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

Mr. Francisco Guzman was born in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico to a very well to do family. He joined the military service when he was very young. After getting his discharge from the service, he and his wife decided to come to the United States for a visit and find out how life in the United States was like. They had planned to return to Mexico as soon as their money got low. They crossed the border at Presidio, Texas, and lived near Malpa, Texas for a while than moved to Fort Worth, Texas where they contracted to come to the beet fields in Minnesota in 1929. They liked Minnesota so well that they decided to remain and make their home in St. Paul.

Mrs. Guzman was fourteen years old when she married her husband in 1922. They have seven children, the oldest daughter was born in Mexico, one son was born in Texas, and the rest were born in Minnesota.

Mr. and Mrs. Guzman give their advice to the young people.

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded Spanish interview, edited and translated 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.
INTERVIEW WITH MR. FRANCISCO GUZMAN AND MRS. DOLORES RODRIGUEZ DE GUZMAN

July 17, 1975

Barela: This is Victor Barela, interviewing Mr. Francisco Guzman and Mrs. Dolores Rodriguez de Guzman of 463 Iglehart Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota, for the Minnesota Historical Society. Today is July 17, 1975. Do I have your permission to take an interview from you?

Guzman: Yes, you do.

Barela: What is your full name?

Guzman: Francisco Guzman.

Barela: Where were you born?

Guzman: San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico.

Barela: What year were you born?

Guzman: October 4, 1900.

Barela: Who were your parents?

Guzman: Mariano Ulalio Guzman and Salomea Rico.

Barela: When were they born?

Guzman: I don't know.

Barela: Where was your father born?

Guzman: My father was born in Spain.

Barela: Do you know the town?

Guzman: I used to hear him say "Sevilla".

Barela: Where was your mother born?

Guzman: She was born in La Jolla, Guanajuato, Mexico.

Barela: What did your father do for a living?

Guzman: He was a cattle rancher.

Mrs. Guzman: His father owned a lot of property, he had a big ranch. He also had a large family. He had up to 29 men working for him. He doesn't know how many acres of land he had. All he did was collect the money. He had other people do all the work. My husband's mother had servants do the work for her.
Barela: His family was well off?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, very well off. The whole family was well off.

Barela: Did you have any brothers?

Guzman: Yes I did. Jose, Ipolito, Leandro, Faustino and Jesus, they have all died now.

Barela: How about sisters?

Guzman: Yes, there was 16 of us.

Barela: What were some of their names?

Guzman: There was Maria, Ana, Ausensia, Ortensia, Aurelia, Juanita, I don't remember the others.

Barela: So there were 16 in your family. Fourteen children and the parents?

Guzman: No, there was 16 children plus the parents.

Mrs. Guzman: His mother died when she had the 16th child. She was still very young.

Barela: And what is your full name, Mrs. Guzman?

Mrs. Guzman: Dolores Rodriguez. This was my maiden name.

Barela: Where were you born?

Mrs. Guzman: I was born in the state of San Luis Potosi, in a small town called "Chacas".

Barela: I only had my mother and my sister. My father did when I was very young, I didn't know him.

Barela: What was your mother's name?

Mrs. Guzman: Angela Rodriguez. She came to St. Paul and from here she went back to Mexico.

Barela: Is she still living?

Mrs. Guzman: No, she died around 1952.

Barela: Where was she born?

Mrs. Guzman: She was born in Chacas.

Barela: And when were you born?

Mrs. Guzman: I was born April 26, 1907.
Barela: How did your mother support the family?

Mrs. Guzman: She worked in restaurants in Mexico.

Barela: You said you had a sister, what is her name?

Mrs. Guzman: Belen. Her husband was killed and she lived with my mother.

Barela: Is she older or younger than you?

Mrs. Guzman: She is older. She is the only relative I have.

Barela: Do you remember your parents?

Guzman: Yes, very little. I remember my father well, he died in 1930. Whereas, my mother died when I was very young. I was about seven or eight years old.

Barela: Do you remember your parents Mrs. Guzman?

Mrs. Guzman: Only my mother. From here she went to Mexico and that is where she died.

Barela: Did she encounter a lot of hardships?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, during the Revolution. I remember when she used to go to work. I don't know how we survived in the little town where we lived. From there we went to the state of Chihuahua with the help of a stepsister. From Chihuahua we went to a small town named "Ojilana" near the river and from there we crossed the border to the U.S. At that time all you had to do was pay $8 dollars to get across. They would wash us like cattle, weighted and measured us, then take our picture and gave us a receipt for the $8 dollars and we came across. It was much easier to come across the border then.

Barela: What do you recall about the Revolution?

Guzman: When I was very young I remember seeing the troops. Then the President Porfirio Diaz, fell. It was chaos with one group fighting another until Victoriano Huerta came into power. He organized the government not only in the capital, but all over Mexico. I was very young and this is the impression I got, but maybe it was different.
Barela: You must have been about 10 years old?

Guzman: Yes, about 10 years old.

Barela: Did you get to see any of the atrocities of the Revolution?

Guzman: No, I did not get to see any of that. I heard of them in other places. The government was the one that committed most of the atrocities. As soon as they heard that there was a revolutionary in the area they would come and dig him out. Sometimes when someone disliked someone else they would tell the government he was a revolutionary and they would go after him. You could count on more mercy from the revolutionaries than from the government. People were afraid of everyone.

Barela: Did you get to see any of these things?

Guzman: No, I just heard about them. There was an incident when someone got the government after my father's godchild. He was a very quiet and honest person. I guess they did that out of jealousy. There was a calvary unit that came to our town looking for pasture for their horse which was starving. There was also one time that they robbed us. Tiburcio Avalos and Mariano Ortega, who were good friends of the family were in charge of gathering the harvest at Puerto Nieto, our hacienda. My father had me working with them. I helped as much as I could in gathering the harvest, but when it came to loading the donkeys I wasn't much help. After we had finished loading the donkeys, one of the government man came and asked where we were going and we told him we were going into town. He was upset because he said that we were always hiding the things they needed. So he asked us to go with him. There were about 50 donkeys loaded with grain and about 15 or 20 men, my brothers and some friends. He took us where the rest of his men were. They unloaded the donkeys and kept the grain. One of the men asked if we could have our sacks back, because we could not continue to work without them. They agreed to let us have the sacks as
long as we piled the grain for them. They let us go and we went back to San Miguel. During the two days that we were held captive they did not feed us. Mr. Avalos had a big house in San Miguel and we went back and started to gather some more crops. Just as we had completed filling the two big trucks with grain the "Carransistas" came and took the whole load. They also took the donkeys and wheat we had because they had about 2,000 men and horses to feed. I begged one of the lieutenants not to take all the wheat because my father had other cattle to feed, but they took it anyway. They also wanted to know where they could get some more supplies. We directed them to "Marcial" which was about an hour and a half from where we were. So they left and we went had to go with them. In "Marcial" they had their fill of everything that the ranchers had. They loaded their horses up and left. They were so happy that they sang "LaCucaracha" and smoked "Alfonso XII" cigarettes. I got home after three days. They did not feed us the whole time we were with them. Most of them were very poor people so you would think that they would not like to see someone else go hungry, but I think they were affected by the suffering they had gone through and they wanted to see someone else in that same position. I thought of all these things later, we were all Mexicans and we should've cared about one another. It is very sad when people only think of themselves. There was a man, Porfirio Lopez, who had land next to one of my father's haciendas, he had an apple orchard and would hire people to pick the apples for him. For every bushel they picked for the boss, they would pick one for themselves. One time the people picked all the apples and left him with nothing to show for all his hard work. Life was hard during the revolution. The "Carransista" government and troops had no discipline at all, they wanted to take over everything.

Mrs. Guzman, do you remember anything about the revolution?
Mrs. Guzman: No, I don't remember any of it. I was very young when we came here. I don't even remember what it was like when we left. One of my sons took us to Mexico one time and he asked me where I wanted to go. I told him I wanted to go to Chacas, where I was born. But they told him that there weren't any roads to get there. A year later we went to Chacas after they had made a road. It was very nice. Then my son wanted me to show him around the town, but I could not remember any part of it. The only thing I remembered was the church of St. Jesus that my mother used to talk about. We asked a boy in the town and he said that it was on the other side of the town.

Barela: Did you get married in Mexico?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes in Mexico. In a town near the border, Ojinada, Chihuahua. That is where we moved to and I grew up there. I met my husband there when he was in the service.

Barela: The Mexican service?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, he was in the military service. We were married there and my oldest daughter was born there.

Barela: When did you get married?

Mrs. Guzman: In 1922.

Barela: You must have been very young?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, I was 14 years old. He was 22 years old.

Barela: So you were in the military service, Mr. Guzman?

Guzman: Yes, I was in the service.

Barela: When did you decide to come to the United States?

Mrs. Guzman: Right away, even before we were married. When my husband proposed to me, I suggested that he leave the service and do other type of work. He had been in the service since he was very young, so he agreed. It was a year before he was discharged from the service and during that time the baby was
Mrs. Guzman: born. He decided that since he was very young he had wanted to come to the United States. He had a lot of offers to go to Mexico City, but he did not want to go.

Barela: What year did you decide to come to the United States?

Guzman: We crossed the border on October 8, 1922.

Barela: Where did you cross the border?

Guzman: Presidio, Texas.

Barela: Why did you want to come to the United States?

Mrs. Guzman: The reason people come here is because they are very poor and they want to work. But that was not our reason, while we were waiting for my husband to be discharged we were receiving some money. We had plenty of money when we came here.

Barela: Did you come to the United States to visit?

Mrs. Guzman: We came to visit, our visas were good for a year. We wanted to travel and see what it was like in the United States.

Guzman: Yes, we wanted to stay here for a year and see what it was like!

Mrs. Guzman: We had money, we did not come to work.

Guzman: We were going to travel and as soon as the money ran out, we were planning on going back to Mexico.

Mrs. Guzman: But then we liked it, so we stayed here.

Barela: Where did you go first?

Mrs. Guzman: We crossed the border at Presidio, there weren't any trains or other public transportation, so we rode in the mail truck to Malpa, Texas. My husband went to work in the railroad.

Barela: What type of work did you do?

Guzman: I would do everything. I laid the tracks and unload the train.

Barela: How much money did you make in a day?

Guzman: We worked 10 hours and we earned $2.50. At that time that was good money.
Guzman: Everything was cheaper.

Barela: And you were at home with your child?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, I did not work.

Barela: After Malpa, where did you go?

Guzman: It wasn't Malpa where I worked, it was a camp named Strobol. It was a railroad station. After we finished there we moved on to another camp.

Barela: From Strobol where did you go?

Guzman: We went to Alpine, Texas.

Mrs. Guzman: He was working for the highway department. He worked two years for them. We lived in large tents among the snakes. There is a lot of snakes in Texas.

Barela: Was this in Alpine, Texas?

Mrs. Guzman: Near there.

Guzman: Sometimes my son and I would walk to the store, which was about a mile from where we lived and we would see a lot of snakes hanging from the trees.

Barela: What did you do in that job?

Guzman: There were about 8 or 10 men and we would clear the way for the machinery to come in. The small trees we would cut down with axes and for the bigger stuff we would use dynamite. We used good equipment. Before this there weren't any roads. It was not until 1925 when they started making roads for the cars.

Barela: Were there other Mexicans working there?

Guzman: There were only five of us. All together there were about 100 men, but all the others were of different nationalities.

Barela: From there where did you go?

Guzman: We went to Wichita, Kansas.

Barela: What type of work did you do there?

Guzman: We went to pick cotton. When we finished there, we went to Forth Worth
and there I worked digging ditches and laying pipes for the gas company. Later I went to work for the Round House of the Soo Pacific Railroad.

From Wichita where did you go?
To Fort Worth, Texas. After Fort Worth, we came here.
What did you do at Fort Worth?
I worked at the Round House. First for the gas company and then in the Round House.
And from there to Minnesota?
Yes, we were contracted in Fort Worth for the beet fields. We worked for seven years in the beets year after year. When we came to Minnesota we liked it and we stayed here. Then my mother, my sister and her husband worked with us.
Where did you work the beets?
Le Sueur. We worked for the same farmer for seven years.
We also worked near Chaska.
This is where they take the beets and make the sugar.
When they deported a lot of people, this is where they took them from.
They would not give them their checks until they got on the trucks that would take them back to Mexico.
After we finished our work, the farmer that we worked for told us that they were rounding up all the Mexicans in Chaska to take them back to Mexico. All the farmers were supposed to take their people and put them on the trucks. He took us to Chaska to see if they would take us back.
There was an apartment or a hotel where they were all gathered. Some of the men were outside very angry because they could not get their checks until the trucks came to take them. My husband went to the office and came back with his check and the others were angry. We did not know why they gave it to him and not to the others. We did not know what was going
Mrs. Guzman: on.

Guzman: We did not mind going back to Mexico, because that was our country. I came by myself, so I thought it would be good if I could get a free ride back to Mexico.

Barela: Did you suffer a lot of hardships, while working the beets?

Mrs. Guzman: Many. My daughter, Leonor, was just learning how to walk when we picked cotton. We did not have anyone to leave her with, so we would take her to the fields with us. Since she did not walk one of us had to carry her all the time. When she fell asleep we would laid her on his or my jacket on the ground. When we worked the beets, she would follow us. She would be up to her knees in mud. She would fall asleep where ever she fell. She suffered a lot with us.

Barela: How did you get to Minnesota?

Mrs. Guzman: We came by train.

Guzman: We were contracted in Forth Worth. There were many people that came at the same time we did. They would drop us off according to where we were assigned to work. Some of them went to Minnesota, some to North Dakota and other parts. We stayed at the farm for six months.

Mrs. Guzman: You suffered when you work in the fields and have children. We stopped working the beets when we had the other children. Later we went back to the fields and picked onions. But this was during the summer when the children were on vacation. We would take all the children to work.

Barela: When you came to Minnesota you only had one daughter?

Mrs. Guzman: No, we had two children. We had Teodoro and Leonor. One was born in Forth Worth, Texas.

Barela: What year did you come to Minnesota?

Guzman: April 15, 1929.

Barela: You did not come to St. Paul at that time?
Mrs. Guzman: Yes, this is where we came. And this is where we have been most of our lives.

Barela: Did you live in the West Side?

Mrs. Guzman: No, we did not.

Barela: Where did you live?

Mrs. Guzman: On Payne Avenue.

Barela: You moved around?

Mrs. Guzman: We moved because it was a very small place. There were only three rooms and when the other children came we did not fit. We had about five children by then. We moved to Northeast which was a bigger place.

Guzman: The house was in bad shape. We nearly froze in the winter time.

Barela: Did the cold come in the house?

Guzman: Yes. When we worked the fields, the farmers only had temporary shelter for us.

Mrs. Guzman: My son Frank, works with the migrants, Robert works in the unemployment office, my son that lives upstairs works in construction and Teodore works at the food stamp center.

Barela: Do you remember what St. Paul was like when you first came?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, my son Roberto and I were just talking about a little boy that drowned on Grove Street. He fell in the river and his brother tried to save him and drowned. I remember we used to live by 12th Street, where the market is, except that we lived on 13th Street. Grove Street was around there. Everything is very different now.

Barela: You did not live in the Mexican community?

Mrs. Guzman: No, we have always lived outside of the area.

Barela: Did you go to church in the West Side?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, we went to mass there.

Barela: You did not participate in any of their festivities?
Mrs. Guzman: No.

Guzman: No we have never been involved in their activities. We would go visit and that was it.

Barela: Did you know some of the families that lived in the West Side?

Mrs. Guzman: My husband knows some of the people there. These are people that we met while working in the beets. Irene Montez, her husband's name is Marcelino Rivera, she is my comadre. Her sister, Gregoria, is also godmother to one of my other girls.

Barela: Were they already here, when you came?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, they were already here. They are from Colorado.

Barela: What do you recall about the church?

Mrs. Guzman: Only what I already told you. We went to mass there and later the priest bought or rented the whole place. Before that the other half of the building where the church was, used to be a bar. I don't know how the priest did it, but that was where we went to church.

Barela: Who was the priest at that time?

Mrs. Guzman: Father Dicks. He spoke Spanish. I don't remember what happened to him. I think he died and then Father Ward replaced him. Father Ward was the one that was there the longest.

Guzman: Father Jose also died.

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, there was another priest, Father Jose. He was a good priest.

Barela: You mentioned that the church was a bar?

Guzman: It was a billiard and a bar. It had two floors. We did not have a church and the priest bought it and fixed it and made it into a church. Now there is nothing left, everything was torned down.

Barela: Did you participate in any of the feasts of the church?

Guzman: No.

Mrs. Guzman: One of my girls liked to dance, so I took her to a dance, but I did not
Mrs. Guzman: like it because there were Blacks, Indians and Anglos. If it was supposed to be a Mexican feast there should have been only Mexicans not all the other races. If they were going to have all the others participate, it should have been an international feast not a Mexican feast.

Guzman: They were all mixed up. There were more Blacks, Indians, Anglos than Mexicans.

Mrs. Guzman: I told my daughter I would not take her to any of those festivities. I did not like to see all that mixing. I told her that in Mexico they have beautiful feasts and that I would rather take her to a feast there. We went for six months to Mexico and we got a chance to see all the festivities. The Mexican feasts should be celebrated by Mexicans only not by all the races.

Barela: Did you belong to any of the organizations?

Guzman: No.

Barela: So you did not have any Mexican friends?

Mrs. Guzman: Only the ones that I mentioned before.

Barela: You lived only with your family?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, our only trips were to the church. We stayed home, looked after our children, sent them to school, and all those things which a family should do. That is our custom.

Barela: Did your children go to school here?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes.

Barela: What school did they attend?

Mrs. Guzman: They went to Lincoln, Franklin, and Mechanic Arts.

Barela: Were they treated fairly in school?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, they said they were.

Guzman: We have never had any conflicts with the school.

Mrs. Guzman: The youngest one complained a lot. The principal would often call me
Mrs. Guzman: because he did not like to sing and they wanted him to sing. I would run
to the school to see what was the matter and when they told me that he
did not want to sing, I said that was okey, that there wasn't any way that
I could make him sing either.

Barela: All the other children had it okey at school?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes.

Barela: Did they graduate from high school?

Guzman: Yes, they all graduated from high school. The youngest one graduated from
the University of Minnesota.

Mrs. Guzman: He is the one that has the most education.

Barela: What is his name?

Mrs. Guzman: His name is Roberto.

Barela: Only two of your children were born out of the State?

Mrs. Guzman: My daughter and Teodoro. All the rest were born here.

Guzman: She was born in Ojinada and Teodoro was born in Forth Worth, Texas.

Mrs. Guzman: All the others were born in Minnesota.

Barela: How many children do you have?

Mrs. Guzman: Seven of them.

Barela: What are their names?

Mrs. Guzman: Teodoro, Frank, Gregorio, Roberto, Leonor, Maureen and Dolores.

Barela: And they all have good jobs?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, they all have their jobs. Thanks to God. Frank is director of
Migrants In Action, the oldest Teodoro works for the food stamp program
and he also has a restaurant in one of the bars, but his main job is as
an antique dealer. He makes good money. Gregorio works in an office
for a construction company and Roberto is waiting for a job in his field,
as a probation officer, he studied psychiatry.

Barela: Did the Mexican community get together for certain things?
Mrs. Guzman: Yes, they would have dances and meetings at the Neighborhood House, but we never took part in their activities.

Barela: When you first came, what year was it?

Mrs. Guzman: 1929.

Barela: What did you do for entertainment?

Mrs. Guzman: We went to the movies. That was when we did not speak any English. It was very hard because some of the people that spoke English would laugh and make fun of us.

Guzman: Some of the Anglos would laugh at me because I did not speak English. Some were very nice, but others were not.

Mrs. Guzman: I had the same experience.

Barela: Did you have any other friends, other than Marcelino and Irene Rivera?

Mrs. Guzman: No, they were the only ones and Mr. Jose Garcia, we also met him in the fields, the same as the Riveras, there was also Canuto and Carmen, we don't even know if they are still living. During that time Mrs. Rivera was single, her sister Gregoria was the one that was married. When we first came, the Riveras were the only people we knew, their's was one of the first houses I visited. Their mother was very nice, I had my tonsils taken out and she took care of my daughter. I could not eat, but she would cook for me and try to make me eat.

Barela: Do you still visit each other?

Mrs. Guzman: It has been many years since I have visited her.

Barela: What were some of the jobs that you worked at when you first came here?

Guzman: There were many jobs. I have done many different types of work.

Barela: Which was the first job?

Guzman: I dug ditches and cleaned sewers.

Barela: Did you work for the city?

Guzman: No, I worked for a contractor. When that work was completed we started
Guzman: working digging the ditches for the pipes.

Barela: Did you do this with a shovel?

Guzman: Yes. It had to be five feet deep. It was in Toronto, Texas that I first worked with a jack hammer. They are good, but they are hard on your arms.

Barela: Did you do much work with them?

Guzman: Yes, many jobs.

Barela: Under contractors?

Guzman: Yes with contractors, except when I worked for the railroad then I worked directly for the company like the Soo Line or Soo Pacific under a foreman. They had their representatives that would come around to see that the work was completed.

Barela: When you retired, were you working for a contractor?

Guzman: Yes, I was working with heavy machinery picking up scrap. It was heavy work, but once you get used to a job it is not too hard. I remember one time I worked at Swift's, the packing house, I was a butcher, but I could not get the hang of the work so I quit.

Barela: So you also worked in a packing house, how long did you work there?

Guzman: I worked there for a couple of years. I did not like the butcher job so I worked in other departments.

Mrs. Guzman: There are some people that started working there and never left their jobs. We know a man who has been working there ever since he came with his family and he is still there. He has a home, a new car and his wife goes to Texas to visit her mother. He disposes of the waste, but he doesn't mind smelling it all the time.

Barela: Do you still maintain some of the Mexican culture, like food?

Mrs. Guzman: Oh, yes, how can we forget something like that!

Barela: Does your family like Mexican food?

Mrs. Guzman: Well, we eat both kinds of food. My family enjoys it.
Barela: What dishes do you prepare?

Mrs. Guzman: The most common dishes like chicken with rice, chile con carne, sopa de arroz, sopa de fideo, green beans fried with tomatoes and garlic, enchiladas, tacos, and tortillas. I make tortillas everyday. I can serve bread to my husband but my youngest boy will not eat unless there is tortillas.

Barela: Do all of your children speak Spanish?

Mrs. Guzman: They all understand Spanish, but they do not speak it correctly. My two oldest speak it correctly, but all the others speak a broken Spanish. The youngest girl can write in Spanish.

Barela: Does your family still visit Mexico?

Mrs. Guzman: Yes, we go to Mexico. Our boy that lives upstairs goes to Mexico every year. We go to Acapulco.

Barela: In your life time, what has been the one thing that has influenced you the most?

Guzman: My way of thinking is that everything go according to my wishes without hurting anyone and always going ahead to progress.

Barela: Did something happened in your life that has made you think that way?

Guzman: Through meditation. It has been through this that I have learned to get ahead, to learn, and to respect oneself.

Barela: What do you think has influenced you in your life?

Mrs. Guzman: The best thing that happened to me was when I married my husband. That was when my life started. If I hadn't married him, my life and that of my children would have been very different. My children are also very proud of their father.

Barela: If you were to give advice to someone that has had little experience in their life, what would you tell them?

Guzman: It would depend on the person. There are many ways to succeed and also to fail. There are many ways of doing and understanding. For example you might not need it, but the money you have is a good hope. But whether you
Guzman: make a lot of money or not, that is something we don't know, but at least you try to make or have sufficient money to cover your expenses.

Barela: And you, Mrs. Guzman, what type of advice would you give?

Mrs. Guzman: Never drink or smoke, because from these can develop many difficulties. Conserve your home and your family. Have respect for your home and you will always be happy.

Barela: Thank you, I appreciate your cooperation for this interview.