BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

SOLLIDAY: This is Scott Solliday interviewing Ray Chavarria. Today's date is August 17, [1993], and we're at the Tempe Historical Museum. And . . . Ray, I understand you were born in Tempe in 1927?

CHAVARRIA: Yes, I was born November 8, 1927, in the section of the railroad track where the old West Eighth Street was, and the railroad. I was born in that railway section, and the reason nobody can deprive me from that is that I have a broken finger for playing with the machinery of the railroad, and I have a broken finger, and I recall that as my first home in Arizona that I can remember.

SOLLIDAY: That's almost outside of town, isn't it?

CHAVARRIA: Yes, it's where the old Exchange Orange Product Company was, across from it. And it was considered outside of town at that time.

SOLLIDAY: Of course that's now. . . .

CHAVARRIA: That's all part of the town now. They've got businesses there and everything.

SOLLIDAY: And you'd mentioned a little bit about the First Street *Barrio* also. (CHAVARRIA: Uh-huh.) Is that where you moved there a little bit later?

CHAVARRIA: Yes, after my dad retired from the railroad, [Southern] Pacific Railroad. Him and Mom came on this land that the government was furnishing if you put a building and you worked on it, which is considered homesteading.

They put a home there, which was made from wood from the railroad section, and it was a two-bedroom with a small little kitchen. And that's where we were, and then Dad had the opportunity to buy the land, and he DID buy the land. But when he signed the papers, Gilbert Montanez, who was the first Hispanic city councilman in Tempe, loaned Dad the money with the recognition that after his death the property would be turned over to him. So the Chavarria family lost that land to Gilbert Montanez, due to that signing.

SOLLIDAY: So that wasn't when you were VERY young.

CHAVARRIA: No, this was later, in the later years about 15 years ago. That's when. . . . We didn't know what had happened until later, but there was nothing that we could do to fight for our land, because Dad's document was signed by himself, he knew what he was getting into, and there was nothing that we could do but to accept it, that the land belonged to Gil Montanez.

SOLLIDAY: When was that that you first moved over there?

CHAVARRIA: I would say that it would be in about 1932, if I can recall. "Cause I was. . . . In 1935, that's when I remember part of the history of Tempe, and that was between eight and nine years of age. So I would say that it came to be in the late '30s, somewhere in there. But I can't really tell you just when.

SOLLIDAY: Okay. And you'd also mentioned you'd walked

around a lot to different areas of Tempe. Well, of course the main *barrio* at that time over in what's now part of ASU campus, is where so much of the history that we focused on. . . . And there's a number of people I've been interested in, through the time of the '30s and the '40s, whether there was ever someone that was looked up to as a leader of the Hispanic community at that time.

CHAVARRIA: In the older generation, my father was considered a man that they could come to, because my father was a musician and he played in different functions. And he knew most of all the people in the *barrios*, including the ranches around Safford, Willcox, and Solomonville. He was born in Solomonville, Arizona. So he knew, and people would come to him for advice. But then as I started to grow among the younger people, I sort of became like a leader, like -- what would you say? -- like a vanguard. I had certain people with me, like Lucio Lopez, Johnny Garcia, Harold Aceves, Alonso Alvarez, Chappo Alvarez, that went around with me, that anytime somebody would come into the *barrio* to do some mischief or whatever, they would get ahold of me and I would get ahold of the others and I would protect the *barrios*. And even to today, some of these young men that grew up with me, which were in our age now, they still sort of look forward at me for guidance, and to provide direction. So, it just considered that. But there has been others in various other things. I mean, I don't

take full credit for nothing. It's just MY part and my father's part. The Chavarrias are well-known in Tempe, their contribution to the town. My dad had a ranch on Eighth Street School where now I think the Pepsi Cola Company has their plant. That used to be part of Dad's ranch. Dad sold that in the early '40s for $400, and the man that bought it from Dad sold it for a million dollars. I still remember that, and when I pass by, I always look. I always remember that in that area was my father's ranch.

SOLLIDAY: That's west of Tempe?

CHAVARRIA: Uh-huh, west of Tempe.

SOLLIDAY: Over by the freeway.

CHAVARRIA: Uh-huh, on the other side of the Gomez Ranch -- Helen Gomez Ranch. We were about a mile and a half from there. And as a matter of fact, they were trying to remember who owned that ranch and the house there until this last activity that we had, this reunion. Irene [Hormell] asked me the question and I answered it, and she was so surprised because then she recalled that we used to stop at THEIR ranch and play before going down to our ranch or coming back. My dad was a good friend of Irene and Helen's father and mother. And we stopped there for water and rest, and then we would continue to our home on West First Street, which was 520 West First Street, that was the address of it.

SOLLIDAY: I believe that house is still there today, too.

CHAVARRIA: No, it was tore down just a year ago, because it was so old that the wood just gave way to the side and it became a safety hazard to people within. And the City requested to the owner, which is Gil Montanez, to do away with it, and they did. He had to pay for the removal of it. He took everything that he could from it: antique furniture that belonged to my mother and other items, and Dad's, and so forth. His family has a lot of this antique furniture that belonged to my mother before. You know, when she died, my father eventually married Gilbert's mother. Well, she became the owner of the property. But we don't feel no animosity or anything. I mean, it was done legally, my dad did everything that HE felt was right, because Coley was the one that was with him more than us. Coley was the one that helped Dad more than us, because we all went our different ways, but Coley stayed in the house, went to high school and college. And afterwards, when he married, he used to visit Dad and help him in anything that he needed. So that's why we all believe that Dad did what he had to do, you know, to show Coley appreciation for taking good care of him. So we're thankful that he did that.

SOLLIDAY: I wanted to ask you a little bit about your father. Pablo Chavarria, Senior.

CHAVARRIA: Yes. He was known as Pablito, Pablito Chavarria. My dad came from Solomonville. That's where he

was born and some of my brothers and sisters. But my dad was a musician. He played the violin, he went to different ranches to play. He had his own band, and then a orchestra which consisted of -- if I can recall -- he said there was a guitar player, violin player -- which was my dad -- and a bass fiddle, and I can't recall what the other instrument was. But what they used to do is, they used to go to the mining towns like Superior, Miami, Globe, and Bisbee, and the miners wouldn't let them go. They wanted them to play around the clock. And the way they would do it, after somebody would get sleepy, he'd sneak off and go sleep for a couple of hours. Then when he reported back to the band, another one would take off. But the miners wouldn't know the difference, because of all the heavy drinking, and they were having fun.

SOLLIDAY: Oh, so they wouldn't notice that the bass player was gone for a while.

CHAVARRIA: Yes, they wouldn't notice that. And Dad did that, and then he moved to Tempe and he formed his own band. And also Dad played during the Depression for the WPA [Works Progress Administration]. He played for different Tempeños, Tempeans, you know. And we have pictures of all of that when Dad was much younger, playing, and so forth. My father was a man of strict discipline. He was taught that young people should respect their elders, so he taught us that when an elder came into OUR

home, if we were sitting down, for us to stand up and be reverent and offer the chair to that elderly person. After that, we can recall that he also taught us this: once they sat down, without asking, we would have to go to the kitchen and bring them a cool glass of water. At that time, we had ice boxes, so we always had a pitcher of cold water JUST for that purpose, nothing else. But I do recall that every second day, if we had no visitors, then we were allowed to drink that cold water, and then cut some ice, put it in the pitcher with clear water, and put it away for that purpose, so when they came in, you always offer a glass of water. Then, after that, you would stand, reverent, until your father would dismiss you. He would tell you, "Okay, go outside and play." The purpose for that was that young people were not to hear any grown-up talk, which was sometimes very private among them. It wasn't secret, it was sacred, and we were taught that sacredness, to be obedient to that. And if we didn't, we got a spanking. Sometimes our fathers, yes, abused us as children, because of the way that they spanked us. Sometimes it was brutal, but the law didn't protect the child at that time. And that's why I feel glad that we have such laws now that protect a woman from a husband's abuse, and also children [from child] abuse. So I can honestly say that my father didn't have the education that other people might have had. He had to make his living

playing and working on ranches. But he went by strictly what was taught by HIS father. And . . . that's I remember most about my father that he was well-loved in Tempe. All over, my dad was loved. They had great respect for him. When my brothers learned to play, Ralph and Paul, they were part of his band that went to the mining towns. If I can recall, one of them I think was 13 and travelled with Dad. And then down here in Tempe he taught a lot of musicians in the Valley music. My dad was not a man who listened to music and just played it by ear. My dad was a musician that did everything by note. And that was what he taught. He taught note first before he taught the instrument. Some of your famous Hispanic musicians here in the Valley that have grown old have been students of my father.

SOLLIDAY: It seems like he was one of the earliest bands that I ever have found any reference to here in Tempe.

CHAVARRIA: Oh yes. I don't recall the names of all of them, but I know that the Arroyo family, they were with Dad. And Valdemar Carabajal was another one. And Rodriguez. I can't remember his first name, but he was from Guadalupe. And then Paul and Ralph and Victor, Victor Arroyo. So you had about a good six or seven people that played. And then later on, why, my brother formed his own band, Ralph. But those are the good things I remember about Dad, and the respect that he had. Dad was quiet. But I'll tell you something that to this day I often

wonder: I never heard my dad talk English, speaking English -- it was always in Spanish. But he could understand it, but why he never spoke it, to this day I don't know why. (chuckles)

SOLLIDAY: But you never heard him speak it?

CHAVARRIA: No, I never heard him speak a word of English. I don't know if Paul or Ralph -- we know him as Chapito Chavarria -- if they heard him, or my sisters, but I never did. Everything was in Spanish. So I don't know why. But those are the good things I remember about Dad. He was well-loved and respected in the entire community and surrounding areas where he used to go to play. Dad was a man of honor -- not perfect. He did the best that he could with us, and that's why we respect him and love him.

SOLLIDAY: Did he teach you to play an instrument?

CHAVARRIA: Yes, he started to. He started me with the saxophone and the music and the little timer. And where he was teaching me there was a window, and from that window I used to see, Scott, I used to see the kids playing, and I would . . . and I just didn't feel good being in the room and not playing, so I wasn't paying much attention. And when Dad seen that I wasn't paying attention to the music, he figured that I didn't have that talent. So he didn't push me, so I quit. But on every dance that he played, I was there always dancing as a single person, and afterwards as a married person. I always was there to show him that I

enjoyed his music and my brothers'. Those are the happy memories, also, that I do have.

SOLLIDAY: I wanted to ask you about a few other people that I don't know if you remember: Antonio Celaya?

CHAVARRIA: Celaya, no, I don't know him.

SOLLIDAY: He passed away probably. . . .

CHAVARRIA: Some of the families, Scott, interject that today, is that the reason that I don't know many of those families is that they didn't have sons my age, and we never went to those homes and got acquainted. We used to see them in the *barrio*, we used to know who they were, but as far as knowing where they worked, their family life or whatever, that I can't tell you. But my dad used to sometimes point out to me, *"Este es Señor. . . ."* You know, "This is Mr. Soza," and that was it. But he would introduce me and I would just get to know them by that first meeting and that was it.

SOLLIDAY: Let's see. How about Pete Estrada? Did you ever. . . .

CHAVARRIA: Estrada? I remember a little bit, but not too much. Pete Estrada didn't hang around with us too much in school. His family was like the Molinas -- Frank Molina's family -- they were quiet people. They stayed more closely to each other. If there was any mingling in the neighborhood of the sons and daughters, I don't know, because since I lived on West First Street, "the *barrio* of

swimming pool," known at that time, I didn't know who was hanging around over here. All I know was that when they had trouble over there, from some other *barrio* from Mesa or Phoenix or Guadalupe, word would get to me, and I would go there. But as far as mingling with them, no. There's quite a few families that I'm not acquainted. I think I mentioned most of the families that I'm familiar with on the tapes -- I wish I could give you more information on them, but that's the honest truth. I wish I could, that's why I told you I'd try to give you the input that you really need. If I don't, you can get that information, I think, from -- I'm quite sure that my brother Paul and brother Ralph -- Chapito -- can give you some of this information. I'm quite sure that they knew some of these people that I didn't know.

SOLLIDAY: Let's see, about Guadalupe. Obviously you didn't really get a chance to travel around probably that much.

CHAVARRIA: Guadalupe? That was my old stomping grounds where I did most of my fighting. I know Guadalupe very well. Where we used to go to dance was a hall that still existed just a few years ago, because I came to Tempe and went to Guadalupe five years ago and that hall was still in existence. It was tore down, but that's where we used to hang around. I remember the Soto's Market. I know that the old church -- there's a new one there and it's being

saved for historical interest. I know some of the houses that were there. The *barrios* were similar to the ones at West First Street, because the *barrio* in the *Colegios*, which is the college barrios, where the college is now, the university. They were better built, the homes were better built than the *barrio* in West First Street. Well, the *barrio*, West First Street, was compared almost to the Guadalupe *barrio*. The homes were made out of adobe, and they had dry rods of trees -- in other words, branches of trees, you know, the thick. . . . They would run this way, and then some kind of a. . . . I don't know what it was, what kind of a weed it was, but it was woven as a roof.

SOLLIDAY: So it was just a flat roof then with the mud top?

CHAVARRIA: Uh-huh. And some of the homes were constructed by those that lived there, and some of those homes were constructed in a good manner. They were beautiful. They didn't have any green grass, because Guadalupe, the way I used to know it was hilly and a lot of the rock that you find in the mountains, small rocks and dirt and all that, that's what it was, all on the ground. But Guadalupe consisted of the main street in the town and the business is similar to what it is today. But the Sotos had the grocery store. It was a big grocery store that was the ONLY one, and that's where everybody went to. But I remember most, and I still do, and I still look forward to

coming to see it, is the *matachines*, the Indian dances that they hold, the festivities, the sacred dances of dancing for rain, you know, with their outfits and so forth, the hoops and so forth. Those are memories that I will never forget about Guadalupe. That's why I felt real good when my brother-in-law, Joe Barriga, told me that they had made the old church a historical place, and they built the new one to the side, because they will continue having those dances. Because Guadalupe was where all the Indian people lived, and that's where we used to go, and I was accepted, because we knew each other. Even in San Diego now, I'm walking down the street with my wife and I meet an Indian and he'll smile and have a gleam on his eye, and I feel also something towards him. And my wife says, "There goes your brother." I says, "Yes." "He thought you were your brother, remember?" (laughs) "Yes." But Guadalupe was mostly, I would say that when I knew it, about 70% Indian -- Yaqui Indian -- and the rest were Hispanic.

SOLLIDAY: Now, you said your father was Yaqui?

CHAVARRIA: Yeah, Yaqui Indian.

SOLLIDAY: So did he really have ties with people there?

CHAVARRIA: Oh yes! When he went there, he felt good being with Rodriquez, the one that played with him. And he knew the Sotos, he knew others. He knew a TREMENDOUS amount of people in Guadalupe. But the reason that we didn't find out 'til later that we were American Indian was that due to

the discrimination of races. The Indian was looked down upon, like today. And Dad didn't want us to suffer through any of that. So he would always say that he was a *Mexicano*. *Mexicano*, you know, is you come from the Mexican race. *Mexicano-Americano*, that's what they said -- Mexican-American. And due to that, I feel that that is why we were not discriminated [against], that Dad, in his way, and Mom, foreseen this, and they got away without saying who they were, really, of what race, until I started to doing genealogy work. That's when I discovered that we were from the American Indian. And also I have discovered where my forefathers came from, so I know the history of the American Indian prior to coming to America. And it has been proven by history that what I have uncovered is true. It's on records and archives and so forth. This is why we're now, Tony, my younger brother, and myself, we're working to where we get the Chavarrias registered as American Indians. One of my brothers resents it, but in due respect, what we're going to do is get myself and Tony registered, and if the other ones want to do it, fine. If not, they have that right. It all comes from my father.

SOLLIDAY: Yeah, you don't want to force anybody to be registered.

CHAVARRIA: Uh-huh. My mother was Apache, Chiricahua. So you see my mother being Chiricahua married my father, Apache Yaqui, it was still the Indian race there. You

know, the sons and daughters of Rita Moreno Chavarria -- that's when she married my father -- consists of my oldest brother, Roberto, then you have Rodolfo, you have Ramon, which is me, and you have Josephina, and then you have Antonio, so there's five. Chapito and all that, I have their genealogy, but they won't accept what I have uncovered, but I leave that alone. I just go by what the marriage of my father and mother. And I have the other information concerning also the third marriage of my father to Gilbert Montanez's mother, Margarita. My wife's name is Margarita also, so it's easy to remember her name! (chuckles)

SOLLIDAY: And what family was she [from], his third wife?

CHAVARRIA: Okay, my father's first wife was Dolores Amado. She had two brothers, and due to the Spanish conquest here in the United States, Amadoville is named, and it belonged to her family, the Amados. When she married Dad, why, she became a Chavarria. But all of my brothers due to that marriage, their middle name is Amado. So the lineage goes to that land grant, which it was. You know how Spain used to give land grants to faithful soldiers and so forth here in America? Well, this is how they became the owners of this land, through a land grant. But due to drinking, they both became alcoholics, little by little they sold the land, and they lost it. But the people that bought different plots of land maintained the name of Amadoville,

named after the family of my older brothers.

SOLLIDAY: Let's see, I wanted to go back to Guadalupe a little bit, because as I've talked to so many other people, nobody really seems to know much about Guadalupe, or do not really consider it the same as any of the other *barrios* that are a little bit further to the north.

CHAVARRIA: Yes. The reason for that was that the Hispanic has in a way been ashamed of their own race. And knowing that Guadalupe consisted more of the Yaqui Indian, they stayed away. So they -- what would you say? -- ostracized a barrio completely out. Yes, there were some of us that went to Guadalupe. I remember going with Dad, and going to the Soto Grocery Store and buying food. And Dad played every Sunday at this dance hall, and my brothers. Every Sunday, every Sunday for years and years. I learned how to dance to the latest music there at that place and so forth. Dad told me that the reason that *Mexicanos* -- he used to say *Mexicanos*, used the word a lot, *Mexicanos*, Mexicans, okay? -- he said that they were ashamed of their own race, they didn't want to mingle with the Indian, with the Yaqui, because then people would say that they were also Indian. So in order not to be discriminated by the Anglos in the town of Tempe, they stayed away, they stayed away. So this is one of the reasons that even Guadalupe today, you will find almost the same thing. The younger generation isn't. The younger generation today is buying homes that are

built in Guadalupe, so we have some of the. . . .

END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

TAPE ONE, BEGIN SIDE TWO

[Note: Beginning on Tape 1, Side 2, the tape quality gets bad. The tape begins to slip, causing the speed to increase and decrease unexpectedly, changing the tone of the narrator.]

SOLLIDAY: That's always been a little mystery about that.

CHAVARRIA: That is the reason why _____ Guadalupe. I went to Guadalupe, and I didn't feel any animosity to the people. The only thing that we used to do is gang fights, if you could consider gang fights, was the invasion. They protected their homes, their families. Mostly, it was concerning girls -- it STILL does. They didn't want our outsiders to come in and take the girls away, become boyfriends and later marry them. That's the reason these things still go around the Hispanic families. That they don't want outsiders, that they want people that have grown and gone to school together, and mingled together. They figure that this way, they know who they're marrying, from what family, and the same religion. A marriage is more successful if you marry within that religion, because if you marry out of the Catholic religion, the Protestant religion don't worship God the way the Catholics do, and so forth. Protestants don't have idol images, and so forth and so forth. So they feel that, one, if it's not a Catholic, you'll convert that woman to the Protestant faith, and they will lose, the church will

lose the daughter and the grandchildren from then on. They will be Protestant and they try to safeguard that. So this is one of the things that is very interesting in our history.

SOLLIDAY: There was a Methodist church in the *barrio* over on Eighth Street [now East University Drive].

CHAVARRIA: Yes, there was. Of course at that time I was Catholic. I'm a Mormon now -- they call us Mormon. Yes, we knew about it, and we stayed away. And we sort of -- what we called the *Catholicos*, the Catholics, the young *Catholicos* -- we used to beat up on those kids that went to church there. (laughs) We figured they were traitors. And that was very interesting about the people, but yes, we did. And then later on we had the _____ *apostolicos*, apostolics, and so forth. And then we started seeing the movement of churches also coming into *barrios*, you know, and so forth. But the one that we will always remember is Saint Mary's, which is [Our Lady of] Mount Carmen. I made my first communion there. I was also an altar boy there. So that's where I received my discipline, mostly, of what. . . . I give credit to the church today, because I remember that Father Green used to be the priest then, and he used to talk to us with a very loving voice and show us the mistakes we were making. Sometimes we were rowdy, sometimes we destroyed church property around before Mass, and so forth. And he taught us discipline. 'Cause

we went to communion, you know, going through school and learning the principles of the Gospel, of the Catholic Church there. He was very loving. That's why it's been years and years and I still remember his name, Father Green. I think that some of the people you have interviewed probably have mentioned him, Father Green. And that's where I have learned to be self-disciplined, you know. Plus, as an adult, your schooling, and then your other faith that you have joined, everybody says, "I'm a reborn Christian," and so forth. Everyone teaches good, all churches are good, I don't condemn anyone. The only thing that when I served two church missions, all I used to tell them is that we're bringing you MORE to what you have, and that was it -- MORE. And the reference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is to let ALL inhabitants of the world know that Christ came to America, and that the American Indian is a choice people. And that's what I try to do, to show the true history of the American Indian, that we are Jews, we come from the house of Manasseh. There are two tribes. There were twelve, but ten are hidden, and two are on the face of the earth, and we come through one of those tribes. And that's why I try to show that all the cities in the Americas that they have uncovered, why they are built in the same identical architecture of Egypt and Jews. And it's been proven. You know, a lot of people go to Mexico for that purpose, to

look at those pyramids and climb those pyramids. They're identical to the ones overseas that I mentioned. So we do have a history.

SOLLIDAY: Hm. Something else -- you mentioned this already a little bit -- was when you were a zoot suiter.

CHAVARRIA: Okay, this is one of the interesting points. One time we were watching -- this is just prior to -- no, it was during the zoot suit era, because it happened in December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. I was wearing my first pair of zoot suits, which we called "*pachucos*." Okay. In Spanish you used to say *pachucos*. The Anglo used to call it "zoot suit," and the blacks, "zoot suiters." But among us we were "*pachucos*." Our pants were tailor-made and our coats, tailor-made. Our pants were -- If I can recall -- they were 24 [inches] wide, from

the. . . . They were fitted tight on your upper part of your torso, and then they were wide on the bottom, and then they came all the way down. You see those now that a lot of kids are wearing with tennis shoes. Well, to us, those are *pachucos*.

SOLLIDAY: Yeah, it's like they've become popular again.

CHAVARRIA: Uh-huh, they come back, but they don't have that name. But they were all made of gabardine. We paid good money. Our coats were fitted, tailor-made. We called them finger-tip -- to the edge of your finger, that's where

your coat would come. Some wore hats, some of us, we didn't. The hairstyle was long hair, over the ear, and on the back it was formed into a duck tail. The way it would form into a duck tail, that the barber -- Al was one and Carabajal was one, and Juan Palma was another -- they would cut your hair short in the center on the back of your head, and then they would comb the hair TO the center from the sides. And it was so long that it would curl up and it formed like the tail of a duck. So we used to have duck tails, in other words. And then our shoes: we would buy new shoes and then take them to the shoe shop in Tempe and they would put an extra sole to where we had one-inch soles -- elevated shoes. (laughter) And that was the way that we did. Very rare did I see someone with all those chains that you see in the movies, you know. This was in Los Angeles, but not in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. We were. . . . We took pride in the way we dressed, in other words. Yes, we wore an outfit that the Anglo couldn't recognize, they were wondering what it was, you know, why all this. In other words, to me, I consider that the Anglos considered us as radicals, that we were going to overthrow principles that they had come up with, and that we had formed gangs for that purpose. But the gangs were the same gangs that were formed together through birth and companionship. When one had something that was new, everybody else would try it. And that's how some of

us. . . . There was not all the Chicanos. Not all the Chicanos were *pachucos*. Some of their fathers and mothers were very strict. They would beat them up or restrict them from participating in any activity in the *barrio*. So some of them did not wear *pachucos*. Harold Aceves is one in our *barrio* that did not wear *pachucos*. He always wore normal dress pants. But we never said nothing to him. That was his, you had a choice. We practice that free agency of doing what you want to do and wearing whatever you want to do. There wasn't a purpose of having "colors" like they do today, you know, gangs. No, it was just the way you wanted to dress. If you didn't have the money to pay for that type of clothing, you didn't wear it. Go fine with made up. You were accepted as one of the guys. The outfit didn't count for that. We . . . I would say that we had a love, and we still have that love that we have had. That we all grew up together and we looked at each other mostly as brothers and sisters. And it was real good that some of us women and guys, when they hug at the dance, would tell me, "I love you, Mochie," you know, "I love you." It's a feeling that, you know, you probably have felt that feeling from your loved ones too. You know, when they give you that love, you feel it. And that's the way that it happened to me, and that's the way it happens to them. We still have this little unity among us. And then, well, it's bringing us closer and closer to the *Amigos de Tempe*

function. This love and friendship that we have from our youth and all that. But one of the starring events that I can tell you during the zoot suit era was that Lucio Lopez and myself, we snuck unto the swimming pool and we went swimming, and we didn't have anything to do afterwards, so we wanted to create a little havoc (chuckles) downtown, to get people aroused. So what we did, we took our clothing off, completely naked, and folded our clothes and our tennis shoes that we had, underneath our arm, and we ran from West First Street where the Tempe Bridge is all the way to Tenth Street through the center of town! (laughter) And this was in 1941. It was almost in the last days of December when we did that, in fact, I recall. And we were talking about it at the function that, actually, we were the first streakers that streaked through a town. We'd seen streakers, later on, even on TV, because I happened to be watching this event on TV of the Oscar presentation, and a streaker went by. And my wife was startled. She said, "Why that's terrible what he did!" I said, "Well, let me tell you," I said, "he's not a first." She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Lucio and Johnny and I, we did this in our youth through the town of Tempe." (laughter) And people found out that we did, and that's why they consider us as trouble-makers. We were doing things that we weren't supposed to do. But that's the thing that I remember most of what you asked me about certain events.

SOLLIDAY: So in a way it's. . . . Well, you talk about a lot of things that you and some of your friends would get into a lot of trouble and different things, but it wasn't like today, _____.

CHAVARRIA: No, it's no way whatsoever. One of the things that when we had difficulty with one another, well, say for instance if I was after a girl in the *barrio*, you know, trying to take her to the movies or to the dance or just to flirt, and another person from that *barrio*, another youngster from that *barrio* had eyes for her and he was still doing the same thing -- you know, going after her, too -- yes, we would encounter. But you know what? We would iron it out with words, try to explain how things had happened. Now if one of us got a little belligerent, the other one stood his ground. And we wouldn't fight like they do today. It was all clean fights, just between those two. Nobody would enter. And whenever one of us would give in to the better man, we would shake that individual's hand and have respect for him, and we would never encounter that person again. It was settled once and for all, right there. You knew exactly that you must stay away from that girl. So due to that fact, I went through a lot of encounters! (laughs) And so did the other guys. But that was good, we respected each other. Now, when the *pachuco* era came in, what we used to do is, we had captains and lieutenants, and they would meet with the other captains

and lieutenants of the other town, like Mesa, and we would set the hour to encounter. We would set the rules of what to use and what not to use. If one gang didn't want to use your feet, because at that time -- Chicanos are what *pachucos* are called today, but Mexican-Americans or Americans of Mexican descent -- some did prefer to use their feet. There were a lot of us that were good. When I was little, I could have knocked your glasses off of your face with my left foot, before you could even throw a punch. I was fast. I was considered to be fast with my leg. I did a lot of injury to people's noses and mouths and throats. And there were others the same way. Some were good with bicycle chains. We had bicycle chains wrapped with tape, with leather, like a string on that so we could put it in our hand and grab it like this, so in case somebody grabbed it, they could never yank it away from us. Those chains were used on the inside of our shirt, where the belt goes on the pants, underneath there, so nobody could tell if you had a chain or not. And if it came to an encounter, and the other person pulled out a knife or a chain, he just comes up with a bottom one, and pull that chain out. So that's how I prevented a lot of fights also. The fights were clean. The fights were clean. They would stand -- like on the Rendezvous Park, we had three encounters _____ with *pachucos* there, besides Guadalupe and Phoenix and here in Tempe at the swimming

pool. But each gang would line up on this side, and we just walked towards each other, because you already knew that there wouldn't be no chains or knives, but everything was going to be strictly on fists. And when it was over, you went your way again, and then you went home. I often wonder today what accomplishments we did! (laughter) Because there was no accomplishments, because sometimes in two weeks, somebody'll come up, "Let's go at 'em again," and we went at each other again, and so forth. It was clean, not like today -- they have guns, knives, and beat up on old people and all that. We were taught different. We were taught that an elderly person is supposed to be respected, and _____ be taken care of and loved and given all the protection that one can. I still have that in me. But nowadays it's not. It's too much parent abuse. Parental abuse in the communities. Now they're called communities, not *barrios* -- they're called communities. But that's what I remember about the *pachucos*. We danced to the music of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, _____, Carmen Caballero, Fred Estrada -- all those. "In the Mood" was one of our best. "In the Mood." (laughs) Everybody, when they play "In the Mood". . . .

(tape turned off and on)

You will notice that even at the dance, everybody dances. And to me, they're all good dancers, because that was the activity of the week, to get together as youngsters and

dance at the Daniels' home. And then on Sundays we used to go to the Melendez's in Mesa, or Riverside Ballroom. So those were the areas that we mostly went to, to dance. And yes, during the *pachucos*, we had Hispanics who were really good dancers. I mean, they could flip the girls up and down and through the legs. I mean, showmanship, to show your skill as a dancer. And we had such an individual in Phoenix that nobody could dance, compared to him, and that was Porky -- we used to call him Porky because he was sort of a little chubby -- and his sister, Mary. They came from *Barrio de las Milpas*, which still exists. They were the best, nobody could outdance them. And on the mambo, Maria Madrille was the best in Riverside. No, in the Calderon Ballroom she danced to the music of my brother. There was no woman that could beat her dancing. So there has been some that we have known for their talent, you know: music, cement layers. We know who has been a professional in their skills, who have professionals in every facet of labor. And whenever we got some one of those individuals to do something for you, you could consider it to be done professionally. So those were some of the things I do remember.

SOLLIDAY: Now during that time, was there any reaction from the Anglo community? And especially I think with the *pachucos*. It's something that's different.

CHAVARRIA: Oh yes! You could see the prejudice then,

really. Some, if we went downtown, walking to another *barrio*, and we would meet an Anglo, they looked upon you like you were dirt. Some Anglos would even -- the older ones -- would, as we passed like this, they would hit us in the ribs or something, to show their disgust with us. But we never retaliated. We never retaliated. We never said nothing to them, so we wouldn't create a fight within our own little city. We accepted what they were doing that, yes, to them we were outsiders. They accepted that the town was theirs, that Tempe was an Anglo town, Anglo run, and Hispanics had no business there except to go and get groceries and clothing or for whiskey, and then move out. The Tempe College Theater, the first one that was next to the fire station: we had to sit in the front rows. Can you imagine sitting in the front six rows and looking up at a big screen? That's where they used to sit us. If you sit half-way or on the back or something, the usher would come in and tell you either you move to the front or go out. So most of us, we used to sit up there on the back. Swimming pool the same way. On jobs, on jobs downtown, it was a taboo for a Hispanic to go looking for a job. Those were for Anglo kids. That's why my father, as you notice on the tape, I said that one of the obstacles of my father was that he told me that I would be wasting my time going to look for a job downtown. I wouldn't get any. Yes, there WAS a lot of discrimination. But we learned to

overcome it, we found ways to overcome it. Like on the swimming pool. A lot of us, instead of waiting to go and swim those two hours, we took to the canal. We swam. A lot of us took to the river. We played. . . . You may not believe it, as a youngster we played from Tempe all the way to Phoenix, through the river. Yeah. Swimming and walking, swimming and walking. And at that time the water was so pure that if we got thirsty, we drank water from the river. And if we got hungry, we ate what we called *vero* [watercress]. I don't know, they named the *Mexicanos* from Tempe *comevero* [one who eats watercress]. It's a green leaf.

SOLLIDAY: Like the watercress?

CHAVARRIA: Yeah, uh-huh. We would eat that as food. So we became known as the *comeveros*, for people from Mesa and Phoenix. *Comevero*. We were talking about it Saturday night, Irene [Hormell] and Clara [Urbano] and I. We were talking about *comeveros*. But we enjoyed it. We learned to overcome things. We didn't hold Anglos -- what would you say? -- in our minds that they were doing this deliberately or whatever. We accepted that their ways were different than ours, and we learned to do things OUR way, to where we did not interfere with THEIR way of life. You know what I mean? Later on, as we went to school and we grew older in age, we started to intermingle. And this is the individual that changed the tide, changed the tide in Tempe, that

Hispanics were no better than Anglos, everybody was equal. And that's when things started to change. The schools were. . . . Danny Rodriguez, _____ school, and I forgot the other individual who also fought for entry into schools. Danny was concerning the swimming pool, if I can recall, and so forth. There were some that did their thing to help out. This is one of the things that still goes on today. When Danny and the other individual -- I forgot if it was Escalante or who -- I can't remember -- but I know Danny Rodriquez. The whole *barrio* was behind him 100%, but when we went to court for his hearing, he was all alone. The same thing exists today. That's why I was telling you that now that I have been asked twice to run for the Congress of the United States, I have gone through this, campaigning for other Hispanics in San Diego, and the same thing consists of, you have their support, but at the day of voting, nobody shows up. The Hispanics lose. But if it wasn't for that, if there was unity, you would have Hispanics in all cities, all facets of the government, because of the majority. But it still exists, it still exists. Why? We haven't been able to find out, but maybe some day we will.

SOLLIDAY: Because I always get the impression that Danny Rodriguez -- it was almost . . . he was on his own.

CHAVARRIA: He went that morning. How do you think that Danny must have felt, to have the people supporting,

encourage him and everything, and he gets all the information he can together, compiles it to make his presentation, and he goes to the courtroom, and he starts looking, and none of his people from the *barrios* were there. And then the judge calls him to make his presentation. He made such a wonderful presentation that he won!

SOLLIDAY: Was he suing the City?

CHAVARRIA: Yes, I think he was. I can't recall what it was, but he was left alone. I think Clara Urbano, when that piece of paper specified what _____ he went on, and so forth. He must have felt very lonely. When he walked out of there, he must have really walked out with a lot of bitterness, because Danny moved away from Tempe. And some of us, I don't know who may know where he's at. But he was one of the heros, another individual, really heros, when prejudice and discrimination was practiced in Tempe by the Anglo-Saxons.

SOLLIDAY: _____ really open up the [Tempe Beach] swimming pool for everybody.

CHAVARRIA: Yes, it opened up the educational field. Then Tempe natives could go to Tempe Grammar School. Now Tempe Grammar School was not a teachers' proving ground. The Tempe Eighth Street School, where all the Mexicans went, all the college students who wanted to become teachers went to Tempe Eighth Street School. The books that they had at

Tempe Eighth Street School were used books, obsolete books. Tempe Grammar School had _____ and so forth. Anything that came new, we received _____, that educational book. And the ones that we were using, they were put just in boxes, and Mr. H. A. McKemy, the principal of Tempe Eighth Street School [actually, the Tempe Grammar School, or "Tenth Street School"], would tell us to deliver this to Mrs. Roberts, who was the principal at Tempe Eighth Street School [which was the segregated school for Hispanic children]. So the reasons why you will find a comparison at that time that the Hispanics and Anglos that went to Tempe Grammar School were more educated than the ones in Tempe Eighth Street School. Because the Tempe Eighth Street School, when I was graduating, they were actually graduating not from the eighth grade like from the regular [school], they were graduating of books of history that belong to the seventh grade. They were one year or two years behind. And that, as you can see, in the teachers. And the teachers were, like I told you, teachers were assigned by the college there through the district to correct up their skills, to learn their skills in teaching. So this is why you find a lot of Hispanics out in the *barrios* that went to Tempe Eighth Street School still are educated, yet you get that. . . . As you grow older and mingling with different people, you get _____. But as far as history, geography, all of that, math, and all that,

you find that there aren't too many. The only one that was sharp was a man, _____. He was white, he looked like an Anglo. He was a whiz. I mean, he could read one page and almost describe it to you word-by-word. He could have been somebody in Tempe. He could have been a mayor, a lawyer, or a judge because he was that smart. My wife says that I don't give myself credit, but my first _____ was Anglo.

END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

CHAVARRIA: . . . on the seventh grade and the eighth grade, and we had plans of going to high school and marrying. Well, I used to stop at their home, and the judge started to teach me law. And that's why I know what I know. He used to explain things to me. He took a liking to me, and I respected his daughter. I never took advantage of his daughter at all. We knew certain guys used to take advantage and they'd tell us, "Do this, do that," but to us it was a disgrace, to disgrace a family, to disgrace yourself. And this is where all of a sudden I met my wife. My father sat down with me and told me that it was a gentleman's obligation that when the parent knew that you were looking for marriage to their daughter, that if you couldn't marry, be man enough to go to the mother and father and explain the reason why you couldn't. And I did that. And the judge -- I always will remember -- that

he got out from his chair, came towards me, and when I seen him coming towards me, I thought he was going to hit me. I mean, you know. . . . [Put his] arm around me, and told me that he really appreciated what I had done. And he said, "You are a gentleman." And though Noel was hurt, I always had great admiration for her, because she did want to accomplish a lot of things. But the one that made me for what I am, and I have to give credit, I will never forget her, was Elizabeth Hampton, my fifth-grade teacher. She is the one that took time, on her own, to teach me, and I was always ahead of the class. Due to her, I was advanced, higher up. And still, even though I was in the eighth grade, she always made it a point to ask me questions in the hall, to see if I knew. And if I didn't, she would tell me, "Read page so-and-so in your history book." She wouldn't tell me [the answer], she would just give me the page, and I'd go and look it up. And that's where I had the answer that she asked me.

SOLLIDAY: She's still around. She's in the museum here sometimes.

CHAVARRIA: Is she?! Do you know her address?

SOLLIDAY: I'm not sure. I think I might have a phone number for her.

CHAVARRIA: Well, if you have her phone number, I'd like to have it, because the motivation that I have had, and I still have that, is from her, that she took the time to

teach me that. She took the time for me to grow in that knowledge. Maybe she see something that I didn't see, but I cannot give nobody credit -- I cannot give my motivation of advancing in life to what I am now to nobody except her. She has been my role model ALL these years. And to me, it would really be an honor to go see her and talk with her, because I hold her very dear to my heart. And my wife knows it. She says, "You ought to make it a point to go see her before she passes away. And maybe talk to her about things that you have done and this and that, what you have accomplished and so forth." That little thin boy with suspenders and shoes that were so worn out on the front and soles on the back that he used to put cardboard. And she was the one that stayed with me. I had one of her teachers at Tempe Grammar School. Yes, I figure I was abused, because at that time I resented an Anglo whipping Hispanics more than him. So I will always jumped to that rescue. And because of that, I would go through the spanking machine, a human line with belts, and after that they would take me down to the boiler room where they had a spanking machine, and finish it off. I had one teacher, Pop Holdeman, slap me. He slapped me because I had a fight with Frank Skousen. That was his name, I still remember. And I was deprived from giving the speech on graduation because of that. I had already been selected, I had already practiced my speech and everything, and just three

days prior to that, due to the fact that I did that in playing soccer, that I pushed Frank, Pop Holdeman called me outside and he got mad and slapped me. Well, I resented that, but it taught me something, that you have to respect policies of the institution you're in, and I was in violation of it, and it disappointed him, because he told me that later, on graduation night that we graduated. He told me that it really hurt him to do that, but he wanted me to learn a lesson, and I did learn that lesson, and I taught that lesson to my children: Never, never to hit a teacher, or never to argue with a teacher, to accept that you are wrong and admit it, and go from there.

SOLLIDAY: So you had moved out of Tempe before the *barrios* were actually torn down?

CHAVARRIA: No.

SOLLIDAY: Was that happening already?

CHAVARRIA: I moved out in September of 1954. When I left, we still had the *Barrio Swimming Pool*; the Creamery -- *[Barrio de] May*; and a part of Mickey Mouse and part of *Colegio*, to this end. When I came back, those were gone. When I came back to visit, they were gone. But in 1961, I came back in '58 to '61, well, I wasn't too in touch with the *barrios* because I moved to Phoenix, and moved to 35th Avenue and Thomas. And from there, I went back to San Diego. But Lucio Lopez; Olivia Bracamonte; Paul, my brother, Pablito; Mary Barriga. Mary Barriga knows quite a

bit of the *barrios*. They know just about when everything was demolished -- in other words, when the college bought and they moved out and the houses were torn down and everything. She knows more about it than I do. I've only seen when they started to buy the homes, how it affected the people. You heard people crying. A lot of Hispanics didn't know what to do. They thought that the world was coming to an end because they would lose their identity with each other and all this, that the college was doing an injustice to them and so forth. Why didn't they do it towards the other side of Apache, where the Anglo lived?! Why do away with the community? Well the City of Tempe never got together with the Hispanic community to notify them that there were certain things that would be coming in the future, that the City had engineers, and they were mapping and surveying different parts of the city where certain things would be built and so forth. They never let us know. They just came to the door and said that the college was going to buy that land. Sooner or later you had to sell, but the college was making you this offer: take it or leave it. You had no choice. The Hispanics have no choice but to sell and get out.

SOLLIDAY: It'd already been decided long beforehand.

CHAVARRIA: Yes, it had already been decided. To me, that was a great injustice done by the City, the City Council, and the university -- that they disregarded and

disrespected the rights of the Hispanics here in Tempe. And to me, I think that that is why a lot of us can recall a lot of this memory, because of the hurt that has been inside of us.

SOLLIDAY: Yeah, I know from talking to so many people it almost seems that the two things which people feel most strongly about usually is the swimming pool -- not being allowed to swim in the swimming pool -- and ASU coming and taking all of these people's houses. (CHAVARRIA: Yes.) These are the strongest feelings, that after 40 years people will not forget these.

CHAVARRIA: Let's put it this way, Scott, so you may understand it a little better: How would you feel to get a knock early in the morning on the door, and they come and serve you with a paper that the City or the college is offering you so much for your home, and they're giving you so many months to get out. How would you feel?

SOLLIDAY: I would be quite upset.

CHAVARRIA: Sure you would! And this is the upset that the people from the *Barrio al Central*, which is the college, the largest of the barrios, because they didn't do that to US at West First Street. Later on, the *Barrio La Cremeria* was bought to a certain location and so forth. Some of those homes and some of those people still live there, from what I heard. Matter of fact, I plan to take a drive through there today and see, because I lived in two

barrios. I lived in three, as a matter of fact, but the railroad section was not known as a *barrio*, because it belonged to the railroad. We called it *El Barrio de la Sección*. It had nothing to do with the other. But I lived in *Barrio de Swimming Pool*, which was First Street. And then when I married in 1945, I went into the service, and when I came out from the service, I moved in with my in-laws. I stayed with my in-laws in *La Cremeria*. And then there was one of the apartments there next to them that became vacant, and my wife and I, we rented that. And we stayed there for quite a while and eventually we moved to Phoenix from there, and then from Phoenix to San Diego. But I was there in those *barrios*. Matter of fact, on our wedding night -- or wedding day -- we got married at two o'clock by Judge Westphal in Phoenix. It was just to go get married and that was it. My wife was eighteen, I was eighteen. Lucio Lopez was my witness, and Dahlia Montanez was the other witness, which we called *niños, niña and niño*. To our surprise, when we came back home, the front of the house was full of kids from the *barrios*. (chuckles) So my mother-in-law started to cook chicken with chili, make tortillas to start feeding them, and to bring sodas. And somebody went and got some beer for the older ones. And by nightfall, by eight o'clock at night, people were on the street. And it was raining. And we didn't have enough room to get them all in, but they were still there to pay

honor to my marriage. And I will never forget that, that on my marriage night, when we were getting ready to go and spend our honeymoon at the Casa Loma Hotel, I seen all of these friends, Scott, they were coming and hugging me, all wet, and I was just starting to get wet. But they were soaking wet! Girls! You know, I feel for it. That's a friendship that we have today. They didn't care about the rain, they cared about being at Mochie's wedding -- Margie and Beko's wedding. They wanted to be there to celebrate my happiness with me. It gets me a little bit emotional, because those are the memories that I will never forget. That's why I have offered to help you and Clara, Irene and Rudy and the rest of the committee in anything that I can do to help, because to me, this is my way of repaying them back, what THEIR fathers did, what others have done for me. And this is the only way that I can do it, is to give you this personal interview and to give permission for you to use as you will, into the history books or make a recording for your presentations inside -- it's there. And I felt very honored to have gone through all of this. I will always cherish this memory. I know I have been progressing in life, but still I give credibility to my ways of discipline and respect and honor, to all these families, because I used to hear them discipline their children. And sometimes I was in the bunch when they disciplined, so I learned from it.

SOLLIDAY: This concludes the interview with Ray Chavarria.

END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO