

Elynor Whitaker
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Professor José Alamillo
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Final Project
English Translation of Isaiás Muro Interview

Isaiás Muro

Transcription

Name of the Interviewee: Isaiás Muro

Interview Date: May 9, 2010

Name of the Interviewer: Aron Pamatz

My name is Aron Pamatz. I am interviewing Isaias Muro and this interview is taking place in Saticoy, California.

AP: The first question that I am going to ask is, where and when were you born?

IM: I was born in Zacatecas on January 21, 1941.

AP: Now, tell me about your family and the place where you were born.

IM: My father we were 10, in the family there were 10 of us in the family. And my ranch was called Santa Rosa, García de la Cadena Zacatecas, it was part of the municipality of García de la Cadena Zacatecas.

AP: And what did your parents do?

IM: My parents were day laborers, they were day laborers. They used to plant corn, beans, sweet potatoes, potatoes, we used to plant all of that.

AP: Do you come from a large family?

IM: Yes, my family is large. I have many uncles, I used to have many uncles. My brothers and sisters we were 10.

AP: Where do your brothers and sisters live now?

IM: My my... I have a sister who's in Guadalajara, another one in Zacatecas, and my brothers live in Tepi, I have 2 brothers in Tepi and another one here in Mexicali.

AP: Tell me about when you went to school when you were a child?

IM: I didn't have much schooling but I did at least learn to read. Uh, there weren't many classes there in Zacatecas where I grew up. But then a teacher came and we started to go to school. I was about ... I think 10 years old something like that when I started going to school.

AP: Did you learn to read and write?

IM: I learned to read and write thank God and ... 'cause I had good grades but I couldn't continue in school anymore because ... on account of my father since I cooked for my dad because my mom died. And ... we were motherless orphans and we used to cook for my father and I couldn't go to school anymore, but I got up to the fourth grade there they didn't teach any others it was only up to the fourth grade.

AP: Did you work while you were going to school?

IM: I worked while I was going to school. We used to plant corn, beans, sweet potatoes and we used to pick (sic) corn in ... in November we would gather the harvest, I used to work all the time.

AP: How old were you when you started to work?

IM: When (sic) I started to work I must be (sic) about 8 years old. I was about 8 years. My father started teaching me how to work, to *escaldar* the cornstalks (burn the dead cornstalks after the harvest), from then on it was all work for me.

AP: Tell me about your first job that you might remember (sic)?

IM: My first job well it was just that. *Escaldar* the cornstalks was my first job. And well I would take care of my father's cows, the beef cattle that my father had but that wasn't until I was a little older about 14 years old.

AP: Now the following questions are about the hiring process. The first question is, how did you find out about the Bracero Program?

IM: Oh, the Bracero Program came to Zacatecas because there at the ranch they were all very *Norteños*. Just as they turned 19, and then they would right away he (sic) would come to the bracero work. Well in order to earn more money and things like that they would come to be hired. And we them (sic) found out. At first it was in Irapuato the hiring and later it was (sic) in Mexicali, and afterwards in Empalme Sonora, Mexico. That was where I hired myself (sic), in empalme (sic) Sonora Mexico I hired myself (sic).

AP: What did they call the Bracero Program in Mexico?

IM: Well I don't remember that, just the bracero program, that's it, Program of the braceros.

AP: Where were you living at that time?

IM: There in Santa Rosa, I was living in Zacatecas.

AP: What type of work were you doing back then?

IM: There in Zacatecas just the same. Plant corn and harvest and take care of some animals, some of my father's animals and that was all. Take care of the beef cattle that my father had, that's all that I would do there. I would just work for six months and I would spend six months resting, I would only take care of the animals and tend to them

AP: Were you married?

IM: No. no.

AP: Did you ever think about working in the United States?

IM: Oh no, no I never thought about coming to the United States not until the time came. My brother was coming, and many were coming from there from the ranch to the United States precisely to be hired but I was never very tempted to come here (sic). I had my sight set on ... setting up a business with my brothers in Tepic Nayarit Mexico (sic) where (sic) they lived, opening a seafood business, the same as them.

AP: Why did you decide to go to the United States?

IM: Ah very good question. I decided to come to the United States ... my brother-in-law was going to come over (sic) the one who is married to the youngest sister is my brother-in-law, my brother-in-law Serapio is his name. And he was coming here ...and all of a sudden I got the crazy notion, we'll say it this way, the excitement to come here. Some cousins were going to come here to the United States in...in 1960 when I was already 19 years old, I could already come over here. Then from there, from there it all started that I wanted to come to the United State (sic) to see what it was like here and to work.

AP (sic); What were your means, in other words, your expectations about coming here?

IM: Uh, to see what it's like over here and earn some money here. And ... well send (sic) it to help my father.

AP: Did your family influence you in any way about your decision to come to the United States?

IM: Yes, they loaned me the money to come over here. My brother who had already been here in San Ibel California, he had, he loaned me the money to come. He loaned (sic) me 2000 pesos so I could come over here, he loaned me the money. I came with consent (sic) because he is older than me and I was under his orders because he is older than me.

AP: Describe the hiring process?

IM: It was, for me it was good, it was good because when I came I stayed (sic), we got there, we left on February 7, 1960. I came and we got there that same month, in February to Empalme Sonora. I spent 3 months there and after that ... we got in because you need (sic) to hire an attorney in order to cross you over here, for the roll to be called. For the names to be called. And then well ... from there then ..from there it was that I came over (sic). Three months later, I hired myself, I hired myself (sic) through a lawyer from Guadalajara Jalisco. Then we paid him 3000 pesos and he hired them (sic). With a contract already by the United States and Mexico and the contract that I had and you know. (sic)

AP: What requirements did you have to comply with in order to be a bracero?

IM: You had to be 19 years old, 19, under 19, they couldn't hire you. It was impossible to get hired, if you weren't 19 they couldn't hire you (sic). And some identification paper that you might have. I brought with me a safe-conduct, a recommendation from my town over there and a birth certificate and with that, I came over here.

AP: Weren't your hands checked?

IM: Yes also also. Well, once you hired yourself (sic), when you hired yourself they checked your hands. A lot times you had to go around with a stick rubbing your hands so that they would be a little rough because otherwise they would say "Well did you work in an office or what" And uh yes, they checked your hands, they did a tremendous physiological (sic) exam such that I've never seen another exam like the one they did when I hired myself (sic).

AP: In other words, those who had hands ...

IM: Very smooth hands were investigated more. "Hey you, well what did you do, didn't you do some kind of work in Mexico" (sic) because supposedly you were coming here to work.

AP: Was there some kind of physical exam?

IM: They used to do quite a physical exam. Amazing, a complete physical that's what they did. You couldn't have any infection on your body in order to come over here.

AP: When and where did you enlist?

IM: We enlisted in Guadalajara because we put them through with an attorney from ... Guaima Sonora and the thing didn't work out. We picked up the money and we went through with the one from Guadalajara. We enlisted with that attorney from Guadalajara and that attorney from Guadalajara got us across. And right away as soon as they went, went over there and we signed up. We sent two of them, a relative of mine and another acquaintance of mine from there from the ranch that is very close to there to Empalme, we sent them, we paid their fare, he went and signed them up over there and on Tuesday they called the list where my name was there (sic).

AP: What did the authorities, whether Mexican or American tell you that you could expect from your work?

IM: The Mexican authorities since it was a contract, they were paid, for each bracero they would pay them, I don't know how much they might have paid them that I don't know how much they might have paid Mexico. But they paid them a certain amount of money the American authorities to the Mexican authorities, but that I don't know how much they might have been paid. But well they (sic) were a contract that they had, like a business to hire people to come over here (sic). And it was good because you would bring your passport, Immigration would catch you and wouldn't say anything to you because you were proper here in the United States.

AP: Did they tell you something about your salary, living conditions?

IM: No. They only said, that ... since I came here to the lemon to Ventura County, to pick lemons uhm they ... the only thing they told me, the American man told me, "*tu poder durar*" "You can last" he meant to say you can last from 18 to 22 months hired because you're going to pick lemons they told me, you're going to pick lemons. To pick lemons and you're going to Ventura County freely. Then ... or free to California in other words. So that's why I came here and since ... no not at all but I was very loyal to my work, I wasn't ever absent, I was always there at work. So that's why I was here for almost two years hired (sic). But the contract just for 45 days (sic), for 45 days. They would try you out if the person is absent a lot, or has too many vices, very drunk, after 45 days they would give you your check, good-bye. Some were sent over there because they were absent from work a lot. But since I was hardly ever absent from work because of that they started giving me contracts for 6 months and 3 months.

IM: How did you travel (sic) to the recruitment place to the center in the United States, in other words, how did you travel to the United States?

IM: When you have already hired yourself, they would put you on the best train, on a first-class train. From Empalme Sonora we already came with lunch, (sic) lunch (sic) from here from the United States, a first-class train to Mexicali. And from there, when we had already contracted them (sic) to the center in California where the hiring process is completed... At empalme (sic) the first arrangements are made and later at the center in California, where (sic) I crossed over, it was all done there, the whole process. Then, I came here in a Greyhound, here in the northern field, the one that's here on the 118.

AP: How much were they paying you?

IM: Well they paid us very little. At that time they paid us 14 cents for a box of lemons, which were (sic) about this big. Each bag of a little sack (sic), or that they would give you to pick lemons, each bag was a box. You would fill it up all the way and that was one whole box. You didn't have to put anymore in, just a sack well (sic), a box, at 14 cents a box. But it was cheap back then, now they pay a high price for it but it was cheap then.

AP: Would they pay you cash or by check?

IM: By check, they used to pay us by check. Every two weeks they would pay us by check.

AP: What would you do with the money?

IM: Some of it I sent to my father. I sent to my father, in other words, I paid my brother the money, that I brought, and I spent part of it on clothes that I would buy here. For sure, I had no vices, I used to carry a bit of money there with me in my wallet. I didn't have any vices or nothing. I always went to church and everything, everything. That's all I did, part of it I sent to my dad.

AP: How did you send money to your family?

IM: Through the cooks, the cooks we would tell them (sic) "go and buy this money order (sic) and send it for me." We would give them the address where (sic) to send it and the money order (sic), checks, postal money order (sic) whichever you can call them, would get there just fine to Zacatecas over there, not even one check was lost.

AP: Did you manage to save some money, was it hard?

IM: Well since I didn't make much, then I didn't save much money, and then the bit of money that I sent (sic) to my dad, and since it was low they paid us very little, I didn't save much money. And then I would buy my clothes, I paid for my food there at the field where I was hired, the board (sic), the board (sic), I would pay board (sic) there it was also cheap but anyhow I paid board (sic) there.

AP: Were all the braceros paid the same?

IM: Well, there were some who were very good at picking lemons and they were paid more. Because there was one who was from ... from Michoacán. Good when it came to picking, that guy, Ricardo was his name. A very good friend of mine, he was very good at picking. The boss himself took care of his documents because he saw that he was an excellent (sic) at picking lemons. And the more you picked, the more you made, more money you earned more.

AP: Was there ever a problem in getting paid?

IM: No. Not as far as I was concerned, never. Always, when the two weeks were up there was the check. We got paid every two weeks, every two weeks, they would pay us our check, the check was there. Only when it rained, we didn't work, we would get a small check (sic). But whatever we worked we would get it all, the whole check They didn't owe me a penny because they would always pay me everything.

AP: Was the pay always right for the hours worked?

IM: The pay was always right for the hours worked. During the first few days, the first few days, we worked by the hour because you (sic) were learning to pick lemons. They would pay by the hour but then later by the box, according to the boxes you did (sic), you got paid. Every two weeks your check, they paid you your check right there, with the deduction for your meals and everything.

AP: Was money ever deducted from your salary?

IM: They deducted some, but back then I am going to be honest with you, I don't remember, I don't remember. They would deduct something because haven't I told you that they paid a certain amount of money to... to the Mexican government, they paid them a certain amount of money but I don't know how much, and I never paid attention. What happened, I never kept one of those stubs, I threw out all the check stubs (sic). I should have kept (sic) but I didn't keep them.

AP: Did you ever have any problems at work?

IM: No, not me. Personally no, no problems with the foreman or anything. The foremen were good people ... and I never had problems with him (sic). They treated me very well, I was treated well. They treated me very well, they paid me my check every two weeks like I say, and that's it.

AP: And from other braceros, the rest of them?

IM: Other braceros, well they had problems in the way that (sic) sometimes they got drunk and they wouldn't go to work. Others went and ... since they were given to vice, others were (sic) sick and they didn't go out of laziness, they were sick on account of the same sin and they didn't go to work and yes they had problems. Me, thank Got not even one problem with him, and ... not with the bosses either.

AP: What types of vices were there?

IM: Drinking and playing cards, and dice because they would play in the field. I never played and I didn't even come near to play over there and I didn't ever come over to watch them play either. But I know ... how to throw the dice and play cards the braceros (sic) would play there together (sic) after work. And of course well to drink... those who drank would go once in a while (sic) to the *cantinas*, bars, yeah.

AP: A lot of prostitution?

IM: There was prostitution, there was prostitution, yes there was prostitution because they would bring women to negotiate there with the braceros. Yes there was prostitution. In fact they even caught an American woman and she was prosecuted because she was a very young woman there (sic). The guys said "I don't even know that woman, I didn't even meet her or nothing, I never saw her either. But the guys started saying, a friend I had, "no well they bring a very young girl here.

AP: Who was bringing those women, the foremen?

IM: People, oh no not the foreman, no never, the people, people who find out from outside they brought them, people who were born here, people who were born here because those women they got were American. American and they would bring them there to negotiate with the braceros.

AP: What happened in case of an accident or an illness?

IM: Well in case of an accident they would take you to a hospital. Thank God that I in the 18, the 21 month (sic), that I was there close to two years, I never got sick or nothing. Never... but some were taken to the doctor (sic), some who got sick were taken to the doctor (sic). They were taken to the doctor (sic). They would give them medical coverage, they took them to the doctor (sic) to cure them.

AP: What were the most common complaints?

IM: The most common complaints ... well a lot of them sometimes didn't like, pardon me, the board (sic). Sometimes many complained that the boarding wasn't good, yes it was good, me (sic) as far as I'm concerned it was good the board (sic) because they cooked some good meals for us, they made them there for us. There in the field the cooks we had there ... I never had problems with the cooks either because I got along real well with them. I would always go and help them so they also liked me because I would go and help them the cooks there (sic). For me there were no problems. Sometimes some of them did complain that "no well I don't like it that" but there were many types of food for you to eat, whatever you liked best.

AP: Some of the braceros complained about the bosses (sic)

IM: Well in our crew the ... the only complaint there was that they would put them in bad orchards, our crew. They put us in bad orchard (sic) for picking (sic) lemons. Because in the good orchards, well you did more boxes. But they would put us in bad orchards, and yes there were complaints in that respect about the ... that you know about ... that they would take them into bad orchards that there wasn't a lot lemons, and others that they would take them to good orchards where they would make a lot of money.

AP: And if it rained?

IM: If it rained no, we wouldn't work. On the days that it rained we wouldn't work. They did give us all of the board and everything, we ate very well that day, but we didn't work that day. But anyway, we still paid for the board.

AP: What could you do if you didn't like the work?

IM: You could leave. Comply with the 45 days and say ok, well I don't like the work, and you couldn't ask for another job because that's what you came for, to work there. Then you could go to Mexico. After 45 days my contract is up I leave, because if you deserted and left, it was a punishment, they wouldn't hire you again. They wouldn't hire you again, if you deserted and left, uhm, it was a crime. But if you left voluntarily that you said (sic) "well I'm just going to finish my 45 days of the contract I came with, I don't like the work, I am leaving," you could leave, the person could leave.

AP: Did you encounter some type of discrimination against you?

IM: No ... me for me (sic), not for me. I don't know if there might be (sic) in other crews but not for me. They (sic) were well cared for all the time. As for me, personally, I was well cared for, I

never lacked food. Whatever I wanted I ate, and like I say about my friends, about the cooks ... for me, for me (sic). Maybe in other places ... it could be that in other places there might (sic) have been but in the crew I was in there wasn't. Nobody complained, the only thing they complained about was what I repeated (sic) a while ago about the orchards not being so good, there wasn't much lemon.

AP: Did you ever hear that there were protests?

IM: Protests ... no, there were hardly ever any protests. People always came to work, and our people can take a lot, and hardly ever That I, I didn't see protests, I never saw any protests. Well that's what I saw (sic), what I live (sic), the 22 months that I had a contract here.

AP: What did you do on your day or days off?

IM: On my days off (sic) I would go to church and read the Bible. That's how it was (sic) on my days off, that it was only on Sunday because on Saturday we worked until 12 noon. From Monday to Saturday I was there at work. We would work until 12:30 in the afternoon (sic) and we would come over to the camp. And it was Sunday (sic) go to church and read the Bible, that's it, that's what I would do.

AP: And what did the other braceros do?

IM: The others went out into the world, their own world. To pleasures, to bars, to spend their money and spend the little money they earned.

AP: Didn't they sometimes play sports outside?

IM: No. Just like I told you a while ago, they would play cards and dice. They would bet money (sic), and it was forbidden, the police would come over and would stop them because somebody would complain that they're (sic) gambling here. The police would come over, and they didn't even say anything, we didn't go to jail or nothing. They would say "put your money away, put your cards away, go to sleep already," they would say that when the police came because the police came over a lot once to the camp, and there you go.

AP: Weren't there any organizations that would come to provide pass times for the braceros, or churches?

IM: No. There weren't any. There were none. And then, a brother who worked there would only come to give out Bibles, but that was all. A brother who already died, would come over to the camp to give out Bibles, and that was it.

AP: Did you have television?

IM: We had television, yes there was television in the dining room (sic), there was television, there in the dining room (sic) there was television. A a (sic) special room over there if you

wanted to watch television or some program. I hardly ever went, I would hardly ever go me (sic) over there to watch television. They had television, there was television over there.

AP: And many of them just rested?

IM: Many rested and many didn't go to work just because they didn't go, due to laziness, many were absent from work, also because well you see our people are that way and all that.

AP: Were you free to come and go as you pleased, in other words, to leave the camp ... into the city?

IM: No (sic) into the city yes. Not desert from camp, you couldn't desert from the camp. But you did have free (sic) ... let's suppose that I want to go to San Francisco, you could say to San Francisco, as far as San Francisco you could go so long as you telling (sic) the bosses or letting the people know. To the (sic) campers having told them (sic) I'm going to take time off and go to San Francisco. Ok you go to San Francisco. You could go wherever you could go around here. Except desert from camp, so long as you came in two or three days you could come back there again to the camp.

AP: Didn't you go like into town, to the stores?

IM: Yes. We went into town. When I was here right away, we went to Oxnard, we would go into town, we went into town, a special bus would come (sic) to pick us (sic) up to take us into town because back then, we didn't have a license. We didn't have nothing and we couldn't get a driver's license or nothing. Worse, I didn't even know how to drive or nothing.

AP: What did you go to the stores for, to look?

IM: To look and to buy things. To buy clothes lots of times. Although the guys from the Roach Coach came over there to the camp, the trucks sell clothes over there, they would come (sic) and lots of times you didn't have any way of leaving. And if you didn't want to you didn't want to, but lots of times we had to go and shop in Oxnard or go to a restaurant, you could go and eat there.

AP: You always had enough money?

IM: I'm always able to make ends meet, I always had enough money as I said, since I didn't waste any of my money, I always had a little money in my pocket.

AP: Did you have radios?

IM: Oh yes. I bought a very good transistor radio. When my wife and I were still dating I gave it to her, a transistor radio. That was the in thing, Japanese (sic) transistor radios very good ones (sic). There were lots of radios, that's for sure, many radios that the coworkers had over there.

AP: Was that when you were here?

IM: That's when I was here on a contract, yes.

AP: In Ventura?

IM: When I was here in Ventura.

AP: Were there some Spanish (sic) radio stations?

IM: Oh yes. Kmro of ... no the kcpa from Santa Paula and here the one from Oxnard, I don't remember, I don't remember the name... KOXR ... those were the two radios (sic) they had Spanish, the one from Santa Paula and the one from Oxnard.

AP: Where was the closest town?

IM: The closest town well here ... well because I was almost in between towns. When I was here at that camp the one on... the 118, it was over there and right there Oxnard and Ventura, it's close (sic) to here. And then when they moved me to Ventura, later they moved (sic) me to Ventura, well Ventura was even closer over there, Ventura was even closer (sic) from there, and sometimes we went to Bakersfield too, we sometimes went over to Bakersfield.

AP: How did you get to town?

IM: Well, when my wife and I were dating, my in-laws the ones who were going to be my in-laws would take us over to Bakersfield, we went over there, but for us it was just by bus (sic). I went to Camarillo a few times, I went by bus (sic) here, I went to Camarillo on the bus (sic), I went to Camarillo on the Greyhound.

AP: And the other braceros?

IM: The other braceros had their friends and many had cars, and many had already immigrated over here. They would give them a ride (sic), they would take them. But most of the time they rode the bus. In fact a bus would come here and would say "who wants to go into town" and would pick you up too.

AP: Was there a church close (sic) to you?

IM: Close by well yes. Here I would go to this church but when I had just come, I would go to this church on Violeta (sic) that's where I went to church. And later when I moved (sic) to Ventura I would come to this church anyway because the brother came, the pastor from here would go and pick (sic) us up me and another guy, called Daniel and they picked (sic) me up and we went to church. He always (sic) and me always went to church on Sunday.

AP: When the other braceros went into town, what did they do there in town?

IM: Just hang out (laughter). Wandering about the streets that's for sure, those who don't have the fear of God in their hearts, just walk around. For sure they would go drink, to the bars, to

spend their money and a lot of times on Monday many times they didn't even have a penny in their pockets.

AP: So then you would go church?

IM: I would go to church, I always went to church. Since way back (sic) I went to church all the time. My friend and me, the one called Daniel, we went to church. He was from the state of Mexico, he was and we met at the time we got our contracts and we started together. We went to church together all time.

AP: So religious people did come to the camps?

IM: Yes. Religious people came to the camps. Many went to give services, in fact they event went to give services, religious services there. But well people, some of them wanted to. Many many became Christians but many didn't, many didn't want to. want They liked the world more, the world called out to them more, worldly things.

AP: Were they Anglosaxons those who came to the camp?

IM: No just Latinos. They were Latinos. It was just Latinos who went over there, to hand out tracts and stuff.

AP: During the time that you were here did you ever go to Mexico on vacation (sic) to visit your family?

IM: No because I couldn't. That you can't do, you can't. You have to stay until the whole contract expires. When you've been here close to two years, then yes, it's by law that you have to go to Mexico because you can't stay here anymore. Because then the association from Santa Paula, the association was in Santa Paula. The big boss who gave the orders was called Victor Veja, and he is the one who sent you (sic) when you had been here close to 2 years, he would say "you know what and you cannot be here in the United States anymore, go to your Mexico and then come back later, get yourself a contract again but we can't have you here so long anymore." Because the law it was just close to two years (sic).

AP: How did you celebrate Easter (sic) and Christmas?

IM: Easter and Christmas, very good question. In the first place, Christmas (sic) well we used to celebrate it in Zacatecas at the church where (sic) I grew up. But here when I came, for me it was a cause for admiration to see all the little red lights and so many things, the decorated houses. I asked the brother, "what does that mean," "it's Christmas" he said, "it is Christmas," (sic) uhm well I said, I don't know, I said. But we celebrate well (sic) here at church also.

AP: So the lights were something unbelievable for you?

IM: Yes for me everything was unbelievable because all of that was admirable. Because I had never seen those things (sic). I would ask this brother, "what does it mean, why do they put so

many little lights on the houses” He said “Christmas is celebrated here” uhm I said that’s (sic) just fine.

AP: You weren’t used to this culture?

IM: No of course, I wasn’t used to the culture over here.

AP: Do they celebrate Mexican holidays like September 18, at the bracero camps?

IM: Not here at the camps. No, they never never celebrated, they never celebrated. Over there at the camps no, at the camps no.

AP: So at Christmastime the other braceros...

IM: At Christmas (sic), it was celebrated, it was celebrated. Like I say, we at the church and people well they sit and drink. On January 1 they would also go the bars to drink, and also the last day of the year you know, December 31.

AP: Did you return to Mexico when your labor contract expired?

IM: I went back to Mexico because I had to go to Mexico. I left for Mexico again on July 17, 1962.

AP: Did your boss provide transportation for you to go back to Mexico?

IM: No. It was me (sic) from my own money. They just paid us everything they owed us, that’s it. They would give you 3 days to get your things ready, to pack the few clothes you had and your stuff, wash (sic) everything and you’re ready and right away to leave. 3 days is what they gave you and now there you go. But they paid you all they owed you, of course, they would give you your check and that was it. Then you paid on your own out of your own pocket.

AP: Well, didn’t they help you?

IM: They didn’t help you, no that’s for sure, when you’re leaving they didn’t help you. You just left with your own money. In fact, we even had to get a collection going for a guy because he was absent from work a lot and we had to collect some money so he could leave. We collected the money over there at the camp. We gave him, he was a Zacatecan and I say (sic) to him “we’re going to collect some for you, he didn’t have money to leave, how was he going to go. And the boss said to him “you know that this is it, you’ve been let go, go to your Mexico.” Because the guy was absent from work a lot, and we got money together for him so he could leave. But the boss didn’t pay for nothing, just paid what he owed you, and that’s all.

AP: After you finished your labor contract, how difficult was it to get another contract?

IM: Another contract that was very easy, good question, because then it was very easy to get another contract. Since you had already come over here, since you had already come over here,

they gave you a (sic) green card, a green card, you had your green card and then you would be hired. They would say, "all the ones with green cards, make a line here" because they had already come over here. Then that way you would quickly cross over, it was very easy then when you had already come to the United States, a lot easier than when you come the first time.

AP: What had to be done to obtain authorization to come back to the United States?

IM: Well, you had to work in Mexico at least 2 months, 2 months and earn yourself a letter. I worked in order to come over here again, but because of some circumstances I wasn't able to cross over here. Uhm uhm ... and I was doing very on my way over but something happened, I had an infection here on one of my legs from something that got to me. The doctor told me that because of the heat and I wan't able to cross over. But I earned a *carta de control* (letter of advice) by picking cotton in Mexico and it was a very good letter because it was from a German man, named Enrique Faister in Sonora Mexico. And I was already coming straight through and they told me "those with a green card, line up here." Well I had my green card and right away I stood in line there, I was already coming, but I couldn't cross over because of that. And the doctor (sic) told me "I can give you an injection and you can go across. I told him "Give it to me" I said "please" (sic) no no he didn't want to, and so that's why I didn't get across that time. But by then it was very easy, having a green card already it was very easy to come over here.

AP: Did you ever resign from your job as a bracero?

IM: No never. I liked it, I like this country a lot and all that. Never no way, it made me happy whenever they renewed my contract for six months, I felt like I was from here.

AP: So you didn't go back to Mexico, what did you do to (sic) stay in the United States what motivated you?

IM: Well when I left for Mexico ... when I left in order to go to Mexico, mi wife and I were dating. We dated for three years like we (sic) have told you and that was later. Then since I had already been here, I knew my way around, since I like this country over here (sic) in the United States. And then when we were already dating (sic) my wife, then it was different. In just ... a week we took care immigration arrangements, in just a week, we made immigration arrangements with my in-laws and my wife's help. And then we did marry them (sic) in 1963.

AP: Did you become a U. S. citizen?

IM: I became a citizen 15 years ago, it's going to be 16 years since I became a United States citizen.

AP: Tell me about your life after having worked as a bracero? (sic)

IM: Well by then it was very different because since I already had immigration (sic), then I could look for a better job other than picking lemons. And then it was (sic) that doors opened for me because I had immigration (sic), now I could have a license, I could have a car, look for my job, that's how I got into construction, I got into the union (sic) because I made more money there

and things went more good (sic) for you. Then well that's it, but with immigration already, with a green card (sic) well it's different then, because then even though ... you are a legal resident here, well then the person has more security. And (sic) that's how I found me that other better job (sic) in construction, I started working in construction.

AP: In other words, you went to Mexico and came back to the United States (sic) again?

IM: By the time I went to Mexico ... when after only a week I had arranged for over here (sic), I didn't go back to Mexico until 1966. In 1966, but I had already immigrated (sic), my wife and all, already married and everything.

AP: You didn't enter illegal?

IM: I was never illegal here in the United States. It was with my contract, wherever (sic) Immigration caught me Immigration didn't do anything to me because I had my contract. I never came in illegal here into the United States.

AP: Where did you cross the border? (sic)

IM: I crossed through by San Isidro. And when I crossed as a bracero through Calexico because that's where the line was to get across. That's when ... when I was a legal resident, I got across through San Isidro, on January (sic) 24, 1963.

AP: What happened when you were at the reception center?

IM: Where, here in Calexico?

AP: Yes, when you were about to enter.

IM: When I was going to come in as a bracero or already immigrated?

AP: At first as a bracero.

IM: Oh no (sic) well at the center, like I told you a while ago many exams. A physical exam, blood, lung (sic), that you wouldn't have any infections, all of that. Much more rigorous than the exam when I made the arrangements for the paperwork. When I got the papers just the lung (sic) and the blood, and that's it. But when I hired myself (sic), there was a physical (sic) physical what you would call a physical is what they do to you (sic) as a bracero. And here at the California center that's where they ... if you are going to get across or won't get across, there they tell you everything over there (sic). If they turn you back, they turn you back and if you get across, well then you get across that's it. Because many didn't get through because of the bad record they had in Mexico and there they would find out about their record, and there you go. They would draw a line through the passport, a red pencil, go line up over there. When they put (sic) the red pencil, it was already when they were already on their way over, he (sic) couldn't cross over. He had something, he must've owed something ... or something, something something was wrong. But I don't have any of those problems because I ... God first because I

feared God and I wasn't lazy or nothing, I didn't have any infections. They did the complete exam, my blood my lung (sic) everything came out very good. No venereal (sic) infections, no nothing that the person might have (sic), they checked you good. Then you'd sign your contract at the center in California now go ahead and get on the bus (sic) and we'd go to the camp where (sic) we're going to drop you off over there.

AP: So you went directly to Ventura?

IM: I came directly to Ventura yes because I'd been assigned over here. My contract said that this is where I was assigned, to Ventura County.

AP: Well from San Isidro to Ventura?

AP: (sic) From San Isidro ... No, from Calexico to Ventura, yes. When I came in already immigrated, well then I came to the camp too because nowhere (sic) to stay but then it was different because I already had my passport then (sic), Then I had my migration already (sic). Then it was different. Of course at the camp then they would put me apart from the ones with a contract, me (sic), since I already had my migration (sic) already. I came to the Oxnard camp over there, I was still there (sic) but already immigrated. But when I came (sic) immigrated I came in through San Isidro, through San Isidro, I came in. When I came with a contract I came in through Calexico, through Calexico.

AP: From Guadalajara to Calexico too?

IM: No from here, from Empalme Sonora, from empalme (sic) Sonora to Mexicali, and there I came in through Calexico, but with my contract, you you know, not illegal or nothing, with my contract me (sic).

AP: The lawyer?

IM: The lawyer he, that one so he could run the list through in Empalme Sonora, he put the list through and right away. And he even turned out to be a good lawyer because he returned 500 pesos to each one, we only paid 300, everywhere they paid 1000 pesos to get through. We just (sic) to the attorney we paid 800, but he returned 500 Mexican pesos to my father, he still returned it, he only charged them 300 pesos to run the list through, since they have to make some money and it's a contract well it's a business then that they had with the United States. But then when you come already hired, you come with a good lunch (sic), a first-class train and everything to perfection so there wouldn't be anything (sic).

AP: Give a physical description of the reception center, how was it do you remember?

IM: The center where ...

AP: The reception one.

IM: From where?

AP: When you were going to be hired.

IM: Oh the center no well over there in Empalme Sonora. Oh there it was a mess there. At the center in ... and then had (sic) to do everything. Those were huge offices, really long like from here to the light. They were hiring 800 men every hour, every hour 800 men they hired you (sic) and fast. And I have to do everything quickly everything everything take my clothes off for an exam and everything quickly put them on and quickly run and everything ready it was terrible over there. I'm, I'm not very smart but over there I started watching everything that was going on and quickly so they wouldn't scold me because many "line up over there" they growled at you they didn't hit you or nothing but they bawled you out. "Hey line up over there" and you took longer. If not all you did take your clothes off (sic) now and when we were on our way over here to cross over ... from Calexico to the United States there they sprayed (sic) you on your clothes. So you wouldn't bring in any bugs, lice well you weren't gonna have lice you were already grown up but so you wouldn't bring in any insects or nothing they'd spray (sic) you over there. But the hiring center was terrible, it was terrible. And I was still telling (sic) my wife, one day when they said "on Good Friday free to California" (sic) and the guys started pushing (sic). 100,000 men, 100,000 men started pushing and I was very close (sic) to the rail like from here to the pulpit from the rail where you went through towards the booth where you hired yourself (sic). And where would I escape to, I just put my hands on my (sic) stomach and started pushing (sic) too because if you fell, they would trample on you and kill you.

AP: Did anyone die?

IM: No one died just 3000 *sardos* (sic), 3000 soldiers with their rifles and they cocked (sic) them for a while. You could hear and they came with the (sic) butts, that's it to clear the people out with the butts, the rifle butts.

AP: American soldiers?

IM: Mexican soldiers because it was Empalme Sonora. That experience I did have (sic) over there in Empalme Sonora, when they said "free to California" which is that on Fridays they gave them free to California and the people start (sic) to push (sic) and there were rails of real iron, the ones from the train so they won't cross over there. And then 3000 soldiers come cock (sic) the rifles and that's it. I told myself why should I get close (sic) over there, and they'll rifle butt me on the head, I said don't. But that was the way ... to (sic) ... 100,000 men there was no other way, 100,000 men right there at the hiring that was (sic) terrible. That was the only experience that I had (sic) there.

AP: So then it was a multitude of men?

IM: A multitude of men. Friday and Saturday morning it was full and everyday they hired thousands and thousands and thousands. And by morning fine, maybe it was because on Friday and Saturday they came from the south of Mexico many buses (sic) full at night (sic). And it was full again by Monday morning, again the hiring, full full. It was a valley, you would go down the international highway and what you saw was a valley (sic). Just hats over there just like it shows (sic) on the photos, just just hats were seen over there. Me the first time I was even afraid, I was

afraid, well I was green, just a kid without doing any traveling (sic) or nothing I was afraid honestly I was afraid when my brother-in-law said "let's go to the hiring" We got them up (sic) early, about 7, like going to look for work Because (sic) they would call at 8, at (sic) 8 they called. And whoever wasn't there missed out and lost his money and missed out he didn't show up, so, the roll was called, the person showed up there when ... we got the lawyer, that one we were already, we were all ready right there early and one Monday he came and said "on Tuesday you'll be called" said the lawyer. "On Tuesday you'll be called they're going to call the roll," we were there early and I start hearing my relatives', my friends' names from Santa Rosa, and they called my name and I ran to the hiring, to hire ourselves (sic).

AP: How was the roll called by State?

IM: Sometimes by state they called the roll (sic). But sometimes they just did, lots of times they would say, "those who were left and were sick," but a lot of times those who paid more. He said well they were left behind yesterday they were sick but it wasn't like that, in order not to *decrepitalos* (sic) right there and those who paid well of course right away they called (sic) them first. And ... those lists were like this, from the floor up to here that big since we could see the list there. The lawyer would grab the microphone and you could see him. He would get up on (sic) like a platform and would be (sic) calling the roll there. "Tt t ata t ata so and so" (sic) and everybody just running and going in to the hiring.

AP: What happens (sic) to the men who couldn't pay an attorney?

IM: They wouldn't get through. They wouldn't get through because they didn't have no money left, they had spent it. I saw many that's for sure, I saw a lot, now they would only write on the dirt because they would spend their money just bumming around, on prostitution in Empalme Sonora Mexico. Over there really was (sic) for you to get way deep into prostitution. And many would spend their money there and wouldn't be able to get through. They didn't have money to hire themselves, they spent their money in vain. They left their wife (sic) their family (sic) over there and spent their money bumming around and they wouldn't get through because they had no more money to hire themselves (sic).

AP: Then in order to come as a bracero you had to pay a lawyer?

IM: You had to pay an attorney. It was the law in Mexico, I don't know how come but you had to pay a lawyer. In order to come and hire yourself (sic) because who knows how the United States and Mexican hiring was, what arrangements they had. Because a certain amount of money went to the Mexican government. Yes, the United States paid a certain amount of money for each bracero, but I didn't know how much, I never knew how much, we didn't even investigate, we came and were so happy that we didn't even investigate whatever for. We never investigated how much was paid or nothing. But an attorney would get you across, they would call the roll over there. They would read the list and right away your list was put in it was put on the lid (sic) they would grab the list and "tatata" they would start hiring you. But it was chaos the (sic) hiring many ... I didn't even spend a penny (sic). I had a little money, I would go eat my meal over there, I would eat my food, I didn't even spend a penny (sic) outside, I didn't waste. I had a bit of money all the time but I didn't tell anybody that I had money. But many didn't get through,

I would just look at them writing on the dirt, sad and didn't say nothing. Even when I came over, me to a few guys from my ranch (sic) I gave them 100 pesos each "here I had money left over, here are 100 pesos so you can help yourself" I told him (sic). A couple of them, here are 100 pesos. I gave them to them so that ... I'm going to the United States he gave them to them (sic) so that because you would suffer if you didn't watch the little bit of money you had, there was suffering over there in Empalme Sonora, there was suffering. You could spend the money and not get through because you had nothing to pay the lawyer with.

AP: No bosses ever came to help?

IM: No, not over there. Not over there in Empalme.

AP: How do I pay you ...

IM: No. Oh that would've been so good, but no when you came and were already hired you came with the contract from Mexico and the United States. Then that's when they knew that you hired yourself (sic), that you hired yourself, (sic) a good lunch they would give you (sic) at the center in California, good lunch (sic) like I say and they would bring them on a first-class train. They brought them on a real Greyhound, that's how they brought them over here, to the camps, but not until you hired yourself, less no (sic). Less no (sic) they didn't help you in that way. If you got hired you got hired and the one who didn't may God bless him. There was no hiring, you spent your money, you wasted your money, case closed.

AP: Then what was the first year you arrived here? (sic)

IM: In 1960 in 1960. I came here in May of 1960. I came to Empalme that same month. On the 7th of February (sic) I left my home town, I got to Empalme (sic). I left Zacatecas and got to Empalme that same month but I didn't hire myself until May. I stayed since May until that's about three months something like that and going to the hiring place everyday. I would go everyday I would get up early ... I'd wash m face, brush my teeth, get ready and go over to the hiring place, everyday. As a kind of job, from Monday through Friday because there was no hiring on Saturday, but on Monday ... I'd be (sic) there.

AP: What had to done in order to obtain your work permit, the attorney? (sic)

IM: No well through the lawyer. The lawyer he got the work permit and then ... God first, and then the exams that they did, that you would pass the physical exams and there you go to work in the United States. You you (sic) could then come to the United States to work.

AP: How was (sic) the exam when they took your clothes off? (sic)

IM: They checked you all over, a complete physical exam, everything. Body (sic) that had no venereal infections, that it didn't have hemorrhoids that it didn't have piles, that it didn't have nothing. The person couldn't have any infections because he didn't get across. They would tell or (sic) bad lung, they would take X-rays, plates of the lung, the blood of the lung. If you could see, they would put a pencil like from here to that pew I think. They would put the hands out

“how many fingers do you see” they would tell you. They would check all that. And that you couldn’t have any infections couldn’t have nothing (sic). I tell you that I had a ... just a tiny bit and the doctor (sic) himself said you know since your skin is white and it was terribly hot in Sonora I said, of course it’s very hot, 126 degrees of heat (sic) and I was picking cotton I said. He said that’s why you got it, because your skin is white, it is the dust that you ... he said I could take it all off. But come on do it I said but he didn’t want to. No well they already marked your paper he said. But the person had to be very healthy to come over here.

AP: Did you have (sic) some option to choose between the type of work?

IM: O no. You don’t come to pick (sic). If they send you to pick oranges pick lemons it’s it’s ... well you can’t say no ... then they tell you well then go, then go, we’ll kick you out to Mexico.

AP: Did you have (sic) something to say about the place where they sent you to work here in Ventura?

IM: Very good food they gave us (sic). On the first day I got up, I got there at 4 in the morning to the camp (sic) the bus came from the California center at 4 in the morning, (sic) I slept an hour and in an hour, the *campero* (the guy in charge of the camp), the bell, I told a friend of mine, what’s this since I didn’t know. It’s the bell for you to get up, how’s that but I just went to bed I told him. No you have to get up you have to get up because work is here. And I went to the dining room wow, wow, wow, there were eggs there was Mexican bread there was oatmeal I had heard it said for you to eat. At that hour well I wasn’t at all hungry but they did give you a very good lunch they would put your lunch so you could eat. In the evening you would come you showered (sic) and again to eat have dinner and in the morning (sic) again all three meal (sic) very good they served there at the camp. That’s for sure very good food they served for me I never suffered on account of the good I like everything all the *chile*, I like everything, I like everything.

AP: But there were some braceros who didn’t like it?

IM: There were some braceros who didn’t but only a few, hardly any, they would eat everything most of the time. The sandwiches they many didn’t (sic) like them, I also liked the sandwiches. Sometimes I would grab sandwiches to take to (sic) work. There they made fried eggs any way you wanted scrambled egg sandwich however you wanted they would make them for you over there, all kinds of food they served very good food.

AP: Were you allowed to have some personal property with you?

IM: Well just your clothes a radio or record player (sic) that you bought you would have hem at your camp, you would have them in your suitcase and it was kept there. We had a radio I bought a radio like I said I bought a very good transistor radio I bought it from (sic) Japanese radios and they never said anything never, you could have ... except except some even had pocket knives but you weren’t supposed to pocket knives (sic) there but yes many had pocket knives but you weren’t supposed to.

AP: After you received your work permit you came here to Ventura? (sic)

IM: I came here to Ventura I landed in Ventura after I already got my work permit. They gave me my paper it's a passport they stamp your passport for the 45 days and like I said you behaved well they renew it for another 3 months, another 4 months and if you do well (sic) . Then well they renew it for 6 months straight. But if you're absent from work well then they lay you off, they will also lay you off and they tell you well we can't hire you anymore and what do you do, well go to Mexico.

AP: How many years did you work officially as braceros (sic) here in the United States?

IM: As a bracero, close to 2 years very close to 2 years, about 22, 23 months close to 2 years. Just the law required 18 months, a year and a half but since I behaved (sic) very well, first God helped me, I behaved well and everybody liked me (sic). The bosses, when they were going to kick me out, they didn't want me to go to Mexico yet, the bosses told me that I shouldn't. I told the foreman "already sir that they're going to kick them out to Mexico" (sic) he said no the bosses like you all a lot they don't want you to go (sic) he said. But I had been here a long time and I had been almost two years hired (sic).

AP: During what years?

IM: In 1960. On July 17, 1962 I left. I came here in 1960 ... in May, 1960 I entered. And on July 17 of 1962 it was, I left, me (sic) that was my departure already because my contract was already up.

AP: In how many different places did you work as a bracero?

IM: Just here in Ventura, just here in Ventura. This was the only one, we would go to Camarillo to pick the lemon orchard to Camarillo. Over here to Ojai, over here to Oxnard, over there in those fields (sic) that you see on Central (sic), that's where we used to pick. Those fields there lemon fields, but I never left this county, that's where I was the whole time.

AP: What did you harvest at the farm or ranch?

IM: In my home town?

AP: Here as a bracero.

IM: No no you couldn't have no other job, just what you came for to pick lemons and that's all. You couldn't choose.

AP: The bosses

IM: The bosses

AP: What did they harvest?

IM: Oh what did they harvest, well just lemons, me my bosses they (sic) just lemons only lemons they harvested (sic). Sometimes, some braceros were taken to pick avocados, they never took me to pick avocados. They would come over “hey who wants to go pick avocados,” avocados and lemons were picked and, of course, orange orchards, too. But I hardly ever went over to the oranges (sick). Later when I was immigrated I went to the oranges, but not before.

AP: Then describe the work you did as a bracero? (sic)

IM: Well just the lemon picking. I picked that everyday because I never went to pick avocados just lemons everyday (sic) the 21 months that I was here close (sic) to two years, like I said that was the only thing I picked (sic) just lemons.

AP: What was the procedure, how would you do it?

IM: They give you clippers, they give you some gloves, some *manguillas* (arm protectors) because the the lemon trees were tall then now (sic) they are little, not tall. But the lemon trees were tall too. They would give you your *manguillas* so you wouldn't get scraped because the thorn (sic) will stick you, they gave you a measurement that you had to look at the measurement and any that were through that measurement couldn't be picked, but when it's etched, you learn (sic) to pick lemons, then you just look at it and don't. In order to use the measurement, there you had it on your finger but you can't use it because you already know the process, already the lemon, any lemon that goes through the measurement you have to pick it and that's it. But that's all you couldn't have options, have options to pick something else. Listen well I don't like lemons, change me over to something else, you couldn't do that. Just your contract, that was it we came to the lemons, we came to the lemon that was our contract, that's all. We had to obey the contract.

AP: How many braceros worked with you?

IM: With me, about a thousand about one thousand of us braceros worked together.

AP: Tell me about the other braceros who worked over there, did you make some friends?

IM: Of course, they were my friends, some were my friends, yes some of them were my friends the ones I knew better at the camp were my friends. We had a friendship (sic) there with them and all. But since I was never given to problems or nothing. Well anyway you sometimes had slight problems because they came drunk and they wanted to force me by force to drink beer, I said no no I can't drink beer, I don't want to drink beer, but that was the end of it (sic). Then they would come by later and apologized and they never offended me again too (sic). I always had my battle over there because at that point a little drunk you know the person loses control, but that was it.

AP: Did you ever hear that there were illegal people in this country who wanted to work?

IM: No, never all the ones who were over there had contracts, just with contracts. They had to work, they would ask you for your passport. The list came to the *campero*, and the *campero*

knew there, So and So has a contract, they have contracts here. He was handed a list from the Greyhound, they handed a list to the *campero*, here is the list, These are the ones I brought you and that's it. I brought you these it's 50, when we got to the camp over there 50 of us laborers came on the bus (sic) here is the list, he handed the list to the *campero*, the one in charge of the camp, in all but there wasn't anyone (sic) who didn't have a contract and was working.

AP: Then you never heard about your boss hiring (sic) someone who was illegal?

IM: No and I never heard that my boss hired someone who was illegal because since there were a lot of braceros, no no (sic) I don't think that's why they didn't do that. At least I never heard that that someone illegal would be hired.

AP: Did you have much contact with your boss?

IM: Well sometimes because sometimes he would give us a ride (sic) to other orchards. Just once only did my real boss take me to another orchard, that Phil Boss big, he was (sic) an American, he knew a little Spanish. But that was the only time I got in his car, and we went to another orchard that was going to take them (sic) so we could pick (sic) there for a while. And we only picked (sic) there for a while and then we went back and then then we didn't go since then anymore. Only with the real foreman we talked, just the foreman.

AP: How were you treated?

IM: I was treated very well, very well no complaint (sic) on my part, as far as the bosses, the bosses treated me very well they never owed me even a penny (sic), they treated me very well, as far as I am concerned, they treated me very well. And my coworkers too, since I never saw that they owed (sic) any money to my coworkers mine (sic). They always paid us, like when the two weeks were up, check's there (sic) our check.

AP: Did the Mexican authorities ever come to the place where you were working?

IM: Not that I can remember. No.

AP: Did Immigration come over to check the workers' documentation?

IM: Not that either never. Me (sic) during the years that I had my contract I never see (sic) the Immigration, I never saw it the Immigration. Since they knew that they you had your papers in order, they didn't bother you and Immigration never came to the camps (sic) no, to the camp where I was.

AP: How did you get in touch with your family in Mexico?

IM: I either wrote them by letters (sic) by letter I would send them letters (sic) over there. The checks I sent by letter I sent them to my father too.

AP: Did you visit them?

IM: Just because we couldn't visit. We couldn't visit until the contract was up we could visit Mexico again but yes, just letters I would write (sic) letters to my father, me by letter, I sent letters to my father.

AP: How many days a week did you work?

IM: We worked six days a week like I said, from Monday through Saturday and on Saturdays at 10 we stopped. Twelve-thirty (sic) we stopped and then we would go (sic) to the camp (sic) every day, from Monday through Saturday, from Monday to Saturday (sic), because of the budget that Saturday was like I say until 12:30. It wasn't all day but anyway, at 12:30 in the afternoon, we'd go to the camp already, we'd go to the truck (sic) and we'd go over there.

AP: How many hours per day?

IM: How many hours per day. We would work about from 7 till 4 in the afternoon and they gave us what ... about half hour for lunch something like that, half hour for lunch ... it seems to me they have them (sic) half hour for lunch, about some 8 hours I think 8 hours something like that.

AP: Describe the normal day of work?

IM: The normal day.

AP: You would get up ...

IM: The day ... when I worked ... Uhm Well I got up early early because we had to be bright and early because the truck (sic) would come. If you were (sic) ready, it would take you, if not you stayed behind. You had to be there real early, having already eaten with your lunch (sic), your sack ready, everything that you used. All ready, already waiting for the (sic) truck lined up over there, ready. They would say "before ... at 6 we're coming to pick you up (sic)" you would get up at 5, you would eat breakfast grab your lunch, grab all your gear that you were going to use all your scissors, your *manguillas*, all your gloves and there you go. Standing over there (sic) already standing so that the truck (sic) would come, whoever was left just stayed behind. They would say to you "listen come ... whoever was left behind just stayed" But it was a terrible offense and right away they would mark you absent, they would also mark it as an offense too.

AP: Tell me about the foods you ate? (sic)

IM: The food was good. In the morning we ate oatmeal, a piece of bread, a sandwich, or fried eggs if the person wanted to eat fried eggs. But there was a lot to eat. If you wanted to eat bananas, if you wanted to eat bread, you ate bread, or with oatmeal or just a bowl of oatmeal but that was it.

AP: Where did you eat?

IM: In the dining room they had a dining room over there special where and a kitchen where the cooks would cook the food and the dining room was big bigger like this place where we are right now (sic). A lot bigger and there we would all (sic) sit down to eat, everyone.

AP: Did you have to pay for the food?

IM: We had to pay 1.25 (sic) per day with all (sic your food and housing, with all (sic) the food and housing and bed, and they gave you everything there. 1.25 per day all three meals.

AP: What was your opinion about the food?

IM: For me it was very good (sic), I have no complaint Like I said (sic) like I said a while ago, it repeats (sic) a while ago, it was very good food for me (sic) very good food, it agreed with me the food. Milk at first didn't quite agree with me, but later I loved milk. I was used to Mexico, hot milk and the whole thing but here ... And later I got hooked on it (sic). No sooner did I come from work and I drank a huge glass of milk. I'd shower and I'd go to the dining room, I got dressed, I'd shower, (sic) I'd go to the dining room (sic) a huge glass of milk. But later I started liking meat a lot and everything, I started liking it a lot and that's it. The only problem with the food, the food was very good, they served very good food.

AP: Did they give you enough food?

IM: They gave enough, as far as I'm concerned, there's no complaint in that respect, enough. They would say to you "Would you like more? Even better on a Thanksgiving Day huge pots they made just with turkeys, lots and lots of turkey they served, turkey and I said, what's this "well it's thank you day" they said oh well, I didn't know I told him and uhm... lots (sic) of meat they served, whatever kind of meat (sic) you wanted, any kind of meat you wanted, bread, eggs, bananas, apples, all juices, milks, whatever you wanted to drink, there were no problems with the food, very good food.

AP: Describe where you lived and how it was furnished?

IM: We were (sic) the cabin where (sic) we lived, it was (sic) twelve beds. Each one had his suitcase and just a suitcase and some chairs we just had. And sometimes there were no chairs there and we just the had small beds where we would sleep, where only one person fits, one person for each bracero (sic). There were 12, 12 of us lived in that cabin and that was it. Your blankets that you had brought and that's it. They would also give you sheets and pillows, of course but that was all. Then when you were leaving you turn in everything over there, you would grab what were your belongings, your radio your your (sic) suitcase and you packed up your stuff, your shoes and everything that ... and that's it you would go.

AP: Were there bathrooms with sewers?

IM: Oh there were bathrooms yes there were bathrooms. The bathrooms were huge there were (sic) lots of bathrooms. A whole lot of bathrooms, a *curco* of bathrooms. Listen, lots and lots of

bathrooms. The bathrooms were (sic) very good for you to bathe, everything very good, they were (sic) very good, everything was very good.

AP: How did you manage to wash your clothes?

IM: To wash our clothes there were sinks over there for you to wash your clothes. I used to wash my clothes and iron them, we also had a place to iron there and we would take care of our clothes, there was still also a place where you wash (sic) clothes too.

AP: Did they provide items for your personal use like tooth brush soap towels...?

IM: NO. You would buy it none of that none of that, none of that all of that you would buy.

AP: So they didn't help you?

IM: Not in that way they didn't help you, not when the only thing (sic) ... just the only thing, the way in which they helped you just that they gave them (sic), when we where learning to pick (sic) lemons by the hour. They really helped us with that because they said "we're going to assign you to pick (sic) lemons on the first day, you're not going to know how many boxes. It's gonna be anywhere from (sic) 2, 3 boxes that's what it'll be." Then that time in that way they helped us by the hour (sic). But you had to buy your own tooth brush, your toothpaste your things to comb your hair and all of that you bought with your own money. The envelopes to send to Mexico, you would also buy them, your envelopes and everything to send to Mexico, money, to write to your relatives.

AP: What does the term bracero mean to you?

IM: Bracero well for me the term bracero it's that that like they say around here, the hands are used, you use your hands, the hands were important. The arms were important, let's say "We need a hand over here So-and-so" you would hear them say. Or "hands are needed," it means ... that's why they called it braceros, because it was to work with your arms with your hands and for me that's what it means and so, they called it braceros.

AP: How does it feel to be called bracero?

IM: For me it's not an offense at all. Personally that's what I was, a bracero I think it's an honor because you came to work, you came to make something of yourself, to work in a better environment to (sic) a better job to earn a little more money and for me, it was a pleasure to be a bracero. For me ... because like I say by the grace of God I behaved well and everyone (sic) was good to me and I didn't have any problems of any kind, just sometimes like I say they wanted to make me drink beer but that's unimportant, but for me it was good (sic), for me it was a pleasure (sic) to have come (sic) as a bracero, I got to know what it was to be a bracero, when they talk to me about bracero, what are you saying (sic) if I went through that, I hired myself, I know what a bracero is, to be a bracero.

AP: Your memories about having worked as a bracero are positive or negative?

IM: Oh no positive, positive. Me I still like to remember about when I came here. Sometimes, I remember precisely in my bed and sometimes I fall asleep thinking about (sic) how I came here, how my life was here as a bracero, what I worked, what I lived, the experiences I had and it was (sic) all good for me.

AP: Did the fact that you were a bracero change your life in some way?

IM: Well in a way it did, you know. Because look, look where I am, I came over here. If I hadn't (sic) come as a bracero, I wouldn't have gotten to see the United States me (sic). If it hadn't been because ... first God and then I made the effort me to come over here thank God, I made the effort to come here, thank God, I made the effort to come over here, I did my part my I gave of myself (sic) did my part, I used my talent for coming here and my effort to come here and for me it was a blessing to get to get to know over here (sic) the United States and have (sic) come as a bracero. I might not have come, if it hadn't (sic) been to the bracero program, I wouldn't have come here to the United States. I would've stayed with my brothers over there in Tepi. Oh but since it was the bracero program, I said I'll go take a look, I got this notion at once to come over here to get to know (sic) over here the bracero program.

AP: Ok thank you very much.

IM: It's a pleasure. h