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

Jesus A. Patlan, like thousands of Mexican Citizens who now reside in Minnesota, discusses the difficulties encountered as a result of not knowing English. He also mentions the numerous adjustments a Mexican must make in order to live in Minnesota. He discusses the on the job discrimination to the foreign born and elaborates the cultural differences that exist between the United States and Mexico, he makes a comparison between conditions in the Twin Cities and Mexico City.

This is an English translation of the tape-recorded interview in Spanish. The original cassette recording is available in the Audio-Visual Library of the Minnesota Historical Society.
INTERVIEW WITH JESUS ASCENCION PATLAN

AUGUST 9, 1975

SAUCEDO: This is Ramedo J. Saucedo, interviewing Mr. Jesus Ascencion Patlan of 227 West Congress Street, St. Paul, Minnesota, for the Minnesota Historical Society. Today is August 9, 1975. Do I have your permission to take an interview from you?

What is your full name?

PATLAN: My full name is Jesús Ascención Patlán.

SAUCEDO: Where were you born?

PATLAN: I was born in Mexico City in 1940.

SAUCEDO: What are your parents' names?

PATLAN: My father's name is Ascenció Patlán Manrique and my mother's name is Maria Francisca Felix.

SAUCEDO: Where were your parents born?

PATLAN: My father was born in Guanajuato and my mother in Durango, both in Mexico.

SAUCEDO: At which school did you study?

PATLAN: I studied at Matallon de San Blas in Mexico till the eighth grade. The school is not in existence anymore.

SAUCEDO: What was the name of the community where you spent most of your life in Mexico?

PATLAN: I was born and spent most of my life in the "Colonia Emilio Carranza."

SAUCEDO: What did your father do for a living?

PATLAN: My father worked with the Mexican Packing Company of Mexico City for 28 years. He was a butcher.

SAUCEDO: When did he begin to work there and when did he quit?
I don't know when he started, but he retired about ten years ago. During those 28 years that he worked there he was at one time a general administrator of the meat packing company in Mexico. The position that my father had is one of the highest that anyone can obtain in that industry. I can't remember much because I was very young at the time.

Does your father receive a pension from the company, now that he is retired?

He receives something like 1200.00 pesos ($96) per week from the Meat Industry.

What can you tell us about the social classes in Mexico? We have always heard that a large majority of the people are very poor and there is a high percentage of people who are very rich and that a middle class is emerging.

I've been living in the United States for the past eleven years so I don't know much about how the situation is now. I also can't talk about the whole country but I can tell you how it was in Mexico City when I lived there. There are various classes in Mexico: the lower class, the lower class and upper lower class, the lower middle class, the middle class, and the upper middle class, the lower upper class, the upper class, and the upper upper class. The people in the lower class would be considered the poorest and those in the upper upper class would be the wealthiest.

In my family, we were not very poor, but we weren't rich so I think that we were and are part of the middle class. Most of the people in Mexico City would be considered very, very poor. Since the majority of the people are poor, they would rank first.
PATLAN: We also have quite a few rich people, so they would be next in line; lastly, the ones in the middle class because there are not too many.

SAUCEDO: What did you do in Mexico after you got out of school in the eighth grade?

PATLAN: After I informed my father that I was quitting school, he found a job for me at the meat packing company where he worked. Well, I only worked there for a while because I didn't like it, it was very rough, and the hours were from 8:00 at night till 8:00 in the morning. After I left there I held other jobs. The job I had before coming to the United States was with a North American Company called Anderson and Clayton. I was doing two jobs at the same time because I was a salesman and also a delivery person.

SAUCEDO: How many brothers and sisters do you have and what are their names?

PATLAN: We were five children in our family. My oldest sister is Maria de la Luz, then a brother who is now deceased and his name was Guillermo Patlan, then myself, then a brother Arturo, and lastly Jaime Patlan. Arturo is 26 years old and Jaime is 24.

SAUCEDO: When did you first come to the United States and why?

PATLAN: The first time I came to the United States was in 1960. Ever since I was a child I dreamed of coming to the United States, but I had never had the opportunity. In January 1960, Mr. Ramedo Saucedo and his wife sent my sister and myself the necessary documents to come and live and study in this country. We came with the Saucedo's at that time. The thing that had the greatest impact on us (my sister and I) was the snow.
We had never seen snow in our lives and at first we were all excited about it. But after a while, we just couldn't take it or the cold weather. I was here for three months.

Did you study English in Mexico before you came to the United States in 1960?

No. Probably the only thing I could do in English was count and the only word I knew was "Okay" which is a very common word in Mexico.

Is English taught in the public schools in Mexico?

Yes, they start teaching it in secondary school. I can't remember how many years ago they started teaching it, but it is very basic, just like the Spanish that is taught here.

So then, you had difficulty with the language when you first came.

My sister and I attended classes at the International Institute, but the professor that we had did not know any Spanish so that made it very boring for me. My sister had studied English so she more or less knew what was going on. The instructor was very nice to us because he knew we needed help and he gave us special attention. After three months, I returned to Mexico.

When you returned to Mexico, what kind of work did you do? When did you return to the United States?

When I arrived in Mexico, I was still very young and I wanted to do something worthwhile so I bought a truck and began to sell shoes. I would buy the shoes in Mexico City and go sell them in the "plazas" of the small towns. Each town had a special day for the "plaza." I would sell the shoes, return to Mexico City, buy more and go sell them.
PATLAN: The only problem I had was that I would buy the merchandise on a cash basis, but I would have to sell the shoes on a credit basis. Pretty soon the money which I had to invest was all gone so I couldn't continue with the business. I held other jobs but I can't remember what they were. When I came to the United States in 1960, I met the girl who is now my wife. We fell in love and during her vacations, she went to visit me in Mexico. I took her to Acapulco and other parts of the country. She really liked it. At that time I was 21 or 22 years old and she was 20. After her vacation had ended, she returned to the United States, but the following year, she again came to visit me in Mexico. I showed her around other places and finally asked her to marry me. She consented and we were married and lived in Mexico City for the next two years. In those times, my parents lived in the lower floor of an apartment building; the address was Alfareria #65. My wife did not know very much Spanish and her customs were very different from mine. I was afraid for her because of her lack of knowledge of the language and customs. I then asked my father if we could live with them for a short while, just until my wife learned more of the language and the culture, and so that my mother could teach her how to be a good housewife. Both my parents consented so we lived with them for about two or three months. Then someone in the same apartment building moved out so my wife and I decided that we would live there. The apartment was a very humble one and we didn't have much. The money I made from my job was more than sufficient for the two of us, but instead of buying things for the house with it, we would travel and have a good time.

SAUCEDO: What made you two decide to return to the United States.
Well, I remember that many times I would come home from work and I would find my wife crying. She would never tell me what was bothering her, so often times I thought that she and my mother had had an argument. Finally she told me that she really missed her family, so I said to her that if she wanted to return to Minnesota, we would come. I went to get my documents and because my wife was a United States citizen, I got them in fifteen days. I had had a very bad impression of Minnesota so I didn't really want to return, but if that was what was going to make my wife happy, I was willing to come back. So, I've been here ever since.

What type of work did you do when you returned to the United States?

First of all you have to consider that I had a language problem, because I didn't know any English. The first job I had was with Master Industries, which no longer exists. I did all types of odd things from sweeping the floors to cutting materials for toys. I was earning $1.25 an hour and I knew that that was not what I wanted. Then I worked at the College of St. Catherine, doing janitorial work. I worked at a gasoline station, I also took care of the building right next to the gasoline station where the truck drivers would stay overnight. I would clean it up and do the beds. I again knew that this was not what I wanted so I would continue to change jobs. I worked at St. Joseph's Hospital in the laundry and linen department but it was very rough and depressing, so I quit. Finally, I decided to go to the employment office to see if they would help put me through school so that I could get a better job, but they declined. Instead, they found me a job at a printing company on University Avenue. The company was called Ready Print at that time. I began to work with them about eight years ago. The company was very small at the time.
PATLAN: Only the supervisor and myself. He showed me how to operate the two types of machines they had and which they still have now. The biggest problem I had and probably still have is the language. I remember that whenever the supervisor had to leave and I had to answer the phone, I would bless myself. Then I went to work at Insty Print. They have twelve shops in the Twin Cities. I worked with them for about six to eight months. Then one day a customer came to have something printed, and about an hour after he left the shop, he called me and asked me if I would like to work for him. He told me he would pay me more than what I was earning at Instant Print. He wanted me to run his printing shop for him, and after we settled on a salary, I went to work for him. I learned how to operate many more machines and I worked there until the man died. Someone else bought the shop and I worked for them for some time. Then I went to work for Malone Graphing Service which is located on Larpenteur and Snelling. I worked there for a while and then went to work for the Minneapolis Graphing Service. I worked there until I was laid off. Then I found a job with McGill Graphic Service where I have been working for over five years. The machinery is quite different than what I had been used to.

SAUCEDO: When you first started to work you were making $1.25 an hour. How much are you making now?

PATLAN: I make $6.40 an hour.

SAUCEDO: Have you ever found any discrimination in your job?

PATLAN: I have observed discrimination in this country ever since I came.

SAUCEDO: In which ways have you seen it?

PATLAN: One way is in the way people look at you.
PATLAN: I don't let this bother me because I look at them in the same way. I believe that we are all the same, that no one is better or worse than the other. In the job that I had before this one, and also in this one, I have been discriminated against. On Monday, of this week and on Friday of the same week, I was discriminated against. When there is a position that is better than the one I have, I have never had the opportunity to get it. Yesterday I was talking to the new supervisor and I asked him to tell me the truth about the fact that there was discrimination in the place where I worked. I told him that I was pretty good in my job, that I wasn't the best but I wasn't the worst either. I also told him that I had more seniority and experience than him but even then they gave him all the opportunities and facilities to get the job as supervisor. He then responded by saying that if I wanted to know the truth, he was going to give it to me. He said, "Unfortunately, this country never has and never will give foreigners an opportunity to progress. You will never progress in this company. You will always be pushed aside. As soon as they know that you are a foreigner, they label you and you will be labeled for the rest of the time that you live here. It's unfortunate, but that is the way people are in the United States." I remember that once the supervisor had to be out for one week and instead of leaving me in charge, he left another pressman who has less experience and is probably one of the worst employees in the company. Well, this guy didn't know what to do so he was constantly asking me for advice. I have always been discriminated against in this job that I hold.

SAUCEDO: There is a Department in the State called the Human Rights Commission, which is there to investigate actions such as the one you have described. Maybe you'd like to talk to them about this.
PATLAN: Well, since I plan on returning to Mexico, I don't want to have anymore problems with the company.

SAUCEDO: Did you buy a home in St. Paul?


SAUCEDO: Did you have any difficulty in buying your house?

PATLAN: I did have a bit. I bought it through the FHA because I didn't have enough money. The government did not approve my loan.

SAUCEDO: What reasons did they give you for not approving your application?

PATLAN: I had been saving some money for the down payment so when I asked for the loan, I did not include the money for the down payment. When I asked why I had been turned down, the agent told me that it was due to the fact that I had borrowed the money for the down payment from somebody else. I tried to explain to him that it was my money I was planning to use for the down payment. After much investigation, my loan was finally approved.

SAUCEDO: Can you tell us about your family?

PATLAN: My wife's name is Victoria. My oldest daughter Christina, is seven years old and was born in St. Paul. The youngest daughter is six years old and was born in Mexico City. Both girls go to St. Matthew's School. One will be in first grade and the other in second grade in September of this year.

SAUCEDO: Do you help out in St. Matthew's?

PATLAN: Yes, I help them teach Spanish.

SAUCEDO: What kind of Spanish program do they have there?

PATLAN: The program began in March of 1975. It is a Catholic School and it is the first time that Spanish has been taught there.

SAUCEDO: How do the parents and the children feel about the program?

PATLAN: The majority of the children are very enthusiastic about the program.
PATLAN: I don't know much about the parents because I can't attend meetings when they are held. I am working. In the grades where I have helped out, there are at least five children in each group which don't participate. It's unfortunate because it's a disadvantage for the child and not for the parents.

SAUCEDO: How many Spanish classes are taught and how many Spanish teachers do you have there?

PATLAN: There are two Spanish teachers and I help both of them. We teach Spanish starting with the children in Kindergarten and all the way to third grade. This year we will expand to the fourth grade. Like I said before, the children are very enthusiastic about learning Spanish. We have had problems with teachers because they already have a schedule and they find it very hard to do away with a subject so that Spanish can be taught. We hope that come September, things will be better organized and the program will give us better results.

SAUCEDO: What subjects did the children have to do away with to learn Spanish?

PATLAN: When the children were having art, we would go into the room and I would take one group and a Spanish teacher would take another. We would converse with the children while they were drawing. I would ask the children for the names of the colors in English and they responded in Spanish. Many times the teachers would get upset because the children would become so involved in what we were saying that they would just quit working on what they were doing.

SAUCEDO: What does the word Chicano mean to you? I know that you are still a citizen of Mexico and a resident of the United States, but how do you feel about this word?
PATLAN: I lived in Mexico for twenty-five years and I had never heard that word before. I think that it is a fairly new word which has been evolving in the United States. I believe that this word evolved from the Mexican Americans in Mexico, we consider people who are born in the United States as Americans and those that are born in Mexico, Mexicans. If a person of Chinese or Japanese descent or whatever ethnic group is born in Mexico, he is considered a Mexican. Since there is so much discrimination in this country, against all ethnic groups, I believe that the word Chicano evolved because of it, just as the Blacks came up with the words Black Power during the Olympics. I suppose that it is their way (the Mexicans) of showing the Anglos that they were also born and raised in this country and that they have as many rights as anyone who has been born in this country. Some person came up with the special name of Chicano so that the Mexican American could have his own identity. When someone mentions that I am a Mexican, I feel very proud because I am a Mexican. But then, there are many people who don't like to be called Mexicans, they prefer the word Chicano. I imagine that they prefer this word to show the Anglos that they are just as American as they. I don't know where the word Chicano really comes from, but this is just my personal opinion. In March, I was in Mexico City and I went to a boxing match. To my surprise, a Mexican was fighting a Chicano. It just struck me very funny the way the announcer was calling them. One was the Mexican so and so and the other was the Chicano so and so.

SAUCEDO: What name is used in Mexico for a person of Mexican descent but born in the United States?

PATLAN: The most common name would be "Pocho."
SAUCEDO: What else does the word "Pocho" signify?

PATLAN: Nothing else, I think.

SAUCEDO: What changes have you noticed in Mexico in the last few years when you have gone back to visit? For example, women's liberation, customs as far as food is concerned, anything that you would notice had changed as soon as you got to your country.

PATLAN: Everytime I go to Mexico, I always find something new. In Mexico City, where I spend most of my vacation, I always find more people, more traffic, and more smog, more of everything. There is always construction of some sort like freeways, trunpikes, and other things. Mexico City just keeps growing and growing. I think it is the third largest city in the world. The clover-leaf has already been in existence outside the city highways, and now they are being constructed in the city. There have been many changes as far as construction is concerned. As far as food is concerned, I really haven't noticed any changes. We always had a lot of meat at my house, since the meat packing company always gave its employees some to take home. You'll remember that my father worked there for many, many years. I really couldn't say much about noticing any changes.

SAUCEDO: Have you noticed if the women in Mexico has begun to take a stronger and stronger role in life?

PATLAN: I believe that the women have become more liberated. When I was about nineteen years old, it was unheard of for a married woman to work. All the obligations of making money were left up to the man. But nowadays, its impossible to live on one salary, so the woman should work to help the husband support the household. You know, I believe that living in Mexico City is more expensive than it is anywhere in Minnesota.
PATLAN: Long ago, there were many children in each household, but now, people think of planning how many children they should have. It is kind of like it is here in the United States, where a couple only has one or two children.

SAUCEDO: Have you noticed that even though the cost of living has risen, the social status has progressed?

PATLAN: Yes, it has gotten better. One thing that I would like to say about the "campesino" or farmer is that the government lends them 10,000 pesos or $800 per year for their crops. When the crops are sold, the campesino pays back the $800 to the government without any interest. If the crops are ruined, the farmer does not need to pay the government back anything. Of course, there are always inspectors around seeing that the money is being spent on the crops. Mexico had never before had a program like this where the government helped the farmer out. Mexico City has also progressed salary-wise. The minimum wage four years ago was 50 pesos ($4). I don't know what it is now, but the salaries have surely gotten a lot better. The Government has tried to help the poor as much as possible.

SAUCEDO: Is it true that the government requires doctors to practice in a small town for two years before he can move on to a bigger one?

PATLAN: Yes, it is true. When a doctor receives his medical license, he must serve a number of hours with the "Seguro Social" which depends on government aid. These young physicians are sent to whichever place of the country they are needed, and it is a must that he be under their service for a certain amount of time. After they have complied with the government regulations, they can practice wherever they please in the country.

SAUCEDO: What Mexican customs do you wish your daughters would adopt or accept for leading their lives?
PATLAN: I would like for them to be very close, especially in the family unit, also love of the family members, respect for all people whether they are family members or not. I am very close to my parents and my brother and sister. My parents came in January, I went to see them in March, and then they came back to see me and my family in July. We have always been a very closely knit family and the love that exists in my family is very great. This I have never seen in the United States.

SAUCEDO: What customs does this country have that you like, and that when you go to Mexico and you don't see them it bothers you?

PATLAN: One thing that I can think of just now is the way children are brought up as far as working and making money for themselves. Children know the value of the dollar. I have seen children delivering papers or babysitting to make some money, and use this money to buy shoes or clothing for themselves. This, I have never seen in Mexico, but I wish Mexico would have something like it because I believe that it is a good trait.

SAUCEDO: Do you think that this country offers more opportunities for the youngsters then Mexico? Opportunities to work, to study, be what he wants, et cetera?

PATLAN: When I first came to this country, there were many opportunities as far as work or education was concerned. I remember that the newspaper was always full of ads for employment. Everything was easier at that time. It's a little hard for me to answer that question with the way things are right now. I know that there are many opportunities in Mexico at the present time. There are more schools, the "Seguro Social" now teaches and prepares people for whatever career they want, and they don't charge you a cent. When I first came, this did not exist in Mexico, but it did in the United States.
PATLAN: Probably there are more opportunities in the United States, but they are open to those born here.

SAUCEDO: Jesse, do you think that the Mexican influence exists in this State as far as the Mexican Americans are concerned? For example, the "Quinceanera" or fifteenth year old birthday celebration is celebrated here. Do you think that when your daughters reach that age you would like to celebrate it like it's done in Mexico?

PATLAN: The "Quinceanera" is a beautiful custom of my country. The father gives a talk in front of friends and relatives about his daughter and then introduces her as a "senorita" or young lady. In Mexico, a girl is called a senorita when she is fifteen years old or older. The father throws a big party in his daughter's honor and buys her a beautiful dress. The girl has fourteen of her friends participate as her "damas" (attendants) and fourteen boys as "chamberlaines" (ushers) and the boys are the girls' chamberlains. They all dance to a waltz, and this is a beautiful tradition. I have never seen a "Quinceanera" party here in Minnesota or in other states which I have visited. The biggest festivity that I have seen here in Minnesota is the 16th of September celebration. Since most of the people are working, it is not celebrated until the week-end. I have helped out in the planning of this festivity, and it has always been a tremendous success. We had two very big and elegant parades. Because of many things that happened, especially involving politics, many of the members of this committee resigned. The tradition of the parade continues but it is not as big as it used to be before. Foods that are prepared here are more Tex-Mex than Mexican. For example, I had never eaten tacos like they prepare them here, and they are just delicious. There are many things which I miss from Mexico.
SAUCEDO: Jesse, what advice would you give a person from Mexico who plans to live in Minnesota?

PATLAN: Well, if a person was going to be transferred from Mexico to the United States because of his job, I would advise him to come, but just for a period of time because I believe that a person will never really adjust to life in the United States. When one wants to come to the United States to learn about the customs and to experience life here, it is a magnificent thing to do. I don't recommend that anyone in the same circumstances as I was in when I came to the United States because all that will happen is that he is going to suffer, and he will suffer until he returns to Mexico. He is in better shape in Mexico even if he is just eating beans than having to come over here to look for a job and leading a miserable life. He is a lot happier than those of us who are living here. I have had a lot of experience here in the United States. I have suffered a lot because of the language, but it is an experience which I never would have had if I had stayed in Mexico. It's hard to say whether I would have had the opportunity to live in Mexico just as I do here. I don't know if I would have been better off over there than here. But the experience I have had has been very wide. When I first came to this country I was very immature, but thanks to this country, I have become a man. I am a decent and honorable man, and I consider myself a "caballero" (gentleman). This I owe to the United States.

SAUCEDO: What are your reasons for returning to Mexico?

PATLAN: I am selling my home, but as of yet I have had no luck selling it. As soon as I do though, I plan on going straight back to Mexico City. I don't have a job waiting for me in Mexico City, but I have some ideas on some business...
PATLAN: that I could start off with to support my family. The main thing that I have back there is the backing of my parents and my brothers. The experience that I have had in the United States and the fact that I know English, could help me in my future. I don't think that I would have any problems making a living so as to support my family. In the years that I have been living outside of Mexico, I have learned a lot about life and I have reached the conclusion that I don't need to have a lot of material things. What I need is happiness. I have learned that material things are of no value to a person. I would prefer to return to Mexico, leaving my color TV behind and buying a small black and white set, and be happy. In all the years that I have spent in this country, I have rarely been happy. When I was a young boy, I used to be very mischievous, and loved to fight. Sometimes I didn't even know the other kid that I was going to fight. I used to get into these fights at least four times a week while I was going to school. My parents just nodded their heads because they knew that I had gotten into a fight. I remember that I was still fighting when I was sixteen years old, but one thing I could do then was to laugh. I was very happy when I was in Mexico. That laughter does not exist anymore. It has been many, many years that I haven't been able to laugh with such happiness. I want to go back to Mexico to see if I can find that happiness that I once had. I just hope it isn't too late. If I can keep the material things I have, then fine, but if I can't, then I just want to be happy.

SAUCEDO: Can you compare the neighborhood in which you lived in Mexico to the West Side?

PATLAN: I think that the children are the same. They play out in the street, break windows, and destroy things.
PATLAN

My daughter Christina just finished first grade and she is able to read very well. She has really enjoyed reading. As far as schools are concerned, the one to which my daughters go, St. Matthews, is a very good school. The school which I attended was government owned and I don't believe that it had any of the programs which are offered at St. Matthews, which is a private school. The private schools in Mexico, as well as some of those owned by the government, are very good, but I also feel that it depends a lot on the teacher to do a good job teaching. I think that the courses that are taught in elementary school and in secondary school are the same in both countries. It's not until one gets to the University that one begins to choose which one he wants to attend. The University that we have in Mexico City is very good, just as is the University of Minnesota. So I think that education-wise, both are very similar. When I return to Mexico, I don't want to live in the same colonia (neighborhood) in which I grew up because there is a lot of poverty. I am still poor, but I want to see if I can come closer to the middle class. The customs, manners, and atmosphere of the poor are very different than those of the middle class. The very poor people are more interested in the younger generation. My youngest brother is very interested in swimming, basketball, the library, reading, etc. The atmosphere is very different and this is the kind of place which I want my daughters to have. I don't care for the atmosphere where I live now, but I hope that I can get to a place where it will be better, where the people are more refined, where there is more respect for the property of others, which I don't have right now. I want to have privacy, but at the same time have a good friendship with my neighbors, which I haven't been able to have in this neighborhood.
PATLAN: I have tried to be friendly with my neighbors, but all that has happened is that they try to take advantage of me. This is another thing which exists in this country. If one does a favor for someone, it is done only because they expect you to do a bigger favor for them. This does not exist in Mexico. When we do someone a favor in Mexico, we don't expect to be repaid for it. We just forget about it.

SAUCEDO: Do you miss Mexican foods which are just typical of Mexico and cannot be found here?

PATLAN: Yes, ever since I have been here, I have yearned for "guisos, carnitas," and the "Mariachis" which sing for you and others. When one is used to eating certain things and then just stops eating them all of a sudden, it becomes very hard. One thing which might be very insignificant, but which I like very much are the "pepititas" whenever someone from my family comes to visit me, I always ask them to bring me some "pepititas." All these things that we have, I yearn for. I would like to talk about certain types of people which I have met in the United States. I have never been able to get along with the majority of the people here. It's that our customs are so very different. Unity is not a big deal here in this country.

SAUCEDO: Can you tell us what you think a friend is here in the United States and what a friend is in Mexico?

PATLAN: A friend in Mexico is a person who is sincere in what he says and he tries to get closer to you all the time. In all the time that I have been here in the United States I could say that I have never found a person whom I could consider a friend, no matter what the nationality is. The people here are not sincere in anything they say, they are pretty strange.
PATLAN: I remember an instance where I met a supervisor of mine after I had quit working for the company. He said he was very glad to see me and invited me and my family for a barbecue at his house. I told him that I would consult with my wife and call him later. When I called him to inform him that we could make it either on Saturday or Sunday, he told me that he had forgotten that he had already made a previous engagement, but that he would get in touch with me later. Well, up to this day, he has never called. I don't care if I ever in my life see him again, but that is the way the people of the United States are.

SAUCEDO: What problems have you encountered in your marriage since you married a girl born in the United States?

PATLAN: I consider my wife a hundred percent North American, even if she is a descendent of Mexican parents. We had many, many problems at one time, but thank God they are all solved. Our customs, ideas, and understandings were very different. I don't think that I would have had as many problems in my marriage had I married a girl from Mexico. I would tell my wife something and she didn't want to listen to me. The women here in the United States are more liberated than in Mexico. In Mexico, the girls are very noble, but a lot of people say that they are dumb for being so noble. To be noble is not to be dumb. Love grows when one shows affection and goodness toward the person they love. When one asks a girl here in the United States for a glass of water, many of them will say, "Don't you have two hands and two legs?" In Mexico, if one asks his wife for a glass of water, she gladly gets up and gets it for him. This is one of the customs I want my daughters to learn.
PATLAN: I want them to be good and to show their kindness and affection towards other people. When one falls in love with someone, it is as though the two people were predestined for each other. If possible, I would advise that people should try to marry someone of his own race, instead of getting mixed up with people of another race, custom, or country. There is a saying in Spanish that goes like this, "Zapatero a tus zapatos. Busca lo de tu casa y no andes fuera de tu casa porque vas a tener muchos problemas." All this means that you should not stray from your people or from where you belong because you will just encounter many problems. I am referring to the problems that I had with my wife for a few years after we were married. Now things are very different. We have been married for twelve years and I just thank God that I have such a good wife. I have a terrible temper and get all riled up in a few minutes and my wife is very quiet, but she has learned how to understand me. She understands me so well that she wants to return to Mexico with me to see if I can find the happiness which I seek. She says that wherever I am happy, she is happy. Again, I say, thank God that I found such a good person.

SAUCEDO: How does religion fit into your life?

PATLAN: I am a Catholic. I am not very devout, but I go to mass every Sunday. I have a lot of devotion for Our Lady of Guadalupe and everytime I go to Mexico, I go visit her. When I go to church, I pray to her to give me the strength to return to my country. My devotion to her grows more and more all the time. When my youngest daughter was born, she became gravely ill and my wife and I promised Our Lady that if she would heal our child, both my wife and I would carry our daughter on our knees from the entrance of the church to the altar.
PATLAN: We fulfilled our promise when our daughter recovered and she has been well ever since.

SAUCEDO: From what I have understood you to say, do you prefer for your daughters to marry Mexican citizens?

PATLAN: Well, this is something way off in the future.

SAUCEDO: What do you want for your daughters?

PATLAN: I want them to find a good man. I don't care if they are U.S. citizens or if they are Mexican citizens, so long as they are good men. I imagine that all parents want the best for their daughters. But if I return to Mexico, I would prefer for them to marry Mexican citizens, and that way I know I will have them there all the time. If they marry a U.S. citizen, they would have to live in the United States and thus we would be separated and that is what I don't want. In what I have seen, the Latin male likes to run around while the one from the United States likes to stay at home and is more reserved. Thanks to the United States I was able to learn this habit of respecting what I have and not run around looking for anything. I am happy with what I have and I don't yearn for anything else. My wife is sacred to me and I don't wish or want anything else.

SAUCEDO: What does the word, "machismo" mean to you?

PATLAN: "Machismo" is a very old word. It comes from a very small town. It refers to the fact that a man is very manly. It could mean several things. A "torero" (bullfighter) is very macho, he is very brave. In a street fight between two persons who are trying to kill themselves, one would say that they are very "machos" because they are not afraid of death. This is what I think "machismo" means.

SAUCEDO: Are you an avid fan of bullfights?
PATLAN: Yes, one-hundred percent.

SAUCEDO: In this country, people feel that this is a very cruel sport because of the poor life the bull leads. What is your opinion on this?

PATLAN: For us, a bullfight is like a work of art. There are many things which are not accepted in this country, but that is because the people who make up this country are ignorant of them. It is very detailed how the bull and the bullfighter are trained from childhood for the bullfight. The whole idea is that this is a great Spanish celebration, where everything and everyone is very happy. The bullfights begin at 4:30 p.m. sharp every time. It is unfortunate that this country does not have bullfights, because they are really beautiful. We don't consider the slaughtering of the bull as being cruel.

SAUCEDO: Since the people in this country pity the bull, it's very likely that there will never be any bullfights in the United States.

PATLAN: It's very likely that there won't be any, but it doesn't bother them when they are eating it. The deer do less harm than the bulls and just look and see how many deer are killed by the people of this country. Deer hunting and fishing are two very popular sports in the winter time in the United States. In Mexico, if one wants to go fishing, he can go to Acapulco, and fishing there is quite a challenge because the fish are as big or bigger than men.

SAUCEDO: Did you play any sports with teams?

PATLAN: Yes, I played soccer in Mexico. I was nine or ten years old when I first played with a team, and I played for about eight or nine years. I remember that the sponsor for the team used to give me two free passes for any movie theatre for every goal that I made.
PATLAN: He would give me money, but never in front of anyone; otherwise, everyone on the team who scored goals would also want some money. This man really liked me and he thought I would be able to play in professional soccer leagues. Unfortunately, I was never able to play in professional leagues. I don't know why, but I always liked the sport. I recall that once while I was working for the Anderson / Clayton Company, we played against another company team. I wanted to play front center because I wanted to win that game because I had invited my parents to go see me. The captain of the team told me that I had to play my usual position of extreme right guard. He agreed to let me play front center for forty-five minutes. I believe that was the best game I ever played in Mexico. I scored two or three goals and then had to be removed from the game because of a terrible leg cramp. Everyone went to congratulate me and I think my parents were very proud of me because I had played really well in the game.

SAUCEDO: Did you play soccer here in Minnesota?

PATLAN: I did play several times with a team from St. Paul. They would play at Harriet Island and once I went to ask them if I could play with them. I only played a few times because I didn't like the way they played. I was afraid that they might break my leg because of the way they played. Now there are more people involved in playing soccer in this country and those that play at Harriet Island are doing much better. I don't even remember how to hit the ball so I probably couldn't even participate. I think I'm kind of old now. I also played handball, which is not played here in Minnesota. It might not even be played anywhere in the United States. It is very similar to tennis or "Jaialai."
It is a very interesting sport. Those are the games which I mainly played in Mexico.

Is a basket used for front tennis?

No, a racket. The basket is used in the "Jaialai."

Thank you very much, Jesse, for this wonderful interview. We hope that this tape will be of great value and benefit to anyone listening to it at the Historical Society.