TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

ESTHER M. AVALOZ

This interview was conducted as part of a series on the Mexican American in Minnesota. Esther M. Avaloz, was born in Topeka, Kansas on February 21, 1911. Her parents were both born in Guanajuato, Mexico. Her father was both a field worker and a contractor for workers. As a child Esther spent time traveling from state to state. From the age of eleven she worked in the fields with her family. She went to school for one year.

In 1935, Mrs. Avaloz came to St. Paul where she met and married her husband, Gabriel Avaloz. They were married the same year they met and had five children.

Mrs. Avaloz discusses her family history as well as her husband's. She describes the life of working in the fields of Colorado and California. She also talks about her husband's job on the railroad, St. Paul's Mexican American community when she first arrived, the holidays celebrated by the Mexican Americans, weddings, and baptisms. In conclusion, she advises the younger generation to take advice from older people with experience.

This is a transcript of a tape recorded interview in Spanish, translated and edited to aid in clarity and ease of comprehension for the reader. The original tape recording is available in the Audio-Visual Library of the Minnesota Historical Society.
BARELA: This is Victor Barela interviewing Mrs. Esther M. Avaloz of 138 West Robie Street, at the State Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. This interview is for the Mexican American History Project, under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society. Do I have your permission to interview you? Do you agree then that this interview will go on to the Minnesota Historical Society?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: What is your full name?

AVALOZ: Esther Manuela Avaloz.

BARELA: Where were you born?

AVALOZ: In Topeka, Kansas.

BARELA: What was the year?

AVALOZ: February 21, 1911.

BARELA: Who were your parents?

AVALOZ: Vicenta Valdivia and Severiano Torres.

BARELA: Where was your father born?

AVALOZ: He was from the state of Guanajuato. I don't recall the name of the town.

BARELA: Do you remember the year?

AVALOZ: No, I don't.

BARELA: Where was your mother born?

AVALOZ: In the state of Guanajuato, also.

BARELA: What did your father do for a living?

AVALOZ: He was a field worker and a contractor. Both of them worked.
You said he was a contractor, what do you mean by that?

He would contract with farmers or companies and then he would contract the people to do the work. He also worked in the fields with the other workers.

Did he go to Mexico to recruit the workers or did he recruit them here in the United States?

In the United States.

Is this why he came to the United States, to work the beets?

I guess he was already here when I was born but I suppose he did come here to work.

Did you have other brothers and sisters?

I did, but they have all died now.

Were there a lot of you?

Four.

Do you remember some of their names?

There was Juan. They all died when I was still very young, but I remember him because he was the only one left. We had a Victoria, Juana and a baby named Visar.

Did they die here in Minnesota?

No, they died in Colorado.

Do you remember your parents?

Very little, because I left after I got married. I went back shortly after but my mother died and I did not want to live with my father.

Do you remember the year that your parents crossed the border?

No. They were here since 1902. They probably lived in different places.
BARELA: Do you remember hearing your family talk about the revolution?

AVALOZ: No. I think they were already here when the Revolution was going on.

BARELA: You mentioned that your father had seen President Juarez in person?

AVALOZ: No, it was my husband.

BARELA: So after your parents crossed the border, where did they go from there?

AVALOZ: They lived in Esmelda in Ciudad Juarez for a long time.

BARELA: From there where did they go?

AVALOZ: They went to Colorado.

BARELA: What did they do in Colorado?

AVALOZ: My father worked for the railroad in 1908. From Kansas they went to Colorado, where they started working the beets.

BARELA: Do you recall approximately when this was?

AVALOZ: No, I don't, because they did not talk much about their past life.

BARELA: So they went to work the beets?

AVALOZ: They became residents of Colorado. They lived in La Junta, Colorado.

BARELA: Do you remember La Junta? Did you go to school there?

AVALOZ: Yes, I remember. I went to school there for a year.

BARELA: What grade was this?

AVALOZ: I don't remember.

BARELA: How old were you then?

AVALOZ: I was about 10 or 11 years old.

BARELA: So by then you were working the beets, too?

AVALOZ: Yes, I started to work when I was 11 years old.

BARELA: Was it hard work?

AVALOZ: In the beet, yes.

BARELA: Did the family make much money?
AVALOZ: Yes, we made money because there were three girls and one boy and myself. We all worked. We worked during the summer but in the winter we stayed home.

BARELA: You worked in La Junta?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: Were there many Mexicans in La Junta?

AVALOZ: Yes, but I don't remember how many.

BARELA: Where did you go from La Junta?

AVALOZ: We went to Brawley, California.

BARELA: Do you remember the year?

AVALOZ: It was around 1926.

BARELA: So when you were in Brawley, the Imperial Valley, what did you do there?

AVALOZ: We worked in the melon fields. We would cover them with dry weeds. The Mexicans were not the only ones to do this work because other nationalities did it too. The Japanese were the owners of the ranches because they knew a lot about agriculture. There were not many Anglos that knew much about how to plant watermelon, melons, cucumbers, and squash. The Japanese have more experience at planting these than the Anglos. They would spread out the plants, put a circle of stakes around them, put a newspaper to the north to shelter them from the cold. This was the work we did during January, February, March, April and May.

BARELA: Did you also cover the melons with the dry weeds?

AVALOZ: Yes, so they would not freeze in case it got cold. Melon is very sensitive. We would pick it during July, but by then it was so hot people would pass out from the heat.
AVALOZ: They would put their sacks on their backs and pick the melon so that sometimes they would be carrying about 20 or 25 melons on their backs until they filled their sacks. Then they would empty it and start all over.

BARELA: Were there a lot of Mexicans working there, too?

AVALOZ: Oh yes, we lived in grass huts. We only had a roof over our heads. It looked like we were having a picnic outside.

BARELA: Like a little house?

AVALOZ: No, not even that because all we had was a roof and we cooked under it. Like I tell my children, you still see this in Mexico. Here we have plenty but we don't appreciate it because the more you have the more you want. So this is how we lived. If you had a creative husband, he could cover the four sides of the house. If not, that was all you had.

BARELA: Did you sleep there, too?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: Did you have blankets?

AVALOZ: No, we did not need them in that heat. It wasn't until three or four years after we were there that the farmers started building little houses for us with screens all the way around and roofs, because there were a lot of snakes and some of the people died from snake bites. Someone started to pressure the ranchers to provide better shelter.

BARELA: So you must have suffered a lot there?

AVALOZ: Yes, it was awfully hot. We were in Brawley for six months and for the next four to six months we went to the coast to pick prunes. We left around July or August. We stopped in Kochela and El Indio to pick onions for about a month. After we finished there we went to a place near Santa Barbara to pick apricots. From there we went to pick onions. When we finished picking prunes in September, we would go back home.
BARELA: Where did you pick prunes?

AVALOZ: In Hillroy, California.

BARELA: Was this during the time when you were 11, 12, or 13 years old?

AVALOZ: No, I was 15 when we first went to California. I was there until I was 24 years old.

BARELA: So you did not go to school?

AVALOZ: No. I never went to school. I worked.

BARELA: Did you only go to school for a year?

AVALOZ: Only a year. Whatever I have learned here has been through word of mouth.

BARELA: How about the other Mexican children, did they get to go to school?

AVALOZ: No, most of them did not.

BARELA: Did some of them get to go to school?

AVALOZ: Some did.

BARELA: To public schools or did someone come out to teach them?

AVALOZ: To public schools. There were some parents who wanted their children to get an education to have a better life and get ahead. My husband Gabriel wanted his children to get an education rather than working because there will always be work, but you cannot always get an education. So he always encouraged the children to get an education so they would not end up breaking their backs like he did. He worked laying track most of his life. He also did some field work.

BARELA: Were you married in California?

AVALOZ: Yes, I had my first child in California.

BARELA: Where did you meet your husband?

AVALOZ: Here in St. Paul.
So from California...

I went to Colorado, and from there I came here.

What did you do in Colorado? Did you work in the beets?

I worked the beets. I did that for two years. I also worked the beets here for one year, near Chaska.

What year was it when you went from California to Colorado? Were you 25 years old?

No, I was about 23 years old.

And from there you came here to St. Paul? Were you about the same age?

Yes, it was not long before I came here.

Here you met your husband?

Yes, I met Gabriel here.

Did you come by train?

Yes, by train.

Was it a long journey?

Yes, it was long. It took us about a day and a night. Something like that.

When did you come to St. Paul?

In 1935.

And you met your husband?

Yes, we were married the same year.

You mentioned that your husband was born in Mexico?

Yes, he was born in Mexico, but they brought him here when he was about five or six months old. They had also lived in Esmelda; it is between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas. The government at that time did not restrict anyone.

If you wanted to build a house you could live in it for nothing. His family built a house and they lived there for a long time. Until they came here, I think.
BARELA: Did he ever talk about his parents, where they were born or where they came from?

AVALOZ: No, his father did not tell him about his mother. I guess his father did not know anything about her. My husband was about 16 or 17 years old when his mother died.

BARELA: Did he remember their names?

AVALOZ: His father's name was Faustin Avaloz and his mother's name was Petra Galisi.

BARELA: What year was your husband born?

AVALOZ: In 1899.

BARELA: Was he born in Ciudad Juarez?

AVALOZ: In Chihuahua. The state of Chihuahua. I don't remember the name of the town.

BARELA: So they went to Ciudad Juarez and from there where did his family go?

AVALOZ: They worked in the fields.

BARELA: Do you remember the towns?

AVALOZ: He told me they worked in Dutch City, and all those places where they had ranches. His mother is buried in Emporia, Kansas and his father is buried here in St. Paul.

BARELA: So his father worked the beets?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: Did they ever go to California like you did?

AVALOZ: No. I never knew them. When I married him he was about 35 or 36 years old.

BARELA: When were you married?

AVALOZ: In 1935.
BARELA: At this time was he working for the railroad?

AVALOZ: Yes, he worked for 39 years on the tracks, until he retired.

BARELA: When did he retire?

AVALOZ: He died six years after he retired, so it was around 1966. He was 66 years old when he died.

BARELA: Was he treated fairly at work? Did he like it?

AVALOZ: Well, he had a missing eye. He lost it when he was young. A playmate shot an arrow and hit him in the eye. He felt that it could have been saved but back then people tried their home remedies first because they could not afford to take their children to the doctor. So his grandmother tried to cure him.

BARELA: Do you know how they tried to cure him?

AVALOZ: They would put drops in his eyes. His eye still watered so I think it could have been saved but he did not try to get it fixed. So this is why he always said he had no other choice but to do hard labor. He was always a spiker.

BARELA: Did he enjoy his work?

AVALOZ: Yes, he loved it.

BARELA: So after you got married he worked the tracks?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: And you stayed home with your family?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: When you first came in 1935....

AVALOZ: Yes, I came in 1935, but he was already here. He came here around 1918 or 1920.

BARELA: Do you remember some of the families that were here by then?
AVALOZ: Yes, this was when I met Mr. Aguilar, the Rangels, Celia, Lupe Cruz, the Coronados, Juan Rodriquez, Agustin Rodriquez, Alfonso de Leon, Esiquia Monita, Munoz, David Limon, and the Ruiz family.

BARELA: You said that when you came, there was not just one Mexican community, that there were others?

AVALOZ: Yes, there were those of the West Side, East Side, and the ones on the other side of the West Side. The people on the West Side would always get together and whenever anyone outside the area would come in they would consider that person an outsider. But even so, they all got along.

BARELA: Was there a group that was with the church and others for other things?

AVALOZ: Some would not come to our church because they already belonged to another church or because they would attend a church that was closer to where they lived.

BARELA: What was St. Paul like when you first came? You were coming from the fields, so it must have been quite a change?

AVALOZ: Well, it was a big change. As I tell my children, I am grateful to God for having given me this much. I am used to living different styles, poor and comfortable. I am very happy with what I have now. The difference was that we did not have to move around from town to town working like a tramp. Here I stayed in one place and I have gotten used to it. I learned how to drive when I was 16 in California. When we got married we bought a car. My husband never learned how to drive so I used to drive him to work. Every Sunday I would take my children to McCarrons Lake. They always took their friends. One time we took 12 children and three adults in our Model T. We were poor, but we had a good life.
AVAŁOZ: My husband liked to drink once in awhile, but he never ignored his responsibilities.

BARELA: Where did you live when you first came to St. Paul?

AVAŁOZ: We lived on Fairfield for nine years, in a basement that my compadre Frank Lopez rented to us. He was married to my husband's sister, but she died. We had three little rooms.

BARELA: How many children did you have?

AVAŁOZ: I only had two children. I have always been very compassionate with other people. There was a woman that did not have a place to sleep so I invited her to stay at our house.

BARELA: What was her name?

AVAŁOZ: It was Maria Felix, I think. I don't exactly recall her last name. They did not want to help her out and so she stayed with us for more than a year. Later there was another woman that lived with us for over a year. Her name is Pola Campos. She also did not have anyone to live with.

BARELA: Were all your children born here?

AVAŁOZ: Yes, well, the oldest was born in Brawley, California. All the others were born here.

BARELA: What is her name?

AVAŁOZ: Her name is Maria.

BARELA: When was she born?

AVAŁOZ: In 1931.

BARELA: When were the others born?

AVAŁOZ: Jorge was born in 1936, Agustino (Íñio) in 1938, he is going to be 36 years old, Nazaria (Chaya) was born in 1941, Juan is the youngest. They are all living.
BARELA: Do they all live here in St. Paul?

AVALOZ: Yes, except the oldest. He lives in New York.

BARELA: And your oldest daughter, is she married?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: Who is she married to?

AVALOZ: She married a black man, his name is Glaston.

BARELA: And the girl?

AVALOZ: She is married to an Anglo, his name is Mark Bauer.

BARELA: And the boys?

AVALOZ: Tino is married to Karen, and Jorge's wife was Pat. He is divorced.

BARELA: Were your first years in Minnesota hard?

AVALOZ: For me they were not because I had suffered a lot before. This was a better life than what I was used to having.

BARELA: Was the Mexican community united by then?

AVALOZ: No, when Gabriel's uncle came in 1918....

BARELA: What is his uncle's name?

AVALOZ: Pomposo Guerra, he and Luisa said that there were only a few Mexicans when they first came. Later on some of the Mexicans would stop in the houses of the families that were here. Little by little more and more people came.

BARELA: Were organizations formed to help out some of the new families?

AVALOZ: No, I don't think so. The only way they could help them was to let them stay at their homes until they could find their own place.

BARELA: Did you ever take in any families like that?

AVALOZ: No, I never did because I did not have room and, as I told you before, I always had someone living with us.
Were you renting then?

Yes, the first house we bought was in 1951 on State and Texas Streets. Then the government bought out the homes to build the Industrial Park. They gave us $6,000 for the house and a lot that was 50' x 100'.

And you had to sell it?

Yes, we had to. If we wanted to fight so they would give us more money it would have all gone to a lawyer for his fees. We did not put up a fight. Others did put up a fight, but I don't know if they got that much more.

From there you came to this house on Robie?

Yes, we only had three children by then. Gabriel, my husband, lived about 10 years here.

When you came, did the people celebrate the patriotic feasts?

Yes, they did.

Was your husband involved with the Anahuac Society?

I don't know because when I came and got married to him he did not belong to any society. But later he took part in the Comite Patriotico. For about 10 years, we were in charge of pop selling for the festivals. The priest would buy it and we would sell it for him.

For the church?

Yes, for the church.

So your husband did not participate in the Anahuac Society when you met him?

Not in the Anahuac Society. He was a member of the Comite Patriotico. Later my children became involved with dancing in the programs. They did this for a long time.
The oldest was the first one and my youngest, Jorge was dancing when he was four years old. We have a picture of my son Jorge marching for Flag Day in May. He wore a little Spanish hat but it rained so hard that his hat got all bent out of shape. He did not mind, he kept on marching. There were others that marched for that day. We did not have a parade but some did march for that day. Father Dicks liked to have the children participate. He was a good priest, but he did not last too long, about three years. Then Father Ward replaced him and did the same kinds of things.

Were the holidays you celebrated then the same as the ones they celebrate now?

I think those were the best. In the first place they were very orderly.

Do you remember how you celebrated the 5th of May?

I don't remember. My husband's uncle, Pomposo Guerra, had pictures of all the Mexican heroes and he would lend them out so they could use them. For the 15th and 16th of September, they would put them up and arrange them with a curtain for a background.

Where did they celebrate these holidays?

It was at the Auditorium for many years. Before, when they did not have enough money, they would celebrate it at Harriet Island, and also at the Neighborhood House.

How did they celebrate the 16th of September? Was it the same as the 5th of May?

No, it was much bigger. When they first started to celebrate the 5th of May, they would recite one or two poems to let the people know what the celebration was all about.
For the 16th of September, they would have the governor or the mayor speak to the people, especially if it was an election year. Humphrey was one of the speakers.

Did they recite poems or what?

They only told us how happy they were that we, as Mexicans, celebrate the anniversary of independence. They would thank us for having invited them.

What did the Mexican community present for the 16th of September?

About two or three years ago, they had a parade. I don't know if they did not have floats because they did not have any money or what, but they had a short parade. Sometimes they would only announce it. The first night there were not too many people, but the second night it was packed.

What type of things did you have?

We would have someone recite poems, a group of children would sing the Mexican National Anthem and other songs. Some would dance, the Rangel girls would always be involved with this. They are very good singers and dancers. It seemed as though the people were more enthused. The Auditorium is a big place and it would fill with people.

Who were the ones that organized the whole program?

El Comite Patriótico.

Was your husband involved with the comite on this?

Yes.

What responsibilities did your husband have for the program?

He helped to put up the alter and he would fix the booth were the family was going to sell the pop.
BARELA: Did whole families participate?

AVALOZ: Yes, whole families.

BARELA: Did you celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe's Day?

AVALOZ: No, we only had a mass and mananitas. I have never taken part in that. I did not go to any of those events until the children grew up and we could take them with us. We would even take them to dances with us. Sometimes I would not go to mass because I did not like to leave them by themselves.

BARELA: Were these dances for the patriotic celebration?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: Did you celebrate El Dia de la Raza (Columbus Day)?

AVALOZ: No.

BARELA: Did you have some church festivals that you celebrated?

AVALOZ: Yes, Father Ward liked to have "jmaicas", it is like a carnival. You have booths which sell foods like tamales, tacos, tostadas, palm readers, games and rides. We had a jail where we would throw in people and they had to pay to get out. This was to raise funds for the church. Mrs. Rangel said that she stopped putting these together because she doesn't know how to read. Mr. Rangel was a good person and he put on some good pastorelas. I know how to read, but I would not like to take on that responsibility.

BARELA: Did your children take part in all of this?

AVALOZ: Yes, they liked all those things.

BARELA: Did you ever participate in any of the church activities? Were you a member of any of their organizations?

AVALOZ: No, it has only been four years since I joined the Society of Guadalupe. Before, I did not participate in any of those things.
BARELA: Your husband was a member of the Comite Patriotico, did he belong to any other organization?

AVALOZ: My son told me that his name was in the Anahuac Society. That must have been before I met him. Later he liked to drink so maybe he'd rather go to the bar than go to the meetings. Maybe that is why he stopped being involved with them.

BARELA: Do you remember who were the people in the Comite Patriotico who showed more enthusiasm?

AVALOZ: Don Alfonso de Leon was one of them, Don Pomposo Guerra was another one, and a man that died long ago, he was Jorge Galvan's father-in-law. He was the one that started the Comite Patriotico again.

BARELA: You said that Father Ward organized a lot of things?

AVALOZ: Yes, he did.

BARELA: Did he also help the Mexican community?

AVALOZ: Oh yes, plenty. He helped them in different ways. People that come would go to him for help.

BARELA: Did your family ever have to go to Father Ward for help? Oh no, Father Dicks was already here.

AVALOZ: Father Dicks also helped the Mexicans. He would show us as being poor and showed how he helped us. Whereas, Father Ward helped us out of his own humility and kindness.

BARELA: At that time, did you celebrate weddings, baptisms, and funerals, the Mexican way?

AVALOZ: Well, not long ago, we had some Mexican weddings where the man had to pay for all the expenses. Now days it is the other way around.
AVALOZ: Some of my husband's relatives got married here and it was half and half. They both paid for the wedding.

BARELA: Were there some things about a Mexican wedding that were different from the other weddings?

AVALOZ: It depends on what type of food you want. If you want Mexican food, you can have it; if not you can have Anglo food.

BARELA: How are they different?

AVALOZ: Well, in an Anglo wedding you can have sandwiches and in a Mexican wedding you put on a whole dinner. Some of the food you would serve would be sopa, mole, arroz, tortillas, all those things.

BARELA: Would they have a dance with music?

AVALOZ: Yes, always.

BARELA: Was it at night, or during the day?

AVALOZ: In some parts they would celebrate all day, but now they don't. Then a lot of people would have them in their homes, but now you have to rent a hall and you can only be there a couple of hours.

BARELA: Was it the Mexican style to have it at home?

AVALOZ: Yes, to have it at home.

BARELA: Did this start in the morning at church?

AVALOZ: Yes, and from there to the house.

BARELA: Are there certain Mexican wedding songs that they played at the dance?

AVALOZ: When the couple entered, they played a march.

BARELA: I have seen some weddings where they put coins on the bride's veil, is this typical?

AVALOZ: No, now they have the dollar dance. When you dance with the bride, you pay a dollar.
Before that, they would pin it on the bride, now they have a bag for the money.

Is this a Mexican custom?

No.

Were the baptisms big celebrations?

They were the. I don't know if they are now. They would have a dance and give out a "bolo."

What is a "bolo?"

The godfather of the child has to give some money to the other children. Other times, they would throw out a fistful of money to the kids after church. This is the "bolo", it is a Mexican custom.

Something I remember is that when the "compadrazco" took place, the people would get together to do something. Do you remember any of this?

The only thing I remember is that when you baptized a child, you gave her to the godparents and certain words would be said so that the "compadrazco" would take place. The compadres would embrace each other.

This was something special?

Yes, because you have to respect those who are your compadres. They are second parents to your child. This is a responsibility that the compadres undertake, in case anything happens to the parents, they become the child's parents.

Does this "compadrazco" take place for the weddings?

That I don't know, except for the people in the wedding. Now they call each other compadres when their children marry each other. But, that is not so, they are not compadres.
BARELA: Did you have some sports such as baseball, soccer, etc.?

AVALOZ: Yes, the students at school have always played these, my children played football, baseball, and basketball. They never played tennis. One of them did, but the others did not.

BARELA: Did they ever play football, soccer?

AVALOZ: No, it wasn't until about 10 years ago that lalo Sanchez started this.

BARELA: Did all of your children go to school here?

AVALOZ: Yes, all of them. Two went to Mechanic Arts, and three to Humboldt.

BARELA: Where did they go to for elementary school?

AVALOZ: They went to Lafayette, Roosevelt, and Humboldt. Two went to Mechanics.

BARELA: Did any of them go to the University?

AVALOZ: Two of them did, but the oldest, Jorge, wanted to play in a band and go to the University. He only studied for one year.

BARELA: Did he study music?

AVALOZ: No, his field was something else, but he did study some music. Whatever music he knows, he learned at the University. He played with Bill Elstein.

BARELA: Did he sing?

AVALOZ: No, he plays the drums.

BARELA: Did you encourage them to continue their education?

AVALOZ: Yes, he has always like music and he feels this is what he wants to do. He won't leave that until he is an old man. He played around here for awhile and then he decided to go to New York. He is working there now.

BARELA: Did your husband also encourage your children to finish school?

AVALOZ: Oh yes, my husband encouraged them to finish. We did not have much trouble with our kids going to school.

BARELA: Did they ever encounter any problems in the schools?
AVALOZ: No, they never complained.

BARELA: Did you encourage them to go the University?

AVALOZ: We could not encourage them because we did not have the money to send them. We did not have anyone that could help us, like you do now.

BARELA: Were there some that went?

AVALOZ: Not many, but some.

BARELA: Was this because of the efforts of the family?

AVALOZ: Yes.

BARELA: Do you still maintain some of the Mexican customs?

AVALOZ: The food is something nobody wants to give up. They eat Anglo food, but when they come over to my house, they have frijoles and tortillas.

BARELA: Do you still prepare it?

AVALOZ: Oh yes, as a Mexican, that is something you like to have.

BARELA: Do you eat it every day?

AVALOZ: No, not everyday, but I always have some on hand.

BARELA: Do you make mole?

AVALOZ: Yes, I have a sister-in-law that makes good mole.

BARELA: Does your whole family speak Spanish?

AVALOZ: The two oldest do. The others understand it. They do not know how to speak correctly, but they try.

BARELA: Do you take part in any of the Mexican festivities?

AVALOZ: The one that participates the most is the youngest. He is married to a Black woman. One of my daughters is also married to a Black man. I have one son-in-law and two daughter-in-laws that are Anglos.

BARELA: What is the youngest's wife's name?

AVALOZ: Jay.
BARELA: Does your family still visit Mexico?

AVALOZ: I went to Mexico last year for six weeks.

BARELA: Do you have some relatives there?

AVALOZ: No, I went with a group of people that invited me.

BARELA: Did you like it?

AVALOZ: Yes, I liked it, but here you have all the comforts and you miss not having them.

BARELA: How about the rest of your family?

AVALOZ: Juan and the oldest girl went one time. They both loved it. They went to Mexico City and Acapulco. They really liked it.

BARELA: Your husband was well known in the community?

AVALOZ: Yes, he was.

BARELA: Why do you think he was so well known? He was a leader in the community?

AVALOZ: He was a very serious person, visited the bars, got to know a lot of people, and made friends easily.

BARELA: What do you think influenced your thinking and lifestyle the most?

AVALOZ: My experiences during my youth. Now that I am older, I have a closer view of things which make me very happy. When I was very young, I did not have the freedom to go out to the movies, dances, or make friends. Now that I have that I feel like I'm living the "Life of Riley."

BARELA: You have no desire to go back to the past?

AVALOZ: No.

BARELA: If you were to give advice to people that have not lived long or have not experienced as much as you have, what would you advise them to do in order to lead a happy life?
AVAŁOZ: My advice would be to have respect for the other people, and also to listen to the advice given to you by older people. When they advise you, they already know the results of the consequences. I have had that experience where someone has given me advice and has helped me. When I was in Mexico there was a boy, Luis, that lived in a bad neighborhood. I advised him to move out because his children would pick up a lot of the bad influences. He followed my advice and he sent me a letter telling me that they have moved to a ranch where they have some orange trees, lots of eggs, and they are very happy. He thanked me for my advice.

BARELA: I appreciate your cooperation.