TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  

WITH  

MR. AND MRS. CORONADO  

This interview was conducted as part of a series on the Mexican American in Minnesota.  

Mr. and Mrs. Coronado were both born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. Mr. Coronado's family came to the United States to avoid involvement in the Revolution. Mrs. Coronado's family had to come when her father was hurt in an accident in Texas.  

Mr. and Mrs. Coronado share their personal lives with us in this oral interview. Through them we can gain an insight into the Mexican American community on the West Side of St. Paul. They discuss in depth the history of their successful Mexican restaurant, "La Casa Coronado". Their lives have held many varied and fascinating experiences. Mr. and Mrs. Coronado close with their own very useful advice for future generations.  

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview 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.
This is Ramedo Saucedo interviewing at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arturo Coronado. Today is August 18, 1975. This interview is being conducted as part of the Mexican American Project for the Minnesota Historical Society. With me, is Richard Juarez, also interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Coronado. Let's start off with Mr. Coronado and ask him first of all, where were you born?

Coronado: In San Luis, Potosi, Mexico.

Saucedo: And your parents' names were?

Coronado: Juan Coronado and Guadalupe Morquecho Coronado.

Saucedo: Where were they born?

Coronado: My father was born in San Luis Potosi, and my mother was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

Saucedo: How many brothers and sisters do you have or did you have?

Coronado: There were four sisters and four brothers. First there was my two brothers, I cannot recollect their names. Then of course, I came. Then there was my sister Annie, and after my sister Annie, was my brother Saloman, who also passed away in Monclova, Coahuila, Mexico in 1912. Next was my sister Connie, also born in Mexico, that I can recollect. I think it was Monterrey then. Then it was my younger sister, I cannot remember her name. She passed away during the flu epidemic in the First World War. That was in San Antonio, Texas. We came to the United States in 1915.

Saucedo: How old were you at that time?

Coronado: At that time I was ten years old.

Saucedo: Do you remember what the reasons were for...

Coronado: We came here during the Revolution. My father was working for the railroad as a conductor in Mexico. That was in 1909, in Monterrey, Mexico. He was one of the first Mexicans to become a conductor in Mexico. During the Revolution it was pretty bad and we just didn't want anything to do with the Revolution. He
Coronado: didn't have anything against anybody.

Saucedo: So he wasn't really sympathetic towards one cause or the other?

Coronado: No, he was not. He was neutral. In fact, a neutral group in Monclova, Coahuila, Mexico in 1912 formed themselves into a neutral group. That means the engineer, the foreman, the first, second, and third brakeman, and my father the conductor, agreed with Pancho Villa, and all the revolutionary parties that they would work for them, providing that they would pay them with merchandise, clothing and so forth. In order to leave for Texas, we had money, but there wasn’t any place to buy anything during the Revolution. That was up until 1914, then things got pretty bad. We decided to go to Monterrey, Mexico. Things were pretty bad there also, so my father and mother thought, the best thing to do was to come to the United States.

Saucedo: What place did you come to?

Coronado: We came through Laredo, Texas.

Saucedo: Was this the second time?

Coronado: No, that was the first time. We came through Laredo, Texas in 1915, I believe it was in May. We remained in Laredo, Texas until sometime in September. There wasn’t any work, nothing to do there and my mother and dad were afraid that they were going to spend what little money they had with them. So we went to Dallas, Texas. That was in November. That was the first time we had seen snow. We just couldn’t stand the weather. We went back to San Antonio, Texas in 1916.

Saucedo: Did you have any relatives in San Antonio?

Coronado: Yes, my uncles and grandparents came to the United States in 1914.

Saucedo: What were their names?

Coronado: There names were Juan Coronado, and I can’t remember my grandmother's first name, I am sorry to say that. I also had two aunts, Lola Coronado, and Rafaela Coronado living in San Antonio, Texas.

Saucedo: And you say you returned to Monterrey?
Coronado: No, we didn't go back to Monterrey after we came to the United States. My father went back in 1918. My father returned to Mexico, because he wasn't making the kind of money that he used to make in Mexico. In Mexico, right after the Mexican Government took the railroad away, from I think America, Englishmen, whoever used to own the railroad, the government took it away and they used to pay my dad $250 per month, American money.

Saucedo: That was good money.

Coronado: Yes, it was. That's what they used to pay the American people that used to run the railroad. Anyway that is what a conductor got paid, a brakeman made only $85 a month. But anyway, we remained in San Antonio, Texas, I went to school in Dallas, during the winter in 1915. I had already finished my grammar school in Mexico. I started school when I was not quite four years old. I went to Dolores Institute. In those days there were not too many public schools in Mexico. That's the reason I went to Dolores Institute.

Saucedo: Mr. Coronado, you were telling us about living in San Antonio for the first time in 1916.

Coronado: Yes.

Saucedo: You were about eleven or twelve years old at the time.

Coronado: Yes.

Saucedo: Where were your parents, what were they doing and what was life like at that time?

Coronado: My father went to work as a shoemaker, and then of course, he wasn't making enough money. The money that we brought from Mexico was getting less and less, so in 1918 he went back to Mexico. He couldn't get a job where he used to work in the north part of Mexico during the time of the revolution, so he went way south by Puebla, Mexico. That's where he worked. Then I was very sick with that flu epidemic we had in those days. So my dad came and we remained in San Antonio. I went to the eighth grade in San Antonio. From there my father took me to the Brown's Practical Business College. He wanted me to
Coronado: take a business course in Spanish and English, so that we could go back to Mexico. He had a good position for me at Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico, with the American Melting Company. I did not like the business course. I wanted to learn some other kind of a trade, so I could go in business, I kept telling them. Then I took translation for two and a half years. I also took typing, bookkeeping, shorthand, and I didn't care for it. We used to translate all types of correspondence. All the mail that would go to Mexico or come from Mexico, we used to translate at the college. Then we would send it either to Mexico or places here in the Twin Cities. They used to give us those letters to practice. I used to see on the letterhead of each letter, Twin Cities. I was having difficulty with speaking English. I'd read and translate, but in speaking, I'd have an awful time. I told my mother and father, "Dad, I'm leaving. I'm going to the Twin Cities." My friend Fred Nesa graduated and came to work for Brown & Bigelow. I talked to him. I asked him if he could get me a job. I said, "I don't want to finish this shorthand, because I don't care for it." I was learning tailoring after my school hours, with the Mayo Brothers, in San Antonio. Mr. Nesa wrote to me and said, "Well, I'll have a job for you all right, but they only pay $65 a month because you didn't take the shorthand." I said, "Alright, I don't care, I want to go to the Twin Cities. I want to practice my English. I got as far as Fort Worth, Texas; then I sent a telegram to my father and mother, because I ran away from home. I said that I had a job in the Twin Cities, but they said, "No, you can't go there. It's too far away! It's too cold over there! It's close to Canada! to Alaska! Remember Dallas?! In 1915 remember how cold it was? Well, anyway, my father reported me to the sheriff in San Antonio, Texas. They stopped me in Kansas. The sheriff got on the train and he stopped me. He came to me and said, "What is your name?" Sure I'll give him a name, I said, "My name is Arturo Coronado." He said, "Where are you going? Where are you from? I said, "I'm from San Antonio, Texas, and I'm going to work for Brown & Bigelow."
Coronado: He said, "What kind of work?" I said, "As a typist and translator." He said, "What do you have in that suitcase?" I had all of my books yet, from the school, to finish my course here, or else to get a job and stay here. So when I found out that it was only paying $65 a month, I only worked for Brown & Bigelow three days. I said, "No, that's no money for me!" Then the Minnehaha Cleaners, in St. Paul had an ad in the paper for a bushelman. A bushelman is a tailor, but all they do is alterations, remodeling and alterations. So I went to work for the Minnehaha Cleaners.

Saucedo: What year was this?

Coronado: That was in 1924. The early part of 1924.

Saucedo: Was that the same year you arrived in Minnesota?

Coronado: No, I arrived in 1923. After I left Brown & Bigelow I went to work for the packing house. It was only paying forty-two cents and a half an hour. It was hard work. Then in early 1924, which was in January sometime, I went to work for the Minnehaha Cleaners for about two months. It was paying 33% on a dollar; piece work. I used to work from five, six, or seven o'clock in the morning, until midnight. My check, my first check was ninety-two dollars and fifty cents. I'll never forget this! I showed this to my mother and I said, "Look mother, see the difference between an office job, and tailoring?" There's where I learned some dry cleaning, and a little spotting. So after two months they stopped paying 33%, and they wanted us to work at the salary of twenty-seven dollars and fifty cents. I said, "No," I quit the job. In October, 1924, my father went to San Antonio, to sell the house and to ship some of our furniture to St. Paul. At that time, I bought a 1919 Model T Ford, in 1923, the last part of 1923. That's the car we made the trip with. Coming back in 1924, we stopped in Houston, Texas. In those days we used to get snow quite early, my father said, "Well, son, we can't make it anymore, it's too late. Now you remain here with my family, uncles and my grandparents and then you go back to St. Paul in the spring," which is what I did. That's when I met my wife!
Saucedo: You met her here?
Coronado: I met her in Houston, Texas.
Saucedo: In what year?
Coronado: In 1925, March.
Saucedo: Where did you meet your wife?
Coronado: I met my wife at a party.
Saucedo: When you were planning to return?
Coronado: Yes, when I was planning to return to St. Paul. Yes, that's where I met my wife. When I was ready to leave, I went to say good-by, and I said "Honey, why don't we get married?" Then we went to the City Hall or Court House, whatever you want to call it. We applied for a marriage license. They took my name and wanted to know where I was from. I told them I lived in St. Paul, Minnesota. I gave them my mother and father's name. Then they asked my wife her name and how old she was. She wasn't quite sixteen or seventeen. They said, I'm sorry, we can't give you a marriage license. You have to go bring your parents. So I told them, "That's impossible for me, to bring my parents. They are in St. Paul, Minnesota." They said, "Who are you staying with?" I said, "I am staying with my grandfather and my aunts." "Well, he said, "Come and bring your grandfather." I said, "Well, I'm afraid I can't. He's a very old man, but I can bring my aunt to represent me." He said, "Okay." Then they asked my wife to bring her father to approve our marriage.
Saucedo: Señora Coronado, could you give us a little background? Were you born in Mexico; what year you came to the United States; your brothers and sisters and who they are?
Señora: I came to the United States from San Luis Potosí, Mexico. I was born in San Luis Potosí.
Saucedo: And your parents?
Señora: My parents were Valecio Gamez, but the name was changed because there was no one else by the name of Gamez. So they changed it to Gomez, but my real name
Senora: was Gamez. My mother was born in a little small town in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. Her name was Serjia Navarro Martinez.

Saucedo: And you had brothers and sisters?

Senora: I didn't have any brothers. I had two sisters.

Saucedo: Are you the youngest?

Senora: No, I'm the oldest one.

Saucedo: You were born in what year?

Senora: 1908.

Saucedo: When were the other children born and what were their names?

Senora: They were born in Mexico, my sister, Estella and my sister Ana Maria.

Saucedo: Is your sister Estella the oldest?

Senora: No, I'm the oldest one and my sister Estella is the second one. Ana Maria was the youngest one, she passed away about seven years ago.

Saucedo: What did your parents do? How did they make a living? How did they live in Mexico?

Senora: Oh, they had a wonderful life. My father was a broker and my mother had a grocery store. We came to the United States because my father was looking for a sister that was lost in the Revolution. He found out that she was in Houston, Texas. So he went to Houston to look for her.

Saucedo: In what year did he go to look in Houston, Texas?

Senora: I don't remember what year, but that was before we came.

Saucedo: Did you come with him?

Senora: No, we didn't come with him. He went by himself and he found his sister. When he was with his sister, he was in an accident, so he was put in the hospital. Then we had to tell grandma and mother to go to Houston because my father was in the hospital and in very serious condition. So that's the way we happened to come to Houston, Texas.

Saucedo: Do you remember how old you were?

Senora: We came and visited my father and found out how he was. I was about ten or
eleven years old, maybe younger, I don't remember. We came in 1920 to Houston, legally, after my mother found out that my father was sick and he couldn't be moved. My father said, "Yes, I wish you'd apply for a residence". So I went with my mother to the American Consul. They said, "No, never"! He said, "If your husband is in the hospital, you can't support yourself and your three daughters. But if you can prove you can support yourself, you can stay in the states." Now, my mother and sisters and I were lucky. Like I mentioned before, my father was a broker. He used to transport merchandise from one city to another and he'd make a lot of money, a lot of gold. He had our passports and my mother proved that we had come to the States legally and that we had enough money to live in Houston, Texas. My father invested some of the money on building a home in Mexico because he planned to retire there. Then the depression came. He opened our grocery stores. He had three grocery stores.

Like supermarkets?

Yes, but before that he sent us to one store every Sunday, to help there people, and at the same time to learn the work of the grocery store, so we could help him in the store. But I married before he opened the stores. During the depression he lost everything because he charged all the merchandise to the people who needed it. After I was married, I went back to Houston. He had a restaurant then, and I liked it very much. He had one in Mexico, but I didn't get to see very much of it because he had cooks. He had maids. He had everything! I used to go to the kitchen. I loved the kitchen. One of the times I was looking to see what they were cooking and I burned myself in the face. I was lucky, I didn't get any scars. When I went back to Houston, I still had in mind that I wanted a restaurant. I talked to my husband about a restaurant. He said, "No, I won't open a restaurant for you because what are you going to do with the children?" Then he opened one.

In Houston?

No, he opened one in St. Paul. That was in 1938. That was his first restaurant.
Senora: He didn't let me cook. He hired a cook by the name of Bravo. He was the only cook. He closed it up shortly after he opened. Six months after he open it.

I told him, "If you won't let me cook, you're not going to make it"! So then after he closed it up, I insisted that I wanted a restaurant.

Saucedo: Where was your first restaurant?

Senora: It was 154 East Fairfield. That was my first one. I had only four table which he bought for me just before the war ended. I think the war ended that year. We couldn't find any equipment for cooking or anything concerning restaurants. So I moved all my things from my own kitchen in the home, and opened the restaurant with his help.

Saucedo: So your ambition was always a restaurant?

Senora: Yes, that was my ambition. I always had in mind a restaurant. Every time I went to visit my father that's all I had in mind. I used to see my mother cook and make all these good things. Then I wanted to come and share with all the people from the Twin Cities. That was my ambition, and I was very successful too. I said one day to my husband, "I wonder why I don't have business the way I should have?" He said, "Well, you do not advertise, I think that is one of the reasons you don't have the business." I said to myself, that advertising would take longer. So I picked up the telephone and called different schools and colleges. I asked them if they were interested in a demonstration to learn about Mexican food. They said, "Yes". Minneapolis was the first one to answer. In the beginning of my going out to cook in the schools, there was no kitchen so I used a desk with an electric, I don't remember what it was, but it was electric and I did the best I could with it. One of these schools was St. Thomas College, which my son had attended, before he went into the service. I'd make tacos for all the classes. Then I was in the St. Thomas paper for the first time. I was already happy with this and a reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune just happened to stop by. He said, "Did anybody give you any publicity?" I said, "No". "Well, how about letting me know when
Senora: you are going to get something special and I'll come and see you. You can give me a call.

Saucedo: What was his name?

Senora: His name is Paul Presbery. He said, "Here I've discovered you and I want everyone to know that you are here and about Mexican food!"

Saucedo: What paper was he with?

Senora: With the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Another time one school called me and said they were coming. I called him and he came to the restaurant on Fairfield and took the pictures. I had no way of fitting them all in because it was the whole school. I took them down the basement and let them go out the front as I was passing the food from the tray to the children. Some of them made faces because they had never seen any Mexican food. Especially the tamales. They looked at the tamales, wrapped in corn husks, and they'd say "What are they? No, I don't think I'd like that". Then I would give them an enchilada in their hands.

Then the Department of Education sent me a letter asking me if I would accept any Spanish classes so they could come and visit the restaurant and learn something about the food. I had a lot of invitations to go to the schools. I would come in and it was hard work for me. It was better for them to come to me than for me to go because I had to take baskets and all kinds of things in which to make the food. And then Doctor Mosalite, I am so grateful to him, he was a teacher at Macalister College, discovered me and added me to his paper. Then he started coming and bringing his class to the restaurant. They were student teachers. He said, "All the future teachers are going to be coming, if you can enlarge the place. We are going to send you all the Spanish classes we can. I'll fly to Washington to set up Spanish classes all over the state. We'll send you the Spanish classes! So we enlarged the place. We had classes from morning until five o'clock. We served them all. They were not familiar with the food. Then I had a problem. I gave out more food than the money I
Senora: was making! But my interest was to introduce the food and let the people know what the Mexican food was. I started making chicken and wine. We called it in Mexico "Cosina Alta", which is gourmet food. They used to say, "Oh, no, Mrs. Coronado, that food we don't want. We like enchiladas, tacos, and tamales."

Most of them wanted tamales. Then I decided to make a switch from the menu, I made a small menu and I put in the tacos and enchiladas. Before I knew it, I was in business, real business! The place was too small with four tables, so I moved to 184 Fairfield.

Saucedo: You moved from one corner to the other corner on the same street?

Senora: Yes. The church of Our Lady of Guadalupe was there. My husband and I took part in that church. We helped. My husband asked his employees, when they cleaned it, to paint the walls, the church walls.

We had a hard time getting my first license. My husband went with me to the courthouse. They denied the license to me. I mentioned to them, "Have you been to the place?" They said, "No, but we would be happy to come and see the place." After they came to see the place, they were very happy. They said it was something different, and something that the people from the Twin Cities needed. They were happy to give me the license because the place was all decorated in Mexican style. I had a few things from Mexico that my sister had sent me. At that time, we couldn't get very much here.

Saucedo: Now, can we get some dates? When you were on the corner of Eaton and Fairfield, that was your first restaurant. What year did you open that restaurant?

Senora: 1946, before World War II ended. I remember that day, because I closed the restaurant to join the people in the streets that were singing and praying with joy that the war had ended.

Saucedo: You were at the first restaurant for how long? From 1946 until what year?

Senora: 1953, I moved to the corner of Fairfield and Eva, just across from the Guadalupe Church.

Saucedo: So you were there seven years?
Senora: Yes, I was there for that long.
Saucedo: Then you moved over to Eva and Fairfield in 1953? How long were you there? From 1953 business improved?
Senora: Yes, business improved, but my intention was not to move out of St. Paul. I wanted to stay there. I had plans to open a patio. They denied the license, because they said the dust will harm the people. Then I just gave it up. I always wanted to own a patio, but that dream will never come true.
Saucedo: How did you decide to move to Minneapolis? Why did you make that decision and what brought it about? What year did you move to Minneapolis?
Senora: I didn't make the decision, or my family. When the Industrial Park moved in, we had to move and we had to leave the restaurant and our house. We looked for a place in St. Paul and we couldn't find one. Nobody helped us. My husband called the real estate people and nobody helped us from there. We used to go out after we closed the restaurant. He'd pick me up and we used to go looking for a place until three or four o'clock in the morning. We happened to go to Washington Avenue and we saw this big building for rent. I told my husband, "Well, maybe this is the place after we have looked for so long." I was ready to turn the stone. I said, "I thought all this time that there would be a place to build one."
Saucedo: What year did you officially moved into the restaurant on Washington Avenue?
Saucedo: What memorable incidents do you remember in the restaurant between 1953 to 1960? The restaurant on the West Side, you had quite a few students?
Senora: I had quite a few students. Also, I had a lot of people from all over the world. I was close to the airport, the whole running field. I had a lot of pilots and attendants and a lot of civilian people that came. I had certain families that came all the time. They used to all come and eat. Also, I had another family that came. They used to like my stuffed peppers. They were very unlucky, because when they went back to their place, which was Chicago;
their plane crashed and they were killed. So I lost customers in an accident.

I believe your husband and your son had an accident?

Yes.

Maybe I could ask your husband about that. Where were you going? Who were you with?

I was with my son, but we were in a man's plane who was just graduating from law school. His name was Ernest Beedle. I had a meeting with a councilman in Crystal Village.

Was this in reference to the restaurant?

We were negotiating to buy a place at Twin Lakes. There was a lot of room for a big restaurant. I had that meeting because they had reclassified that place which used to be a big dance hall, they didn't want any more commercial places there. That was supposed to be only for residential. Anyway, we had the meeting and we crashed taking off on the way back to St. Paul. Afterwards, we kept looking for a location. We went all over the Twin Cities. I didn't want to be downtown. I wanted to be in the suburbs. We were going to buy a place in Mendota. Somehow, they opposed it. They wanted to move the building. They wanted to go to an awful expense and I just couldn't afford it. That place was right across from the Sibley House. After that we kept looking and found this building on Washington Avenue, near Seven Corners. Also at that time mother had put our boy in the import business. That's when my boy opened up the place, Coronado Sales, on Robert Street.

Do you remember the street or the address?

One block from the drugstore.

Robert and Fairfield?

My boy was in the import business, 1953 until 1959. And then we found this spot over here on Washington Avenue and he came into business with us. I told him that mother and I were getting pretty old. I was afraid that we wouldn't be able to handle it, because we couldn't get any help in Mexican cooking.
Saucedo: O.K., now we are up to 1959 or 1960. There are a few pieces, odds and ends that we haven't included. For example, going back to your marriage, what year was that?

Coronado: That was April 28, 1925.

Saucedo: Your wife told us that main interests were in the restaurant business. However, your family comes from a long line of business people as well. What area was your dad interested in?

Coronado: What do you mean by interested in?

Saucedo: Well, for example, other than the restaurant business.

Coronado: My father, like I said, used to work as a conductor for the railroad in Mexico. But we came here to Minnesota. One of my grandparents was a shoemaker in Mexico. The other one was a tailor. I knew a little bit about both trades. When I went to the business school, after classes, I used to go to the Mayo Tailors. I learned tailoring, like I told you before. When we came here I went into the tailoring business. I went into dry cleaning.

Saucedo: You went in the dry cleaning business then?

Coronado: I went in the dry cleaning business in 1930.

Saucedo: Where did you have your shop?

Coronado: I had my shop on Snelling and University Avenue, it was a little place. I was there for about a year and a half. Then I got a bigger location about three doors away from the first place, which was four times larger than the place I had. I put in shoe repairing.

Saucedo: So altogether in that business place you had: cleaning, pressing, alterations, and shoe repair, what else did you have?

Coronado: Well, we used to make shoes for crippled people, when we opened the shoe repairing. There wasn't much profit in that, so we just dedicated ourselves to repairing shoes. Then I started wholesale renovating, in which I was very successful. I used to take care of all the small places from Dale Street to the city limits of Minneapolis and to the University Barn and also to the
Coronado: Ford Plant. That was the area that I was able to take care of. We had four people, blocking and cleaning hats; and two men picking up and delivering hats. I used to do most of the blocking of hats from all the other dry cleaners in the area.

Saucedo: So your father was a shoe maker?
Coronado: Yes.
Saucedo: Did he help you?
Coronado: Yes, but of course, he didn't know much about the shoe repairing. But with the equipment we have now, anybody can repair. See, we have everything in machine work. I started helping my dad to sew the soles, because he was afraid of the machine. He was afraid he would get his fingers caught in the needles. So I used to do the sewing of the soles and my father used to do the rest of it.

Saucedo: How long were you in the dry cleaning business?
Coronado: I was in the dry cleaning business until 1951.
Saucedo: And you were always on the corner near University?
Coronado: No, then we moved to a larger place on University Avenue. That was in the last part of 1933, I moved to 1563 University Avenue. I moved right across from the streetcar barns. There I had a wonderful business.

Saucedo: We haven't touched upon the members of your family yet. We know that you have a number of daughters and grandchildren.
Coronado: Yes.
Saucedo: Can you give us their names and where they were born?
Coronado: All my children were born in St. Paul. They finished grammar school. Then I sent my boy to St. Thomas Academy. I sent my daughter, Carmen, to St. Joseph's Academy. The rest of my children didn't get to go to those schools, because they were pretty strict and hard. One went to Mechanic Arts High School. The rest graduated from Humboldt High School.

Saucedo: Could you give us the names of all the children? And perhaps if you can remember when they were born?
Coronado: My boy, Arthur, was my first and only boy. He was born in January of 1926.

Senora: January 22, 1926.

Saucedo: Then who followed?

Coronado: Then Carmen was born, about a year and a half after that.

Senora: In April.

Saucedo: April of what year?

Coronado: 1928. Then Alvira, she calls herself 'Vira', because she doesn't like to be called Alvira. Vira was born in Houston, Texas. My wife went to visit her family. The doctor advised her not to come back until after the child was born. That's how she happened to be born in Houston, Texas.

Saucedo: After Alvira, who else?

Coronado: I forgot to tell you this. I was going to go into business. In 1929, my wife was in Houston. I decided I wanted to go into business. My father-in-law made me a good proposition, that he would go into business with me. See, I had three different kinds of jobs. I used to work in one place from seven in the morning until five. Then I used to work in another place, this was from the last part of 1925, I worked for Perler's Dry Cleaners. Then from six o'clock until nine o'clock at night, I used to work in another store as a tailor, and I used to work in the house making pants, jackets, pressing, repairing, and so on. That was the way I was able to save a little money for myself, so I could go into business. Then we decided to go to Houston, my wife was there. We were supposed to go and bring her back. I decided to go and bring her and my father-in-law. I got into Houston, I'll never forget this, the nineteenth of May of 1929. I worked instead of going into business. I worked because it was terribly hot. I couldn't take that weather anymore. I had been in Minnesota from 1923 until 1929. It was so hot, I got sick the very first week. I got into Houston on Sunday at one o'clock on the nineteenth of May. It was terribly hot. Monday morning, I went to look for work and I got another job as a presser on silks. The dry cleaners thought that silk
Coronado: couldn't be pressed on machines. They thought it had to be pressed by hand. They used to have all kinds of pleated dresses in those days. I found a way to pleat the dresses on the machine, providing that the pleats were over one-fourth inch wide. I discovered a way to pleat these dresses and these skirts on the machine, which made it much faster than doing it by hand. I was doing all this fancy pressing at the Perler's Dry Cleaners. So when I went to Houston, I went and applied for a job as a pleater, a silk pleater. They laughed at me! I told them what they had to do with the top of the pressing machine. They had to use the aluminum plate, instead of cloth, that we used to use before, for main sewing. Anyway, they fixed the machine the way I asked them to fix it and I got the job. That was the first week, then I went and got myself another job. I worked there for five months, then I left Houston, exactly the nineteenth of October. I came back to St. Paul. But before I left for Houston, Texas, Ernest Wells, who was the spotter for the Perler's Dry Cleaners; where I was working, the one that taught me how to spot clothes; and also, Roy, who used to work for the shop in Minneapolis, and myself, got together and we hired an organizer from Chicago, to organize the Presser's Cleaner's and Dry Cleaner's Union. We organized this. I left and right away after we organized our local, our Union, they wanted us to work fifty-four hours a week; nine hours a day; for six days a week. We cut it down to fifty hours. That's when I left to go to Houston. When I came back there was no more Union. There was no one to help us in the Union, except the milkmen. They were a very strong Union. They were the only group. There were no other groups. When I came back, nobody would give me a job. They called me a Bolshevik, because I was one of the organizers of the Local Union of the Dry Cleaners.

Saucedo: What year did you come back?

Coronado: That was October of 1929. Nobody would give me a job. So, in 1930 I decided to go into business. I started in a little bit of a place, with one person,
Coronado: one pressing machine and one littler boiler. Then I bought a hat-renovating machine. That's the way I started the business. I kept adding and adding.

Saucedo: How was it that both of you made the decision in 1946 to go into the restaurant business? What was the big transition or how did you reach that decision?

Coronado: I didn't want any restaurant, because I had a restaurant in 1938 and I didn't let my wife cook. All my children were too young.

Saucedo: Where did you have that restaurant?

Coronado: That was right next to the parking lot of the auditorium on Fourth Street in St. Paul. I forgot the name of that hotel. Maybe it doesn't exist anymore. We rented the place and I made all the tables and all of the chairs from Knotted pine. We fixed a beautiful place. Then we added a room, that we called the "Curious Room" we ordered some merchandise from Mexico through my sister-in-law in Houston. We only lasted six months, because I wasn't able to help and I didn't let my wife cook. We hired Mr. Bravo, as a cook. He wasn't too good of a cook and I was losing money in every way. I closed the place and I stayed with the dry cleaning business.

Saucedo: I imagine you encouraged your husband to go into the restaurant business after working for so many years at the dry cleaners?

Senros: Yes, he often mentions, when he talks to his friends that his wife turned him into a tamal, because in Mexico the men don't really go into the kitchen. It's mostly the wives. The rich ones, they just give orders to the cooks, what they want for the day. The men don't really know anything about the kitchen. All they do is sit down at the table. Also, we have the custom in Mexico, that we serve the men first, not the ladies. I used to do that in the restaurant. They used to ask me in the restaurant, "Why do you do that?" I'd say, "Because I'm used to doing that. That's the way I always serve my husband, when he is home. I serve him first, then I serve the children, I come last to sit down at the table." They couldn't get over the custom of Mexico. Anyway, I liked the customers. They were very interested in Spanish. One day, there was a
lady, she asked me if I wanted to join her. She said, "We have a problem with the Department of Education." I said, "Maybe I can help you. What is it?" She said, "They are going to prove that children, a boy or girl of five years of age, while learning another language, have a hard time learning their own." She and I and another teacher, I don't remember her name, used to go to Macalister College and demonstrate and prove that children, she had a class of small children, she taught them playing in Spanish. I was to take the food so the children could eat. Then we proved that children of about five or so, could learn a different language, not only one language, but more than one. Doctor Mosalite, as I mentioned before, went to Washington to set up Spanish classes. Also, another teacher from Mankato College found my restaurant. He liked my cooking. He also used to bring his class, also teachers. He used to tell me, "These teachers will also be the future teachers and they are all going to come and bring their classes." After this date my girls started serving the Spanish classes in the restaurant. I enjoyed very much being in that business, because I met a lot of people. I never had an idea of whom I would come to meet.

Let's move over to 1960 when you moved over to Washington Avenue. What problems did you encounter in getting set-up again, to get into full operation? Your facilities were larger there.

We didn't have any problems at all. First we ordered 200 Mexican chairs. We started with one dining room downstairs. It was a three story building. We had a big warehouse in the back. That's where I put my tortilla machine. Also, I used it as a warehouse, for the merchandise I had when I was in the import business. We had quite a bit left. I was also selling some of that. But we didn't have any trouble whatsoever. We've had very good business right from the beginning.

Did you order additional machines as well?

Oh, yes! I had to for the restaurant. We didn't have any equipment in that
Coronado: little restaurant, whatsoever.

Saucedo: Did you have any problems in ordering a certain type of machine that you needed?

Coronado: No, well, the tortilla machine, I didn't know at first where to buy it. Then I found out I could buy it from California.

Saucedo: Of the three restaurants that we have covered so far, the first one on Fairfield and Eaton, the second on Eva and Fairfield and the third on Washington Avenue, which one did you enjoy working at the most?

Senora: I enjoyed the first one because I used to do the cooking and I used to serve it. I had contact with the customers all the time. I'd never lose contact with them, because I used to cook, then go out and serve them. Some of the customers used to take my apron off. They'd say "Little mama, come to the dining room." So then after that, my daughter Rosie started cooking. She was at the University of Mexico for three years, not for cooking, she never took a lesson in cooking. She wanted to be a Spanish teacher. When she came back, she joined me in the cooking. She and I used to do a lot of cooking. A few years later I became ill and I wasn't able to do the heavy work. I've been suffering from the heart for many, many years. But I never gave up. The doctor told me to stop and I never did. In fact, we closed the small restaurant with the four table for one whole year. The doctor told me, "Don't open up, because if you do you are going to drop dead on one of those tables." But I insisted, and I didn't tell my husband that. I wanted that restaurant back again. So he helped me to clean it up again. Then I was back in business. We moved, as I mentioned before, to 184 Fairfield, across from the church. When the church was just built there. This used to be a pool hall. A few Mexican people that were there, took part in it and helped clean it up. I helped, my husband helped, we all helped. Except for one thing, I had some friends, they used to call themselves the "Milch" sisters. They used to play the violin.

Coronado: They used to play for the Symphony in Minneapolis.
One day I was talking to them, the "Milch" sisters, they told me they were going to have an open house for the church, to let the people know that we had a church, a real church! Then, she said, "Well, who are the guests coming?" I said, "Well, I'd like to invite the banker." She said, "If you'd like to, I'll go with you." So we went to the mayor's office and I think that at that time it was... Oh, I can't remember the name of the mayor, anyway, we went over there. We invited the mayor to come to the church for the open house and we cooked dinner for him. We also had a speaker, Esiquiel Moreno. Later he came with his family to St. Paul. The mayor was pleased. That was his first introduction to the Mexican Colony. From there on there was a society, the Sacred Heart or something, in the church. I can't remember the names. Anyway, the president of that society invited me to join him in celebrating the 16th of September. There were other people, Mr. & Mrs. Guerra. They used to take part in the program. But I used to be in charge of the queen for the fiesta. I was to present the queen on the sixteenth of September, until I was unable to do it.

Don't forget Mrs. Rangel.

Oh, Mrs. Rangel, she helped me on one occasion, because of Tito Guizar, a movie star, from Mexico, was coming. He was well liked here in St. Paul. Every time he used to come, I was invited to go and listen to him. One of the times, they asked me to set up a window display. I asked Mrs. Rangel to help me. I set up a "bracero" which I made myself, like they cook in Mexico with charcoal and bricks. On top of the "bracero", I set up a square frying pan. Then Mrs. Rangel made the tortillas by hand. I used to give them to the children. Our picture was taken while I was talking to the children and my daughter was doing the selling like the girls down in Mexico. I had them on the window, and we won first prize on that window.

What year was that?

Oh, I don't know. I'd have to look at the pictures on the clipping. There are
Senora: so many things for the stories: Festival of Nations; Fiesta de Montevideo, I used to go all over. I used to meet a lot of dignitaries. I met so many people, I wish I had the list of all the people I have met, from the restaurant. I met President Kennedy, I met the Attorney General. We were good friends with Miles Lord. He helped us a great deal, when we were opening up the third business. I wish I could mention all the people that I have met.

Saucedo: That was in 1960? How long were you there?

Coronado: We were there until we had the fire in 1965, the eighteenth of January. That was the restaurant on Washington Avenue.

Saucedo: Then after the fire you made the move over to where?

Coronado: To Twenty-three North Sixth Street.

Saucedo: Where you are now?

Coronado: Yes. Where we are now.

Saucedo: That was in 1965, that you moved to the present location?

Coronado: Yes.

Saucedo: Have you enjoyed being here at the present location more than you have at the others? Is it easier or more convenient?

Coronado: No, it was very convenient at Washington Avenue, because we had a parking lot. In fact, two parking lots. After six o'clock there weren't any people parked in the streets. They used to fill the streets for blocks and blocks. Up to four blocks north on Washington. We had cars parked on Eleventh Street by the tracks, on Twelfth Street and on Fourth Street. They used to park all over the place. When we had the fire, we had seating capacity for 500 people. We had two big kitchens, like we still have now.

Saucedo: So what are the problems you have encountered in this restaurant?

Coronado: There is a parking problem.

Saucedo: I noticed that your family has been quite involved in your business, not only the dry cleaning business, but also the restaurant business. Have they benefitted tremendously in learning how to, for example, deal with the public?
Saucedo: Or how to keep records in a business?

Coronado: Yes.

Saucedo: How in a way, do you feel that you have instilled in your children a certain philosophy of live in working with them from day to day?

Coronado: Well, I had all my children right in St. Paul. When I was in the dry cleaning my wife used to help me. I had two branch offices. My wife used to help me take care of one branch office. I hired somebody to take care of the other. But there wasn't anybody else that could help me in the business. So I used to have my boy, then Carmen and Vira come to the dry cleaning place. They really didn't have much to do, but you know, I wanted to keep them away from the streets after school hours. Then they learned how to mark clothes. Also how to wait on customers. Then Carmen learned how to press, because we used to have a lot of pleated dresses in those days, which were hard to press. My wife knew a lot about dry cleaning. She was able to take care of the customers, explaining, taking orders, promising of the job, and so forth. All my children helped me mostly in the restaurant, except one daughter, Aurora. She remained in Houston, Texas with my father-in-law. Then she came back and got married. She moved to Montana, because her husband was a veterinarian. All my children are still here in St. Paul, except Aurora. She still lives in Bosman, Montana, after her husband died in an airplane accident. He killed himself in his own plane. He was coming after the kid. We ran that big restaurant at the State Fair. That was a big place, we needed a lot of help, so my daughter from Montana used to come and help us. Then her husband used to come and take them back before school opened. In the last trip that he made, he had the accident and was killed. That was about seven years ago. My daughter still comes to help us at times.

Saucedo: Some families find it difficult to keep all the members of the family together. Would you say that because of the restaurant business that your entire family is very close knit? Or would you say that this is more of a Mexican tradition
Saucedo: to have the family together as much as possible?

Coronado: No, well, yes. I really can't answer that truly, because the reason why we kept the family together, was because I tried to keep them away from being by themselves after school hours. I used to take them to the cleaning shop. Often, they couldn't do anything. Then I used to take them home after closing hours. They did their homework. That's how they got to meet the public, get used to the public. They learned to be in business. They all liked the business very much.

Saucedo: In fact, I believe, isn't one of them in business?

Coronado: Yes, my daughter; Gloria Frias and her husband. They got married in Houston, Texas. I don't remember the year. Do you mother?

Senora: No.

Coronado: Then after they married, they came to work, that was in 1963. My boy was supervising, I forgot the name of the dry cleaning place on Payne Avenue. My boy gave him a job, he taught him how to spot and press clothes. Mr. Frias' father had the same kind of business in Mexico. Not dry cleaning, just pressing shops. When his father passed away, then they came and we gave him a job. My boy quit that job and went to work for the post office. He only worked there for a couple years when Mother put him in the import business.

Saucedo: Has the Guadalupe Church played an important role in your life, your wife's life, or your family's life?

Coronado: Yes, the Guadalupe Church has helped us a great deal. We also have helped the Guadalupe Church very, very much. We are still helping the church.

Saucedo: Do you remember when the church was first organized? Wasn't it a mission at one time? Do you remember when that was?

Coronado: Yes, I don't remember the exact place, but that was sometime in 1932, that we rented a store on Wabasha Avenue. That was an old grocery store. So we painted and cleaned it up. We had Father Guillemette, from St. Thomas College, that was our first priest. Then we moved to Fairfield Avenue, which used to be a
Coronado: pool hall. We fixed part of the building. We made a church out of it. We worked hard. Father Guillemette was still with us. Then Father Dicks came from Mexico and he took over.

Saucedo: Then Father Ward?

Coronado: Yes, Father Ward came after Father Dicks. He was with us until he passed away. That was about seven years ago. That was in 1968. It was when I had my first heart attack. He had a heart attack and then he died twenty days after he came to the hospital to give me my last rites, I thought I was going to die, but I didn't!

Saucedo: Did you belong to any organizations in St. Paul? For example, the first Mexican American organization? Do you remember what it was?

Coronado: Well, when I first came here, in the winter of 1923, we had what we called Sociedad Anahuac. They found out that I was a translator and a good typist. I used to type eighty-nine words a minute, So I must have been good!

Saucedo: I guess!

Coronado: They made me President of Propaganda. I used to write in English and Spanish to all the members of our society that we called Sociedad Anahuac.

Saucedo: Senora, could you give us any of the organizations that you belonged to and what roles you played with some of the organizations, as well as perhaps the church?

Senora: My first organization was related with the Guadalupe Society, which still exists with the younger generation. Then I belonged to the Business Women's Club, and Women of America Club. I used to belong to the International Institute and the Latin American Club. But it's been kind of impossible for me to attend all of them, because I'm sick now and transportation keeps me from going to meetings.

Saucedo: Both of you have done a tremendous amount in maintaining the heritage of the Mexican American in Minnesota through the foods, the restaurant business and giving the Mexican American a good image, that he can be successful in business. Can you tell us other traditions that you feel are extremely important to
Saucedo: instill in the minds of the children? Is this extremely important, that people of Mexican American heritage maintain some traditions? And if so, what traditions do you feel are extremely important? For example: the language; perhaps not only the foods, the music perhaps? Do you visit Mexico from time to time? Do your friends or relatives visit Mexico? Do your children go back to Mexico from time to time?

Coronado: My way of thinking, and the experience that I have had, in business, I started with the dry cleaning, and then after that my wife wanted the restaurant. So I told her, "Well, we can try, but I doubt it very much that it'll succeed." The people in this part of the country don't know that much about Mexican food. Anyway, that's when I opened up a place on Fourth Street in St. Paul, near the auditorium, on one side of the parking lot. Well, I wasn't too successful there, because I didn't take care of the business. I let somebody else run it and that didn't work out. From there, I didn't want the restaurant. So finally, after the World War II, prices, salaries, and everything started going up, so high, and I wasn't making enough profit to satisfy myself. So that's when I decided to go into business with Mama Coronado. But I never wanted a big restaurant here in the Twin Cities, although we had a wonderful clientele; right here from Minnetonka, Bloomington, the South part of Minneapolis, all the college towns south from the Twin Cities; White Bear; some from Duluth. Then we had the theater. We had the theater for about a year, showing Mexican films, and of course American films, but especially Mexican films. We were serving all the Spanish classes of the Twin Cities and also from other towns as far as La Crosse, Wisconsin. Also Montevideo, Minnesota, Duluth, some came from quite far away from the Twin Cities. Even some from Iowa.

I used to tell people, why doesn't someone open a store. My boy wanted to open a grocery store, when he was running the import business, but it would have been too much for him to take care of both. I used to ask some of my friends, "Why doesn't someone open up a bakery, open up a store here." After I moved
Coronado: to Minneapolis, "Why doesn't someone open a store, a bakery, to supply the Mexican colony?" And not only the Mexican colony, because we had a great deal of American people that go to Mexico. They like Mexican sweet rolls. After I sold the dry cleaning place, mother and I used to go to Mexico and we learned how to make candy. I learned how to make Mexican chocolate. I learned to do many things. That's why I used to tell the people, "Why doesn't somebody else open a store to supply the Mexican people with this?" We can't handle any more with this big restaurant! Nobody seemed to care. Well, I guess a couple of them did. Now my daughter opened a restaurant. She's very successful. She has a very good business. When we had the fire, we helped my daughter a great deal by sending the customers to her. In the place where we had the fire, we had the tortilla factory in the back, because we had a big, big building, a great big building and warehouse. We helped our daughter with the tortillas until we were able to fix this place that we have now. It took us over six months to finish the place. First, we started with the upstairs. That place had been vacant for thirty-five or thirty-seven years! Well, we spent a lot of money fixing up the place. Then we opened the downstairs dining room. But before that, we opened the restaurant, then we moved the tortilla machine and the rest of the equipment to the warehouse in one of the rooms. We had about six or seven big, big rooms, separate rooms as a warehouse.

Juarez: Now looking back on your lives' from the time you came here and started your business in St. Paul, what things would you do the same and what things would you do different?

Coronado: Well, now of course, it's different. Now we have to educate the people here, in the Twin Cities to like the Mexican food. If I was to start again, I would never start in downtown. I would have to be in the suburbs of the Twin Cities, with a big parking space, and with an appropriate Spanish, really Spanish-Mexican building, with the Spanish decor as a yard and for parking and so forth. Now, I would do that, because of course, don't forget that it cost us an awful
Coronado: lot of money to teach the people of the Twin Cities to like and to enjoy the Mexican food.

Saucedo: You made it easier for Zapata to make a profit!

Coronado: Yes. We started with tacos and also with a package of spices, selling in the stores. But it was too much for us to handle. Of course, I was getting old. I'm seventy-one years old, and I'm blind. But if I was to start right now, I would start a business in the suburbs.

Juarez: Do you still sell products in the stores now?

Coronado: No, not any more. That business was taken over by Mrs. Simon. She used to be a Spanish teacher.

Senora: The import business was taken over by her, because Arthur couldn't handle it anymore because he was sick.

Saucedo: Is she still in business?

Coronado: She's in Mexico. She sends the merchandise here.

Senora: She lives in Puebla, Mexico.

Coronado: We really did a very, very successful, wonderful business. But like I said, we had to stop the import business. We started with hand-tool-leather goods.

Juarez: Don't you sell frozen tortillas?

Coronado: Yes, we do.

Senora: We make tortillas, corn and flour. It took six months for my daughter Rosie and I to improve the recipe for tortillas, to make it good. First we had a problem in making it. My daughter and I decided there had to be a different way to make them, to keep them fresh and for the people to use them. Like I mentioned before, it took six months before we put it in the market. Also the bags had to be tested by the Health Department.

Coronado: There had to be a special kind of paper.

Juarez: Who handles that operation now?

Senora: The American Frozen Foods. Then we had a lot of individual grocery stores that buy them. My daughter Carmen, goes every Thursday to the factory and she
Senora: sells the tortillas to the grocery stores and the restaurants. There is three restaurants that buy tortillas.

Coronado: There is quite a few stores that buy. They buy through the American Broker's. In other words, American Broker's sell you almost anything you want in line of frozen foods. We had open the frozen plant, right over here at the Nicollet Island. But like I said before, my boy had heart trouble. It was too much work for him and we had to close it.

Senora: My son worked really hard. He wanted to build the business and he did. The last time he was with us, he'd really work. He'd concentrate on bringing up the business after we had the fire.

Saucedo: Did you rely on him more than you did on any other member of the family?

Coronado: Oh, yes.

Senora: Yes, we did. My son was very intelligent. He managed to build up the business. He was also the treasurer. We formed a corporation among the family. I was the president. I think I'm still that, because they gave us one year after my son died to change the names of the corporation. But then, I'll be through. I have been a volunteer. I'm no longer in the business.

Coronado: We advise them. We can't help, because she's crippled and I'm blind. The only one in charge now, as the owner, is my daughter, Rosie. Well, now I just don't know. The business is going good, especially in tortillas. We are supposed to make the best tortillas. Also we get tortillas coming from all over. We get tortillas from Chicago, and from Dallas, from California. But still they claim that ours are the best, which makes us happy.

Juarez: That's very good. Mama, I want to ask you a question. What things would you do the same or different looking back on your life time in St. Paul?

Senora: Well, if I was to start all over with the restaurant, I would never give it up. The business has been a part of my life and I like it and I'm used to it. I'm at home, especially after my son passed away. I used to tell my son, "Son, I am getting old and you can have me here, in the wheel chair, and I'll still be
Senora: with you?" He'd say, "Mother, don't worry, we'll be here." But I think I would never open up a big building, a restaurant, especially now the situation with employees. Some are short of work; some work only one day; and some just want to get easy things for them. They want a lot of money. It's difficult to run a business right now. But I feel one satisfaction, that is what I did in the years before: I not only introduced the food to the children, but also to the parents, and to the schools. I wish that my children had that opportunity, in the different fields, when they were small. I did a lot for the Department of Education, for the groups of children from the different schools. We consider that we had more than other people. During the depression, my husband had a contract with the Welfare. We were better off than anybody else. We helped a lot of people. They didn't have enough food. They'd come to my door and ask for a cup of sugar or anything. I was happy to give it to them, because I had more than enough. My husband was a good provider. He also was working for the Changing Case and he did very good. We never had anybody help us. We never had any Welfare from the County. We never had any help from the City, or any other thing. We did everything by ourselves. People used to tell me when we used to go away on our trips to Mexico to buy merchandise, "Oh, your children get like a beast, they all get together and work together." But that's the way we had taught them, to get together and to have unity. When my husband was in the business, I was home, I used to play with them. I used to play in the sandbox. The only thing I could never do is ride a bicycle. But I used to go all over with them. I grew up with them. I was young when I married. I had them young. I was twenty-five years old when I had my six children. My Rosita, came six years later. I enjoyed her very much, because the others were big. I spent a lot of time raising her. Now, she's the one helping us. She's the one taking care of us, because she's the only one at home.

Coronado: Well, she's the one that owns the business. We have nothing to do with it.
Coronado: We are retired. See, I retired in 1969, when I was sixty-five years old. Mother retired in 1972.

Senora: I know that otherwise, I would have gotten sick.

Coronado: The reason we retired is on account of sickness. I have heart trouble. I have a pace-maker with me now. I'm due for my other pace-maker next year, if God gives me the grace to live that long.

Saucedo: Who has been running the business now? Which daughter?

Coronado: Rosa, and Carmen, with the help of some of my grand-daughters. Then of course, the boys. But when it comes to the cooking, it's the family. We had up to fifty-four people in the restaurant, when we had the Mariachi group. Now this is going back to six years ago. But like she said before, wages have gone up so high. Prices are going up so high in corn, flour, shortening, lard, we don't used lard at all, but we do sell it wholesale. Now we serve as brokers also. We sell cheese, and beans by certain amounts in sacks and all kinds of spices. But if I was to start all over again, like I said, we would start in a restaurant of about, say, no more than a hundred people. Then you don't have any trouble with help. Also, they claim that there are so many millions of people unemployed. But they don't want to go to work. They go to work and they maybe work a week and then they quit. Then they want to go on Social Security or Welfare. It's too much trouble for a big business now. A lot of big restaurants have closed. Lots of big restaurants right here in the Twin Cities. Not only in Minneapolis, but also in St. Paul. But I still say, like I said before, that I do not know or understand why some of our people have not gone into other businesses. I can't understand why!

Saucedo: If your grandchildren, say, right out of high school, were to ask you, "Grandpa or Grandma, what advice do you have for me?" Would you encourage them to go into business? What would you say to them?

Coronado: Well, no. I told them and I've been telling them, to go to the University. I've been trying to have some of my grandchildren, to take medicine. But up
Coronado: until now, none of them have agreed to it. Now my grand-daughter, I had three of them, are going to the University. They are taking I don't know what. They take one thing this year, then they take another thing next year and so on. Up until now, I don't know what they are going to do. I have a grand-daughter, working for 3M. She took programming at Control Data. She was the only girl in that school that graduated with big honors. That's the one that's working for 3M now, getting a big salary.

Saucedo: What's her name?

Senora: Marcia Yollanda Rodriguez. She is Carmen's daughter.

Coronado: I also have a grandson that took science for a year or a year and a half at the University. Then he went and enlisted in the service, because he was due to be called for service in the trouble that we had in South Vietnam. So he went and he enlisted and he served two years. But then he went and got married. Now he goes to school at night. I think he's going to go this year full time?

Senora: Yes, he's planning to continue his education. So is his wife.

Coronado: He is a very intelligent kid. You know him?

Senora: Carlos Rodriguez.

Saucedo: So your advice then, is to continue their education as much as possible?

Coronado: Oh, yes, by all means!

Senora: I was not very lucky to get a very good education. I was unfortunate enough to be part of the Revolution in Mexico. My experience was very bad. Then when we came in 1922 to Houston, Texas I only had been to school one day and the doctor discovered that I had rheumatic fever. I had that before. From that I had heart trouble. I have had heart trouble all my life. But now, it's getting bad. As I'm getting older, it's getting worse. So then my father had a tutor in Spanish, not English to help me. When I came to St. Paul, after I married my husband, I didn't know a word of English. They asked me, "How do you say 'dress' in Spanish?" And I started by telling them a dress was there. I went over and changed into a dress. Then I figured that it was very impor-
Senora: important for me to be sure of English. They had classes at night for English. I only attended one night, because I had my son I couldn't leave him alone. I was always attached to the children very much. I played with them. I did everything the children would like or wanted to do. They cooked for me, all of them, even my son. The English that I know, I taught to myself, I don't like to say it, but it's the honest truth. On Sundays, I would lay the newspaper on the floor and look at the comics. I'd tell myself, that's why my English is not correct. I didn't go to school more than one day. English is very hard to speak.

Coronado: Well, I'm sorry to interrupt you Mama, but the question you asked me, I do like to see more Mexican people in business. Because we do need other merchants in different fields: like groceries, bakeries, butcher shops. The colony and the neighborhood need them. But I do not understand why they haven't tried it.

Saucedo: Through your efforts, I know you have done much to give the Mexican American in Minnesota, a favorable reputation. I know your family and friends who listen to this tape in the future, will find it quite informative. We want to thank you for allowing us into your home and making this recording, and conducting this interview on behalf of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Coronado: Thank you! We are very happy to tell you our troubles and our good times!

Senora: Thank you.