and then my dad drives really slow, but that, of all days he got stopped that he got a ticket that he was being in the school zone. So you know, he was like, "we're not going to pick them up anymore". But, yeah, I kind of was like, I guess embarrassed. I didn't want to get off in a cab in the front of school. So then we made a deal, he'd leave us at the corner. We just walk across the street, but, you know, didn't realize at the times like that was pretty cool getting dropped off in the cab. But you know, it's just not the thing to do. And then a certain point we got to where I would walk to my my friend's house. They're just a block away from Martin, and I would wait there for them to pick me up at her house. But then on occasion, you know, my parents would be busy and they couldn't pick me up. So then I would have to walk from comal and and Holly street home, and, you know, so kind of a long walk for a little girl by herself. I mean, I was in junior high, but still, it was like something I had never done before. So it was a little intimidating, you know, especially crossing the the the interstate feeder road on both sides. So,

yeah, it was just an experience. But when I would go to her house, there was a little corner store next door to her house. And then there was a little these two little ladies. I don't remember their names, but they had a little store there. And I just thought it was the thing to do go buy a pickle and a soda, because I didn't have ever have that opportunity. So, yeah, that was, that was kind of fun.

Annette Rodriguez 2:27:10

What did that feel like, having to cross the 35 I mean, that's,

Teresa Velasquez 2:27:16

yeah, it was dangerous. I mean, it was on the the feeder road, but it was still, even at that time, a lot more traffic, and, you know, just to be aware of, you know, traffic coming and crossing, and watching the street signs to cross, the lights to cross. But I didn't do it a whole lot, but, you know, I did have the opportunity at junior high to to do that, you know, which was something I never had the opportunity to walk over in school. But, you know, as I grew older, they, they did allow me to, but more more fun was going to the store, getting, getting to go to the store after school. But which I never, I didn't have that opportunity.

Annette Rodriguez 2:27:58

Did you feel once you were making that walk in junior high, did you feel like how sort of separated the neighborhood had been because of the road?

Teresa Velasquez 2:28:12

It was always that side of the highway and this side of the highway. And I would get teased a lot, well, "you live over there, you know, you live on that side", which, you know, I lived on the west side of I 35 but like, right on I 35 so there was a lot of, I think, stereotyping, like even back then. I don't know if that's the right word, but we were looked at different because we lived on kind of the other side of the tracks, per se, but you know, still, I felt a big connection to the neighborhood, because, I mean, all my friends, I mean they lived, it was just, I mean, the highway that divided us. But you know, I was still, I felt very much a part of East Austin, because I felt that was east Austin, even where we lived, even though it was the west side of I 35 but you know, we were looked at different. We were looked at different. And

Annette Rodriguez 2:29:10

that had happened at the Palm school, because you all were together, yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 2:29:14

yeah, yeah. But we, you know, we, we even when we walk. When they walked us, we walked and joined where the other kids were meeting us, because of the cross pattern. So they didn't know I was coming from the other side, you know, because we crossed the same pattern to get across the street. Yeah, we had across three times because you couldn't go directly across the street from from East Avenue. I couldn't cross just I couldn't cross first street because you had to go the way the crossing the crossing guards were. I had to cross toward I 35 and then cross First Street, and then cross back, just for the safety. That's just the way it was set up. Yeah,

Annette Rodriguez 2:30:00

but they took the time to create a safe route for you. It sounds like we had crossing guards, sort of showing you, yep, yep. And was that the case in middle school too?

Teresa Velasquez 2:30:12

No, in middle school, we didn't have crossing guards down. I didn't have any, any crossing guards crossing because basically, you know, I don't know where the other girls would go, but they probably went directly after school. See, I would go to my friend's house, and then, assuming my parents were gonna pick me up, and then something would happen. And so it was away later. So by then, you know, the rest of the kids that will walk that way, and they were long gone home. So I would go way later, like five o'clock in the afternoon, the traffic people getting out of work, and so it was just, you know, little uneasiness, but always made it home. I was lucky. I made it home okay, but never

Annette Rodriguez 2:30:50

Never had any, no incident.

Teresa Velasquez 2:30:54

No incident, no, that's great. Yeah, I was lucky.

Annette Rodriguez 2:30:59

So around this time, when you're in elementary school, there's all sorts of changes happening in the nation, right? And we talked about the moon landing, which is incredible that you were there to see it with all of your your classmates. Were there any other sort of national changes happening that you were aware of as a kid, that you saw happening in Palm school or in the neighborhood

Teresa Velasquez 2:31:25

back then, God, I didn't really get introduced to any of that till like sixth grade later, when I went to Martin the discrimination and the rioting, I was just like, Oh, my God, I was afraid to go to school because there was a lot of racial tension between the blacks and the Hispanics. And I remember vividly being told like, hold the doors because kids were on the other side of the door hitting it with chains. And I was like, if this is Junior High, take me back to elementary. I was not prepared at all for that. And, you know, it was like eye opening, because I think that was my first experience with, like, interracial, like issues that at sixth grade. I mean, what I was 12, I don't know, it was just a lot to take in. And, you know, things settled down eventually where I was comfortable, but it was a lot. It was eye opening, because I never experienced that. You know, the entire time I was at Palm because, like I said, you know, we were all of the same race and background. I didn't have that. I didn't see that until I got to Martin, where it was kids from Montopolis coming there, and kids from savala, kids from Metz. And it was just kind of, you know, coming together of different cultures and different backgrounds, where that's when I saw the difference. But, yeah, just not, not growing up at Palm, I didn't, I didn't really recall seeing it or being around it like I did at middle school.

Annette Rodriguez 2:33:14

So do you remember at Martin when there, when there were moments like that you're talking about, you know, holding back the door. Do you remember what those moments were about?

Teresa Velasquez 2:33:27

It was just racial, I mean, just racial tensions, you know, like, you know, the black movement or the Chicanos. And, you know, it was like, I didn't even know what "Chicano" was. It was like, I never had heard that, either. And, you know, I was Hispanic American, is what I always heard that I was, and hearing the word "Chicanos", like, I don't know what that is. And, you know, it was just like a movement of, I guess, turf and territory. But it died down, like, pretty much the way it came up, it kind of just went away. You know, I remember establishing friendships with African American students at middle school and, you know, carrying, you know, those friendships on to high school. I think at high school it was just totally different, because it was more of Anglo American versus the hispanic and black culture, where we were looked at different in comparison to where we were going and integrating with the Anglo population. So it was another, like, a whole different kind of like experience, you know, like, oh, the Anglo people are on this floor. This is their area. Like everybody knew where they belonged. You know, there was a, I think, a motto of the school, like "everyone is someone at Austin High". And I was like, That was so weird phrase to have when everybody was so segregated, because, like me and my friends, we were on the the main floors. You walked in and we clustered around the book drop, and that was like our spot. Like everybody, me and my friends, we knew that was like where we were gonna meet up when we got to school. And then, you know, you had your other kids that were, you know, I always address them as the smokers and the tookers. They were the kids that would skip school and, you know, go check in and then leave. And you know, the ones that were going to do whatever they were going to do, they were in a certain, certain section on back of the school. And then, then we had the, you know, the preppy kids that wore, you know, stylish clothes, and name brand, you know, logos on their shirts. And it was just really weird how everybody was separated, like your group. You were separated by your class, not your grade class either it was just real different, you know, just so different.

Annette Rodriguez 2:36:06

More separated by class than race, or kind of a combination of both,

Teresa Velasquez 2:36:11

both, you know, yeah, both. But I think that was just kind of in the beginning, and I think you just either learn to accept it or learn how to fit in with the different groups, because by the time I was a senior, you know, I was a member of the Red Jackets, which predominantly was, you know, Anglo girls, but you know, me and friend Terry Celestino, We were practically the only two Hispanic girls on the in the girls, I mean, in the Red Jackets. But it was like more of an elitist participation in that and, but, yeah, it was a good experience, you know, for my senior year.

Annette Rodriguez 2:36:58

And so to change though, with each level of schooling, it was almost like a different layer was added each time and every time it was different in any of these levels, was there bilingual education?

Teresa Velasquez 2:37:12

Oh, yeah, I think there was bilingual education throughout. I remember specifically at Martin, you know, there was bilingual classes, ESL, and I'm pretty sure in elementary school as well. And in high school, I was able to get advanced placement, I guess because I was raised having here, heard Spanish at

home. My parents didn't speak to us in Spanish. But, you know, anytime in the in the culture, when they didn't want you to know anything they you know, but again, the kids just start speaking Spanish. But you learn to pick up, you know, especially if you're nosy like me. And so I learned a little bit, and I was able to advance place from first year to third year of Spanish. And then I was a member of the nosotros Spanish club. And Miss Juanita Olivares was our teacher and her husband, I believe, had been our my middle school principal. So it was, you know, again, a introduction of learning more of my culture and getting experience to celebrate and enrich everybody else about our culture as well. So, yeah, just, you know, stand up for who you are and be proud. Kind of thing.

Annette Rodriguez 2:38:29

Did you find your early experiences coming back to you at that point when you started, when you started, that point of celebrating your culture, capturing

Teresa Velasquez 2:38:41

Spanish, yeah, learning, learning and being proud of it, not not wanting to, like, I wish I had learned more, because there was so much like, you had your conversation Spanish, then you had your academic Spanish, and it's like, Oh my God. It's a big difference. You know, the Spanish that I knew was mucho, mucho, it was like, choppy, choppy, and that's still the way I speak, even now and later on, when I started working with school system, I was a teacher assistant, and I worked in a Early Childhood Special Education bilingual unit. And you know my teacher, the teacher I worked with. She was from Mexico, Mexico City, and she knew proper Spanish. And you know, we do these little lessons with the kids, and you know, she'd give me, you know, the materials that I was gonna be working with. And like, I don't even one of them was with a straw, and I didn't know the word for straw, and I think it's pipote, and it was like I learned so much Spanish working with that teacher, because I didn't. I had never heard these words before. And you know, sometimes what I would it would be in a group, and you know, all the kids spoke Spanish, and they were speech delayed children. I would, I would, if I didn't know the word, I would tell, tell the kids, "esto como se llama" and ask the kids to tell me, and then once, they would try to say it because, you know, again, it was hard to understand because of their speech impediments, but I would figure it out. It's like, oh yeah, but, you know, the kids wouldn't be teaching me. They knew they knew more than the teacher, but you know, it was a learning experience. And then, you know, a lot of the things too, even way later, one of the schools I worked at was heart Elementary School. And that school, it was a pretty integrated school, but predominantly Spanish speaking community, but these were parents and families from different parts of, you know, native Spanish speaking communities. And I had never been introduced to like the Posadas, and I didn't understand and, you know, and they taught me they wanted to do activity, you know, with their children and their teachers. And oh, "vengase Terry", you know, they call me to go participate in a classroom activity. And I remember them serving me posole. And, you know, with the with the cabbage and then the ravano, I had another word I had never heard before, the radish and the cabbage slaw that they were put in the posole like "se se llama?", so I learned all the in so that particular parent, Betty, we're still in touch to this day. She always would, you know, give me gratitude about learning, you know, giving her opportunity to learn so much because she was part of those book clubs that I would provide for her children and the parents. And I said, Oh, Betty, you don't even know. I said, I learned so much from you, and you're in the families here that I had never, you know, over my years, had been, you know, involved in learning, learning about and even the dia de Los Muertos altar, one of the teachers

had started that, you know, at that school, and that was something that I never really experienced and learned about what it was and symbolize. Now it's all popular, everybody wants an alter. But that was my first experience, you know, way later on, when I worked at heart Elementary School and the challenges that that campus had, it was like, Oh, my God, I had worked in East Austin for 14 or more years, and never had I had the need to involve social services like CPS and, you know, just the need for unfortunate experiences that those families were, you know, were facing. But again, you know, those families enrich my life and you know, experiences that I had never shared and been a part of.

Annette Rodriguez 2:42:47

Can you how would you describe the effect and the legacy of home school, the career that you chose? Right? You very much. You talked a little bit about your mom. I want to know everything about your mom, but, but, but thinking about you know, everything that you absorbed as an elementary school child, and how you bring that into your career and your life.

Teresa Velasquez 2:43:14

Yeah, I I owe a lot of it to Pat Swinson, who was the PE teacher, and ultimately, my square dance teacher and my Girl Scout, giving us the opportunity to learn those things that I don't think we would have experienced, maybe Girl Scouts, but not so much the square dancing. And my mother also having her there knowing, you know, I was safe. My mom was downstairs. You know, anything bad was happened. You know, I wasn't never afraid of school, but I was always real proud that she was there. And you know, even though it was like, Okay, you can't get in trouble because your mom's downstairs. But, you know, like I said, I was the rebellious one, because I was could be challenging, but knowing she was there, and I could count on her for everything, and her want and desire to give back and share the experiences that were brought forth to her as a parent educator, and the opportunity for her to be involved for so many years with the school system and teaching other moms to speak their voice. Again, that's something that I think empowering women with her work with Lady sulac And, you know, the scholarship opportunities that they provided to students to move forward in getting, you know, higher education and social and civic, you know, opportunities. She was a founding member of SEVEN, I don't recall what SEVEN stands for, but I know she was a founding member of that organization as well. And she was very active in LULAC and served as, you know, district capacity, as the Deputy District. Director. She was a go getter. You know, she she didn't ever face a challenge that she wouldn't, you know, give it her all and pretty much get it all done. You know, even family reunions that she's put together, and even the week that she passed. We she has a long legacy as well. Her great grandfather, I believe five times back or nine times back, was a founder of Nacogdoches. Gil Y'Barbo was a founder sent from Spain to found Nacogdoches, Texas. So yeah, we had a lot of strong roots on both sides of the family, and some of her descendants are daughters of the Republic of Texas, and in her honor, that's something she had wanted to do prior to her death, and never had the opportunity. I have the papers that she had, and never got the chance to complete them, but we did have unveiling at the state cemetery of his name on a monument there that we participated in and had a lot of family come from all over and to fulfill her legacy, I would like to pursue and complete her application, because we, also my daughter and I, are entitled to that honor as well. So

Annette Rodriguez 2:46:25

absolutely, absolutely and so you'll, you'll complete her application posthumously, but also you and your daughter are

Teresa Velasquez 2:46:35

yeah, yeah, because I know that's something she wanted. It's just we have a big reunion coming up. She organized many of the reunions, but we have family that are planning a reunion in Nacogdoches this coming summer. And, you know, look forward to again. You know, meeting and seeing family from all over, all over, everywhere, but again, sharing the stories and our legacy of where we came from. But she was a strong advocate of that as well, and proud of her heritage as well, and again, pushing forth to provide for families when they face challenges, but also empowering them to do for themselves. That was one thing. She was not a sit at home and cry about things. She was a doer and a go getter. You know, something needed to be done. She made sure that, you know, she couldn't give it her all to get it done.

Annette Rodriguez 2:47:39

And that was true for when y'all were in the palm school, she made sure,

Teresa Velasquez 2:47:46

yeah, well, with the square dancing, the teacher provided we wore red skirts and white blouses. And I remember her having my own, you know, she had to have her little go to the get her own outfit and my own shoes and my own petticoat. I was like, I'm such a saver of everything. I know I still have Girl Scout stuff. I just can't find it. But I don't know why I wouldn't save my square dancing attire, but I know she had my own made for me and my shoes. Like I said, we loved it. We just that was just so much fun, just to learn all those dances. And, you know, it was funny, because a lot of the people that typically did square dancing were not of our culture, you know, African American and Anglo people. And here we were, all the little Mexicanitos. It was here they here comes our Early Bird group. But we could hold our own with those callers. Because, I mean, we never knew what, what songs and what calls they were going to call. We would just, you know, you just knew the steps and you know you did what they called and we were good at it.

Annette Rodriguez 2:48:54

Do you remember you all going to those, to those conventions, or those gatherings and and noticing that difference at that age, oh yeah,

Teresa Velasquez 2:49:01

oh yeah, we stood out. We stood out. But like I said, I think a lot of people looked at us like, Oh, those kids are pretty good,

Annette Rodriguez 2:49:12

yeah, once you started dancing, yeah. Did anyone talk to you about standing out or

Teresa Velasquez 2:49:19

No, no, I just, I just recall like it was obvious, like, you know, it just sometimes we felt like, I felt like, you know, like, what are we doing here? But, you know, I know we were good. She, she taught us well, and

we knew how to present ourselves. And, you know, she didn't like all that horsing around when we were out there. We were there to do our job and, you know, and have fun at the same time. It was a lot of fun experiences. You were professional dancers. We were professional dancers. And like I said, you know, I'm glad that my mother was there again, you know, alongside us and I. You know, letting us have those opportunities like, you know, she could have been one of those that my dad would say, Oh, you don't need to be going out there, you know, whatever. But, you know, it was, it was, I think, had she not been maybe we wouldn't have been able to go. But I'm glad she was there to be, you know, at her side and supporting us even even now, like when my younger brother went off to college. I mean, we traveled and went to his games and supporting him. My nieces, when they started playing soccer and softball, up until her passing, you know, in her scooter because she couldn't walk very good, she'd be out there cheering, and, you know, they were in dance, and she'd be the loudest one in the audience. You know, that's my girl, and I we make sure that we keep her memory alive. I have a little pin. It's in my purse that I wear special occasions, and I have a small picture of her as my nieces and nephews and my daughter and graduations, we have her seat right there and take her part of major family events,

Annette Rodriguez 2:51:35

thinking about this story of of The Palm school I'm thinking about through your story, learning how much a part of this story is the mothers of the palm school and your mom, that's

Teresa Velasquez 2:51:53

so much. Another somebody from church is friends with my brother and reached out, and she knew her families knew each other and her mom also went on these trips with my mom, and they became friends Margaret Camacho and her son, David and Daniel, were part of the square dancing group, and she had asked my Brother if I had any pictures of their mom and that I could share with her, and the pictures weren't very good. It's, you know, cutting up on the one of the busses on one of the trips with square dancing. But this is, this is what I have. I'll gladly share them with you. But, you know, she was always, you know, like, like we were her babies too. You know, it was like we knew I was a mom and she was going to look out for us, just like her kids. And one of her sons was in my quinceanera, and I have a picture of her and her husband as they're leaving the church, shaking my mom's hand. And, you know, just a strong root again, they were part of the same church. And you know those ties, you know, their daughters friends with my brother, and you just have the connection that, you know, just really strong. Another mother that I remember being involved was Miss Perez Adell, and Joe's mother, she had a business on East First Street, right real close to palm school. And she was always, you know, there, and everybody knew, everybody knew Miss Bettis. She was had a heart of gold. And, you know, she, she'd look after everybody. And she has since passed. But her son is friends with my brother. In fact, her son stood with me and my brother's wedding. And Adele were friends on Facebook. You know, check in with each other periodically. But, yeah, it's just interesting that you know those bonds that you make as a young, young child, that they stay with you, and those lasting friendships that you build, you know they stay.

Annette Rodriguez 2:54:06

If someone were to ask you what what the palm school symbolizes to you when you think about the palm school in your years there,

Teresa Velasquez 2:54:19

I had written something a while back, a letter to miss Swenson, thanking her, and I never got the opportunity to share it with her. And I tried to find it, to bring it today to share, but I never did. But I know in that letter, it was a strong foundation of roots of who I am today because of my experiences and opportunities that I had at palm school, lasting friendships, lifetime friendships, cherish i. Uh, that I cherish forever. Yeah, my oldest and nearest friend I lost in 2015, and she's buried right behind my mom. And every time I go see my mom, I go see her and her daughters, my god daughter, and you don't forget your friends. I Yeah,

Annette Rodriguez 2:55:46

and all these good times that

Teresa Velasquez 2:55:48

Lots of fun, lots of craziness. We we had some some times a lot of stories, a lot of stories. When she died, we were going through pictures and sharing stories with each other. And one of them was, we had got together for something, and we ended up at Zilker Park, and we're riding the train, and it was this Fab Five group, and one of them jumped off the train, and I hadn't noticed, I guess I was further back, or I was forward more they were on the back, and one by one, they were jumping off. And there I go, still riding along. And then they're hollering laughing because I was still on the train. And I was like, how crazy jumping off the train? But I'm like, I wasn't going to get separated from them. So there I go, jumping off the moving train. And, I mean, we found it to be hilarious. I mean, I mean, we fell down laughing so much. And I'm like, yeah, there you went, going riding by yourself, you know, just make it funny, because I didn't know they had jumped off. But I'm like, how crazy? Like, jumping off a movie train, even though it was a little like, you know, the little whatever train there in Zilker Park. But I was like, yeah, those kind of crazy things. But, you know, just fun stuff, fun stuff.

Annette Rodriguez 2:57:07

So this will remind you of being in fifth grade when they asked you, what, what you what improvements you wanted to the new calm school? What would you want to come of the of what is left of palm school.

Teresa Velasquez 2:57:24

I went to one of the meetings. They had the community meetings, and I know they talked about like the outside structure, like the where the school grounds were. And you know, there's been a lot of input about making community stage for bands and so forth. And are they talking specifically about the building itself? I think it would really, really be a great museum of sorts to share, you know, some of the memorabilia or things about people that grew up in the area, people that went there, the teaching staff, and the impact that they've made on the community. I think, I think we don't have museums in East Austin, we don't have those opportunities. And I don't know that there are that many young people of our culture still living in the area because of the gentrification that's gone on. But, you know, there's got to be some, you know, some kind of roots of grandchildren that are still or that would still take part in utilizing it. But I'd like to see some kind of opportunity for a museum of some sort, even as an educator, and knowing a lot of people that followed education or social service type work, that went to school with me of something like that, like, what are these? Like, kind of a "Who are they? Who are you now? Or

what have you done since your years there?" Because a lot of people, I think, have done a lot of great things, not only in education, but in other endeavors that they've chosen, and that would be interesting to see, like, "where are you now, or what have you done?" Because there's got to be a lot of great things, of great people out there that have ties to palm school. And that would be just amazing for me, just, you know, the historian in me that would love to read about and see and share and learn about

Annette Rodriguez 2:59:49

before we go. Is there anything you'd like to add? Any great memories, any great stories?

Teresa Velasquez 2:59:57

I probably cover pretty much everything. That I can remember at this point as I'm aging, I was like a lot of times, some things are real vivid, and I can just go on and on and on and remember, but it's getting a little harder. Like I said, I when I was looking for my stuff, I knew I had my Girl Scout sash and everything. My badges are all pinned because my mother never sewed them on. I just wore them with pins on them, and then, like every year, you earned a star for each year those, those have the little clasp in the back. But for some reason, I never, never had my badges sewn on. I guess my mom wasn't into sewing. She had a lot of other other qualities and attributes, but sewing wasn't one of them, and nor did I ever get that, because I never did it myself. But, yeah, it's just, you know, interesting that I don't know where that's at, but I know I have it, I have it somewhere. Just don't know where, possibly in my attic somewhere, but I had thought about downsizing. You know, it's just me and my dad now in a 2900 square foot house, a big old house or two people, but just the thought of relocating 20 plus years of stuff, I'm like, I don't know how my parents moved out of East Avenue, because that was, you know, we were all gone by then, by the time they moved. But that was an ordeal. That was an ordeal, a lot of stuff, but, yeah, I was sad to see the house knocked down. I was there the day before they knocked down East Avenue, and I had my dad take the nine zero off the house where I grew up, and I still have it. And there's a lot of memories, a lot of memories from palm and growing up, you know, in East Austin, and just, you know, deep rooted ties to the community still. And I think I'm grateful for the fact that my grandfather was able to help a lot of people, you know, not only providing jobs for the community, but a service as well to the community in regards to transportation and involvement in politics and their voice being heard, and getting the Hispanic voice into politics and and I think it's important, because, you know, if we don't speak up, things are going to change. Things are still changing. And you know, unfortunately, you know, people don't understand that you're only person that has the power to change is yourself. And gotta stay involved, and gotta get out there and vote and make things happen.

Annette Rodriguez 3:02:42

Thank you so much. Thank you for sharing your story with us.

Teresa Velasquez 3:02:45

Thank you. Sorry for all the tears, but I'm just an emotional person,

Annette Rodriguez 3:02:51

beautiful, moving story, beautiful family. So thank you. Thank you so much. I know we're going to look at your your photos now, so maybe lots of Yeah, and I was thinking about my dream at the Palm

school, if they do something, and they have that band stand, they talked about that, you all do a square dance for,

Teresa Velasquez 3:03:16

you know, always, always because, like I said, you know, we're friends, still a lot of us and always want to reach out and say, Hey, let's have a little reunion. But the two girls, the Villanova girl, just passed and and not the Gonzalez, I got to see them at Judy's funeral. And you know, when you see people like that, you reconnect. It just kind of takes you back, like, you know, those friendships, and you know, we were there, and like her sister, was surprised to see me, I hadn't seen her in quite some time, and before, the thing for her to remember was my slumber party. It's like, oh, girl I hadn't thought about those in forever. You know, I had those in one probably at elementary school, but, you know, I guess she enjoyed them. It was just crazy. But because, mostly, you know, I didn't really have opportunity to invite friends, because I had so many cousins. Like when I had my quincenera I had very maybe just a couple of friends that got to stand in it, because, you know, you only could have the 14 girls in yourself. Everybody else was a cousin. You know, get so many cousins, and that's the way, you know, it is with, you know, our family, it was just so many of us, it's hard to keep track. And even, you know, when we would do the gifts and, you know, buy for all the other kids and family, we'd have to update the list, because so and so had a baby, and so and so had a baby, and it's like, who is so and so? Like, Oh, that's, that's Lisa's daughter, who is this and and we'd end up with two Alyssa's, okay, who has Alyssa? It's like, now I think we have three alysses, and it's just like crazy. That's why I want to do the thing with the ornament, because I try to do a chronological like everybody's birthday to try to post Happy Birthday on the family page. But I said, Forget it. I'll never finish. Everybody keeps having babies, but my great niece was just born yesterday, and her name is Haley Marie. I haven't got to see her yet, but I've seen pictures, and just my heart just melted because she looks all like my mom and my brother and my niece. So her name was fitting, you know, her middle name Marie, but yeah, I'll see her later, probably tomorrow. She's she's still in the hospital, but, yeah, generation keeps on going, and that legacy of my grandfathers will continue on and on and on and on and on. I'm just grateful that my dad has had the opportunity to, you know, witness his grand great grandchildren. It's unfortunate that my grandma, my mom, was not but I talked with her sister, my aunt, yesterday, and she says, Oh, I know your mother was over there just loving on her. And I said, Yeah, that's probably why it was raining she was probably just crying so much. It just had a rain but I know, I know that she's always going to be around us. My my great nephew when he comes over. I have a little kind of shrine, per se, with my mom's picture. And right now at Christmas, there's angels, my mom's that was her little thing, our little niche with all the angels, and then the, like, big old nativity underneath, and her pictures there. And he doesn't visit a whole lot, but it's like he has a familiarity when he sees her picture. And you know, I always have this thing about, like, babies knowing, like in their dreams. They know people from the other side. And it's like, I know he knows my mom, you know? I just I feel like when he looks at her, he looks at her, at the picture, like he knows who she is, and that I feel the same way, like my daughter when she was young, my my grandmother died when my daughter was, like, three years old, and at the time, we lived by herself and my daughter. I would walk in the living room, and she'd be looking up in the corner, and she'd be talking, and I'd come in the room, it's like, Who are you talking to? She said, Great Grandma. She'd point up to the ceiling, and I'm like, okay, tell her good night. We'll see you tomorrow. Because then I'd get all kind of freaked out, because I'm like, Who is she talking to? But she vividly would see my grandmother talking and playing with her, and she was only three years old. But you know, I really feel

like you know the spirit is there with them. And you know, it makes me comforted to know that, you know they're watching out and they're they're with us all the time,

Annette Rodriguez 3:07:36

and still that same nurturing, yep, comforting, checking for the safety, making sure you get home ok.

Teresa Velasquez 3:07:44

yeah, and, well, you know, with the with the cancer treatment, had a lot of anxiety, because I had experience, you know, my mom's chemotherapy and all the years of treatment. And one thing she always said that she never wanted to go through radiation because she's saw what it did to her mother and burn her skin and so forth. And she says, No, if I ever get to the point where I need that, I don't want to have that. But that was, had no option. That was what they recommended that I have. And I was kind of apprehensive, like, you know, my mom didn't want to do it, but mine was external radiation, and I, you know, told the doctor, so I need to see like, you know, I don't like confined spaces, and I don't like the unknown. I said I got to see before, you know, you're going to put me in there and close the door, and nobody's going to be in there with me, because nobody could be in the room. And, you know, they showed me exactly what it was going to be. And my neighbor happened to be going through it at the same time. And she said, girl, she says, just take your rosary in there. You don't get past one decade before you know it, you're done. And sure enough, I asked, you know, because my, you know, the metal on my rosary. I was like, is that something I can bring in here with the radiation? She's Oh, yeah, that's fine. Not even one decade, but I'll be there. I was like, I'm not ready yet. I'm not ready to go yet, because I'm still trying to pray. Keep on praying. But that's what got me through. And, you know, anytime I face a challenge, you know, my dad said, put it in God's hands and you'll get through anything. And you know, even the over protecting of my daughter, you know, it got to a point where I was like, I can't hover over her every minute of every day of her life. I just, you know, said, God, watch over her, keep her safe, you know, bring her home safe, and, you know, watch over her and protect her. And that's all you can do. You gotta let go at some point. I'm always encouraging these parents, you know, with my work, "ay dejalos, ay dejalos". A lot of good hypocrite over here, telling mine and doing the opposite. But you know your kids, and you know that if you taught them right, they're gonna know what's right and wrong and make the right choices. And that's all I tell her, "make sure you make good choices". But you know, she's got a big heart, you know, and I'm really proud of. The work that she continues the legacy like her grandpa,

Annette Rodriguez 3:10:05

the legacy of education you all have is incredible,

Teresa Velasquez 3:10:07

yeah, and giving. Thank you. This has been a big thing. I'm really proud and happy that I had this opportunity to share my story. Thank you. Thank you. Thank.