

Ethnic Oral History Project, 1977-1978

Fresno Historical Society

Andres Jimenez

Andres Jimenez, "a Spanish-speaking senior citizen of Selma, California," was interviewed on November 23, 1977. He was born in El Rey [Sonora], Pinal County, Arizona on November 21, 1918. He was one of ten children with four brothers and five sisters. Andres was born during the 1918 flu epidemic where his mother was the only well person in the household. When the health inspectors came, Andres' mother told them "No, nobody is sick." for fear that the family members would be taken away. Andres' father came to Texas from Mexico in 1910 as an orphan of about 14 years old with two younger siblings to support. Andres describes the prejudice his father faced in Texas as a Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant. His father was illiterate and he worked as a miner in Arizona. Andres' family and a few other families left Arizona and settled in Corona, California near Riverside and his father began working for a German with an orange orchard. Andres' older sister went to work at the California Sunkist Packing Company. Andres' father bought a lot and built his own house. To supplement his income, they would cut down the old orange trees and sell the wood. Andres describes the discrimination the Mexicans and Italians faced in Corona.

In the summer, Andres and his family would go to the San Joaquin Valley to pick grapes. During the Depression, when Andres was about 12, the family struggled to find work. The family picked peas on the coast as far north as Fort Bragg. In 1937, they bought a car and a trailer so they could more easily follow the harvest. Andres' family would regularly team up with other Mexican families for support and protection. The family eventually joined Andres' older brother in Coalinga who had become a foreman at a cotton ranch. Andres' left school after eighth grade and, along with several of his older brothers, began working in irrigation.

Tired of working long hours for low wages, Andres joined the Army just before March 1940. Andres describes his first few weeks in the Army, including basic training in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He became a mechanic and truck driver. He was about to be released from his 1 year service when WWII broke out and they froze discharges. He was part of the invasion of Africa and Algiers for a year, and the invasion of Italy for 3 years. Andres discusses discrimination and segregation in the Army. He returned to his family's small ranch in Selma and worked as a mechanic. It was difficult to get car parts and repairs were delayed several months. In 1952, he began his own auto repair shop. Andres describes the Mexican community and businesses that developed in Selma after the war. He describes going to Fresno's Chinatown for supplies twice a month with his family. In later years, Andres became involved in the *Sociedad Progresita* and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Interviewer: Lucia Cabral
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FRESNO CITY AND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INTERVIEW WITH ANDRES JIMENEZ

264-8317

NOVEMBER 23, 1977

Andrew Vallejo

Phone 237-5987

Today is Wednesday, November 23, 1977. I, Lucia Cabral, am interviewing Mr. Andres Jimenez, a Spanish-speaking senior citizen of Selma, California.

*Jimenez
age 59*

*Monte
old*

Miss CABRAL: Mr. Jimenez, where and when were you born?

JIMENEZ: I was born in Arizona in 1918 in Pinal County, and the town was El Rey. Now they call it Sonora. It was a mining town and my dad was a miner. He worked with the engineer, putting in pipe lines, wood and whatever they did in the mines. During 1918- that was right after World War I- that's when the epidemic hit. I don't know if you ever heard of it. They called it the flu, and a lot of people were dying all over the place. They didn't have any doctors. Some of the doctors that were there were more or less, instead of helping the people, killing them, to get rid of the epidemic. You couldn't even go out on the streets. According to my mother, everyone was sick in her house, and she was expecting me. She was the only person in her house able to get around. She used to keep the house clean and everything, because inspectors used to come around every morning to check to see if anyone was sick. She used to tell them, "No, nobody is sick." Because the rumor was that if they found anyone sick that they would take them to the hospital or something, and got rid of them. So right after that I was born. I was born on November 21, 1918, and I was born on a payday. My godfather remembered that real good. He said, "This guy is going to be real lucky because he was born on payday." About six months after that there was an accident in the mine, and my godfather got killed. At that time, my dad's, my godmother, and other families, my dad's brother and his wife used to stick together. They were kind of like a little society of friends. If one left the county, they all took off too. We all came to California. We ended up in Corona; that's close ~~to~~ to Riverside over by Los Angeles. Some of them went to La Habra, and we stayed in Corona. My dad started working there. He met a German who had an orange orchard. He started working for him. ~~He was very~~ conservative,

my Dad was very conservative

*Mr.
Briggs*

he didn't even know how to read or write. All he could do was sign his name. But he was very smart. Because in Mexico my dad used to be a carpenter and a mason, but just by sheer knowledge that he learned. But, he never went to school because he was an orphan. He was very young when he was an orphan; I think thirteen or fourteen years old. He had a sister and a younger brother, and he had to take care of both of them. So then he came to the United States—I think that was in 1910 when he came. He worked in Texas for the railroad. Texas, at that time was very bitter against the Mexican people. If you were of Mexican descent, you couldn't even get a haircut or eat in a restaurant. They would serve you, but you'd have to go to the kitchen. My dad was part German. He was light, he had green eyes; you couldn't even tell that he was Mexican. But still they did, because he couldn't speak English. So they discriminated. ^{Him} When we came to California, my dad started working for this man. ^{my mom} Then my oldest sister started working in a packing house. ^{my sister} Then this ^{got a job for him} man that my dad worked for, got ~~me~~ my job in the packing house also. Sunkist, California Sunkist Packing Company, there in Corona. We had a house there dad made, made it himself. He bought a lot and made his own house. The only problem was that there was too many of us. I have four brothers and five sisters, and that was kind of a burden at that time for a man to support so many kids. My dad ^{Bowl} out of an old "model T", made a saw, and his boss used to pay him to cut down the old trees. After he would pay him to cut them down, he would give my dad the wood. So he cut wood and we'd sell wood. We cut it in the afternoons. When we got out of school, ^{the} we used to cut wood and stack it up in ties and we'd sell it. We had a couple of goats and a cow and a horse. My dad had a carriage; at that time we didn't have a car. We lived very nice there; we didn't have ~~any~~ problems. The only problem we had was that there in Corona, in town, they were very discriminating. We'd go to the movies and they'd separate all the Mexican people to one side. There was no colored people in that town, only Mexicans and a lot of Italians. At the park, they had a swimming pool, and the only time they'd let the Mexican

My dad name was Manuel Jimenez

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JIMENEZ

My let the
Mexican grow

people or the Italians or other races go swimming in there ^{was} the first day before they drained the water out of the pool- when it's all dirty already. We had some bad times. In the summertime, we used to come to Del Rey and to Selma to pick grapes. The foreman in the grapes knew that my dad had a lot of family and that he needed a little extra money seeing that we were many. They used to give him permission for the grape season so we could come and work over here during the grapes and make a little extra money, for our school clothes and that. To help out, you know. During the depression we had to leave. My dad sold, he had a house and then he made another house. He sold everything and we moved to Burrough. We came to Burrough; there was no work. But he had a compadre there who was kind of a contractor. They fixed a barn up and they made a kind of a house for us there in the barn. He gave us a little work there; it wasn't much work to do anyways. They used to prefer all Anglos at that time. It was pretty hard to get a job if you were a Mexican at that time. They payed 10¢ an hour. But we managed. We worked there, the younger ones were going to school. We started ^{to} and we worked; if there was no work, we'd go some other place. We'd go to the coast, we'd go to Nacoma, Santa Maria, and all over, all the way up to Fort Bragg, to pick peas. ^{Nacoma} My dad bought a car- it was a 1937 and had a trailer. We had a tent. He used to go set up camp, out of old boxes or crates, whatever he could find to make a little kitchen. I remember one time we were in Half Moon ^{my} Bay, and we went there to pick peas. It was raining, it just ^{mother} rained and rained for two weeks. We didn't have anything to eat, ^{man} nothing. The wood was wet, what little wood my dad and us kids would go out in the hills and gather. ^{was valley} We didn't even have any ^{tehuca} money for gasoline to even go to town. My dad was real industrious. There was a place there that some Japanese people had. ^{Jimenez} They raised flowers and vegetables. My dad just went down there ^{she was} to help, never asking for a job. He just went down there and ^{Spanish} helped them. They didn't pay him or anything, but at night they ^{French} would give him potatoes, peas, lettuce and vegetables. And then ^{my} my dad would go to town and maybe buy a pound of hamburger or some- ^{last} thing.

Then he'd ask the butcher, "Do you have any bones for my dog?" Sure, they'd give him a big bag of bones. (Laughing) We had a little tiny dog; she didn't eat very much. But, those bones used to make real good soup with all those vegetables, I'll tell you. Finally, about two or three days later, they gave my dad a job. It wasn't very much, 20¢ an hour. Then they asked if he had any small children? He said, "Yes". They said, "Why don't you bring them down here to work?" Because they raised flowers. With those flower beds, you can't have big boned people working on them with a hoe or anything. So they needed children, small children to get into the flowers and pull all the weeds by hand. So, the whole gang got out there working, fog and all. Worst than now. You could feel it, almost like rain. That fog was so thick. From there we went up North, because of the other compadre of my dad. Like I tell you, we used to stay in groups. Two or three families together most of the time. That way it was some kind of protection; if somebody didn't have any money or something, the other one would help out. It was like a group that hung together all the time. They weren't working there or nothing so he said, "Compadre, let's go up to the peas?" Well, my dad didn't really want to go, because we were doing all right there, we were working. Then my dad said to my mom, "What are we going to do?" She said, "Well, we just can't leave them. We're always together, and they want to go over there because they're not working. We can't leave them alone." So we tore the tent down, we go up north to pick peas. The peas finished; then we finally went up to Coalinga. My older brother had a job there. When we went on the road, he was already working there in Coalinga. He started there irrigating land and cotton. Pretty soon he became a foreman. So, we came back and I started irrigating; my other brother started irrigating, my younger brother, well, he was still in school. I quit going to school, well, I just barely made the eighth grade. It was just going to school here and there, jumping around from one school to another. I never really got a good education. So we were there in Coalinga. We stayed there because they had a camp. Still in the summers, we used to come and pick grapes. In 1939 I was working, irrigating for my brother over there. At that time, they were drafting, and they called me in.

I passed my examination, that was a little before March of 1940. I had a 1932 Chevrolet. I got in trouble. They gave me a ticket there in Coalinga because I was speeding. I didn't have any money, so I went to see the judge. I told him, "I don't have any money to pay the ticket." I only had \$10.00. The ticket was \$20.00. He said "Are you working?" I said, "Yes, but I don't get payed, but every fifteen days." They used to pay me three dollars a day for twelve hours. You worked from six to six. In that time, (Laughing) you really worked for your money. So, I got disgusted. I had passed my test and everything for the army. So I went and told the recruiting office I was going to volunteer. They said to wait, that I was going to be drafted in July anyways. So I told them, "No, I don't want to wait. I'm just going to go in now." I told my brother. He said, "What do you want to go into the army for?" "I'm tired of working here, killing myself here every night, working in that cold, and getting all wet." He said, "Well, you still owe \$10.00 over there to the judge." I went to see the judge. The judge was an old man. I said, "I'm not working and I'm going to go into the army and I don't have the \$10.00 to pay you. You want to put me in jail, or you want me to mow your lawn or do some work for the \$10.00?" He said, "No, seeing as though you're going to go in the army, you're honest enough to come and tell me." He looked in the book and said, "We are just going to forget about your fine." There in Coalinga, there weren't too many Mexican people, so they used to treat Mexican people fairly nice. I mean decent. In March, 1940, I went in. My dad didn't want me to and my mother didn't either. So, they drove me all the way to Fresno. When I was getting on the train my dad said - My dad was very strict with us - he said, "Well, now that you insist in going to the army, good luck." And he shook my hand; he left me a ten dollar bill. My mother did too. I didn't get on that train. I was standing there and they were calling all the names of everybody. They kept mispronouncing my name. For some reason they kept saying something else. So, I was the last one there. He said, "What's your serial number? Aren't you 'Andrew V. Jaminez' or something?" "No, my name is Andrew V. Jimenez." "Well, you're the one; get in there." There were some ribbons, "Volunteer, Fresno County", and a box of raisins, different kinds of things they gave us. So we got on that train. Out of that whole bunch, I was the only Mexican. Every-

body was real happy; they had bottles of whiskey. At that time, I didn't even smoke or drink or anything. We were in Pullmans and I got in with this big man from Madera. He said, "Where are you from?" "Well, I'm from Coalinga. Where are you from?" "Madera," he said, "Well, we have the same bunk. Which one do you want?" I said, "Well, hell, you're bigger than I am, and it's going to be pretty hard for you to climb up to the top bunk. I think I'll take the top bunk." He said, "You know, that's real nice of you." He had a big old quart of whiskey. So I said, "Well, hell, why not!" So I took a shot of Whiskey and I almost gagged. (Laughing) Like to kill me. I was used to drinking a little beer or wine, but never whiskey. They took us to Sacramento. There they gave us our physicals and everything. They took us to Monterey Presido. There I had another problem. I was sitting out in the rain, and they couldn't pronounce my name. They didn't have any boots that would fit me. They didn't have any pants that would fit me. Nothing! All they gave me was a big overcoat. At least I had an overcoat. All I had was a thin suit. We slept there over night. The next day for breakfast, you know what they gave us? A boiled potatoe and a glass of milk. Now who the heck eats a boiled potatoe in the morning? (Laughing) I said, "Oh boy! If this is the kind of food they're going to serve me in the army, I can see that I'm not going to like it." I was sitting there with everybody talking and again they couldn't pronounce my name. Finally I got on the truck I said, "Where are we going?" Nobody knew. We got on the train and it was night, and I was still with the same guy 'cause his name started with an "H". They went in alphabetical order; that's the way they arrange you. Most of the time we were together because his name was "H" and mine was "J". We were going to Nevada. I said, "You know what, I think we're going to Arizona." He said, "Why?" "Look at all the sand." I had never seen snow before in all my life, except for here up in the mountains, but I had never even gone to the mountains. He said, "No, that's not sand, that's snow." I said, "Well, where do you think we're going?" "I don't know, but we're going north." So in Ogden, Utah, the train stopped for an hour. They let us out, but be back in an hour. It was at night, about ten o'clock at night. So, we got out there. I didn't have but \$20.00. We had already drank the bottle of whiskey. I was cold. The snow was

pretty deep. I said, "Do you think we ought to buy us a bottle of whiskey?" He said, "I think so." But I couldn't buy it, see, I wasn't old enough. We went to a liquor store; it wasn't very far from the train there. We bought a bottle of Seven Up and something. So nobody knew where we were going. We wound up in the morning in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The snow was just as deep. Oh my God, I liked to froze to death over there. We spent three months in Cheyenne on our basic training. They sent us from there to San Antonio, Texas. I was mechanically inclined, so I passed the test for mechanic. So there we were all training and also going to school. We were in the Quartermaster; that's what they used to call it. They needed truck drivers, because at that time the army was just starting to mobilize. So they needed all the machanics and truck drivers they could get at that time. I only joined the army for a year. See, the draft was only for one year. I was just about to get out when the war broke out with Japan, so they froze us. From San Antonio, to San Angelo, from there they sent us to New York. From New York, we went to Scotland. We stayed in Scotland for a little while, then went to England - Newport. From there, we got everything together and we invaded Africa. Stayed in Africa about a year. Then we went to Algiers. From Algiers we prepared all the equipment for the invasion of Italy. We invaded Italy. I think I was in Italy close to three years. We spent almost a year in Naples. Then we went from Rome to a town named Locarno. We stayed there till the end of the war. All together, I spent about five years in the army. When I came back home, I didn't even recognize my sisters. They were all big already. I hadn't seen anybody for five years.

CABRAL: Where did you settle when you came back?

JIMENEZ: When I came back, I came right here to Selma. Not in town, my dad owned a ranch here. Well, my brother still owns it. It's a small forty acres over here on Parlier Avenue. I came back and stayed with my folks. Then I got a job in Selma, working for Allan Chevrolet Garage. They needed mechanics pretty bad. They couldn't find nobody 'cause everybody was still in the service. My brother-in-law and I and some of the other guys were some of the first to get out of the service because we had so many points. We had a lot of points, a lot of invasions and everything counted.

You got so many points for everything you did. So, I got a job there; they didn't pay too much. They paid commission, 50% commission. There was a lot of work, but they couldn't get any parts. There were no new cars, no nothing. They had cars sitting there for two or three months because they couldn't get parts to fix them. But since we got out of the army in 1945, things started looking better for the Mexican people. But it took more than that, than just that. But at least you could get a job. If you had been in the service, you had a right to apply for a job, whether they gave it to you or not that was a different thing. You had a lot more privileges than we had before. I worked for Allen Chevrolet for four years. I always had my mind, on since I was in the army, of having a shop of my own. So I started building this shop that you see right there. In 1952, I started and I've been there since. More than twenty-seven years I've been there. That other house is my mother's house; she's dead now. She died in September, and my dad died about six years ago. What we have or what we made, we made out of our own because we wanted to get ahead. No other way. And we're still here.

CABRAL: Were there any Mexican leaders in the community?

JIMENEZ: I don't know. Like I tell you, I haven't lived in town. See I lived over here. We lived away from town. That's why I can't really tell you how things were in town for the Mexican people. Because we never lived in town. When we went to town, we only went for groceries.

CABRAL: When you said you went to town, what town was that?

JIMENEZ: Selma or Fresno.

CABRAL: How was Selma when you used to go?

JIMENEZ: Well, Selma was, to me it's always been about the same. There's always been discrimination. Selma has a lot of Mexican people. The Mexican people live in a separate area, they always have and they still do. But they're spread all over the place now. But, I never did pay too much attention. People weren't that friendly. They're a lot different now than they used to be before. But I, myself, never had any particular problems with the Anglos, really.

CABRAL: Did the town look the same?

JIMENEZ: The town, it hasn't changed very much, it's grown a lot.

Residential, and quite a few changes. But it hasn't really changed that much since 1945, when I returned.

CABRAL: How about businessmen, were there any Mexican businessmen?

JIMENEZ: Oh, yes, at that time, there was several businesses. One especially that I remember and is still there is Sal's Place. I don't know if you have heard of it, it's a restaurant, it's very famous for it's Mexican Food. People from not only Fresno, but all over come to eat there.

CABRAL: Is it owned by a Mexican, now?

JIMENEZ: Yes, it's owned by a Mexican.

CABRAL: Does it have the same owners?

JIMENEZ: Yes, his son has it. The old man is still there, but the son is running it. His mother is still making the tortillas. I don't know, they were there when I came, so I guess they were there before I ever came to Selma. There were several other places. Right now in Selma, I'll tell you, I think one-third of the business is owned by Mexican people.

CABRAL: Do you know if the business started before or after World War II?

JIMENEZ: Well, I think most of them started after World War II, but there were some businesses that were there before. There were several stores that were owned by Mexican people, grocery stores, and a couple of service stations were owned by Mexican people. That's about all I can remember as far as that.

CABRAL: Do you remember anything about Prohibition?

JIMENEZ: Prohibition, oh yes. I know there was a lot of bootlegging going on.

CABRAL: Was it easy to get alcohol?

JIMENEZ: Well, you had to know the people, but it wasn't hard to get alcohol. They called it "White Moon Wine" My dad used to make wine all the time.

CABRAL: Was this in Coalinga?

JIMENEZ: No, this was in Corona. No, when we lived in Coalinga, Prohibition was over already.

CABRAL: How was Coalinga?

JIMENEZ: Coalinga was a nice town, very clean, and the people there are very nice. We never realized that there was prejudice there.

Because there were very few Mexican people there, but the people there, well, as far as I'm concerned, they were all very friendly. I never noticed and I was already around eighteen years old. You'd go to the show, a restaurant any place, they never even noticed that you were a Mexican. If they did, they didn't care or they didn't bother to make you feel bad or anything. Coalinga is one of the towns- I haven't been there for many years-but, when I came back from the army, I still went over there and worked for my brother for about half a year. It was still the same just as good, like in the olden days.

CABRAL: When your family moved to Selma, did all the families move to Selma?

JIMENEZ: No, they were living in Coalinga, and then my dad bought his ranch. When he moved to Selma, my brother Paul stayed in Coalinga. He stayed in Coalinga even after I came out of the army. Actually, he lived in Coalinga till around 1954, something like that. My older brother, he was married and he moved to Richmond. He worked in the shipyard during the war. Then he started working for Stover Chemical Company; as a matter of fact, he retired from that company. He worked for that company many years. One of my sisters married too. And they moved to the coast. Her husband was a sailor. So she used to work in the shipyards with her mother-in-law. I think the only ones that came with my mom and dad was my younger brother and all my younger sisters. Then my older sister came and lived with us because they took her husband in the army too. When I came back, my younger brother was in the Navy. He went to North Fork, Virginia and he still is over there. He was a sailor and he's got a business over there. Right now he's working for the Navy, he's an electrician.

CABRAL: When you used to come and work in the fields here in Selma, how was it then?

JIMENEZ: It was a ball then. That's when you really had some nice times. Several of the families that came from down South, they had certain farmers that they worked for, and we'd come to a certain place every year. We'd stay there the whole season. Either we had a tent or a little shack or we'd make one of our own. At night we'd get together, everyone in camp, and make a fire and sing, drink some wine, and sing.

CABRAL: About what year was that?

JIMENEZ: In 1928, '29, '30.

CABRAL: Was that here in Selma?

JIMENEZ: Yes.

CABRAL: Did you used to go to Fresno then?

JIMENEZ: No, not very much. My dad had a car but he wouldn't loan it to us (Laughing). Del Rey, not in Selma actually, we worked in Del Rey, and the camp wasn't very far from Del Rey. It was only about a mile from the camp, so we used to walk down there. But at those times, even when we used to pick cotton down in Coalinga, after everybody would settle down at night, we'd make a fire. Almost everybody, you know Mexican people play the guitar and sing. We'd play games and sing and everything. People were more closer together, we used to have a lot of fun. Now, people don't even talk to each other anymore here in town. Everybody was really friendly, now everybody seems to go their own way. They don't have time to frolic with you anymore. I joined the Sociedad Progresita, I guess I've belonged to it for over fifteen years. I belong to the VFW, I was commander of the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars. Last year, I just finished being president for the Sociedad Progesita. We have plenty of members, not only the Sociedad Progesita but the VFW too. We have over 230 members, but sometimes they don't go enough to even hold a meeting. They don't seem to hold together for some reason or another. It's not like it used to be. They say that the old times were good. The old times, in a way, were very bad because we were poor I never knew what a bicycle was really. We didn't even have a radio or nothing. Didn't even have a home, really, just a tent. But, still I don't know; they were kind of happy times. I'm not really sorry that we went through that. Of course, now things are different. We have everything. If you don't have a television, you're not happy. You got to have heaters, you have to have cars, you have to have everything. Insurance, everything that you make goes out to something or another. But, still, we're a lot better off. One hundred per cent better off than we were before.

CABRAL: Did you know of anybody or did your father ever talk about any politicians who took an interest in the Mexican community?

JIMENEZ: No, not at those times. I don't think they did.

CABRAL: Did you know of anybody who was unfriendly?

JIMENEZ: There was a lot, but I couldn't name anybody personally. There was a lot of people. Like I say, you couldn't even get a job.

CABRAL: Did your parents tell you how the Mexican community reacted to the attack on Pearl Harbor since you were already in the service?

JIMENEZ: I don't know. All I know is that they didn't like it. Because even if the Anglo people didn't think that the Mexican people were American, all the Mexican people who were here, we were all very American. We all had very deep feelings, we still do, for our country.

CABRAL: Were there more Mexicans being sent to war or was it equal?

JIMENEZ: No, it was equal. There was a draft. From that draft, there was no discrimination. Even Mexican people who were here and didn't have papers, if they were called, they went. As a matter of fact, I remember, on the boat when we were going to Italy, a lot of the Mexican soldiers who weren't citizens were given the opportunity to become citizens without hardly any effort at all. All they had to do was to say the Pledge of Allegiance, and that was it. They became citizens. Although in New Mexico and Arizona most of the divisions were Mexicans and Indians because that's about all there is over there. But here in California, all the Mexican people were mixed with everybody else, except the colored people weren't mixed with us. All the colored people were in colored divisions. Like I say, Arizona and New Mexico, the majority of people were Mexican. So they were all in Mexican battalions, even the officers, colonels, and everything were all of Mexican descent. There they had Anglos mixed with them, because the majority in those states were Mexicans. So the Anglos had to mix with them. In certain battalions, most people were Mexicans. Here in California, we were all mixed; there was no distinction, oh, like in Los Angeles there were more people that went to a certain company or battalion. Still the Mexican soldiers stayed together; it wasn't because they were discriminated, it was just because that's the way they are. Me, I didn't have any problems of that kind because I was the only Mexican; there was 300 men in my outfit and I was the only Mexican out of the whole outfit. Besides nobody even thought I was a Mexican; they thought I was an

Italian. So, I never had no problems in the army.

CABRAL: How did the people used to travel from Selma to Fresno?

JIMENEZ: In cars, at times, "Model T" and "Model A's."

CABRAL: There was no other means of transportation?

JIMENEZ: Oh, there was a train. There's always been a train from Selma.

It used to be a passenger train. I never rode it, I mean we never used it because my dad always had a little old car.

CABRAL: Where did the Mexican people used to go when they went to Fresno?

JIMENEZ: Most of them at that time--the Mexican people--used to buy groceries. Like my dad and other people, they'd go every fifteen days and buy 100 pounds of beans, a 50 pound can of lard, a case or two of canned milk and canned goods. We'd buy plenty, you know, to last fifteen days. The reason they went to Fresno is because Fresno was cheaper. You could buy food there a lot cheaper than you could buy it in these little towns. And it was a treat for the whole family to go the Fresno. It was a big deal; we'd go to the show and everything. My dad used to treat us. It was something special; you going to Fresno was something.

CABRAL: Did you used to go to Chinatown or another part of Fresno?

JIMENEZ: Mostly all the people, when they went to Fresno, they went to Chinatown.

CABRAL: Was it the same?

JIMENEZ: No, Chinatown, at that time was a lot different. There were more Mexican stores, more Mexican business, the whole thing was a lot different. The last time I went there, it was nothing but a mess, it's all torn down. Before, Chinatown was very colorful. They used to have people, singing out in the streets, lot of drinking, and a lot of bars. But it was very colorful; Now it's a dump really. At that time, I tell you, it was a real treat to go to Fresno. We always used to look forward to it, especially when we used to live in Coalinga.

CABRAL: How long did it take you to get from Coalinga to Fresno?

JIMENEZ: Well, at that time, it would take us almost three and a half hours. Now it would probably take you an hour and a half. It's not very far from Coalinga to Fresno. But in those times the old cars only went about thirty miles an hour or so, well. Actually, I can tell you how long it used to take us. Because my mother and dad used to like to go to mass here in Fresno because mass was said in Spanish. We used to leave at four o'clock in the morning, and we

just barely make it for eight o'clock mass. It used to take quite awhile.

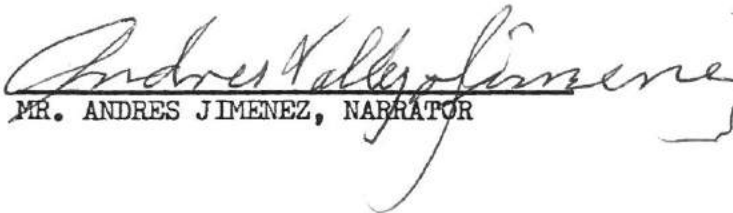
CABRAL: What did you think of this program of getting history from the people who remember the Mexican people's past?

JIMENEZ: Well, I think it's very nice because, like my own children, they don't hardly even speak Spanish at all. They understand a little bit and they're not interested. If you tell them, "Hey dad I want a new pair of boots and I want this." Hey wait a minute, you ought to remember when we hardly had enough to eat. "Ah, you're going to start that again." They don't realize, they don't think. They think that things have always been like the way they're right now, and that's one thing the younger generation should realize how things were with the Mexican people. Like have you seen that movie, The Grapes of Wrath? Well, you put the Mexicans in the same place and the Mexicans lived the same way, only the Mexicans had it a little worse. So it's good that this younger generation knows what these Mexican people went through. And what we contributed to this country too. Because they don't realize it, not even the Anglos or nobody realizes it, but the Mexicans have contributed a lot to this country. Besides it was our country in the first place; they don't seem to realize it. They think it's their country. It wasn't even our country, it belonged to the Indians. And they're being starved to death, and they're becoming extinct and everything! They are the owners of the land. They inherited the land and we took it away from them. And it's a pity that people don't realize the damages that we have done to these poor people and to all the people that are poor! They don't seem to think that they have any rights at all. Although it's not like it used to be, it's a lot better now. But you can still find some discrimination. Quite a bit, yet. (Chuckling) I imagine you know. But I think that something like this can teach not only the Mexican people, but even the Anglos that they can realize the kind of situation we were in at those times. Probably if you would talk to some of the people older than myself, they could probably tell you more, a lot more. That's the problem that a lot of them don't want to remember things like that. They don't want to talk about it either. It's hard to find old people that are willing to talk about it. Because some of

them can't hardly speak very good English anyways.

CABRAL: Well, thank-you very much for giving me your time and telling me your story.

only
"BY MY SIGNATURE, I MAKE THIS TRANSCRIPT AVAILABLE TO RESEARCHERS IN THE FRESNO CITY AND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES."


MR. ANDRES JIMENEZ, NARRATOR

3-28-78
(DATE)

LUCIA CABRAL, INTERVIEWER

(DATE)