

**Manuel Guerrero**  
**Narrator**

**Grant Moosbrugger**  
**Interviewer**

**August 24, 1976**  
**University of Minnesota**  
**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Manuel Guerrero - MG  
Grant Moosbrugger - GM

**GM:** We are interviewing Dr. Manuel Guerrero, chairman of the Chicano Studies Department, University of Minnesota, at the University of Minnesota, on August 24, 1976. Do I have your permission to interview you?

**MG:** Certainly.

**GM:** Thank you. Ah . . . maybe we could start off with your giving us a little rundown on your family history. Who you are, when you were born, and perhaps some features regarding the history of your parents and grandparents, as far back as is known.

**MG:** Well, I was born in Marion, Indiana, on the last day of May, 1935. And I am the third child of a family of nine children born to my father, Nick Guerrero, and my mother, Francesca Guerrero. She was a Castillo. My father came to this country at the age of fourteen, actually. He actually left home in Guanajuato, which is a Southern state, or north of the capitol city of Mexico, at that age, and migrated through the north of Mexico into Texas and all the way to the East. He found himself at the age of fifteen in Pennsylvania. And he was able to get a job in the steel mines at that time we're talking about roughly . . . 1924. And then he worked in the steel mines from that period until the late 1920s, 1929. He worked for the Bethlehem Steel Corporation as a miner. When he migrated back toward the Midwest and to Indiana, where he met my mother in 1930, in Grant County, Indiana, actually, or city of Marion, which is where I was born and grew up.

My mother had come to this country with her family, her four brothers and one sister at the time, when they came to the United States in 1919. They came from the state of Monterrey, came as migrants, actually, and settled in Texas. And then from Texas they came on north and to the Midwest and Indiana. And they arrived in Indiana in 1923 I believe it was, where my grandfather was able to get a job in a foundry, at that time called the Marion Malleable Ironworks. And he lived there in Marion, Indiana, until 1927 when they went back to Texas for . . . actually, it was only a matter of months, with the family. By that time they had increased their family by two, so that now there were seven children in my mother's family.

From Texas, they returned to Indiana, Grant County, in 1928. And the following year my grandfather died, 1929. By this time, the children, that is my mother's brothers and sisters, were old enough in their teens that they could go to work. And they did go to work and worked with Marion Malleable Ironworks, actually, in the late 1920s and on through the Depression.

Actually, my mother's two brothers or three brothers, and an uncle who came with them in the 1920s worked with the Marion Malleable Ironworks until the late 1960s, so that the three brothers and two uncles worked for the Marion Malleable Ironworks for a period of roughly thirty, thirty-five years. Two of the brothers never knew any other employment aside from the Marion Malleable Ironworks.

My mother met my father, as I indicated earlier, in 1930. And after a couple of visits, supervised visits between them, and a period of about thirty days they were married. So it was a relatively short courtship. And they hardly knew one another when my father married my mother. I think Dad was, at that time, probably around twenty-six years old, and my mother was about twenty-two or twenty-three at the time. And they were married in Grant County and their first home was in . . . on a farm outside of a place called Fairmount, Indiana, in Grant County. Fairmount is the town that produced James Dean, if you recall, the late movie star.

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**MG:** He actually grew up in Marion, Indiana, in that little town of Fairmount, which is only about eight miles outside of Marion, Indiana. My father went to work for the Marion Malleable Ironworks in the early 1930s and worked in that foundry as a [unclear] tender during the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s, and on up until the beginning of 1960, when he went to work for another foundry called the Atlas Foundry, which is a smaller foundry, doing [unclear] the same kind of work that he did at the Marion Malleable Ironworks.

I should say that during their employments there were times, particularly during the summer, when not only my uncles worked in the fields as migrants, but I can recall during the 1940s and the early 1950s when my father was forced because of economic necessity to work during the summer as migrants. And so I can recall at least three summers when my brothers and sisters and mother and father along with my uncles and cousins all took to the migrant fields.

We generally worked in Indiana and Ohio and we got into Southern Michigan during those years. During the 1930s, I understand that my mother's family worked as migrants pretty regularly, at least during the summer and during the year. Early fall. And again, it was in around Indiana and Ohio, working in the tomato fields. They had beet fields, which they worked in, and also there was some working in the onions and cucumbers. I don't recall them ever discussing whether they actually picked fruit. It was actually working in the fields with tomatoes, in some instances, corn; the beans and cucumbers and onions and beets.

**GM:** It would be *betabel*, sugar beets?

**MG:** Yes. *Betabel* [sugar beets].

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**MG:** Prior . . . well, getting back to my mother and dad's marriage. And they were married in 1930. My oldest brother, Mitch, was born in 1932. And then I have a sister that was born in 1933, and I came along in May of 1935. Subsequent to that time, there were six additional children born between 1935 and 1950. At the present time, two of . . . I have two sisters and I had six brothers. And there are now only surviving, two sisters and four brothers. My brother Mitch was a railroad detective for the Baltimore-Ohio railway in Chicago, and he was killed in a gun accident in 1958, I believe, at the age of twenty-six. Well, he was born in 1932 and killed in 1958 so [unclear]. And my younger brother, Bob, I had a younger brother who was killed in an auto accident at the age of thirty in nineteen . . . I believe he died in 1970, about six years ago.

My sisters . . . all of us, by the way, were fortunate enough to finish high school. And all of the boys in the family, my family, my brothers were successful in obtaining at least some college education. My two sisters never went to college, although they graduated from high school. My sister Mary married a young man from Texas called . . . by the name of Armando Solis. And they now live in Marion, Indiana, which is our home. They have four children. My sister Evelia married at the age of twenty-two, to a young man by the name of John [unclear]. And they now have six children, and also reside in Marion. And I have two brothers who are in the carpet business, Nick, Jr., and Ramon, who sell and install carpet in Marion, Indiana.

**GM:** Most of the family did settle and stay in Marion, Indiana area?

**MG:** Yes.

**GM:** Did your folks . . . did your parents push you towards education that you recall?

**MG:** My mother and dad always emphasized the importance of at least getting the high school education. My dad said he only went . . . had two years formal education in Mexico, and my mother maintains that she only had one year. And that's all the formal education they ever received, I bet. They did impress us with the importance of education, and at that time in the 1950s and the 1960s of at least obtaining a high school degree.

Now I have a brother, a younger brother who is a lawyer in Phoenix, Arizona. He graduated from Indiana University of Law. And I have a younger brother who is also practicing law in Marion, Indiana, who is the youngest child of the nine. He graduated from the University of Cincinnati Law School. So at the present time there are three boys and two girls, together with my mother, who reside in Marion. My father died at the age of . . . well, I don't recall exactly what age he was at this point, but he died in 1967 of a heart attack.

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm. Maybe you could share with us some of your experiences throughout your school years. Any feelings you had of advantage, disadvantage? What motivated you to continue your education to the extent you did?

**MG:** Well, I went to elementary school there in Marion. A place called Lincoln School, Lincoln Elementary, not too far from our home, approximately five or six blocks. And I guess it was more or less the natural thing for us to do.

**GM:** Yes.

**MG:** That is, to attend elementary school. I can recall in the fifth or sixth grade being highly competitive, however. It seemed to me that at one time in the sixth grade that I was captain of the patrol squad, captain of the softball squad, and champion in marbles. And just a very competitive person, particularly as it pertained to athletics. I don't recall that there were any discriminations based on race, or for that matter, economic reasons.

I do realize, and did realize at the time, that I was poor. I can remember going to school in the first grade and being ashamed because I had holes in my shoes. And I would have liked to have had a pair of shoes without holes in them, but I don't feel that I felt that I was particularly ashamed of the fact. It was a school where other children, white children and black children, were sort of in the same economic condition. So that it really wasn't unusual for me to be in that kind of a situation or at least I didn't perceive it as such.

I knew that we were always poor, that we lived from week to week on Dad's income. He got paid on Friday and that was always the grocery night or . . . and that toward the end of each week there was no more money left. And even in some cases where some of the bills didn't get paid. For years, we traded with the grocer by the name of Oscar McVay [sp?], who always sort of kept a bill at the grocery store, and that's where we got our groceries. And we owed, I think, McVay's Grocery during most of my childhood, and it only paid off during the time that I was in college, as I recall, in the mid- and late-1950s.

But, you know, one of the things that . . . that I admire my dad about. One of the things that I admire, as I look back, was the fact that I can always recall . . . I never recalled him going to work; I knew that he always left before seven to get there at seven. But he always came home dirty like almost a coal miner, working in the hot, sweaty, dirty foundry. And he must have worked there for some thirty, thirty-five years. And he would come home dirty and sweaty. He always walked back and forth to work, which is some ten or twelve blocks, because for the most time we didn't have an automobile.

And his only enjoyment during all of those years, it seems to me, was buying a bottle of wine on Friday or buying some beer. And sometimes in the tavern, most often he'd bring it home and proceed to get high. And that was his sole recreation for all of those years. It seems to me that not many people today have that little recreation after working so darn hard for so long. I think we sort of expect more recreation today. And . . . and get it, for that matter.

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**MG:** Certainly it's not the kind of lifestyle that any of his children now lead. Then I went to Catholic school, Saint Paul Catholic School, where my older sister and brother had gone.

**GM:** This was on a high school level?

**MG:** Junior high school level. And participated in the athletics, and my grades were generally the upper one third. And from there I participated in basketball and baseball and football in junior high school. And I went to Marion High School for only about a month when I was a sophomore. And I decided to go back to Saint Paul Catholic High School, where I attended for the next three years until I graduated in 1953.

During that time I played baseball and played basketball. And had a coach by the name of Norbert Goetz [sp?], who was . . . who asked me, I recall, very specifically, once in a gym, what I wanted to be, when I was a junior. And sitting on the bleachers, I just pulled the notion of being . . . becoming a lawyer out of the air. Certainly, at that time, not only did I did not have the means to become a lawyer but I didn't even have the opportunity to go to college or the expectation because of my parents' financial condition.

I know a lot of times my mother used to make our clothes. She'd make shirts and pants. And there were a lot of lean times. A lot of eating *frijoles* and *arroz* [beans and rice] and tortillas. And that was mainly our staple for all of those years. But I can recall, the house was small, but it was always clean, and that's a very difficult thing to do. Now I . . . I realize that now with six children of my own, to keep a small house clean—a large house, for that matter, no matter what the size is.

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**MG:** I graduated my senior year in 1953, as I indicated earlier, but I was able to get a half scholarship to play baseball at the University of Notre Dame. I played second base. And then Norbert Goetz went to some businessmen in Marion and raised the other six hundred dollars at that time. I remember it cost twelve hundred dollars to go to my freshman year at Notre Dame in 1953.

And so I packed two suitcases . . . actually, they weren't suitcases, they were cardboard boxes like you get in the grocery store. And he took me up to Notre Dame in the fall of 1953. And I stayed there a year. I didn't do too well academically. I played baseball on the freshman squad, second base, and I also made the freshman basketball team. There were fifteen of us, and five of them were on scholarships and the other ten were sort of walk-ons, and I was one of the fifteen. I earned my numeral in baseball, actually, and basketball.

**GM:** So your scholarship was specifically for baseball, but you got on basketball but were not under a scholarship—but were not under a scholarship for basketball.

**MG:** Right. I was this . . . of course, the shortest person on the squad. I'm only five eight and most of them were over six feet. I recall we had one freshman that was six foot seven. But it was a . . . it was a big thrill at the time. During the summer, after my freshman year, I realized I didn't have money sufficient enough money to cover the difference between my half scholarship and my school expenses. Although I had worked on construction that summer, I had saved maybe

two or three hundred dollars, but that wasn't enough. And I just didn't have enough to go back. I recall that I . . . that year I paid . . .

[Buzzer rings]

[Recording interruption]

**GM:** Okay.

**MG:** I recall during that summer that I had paid oh, two or three hundred dollars for dentures for my mother who needed them at that time. And I had the money, and it never occurred to me that I should keep that for myself, but I paid that off to Dr. Brown at that time. I didn't have the money [for school] and went to our pastor at Saint Paul's Catholic High School one evening, just before I was scheduled to go back to Notre Dame, and asked him if he could ask some members of the parishioners to grant me a loan to help me go back. And he said for me to come back the next night, and that he would see about it.

And Father McCarthy was a very . . . gruff person. He didn't talk too much, but I think he was very well respected in that church. And he was there for a long time before he died in 1955. But I went back the next night, and I remember it was dusk. And he met me at the door of the parish house and I asked him . . . I told him why I was there. And he said, "No, I wasn't able to get the money," or, "I can't see how I can help you in any way." And was very gruff and closed the door on my face. And it was at that point that I realized that I wasn't going to be able to go back to Notre Dame. And that realization really hit me. And I recall that . . . that I was very hurt. As a matter of fact, I think I cried that night, walking home.

And I determined, and by that experience, that somehow I was going to finish college because I had the one year and I had the taste for the experience of going to college. And I liked it. So I volunteered for the draft. And the 1<sup>st</sup> of November of 1954 I went into the service, and served in the United States Army for two years in the United States, and was released in 1956 in September. When, with the help of the GI Bill, I entered Franklin College of Indiana.

**GM:** What experience did you have in the service? What was your duty?

**MG:** I was a corporal. After three months in the Army I was assigned to what was called at that time [unclear] for a special category of the Army with the Air Force. And I went from Fort Leonard Wood to Scott Air Force Base in Illinois and then was sent to California where I served with two Air Force Bases, Beale and Norton, until I was separated from Fort Polk in September of 1956. I was mainly in personnel. It was an engineering outfit of the Army, which was assigned primarily to air force bases. And I left the Army and went . . . entered Franklin College as a sophomore in 1956, and stayed there until June of 1959 when I graduated.

I might say that all during my childhood, there were only three main families in Marion, Indiana, which was at that time a city of approximately thirty thousand people. And although I realized we were different from a cultural standpoint, I didn't encounter a pattern of racism or discrimination. There was once . . . there were some instances of racism. I recall once when my

uncle took some of my brothers and sisters to a pond, which was a paying swimming pool, a gravel pit.

**GM:** These were three . . . three Mexican American families—family units or extended families?

**MG:** Family units. There were the Guerreros, the Castillos and the Velasquez families. When we went to this swimming hole, we were told that we couldn't come in because . . . I think it was something like Tuesday mornings or Tuesday afternoons were set aside for Mexicans, and we had to come back then. I recall being very disappointed about that instance.

When I was in college, I ran for the Student Council president in my junior year at Franklin and I recall some people, some of the students saying they weren't going to vote for me because I was a Chicano. And I don't know what affect—or whether it had any effect, as a matter of fact—on the outcome of the election, but I recall being hurt because of that, feeling hurt because of that experience. During the Army, I don't recall any particular instances of racism based on the fact that I was Chicano. It might have occurred to me, but I guess I was so naïve that I . . . I just passed over it.

When I left in my senior year . . . By the way, during my senior year, I did serve as president of our fraternity, which is Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and also served in various other campus organizations in official capacities. I had a fraternity brother who suggested that now that we were finishing college that we ought to enter law school, and that we could use our GI Bill to get in. And so I applied and was accepted at Indiana University. I, of course, was the only Chicano to serve in that . . . I mean, to be able to go to college, to law school.

As I recall, I was the first Chicano graduate of Indiana University Law School, and graduated from there after three years. I went to the evening division of the law school in Indianapolis, and I recall that when I graduated from Franklin in June, my parents came up to my graduation. Now, heretofore, I was the first . . . up to this point, I was the first of our family to go to college. I recall that my parents gave me a hundred dollars for my college graduation, and I found out later that they'd got . . . I didn't know where they got it, but I . . . at the time . . . but I found out later they had borrowed it from a finance company. And I used that hundred dollars to enter Indiana University School of Law to pay my admission fees. And I went every night for three years straight, including the summers. The only vacations I had was the normal vacations for Christmas and Easter.

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm. During those three years of evening school, that would be a four year program. Did you work also?

**MG:** Yes. I recall....

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 1 Side B]

**MG:** ...in the Law School. They had two rooms down there. And I found out about it and wrote to them. And when I got out of Franklin, I moved right into my basement in the law school where I spent two and a half years. During the days, I worked as a...first, in August, as a welfare case worker for approximately six weeks. And then I applied for and received a position as a treasury officer with the Internal Revenue Service in, oh, September or October of 1959, where I stayed for the next two years and nine months, approximately, in that capacity.

So that I worked during the day full time and went to school in the evening. I recall when I got out of school in early June, I looked at sixty-seven various job offers before I finally landed the job with the welfare department. I don't know. I guess we were in a recession at that time, but I know that it was very difficult. And I often wondered *after* the experience whether the fact that I was a Chicano had anything to do with the fact that I wasn't hired. I kept a list, by the way, of all those people that I contacted. Several interviews, many interviews, job interviews during that month and a half.

**GM:** That would have been 1960? June of 1960 when you were ...?

**MG:** No, 1959.

**GM:** June of 1959.

**MG:** And I recall I existed for those six weeks on metrical, that was a . . . you could buy a six pack of MetriCal for a dollar fifty and I could live for, oh, four or five days on that. And then I finally landed the job. And I recall that after that time, and to this day, I can't stand the sight of MetriCal because of all that. [Chuckles]

**GM:** You were taking it not for dietary reasons, but rather because you could get . . .

**MG:** [Chuckles] To exist.

**GM:** . . . enough nourishment.

**MG:** Yes. That's how I lived.

**GM:** Backing up for just a second off of the education, as you look back, could you . . . have you formulated any ideas that you'd care to share with us regarding how the Catholic Church served you and . . . or failed to serve you? Either served you or failed to serve you and your family. And if that's had any impact upon your present-day stand on the Catholic Church, whatever that might be.

**MG:** Well, I . . . it did provide the service in that it helped educate me. I recall that we paid the minimum fee, and in some instances we weren't able to pay that to attend the Catholic School. So that they did allow me that . . . that privilege and that opportunity. But as far as providing any welfare or direct financial assistance, it never was in a position or never saw fit to do so. However, during all of this time, I recall that I still attended church and remained in some . . .

And in some instances I used to go to church practically every day. And this was during the time that I was at Franklin College, which was a Baptist school, actually.

[Buzzer rings]

[Recording interruption]

**MG:** I don't . . . I don't know whether or not it had an adverse effect at this point in my life. That is, the Catholic Church, on my present feelings.

I did graduate from law school, as I indicated, in June of 1962. Took the bar examination in July and was notified in September or October that I had passed. And when I found that out I left the Internal Revenue Service and I moved back to Marion, Indiana, and opened up a law practice. I actually didn't open it up. I went with two brothers by the name of George and John . . . or Robert Milford, who were gracious enough to take me in, and as a junior partner.

The arrangements were at that time, although I . . . because I had a son at that point, I wanted some steady income. In fact, I asked for a hundred and fifty dollars a week. To which George Milford replied, "If you can't make that much on the kind of business we anticipate giving you, we don't want you in the first place. However, we're not going to guarantee you a hundred and fifty dollars." So the arrangement was that they would pay me half of whatever business I brought in, and they would furnish all the business and they would pay all my expenses including a secretary and supplies and office space. And it worked out quite well. The first year I think I brought in something like twenty-eight or twenty-nine thousand dollars and I got half of that, which is roughly fourteen thousand five hundred, or fourteen thousand.

And at the time, that was pretty good money for a first year lawyer. That was in 1962, 1963. Well, even today, that's still a comparable figure and what beginning lawyers are getting. The second year I brought in thirty-five thousand dollars, and took half of that. And I recall that that second year I was looking out the window of the library and I thought, is this all there is of practicing law? And I thought . . . I thought of Robert Kennedy. I don't know why, except thinking that . . . that perhaps you have to reach out to do something different in order to make a change in your life.

And so I thought I would run for a circuit judge in Indiana. That was in 1964 now. And never in the history of Grant County had they had a Democrat judge. And as a matter of fact, of the thirty or forty lawyers who were in Marion at that time, no Democrat had seen fit to even announce for that job because of the fact that no Democrat had ever been elected. So I called the county chairman that night. Or I called a lawyer, actually, a lawyer friend to get a hold of the county chairman to come over to my house, and that I had some things I wanted to talk to him about. And he came over that night and I told him that I wanted to run and fill out a ticket. And this was in August. It was August 30<sup>th</sup> and that was the deadline. So he got my name on the affidavit and on September 1<sup>st</sup> was the deadline, actually, the next day.

And I was a candidate. Actually, I ran because I wanted the experience and notoriety to get my name better known in Marion, and with no expectation of winning. But that was the year

Goldwater ran against Johnson and there was a landslide. And I campaigned in September and October up until the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, and without any expectation of winning. And no one else thought I would win. But when I woke up on Election Day I had . . . I had beat the incumbent. And I was as shocked or even more surprised than he was. So at the age of twenty-eight I found myself in the position of being served a judge. And in Indiana, it's kind of different than they do this here in Minnesota.

In Indiana, you're sort of the . . . when you're elected the circuit judge, you're sort of the king of that county because of all the appointee powers that you have. And you also are considered the number one political officer of the county, because you hold the highest office. And it was a six-year term. And I did serve starting the first day of 1965 and until the last day of 1970 for those six years.

And it was a tremendous experience for me and learning experience. And I might add that although the older lawyers and . . . well, all the lawyers had some uncertainty and trepidation about my ability to serve in that position as the highest judicial officer after only two years and two months out of law school. They were cooperative and helped a great deal at the beginning and also throughout the six years.

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm. You'd gotten married at what point in your schooling?

**MG:** I married my last year, in April, of law school. And I graduated in June. I married a person whom I'd known since the sixth grade, whom I started dating seriously while I was a junior in law school, although I'd dated her once or twice prior to that time. She, at that point, was a senior at the Miami University of Ohio. Her name was Patty Fowler. And so we sort of became engaged during my senior year of law school and got married. And by the time . . . I guess it was my junior year, because by the time we moved back in November of 1962 we already had Danny, who is our oldest child. And since that time we've had five others who were born in Marion, Indiana.

**GM:** All of them were born in Marion?

**MG:** Yes, between the time of 1962 and 1970.

**GM:** Was it during your tenure as circuit judge that you picked up a doctorate in the jurisprudence?

**MG:** No. My doctor of jurisprudence came upon graduation from law school in 1962.

**GM:** I see. You went for a doctorate degree right from Franklin College when you . . . ?

**MG:** Yes.

**GM:** Okay. You were in this . . . so then during those six years you were [unclear] as a judicial officer. You were politically active per force.

**MG:** I was active, you know, in all levels. Probably more active than I should have been as a judicial officer, but at that time, that was the practice. About my third year as a judge, I had second thoughts about what I wanted to do and be. I recall that I handled all of the major criminal trials, and all of the major civil cases, and all the probate, and I did all the juvenile work. There was another judge, but he handled most of the minor criminal and civil cases, as well as all of the divorce work. It just worked out that way and that was the practice. And so that's the kind of jurisdiction I had.

But at any rate, I had a murder trial my second week on the bench. The third year I was on the bench I . . . the jury found the person who was suspected of kidnap and rape and murder guilty of murder in the first degree, and recommended capital punishment. And I had a very difficult time with that finding. And I recall, after struggling over it for a couple of weeks, I thought it was my mandate to carry out the law, so I imposed capital punishment on the individual. And that . . . that case signaled the decline of my interest in being a judicial officer. I found myself going downhill from that point as far as imposing criminal sentences were concerned. And I was sort of leaning, being partial toward the defendant. And it occurred to me that if I couldn't be impartial, both for the state and for the defendant, that I should get off, and I sort of made my decision that I was only going to serve six years.

And in my sixth year I decided that I would run for Congress, although there had never been a Democrat elected to the Congress in that district. It is [unclear] Republican; still is. I did run for Congress in 1970 and was defeated in the primary. Some twelve thousand to ten thousand votes, something like that, in the primary, over a region of ten counties, actually. It's a big congressional district in terms of area.

**GM:** That was for United States Congress?

**MG:** Yes. Fifth District of Indiana. And I was defeated. And I went back into the practice of law in Marion on my own. And for two years I was very successful financially. But then I . . . I became restless again, and decided that I just didn't want to make money anymore and acquire a large estate. In 1971, a friend found out that I had left the bench, a friend here at the University of Minnesota. He knew that there was an opening as a visiting professor in criminal justice studies, and asked if I was interested. And I said that I was, and came up and interviewed and was hired among the three final candidates.

And I commuted for a year as a visiting professor. And then I decided that I liked teaching and I liked Minnesota and I wanted to move. So in September of 1973 I closed down my law practice and moved my family to Minnesota. I had secured a position prior to this time as the assistant director of the Tri-racial Desegregation Center, which was a federal program here at the University, and the capacity that I served in for a year. When the job of chairperson and professor of Chicano Studies opened up, I interviewed for that position and was employed. And I've been here at the University since August of 1974 in the capacity of chairperson and associate professor.

**GM:** Do you . . . would it be premature to ask what your hopes or goals are for the future professionally? Have you considered many options?

**MG:** Well, what I'm thinking about right now is leaving the University and teaching and going into private business. I have an opportunity at this time to go into business, and within the next couple of months I will make up my mind. And if that's the case, then I will give the University notice in November so that they will have sufficient time to search for and employ a chairperson and another professor in Chicano Studies.

I have enjoyed the experience being in Chicano Studies for this reason, among others: It has been a period of a great learning opportunity from a cultural standpoint for me. In that I have learned a lot of history and culture about my heritage as a Chicano, which I did not know even prior to accepting a teaching position, which was sort of an act of either bravado or, depending on how you want to classify it, a stupid move. But as it has worked out, it's been fine. I did a lot of crash learning in order to keep ahead of my students.

**GM:** Perhaps it was a matter of not knowing the depth of the water before one put one's toe in.

**MG:** Could be.

**GM:** Or all twenty fingers and toes. I have [unclear] twenty toes? [Chuckles] Yes. Then maybe you could tell us a little bit about how in what ways your parents retained Chicano culture for you and your brothers and sisters at home, as evidenced by your bilinguality. Were there Mexican meals and Mexican music available? Observations of national feasts, etcetera. Are you working on sharing your culture with your children? For instance, by trips to Mexico. I'm covering a lot of bases. Where are you sharing what?

**MG:** Well, the retention of culture on the part of my parents was primarily language and food. But aside from that, it was a . . . it was an assimilation experience in that my parents pushed us to assimilate pretty much into the culture of the Anglo here in the United States. And I think that's evidenced by our lifestyles as well as our positions today. My mother and father always spoke Spanish at home and always prepared Mexican foods. But they really didn't push or encourage as much as I would have liked now for them to tell us more about their historical and cultural uniqueness. I, of course, being with the Chicano Studies Department, have encouraged my children to know more about their heritage and culture. I haven't encouraged them as much as I should have in the retention and use of the Spanish language. I sent my twelve year old boy to Mexico for a month a couple of years ago, and last year my eleven year old girl went to Mexico for a month to go to school there.

**GM:** Mmmm-hmmm. Was this through a . . . one of the established programs [unclear]?

**MG:** It was through the Open School in Saint Paul, which is an ongoing program that they've had for several years now. And then we take Mexican students into our home for a month after they return. I'm sad, to some extent, because of the heavy predominance of the Anglo culture in this country. The Chicano is forced to assimilate, and in some instances to acculturating into this society. However, the Native American and the Chicano in this country, probably more than any other ethnic group, have retained their uniqueness, their cultural uniqueness, because they have retained the use of the language, their foods, and the observance of their holidays. They have

retained their own music. More so than any other cultural group in the United States, including the blacks, and I am glad it's that way. I hope to continue to do that in the future, whether I stay here in Chicano Studies or go into some other endeavor. I don't see myself growing old as a professor at the University, although I'm very appreciative of the opportunity and the service and the benefits that I have received.

**GM:** Thinking in terms of posterity—and you have reason to be optimistic that this tape and this interview and the transcription are going to last for many decades in the future—what message, what overlying philosophy of life would you like to share with your grandchildren or great-great-grandchildren will someday be interested enough to go to the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society and see what made Manuel Guerrero tick?

**MG:** Well, leaving aside the philosophical implications at this point, what I'd like for them to do is retain their culture and the sense of history and an interest in learning—in Chicanos, generally, so that they will always have a sense of their own identity as Chicanos, their Chicano heritage. And, for that matter, I would hope that they would at some point also investigate the heritages which their mother represents as well. I'd like for them to have an understanding and appreciation of other cultures which make up the United States, and in some way, their own small ways, make some contribution to a lasting and truly pluralistic society that I think this country is and should become.

As opposed to the so-called melting pot theory, which is normally touted or talked about in this country, which . . . which signifies the loss of one's heritage or culture, and in somewhat of a synthesis or synthetic process to create something new that is the American way of life. Most of the European ethnics who have come to this country have, in fact, lost their language and culture and customs and have become so-called all-American. And it's worked pretty well for white people, but for people of color, it has not worked, as a matter of fact, due mainly to institutional racism. I would hope that they would . . . this would help them have an understanding of other people's way of thinking, a way of behaving, a way of living. And thereby increase an understanding of themselves as people, as human beings.

Philosophically I would hope that Chicanos and my children would retain a sense of identity, be able to live with themselves on a gentle and a peaceful level, rather than being materialistic or competitive or trying to do the other person in before . . . or trying to achieve at the expense of others, which seems to be, I think, encouraged in this society. As I told you the other day about the statement made by Don Juan to Carlos Castañeda. He was talking about his anxieties in becoming . . . or inability to become a man of knowledge. And Don Juan said to him that in order to be successful at anything, that success must come gently, with a great deal of effort but with no stress or obsession. It seems to me that the better lives are those lives that are lived without stress and obsession, but where a great deal of effort is put on trying to be successful.

**GM:** Thank you very much for the interview.

[End of recording]

Transcription by Marilyn Olson-Trembl  
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